**The Life of Christ**

**A Harmony of the Gospels**

**by David Scott Nichols MD**

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**Preface**:

In the upcoming pages, I will be presenting a chronological description of the greatest life ever lived on this earth… the life of our Savior, Jesus Christ. My goal is to have this take the form of a narrative biographical story that will take the reader through our Lord’s most interesting, critically important, yet short lifetime on this earth. I do not plan to get very involved with a detailed commentary on His teachings. That will be saved for another time. On the other hand, I will make brief comments as His biography unfolds. To better visualize His life and work, maps will be included for a better understanding of our Lord’s journeys throughout the Holy Land from His birth until His ascension, approximately 35 years later.

Before getting into a study of the gospels, I want to take a little time to review the scriptures as they appeared when Jesus was born. A brief review of the Old Testament follows.

**Introduction**:

In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth. (Gen. 1:1) This is the opening verse in the Bible. God tells us in the first couple of chapters how He created the universe, culminating in His creation of man.

God gave the Bible to illuminate the world. Through a study of the scriptures, all mankind can learn about God and His creation. He uses the Bible to tell us (and later through the life of Jesus, to show us) how to live our lives. Interestingly, God wrote the scriptures via progressive revelation. That is, He revealed more about His ultimate plan for our lives and His universe as the centuries advanced. Two classic examples of this would be the information He revealed concerning the Trinity and the Messiah. No doubt, there are glimpses of truth concerning both very early in the Bible, but much more is learned when the reader reaches the New Testament. Of course, never is there any contradictory information given. The Gospel of John opens with added information concerning the creation and reveals important truth about the Trinity and the Messiah.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God, this One was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him. (John 1:1-2)

On the sixth day of creation, God created man. Adam was the first man. Soon after God created Adam, He fashioned Eve out of his side to be a helper for Adam. God and His creation had a blissful relationship early on. God created man with a free will. This bold action by God allowed for two responses by man and woman toward God that otherwise would not have been possible. They now could truly demonstrate their love for God and follow Him… or they could reject Him and His teachings. Without this gift of free will, this situation could not exist. Certainly, a “robot” cannot truly love or hate – those emotions require a choice.

Adam and Eve were created in large part to allow our heavenly Father to exercise one of His most important character traits… love. God is Love. Love is certainly ideal when it can be reciprocated. Therefore, God gave Adam and Eve free choice, the choice to accept God’s love and return this love by adhering to a few simple requests… (they certainly were amazingly simple in the Garden of Eden)… or reject God’s love by rebelling against these requests.

Unfortunately, for Adam, Eve and all of their subsequent progeny, they chose to follow the advice of Satan. This resulted in the first sin of mankind and the “Fall of Man.”

No longer could man fellowship with God in the idyllic Garden of Eden. Every person born into the world after the Fall would be born with a sinful nature… there would be no doubt that sinful acts would eventually follow. The perfect union with our heavenly Father had been broken. Now what would happen?

Of course, God had known since eternity past that this situation would inevitably arise. Yet, the “love” relationship God desired was sufficiently important that He allowed for our Fall and, amazingly, the consequences that came with His plan for our redemption. This is revealed in the incredible two-part story of the Bible. Part One is described in the Old Testament and is concerned with God granting man the opportunity to save himself in a very real sense… or better put, allowing man the opportunity to realize that this was an impossible task. The New Testament concerns the very necessary action that God had to take to return mankind to a perfect union with Him once again. How this was (and still is) done is the story that unfolds in the Holy Scriptures.

Within several generations of the Fall, mankind had sunk so low that God decided to give the world a fresh start.

The Lord saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.  The Lord was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain. (Gen 6:5-6)

Only Noah and his family remained committed to God and His edicts. And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall die. But with thee will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee. (Gen 6:17-18)

So, this began the second attempt of humanity to live the kind of lives that would be pleasing to the God of heaven. As we will see, there were many trials and tribulations, but God did allow the generations following Noah to remain on the earth and to work out their salvation with Him. As it turns out, each person’s relationship with the God of the universe is an individual thing. The Bible tells everyone that we are each responsible to work out our salvation for ourselves. That is, each person’s eternal destiny is simply between God and that individual person.

So, Noah and his family began again. God had directed Noah to save representative birds and animals so they would be able to repopulate the earth. This would be the first and last time God would destroy the earth with a flood. (He does plan to renew the earth at some point in the future using fire).

Several generations later, God directed a man to leave his homeland and venture out into an unknown land and future. God, as is frequently the case, was asking a person to step out in faith and trust Him.

Now the Lord had said unto Abram, get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee. I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing. I will bless them that bless thee and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. (Gen 12:1-3)

God told Abram (his name later changed to Abraham) to leave from Ur of the Chaldees and head west to the “Promised Land” God had prepared for him and his heirs. Of course, Abraham had to be a man of great faith to trust this word from God and start out on a journey to an unknown land and an uncertain future. Yet he did and was rewarded by God for his faithfulness.

God promised that Abraham would be the father of a great nation. The numbers of his heirs would be like the “stars in the skies.” These heirs would make up the nation of Israel, past, present and future. God passed down this promise to Abraham’s son, Isaac and grandson, Jacob. Jacob (God later renamed him Israel) was blessed with twelve sons. From these sons came the twelve tribes of Israel; these tribes are still recognized to this day.

The Bible continues with the eventual enslavement of the twelve tribes in the land of Egypt. After several hundred years of enforced servitude (where they helped to build the pyramids of Egypt), God chose a former prince of Egypt, Moses, to lead His people back into the “Promised Land.” Moses had been adopted as an infant by one of the princes of Egypt after his Israelite mother gave him up in order to prevent his killing at the hands of the Egyptian Pharaoh.

This Exodus was successful, but due to the rebellion of most of the people soon after being led by God through the Red Sea, the Israelites were required to wander in the desert for a total of forty years before God would allow them entrance into Canaan – their promised destination.

Soon after they left Egypt, God gave His “Law” to the Israelites. This, of course, featured the “Ten Commandments” but also included many other commands and instructions. The Law was given so that people might live moral, healthy and secure lives, pleasing to God. To break God’s Law was to sin. A sinful person would not be able to experience all the blessings of God available for them while on this earth… nor, sadly, enter into heaven upon death. Therefore, God’s plan for redemption now involved following the “Law.”

Each person in Old Testament times, guilty of sin, was required to follow a strict system of repentance and sacrifice (i.e. of a “perfect” lamb – a lamb without spot or blemish). The shedding of the blood of the lamb was absolutely required. This sacrament was reminiscent of the first “Passover” where the Jews placed the blood of a ram over their door post in order to avert the “death angel” who passed over each household in that area of Egypt that night long ago.

At regular intervals, God required these sacrifices in order for any given individual to be temporarily forgiven of their sins. Later, as other sins were committed, additional sacrifice would be required. The devoted, faithful Jew followed these commandments to the best of their ability. This included providing their appropriate repentance and sacrifice as directed by God. Unfortunately, no individual ever proved capable of keeping the Law perfectly… not one person. As it turns out, this was the point God was making… man was not able to save himself! These animal sacrifices were able to temporarily “cover” the sins of the Israelite man or woman, but never to totally “wash their sins away.”

After their forty-year sojourn in the desert, Joshua led them to the conquest of many foreign countries in that Promised Land. Then the nation of Israel entered a period of time where they were led/advised by a succession of military “judges.” Some of these leaders were very godly people and did a fine job. Others were very sinful and the tribes in their charge endured some very dark times. Finally, after asking Him for many years, God granted the people a king to rule over the entire nation. Samuel, the last prophet of Israel, realized that this was not God’s perfect will, but God’s permissive will… to grant this request of the people. As we all know, God has given everyone free will.

The only three kings to rule over the undivided nation of Israel were Saul, David and Solomon. Each reigned for forty years. King David was the greatest king of Israel, a “man after God’s heart.” God, in fact, promised that the Messiah would be in the line of David… that one day the Messiah would come into this world… to save Israel and the entire world. Yet David, at times, did commit terrible sins. Some had very serious consequences. He had an adulterous relationship with the beautiful Bathsheba and conspired to murder her husband. Those terrible sins resulted in David losing his son from that union and a host of other problems throughout his life. Eventually, these sins contributed greatly to the dissolution of Israel into two separate entities, the Northern Kingdom (known as Israel) and the Southern Kingdom (known as Judah).

Although there certainly were exceptions, most of the kings coming after Solomon did not honor nor follow God as they ruled over their portion of the twelve tribes. This resulted in the eventual loss of God’s protection. From this time onward, the people of Israel were destined for a great fall… at the hands of foreign invaders. First, the tribes of the Northern Kingdom were conquered by the Assyrians in 722 B.C. Approximately 135 years later, Babylonia, under King Nebuchadnezzar, flattened and burned Jerusalem, killed many of their people, and took great numbers into captivity. This also was the result of turning away from God. Some of the people returned to Jerusalem 70 years later (as prophesized by God), after their captivity in 605 B.C. On the other hand, since their defeat to Babylon in 605 B.C., the Jews never had a land to call their own until 1948. Soon after World War II (i.e. May 15, 1948), the Jews were back in their homeland… and it was once again their nation! By the way, this recent return was also prophesied by God in the Bible!

The latter portion of the Old Testament covers the time after the return of some of the Jews to Jerusalem from Babylonia. Babylonia fell to Media-Persia in 539 B.C. The Persian King, Cyrus, allowed the Jews to return as mentioned above. Isaiah had predicted this event over 150 years earlier… even the name of Cyrus the King! About two centuries later, Greece, under Alexander the Great became the dominant world power. The Jews were allowed to live in Jerusalem but were always ultimately governed by foreign powers. As the first century B.C. came near its end, Herod was placed in charge of Jerusalem. By that time, Rome had usurped Greece as the most powerful empire on earth. Once again, Jerusalem was left to live under foreign domination. Their people awaited deliverance from this oppression. When would the prophesized Messiah arrive on the scene? Some of their rabbis believed it would be very soon. Then the world would once again take notice of Israel and the Jews!

The main point of this extremely brief survey of the Old Testament was to be a reminder that God had planned from the beginning the method He would use to redeem mankind from their Fall. By establishing the Law and requiring perfect observance of that Law, God demonstrated that man alone would be unable to save himself. Perfection was required to gain entrance into heaven… or, at least, repentance and the adequate payment for one’s sinful acts. Neither was seemingly attainable. What was the answer to be?

First of all, let it be understood that *it does depend on the knowledge that a man or woman is given as to what that person is required to do to gain salvation*. This is pointed out in several different areas of the Bible, particularly by Paul in the book of Romans. The greatest theologian of the 20th century, C.S. Lewis has a great deal to say on this matter in his writings as well. For example, the Old Testament saints, such as Abraham, David, Moses, Elijah, Joseph, etc., will all be in heaven. Yet, there is no evidence that they ever specifically asked Jesus into their heart to be their Savior. Jesus had not yet come to this earth during their lifetimes! On the other hand, they all did do what God asked of them during their time on this earth. Each placed their **faith in God**, each followed God’s plan for their lives as best as they could (e.g. following God’s Law including giving appropriate animal **sacrifices as required**), and all looked forward to the day of the Messiah. That was what God asked of His people in Old Testament times. Those attributes and actions would one day result in their entrance into heaven… but only after an adequate propitiation for their sins had been made by Jesus on the cross. The animal sacrifices, which *looked forward* to the one Great Sacrifice by Jesus Christ, would not be adequate to save mankind from their sins and allow them entrance into heaven. Instead, these great men of faith would wait in *Paradise* for the great sacrifice of their Messiah-Savior that would come at a later time. Then, on Easter morning, Jesus would be the first fruits of God’s great salvation. Promptly thereafter, all of the great Old Testament saints also ascended into heaven.

Today, most in this world have a much greater knowledge and are specifically asked to put their faith in Jesus and His gospel.

For those in the world that have no opportunity to know the name and person of Jesus (e.g. the tribal man who lives in deepest, darkest Africa), they will be judged by God based on their knowledge of the “Truth.” We are wise to let that judgment to God knowing that He will do what is just and fair and merciful.

In all cases, salvation will only to be found through the grace of God. Exactly how this would be done remained a mystery as the Old Testament scriptures came to a conclusion. The faithful Jew just did what God told Him to do… follow Him in faith, obey the Law and give proper sacrifices. God would honor their actions.

The Jews were looking for the Messiah to somehow be their answer. They felt that He would come and lead them to their rightful position of power and glory that God had promised from ages past. They were right but had limited knowledge of how this would happen. They looked at it happening on just one visit… it would actually take two as we know today…

In the end times, the Messiah would come as the powerful king and redeemer… This is revealed in dozens of Old Testament verses… such as:

* Then the Lord will appear over them; his arrow will flash like lightning. The Sovereign Lord will sound the trumpet… (Zech 9:14)
* From the west, men will fear the name of the Lord, and from the rising of the sun, they will revere his glory. For he will come like a pent-up flood that the breath of the Lord drives along.  "The Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob [Israel] who repent of their sins.” (Isaiah 59:19-20)
* The government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.  Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. (Isaiah 9:6-7)

However, the Jews failed to notice many other verses concerning the Messiah that spoke of His other role. He also would be the suffering servant whose sacrifice would be required for the redemption of man:

* For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, And as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or comeliness; and when we see Him, There is no beauty that we should desire Him.  He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. (Isaiah 53:2-3)
* He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.  But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. (Isaiah 53:4-5)
* See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. (Zech 9:9)
* "I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles, to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness.” (Isaiah 42:6-7)

As one can see, the Messiah has two roles to play. The first He carried out beautifully on His first incarnation. The second role will be fulfilled by Him in the future.

Given the importance of the sacrificial lamb all throughout the Old Testament, it is reasonable to suggest that at least some Jews might have considered the need for another form of sacrifice for their ultimate salvation. Even other civilizations had a very real conception of the need for an adequate sacrifice for sins. For example, some believed that virgin girls were needed to appease their gods. I won’t speculate from where or how these ideas of sacrifice became shared by some pagan religions, but it is a fact that many pagan religions had partial truths in their teachings… their hideous ideas of the proper sacrifice, of course, were terribly wrong, but they did have some elements of truth (the idea of a sacrifice for sins) just as most cults do in our present day. However, the Jews were not thinking of any type of ultimate sacrifice. They were waiting only for a Messiah that would come into the world in power and glory… not any other way.

Yet, soon a glorious event would occur that would literally result in the salvation of the world! The answer for the salvation of man would be manifest. Now that story begins…

**The Life of Jesus Christ:** **(dating)** Let me take a moment to mention a little about the dates that I will be using as I go through the events in the life of Jesus in this series of lectures. No one is certain of the year of His birth, the years of His ministry, nor the year of His sacrificial death. Virtually all theologians seem to agree that He was born no later than 3-4 years B.C. There was a difference of about three to four years with respect to the onset of His ministry. Although most seemed to choose the year 26 A.D. as His baptism by His cousin John, some preferred three years later, 29 A.D. (e.g. the outstanding apologist, Dr. Norman Geisler). Obviously, no one today can know the actual dates.

There seems to be very good agreement concerning the events that took place in the first 2 ½ years of His ministry. However, some scholars believe the teaching ministry of Jesus lasted for a total of three years while others are convinced it lasted four years. I will discuss that disagreement in more detail later when that portion of His ministry is reached in the discussion that follows.

**The Birth of Jesus: approx. 5 B.C.**

Zechariah had been a priest all of his adult life. He loved his wife, Elizabeth, very much. They lived and worked in Jerusalem as Zechariah’s work brought him to the Temple quite frequently. This day had begun as so many others… but, it was going to take an incredible turn in just a few minutes. Just after burning the incense that was required in his duties, there appeared to Zechariah an angel of the Lord… Gabriel! He said, “Fear not, Zechariah; for your prayer has been heard and Elizabeth, your wife, will bear you a son.” And you shall call his name John; and you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. For he will be great in the eyes of the Lord and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother’s womb.” (Luke 1:13-15) Now Elizabeth and Zechariah were a fairly old couple and Elizabeth had long been barren, so this was Gabriel telling him that he was about to have a child via God’s supernatural intervention. Although he was a very righteous man and trusted in God throughout his entire lifetime, this information took him aback to say the least. He answered Gabriel, “Whereby shall I know this? For I am an old man and my wife is far along in years.” (Luke 1:18) That was not the response that Gabriel was looking for… in fact, Gabriel then told Zechariah that his momentary doubt would result in his being struck *dumb* from that moment on until the birth of his son, John. Upon his exit from the Temple, his friends and wife inquired as to what took him so long at his duties that morning. He was unable to talk so he did the best that he could to “sign” his answer to them. He had a difficult time convincing them of exactly what had happened… yet they knew that he had seen some sort of a vision. Later, of course, he took the time necessary and explained everything to Elizabeth. She was totally amazed but considering everything that had happened to her husband, and their great faith in the Lord, she believed and waited with great joy for the event that was about to happen. They had been praying for a child for decades, and now that child was to be a special son sent from God! Several days later, Zechariah completed his service and he and Elizabeth were able to head back to their home. Just a few days later, Elizabeth conceived. She remained in her home for five months believing this to be the will of the Lord.

Just about 65 miles north of Jerusalem, in the small town of Nazareth, there lived a young carpenter named Joseph. He was a very respected man in that working-class town. Folks noted that he was always in a good mood those days, recently having fallen in love with a beautiful young woman, as lovely as she could be, named Mary. Mary certainly appeared to be the one for him… so sure of this was Joseph that they had recently become betrothed. They spent many an hour talking about the life they had in front of them. Little did he know that God had a big surprise in mind for the both of them… a very big surprise!

While Joseph was making plans for his upcoming marriage, Mary had just experienced the most amazing encounter she would ever have. Six months after Elizabeth conceived, the angel Gabriel came unto Mary and said, “Hail, you who are richly blessed. The Lord is with you.” "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. 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, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end." "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

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.

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. For nothing is impossible with God."

"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said." Then the angel left her. (Luke 1:28-38)

This young teenaged woman had so much faith and love for God that she accepted this news and told Gabriel that whatever God had in store for her, she was ready to be His servant. When one really thinks about this situation, this really did take a great deal of faith on the part of Mary!

Of course, when Joseph found out about Mary being “with child,” he was not too pleased. He had a very difficult time believing Mary’s story concerning the method by which she became pregnant. He loved Mary and surely wanted to believe her, but it was just too difficult. Yet, he was too kind to reject her and planned to renounce the pending marriage privately. While he was trying to figure out the best way to keep Mary from shame, God sent Gabriel to him. Gabriel appeared to Joseph in a vivid dream and put his mind at ease concerning Mary. His exact words were, "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. 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.” Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet (Isaiah 7:14), saying, behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: and knew her not (had no marital relations) till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS. (Matthew 1:20-25)

So, the two young newlyweds began their married life together.

Soon after the wedding, Mary decided to visit her cousin Elizabeth who was soon to enter her sixth month of pregnancy. The trip was not too difficult and it was not long before Mary appeared before Elizabeth with a warm welcome. A beautiful thing happened at just that moment. When Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost: and she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. (Luke 1:41-44) Elizabeth also said that Mary was to be blessed for trusting God when He told her all that he was doing with the baby Jesus.

Mary followed the welcome from her cousin with wonderful words of praise, "My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me-- holy is his name. His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation. He has performed mighty deeds with His arm; He has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, even as he said to our fathers." (Luke 1:46-55)

Mary stayed with her cousin until right near her delivery date, but then returned home to be with her husband, Joseph, and the rest of her family.

Elizabeth soon brought forth a fine son, John. Family and friends gathered together and were very happy and thankful that she was able to have a child at such an advanced age. On the 8th day, the day that baby John was to be circumcised, the family and friends called out “Zechariah” as they looked at the little baby boy… assuming that would be his name. But Elizabeth said, “Not so, his name shall be called John.” The friends that had gathered at that festive occasion were perplexed at this answer as no one had been called that in the family in previous generations. It would have been customary to name this first-born son after an honored relative, such as his father. When they turned to Zechariah to see what he had to add, he asked for a tablet to write that he agreed with his wife… the baby’s name would indeed be John. As soon as he wrote this note, his tongue was loosed and he began to talk! This miracle was not lost on his guests and they went about telling all those in the town about this event.

Zechariah was very happy and blessed God for His wonderful gift of this beautiful son:

"Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited and redeemed His people,  and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David,  As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, Who have been since the world began,  That we should be saved from our enemies And from the hand of all who hate us,  To perform the mercy promised to our fathers And to remember His holy covenant,  The oath which He swore to our father Abraham:  To grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, Might serve Him without fear,  In holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life.  And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest; For you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, to give knowledge of salvation to His people By the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God, with which the Dayspring from on high has visited us; To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace." So, the child grew and became strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his manifestation to Israel. (Luke 1:68-80)

Back in Nazareth, Mary and Joseph were preparing for the birth of their first child. Both were doing well and everything seemed in place as the due date approached. Then, as luck would have it, the town was given a decree that would require Mary and Joseph to make the long difficult trip south to Bethlehem to register as per the Roman Caesar Augustus. Everyone had to return to the town of their birth for this registration.

And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. So, all went to be registered, everyone to his own city.  Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child.   (Luke 2:1-5)

After the long, arduous journey, they could not even find a decent inn to rest in. At least one innkeeper did allow them to use his barn for shelter from the elements. They were thankful for this… especially given that Mary soon thereafter went into labor!

So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. (Luke 2:6-7)

Not very far from the town of Bethlehem, there were several shepherds tending their flocks. On an otherwise uneventful night, an amazing visitation was about to take place:

Behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid.  Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people.  For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.  And this willbe the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying:  "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!"  So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, "Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us."  And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger.  Now when they had seen Him*,* they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child.  And all those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds.  But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart.  Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them.

(Luke 2:9-20)

For the next several days, Mary and Joseph did the best that they could to make the baby comfortable and safe. Some of the town folk who had heard the amazing story surrounding the birth came to help the young couple. The shepherds returned during the daytime to add a helping hand as well. When eight days had passed, the baby Jesus was circumcised as was the Jewish Law:

And when eight days were completed for the circumcision of the Child, His name was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb. (Luke 2:21)

For the next several weeks, Mary and Joseph had the joy and work of taking care of their brand-new baby. What a wonderful time it was for these newlyweds. The baby was grand, a literal gift from God… in fact, He was God! Yet, He was a baby as well and needed His earthly mother’s and father’s care at this time just as much as any other newborn. After approximately six weeks had passed and Mary was ceremonially pure, they gathered up their few belongings and started north to Jerusalem. Upon entry into the city, they prepared themselves for the trip to the Temple. The Law required that Mary and Joseph present their baby Jesus to the Lord as they presented a sacrifice that was appropriate given their station. A wealthy couple might offer a lamb, but those with less money would give turtledoves or pigeons: *"Every male who opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord" (Exodus 13:2,12,15),* and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, *"A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons." (Leviticus 12:8)* (Luke 2:23-24)

After this presentation to the Lord, two amazing events took place before the young family left the Temple:

And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he

had seen the Lord's Christ.  So, he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said:  "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, According to Your word; For my eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Your people Israel."  And Joseph and His mother marveled at those things which were spoken of Him.  (Luke 2:25-33)

Simeon had waited all of his life for this moment. God had promised him that he would see the Messiah before he died. Now he was very old, but his faith was rewarded as he did finally have the opportunity to see the Lord, Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah of Israel! Simeon also reported that this baby would someday bring the Gentiles into the family of God as well. These words thrilled Mary and Joseph. Yet, the next revelation by Simeon brought the two new parents pangs of anxiety…

Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, "Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against (yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."  (Luke 2:34-35)

These words were not very comforting for the new mother, to say the least. Right after this encounter with Simeon, Mary next saw Anna, an old woman who spent her days in the Temple…

Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; and this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.  And coming in that instant she gave thanks to the Lord and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem. (Luke 2:36-38)

This concluded the day at the Temple and now it was finally time to head on back to their home in Nazareth.

**From Jerusalem to Nazareth: (5-4 B.C.)**

So, when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own city, Nazareth. (Luke 2:39) Some Bible scholars suggest that Luke, when writing his gospel, simply did not write about the first couple of years in the life of Jesus… that time when Jesus was visited by the wise men in Bethlehem, followed by his family’s flight into Egypt. However, many others (e.g. Harold Wilmington and Johnston Cheney) do believe that the young family did return for a short time to Nazareth where they made arrangements for a more extended trip to Bethlehem as described in the next paragraph…

**From Nazareth to Bethlehem: (5-4 B.C.)**

Not long after their return to Nazareth, Joseph decided to move back to his birthplace in Bethlehem. Mary and he had made many friends during the weeks that they spent there after the birth of their son, Jesus. It took a little time, but they finally made the move to Bethlehem. While there, the remainder of the first year of the life of Jesus went without incident. As the second year was drawing to a close, certain events were coming that would change the lives of Mary, Joseph and Jesus for years to come.

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him." When Herod the king heard this*,* he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. So, they said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet:  *'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,* *Are not the least among the rulers of Judah;* *For out of you shall come a Ruler* *Who will shepherd My people Israel.' (Micah 5:2)"* (Matt 2:1-6)

The fact that these intelligent and learned men had come to find and worship the prophesized Messiah was a very worrisome thing to the wicked king Herod. What place would he have once this true King of Israel was recognized? Even children were given the crown and a Messiah would displace him virtually immediately. In any event, he would be in great danger of losing his position. It would be much safer if no one was around to challenge his authority. So, Herod played along with the wise visitors from the east and spoke with them privately asking them when they first noticed this “star?” Then he sent them on their way asking them to make sure that they returned through Jerusalem and let him know exactly where they found the baby so that he might properly go and greet the little future king himself. Of course, all the while Herod intended nothing but evil for this child. The wise men did find the toddler Jesus and were able to praise and worship Him as they had desired. They also gave him very expensive gifts, fit for the King that He was.

And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.   (Matt 2:11)

After this meeting, the wise men from the east were warned by God to depart for their homeland via another route so as not to give Herod the information he had requested. Not only this, but Joseph was warned in a dream to depart from Bethlehem and go into Egypt until further notice as Herod was about to do something terrible to the little toddler boys of Bethlehem. It is important to also note that in the Old Testament it

had been prophesized that *"Out of Egypt I called My Son."* (Matt 2:15 & Hosea 11:1)

Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men.  Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying: *"A voice was heard in Ramah,* *Lamentation, weeping, and great mourning,* *Rachel weeping for her children,* *refusing to be comforted,* *because they are no more."* (Jeremiah 31:15)  (Matthew 2:16-18)

**From Bethlehem to Egypt: (4-3 B.C.)**

So, for several months to a year or so, the little family lived in the land of Egypt. Joseph waited until it was safe to return. Herod the Great died in 4 B.C.

**From Egypt to Nazareth: (~3 B.C.)**

But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the young Child's life are dead."  Then he arose, took the young Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea instead of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And being warned by God in a dream, he turned aside into the region of Galilee.  And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, "He shall be called a Nazarene." (Matt 2:19-23)

Jesus had already spent portions of his young life in three different towns. He was born in Bethlehem, presumably spent a small portion of his first year in Nazareth, then lived most of the next two years in Bethlehem, then it was off to Egypt for a short time. Finally, the family of Joseph, Mary and Jesus was able to put down some roots in the town that Jesus was conceived in via the Holy Spirit… Nazareth. It was here that he spent most of the next 25 years of His life…

And the Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him. (Luke 2:39-40)

**Visit to Jerusalem: (approx. A.D. ~8)**

Only one more incident concerning His life is mentioned in the Scripture prior to His adult ministry. That takes place on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem at the age of twelve. It is interesting to conjecture as to the reason for God including this short passage relating to Jesus’ boyhood years. God had only a few words to say concerning Jesus’ life as a boy. Yet, these words show us how He had been studying diligently in His young life to learn the scriptures and prepare Himself for His later ministry. They also reveal the fact that He was well aware of who He was… the Son of the Living God. The verses also demonstrate the young boy’s great intelligence, which, of course, was expected.

His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover.  And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast.  When they had finished the days, as they returned, the Boy Jesus lingered behind in Jerusalem. And Joseph and His mother did not know it; but supposing Him to have been in the company, they went a day's journey, and sought Him among their relatives and acquaintances. So, when they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking Him. Now so it was that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions.  And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers. So, when they saw Him, they were amazed; and His mother said to Him, "Son, why have You done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously."  And He said to them, "Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?"  But they did not understand the statement which He spoke to them.   (Luke 2:41-50)

**Back home to Nazareth:** After this reunion, Jesus returned home with His earthly family and continued to grow as a devoted son to His earthly parents as He also continued to prepare for His future ministry and sacrificial work on the cross. Mary continued to learn more and more about her son’s special mission on earth.

Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them, but His mother kept all these things in her heart.  And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men. (Luke 2:51-52)

The years passed as Jesus and John, his cousin grew into the roles God had planned for them. Approximately eighteen years later, John began his ministry in the wilderness. John was a Nazarite and a very devoted man of God who preached concerning the coming of the Messiah. A Nazarite was a man characterized by certain traits: they did not cut their hair, they did not drink wine, nor did they approach dead bodies. All of these things they did as they were set apart for the service of God. Samuel and Samson were Old Testament Nazarites. It had been prophesized that John would come at this time to announce the coming of Jesus.

**The Wilderness of Judea: (A.D. 25-26)**

 In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!"  For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying: *"The voice of one crying* *in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight. (Isaiah 40:3)”* And John himself was clothed in camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey.  Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins.  But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?  Therefore, bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not think to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones.  And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore, every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.  I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.  His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." (Matt 3:1-12)

As can be seen, John had his own ministry as he baptized people out in the wilderness as they repented of their sins and rededicated their lives to follow God. He was upset that some of the Pharisees and Sadducees came to see what he was doing. The word had spread concerning him and his growing ministry. Certainly, these two groups were not there to be baptized by John but were concerned with the growing influence John was gaining with the people. One day, an amazing event occurred…

**MAPS and Illustrations depicting the travels of Jesus during His ministry:** In order to gain the maximum benefit out of the information that follows, I strongly suggest that the reader follow the travels of Jesus during His 3-4 year ministry by the use of maps. I have included an appendix at the end of this treatise of several maps relating to the Holy Land during the time of Jesus. A brief description of each map follows:

* Holy Land during the time of Jesus – p. 164
* Holy Land during the time of Jesus – p. 165
* Palestine at the time of Jesus – p. 166
* Close up of Galilee – p. 167
* Bethsaida, Capernaum, and Gennesaret – p. 168
* Jerusalem in the time of Jesus – p. 169
* Jerusalem in the time of Jesus – p. 170
* The tomb of Jesus – p. 171

By following these journeys of Jesus, using these maps, a better understanding can be gained of what it must have been like for our Savior and His disciples. Traveling in those days was no easy task.

**Jesus meets John in Bethabara at the Jordan River: (A.D. 26)**

Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him.  And John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?" But Jesus answered and said to him, "Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he allowed Him.  When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. (Matthew 3:13-16)

He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.'  And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God. (John 1:33-34)

And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Matt 3:17)

Now Jesus Himself began His ministry at about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph. (Luke 3:23)

Jesus was probably about 30-32 years old at this time. Of course, no one knows His exact age at the onset of His ministry, nor the exact dates of His ministry. The ones noted here are certainly close to the actual dates. Many other descendants were well known to the people of that day as detailed records were always kept of every person and their heritage. Jesus was in the line of:

Nathan, *the son* of David, *the son* of Jesse, *the son* of Obed, *the son* of Boaz, …….. *the son* of Judah, *the son* of Jacob, *the son* of Isaac, *the son* of Abraham, *the son* of Terah, *the son* of Nahor, *the son* of Serug,……. *the son* of Shem, *the son* of Noah, *the son* of Lamech, *the son* of Methuselah, *the son* of Enoch, *the son* of Jared, *the son* of Mahalalel, *the son* of Cainan, *the son* of Enos, *the son* of Seth, *the son* of Adam, *the son* of God.

(see Luke 3:23-38 - for Mary’s entire genealogy) (Joseph’s genealogy - Matthew 1:1-17)

**Jesus goes up into the wilderness: (autumn A.D. 26)** Prior to Jesus beginning His ministry on earth, He had an encounter with Satan. Satan has had a terrible influence upon all humanity since the first man and woman on earth. He successfully tempted Eve and Adam to go against God’s direct commandment, leading to that fateful first sin and all subsequent sin. No one has ever been able to resist the temptations of the devil totally. All are sinners and all have fallen short of the yardstick that God uses to judge the world. Now, God’s only begotten Son had come onto the scene. He was on earth to give all mankind an example of how life should be lived. He was also here to give all of us hope and peace. He was here to sacrifice Himself for our sins. This would only be of value if Jesus would remain perfect in His life as the incarnate God/Man. The devil was not about to let this happen if he could do anything to stop it. He certainly would try!

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry.  Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread."  But He answered and said, "It is written, *'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.' (Deut 8:3)"* Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: *'He shall give His angels charge over you,'* and, *'In their hands they shall bear you up,* *lest you dash your foot against a stone.' (Psalms 91:11-12) "*Jesus said to him, "It is written again, *'You shall not tempt the Lord your God.' (Deut 6:16)”*  Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory.  And he said to Him, "All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me."  Then Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, *'You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.' (Deut 6:13)”*  Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him. (Matt 4:1-11)

Jesus had successfully fended off the attempts of Satan to influence His behavior (i.e. to sin). Although it really is not possible for God to sin, God wanted us to see that He would subject Himself to all of those temptations that are common to man. He also gave us all an example, a very valuable one, as to how to stave off the temptations that come to us virtually every day in some way or another. He showed us that we need to turn straight to God’s word and use it to win our victory over those temptations that we fight every day. That is what Jesus did. Obviously, in order to do this well and often, we will need to learn and memorize as many verses as we can. In doing this, we can always call on a pertinent verse for any occasion.

**Bethabara**: **(late A.D. 26)**  Jesus continued in the area of Bethabara at the Jordon River where John was baptizing for a few more days after coming back from his difficult forty day fast and subsequent ordeal with Satan. One day, as Jesus was walking nearby, John was standing with two of his disciples.

**Bethabara to Bethsaida: (autumn A.D. 26)** And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God!"  The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.  Then Jesus turned, and seeing them following, said to them, "What do you seek?" They said to Him, "Rabbi" (which is to say, when translated, Teacher), "where are You staying?"  He said to them, "Come and see." They came and saw where He was staying, and remained with Him that day (now it was about the tenth hour).  One of the two who heard John speak*,* and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.  He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated, the Christ).  And he brought him to Jesus. Now when Jesus looked at him, He said, "You are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas" (which is translated, A Stone).  The following day Jesus wanted to go to Galilee, and He found Philip and said to him, "Follow Me."  Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.  Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote--Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."  And Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see."  Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!"  Nathanael said to Him, "How do You know me?" Jesus answered and said to him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you."  Nathanael answered and said to Him, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!"  Jesus answered and said to him, "Because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree,' do you believe? You will see greater things than these."  And He said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."  **(**John 1:35-51)

**Jesus makes a stop at Cana… then Capernaum: (winter A.D. 27)**

So, in this short period of time, Jesus had begun His earthly ministry. He was now going about the task of selecting His students, disciples, and would immediately begin to teach them and others exactly what they needed to know. The world of that day had fallen so far away from the Lord God. The Jewish leaders, the Pharisees and Sadducees were hypocrites and certainly unable to lead the people to the truth. In that short period of time just described, Jesus had selected Andrew, his brother Simon Peter, and Philip, all from a town called Bethsaida. Philip had a friend named Nathaniel who he invited to come and join up with Jesus. Although at first doubtful of this man named Jesus, he soon was convinced that He was something extraordinary and became the fourth student of the Master.

The five men continued on their way toward Galilee. Upon entering Canaan, the very next day, Jesus and his new friends were invited to a wedding of a good friend of Mary, the mother of Jesus. Mary was trying to do her best to help the reception go as nicely as possible. At one point she noted that the wine was running low. Knowing the power of her Son, she asked Him if He would solve the problem. She apparently realized that there was no more wine to be purchased at that time, at that place, so it was obvious to Jesus what she was asking Him to do… produce wine miraculously! This was not what He wanted to do at this time. There certainly would be very important times and situations to perform miraculous signs and wonders. But, this was not one of them! He had just begun to recruit His disciples and had barely begun his ministry. He did not want to reveal certain things about Himself at this early stage. Yet, Jesus wanted to help His mother and help make the wedding reception a very pleasant success. So, after a moment’s deliberation and a comment to His mother that this was not the best forum for His first miracle, He did in fact, turn six large stone jars of water into excellent tasting wine. After the reception concluded, Jesus, His mother, brothers and new disciples went down into Capernaum to spend a few days together.

**From Capernaum to Jerusalem: (Spring A.D. 27) (1st Passover of Jesus’ ministry)**

Not long after the wedding, it was time for Passover. Of course, this meant going to Jerusalem for all devout Jews. This would be a special time for Jesus as this specific event had been prophesized a little over three hundred years earlier by the prophet Malachi:

"Behold, I send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple, Even the Messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight. Behold, He is coming," Says the Lord of hosts.  "But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire and like launderer's soap.  He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer to the Lord an offering in righteousness. (Mal 3:1-3)

So, when Jesus appeared at the Temple this year, there were probably going to be some “fireworks” if Malachi was correct. He was.

As was always the case during this time of year, Jerusalem was bustling with people. Hundreds of thousands of people had arrived within the previous few days from all over Israel and the surrounding Roman Empire. It was an extremely important time of the Jewish year. It was time to celebrate Passover, the incredible miracle God had provided that had saved the Jewish sons from death during the time of Moses. God had provided salvation for those sons due to their parents being faithful and covering their door posts with the blood of a sacrificial lamb. Of course, this festival was extremely important to every devout Jew. Unfortunately, as had too often been the case, many of the people used this time to make as much money as they could. By setting up shop near and in some cases within the Temple grounds, bold businessmen were able to accost the visiting multitudes and sell them souvenirs, sheep, doves, oxen, and other wares of the day. When Jesus saw this sacrilegious use of the Temple property, He became justly angry and promptly overturned the tables of these “moneychangers” and scattered the animals away. "Take these things away! Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise!" (John 2:16) Naturally, this atypical reaction shocked the crowd and greatly irritated the moneychangers. They were hurling barbs and threats at this bold young man who had dared to suggest that anything was amiss in their actions. Jesus was not afraid and just answered, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." (John 2:19)

The angry mob of people misunderstood His message and threw back at Him, “What are you talking about?! Don’t you know that this Temple took 46 years to build and You are telling us that if it is destroyed You are going to re-build it in three days! Are You nuts?!” Of course, Jesus was not talking about the actual stone Temple that they all were standing in at that time. He was alluding to Himself! One day, a few years later, the four disciples that were with Jesus that day would remember that comment and realize that He was saying that He would resurrect from the dead just three days after He had been “destroyed” – that is, crucified.

As the week of Passover continued, Jesus did continue with some preaching and teaching. He also did perform some additional miracles and healed the sick. Because of this, many people came to believe in Him. Word of His miraculous work was beginning to spread among some of the Pharisees in Jerusalem during that week. Jesus recognized that He could not trust most of the people and took care not to leave Himself exposed to any surreptitious attack. One night, while alone with his disciples, one of the Pharisees named Nicodemus came to honestly inquire concerning those things he had been hearing. Nicodemus knew the scriptures and wondered if this man might actually be the Messiah. At the least, he knew that Jesus was sent from God…

"Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him."  Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."  Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?"  Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.  That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.  Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'  The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit."  Nicodemus answered and said to Him, "How can these things be?" Jesus answered and said to him, "Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things?  Most assuredly, I say to you, We speak what We know and testify what We have seen, and you do not receive Our witness.  If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?  No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.  (Jesus would be lifted up onto a cross and die for the sins of all mankind… all we have to do is *believe* in Him). For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.  For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.  He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.  And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.  For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.  But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God." (John 3:1-21)

In other words, Jesus told this seeking Pharisee that every person who wanted to have everlasting life must believe in Jesus and look to Jesus for his salvation. By doing this, a person would actually experience a literal spiritual rebirth of the spirit within himself. He would be a new creature in Christ. Jesus ended by saying that although He, the Light, had now come into the world, there were so many men that were still living in darkness. In fact, they loved the darkness instead of the Light as they wanted to continue to live in sin.

This conversation had given Nicodemus much to think about. He left there that night very happy that he had come seeking this incredible man… if He was just a man. Now, Nicodemus had to decide what to do with this new information… his life would be dependent on that decision. Evidence strongly suggests that he made the right decision and became “born again.”

**From Jerusalem to the Jordan: (summer A.D. 27)**

After these things Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea, and there He remained with them and baptized.  Now John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim (John 3:22-23)

Jesus and His cousin John were having a wonderful time as they continued to teach and preach nearby one another in Judea. John’s disciples became somewhat perplexed now that they saw how John’s cousin’s disciples (i.e. Jesus’ disciples) continued to grow, seemingly at the expense of their good friend’s ministry, John the Baptist. John quickly and kindly set them straight when he told them that this was how it was to be. It was God’s plan that John would herald the coming of the true Bridegroom, Jesus the Messiah. As the Messiah’s ministry and influence would increase, John’s would correspondingly decrease. John was not the Messiah, Jesus was.

He must increase, but I must decrease.  He who comes from above is above all; he who is of the earth is earthly and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all. The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand.  He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." (John 3:30-31, 35-36)

As the days passed, the two great men continued their work in Judea. John continued his call to repentance. Never in any sense a timid man, this Nazarite had some very harsh words for the current tetrarch of Israel, Herod Antipas. Herod had taken for his second wife the wife of his half-brother, Herodias, also Herod’s niece. This incestuous marriage was denounced harshly by John and had begun to rile up his followers. This was certainly not acceptable to Herod and he had John arrested and put into prison.

**A short time in Samaria: (summer A.D. 27)**

Soon after hearing about the arrest of John, Jesus left for the shores of Galilee. On his trip there, Jesus stopped for a little while in a town called Sychar, Samaria. Jacob’s well was there and Jesus stopped for a drink of water. A Samaritan woman came by to draw out some water from the well. Jesus made a gentle request,

"Give Me a drink."  For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.  Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?" For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.  Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water."  The woman said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Where then do You get that living water?  Are You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, as well as his sons and his livestock?"  Jesus answered and said to her, "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life."  The woman said to Him, "Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw." Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here." The woman answered and said, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You have well said, 'I have no husband,' for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; in that you spoke truly." (John 4:7-18)

After this exchange, the woman realized fully that Jesus was a prophet of God as He knew things about her life (e.g. concerning her five husbands) that only a prophet could know. She said to Him that she knew that the Jews said that the place of proper worship was in Jerusalem. Jesus replied, "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father.  You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews.  But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.  God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." (John 4:21-24)

The woman said to Him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When He comes, He will tell us all things."  Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am He*."*

Jesus tells this woman exactly who He is! After this exchange, His disciples returned from the town. They were puzzled that Jesus was talking to this woman, a Samaritan woman as well. Of course, this was an important lesson for these men. Women were just as important to Jesus as men.

As the disciples were returning, the woman was off to tell her town folk about her incredible encounter with Christ.

"Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" Then they went out of the city and came to Him. (John 4:29)

In the meantime, His disciples urged Him, saying, "Rabbi, eat."  But He said to them, "I have food to eat of which you do not know."  Therefore, the disciples said to one another, "Has anyone brought Him anything to eat?"  Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work.  Do you not say, 'There are still four months and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!  And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together.  For in this the saying is true: 'One sows and another reaps.'  I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labors." (John 4:31-38)

When the disciples had offered some food to their Master and friend Jesus, He responded by telling them that, at the moment, He was busy bringing converts into His Kingdom. In fact, He suggested to them and to the folks of every generation that ***now*** is the time of salvation… the fields are ripe for us to harvest. Today… not tomorrow. We may not always see the people that we witness to accept our message… yet, we are planting a seed that some other Christian witness in the future may be able to use to bring another lost person into the Kingdom of God.

Many of the Samaritans returned to find and talk to Jesus. He was only too happy to converse with them and demonstrate through his words and actions that He was indeed the Christ. He stayed with them in their little town for two days. By the time he left to continue on to Galilee, many had accepted Him as Christ, the Savior of the world!

**Cana**: **(summer A.D. 27)**

Then, it was on to his original destination (about 20 miles north of Sychar), Cana in Galilee. When He arrived there, He was met by a group of people who welcomed Him warmly. Many had seen what He had done earlier in Jerusalem and in Judea. There was one nobleman in particular who was extremely glad to find Him as his son was very sick in nearby Capernaum. He asked Jesus if He would please use His supernatural power to heal his son. Jesus said, "Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will by no means believe." (John 4:48) (You will note that Jesus repeats this statement in the future.) In fact, this was certainly true for the majority of those there that day. Of course, that is why Jesus did so many miracles. That and because He wanted to help those in need.

The nobleman said to Him, "Sir, come down before my child dies!" Jesus said to him, "Go your way; your son lives." (John 4:49-50)

The nobleman immediately took off for his home to see his son. On the way, he met his servants who had come to tell him the wonderful news that his son had, amazingly, been healed! Upon further questioning, the men all realized that at the exact moment Jesus had said that his son “lives” his son was healed!

Jesus remained in the area for a while longer and taught and preached to the townsfolk. He spent much of his time teaching His disciples those things He wanted them to learn about the Kingdom of God. He taught in various synagogues during those weeks.

**Back home to Nazareth: (summer A.D. 27)**

Eventually, Jesus decided to go back to the city in which He was raised, Nazareth. Soon after He arrived, He went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up to read. He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written (Isaiah 61:1-2):  *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me,* *Because He has anointed Me* *To preach the gospel to the poor;* *He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,* *To proclaim liberty to the captives* *and recovery of sight to the blind,* *to set at liberty those who are oppressed;* *to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."*  Then He closed the book and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him.  And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." So, all bore witness to Him, and marveled at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth. And they said, "Is this not Joseph's son?"  He said to them, "You will surely say this proverb to Me, 'Physician, heal yourself! Whatever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in Your country.'"  Then He said, "Assuredly, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own country.” (Luke 4:17-24)

The people in his hometown did not believe that this son of Mary and Joseph was who He now claimed to be… the actual Messiah! How could this person who they had seen growing up, playing in the streets, helping His dad, working as a carpenter… how could this be the Messiah? The King of Kings?! No, they were not about to fall for that.

Jesus told them that He was not planning on just doing one miracle after another to continually prove Himself. Yes, He certainly would do plenty, He had already done some. Yet, He continued…

“But I tell you truly, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a great famine throughout all the land; but to none of them was Elijah sent except to Zarephath, in the region of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow.  And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian."  (Luke 4:25-27)

He had no plans at that time to present the townsfolk there with any additional special proof of His identity… that He was the Christ. Just as God did not have Elijah perform miracles for all of the widows and Elisha heal all of the lepers in that day long ago, Jesus would not be healing all people and performing innumerable miracles in that first century time. They had heard what Jesus had done. They had heard His claims; they could see how He had fulfilled so many Old Testament prophesies. Now it was time for them to trust… to have faith.

Well, this was not accepted at all. Those that heard these words in the synagogue were very angry and rose up and took him to the edge of town near a steep hill. With the miraculous intervention of God, His Father, Jesus was able to slip away from this mob.

**Back East to Capernaum: (late summer A.D. 27)**

Immediately, Jesus travelled back to Capernaum… a nice little seacoast town on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee. He once again began to teach there in the synagogues.

He came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the regions of Zebulun and Naphtali, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: *"The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali,* *By the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan,* *Galilee of the Gentiles:*  *The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light,* *And upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death* *Light has dawned.” (Isaiah 9:1-2)* From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."  (Matthew 4:13-16)

**From Capernaum to Galilee (first preaching tour): (autumn A.D. 27)**

After spending some time in Capernaum, Jesus went down to the Sea of Galilee where He saw Peter and Andrew fishing. He called out to them to come on in to shore as it was time to get on with their ministry with Him if they desired to become “fishers of men.” Indeed, they did, and they quickly finished up their work and came along with their new Master.

And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, **Simon called Peter**, and **Andrew his brother**, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen.  Then He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men."  They immediately left their nets and followed Him.  Going on from there, He saw two other brothers, **James the son of Zebedee**, and **John his brother**, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets. He called them, and immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him. (Matt 4:18-22) (Mark 1:16-20)

Luke records the calling of these four disciples into full-time ministry with significantly more detail…

One morning, as the multitude pressed about Him to hear the word of God, He stood by the Lake of Gennesaret (sea of Galilee) and saw two boats standing by the lake; but the fishermen had gone from them and were washing their nets. Then He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little from the land. And He sat down and taught the multitudes from the boat.  When He had stopped speaking, He said to Simon, "Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch."  But Simon answered and said to Him, "Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net."  And when they had done this, they caught a great number of fish, and their net was breaking. So, they signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink.  When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!"  For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish which they had taken; and so also were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men." So, when they had brought their boats to land, they forsook all and followed Him. (Luke 5:1-11)

In this miracle of Jesus, we see how Peter was struck by the power of Jesus over nature and finally seemed to have understood the true identity of his friend Jesus. Now, Peter recognized Him as the true Messiah, God the Son, and was ready to follow Him for the rest of his life. The other disciples apparently felt similarly after this incident. They all were willing to leave their previous life’s work and their family and follow Jesus full time. Their new goal… to lead people into the truth concerning Jesus, the Messiah – to preach the gospel.

As an aside, there are a few commentators who believe that Luke is actually recording a separate event that took place a few weeks to months after the incident described by Mark and Matthew above. However, the vast majority of Bible scholars understand the differences in the accounts relates to the fact that Luke simply gives a more detailed account of the calling into full-time ministry of these four disciples.

And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people. Then His fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all sick people who were afflicted with various diseases and torments, and those who were demon-possessed, epileptics, and paralytics; and He healed them.  Great multitudes followed Him--from Galilee, and from Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond the Jordan. (Matt 4:23-25)

In other words, Jesus had begun his teaching, preaching and healing ministry in earnest at this time. He covered Galilee completely and His fame spread throughout the region.

They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. The people were amazed at his teaching because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law. Now there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, saying, "Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are--the Holy One of God!"  But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be quiet, and come out of him!" (Mark 1:21-25) (Luke 4:31-35)

Immediately, the demon came out of the man. All that saw this were amazed as they now realized that even demons were subservient to this Jesus. More and more they were realizing that he was someone very extraordinary… many believed that He was the promised Messiah.

Now as soon as they had come out of the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John.  But Simon's wife's mother lay sick with a fever, and they told Him about her at once. So, He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and immediately the fever left her. And she served them.  At evening, when the sun had set, they brought to Him all who were sick and those who were demon-possessed.  And the whole city was gathered together at the door.  Then He healed many who were sick with various diseases and cast out many demons; and He did not allow the demons to speak, because they knew Him. (Mark 1:29-34) (Luke 4:38-41)

Early in the morning, Jesus often would go off by Himself to pray to His Father. One of these mornings, Simon came to find Him as He was away a little longer than usual. When Simon and a couple of the other disciples caught up to Jesus they told Him how there were already so many people waiting for Him to speak to them and to heal their many diseases. Jesus said that it was time to head off to another part of the countryside as soon as they finished up there that morning. Upon returning to the town, Jesus was mobbed by the gathering crowd. He talked with the people and helped many in the crowd as He always did. When they heard that He was about to leave their town that afternoon, they implored Him to stay. But Jesus said,

"I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent." (Luke 4:43)

So, the small band of men set off for other towns in the area. During those weeks, Jesus’ popularity and fame was at a high level in that area around Galilee. He taught and preached mainly in the synagogues but would stop for a conversation or healing almost anywhere. These pleasant times would not last forever, but things were going well as he entered the last half of His first year of ministry. Jesus wanted to blatantly demonstrate just who He was before the inevitable time would come that He would be arrested and nailed to a cross. The people now were learning about the power of Jesus, although not enough yet had reasoned that He was actually God incarnate. This would come. Jesus continued this incredible first preaching and healing mission journey as He then headed back to Capernaum for a while.

 Jesus continued to preach in their synagogues throughout all Galilee and continued to cast out demons.  Now a leper came to Him, imploring Him, kneeling down to Him and saying to Him, "If You are willing, You can make me clean."  Then Jesus, moved with compassion, stretched out His hand and touched him, and said to him, "I am willing; be cleansed."  As soon as He had spoken, immediately the leprosy left him, and he was cleansed.  And He strictly warned him and sent him away at once, and said to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone; but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing those things which Moses commanded, as a testimony to them."  However, he went out and began to proclaim it freely, and to spread the matter, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter the city, but was outside in deserted places; and they came to Him from every direction. (Mark 1:40-45)

**From the first Galilean preaching tour to Capernaum:**

One day, while He was in a house, folks gathered around so they could be near Him. Jesus began to preach to the crowd. Suddenly a paralytic was lowered down through a man-made opening in the roof as there was too big a crowd to bring the man in to Jesus any other way. When Jesus saw the man and the faith in his eyes and his friends, He said…

"Son, your sins are forgiven you."  And some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, "Why does this Man speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?"  But immediately, when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they reasoned thus within themselves, He said to them, "Why do you reason about these things in your hearts?  Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Arise, take up your bed and walk'?  But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins"--He said to the paralytic, I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house." (Mark 2:5-11)

The big problem now was that people had heard Jesus claim to forgive the sins of a person! Only God can do this. Jesus was claiming to be God! Now that claim, to forgive a person’s sins, totally changed the way the scribes and Pharisees approached this new preacher. They railed at Him for speaking blasphemies.

“Who can forgive sins but God alone?" (Luke 5:21b)

The previously paralyzed man got to his feet and walked out of the house! This amazed the crowd including those that were berating Jesus. Everyone was talking about this great healer. Most were saying that He must be sent from God… yet, there was now a contingent (mainly Pharisees and scribes) that were becoming very suspicious of Him. Jesus was gaining so much influence and power over the people. They were beginning to treat Him as the Messiah… and some were, indeed, treating Him as God.

After these events, Jesus and his followers left the house and began to walk through the town. After going a few hundred yards, Jesus came to a man sitting in a booth… getting ready to go home for the evening. He was gathering up a few personal items before leaving his job for that day. The man’s name was **Levi (later, Matthew)**… he was a tax collector for that area. This was not a job that made a person many friends, to say the least. Most of these men had a reputation for dishonesty and tended to be rough in their tactics to the people in the community. It was better to avoid these men whenever one could. Jesus, however, purposely went to Levi and greeted him warmly. After only a few minutes of conversation, the disciples heard Jesus say, Levi, "Follow Me." So, he left all, rose up, and followed Him.  Then Levi gave Him a great feast in his own house. And there were a great number of tax collectors and others who sat down with them. And their scribes and the Pharisees complained against His disciples, saying, "Why do You eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?"  Jesus answered and said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.  I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance." (Luke 5:27-32)

Of course, this was a very logical point Jesus was making. Why would it not be appropriate to associate and witness to those people who were lost without God? Those were exactly the people who needed this influence and information the most! That is what Jesus was doing in adding Levi as a disciple. Jesus would reach Levi and then teach Levi. Levi, in turn, would have great influence over his friends and family and neighbors. Levi, Jesus and the growing band of disciples had a fine time at the dinner party. They grew closer together as they learned more about each other and shared stories of their youth. Unfortunately, there were still a few Pharisees that continued to complain. They wondered out loud, why is it that the disciples of John are always fasting and praying; our followers also fast and pray… yet, Jesus, here you are having a great time eating and talking and laughing!? Something seems amiss. Jesus gave them one last comment before returning to the dinner party with His friends…

"Can you make the friends of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them; then they will fast in those days."  Then He spoke a parable to them: "No one puts a piece from a new garment on an old one; otherwise the new makes a tear, and also the piece that was taken out of the new does not match the old.  And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine will burst the wineskins and be spilled, and the wineskins will be ruined.  But new wine must be put into new wineskins, and both are preserved.

And no one, having drunk old wine*,* immediately desires new; for he says, 'The old is better.'" (Luke 5:34-39)

Jesus was telling the people that it would not work to attempt to fit the Old Covenant into His New Covenant. The rituals of the Old Covenant, for example, were not a part of His gospel message. Certainly, these Laws and rituals were used by God to prepare the way for the gospel, but they were not the gospel. Although Jesus was giving the truthful answer, over time this type of answer was going to get Him into serious trouble with the Pharisees and other authorities of the Jewish religion. On the other hand, His wonderful love of the common people, His miracle healings of their diseases, the casting out of demons, all of these things caused many to love Him and follow Him, especially in the area that He concentrated on that first year of His ministry… Galilee.

**From Capernaum to a Galilean grain field: (2nd yr. of ministry) (spring A.D. 28)**

Now, that first year was drawing to a close as Passover approached. So far, things had gone well for this group of men and their leader. Unfortunately, that was not the case for Jesus’ cousin, John. He was still in prison.

Jesus was about to become involved in a controversy concerning proper conduct on the Sabbath…

Jesus and His friends were passing through some grain fields. And His disciples plucked the heads of grain and ate them*,* rubbing them in their hands.  And some of the Pharisees said to them, "Why are you doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath?"  But Jesus answering them said, "Have you not even read this, what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: how he went into the house of God, took and ate the showbread, and also gave some to those with him, which is not lawful for any but the priests to eat?"  And He said to them, "The Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath." (Luke 6:1-5)

The Pharisees were like many people today, they got all bogged down in the details of the Law, but rarely, if ever, looked at the spirit of the Law. What was the purpose of the Law anyway? To give people a guideline to live more like Christ. Well, here was Christ Himself! He was giving a moment by moment demonstration of how everyone should live their life. The Son of Man, Jesus, was the **Lord of the Sabbath**… He ruled the Sabbath… He set the Laws. But just for good measure, Jesus gave examples of Old Testament saints breaking the Sabbath laws when it was appropriate… this was especially significant when He showed how David did this as David was certainly one of their heroes.

**From a Galilean grain field to a Galilean synagogue:**

It seems that the Pharisees had it in for Jesus now. They watched Him like a hawk always trying to trap Him … to catch Him breaking one of their laws. The opportunity came once again. Jesus went into a synagogue one Sabbath not long after Passover to preach His Kingdom message. While there, he noted a man with a withered hand. The Pharisees waited to see if He would heal this man of that lifelong infirmity. Those vipers were ready to jump on Him once again as they believed that this would be doing work on the Sabbath… that would be against their law. Jesus asked the infirmed man to stand and face Him. Then Jesus said to all those in the room, including the Pharisees, "I will ask you one thing: Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy?" And when He had looked around at them all, He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And he did so, and his hand was restored as whole as the other. But they were filled with rage and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus. (Luke 6:9-11)

Although they remained silent while in the synagogue, the Pharisees were seething and plotted against Jesus. They went quickly to Herod and his henchmen and talked concerning this rebel and tried to decide what the best course of action would be to silence Him.

Jesus certainly knew of their plan, and He soon left that specific area. He continued to preach and teach in the general vicinity where He had been treated so well… Galilee. He preached, taught and healed all those that He came into contact. His fame spread throughout the region, from Jerusalem, to Judea, Jordon, Tyre and Sidon – north, south, east, and west of Galilee.

As Jesus continued to heal the sick, cast out demons, make the blind see, and lame walk, He asked the people not to make these things blatantly known. Jesus still had much to do before He would be ready to get on with the main purpose of His incarnation on this earth. This situation was prophesized in Isaiah…

"*Behold! My Servant whom I have chosen,* *My Beloved in whom My soul is well pleased!* *I will put My Spirit upon Him,* *And He will declare justice to the Gentiles.*  *He will not quarrel nor cry out,* *nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets.*  *A bruised reed He will not break,* *and smoking flax He will not quench,* *Till He sends forth justice to victory;* *And in His name Gentiles will trust."* (Isaiah 42:1-4) (Matt 12:18-21)

**The Sermon on the Mount: (summer A.D. 28)**

Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray and continued all night in prayer to God.  And when it was day, He called His disciples to Himself*;* and from them He chose twelve whom He also named apostles:  Simon, whom He also named **Peter**, and **Andrew** his brother; **James** and **John**; **Philip** and **Bartholomew**; **Matthew** and **Thomas**; **James** the son of Alphaeus, and **Simon** called the Zealot; **Judas** the son of James, and **Judas Iscariot** who also became a traitor.  And He came down with them and stood on a level place with a crowd of His disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem, and from the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, who came to hear Him and be healed of their diseases, as well as those who were tormented with unclean spirits. And they were healed.  And the whole multitude sought to touch Him, for power went out from Him and healed them all.  Then He lifted up His eyes toward His disciples, and said: (Luke 6:12-20)

*The famous Sermon on the Mount*…

In this sermon on the mountain, purportedly given on the side of a mountain just off the northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee, Jesus gives a long discourse on the full meaning of The Law. He points out that it is not only a person’s actions that are important, but also each individual’s thoughts and desires that need line up with The Law. This will prove to be humanly impossible. The first portion of our Lord’s sermon is often referred to as *The* *Beatitudes*:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.  Blessed are those who mourn, For they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth.  Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy.  Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God.  Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.  "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake.  Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (Matt 5:3-12)

Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh. But woe to you who are rich, for you are receiving your comfort. Woe to you who are merry, for you shall lament and weep. Woe to you who are surfeited. For you shall suffer hunger. Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for so did their fathers to the false prophets. (Luke 6:24-26)

Blessed actually means “happy.” So, Jesus is telling us how we can ultimately gain happiness. As can be seen, those attributes required are not those that the “world” normally believes will bring happiness. Certainly, being poor, hungry, weeping, hated by men, excluded by the masses, is not typically thought of as the path toward happiness. Is it? So, why does Jesus say these things?

A careful reading of these verses shows the way everyone needs to look at all that they do while on this sojourn here on earth. Remember that *this earth is not our home,* this is a testing ground, a place to learn what God wants us to learn for the incredibly short time we spend in these bodies we are using for a “season.” We all will soon be spending eternity elsewhere. If we choose to follow Jesus by accepting Him as our Savior and Lord, our eternity will be spent in heaven (along with one thousand years on the earth during the millennial kingdom when Jesus will reign in power and glory). If we do not accept the gospel message, our eternity will be spent in hell. That is being quite blunt… but, frankly, that is what the Bible says, therefore, that is what is true.

Now, if we spend an infinite amount of time in heaven, and a “blink” of time on this earth, it is easy to see why certain actions that we take while on earth may not bring us immediate gratification down here but will still be markedly for our benefit. Why? These “actions” will bring us eternal “happiness” when we are in heaven. I believe it is as simple as that. Why do some study so hard in college when they could be out goofing around for those four years having fun? Obviously, it is because that person is bright enough to understand that for the next 50 years they can be better off due to those four years of effort! This is a simplistic analogy, but a fairly reasonable one.

However, there is an important other reason to obey Jesus and His Word. Jesus will give those people who trust, follow and obey Him a beautiful peace and joy while living on this earth. They will not have to wait for heaven to experience the benefits of trusting in Jesus. I am totally sure of this. This is not to say that the difficulties of life and our weakness will not rob us of some of these benefits. However, to obey Jesus and His Word should be the goal of every Christian.

Is it possible for anyone to live out the Sermon on the Mount? No, it is not. It is even more impossible for this to be accomplished than to follow the Law of Moses as Jesus made even our thoughts and desires come under the Law, not just our actions. So, what is the point? Jesus wants us to know that in our own power we have no chance to be saved. Yet, He came to save us through *His* power! All we have to do is accept His gospel message, that message He gave to Nicodemus (recall John 3:16). Then, as is explained in depth later by apostles such as Paul, we need to turn over the control of our lives to the third person of the Holy Trinity, the Holy Spirit and let Him help us live as we know Jesus wants us to live. Through daily prayer and releasing the control of our lives to God, we can walk through each day in a way that is acceptable to Jesus. Will we be perfect as Jesus was? No way. But, we can learn to come closer and closer to our goal to be like Jesus so that we will make Him proud of us and hopefully and prayerfully someday hear the words, “Well done my good and faithful servant.”

Jesus continued to lay down the standard for His followers:

"You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.  You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.  Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.  Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.   (Matthew 5:13-16)

Christians should demonstrate what Christ has done for them in their lives. Through their example, others can come to know Jesus as their savior.

"Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.  For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.  Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.   (Matthew 5:17-19)

Jesus tells His listeners that He has not come to deny the truth of the Law of Moses, but only to fulfill it. Jesus is the Messiah, the one that the Law has been pointing to for almost fifteen hundred years. Soon, there would be a mechanism that would give marked power to the faithful (via the Holy Spirit living within the Christian) to help that person hold to the Law… and its further enhancements made by Jesus. We are not saved by keeping the Law as Jesus notes here. However, those who teach the importance of the Law and keep the Law as well as they possibly can, will be called “great in heaven” – they will be honored for their efforts by Jesus.

For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.  "You have heard that it was said to those of old, *'You shall not murder,* and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.' But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire. Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.  Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison.  Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny.  "You have heard that it was said to those of old, *'You shall not commit adultery.'*  But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.  If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.  And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. (Matthew 5:20-30)

Jesus was taking the Law of Moses and making it even more difficult to keep by saying that people’s actions were not the only thing that was important, but their thoughts as well. It had been already shown through all the years in Old Testament times that no man could keep the Law. Now, it would be even more impossible to keep the Law as set down by Jesus. Yet, there was one who would keep the Law perfectly, the person giving this sermon, Jesus Christ. If we were to be declared righteous before God, it was going to have to be through Jesus Himself. He would have to do whatever was necessary to bring us into a righteous relationship with His Father in heaven. How would He do it? Well, after living a perfect life, He would be able to give His life for all of humanity, suffer to pay the penalty for their sins, and become the first fruits of all Christians’ salvation. That was His plan and the plan of His Father.

"Furthermore, it has been said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.'  But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery.   (Matthew 5:31-32)

Jesus here states that the only proper reason for divorce is adultery. Later on, in His ministry, He will briefly address the issue of divorce again.

"Again, you have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.'  But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King.  Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one. (Matthew 5:33-37)

Here Jesus tells us that we should just tell the truth pure and simple instead of adding all sorts of oaths to our statements. For a Christian, his word should be enough. If not, that individual is not living a life worthy of a son or daughter of God. Yet, this does not mean that under certain circumstances we cannot testify under oath, because even Jesus testified under oath at His trial and the Law of Moses allows for oaths for certain occasions.

"You have heard that it was said, *'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.'* But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.  If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two.  Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away.  (Matthew 5:38-42)

These have always been difficult verses to understand. J. Vernon McGee believes strongly that they are meant for the Millennial Kingdom where Jesus will be reigning on His throne. He notes that they are excellent concepts for us to strive for, within reason, but not reasonable to live by in the sinful world of today. On the other hand, John McArthur seems to see this as the way Christians should live today… in our relationships with man. This does not mean that we should not have civil laws to protect people and nations from evil, but that we should act this way when we are dealing with individuals. I personally think that Jesus is giving us the ideal, we should strive for this, but we will find situations in life that will not allow us to follow these ideals in today’s world. In the kingdom living age, the Millennial Kingdom, I believe that it will be possible for us to live by this ideal.

"You have heard that it was said, *'You shall love your neighbor* (note Lev. 19:18) and hate your enemy.'  But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.  For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?  And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so?  Therefore, you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect. (Matt 5:43-48) (Luke 6:27-35)

These words of Jesus should be possible for us to live by today through the power of the Holy Spirit. They really are self-explanatory. Yet, doing these things may well prove difficult. We need to turn our daily lives over to Him every morning and continue to turn to Him for His powerful help all day long. This paragraph ends with the words, “you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.” Now it is not possible for us to be perfect. Only Jesus ever lived a perfect life on this earth. If we trust in Jesus, however, we are looked upon as being “perfect,” that is “righteous” by God as He imputes His Son’s righteousness onto us.

"Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven.  Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.  But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.  "And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.   (Matthew 6:1-6)

Wonderful advice and instruction from Jesus. People should do charitable deeds often and pray always. Both should be done quietly; these acts should be known ideally only to you and God. It is so important to be truly humble as none of us has anything to “crow” about anyway. We are all lowly sinners who owe everything to Jesus. We should just be totally thankful to Him. He owns everything that He has loaned out to us and when we give it to someone via a charitable gift, we are just doing what He wants and expects us to do. He has given us the chance to give instead of the need to receive. He has blessed us with that opportunity. We should be thankful to Him for that chance to give. But, don’t let the world know about this gift… it need be between you and God… and, only if necessary, the recipient as well.

And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do*.* For they think that they will be heard for their many words.  Therefore, do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.  In this manner, therefore, pray:

Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread.  And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.  And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen. (Matthew 6:7-13)

The example of the type of prayer that we should pray… known, of course, as the Lord’s Prayer… many have said that it might be more appropriately called the Disciple’s Prayer.

 "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.  (Matthew 6:14,15)

What Jesus means here is that if we do not forgive others, God will not be able to bless the Christian as He would like because that Christian has an unforgiving heart. Judiciously, the Christian is saved as soon as he asks Jesus into his heart, but, to receive blessings and answers to prayer in the manner in which God desires, the believer needs to forgive others and follow Jesus as Lord of his life.

"Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.  But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. (Matthew 6:16-18)

This is another example of doing the right thing without calling attention to oneself. Be humble always. Of course, this verse does also remind us of the “fast” – this is something that virtually no one ever does today… but, God would surely honor this manner of worship and method of getting closer to Him.

"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.  For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.   (Matthew 6:19-21)

We should always be doing those things that have heavenly rewards. What difference does it make whether we leave this world with two cents or two billion dollars in the bank? This is meaningless in heaven. Jesus does tell us to lay up treasures in heaven… it is reasonable to know that what we do for Christ will be rewarded in heaven… Jesus tells us so. Let your treasure be in heaven… not of this world. Things of this world are always temporary… things we lay up for heaven are eternal!

"The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light.  But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!  "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. (Matthew 6:22-24)

There can be only one master in this life. God says it is impossible to serve two. A person cannot keep one foot in this world and try to keep one in heaven. God says everyone has to choose between Him and the world. This should be an easy choice but far too many do not take God at His Word… they try to serve both God and mammon. Sometimes the conflict is between God and some other “god”… maybe another person, a job, a hobby, some form of an addiction……. God must come first to the Christian; He must be our “only Master.”

 "Therefore, I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?  Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?  Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? So, why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.  Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?  Therefore, do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'  For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.  But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.  Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. (Matt 6:25-34)

These verses are meant for so many Christians in the world today. Most Christians seem to have little problem in trusting God for their salvation, but it is so much harder to trust God with their daily lives. He tells us that we should recognize that He can handle all aspects of our lives… just let Him. On a daily basis, all Christians need to get up, pray, turn their lives over to the control of the Holy Spirit, ask for God’s guidance, and then get on with that *one* day. When the ‘morrow comes, repeat that plan… but not until that day comes!

"Judge not, that you be not judged.  For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.  Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you."  (Luke 6:37-38)

These words are reminiscent of those in the Lord’s Prayer. Simply put, we should act toward others as we would want God to act toward us. We do not want to be judged or condemned by God… we should not judge or condemn others. Instead, we should be generous with our time, effort and money.

And He spoke a parable to them: "Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into the ditch?  A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher. (Luke 6:39-40)

A sinful man cannot lead others in the way of righteousness. We have a wonderful role model in Jesus. We should live a life that makes us an excellent role model for others. There will be those that we influence and we will want to influence them in a positive, Christian way.

And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye?  Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.   (Luke 6:41-42) (Matthew 7:3-4)

This is great advice for Christians! One of the most common sins is gossip. Yet, isn’t gossip often a form of judgment? Not infrequently, it involves one person telling another about some other person’s perceived sin. God says not to gossip… ever. God wants us to let Him be the Judge. As an added benefit, while we are minding our own business, we will have more time to keep ourselves from doing those things that would displease God. By the way, this is not to say that we should not recognize sin and sinners for what they are. We just need to try not to be too judgmental. There may be some instances where it is correct to stand in judgment… for example, in order to help someone recognize their sin and possibly to lead them to Christ. There may be other situations where our judgment tells us that we should not even bother as God points out in the next verse…

Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces.   (Matthew 7:6)

How can we gain insight as to how to function in every aspect of our lives including in spiritual discernment? Ask God for help…

"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.  For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.  Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone?  Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent?  If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!  Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets. (Matthew 7:7-12)

This last verse is the famous “golden rule.” Even more simply put, treat others as you want to be treated. God also tells us here that He will answer our prayers and give good gifts to us, His children. Do these gifts always come as we expect and when we expect them? No, they don’t. But, they do come to us in God’s timing. His timing is the right time. We often will see this when we look back and re-evaluate various situations in our lives. As Romans 8:28 says, “All things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”

"Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it.  Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.   (Matthew 7:13-14)

Think how many religions there are in the world today. There are literally hundreds, if not thousands. How many are leading people to heaven? One! The Christian religion. The gate is narrow and the path is straightforward, yet if one does not follow the path, he will get lost forever. This path leads directly to Jesus Christ… then on to heaven when the end of our earthly sojourn comes.

At times this “narrow gate” and “difficult way” is indeed a challenge. But, the reward at the end is so incredibly phenomenal, that anything that is required to stay on course, including even death, is truly worth it. In fact, many have died because of being on this pathway.

"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.  You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles?  Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.  A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit.  Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.  Therefore, by their fruits you will know them.  "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.  Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?'  And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'   (Matthew 7:15-23)

God tells us that just because someone professes to follow Him, it may not actually be the case. Before following a minister, make sure his life bears fruit demonstrating that he is a Christian … to be a Christian not only is proper profession of faith appropriate but proper actions are absolutely required. There are many false prophets today… as there were in New Testament times. Remember, and it cannot be put any better, “by their fruits you shall know them.”

Unfortunately, there are so many people who follow charismatic men and woman… simply because they have a “way with words.” It is so sad that **so many people are being hoodwinked today because** **they are just too lazy to read and study the Bible**. They do not know the Truth (as they do not know the Bible) and therefore become slaves to the wiles of these slimy preachers and teachers… many times being led down the path to perdition.

"Therefore, whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.  But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand:  and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall."  And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. (Matt 7:24-29)

Jesus concludes by telling us that if we will not only hear His words, but also ***do them,*** we will be living a life that is founded on Him… a life that will be rock solid. Not only will it be a life worth living on this earth, but it will enable us to continue to live it for eternity in heaven! If we ignore His instructions, it would be better if we had never been born… that is my interpretation of Jesus’ words. To repeat my previous admonition, in order to ‘hear’ the words of Jesus, we must read the Word of Jesus. Then we will become wise and will know how to live. We will not fall victim to false doctrines. We then simply must work to obey His Word… with the help of the Holy Spirit. This concluded the famous Sermon on the Mount.

**Back to Capernaum: (summer A.D. 28)**

After this sermon, Jesus left the hillside and headed back to Capernaum. Upon arriving in Capernaum, Jesus was accosted by some elders of the Jews. They said that they were sent by a very deserving centurion to ask Jesus to heal this centurion’s trusted servant who was at “death’s door.” In fact, this centurion loved Israel and had even built them a synagogue. Jesus went with them to this man’s house. While they were on the way, they were met by friends of the centurion who delivered this message,

"Lord, do not trouble Yourself, for I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof. Therefore, I did not even think myself worthy to come to You. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man placed under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes; and to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.” When Jesus heard these things, He marveled at him, and turned around and said to the crowd that followed Him, "I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!"  And those who were sent, returning to the house, found the servant well who had been sick. (Luke 7:6-10)

Jesus was impressed by the great showing of faith. This centurion believed that Jesus had the power to heal even from a great distance and let this be known. Jesus was always very impressed with a demonstration of faith… we will see this as His ministry continues. Of course, this is a great lesson to us today.

**From Capernaum to Nain:**

The following day, Jesus headed south approximately twenty miles to another nearby town, Nain. Many of His disciples accompanied Him as well as a large crowd. Just as He was about to enter through the gate of Nain, a young man was being carried past Him… dead. The weeping mother and a large crowd of friends were following. Jesus had compassion on her and said to the grieving mother, "Do not weep."  Then He came and touched the open coffin, and those who carried him stood still. And He said, "Young man, I say to you, arise." So, he who was dead sat up and began to speak. And He presented him to his mother. Then fear came upon all, and they glorified God, saying, "A great prophet has risen up among us"; and, "God has visited His people."  And this report about Him went throughout all Judea and all the surrounding region. (Luke 7:14-17)

Following this incredible miracle, Jesus was asked to dine in the house of a Pharisee. He accepted this invitation, although He knew that the Pharisees had very many doubts about Him. After sitting down to eat, there appeared a woman from the city who was a known sinner. She wanted to see and be near this Man, Jesus. She was allowed into the house and walked over to Jesus, slowly and reverently carrying an alabaster flask of fragrant oil. She was weeping as she approached. Then she kneeled down and began to wash His feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head; and she kissed His feet and anointed them with the fragrant oil. (Luke 7:38)

The Pharisee, named Simon mumbled under his breath that if Jesus were really a prophet of God He would know what manner of woman this was… and He wouldn’t be letting her be wasting such expensive perfume on Him in any event. Jesus, of course, knew what that man was thinking and taught him a little lesson with a parable…

"Simon, I have something to say to you." So, he said, "Teacher, say it."  "There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more?"  Simon answered and said, "I suppose the one whom he forgave more." And He said to him, "You have rightly judged."  Then He turned to the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head.  You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in.  You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil.  Therefore, I say to you, her sins, whichare many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little."  Then He said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."  And those who sat at the table with Him began to say to themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?"  Then He said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you. Go in peace." (Luke 7:40-50)

Here Jesus once again forgives a person’s sins! This, of course, can only be done by God. Jesus is making it known that He is God. Of course, this will eventually land Him in serious trouble.

Jesus will forgive anyone sins, no matter how terrible those sins. He even points out, those that are forgiven most, may well be the people who are most appreciative. Whether a person is a murderer or a petty thief and liar, all need to have their sins forgiven. There is only one mechanism by which the sins of man can be forgiven. By trusting in the finished work of Jesus. He shed His blood for all the world on the cross. Jesus died and paid the penalty for all of our sins, whether they be heinous or maybe a little less egregious… they are all ‘black’ in the sight of God. Note those last two lines by Jesus to the woman… He forgave her sins. Again, this is tantamount to Jesus telling everyone within hearing distance that He is God. Second, He notes what it was that saved her… her ***faith***, certainly not her works!

**From Nain to the second Galilean preaching tour: (summer/autumn A.D. 28)**

Now it came to pass, afterward, that He went through every city and village, preaching and bringing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with Him, and certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities--Mary called Magdalene, out of whom had come seven demons, and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others who provided for Him from their substance. And when a great multitude had gathered, and they had come to Him from every city, He spoke by a parable: (Luke 8:1-4)

Soon thereafter, Jesus began his second preaching tour of the Galilee region. He went to every city and village, preaching, healing and bringing the glad tiding of the kingdom of God. Many people followed Him, including His twelve disciples as well as Mary Magdalene (whom He had cast out seven demons), and Joanna, the wife of Herod’s steward. On an early stop he spoke to them in His familiar style by using a parable:

 "A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trampled down, and the birds of the air devoured it.  Some fell on rock; and as soon as it sprang up, it withered away because it lacked moisture.  And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up with it and choked it.  But others fell on good ground, sprang up, and yielded a crop a hundredfold." When He had said these things He cried, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"  Then His disciples asked Him, saying, "What does this parable mean?"  And He said, "To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest it is given in parables, that *'Seeing they may not see,* *and hearing they may not understand.'* And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: *'Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, and seeing you will see and not perceive;* *for the hearts of this people have grown dull.* *Their ears are hard of hearing,* *and their eyes they have closed,* *lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears,* *lest they should understand with their hearts and turn,* *so that I should* *heal them.'* (Isaiah 6:9-10) "But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it*.*

"Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God.  Those by the wayside are the ones who hear; then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.  But the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away.  Now the ones that fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity.  But **the ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience**.  (Luke 8:5-15)

Jesus explained why he often spoke in parables. He certainly wanted to get His teachings across to those who wanted to hear His Word. Yet, He also did not want to “cast His pearls to the swine,” so to speak. In order to be sure that His disciples did understand His teaching, Jesus explained His parable clearly to them. The bottom line relates to how a person receives the Word of God. There are many who hear and/or read the Bible… but only those who hear this Word with the right, “noble and good heart” will keep the Word and bear fruit. Jesus continued…

"No one, when he has lit a lamp, covers it with a vessel or puts it under a bed, but sets it on a lampstand, that those who enter may see the light.  For nothing is secret that will not be revealed, nor anything hidden that will not be known and come to light.  Therefore, take heed how you hear. *For whoever has, to him more will be given; and whoever does not have, even what he seems to have will be taken from him*." (Luke 8:16-18) (Matthew 13:14-17)

Here Jesus tells the people that He certainly wants His message to be seen and understood. All will be revealed. The key is that the seeker of the Truth, that is the seeker of Jesus, must be looking and listening with that “noble and good heart” of which Jesus speaks.

At one of His stops, Jesus once again was seen casting out demons. Some of His own family and friends attempted to stop Him from continuing these activities. They thought that He was “out of His mind” (Mark 3:11b) Worse than that was the fact that certain scribes from Jerusalem had come up to the area and were continuing to attack Jesus. Some yelled out that He had an unclean spirit Himself! They said… "He has Beelzebub," and, "By the ruler of the demons He casts out demons." So, He called them to Himself and said to them in parables: "How can Satan cast out Satan?  If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.  And if a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand.  And if Satan has risen up against himself, and is divided, he cannot stand, but has an end.  No one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. And then he will plunder his house.  "Assuredly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they may utter; but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness but is subject to eternal condemnation." (Mark 3:22-29)

His mother and brothers were still trying to get Him to come back to Nazareth. They wanted Him to stop with His controversial teaching, preaching and healing ministry. They simply thought that He had lost control of His senses and needed help. His marked tendency to rile up the Pharisees and scribes was not good for the family either, to say the least!

The folks who were with Jesus told Him that His mom and brothers were waiting for Him and really wanted to see Him. Jesus knew what they were there for and answered…

"Who is My mother, or My brothers?"  And He looked around in a circle at those who sat about Him, and said, "Here are My mother and My brothers!  For whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother." (Mark 3:33-35)

Anyone who follows Jesus is His brother or sister… or mother. We all are kin to Jesus by our acceptance of Him and what He has done for us. On the other hand, even Jesus’ own “family” would *not* be His brother, sister or mother if they did not accept Him as the Messiah and Savior. We are related to Jesus by a conscious decision on our part to accept Him as our Lord and Savior.

On the same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the sea. And great multitudes were gathered together to Him, so that He got into a boat and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore.  Then He spoke many things to them in parables, saying: (Matthew 13:1-3)

Jesus got into a boat on the northwestern side of the Sea of Galilee and started to preach…

"The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way.  But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. So, the servants of the owner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?'  He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' The servants said to him, 'Do you want us then to go and gather them up?'  But he said, 'No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them.  Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, ‘First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.’”

(Matthew 13:24-30)

In those days, there was a type of weed (called darnel) that was sometimes sown into a man’s wheat field by an enemy as a way of destroying the harvest. Darnel was very difficult to distinguish from wheat until near harvest time. This parable pictures Satan’s efforts to cloud the church by mixing his “children” with Christians. Jesus is telling the church that this type of thing will happen. Don’t be *overly* concerned about this. Care should be used so that no one becomes too judgmental. Of course, blatant heretical behavior needs to be addressed. The point Jesus is making in this parable is that He will take care of ferreting out the wheat from the tares at the actual harvest time. His decision is the only one that counts! Actually, He will explain this parable a little later to His disciples (see below).

Another parable He put forth to them, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches."   (Matthew 13:31-32)

Jesus did not interpret this parable Himself, but many believe that He is noting that although Christendom was just starting at that time, it would eventually grow to include millions, if not billions of people. This is just one of several times that He uses the tiny mustard seed to make a point. Although the seed itself is small, it is able to grow into a productive tree with the proper soil and cultivation. There is controversy as to what He suggests by the birds… they may be analogous to the tares in the previous parable… or they may just reference that there will be room for many, many people to follow Christ - Jews and Gentiles alike.

Another parable He spoke to them: "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened." (Matthew 13:33)

Although leaven usually stands for evil in the Bible, here many expositors believe that in this case Jesus simply uses it to note that Christianity will continue to grow (rise) as time progresses.

All these things Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables; and without a parable He did not speak to them, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: *"I will open My mouth in parables;* *I will utter things kept secret from the foundation of the world."*  (Psalms 78:2) Then Jesus sent the multitude away and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field." He answered and said to them: "He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man.  The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one*.* The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels.  Therefore, as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age.  The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.  **Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.** He who has ears to hear, let him hear!  "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.   (Matthew 13:34-44)

Christ came to redeem Israel. He gave up His position in heaven to come to earth to accomplish this goal… as well as to save the rest of the world. He found that the Jewish people, in general, were not ready to accept Him on that first visit. They will be on His next.

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it. (Matthew 13:45-46)

Just remember what it cost Jesus to purchase our salvation! The Kingdom of heaven is available to every believer. Jesus compared it to a hidden treasure and to a very expensive, beautiful pearl. Everyone that knew what it was like would be willing to give everything and anything to obtain it… “all that he had.” Unfortunately, there are too many people who do not recognize what they are giving up by not turning and trusting their eternity to Jesus Christ.

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind, which, when it was full, they drew to shore; and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels but threw the bad away. So, it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth." (Matthew 13:47-50)

Until Jesus comes the second time to set up His kingdom on earth, good and evil will co-exit. This co-existence will even take place within “organized” Christianity… certainly not all people who attend church and claim to be Christians will enter into heaven. With His second advent, He will use angels to separate the righteous from the un-saved and set up His millennial kingdom.

Jesus said to them, "Have you understood all these things?" They said to Him, "Yes, Lord."  Then He said to them, "Therefore, every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old." (Matthew 13:51-52)

Jesus had instructed his disciples concerning things old and new. Although they said that they understood Him, this was only partially true. Many more lessons were to be taught and learned in the months and years to come.

**Crossing into the country of the Gerasenes: (autumn A.D. 28)**

Later that evening,with great multitudes about Him, Jesus gave a command to his disciples to depart to the other side of the Sea of Galilee – the southeastern side.  Now when He got into a boat, His disciples followed Him.  And suddenly a great tempest arose on the sea, so that the boat was covered with the waves. But He was asleep.  Then His disciples came to Him and awoke Him, saying, "Lord, save us! We are perishing!"  But He said to them, "Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?" Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. So, the men marveled, saying, "Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?" (Matthew 8:23-27)

Jesus had now added another type of miracle to His resume… His control over nature itself. He showed some displeasure over their lack of faith. Given all that He had just recently shown them of His power, they should not have been concerned over this storm… they should have known that they were in the safest place that any person could find themselves… right next to Jesus. Notice as these ministry years go by, just how often Jesus is impressed by those who demonstrate their faith in Him and the times that He is chagrined with those who show a lack of faith. That must still be true today!

When He had come to the other side, to the country of the Gergesenes, there met Him two demon-possessed men*,* coming out of the tombs, exceedingly fierce, so that no one could pass that way.  And suddenly they cried out, saying, "What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?" Now a good way off from them there was a herd of many swine feeding. So, the demons begged Him, saying, "If You cast us out, permit us to go away into the herd of swine." And He said to them, "Go." So, when they had come out, they went into the herd of swine. And suddenly the whole herd of swine ran violently down the steep place into the sea and perished in the water.  Then those who kept them fled; and they went away into the city and told everything, including what had happened to the demon-possessed men*.* And behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus. And when they saw Him, they begged Him to depart from their region. (Matt 8:28-34)

The area of the Gergesenes was on the eastern shores of the Sea of Galilee. This was a predominately Gentile town where many pigs were raised to sell to peoples in the surrounding region, the Decapolis (to Gentiles, of course). Jesus had saved this man with a wonderful miracle. The townspeople were more concerned about the economic loss of the pigs. They told Jesus to keep on walking. Although the cured man wants to go with Jesus, Jesus tells him to go back and be a witness for Jesus with his family and friends.

"Go home to your friends and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you."  And he departed and began to proclaim in Decapolis all that Jesus had done for him; and all marveled. (Mark 5:19-20)

Since this was a Gentile area, Jesus did not give His typical reply to the healed man to remain silent. Remember, He was not ready to die yet and He had to be careful what was said about Him when He was around the Pharisees – which was not the case here.

**Back to Capernaum: (autumn A.D. 28)**

After casting out the demons from this poor man, Jesus decided it was time to return to Capernaum. He got on the boat and once again crossed the waters of Galilee. While walking north from where they docked the boat, one of the rulers of the local synagogue came, Jairus by name. And when he saw Him, he fell at His feet and begged Him earnestly, saying, "My little daughter lies at the point of death. Come and lay Your hands on her, that she may be healed, and she will live." So, Jesus went with him, and a great multitude followed Him and thronged Him.

While walking briskly to the home of Jairus, a certain woman who had an incurable gynecological problem for twelve years, approached Jesus from behind. She was desperate and was sure that if she could only touch Him that she would be healed. She was able to maneuver into position and just barely reach out and touch His garment. Immediately the fountain of her blood was dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of the affliction.  And Jesus, immediately knowing in Himself that power had gone out of Him, turned around in the crowd and said, "Who touched My clothes?"  But His disciples said to Him, "You see the multitude thronging You, and You say, Who touched Me?'"  And He looked around to see her who had done this thing.  But the woman, fearing and trembling, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell down before Him and told Him the whole truth.  And He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace, and be healed of your affliction." (Mark 5:21-34)

It is interesting that Jesus could “feel” the power rushing out of Him as he supernaturally healed this woman. The woman’s pure, great faith is what healed her. That is what will heal us and save us… pure faith – as much as God will give us and as much as we will give back to Him.

While He was still speaking, some came from the ruler of the synagogue's house who said, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?"  As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, He said to the ruler of the synagogue, "Do not be afraid; only believe."  And He permitted no one to follow Him except Peter, James, and John the brother of James.  Then He came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue and saw a tumult and those who wept and wailed loudly.  When He came in, He said to them, "Why make this commotion and weep? The child is not dead, but sleeping."  And they ridiculed Him. But when He had put them all outside, He took the father and the mother of the child, and those who were with Him, and entered where the child was lying.  Then He took the child by the hand, and said to her, "Talitha, cumi," which is translated, "Little girl, I say to you, arise."  Immediately the girl arose and walked, for she was twelve years of age. And they were overcome with great amazement.  But He commanded them strictly that no one should know it and said that something should be given her to eat. (Mark 5:35-43)

The delay necessitated in the healing of the woman looked as if it cost the little girl her life. But, of course, with Jesus and all of His omnipotent power, this was not the case. Jesus talked to the ruler to make two points, important for all of us. First was for all people to not be afraid in the difficult, even the seemingly impossible, times of our lives, as long as we have Jesus on our side. [By the way, make Him Lord of your life and follow Him to accomplish this]. Second, have faith, do not waiver. God can do all things. The ruler did keep the faith and his little child was raised from the dead! As Jesus was back on Israeli turf, He asked for all those people who witnessed this miracle to keep quiet. It was not yet time for His sacrificial death.

As Jesus continued on, He was met by two blind men who asked Him, the Son of David, to please have mercy on them and give them back their sight. Jesus replied, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" They said to Him, "Yes, Lord."  Then He touched their eyes, saying, "According to your faith let it be to you."  And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly warned them, saying, "See that no one knows it*."*  (Matt 9:28-30)

As they went out, behold, they brought to Him a man, mute and demon-possessed.  And when the demon was cast out, the mute spoke. And the multitudes marveled, saying, "It was never seen like this in Israel!"  But the Pharisees said, "He casts out demons by the ruler of the demons." (Matt 9:32-34)

The Pharisees continued to build their case against Jesus. Once again, they accused Him of demonic activity and heresy. Eventually, they were going to trap Him and stop His ministry. It was just not quite the time… yet. For one thing, Jesus had too many common folks who adored Him.

While Jesus was carrying out His second summer and autumn of ministry around the Sea of Galilee, John the Baptist was suffering in Herod’s prison.  Although John was put on this earth to herald the coming of his cousin, Jesus, even he was, at times, in need of a faith building experience. Therefore, when John had heard in prison about the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples and said to Him, "Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?"  Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and tell John the things which you hear and see:  The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them.  And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me."  Was Jesus upset at John that he would inquire of Him concerning these things? No! Jesus then had these wonderful words to say about His cousin, John: As they departed, Jesus began to say to the multitudes concerning John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind?  But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Indeed, those who wear soft clothing are in kings' houses.  But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet.  For this is he of whom it is written: *'Behold, I send My messenger before Your face,* *who will prepare Your way before You.'* (Malachi 3:1) "Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.  And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force.  For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come.

Interestingly, Jesus says that if the people of that time would receive the message that John and Jesus were delivering, then John would be the “Elijah” that was prophesized in the Old Testament. Of course, the majority of people rejected Jesus in that time, so it would have to wait until the completion of the “time of the Gentiles” before Elijah would make his appearance.

He who has ears to hear, let him hear!  But to what shall I liken this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to their companions and saying: 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; We sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.’  For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.'  The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' But wisdom is justified by her children." (Matt 11:1-19)

Neither John nor Jesus were accepted by the masses when all was said and done in the days in which they came. What does that say about the wisdom of the people in that day? Jesus said, their wisdom can be seen by the result of their actions… they were soon to reject and kill Jesus! On the other hand, the wisdom of John and Jesus would be justified by their bringing into the Kingdom of heaven millions of people!

**From Capernaum to Jerusalem**: **(Feast of Tabernacles - autumn A.D. 28)**

After this encounter, Jesus went down to Jerusalem for a feast of the Jews. When he came through to the pool of Bethsaida, he came upon an invalid. Many sick folks were lying in the pool waiting for an angel to come and stir up the waters. This apparently resulted in some gaining a healing from their infirmity. The invalid told Jesus that he could not make it into the pool. Jesus said to him, "Do you want to be made well?"  The sick man answered Him, "Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; but while I am coming, another steps down before me."  Jesus said to him, "Rise, take up your bed and walk."  And immediately the man was made well, took up his bed, and walked. And that day was the Sabbath. (John 5:6-9)

Instead of the Jews being ecstatic about the curing of this man (who had been an invalid for thirty-eight years), they were only concerned that man would dare to “work” (by carrying his bed) on the Sabbath. He was too happy to spend much time arguing with these boneheads and therefore he just told them how Jesus had simply told him to…

'Take up your bed and walk.'"  Then they asked him, "Who is the Man who said to you, 'Take up your bed and walk'?"  But the one who was healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, a multitude being in that place.  Afterward Jesus found him in the temple, and said to him, "See, you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you."  The man departed and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well. (John 5:10-15)

So now the Pharisees learned the identity of the Sabbath healer… their nemesis, Jesus. They were not surprised. The Pharisees sought Jesus out to reprimand Him once again for His actions… this time the healing on the day of rest, the Sabbath. Jesus had the chance then to do a little teaching:

"My Father has been working until now, and I have been working." This really made the Pharisees mad because now Jesus was saying that He was God Himself, or at least the equivalent! Jesus goes on to confirm this…

"Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner.  For the Father loves the Son and shows Him all things that He Himself does; and He will show Him greater works than these, that you may marvel.  For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them*,* even so **the Son gives life to whom He will**.  For the Father judges no one, but has **committed all judgment to the Son**, that **all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father.** (John 5:17-22)

Jesus was really spelling it out now. He said that He gives life to those He wills, He is the ultimate judge of mankind and He should be honored and treated exactly like God, His Father! Wow! This was heresy to the Pharisees, no doubt! He does not stop there…

He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.  "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life. Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live.  For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man.   (John 5:23-27)

Jesus will judge the quick and the dead. Those who believe in Him, will live… be raised from their graves.

Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth--those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.   (John 5:28-29)

Because of the future sacrifice of Jesus, believers will someday be raised from the dead. This will come at the future Rapture of the Church. At the end of the millennium, unbelievers will be raised to face the Great White Throne Judgment. No one will want to be there!

I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me.  "If I bear witness of Myself, My witness is not true.  There is another who bears witness of Me, and I know that the witness which He witnesses of Me is true. You have sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth.  Yet I do not receive testimony from man, but I say these things that you may be saved.  He was the burning and shining lamp, and you were willing for a time to rejoice in his light.   (John 5:30-35)

Just who or what witness that Jesus is God and our savior? John the Baptist for one…

But I have a greater witness than John's; for the works which the Father has given Me to finish--the very works that I do--bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me.

The miracles that Jesus works, for another…

And the Father Himself, who sent Me, has testified of Me. (John 5:36-37)

Recall that God had sent the Holy Spirit as a dove to demonstrate just who Jesus was at His baptism. A little later in Jesus’ ministry, God will verbally confirm Jesus as His Son again.

You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form. But you do not have His word abiding in you, because whom He sent, Him you do not believe.  You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.   (John 5:37-39)

And, very importantly, God’s Scriptures witness concerning Jesus… over and over again in the Old Testament, the Messiah is predicted… His coming and many, many detailed descriptions of His life on earth… all fulfilled in Jesus.

But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.  I do not receive honor from men.  But I know you, that you do not have the love of God in you.  I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, him you will receive.  How can you believe, who receive honor from one another, and do not seek the honor that comes from the only God?  Do not think that I shall accuse you to the Father; there is one who accuses you--Moses, in whom you trust.  For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me.  But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?" (John 5:40-47)

Sadly, Jesus recognizes their disbelief. He tells them that they do not have the love of God in them. He comes in the Father’s name, yet they rejected Him. Others will come later, false prophets, yet, they will be accepted by many. If these people only would use their God given intelligence and study the Word given to them by God through Moses, they would surely see that Jesus was the promised Messiah. But, they would not!

After this confrontation, Jesus headed back up north. He decided to go back to His old home town to see if He might get a better reception than Had the first time back there since the start of His ministry. He almost got killed that time.

**A quick trip to Nazareth:**

Now it came to pass, when Jesus had finished these parables, that He departed from there.  And when He had come to His own country, He taught them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished and said, "Where did this Man get this wisdom and these mighty works?  Is this not the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brothers James, Joses, Simon, and Judas?  And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this Man get all these things?" So, they were offended at Him. But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his own country and in his own house."  Now He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief. (Matthew 13:53-58)

It was another sad outcome when He tried coming back to His old hometown, Nazareth. Their familiarity with the boy Jesus made it too difficult for them to believe that He was in fact, God! Jesus understood this, but it was still a sad situation.

**His third Galilean Preaching Tour: (winter A.D. 28-29)**

The sending out of His disciples:

Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.  But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few.  Therefore, pray the **Lord of the harvest** to send out laborers into His harvest." (Matthew 9:35-38)

Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases. Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus; Simon the Cananite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him. And He said to them, "Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans.  But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.  (Matthew 10:2-6)

At this time, Jesus was still giving the tribes of Israel the opportunity to accept Him as their Messiah. Soon, the emphasis would shift away from Israel to the Gentiles, although all people are always welcome into the family of God. Jesus continued to tell these special friends and disciples those things He wanted them to know as they went out to preach and teach His Word. He gives them their “marching orders”…

And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.'  Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give. Provide neither gold nor silver nor copper in your money belts, nor bag for your journey, nor two tunics, nor sandals, nor staffs; for a worker is worthy of his food.  Now whatever city or town you enter, inquire who in it is worthy, and stay there till you go out.  And when you go into a household, greet it.  If the household is worthy, let your peace come upon it. But if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you.  **And whoever will not receive you nor hear your words, when you depart from that house or city, shake off the dust from your feet.**  Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city! (Matthew 10:7-15)

It is interesting to see what Jesus expected from His disciples and His followers. He expected His disciples to go and preach and teach His word and heal the sick through the power of God. He expected those that were reached by His Word to provide for His disciples, food and lodging. For those who rejected Jesus by rejecting His disciples, He told them to leave them to themselves… they had their chance and rejected Jesus.

We are never told to beg for others to believe or anything even close. We as Christians have the best news possible. Only a prideful fool, sadly, would reject this news… and that is not our problem… unless we have a special love for them… then, of course, that will affect us dearly.

"Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore, be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.  But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to councils and scourge you in their synagogues.  You will be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles.  But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you. (Matthew 10:16-20)

Jesus tells the disciples that times will get tough, no doubt. He councils them to be on their guard at all times, yet be kind to those they meet. They will have many a trial and at times they will fear for their safety, even their lives. Jesus promises to help them with the words to say when they find themselves in these precarious circumstances.

Now brother will deliver up brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death.  And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But **he who endures to the end will be saved**.  When they persecute you in this city, flee to another. For assuredly, I say to you, you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes.  A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master.  It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more will they call those of his household!  Therefore, do not fear them. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed and hidden that will not be known. (Matthew 10:21-26)

Jesus realizes that there will be very difficult and dangerous times as they spread the gospel throughout Israel, and later the world. Yet, those that endure to the end of their lives will certainly be saved for an eternity in heaven. They cannot expect to escape from those problems that He himself had faced and will face in the future. After all, they were teaching and preaching the same Word of God… the same gospel.

"Whatever I tell you in the dark, speak in the light; and what you hear in the ear, preach on the housetops.  And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.  Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will.  But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.  Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.  **Therefore, whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven.  But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven**.” (Matthew 10:27-33)

Next Jesus reminds His disciples that they need fear no one other than God. God is the only individual in the universe that has the power to affect their eternal soul. Therefore, just do what they know is right and let God take care of them as He has promised to do. Confess Jesus before men and Jesus will confess them before His Father God in heaven. Be very careful never to do the opposite.

"Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword.  For I have come to *'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law';* and *'a man's enemies will be those of his own household.'* (Micah 7:6) He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.  And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.  He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.  "He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me.  He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward. And he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward.  And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward." (Matt 10:34-42)

Jesus finishes this discourse by telling the men that everyone really needs to realize just what is involved in being His disciple… it is critical to know that Jesus expects our full allegiance. We need to love and care for Him more than anyone in the world, our mother, father, sister, brother, child, wife, etc. No one can be first in our lives, except Jesus. We need to take up our cross every morning and follow Him. What is important is what we do for Jesus every day… not what we do to seemingly get ahead in this world. Lastly, all followers of Christ should be helpful to one another in every way possible.

 Now it came to pass, when Jesus finished commanding His twelve disciples, that He departed from there to teach and to preach in their cities. (Matt 11:1)

**John the Baptist: (Spring A.D. 29)**

As you recall, John the Baptist was in prison for having spoken the truth about the incestuous relationship between Herod and his brother’s wife, Herodias. Herod had allowed John to live due to his great following among the masses. Unfortunately for John, Herodias used her influence with Herod to get John be-headed.

When Herod's birthday was celebrated, the daughter of Herodias danced before them and pleased Herod.  Therefore, he promised with an oath to give her whatever she might ask.  So, she, having been prompted by her mother, said, "Give me John the Baptist's head here on a platter."  And the king was sorry; nevertheless, because of the oaths and because of those who sat with him, he commanded it to be given to her*.*  So, he sent and had John beheaded in prison.  And his head was brought on a platter and given to the girl, and she brought it to her mother. Then his disciples came and took away the body and buried it and went and told Jesus.  When Jesus heard it, He departed from there by boat to a deserted place by Himself. But when the multitudes heard it, they followed Him on foot from the cities. (Matt 14:1-13)

This obviously was a very sad time for Jesus and His followers. He went out to speak with His Father as He did so very often. The loss of His outstanding cousin, John, and the horrible method of his execution, had to be very difficult for Jesus. Times like these always are best spent with God… for Jesus and for everyone else going through difficult times.

**To a wilderness near Bethsaida: (Spring A.D. 29)**

A few weeks later, the disciples all returned from their first preaching and healing mission accomplished without Jesus being right there with them. They had worked very hard and were tired. Jesus decided it would be a good idea to give all involved a rest. Therefore, He got them all together on a boat and went across the Sea of Galilee to a wilderness area… near Bethsaida (on the northern shore). Unfortunately for these tired men, the word had leaked out as to where they were headed. Jesus had many people follow Him at that time. Many folks hurried to the planned rendezvous spot so that by the time Jesus had sailed across the lake and walked to the wilderness spot, thousands of people were already there! He had planned a respite for His disciples, but instead had compassion on the crowd and began to minister to them. He taught them and healed many too.

When it was evening, His disciples came to Him, saying, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is already late. Send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves food."  But Jesus said to them, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat."  And they said to Him, "We have here only five loaves and two fish."  He said, "Bring them here to Me."  Then He commanded the multitudes to sit down on the grass. And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitudes.  So, they all ate and were filled, and they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments that remained.  Now those who had eaten were about ***five thousand men, besides women and children.*** (Matthew14:15-21)

This was one of two times that Jesus fed thousands of people with only a small amount of food. Everyone was truly amazed.

Then those men, when they had seen the sign that Jesus did, said, "This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world."  Therefore, when Jesus perceived that they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him king, He decided to go into the nearby mountains to pray. (John 6:14-15)

The Prophet these men were alluding to was that individual that Moses prophesied would someday come and, in many ways, be a “Prophet like unto Moses.” (Deut 18:15-18) Now, that time had come, and at least some of the Jews were recognizing who Jesus really was. When everyone had finished eating and Jesus had finished ministering, He made the multitudes go to their homes and asked the disciples to head out to sea while He went up into the mountain. After praying for several hours, Jesus headed back out toward the water. It was a very blustery night. The winds were blowing and the sea was tossed to and fro. Then the disciples looked out and thought they saw a man walking on the water!

"It is a ghost!" And they cried out for fear.  But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid."  And Peter answered Him and said, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water."  So, He said, "Come." And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus.  But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me!"  And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"  And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased.  Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, "Truly You are the Son of God." (Matt 14:26-33)

Wow! Here Jesus continued to show the disciples His power and proof that He was indeed God. These miracles that show Him suspending the Laws of Nature show that He has power over these Laws. Only God can do something like this. Peter was able to do this feat also as long as he kept his eyes on Jesus. When he began to lose faith, he was sunk, literally and figuratively. Of course, Jesus came to the rescue, but was saddened that his disciple had let fear effect his faith. That is so true for all of us, I believe.

**It is off to Gennesaret:**

The boat came to shore a little while later near the land of Gennesaret.  And when the men of that place recognized Him, they sent out into all that surrounding region, brought to Him all who were sick, and begged Him that they might only touch the hem of His garment. And as many as touched it were made perfectly well. (Matthew 14:34-36)

So, Jesus and the disciples continued on the lake southwest until they landed on the western shore in a region called Gennesaret. They all got out and began ministering again. The power of Jesus even emanated from his clothing while He walked through the countryside. How amazing it would have been to be there in those days.

**At this point in time, Jesus was nearing the end of His second year of ministry.**

**From Gennesaret to Capernaum: (late spring A.D. 29)**

The following day, Jesus went to Capernaum. Many people were still in the area that had witnessed the previous day’s miracle. They saw Jesus as He came into the city and a crowd began to gather around Him. One or two of them asked how and when He got there. Others were more interested in the miracle of all the food he had created the day before. Jesus recognized that they had missed the important thing… which was his message. So, He answered that day while in the synagogue…

"Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled.  Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him."  Then they said to Him, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?"   (John 6:26-29)

Still missing the point, they ask Jesus how they can perform these miracles themselves.

Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent."  Therefore, they said to Him, "What sign will You perform then, that we may see it and believe You? What work will You do?  Our fathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written, *'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'”* (Exodus 16:4)  (John 6:29-31)

Jesus tells them that these miracles that He is performing are primarily to prove to them that He is from God… and is, in fact, God’s Son. They are not just being done for their entertainment. Surely, it is grand that He is able to combine proving just who He is with helping others, but all of the miracles are produced for Godly reasons. Jesus then reminds them that God gave them the manna, not Moses. Moses was the vehicle used by God. Then Jesus gives them a very important lesson… God now has sent something, someone, far more important down from heaven than manna, a form of bread. God has now sent the **“Bread of Life**” from heaven… Jesus Christ, the Messiah! The Messiah is the ‘true bread from heaven.’ And what does He give? **Life to the world**!

Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven.  For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

Then they said to Him, "Lord, give us this bread always."  And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.  But I said to you that you have seen Me and yet do not believe.  All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.  For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.   (John 6:32-38)

Here Jesus tells the crowd that He is sent by His Father, God, to do His will only. If anyone will turn to Jesus, that person will never want for anything important ever again. Jesus also says that He will never cast anyone away once they come to Him.

This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing but should raise it up at the last day.  And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day."   (John 6:39-40)

Simply put, all who trust their life into the hands of Jesus, will be raised to eternal life in heaven on the last day… Jesus will not lose one soul! This surely is one great verse that strongly supports the view of eternal security… even apparently supporting the view that a person cannot lose their eternal life in heaven due to their *own* decision. Jesus has begun to become bolder in telling the crowds detailed information concerning Himself. He is blatantly telling them that He is God… His Son, but still God as well. This was quite a new concept to the masses. Would they take to it well?

The Jews then complained about Him, because He said, "I am the bread which came down from heaven."  And they said, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it then that He says, 'I have come down from heaven'?" Jesus therefore answered and said to them, "Do not murmur among yourselves.  No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.  It is written in the prophets, *'And they shall all be taught by God.'* (Isaiah 54:13) Therefore, everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me.

(John 6:41-45)

Once again, His station as a youth is brought up as a reason to reject His claims. He was born in Bethlehem and raised in Nazareth… so what is He saying about coming down from heaven?

More information is given by Jesus. Everyone that will come to Jesus will be drawn by the Father. Again, Jesus tells them that if the Father draws them to Him, He will save them and make sure that they are saved for eternity.

Not that anyone has seen the Father, except He who is from God; He has seen the Father.  Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life.  I am the bread of life.  Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness and are dead.  This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die.  I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world."   (John 6:46-51)

Jesus concludes with an anecdote concerning their fathers in the wilderness and their need for daily manna. Then He notes the very important difference between ‘consuming’ the “Bread of Life” and eating the manna… one lasts for a day… the other for eternity! Just as Nicodemus did not understand about being “born again,” this concept seemed to be too deep for the crowd to grasp its full meaning as well. Yet, Jesus goes on and drives home an even more difficult point…

The Jews therefore quarreled among themselves, saying, "How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?"  Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you.  Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.  For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed.  He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him.  As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me.  This is the bread which came down from heaven--not as your fathers ate the manna and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever.”   (John 6:52-58)

Jesus elaborated on His message, but it was still at this time difficult for everyone to understand and even more difficult for many to accept. He was speaking metaphorically, of course, of accepting His upcoming sacrificial death. At that time, Jesus would shed His blood for all mankind and His body (His flesh) would hang on the cross and die. Many people were perplexed that day. Certainly, as time went on, more and more people would come to recognize the true import of Jesus’ preaching on this subject.

Even the disciples were confused, so Jesus spoke to them a little later in more detail…

These things He said in the synagogue as He taught in Capernaum.  Therefore, many of His disciples, when they heard this*,* said, "This is a hard saying; who can understand it?" When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples complained about this, He said to them, "Does this offend you?  What then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where He was before?  It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.  But there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who would betray Him.  And He said, "Therefore, I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father."  From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more.  Then Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you also want to go away?"  But Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.  Also, we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."  Jesus answered them, "Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil?"  He spoke of Judas Iscariot, theson of Simon, for it was he who would betray Him, being one of the twelve. (John 6:59-71)

At this time, Jesus began to separate those followers who were true to His real cause and those who had other, more worldly interests at heart. Several “disciples” decided to leave and go home as they no longer could accept the message. Sure, they liked His amazing ability to perform miracles. They even liked much of His message. Yet, they simply did not want to continue to follow someone that claimed to be God. For one thing, it was dangerous to be a friend of someone like that, for another thing, they seriously doubted Jesus was who He claimed to be. Also, it was becoming apparent that He was not likely to lead them in their hoped-for revolt against their Roman oppressors. Maybe He was not the Messiah after all. Jesus seemed too concerned with their eternal life and not enough concerned about their current life on earth… as subjects of Rome. Certainly, Jesus’ hand-picked twelve disciples had a different opinion. This was expressed by Simon Peter. The scene ended, however, on an ominous note as Jesus told the twelve that one in their midst was a “devil.”

Not long after this time in the synagogue, they came across a few Pharisees up from Jerusalem… as they continued to keep tabs on this potential trouble maker. These Pharisees noticed that the disciples did not go through the typical ceremonial hand washing that was called for according to their laws and traditions. They asked Jesus about this in their usual attempt to catch Him doing something wrong…

"Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?"  He answered and said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: *'This people honors Me with their lips,* *But, their heart is far from Me.*  *And in vain they worship Me,* *Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'*  (Isaiah 29:13) "For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men --the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do."  He said to them, "All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition.  For Moses said, *'Honor your father and your mother';* (Exodus 20:12) and, *'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.'*  (Exodus 21:17) But you say, 'If a man says to his father or mother, "Whatever profit you might have received from me is Corban"--' (that is, a gift to God), then you no longer let him do anything for his father or his mother, making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do."  (Mark 7:5-13)

Jesus pointed out in the above verses that many of the Pharisees had added their own selfish laws to those of Moses to circumvent the major thrust of the real Laws of God. For example, He noted that the practice of “Corban” was often used to justify not giving gifts that should have gone to a person’s needy parents. These items were just stated to be set aside for God… but, instead used by the sinning son or daughter.

When He had called all the multitude to Himself, He said to them, "Hear Me, everyone, and understand: There is nothing that enters a man from outside which can defile him; but the things which come out of him, those are the things that defile a man. If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear!"  When He had entered a house away from the crowd, His disciples asked Him concerning the parable. So, He said to them, "Are you thus without understanding also? Do you not perceive that whatever enters a man from outside cannot defile him, because it does not enter his heart but his stomach, and is eliminated, thus purifying all foods?"  And He said, "What comes out of a man, that defiles a man.  For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness.  All these evil things come from within and defile a man." (Mark 7:14-23)

Jesus shows how revolutionary He was for the times in which He lived. He also, of course, showed everyone just what were the important matters in a person’s life. The Pharisees were incredibly bound up in their traditions and man-made laws that they had been producing for centuries. Jesus pointed out just how hypocritical they were. They were so concerned with people keeping their irrelevant decrees, yet they frequently would sin by breaking the Laws of God! Then Jesus made a specific point concerning the food that a man could eat. He notes that all food that we eat simply goes into our mouth, passes into our stomachs, then out the other end… that is it. No matter what edible food we eat, this should be just fine, not a sin. What is important, morally, is NOT what a man eats, that is, what goes “into him.” The important thing is what comes “out of him”… through his mouth and actions.

**From Capernaum to the Tyre and Sidon region: (summer A.D. 29)**

After this time in Capernaum, Jesus takes a trip west for a little relaxation. He and His disciples journeyed about forty miles northwest to the Mediterranean coast. First they stopped a while in Tyre. Then they journeyed north for about fifteen more miles to the seacoast town of Sidon. There were many people from other nationalities in this area, including some Greeks.

He entered a house for a little quiet time. Naturally, He was noticed by one of the women in the house at the time. She was a Greek. She then came over to Him and asked if He would cure her daughter who apparently had a demon within her. Jesus tried to tell the Greek mother that He was sent at that time to the House of Israel. She did not let that stop her. She begged Him to just give her a little bit of what He had planned for Israel and she would be so grateful. In fact, the two of them engaged in a couple of metaphors…

Jesus had said - "Let the children be filled first, for it is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs."

And she answered and said to Him, "Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs under the table eat from the children's crumbs."

Then Jesus replied… "For this saying go your way; the demon has gone out of your daughter." (Mark 7:27-29)

Jesus was pleased at this Gentile’s woman’s faith and promptly healed her daughter. Always remember, faith pleases God. And remember, “Without faith it is impossible to please God.” (Hebrews 11:6)

**Tyre to Decapolis in Galilee region: (summer A.D. 29)**

Jesus left Tyre to return to His favorite area for preaching, teaching and healing these last couple of years, that is, Galilee. On this particular instance, He journeyed a little further south and east than on some occasions. He preached and healed in the towns located in an area generally referred to as Decapolis. At one point, He came upon a deaf man with a speech impediment. As always was the case in these situations, He healed the man promptly. He put His fingers in the man’s ears and spat onto His hands and touched the man’s tongue resulting in an immediate cure. Jesus told the man to keep quiet about his healing. As often was the case, the excitement overcame the man and he told everyone he saw! Jesus just continued walking and went up onto a hillside at the base of a mountain in Galilee. While there, many hurting people came to Him for healing… and He did not disappoint anyone.

**From Decapolis to Mt. Tabor:**

While on the mountain, the people continued to come to Him for days. At one point, Jesus turned to His disciples and said…

 "I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now continued with Me three days and have nothing to eat. And if I send them away hungry to their own houses, they will faint on the way; for some of them have come from afar."  Then His disciples answered Him, "How can one satisfy these people with bread here in the wilderness?" He asked them, "How many loaves do you have?" And they said, "Seven." So, He commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground. And He took the seven loaves and gave thanks, broke them and gave them to His disciples to set before them; and they set them before the multitude.  They also had a few small fish; and having blessed them, He said to set them also before them.  So, they ate and were filled, and they took up seven large baskets of leftover fragments.  Now those who had eaten were about four thousand. And He sent them away, immediately got into the boat with His disciples, and came to the region of Dalmanutha (near Magdala). (Mark 8:2-10)

This was the second time in the gospels where Jesus is seen multiplying bread and fish supernaturally to feed thousands of people. This was a grand demonstration of His power and His compassion. Remember, Jesus came here to this earth to show us how we should live and He came to die for our sins. He also had to demonstrate that He was the Son of God… and He did this partly via His miraculous works.

**From Mt. Tabor to Magdala: (summer A.D. 29)**

After leaving the crowd on the mountain, Jesus and His disciples were off to Magdala. Once again, Jesus was about to have a confrontation with the Pharisees.

Then the Pharisees came out and began to dispute with Him, seeking from Him a sign from heaven, testing Him.  But He sighed deeply in His spirit, and said,

"Why does this generation seek "When it is evening you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red'; and in the morning, 'It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.' Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times. A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign shall be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah." And He left them and departed. (Matt 16:2-4) (Mark 8:11)

Amazing as it may seem to be, the Pharisees wanted a miracle on demand from Jesus. He was saddened at their attitude and refused to play their game. He did take the time to point out to them that they all made use of obvious signs from heaven relating to the weather but were too dense to check out the blatant signs that He had fulfilled and would continue to fulfill in regards to the signs of the Messiah. They were just too close minded and sinful to see that He was the actual Messiah!

Jesus actually did tell them of one sign that would be fulfilled in the not too distant future… He would be in the belly of the earth as Jonah was in the belly of a great fish for three days.

Interestingly, when it came time to eat, the disciples noted that they had forgotten to bring the bread. They were concerned about this even though Jesus had just demonstrated that He could take care of that problem in a “blink.” Jesus was concerned that they understand the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. Therefore, He said them to…

"Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees." (Matthew 16:6)

Unfortunately, they thought He was talking about actual bread!

And they reasoned among themselves, saying, "It is because we have taken no bread."

Jesus corrected them, reminding them of their recent mountain experience:

But Jesus, being aware of it, said to them, "O you of little faith, why do you reason among yourselves because you have brought no bread?  Do you not yet understand, or remember the five loaves of the five thousand and how many baskets you took up?  Nor the seven loaves of the four thousand and how many large baskets you took up?  How is it you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread?--but to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees."  Then they understood that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees. (Matt 16:7-12)

Finally, they got it! They must notice the hypocrisy of the religious leaders of their day… and not be anything like them! They are not to be concerned with the externals and ceremony… but, what is in a man’s heart.

**A brief stop in Bethsaida:**

 Then He came to Bethsaida; and they brought a blind man to Him and begged Him to touch him.  So, He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the town. And when He had spit on his eyes and put His hands on him, He asked him if he saw anything.  And he looked up and said, "I see men like trees, walking."  Then He put His hands on his eyes again and made him look up. And he was restored and saw everyone clearly.  Then He sent him away to his house, saying, "Neither go into the town, nor tell anyone in the town." (Mark 8:22-26)

**A note on dates given in the text which follows:** At the onset of this biographical outline of the *Life of Christ*, I noted that the exact dates of the events of His life were not known. I also noted that the sequence of the first 2 ½ years of His ministry was generally agreed upon by the majority of commentators. On the other hand, there is a great deal of disagreement on the latter portion of Jesus’ teaching ministry. I have decided to follow the outline of two very respected theologians, Johnston M. Cheney and Dr Harold Wilmington. They believe that they have good internal Biblical evidence that the portion of His ministry that comes after His next trip to Jerusalem, the Feast of Tabernacles, took eighteen months. Others believe that Jesus was able to accomplish all that is described below in just six months. The cities that He visited and the topics that He preached on are not the issue; only the question of how long it took Him to do all of these things is in question. So, while reading the remainder of this treatise, recognize that the dates are somewhat in doubt.

It really is not important to our study to know the exact dates of the ministry of Jesus. On the other hand, it is good to know the basic time-lines of His life in order to get a better appreciation of His life on the earth. The main thing to remember is that His ministry began somewhere around A.D. 26-28 and He was crucified sometime between A.D. 30 and 33.

**Off to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles: (autumn A.D. 29)**

It was the autumn of the year and time for the Feast of Tabernacles. Jesus had spent the summer teaching His disciples and preaching, teaching and healing the people mainly in the Galilean region. Now, many were going to go south to Jerusalem for the big Feast. Josephus, the great first century Jewish historian, noted that this was the favorite feast for many of the Jews. People would build little huts or booths to live in during this time (a week). They also had water-drawing and lamp lighting rites. The brothers of Jesus were about to go to Jerusalem when they came to see Jesus. One of them asked,

"Depart from here and go into Judea, that Your disciples also may see the works that You are doing.  For no one does anything in secret while he himself seeks to be known openly. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world."  For even His brothers did not believe in Him.  Then Jesus said to them, "My time has not yet come, but your time is always ready.  The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it that its works are evil.  You go up to this feast. I am not yet going up to this feast, for My time has not yet fully come."  When He had said these things to them, He remained in Galilee. (John 7:3-9)

The brothers of Jesus suggested that He go and show just what He could do down in Jerusalem. They obviously doubted Him, and probably were just making fun of Him… teasing Him, so to speak. Jesus answered with a civil tone as He told them that when the time was right, He would make things known… but, the time was not right yet. He was telling the world certain things that it needed to hear. We all need to understand that none of us is good enough to make it to heaven due to our own “works”… “we have all sinned and come short.” That is a message that few people want to hear - not today, not two thousand years ago. Jesus had more to say and do before He would be ready to accomplish His major task concerning His mission on earth… to die on the cross for all mankind.

Actually, Jesus did go south to Jerusalem a little later, but He did it quietly, without any fanfare. Many of His admirers were looking for His appearance at this festival. They hoped He would come. His detractors were also awaiting Him… but for opposite reasons, of course. Everyone kept quiet when they were within hearing distance of the Pharisees and other leaders of the Jews. No one wanted to take a chance on irritating these men who were so set in their ways and had a great deal of power.

Then one day Jesus appeared in the Temple and began to teach. As usual, He taught with power, authority and wisdom never before witnessed. The leaders got involved in a discussion as to where this man could have learned so much that He could teach with such knowledge and power. Jesus simply noted that if anyone really knew and followed the scriptures they would recognize that his teaching came from the Father in heaven… not that He was speaking for His own agenda.

Jesus then addressed another issue that was on the minds of His enemies. On His last visit to Jerusalem, Jesus had healed a paralytic man on the Sabbath day. This still bothered many as the Sabbath was supposed to be a day of rest. Jesus then used one of His many outstanding examples from the Old Testament to show these narrow-minded people that even their own heroes of the faith had done a similar thing. Specifically, Moses had set down an edict (from God, of course) that a baby boy need be circumcised on the 8th day after birth – this was true even if it landed on a Sabbath day! Jesus noted:

If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath, so that the law of Moses should not be broken, are you angry with Me because I made a man completely well on the Sabbath? Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment." (John 7:23-24)

As this situation developed, the people began to wonder whether the Pharisees and other Jewish leaders were going to arrest Him. There had been a rumor going around that if Jesus showed His face during this festival that He would be arrested… especially if He began to teach in His inimitable fashion – in which He gave no deference to the religious leaders. In fact, Jesus knew and spoke openly about their hypocrisy. On the other hand, why hadn’t they already arrested Him? What were they waiting for? Were they beginning to believe that Jesus really was the Messiah?

Now some of them from Jerusalem said, "Is this not He whom they seek to kill?  But look! He speaks boldly, and they say nothing to Him. Do the rulers know indeed that this is truly the Christ? (John 7:25-27)

The common folk were still puzzled by the fact that many knew of Jesus from His days as a youth in Nazareth. They thought it just too strange that the Messiah should come from such a situation. Jesus answered these doubts…

"You both know Me, and you know where I am from; and I have not come of Myself, but He who sent Me is true, whom you do not know.  But I know Him, for I am from Him, and He sent Me." (John 7:28-29)

While this was going on, the Pharisees had decided to arrest Him. Along with the chief priests, they arranged to send officers to arrest Jesus. As it was not yet time for this to occur, Jesus avoided this encounter…

"I shall be with you a little while longer, and then I go to Him who sent Me.  You will seek Me and not find Me*,* and where I am you cannot come."  Then the Jews said among themselves, "Where does He intend to go that we shall not find Him? Does He intend to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks and teach the Greeks?  What is this thing that He said, 'You will seek Me and not find Me, and where I am you cannot come'?"  On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.  He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."  (Jesus is the One who provides the living water that provides eternal life to mankind). But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive. (John 7:33-39)

Here is the first place that it is noted in the Gospels that **people will be indwelt with the Holy Spirit** after their conversion to Christianity.

The day was coming to a close. The people were divided in their thinking concerning Jesus. Some were convinced that He was the Messiah, others thought that He was a charlatan, others thought that He was demon possessed. That situation was not very different than we see in the world today. The Pharisees and chief priests were upset that the officers did not arrest Jesus. These officers, in turn, said that they were puzzled by His manner and speech and, frankly, were afraid of just who they might be arresting. Maybe He was the Messiah! The Pharisees and chief priests told them that they were just being deceived like the other rabble. Nicodemus then interjected that they should not be too quick to judge… every man should be given a chance to be heard. Then he was berated for his comment.

"Are you also from Galilee? Search and look, for no prophet has arisen out of Galilee." (John 7:52)

That wrapped up the day at the feast. Everyone headed home… Jesus though, headed to the Mount of Olives to pray and prepare for the next day at the Temple.

At the crack of dawn, Jesus headed to the Temple once again. As was typical, the people began to gather around Him, so after sitting down, He began to teach them. A little later that morning, an adulteress was arrested. Never missing a perceived opportunity to confound Jesus, the Pharisees brought the woman into the Temple and over to where Jesus was teaching. Then they began,

"Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act.  Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?"  This they said, testing Him, that they might have something of which to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, as though He did not hear. So, when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first."  And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground.  Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.  When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, "Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?"  She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more."  Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness but have the light of life." (John 8:4-12)

Jesus had once again foiled those who meant to harm Him. He also showed them and the world that **any sin could and would be forgiven if a person would only turn to Jesus in true repentance and faith**. Never forget that He told the woman to go and sin no more. Is that actually possible? Probably not realistically, but with the help of the Holy Spirit, we should all try to come as close to perfection as we can… remember, our goal should be to be like Jesus.

Jesus did not stop His teaching at that point. Instead, he launched into a very controversial topic: "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness but have the light of life." (John 8:12)

Again, Jesus is really calling attention to Himself. He is telling them that He is the light of the world – the entire world! Just who does He think He is? Any person that would say something like this has to be either a liar, a lunatic, or……… GOD! Jesus surely NEVER had the demeanor of a crazy person, that is for sure. He also had done so many wonderful things over His lifetime and would continue to do many more… He had been the only person that has ever lived a sinless life… and this was attested to by His closest friends. He was not a liar. Not only was His character beyond reproach, but certainly no devious liar would lie all the way to death on a cross! Therefore, Jesus was indeed God! The “argument” just given is a brief synopsis of the beautiful *proof* that C.S. Lewis uses to show that Christ must be God Himself!

The Pharisees therefore said to Him, "You bear witness of Yourself; Your witness is not true."  Jesus answered and said to them, "Even if I bear witness of Myself, My witness is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going; but you do not know where I come from and where I am going.  You judge according to the flesh; I judge no one. And yet if I do judge, My judgment is true; for I am not alone, but I am with the Father who sent Me.  It is also written in your law that the testimony of two men is true.  I am One who bears witness of Myself, and the Father who sent Me bears witness of Me."  Then they said to Him, "Where is Your Father?" Jesus answered, "You know neither Me nor My Father. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also."

(John 8:13-19)

Jesus now is telling them that God Himself has given testimony as to the real identity of Jesus. Of course, this is true. Look at the way God authenticated Jesus by the miracles that Jesus had been performing for the past couple of years. Just as impressively, God had spent over two thousand years prophesying that this one Man, this Messiah, would come at this exact time and place in history. Thirdly, even the day that Jesus began His earthly ministry, God had gloriously authenticated His only begotten Son as the Holy Spirit came to Him (as a dove) and God revealed audibly how pleased He was with His Son, Jesus. Then Jesus ends with another blockbuster statement; He equates Himself with God the Father – to know one was to know the other!

Jesus next tells His accusers that He is going to a place that they cannot come. Instead, He tells them that they will die in their sins. They are from another world than He and He will be going to His world (heaven) and those who do not believe that He (Jesus) is God cannot go with Him into heaven.

"I am going away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin. Where I go you cannot come."  So, the Jews said, "Will He kill Himself, because He says, 'Where I go you cannot come'?"  And He said to them, "You are from beneath; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world.  Therefore, I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins." (John 8:21-24)

“When you lift up the Son of Man (here Jesus foretells of His crucifixion), then you will know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things.  And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him."  As He spoke these words, many believed in Him.  Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "**If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed.  And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.**"  They answered Him, "We are Abraham's descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone. How can you say, 'You will be made free'?"  Jesus answered them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin.  And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever.  Therefore, if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed. (John 8:28-36)

At one point in the not too distant future from this occasion, Jesus would be nailed to the cross. After that event, it would become very apparent to many, since He would rise from the grave, that He was exactly who He claimed to be. Then they would recall these words that He had just been speaking and know that He was sent by God to do His will.

Here Jesus adds some very important words. Just who are the followers (disciples) of Jesus? He tells us how you can know them. Those who truly have turned their lives over to Jesus **abide in His Word**. Just think how many people that you know that claim to be a Christian but do absolutely nothing that would suggest that they are consciously trying to follow Jesus. Jesus says that you will know a Christian by the fact that they abide in His Word. Also, by trusting and following Jesus, we can know the Truth… which will set us free from the bondage of sin! Anyone who lives will sin; we all are slaves to sin until we have these sins washed in the “blood of the Lamb.” Then, and only then, can we be free!

Jesus continues His discussion with the hypocritical Pharisees and scribes. In fact, He gets pretty tough with them as He says that they are seeking to kill Him as His Word is irrelevant to them. He stated that he knows, of course, that they are genetically the descendants of Abraham but they do what they see from their “father”… and that is not Abraham. They then say that Abraham is in fact their father! Jesus says that he is not because if they were really following in that great man of faith’s footsteps, they would do the works of Abraham… not be trying to kill the Messiah! In fact, they were doing the works of another father… Satan. The argument goes back and forth – then they claim God as their Father… Jesus says that is not possible as their actions speak so loudly against this possibility:

"If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me.  Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word.  You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.  But because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me.  Which of you convicts Me of sin? And if I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me?  He who is of God hears God's words; therefore, you do not hear, because you are not of God." (John 8:42-47)

Then the crowd became even more belligerent toward Jesus. They accused Him of being a Samaritan and having a demon. Jesus denies this and notes that He is on the earth to honor His Father, certainly not to seek for any glory Himself. He then repeats His claim that if anyone will only keep His word, and follow Him, then they can have eternal life. That really sets them off again. Then the Jews said to Him, "Now we know that You have a demon! Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and You say, 'If anyone keeps My word he shall never taste death.'  Are You greater than our father Abraham, who is dead? And the prophets are dead. Whom do You make Yourself out to be? (John 8:52-53)

Jesus concluded this exchange by telling them that the Father, His Father, in heaven honors Him. He noted that He knew God and certainly would be liar to deny that point… like they were liars. In fact, Abraham, the one they called their father, rejoiced all those years ago when he walked the earth as he looked forward to the day that Jesus would walk the earth… now, that day had come. Jesus said, “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad." **57** Then the Jews said to Him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?" Jesus said unto them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM."  Then they took up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by. (John 8:56-59)

Of course, these ungodly scribes and Pharisees were continually troubled and baffled by Jesus. They now were very upset at the escalating pronouncements of the Lord as He was getting closer to Calvary. Jesus had just used the inimitable statement of God to Moses… that He was “I AM!” It was clear that He was now blatantly claiming to be God the Son. No more would He temper His words as His time was now nearing. Jesus spoke difficult words to those with unbelieving ears as well. These hypocrites were stumbling over the concepts that Jesus was elucidating. If they listened with an open mind and good understanding of the scriptures there would have been no confusion. Jesus had always existed… therefore, Jesus noted… “before Abraham was, I AM.” Also, Abraham was not dead… he was residing in Paradise awaiting Christ’s sacrificial death at which time he would follow Jesus into heaven. This should not have been difficult to follow for such supposedly learned men!

Shortly after walking away from that encounter, Jesus came upon a blind man… a man that had been blind from birth. This man now spent his time begging daily in order to meet his needs. One of the disciples asked an interesting question,

"Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him.  I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work.  As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." (John 9:2-5)

As it turns out, a common belief in those days and even in the days of the Old Testament (certainly Job is a great example), was that people suffered from infirmities due to some sin in their life… or maybe the sins of their father. Sometimes this was (and is still) true. Just a little reflection will allow any reasonable person to think of a physical malady that would befall a person due to sin in their life (e.g. alcoholism, AIDS, etc.). However, Jesus wanted us to know that certainly not all aliments are due to personal sin. Yes, it is true that if not for the “original sin” there would be no illness in the world, but now illness and death are inevitable because of that terrible first sin by Adam and Eve. Jesus pointed out at least one other reason for a congenital abnormality of this sort… the opportunity for God (Jesus in this case) to show His power and love for mankind. In fact, Christians can and should learn many lessons about life as they deal with the difficulties that inevitably come to everyone sooner or later. Patience, love, endurance, and maybe most importantly, faith, are just a few of the attributes that can be developed during these otherwise painful times.

Returning to our story, Jesus spat on His hand and mixed this fluid with clay. Then He covered the eyes of this blind man with this compound. Jesus told him to go and wash it all off in a pool a little way off… the pool of Siloam. This resulted in his restored sight! His friends and acquaintances were amazed as we would expect. Instead of pure joy, the rigid Pharisees could only see problems with this healing. Why? Well, it came on the Sabbath.

"This Man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath." Others said, "How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?" And there was a division among them. (John 9:16)

As you may recall, this was not the first time that Jesus or His disciples had done a good deed on the Sabbath only to be reprimanded. The Pharisees had an awful obsession concerning doing virtually anything at all on the Sabbath… even healing someone! Some were convinced that Jesus was not from God, possibly even a demon! Yet others believed, correctly, that anyone that could do the miraculous works that Jesus did had to be sent from God. Still others just doubted that this miracle was actually real. These Jews called the parents of the blind man and asked them if their son actually was blind. The answer was a hearty “yes.” They said they did not know of the particulars of how he got his sight back, but he had been blind since birth, but now he sees! They went on to say, please just ask him as he will tell you what happened. They were afraid to answer themselves as the Pharisees had already said that anyone suggesting that Jesus was the Messiah would be banned from the synagogue. So, now the Jews called out the previously blind man to question him once more.

"Give God the glory! We know that this Man is a sinner."  He answered and said, "Whether He is a sinner or not I do not know. **One thing I know: that though I was blind, now I see.**" (John 9:24-25)

The man just told them the bottom line, “I was blind, now I see!” That is the fact. You guys can argue about what or who that makes Jesus. After pressing him for more details, the man finally got irritated and said words like the following: Why do you keep pressing me? I already told you what happened. What is the deal? Do you want to become His disciples? Of course, this just riled up the Pharisees even more.

"You are His disciple, but we are Moses' disciples.  We know that God spoke to Moses; as for this fellow, we do not know where He is from."  The man answered and said to them, "Why, this is a marvelous thing, that you do not know where He is from; yet He has opened my eyes!  Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him.  Since the world began it has been unheard of that anyone opened the eyes of one who was born blind.  If this Man were not from God, He could do nothing."  They answered and said to him, "You were completely born in sins, and are you teaching us?" And they cast him out. (John 9:28-34)

So, the attempt by the previously blind man to teach the Pharisees by simply using common sense resulted in his being cast out of the synagogue and ostracized. The kind of attitude exhibited by the Pharisees was becoming more and more typical as the claim of the actual identity of Jesus (that is, He is God) became ever more apparent. Even today, prideful people often simply do not want to hear the many very logical and powerful arguments that could show them that Jesus is their Savior. This is amazing considering the eternal consequences, but absolutely true!

Jesus heard of the problems that this man had encountered and sought him out to help him once again. When he came upon him He asked:

"Do you believe in the Son of God?"  He answered and said, "Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?"  And Jesus said to him, "You have both seen Him and it is He who is talking with you."  Then he said, "Lord, I believe!" And he worshiped Him.  And Jesus said, "For judgment I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may be made blind."  Then some of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these words, and said to Him, "Are we blind also?"  Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you say, 'We see.' Therefore, your sin remains. (John 9:35-41)

In that last verse Jesus tells the Pharisees that they certainly have enough knowledge to understand the truth concerning Him… that is, that He is the Messiah. The fact that they reject this truth, results in their condemnation. If they actually were totally ignorant of spiritual things, they would have been judged by a different standard. Paul also speaks about this in his Epistle to the Romans.

Jesus continues His teaching by explaining the beautiful analogy that the Bible frequently uses between the shepherd and his sheep and how that relates to The Good Shepherd, Jesus, and His “sheep,” His followers… Christians.

"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.  But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.  To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.  And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers."  Jesus used this illustration, but they did not understand the things which He spoke to them.  Then Jesus said to them again, "Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep.  All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them.  I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.  **The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.  (**John 10:1-10)

Since the beginning of civilization there have been false gods by the hundreds. Satan has used all of his guile to convince millions through the ages of so many lies. Scores of religions have come and gone. Still others exist today, many have been around for millennia. Jesus says that there is only one “door” that will lead to the “Truth.” He is that door. All other methods are false, only thieves and robbers. They steal the actual life from a person… their eternal life in heaven! Jesus says that He has come to give anyone who chooses Him eternal life and life more abundantly. In fact, He came to give His life for His sheep as that was required of Him for our salvation. No other god could or would ever do that.

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep.  I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep and am known by My own.  As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.  And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd.   (John 10:11-16)

Certainly, there have been so many false Messiahs. How many of them have given their life for their sheep?

Jesus is the Good Shepherd. He came for Jew and Gentile alike. Salvation is open to all! There is only one heavenly family and we are all invited to become sons and daughters of this family!

Therefore, My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again.  No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father." (John 10:17-18)

Although there will come a time that Jesus will die on the cross for our sins, He makes it clear that He does this willingly. No one has any power to control His actions. Jesus has all power over all things! At the conclusion of these remarks, the argument resumed between those who thought He had a demon versus those who thought that He might just be a Man sent from God.

**Jerusalem - Feast of Dedication (Hanukkah): (winter A.D. 29)**

Apparently, Jesus stayed in the southern region of Israel for the next couple of months. The Bible next mentions an incident that takes place in Jerusalem a couple of months after His teaching on the Good Shepherd. On the Feast of Dedication (Hanukkah), Jesus was accosted while walking in the Temple and asked:

"How long do You keep us in doubt? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly."  Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me.  But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you.  My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.  My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand.  I and My Father are one."

(John 10:24-30)

Jesus was telling them what He had quite obviously been telling them for some time… that He was, indeed, the Messiah. He was their means for salvation. Jesus said that those that are His followers understand these things and they have already received eternal life… some day they would be living in heaven with Him. Not only that but no one would ever be able to snatch any of His converts away as He Himself would protect them forever. He and His Father would watch over their flock. Lastly, Jesus simply states that He and God are one and the same!

Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him.  Jesus answered them, "Many good works I have shown you from My Father. For which of those works do you stone Me?"  The Jews answered Him, saying, "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, make Yourself God."  Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your law, 'I said, "You are gods*"'*?  If He called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken), do you say of Him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'?  If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; but if I do, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father is in Me, and I in Him."   (John 10:31-38)

Jesus asked them to take a moment to seriously consider all that they had heard and seen concerning His teachings and works. If they just considered His miracles they would objectively recognize that what He claimed was indeed true. However, they were not about to open their closed minds. Instead…

Therefore, they sought again to seize Him, but He escaped out of their hand.  And He went away again beyond the Jordan to the place where John was baptizing at first, and there He stayed.  Then many came to Him and said, "John performed no sign, but all the things that John spoke about this Man were true."  And many believed in Him there. (John 10:39-42)

**From Jerusalem to Perea: (A.D. 30)**

Jesus went north to Perea near the Jordan River where John, his cousin, had preached and baptized so often in the past. Perea was just north of the Dead Sea and bordered the Jordan River. There Jesus and His teachings were accepted much more readily. John had, of course, prepared the way.

**From Perea to Caesarea Philippi: (A.D. 30)**

After a little while there, He headed back further north toward His favorite teaching site, Galilee. The group then continued on about twenty-five miles north of the Sea of Galilee to visit the villages of Caesarea Philippi. During one quiet time there, He asked His disciples who the common folk said that He was. "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" (Matt 16:13)

So, they said, "Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

Obviously, the people knew that He was someone special sent from God.

He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"  Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."  Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.   (Matthew 16:15-17)

Jesus was saying that He knew that God had revealed to Peter the firm knowledge that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. Surely Jesus had demonstrated through His miraculous power and the prophesies that He had fulfilled amazing evidence that He was the Son of God. Yet, for all people, then and now, there has to come a time where they accept this fact as true through an act of faith. God gives us this faith to believe. Jesus was simply noting that His friend Peter had come to that saving faith.

And I also say to you that you are Peter (Petros = stone, rock used for a proper name), and on this rock (Petra = rock, ledge or cliff) I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.  And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."  Then He commanded His disciples that they should tell no one that He was Jesus the Christ. (Matt 16:18-20)

There is a difference of opinion on the exact meaning of Jesus when He tells Peter that He will build His Church on “the rock.” Most Protestant theologians believe that Jesus was using a “play on words” to tell the strong-willed disciple (his name in Greek means “stone or rock”) that Peter had really just revealed a critical truth when he said that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of the Living God. Jesus then goes on to say that He was going to build a great Church (upon a “rock”… using a different Greek word as noted above) using Peter in a prominent role to begin that Church. Some believe that Jesus was referencing Peter as the rock that the Church would be built upon. This is unlikely as many other places in the Bible plainly note that the only Rock that the Church will be built upon is the Rock of Ages, Jesus Christ. See a few examples below:

*This is the ‘stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.'* (Acts 4:11) (from Psalms 18:22)

For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. (1 Cor 3:11)

Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.  Therefore, it is also contained in the Scripture, "*Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious, and he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame.*" (1 Peter 2:4-6)

On the other hand, as the verse above notes, all Christians can and should be “living stones/rocks that help in building the entire Church to its rightful position in the world. Whatever the case, Jesus did indeed build a great Church and Peter and all the other apostles had critical roles in the early Church, defining doctrine and spreading the Gospel to the world.

Jesus concluded this particular talk by telling the disciples that even death itself (the gates of Hell) will not stop the Church – nothing will be able to stop the growth of His Church, although millions would be trying as we see every day!

Although Jesus did not want the entire community to know the details of the reasons for His life on this earth, He did now begin to tell His disciples…

From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day. (Matt 16:21)

This clearly bothered many of the disciples, especially Peter. Peter took Jesus aside and began to talk rather sternly at His Master. He told Jesus that he should not say things like that as certainly that would not ever happen and Jesus should not even think thoughts like that. Interestingly enough, that brought a surprising reaction from Jesus…

"Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men."  Then Jesus said to His disciples, "**If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me**.  For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. **For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?** Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?  For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works. (Matt 16:23-27)

Obviously, this was a stern rebuke from Jesus toward His friend and disciple Peter. He was noting that Satan was using his friend as a mouthpiece. Peter was trying to get Jesus to save His own life. While that surely made sense, if Jesus actually saved Himself it would have doomed every person that had ever lived or would ever live to eternal separation from God… leaving them to an eternity in Hell! That is what Satan wanted. Jesus certainly knew that He would have to die on the cross at some time in the near future, suffer terribly and take upon Himself the painful penalty for all of mankind’s sins. Yet, He wanted to do this for us. What does He ask from us? He asks us to take up our cross and follow Him. What does that mean?

When a convicted criminal was going to be crucified, the Roman soldiers required him to carry his own cross. This was to show that he finally recognized the authority of the Roman Empire over him. Jesus wants us to show that we have given our lives to Him as we demonstrate that we love Him and will follow Him at all costs. That path over which we must carry our cross may well be very difficult at times during our lifetime. But, Jesus says we need to keep on this path, carry our cross in the good times as well as those difficult times. As Jesus says here, it is of no profit to gain all the money, fame, and/or power in the world, if it all comes to naught at the end of our lives and we find ourselves in Hell. At best, Hell is looked at as a place of eternal separation from God and all we love and care about… a terribly lonely existence for all eternity. At worse, it is indescribably bad. On the other hand, Jesus has promised an incredibly beautiful eternity for those who do turn their lives over to Him. Also, Jesus will be there to help when the tough times come… as we carry that difficult cross. Take a look at what happened to virtually all of these same disciples later in their lives (they died martyrs’ deaths). Yet, none (accept Judas) would ever trade what they did for Jesus for anything in the world! They finished their “race” and won the prize … an eternity with Jesus in heaven!

Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom." (Matthew 16:28)

Here Jesus tells the disciples that a few of them will see Him in His glory before they die. That prediction would come true six days later as we shall see. Three of the disciples would see Jesus in His “glorified body” on the Mount of Transfiguration. It should be noted that “coming in His kingdom” can also be translated from the Greek as “coming in His royal splendor.”

**From Caesarea Philippi to Mt. Hermon: (A.D. 30)**

Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light.  And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him.  Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."  While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "**This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!**" (note that these are the same words that God spoke right after Jesus was baptized). And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid.  But Jesus came and touched them and said, "Arise, and do not be afraid." (Matthew 17:1-7)

What an incredible experience this had to be for these three men. Imagine if you would have been there. First of all, they were getting a tiny vision of the “world beyond the grave.” Here they were able to see Moses and Elijah, blatant proof of the afterlife. It had to be amazing to see those beautiful, glorified bodies; the brightness was probably unlike anything they had ever seen. Next, they were hearing actual words from God the Father speak to them concerning His Son. This was one of the few times during Christ’s incarnation that the Father audibly spoke to verify and praise His Son, Jesus. The Father and His Son, Jesus, were giving them and us a glimpse of what we have to look forward to one day. Luke also made note that Jesus and the two prophets spoke of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. (Luke 9:31)

 When they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.  Now as they came down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, "Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead."  And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?"  Jesus answered and said to them, "Indeed, Elijah is coming first and will restore all things.  But I say to you that Elijah has come already, and they did not know him but did to him whatever they wished. Likewise, the Son of Man is also about to suffer at their hands."  Then the disciples understood that He spoke to them of John the Baptist. (Matt 17:8-13)

As was often the case, Jesus asked them to keep this quite until a later date… as it was not yet time for Him to die. They also asked about Elijah. Malachi had prophesied that he would come before that “great and terrible day of the Lord.” Jesus told them that John the Baptist had come in the spirit of Elijah but was rejected and killed. Likewise, Jesus was going to soon be rejected and suffer and die as well. Jesus did say that Elijah himself would someday come, but this will be in the end times… just before Jesus comes for the second time.

The next day, Jesus and the three men descended down the mountain. As they approached the other nine disciples, they noted a loud discussion was in progress. As soon as the people saw Jesus they turned to Him. A few ran over to Him as Jesus asked the scribes what they were talking about. A man in the crowd began to speak. He said that he had brought his son to see if Jesus would heal him of his terrible affliction. He suffered from epilepsy and a “dumb spirit.” When he arrived earlier that day, he saw that Jesus was not available so he asked His disciples to heal the boy. Unfortunately, they had no success! Now he was asking Jesus to heal his son. Jesus told the man to bring his son to Him. When the son came in viewing distance of Jesus, the boy began to convulse, fell to the ground and began foaming at the mouth. Jesus recognized the horrible grip that demons had on the young man and asked his father how long his son had been in such a bad condition. The father told Him he had been suffering since childhood and continued to beg Jesus to help if He could. Jesus answered:

"If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes."  Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, "**Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!"** (Mark 9:23-24)

This is an intriguing plea from that father. I have the same plea to Jesus. I do have faith in Him for so many things including my strong belief that Jesus will greet me someday as I enter into heaven. Yet, I wish and pray that He would give me greater faith to trust in Him during my time on earth as I struggle through the difficult times – to give me greater faith to act like I really understand and know that He has everything under control and that everything will work out for my ultimate good and for those Christians I love so much (Romans 8:28). Apparently, that boy’s father had the same plea.

When Jesus saw that the people came running together, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "Deaf and dumb spirit, I command you, come out of him and enter him no more!"  Then the spirit cried out, convulsed him greatly, and came out of him. And he became as one dead, so that many said, "He is dead."  But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose and the child was cured from that very hour. And when He had come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, "Why could we not cast it out?" So, He said to them, "Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you. However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting." (Matt 17:18,20-21) (Mark 9:25-29)

The disciples had been helping Jesus in His ministry now for several months. Unfortunately, in this case, they were unable to succeed in casting out the demon and healing this youngster. Jesus pointed out that more faith was needed to garner the desired result. He told them that this may be gained through *prayer and fasting*.

While the disciples were digesting this lesson, Jesus decided to reveal an important aspect of what was going to happen to Him in the not too distant future. He was beginning to prepare them for the ultimate purpose of His incarnation. He asked for their undivided attention:

"Let these words sink down into your ears, for the Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him; and the third day he shall be raised again. But they did not understand this saying, and it was hidden from them so that they did not perceive it; and they were afraid to ask Him about this saying. And they were exceedingly sorrowful. (Luke 9:44-45) (Matt 17:23)

Jesus was beginning to prepare His inner circle for what was about to happen. They were perplexed as they still harbored hopes that He would be setting up His kingdom on earth at that time. He was the Messiah, wasn’t He? The Messiah was going to be the King of the world – right? Yet, Jesus said that He was going to be killed? What was He talking about??? Maybe Jesus was just having a bad day…

**From Mt. Hermon to Capernaum:**

A couple days later they arrived back in Capernaum. On their arrival, one of the tax collectors accosted Peter and asked him if his friend Jesus planned to pay His taxes. Peter, not wanting to create any trouble said, “Yes.” (Matthew 17:24)

When Peter caught up with the group in the house where they were going to eat that evening, Jesus (already knowing what had happened) greeted Peter with:

"What do you think, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth take customs or taxes, from their sons or from strangers?"  Peter said to Him, "From strangers." Jesus said to him, "Then the sons are free.  Nevertheless, lest we offend them, go to the sea, cast in a hook, and take the fish that comes up first. And when you have opened its mouth, you will find a piece of money; take that and give it to them for Me and you." (Matt 17:25-27)

Jesus’ point here was that as He was God’s (the King’s) son, He should certainly be exempt from paying any taxes. In order to keep the peace, however, He would pay the tax. Yet, to continue to show His power, and that He was indeed the King’s Son, He used an amazing miracle to get the tax money! In this miracle, Jesus shows His dominion over the animals of the earth.

Just after this brief discussion with Peter, Jesus had another opportunity to teach His disciples a very important truth. The disciples had been debating amongst themselves who was going to get the most important role in the Kingdom. Finally, they decided that they would ask the King, Himself… Jesus. This attitude was a disappointment to the Messiah and He decided it was a good time to teach His friends and followers an important lesson.

"If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all."  Then He took a little child and set him in the midst of them. And when He had taken him in His arms, He said to them, "Whoever receives one of these little children in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me, receives not Me but Him who sent Me." "Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.  Therefore, whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”  (Mark 9:35-37)

Jesus asks all of us to humble ourselves, get rid of all pride, and come to Him as a little child would come to and trust in his father. Therefore, He is saying that the greatest in heaven will be that person, paradoxically, who is humble to the point that they would never think that they deserved that honor!

“Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me. But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea.  Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!  If your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the everlasting fire.  And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire-- where *'Their worm does not die,* *And the fire is not quenched.'”*

(Mark 9:37-44)

This is one of several verses in the Bible that show that the punishment of Hell lasts forever… just as the glory of heaven lasts for eternity. Given this terrible fact, all people should take whatever means necessary to ensure that they do what is needed to be a disciple of Christ. God is speaking figuratively when He talks about cutting off one’s foot or hand, etc. Yet, He is pointing out the importance of avoiding temptation from the Devil. We should always run from evil – flee from temptation. Satan is powerful and the ultimate in evil. We should never take him lightly. We need to give our lives to Jesus and then let the Holy Spirit work through us as we lead our daily lives. How is this done? Every day, we need pray and ask that the Holy Spirit will take control of our lives for that day. We also need to study the Bible regularly as God will speak to us through His Living Word. In this way, we will do our best to become more like Jesus each day. This is how we work toward our sanctification once we are saved. This process will continue until we are with Jesus.

"For everyone will be seasoned with fire, and every sacrifice will be seasoned with salt. Salt is good, but if the salt loses its flavor, how will you season it? Have salt in yourselves and have peace with one another." (Mark 9:49-50)

As we go through life, we will slowly learn those lessons God has in store for us. This will come through the good times and the bad, through the storms and the calm. Frankly, as most know, it is through the storms and difficult times in life that Christ teaches us the most. Of course, few, if any, want to learn in this manner. I surely don’t. Yet, God has the whole picture in mind as He prepares His children for eternity. And, He asks us to trust Him… we need to do this.

“Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven.  For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost.  What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine and go to the mountains to seek the one that is straying?  And if he should find it, assuredly, I say to you, he rejoices more over that sheep than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray.  Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.”

(Matthew 18:10-14)

Jesus is our Great Shepherd, He will not allow any one of His sheep to get lost. He will save every one and bring each one of His sheep, His children, up with Him into heaven one day. Next, Jesus gives a lesson on reconciliation among believers…

“Moreover, if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother.  But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.'  And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.  Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.  Again, I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven.  For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.” (Matthew 18:15-20)

Then Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.”   (Matthew 18:21-22)

Here Jesus is really telling Peter that there is no end to how many times we should forgive others. It certainly is incredibly wonderful that there is no end to how many times God will forgive us of our sins! Then Jesus goes on to give a parable demonstrating this truth…

“Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants.  And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents.  But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made.  The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, 'Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.'  Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt.  But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, 'Pay me what you owe!'  So, his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.'  And he would not but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt.  So, when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done.  Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me.  Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?'  And his master was angry and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him.  So, My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses." (Matt 18:23-35)

Do not ignore this last verse – Matthew 18:35. The idea is for God to forgive us as we forgive others. Remember - “forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.”

**From Capernaum to Perea: (Jesus begins His last journey to Jerusalem) (A.D. 30)**

Soon after this lesson, Jesus decided to head down south toward Jerusalem. It was entering into the season during which He planned to give up His life for His children… Christians. He sent several messengers on ahead to prepare the way for His teaching ministry that was coming. When James and John entered into Samaria, the town folk there rejected the idea of Jesus coming into their villages and preaching. The disciples returned to Jesus to ask if they should punish these people for their attitude. Jesus corrected them with…

"You do not know what manner of spirit you are of.  For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives but to save them*."* And they went to another village. (Luke 9:55-56)

That is a message to all Christians. We are certainly supposed to witness to others concerning the Gospel message. However, if that message of hope is rejected, so be it. We are not to get upset nor turn away in anger. Just pray for the soul that rejects their salvation and move on. As an interesting aside, this is exactly opposite of what the Koran teaches to do to those who reject Muslim teachings.

Now it happened as they journeyed on the road, that someone said to Him, "Lord, I will follow You wherever You go."  And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head."  Then He said to another, "Follow Me." But he said, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father."  Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God."  And another also said, "Lord, I will follow You, but let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house."  But Jesus said to him, "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." (Luke 9:57-62)

Here is a story concerning men who hesitated when asked to follow the Lord. There were just too many important earthly things that had to be looked after. Jesus had just begun His trek to Jerusalem which would eventuate in His death on the Cross. His answer to them and to us is that a decision has to be made… either follow Him now or tend to what is felt to be more important than Jesus. There is only one correct answer. We need to throw all of our efforts behind Jesus… do not wait until tomorrow… remember, tomorrow never comes.

As the time for Jesus’ ultimate sacrifice approached, He readied seventy more men to continue His ministry. There was not much time left for Him to personally be involved in training these disciples… in fact, these seventy men would be the last that He would personally choose to carry the gospel message to the world.

After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go.  Then He said to them, "The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; therefore, pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.  Go your way; behold, I send you out as lambs among wolves.  Carry neither money bag, knapsack, nor sandals; and greet no one along the road.  But whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this house.'  And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest on it; if not, it will return to you.  And remain in the same house, eating and drinking such things as they give, for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not go from house to house.  Whatever city you enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you.  And heal the sick there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'  But whatever city you enter, and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say, 'The very dust of your city which clings to us we wipe off against you. Nevertheless, know this, that the kingdom of God has come near you.'  But I say to you that it will be more tolerable in that Day for Sodom than for that city.  "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes.  But it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you.  And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades.  He who hears you hears Me, he who rejects you rejects Me, and he who rejects Me rejects Him who sent Me."   (Luke 10:1-16)

At this time, Jesus sent out an additional seventy men to preach His message. They went out in teams of two. Jesus pointed out the urgency of their message as He knew that the time He had left on earth (on this visit) was minimal. Note that Jesus pronounced judgment on three cities, Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum. Capernaum was where Jesus spent much time teaching the people. Yet, as a city, they rejected Him. One of the most visited sites in Israel today is the ruins of Capernaum.

Also note the response Jesus said that these disciples were to have to those that accepted the message… and those that rejected the message.

Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name."  And He said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.  (Jesus recalls that day long ago when Lucifer was thrown out of heaven due to his prideful rebellion). Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven."  In that hour Jesus rejoiced in the Spirit and said, "I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.  All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him."   Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.  For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

Then He turned to His disciples and said privately, "Blessed are the eyes which see the things you see; for I tell you that many prophets and kings have desired to see what you see, and have not seen it*,* and to hear what you hear, and have not heard it.*"* (Luke 10:17-24) (Matt 11:28-30)

After the seventy disciples returned from their mission journey, they reported gladly the wonderful results that they had. They were successful in working miracles, casting out demons and converting many people to follow Jesus. Jesus was heartened by their success and happiness, but he reminded them that the most wonderful thing that they had to be happy about was that their name was written in the “Lamb’s Book of Life!” That is, they would be going to heaven some day.

Jesus then tells everyone to come to Him. He knows that everyone struggles in this world… it is very difficult. He tells us to give Him our troubles and, in their place, take His yoke upon our shoulders. Follow Him, learn from Him as He will see us through this world and bring us all to a very successful ending … as we transition one day into heaven!

Jesus continued and noted just how blessed those followers were to be in the position that they were in… disciples for Christ at just that time in history. They had the opportunity to actually see and touch and learn from our Lord and Savior!

 And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"  He said to him, "What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?" So, he answered and said, "*'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,'* (Deut 6:5) and *'your neighbor as yourself.'* (Lev. 19:18) *"*  And He said to him, "You have answered rightly; do this and you will live."  But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"  Then Jesus answered and said: "A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him*,* and departed, leaving him half dead.  Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. Likewise, a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side.  But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion.  So, he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him.  On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.'  So, which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?"  And he said, "He who showed mercy on him." Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."   (Luke 10:25-37)

In this encounter, Jesus took the opportunity to show people how we should treat others in need. He points out that the basic commandment we should live by is to ***love God with all of your hearts and to love your neighbor as yourself***… keeping in mind that **your neighbor is any other human being**! This is a great concept for us to know and live by today. In that time, this idea was completely revolutionary… as were a large percentage of those things that Jesus taught. There were at least three reasons that the religious leaders wanted to arrest Him and silence Him. Jesus was certainly pointing out their hypocrisy, He was preaching a message that was very different to their rigid message of the Law and He was proclaiming to be God Almighty!

**From Perea to Bethany and the surrounding area:**

Now it happened as they went that He entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house.  And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word.  But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore, tell her to help me."  And Jesus answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things.  But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her." (Luke 10:38-42)

This is pretty self-explanatory. When a person gets the opportunity to be with Jesus, it is best not to waste that time in the kitchen.

A few days later, Jesus was teaching His disciples on the subject of prayer…

And He said to them, "Which of you shall have a friend, and go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has come to me on his journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; and he will answer from within and say, 'Do not trouble me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you'?  I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs.  "So, I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.  For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.  If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish?  Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?  If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!" (Luke 11:5-13)

This parable shows the importance of supplication (earnest prayer). Jesus also tells us that God will indeed answer our prayers. We need to pray in earnest and pray in His will… He will answer *in His timing*. That is the one thing that God does not tell us, it would seem… exactly when He will answer our prayers. Yet, He will answer them as we wait… hopefully we wait with patience.

A little while later, Jesus healed a blind and dumb demoniac. As had happened on a similar earlier occasion, there were certain Pharisees that accused Jesus of being in league with Satan Himself. Once again, Jesus noted the absurdity of such a statement as Satan would certainly not be casting out himself! He goes on to say what would happen to a man who does not invite Jesus into his life after having a demon spirit cast out. Just because one is temporarily cleaned of immoral spirits and/or immoral thoughts/actions, that is not sufficient to keep these things from returning unless that person becomes a “new creation” by turning their life over to Jesus. This is what being “Born Again” is all about. The Holy Spirit living inside a person after this regeneration makes it impossible for a demon spirit to possess a man ever again.

"When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when he comes, he finds it swept and put in order.  Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first." (Luke 11:24-26)

Then Jesus also told these Pharisees that they were in serious danger of blaspheming against the Holy Spirit… which was the only unforgivable sin!

"Therefore, I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men.  Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.  "Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by its fruit.  Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.  A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things.  But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment.  For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."   (Matthew 12:31-37)

Along with His condemnation of those who blaspheme against the Holy Spirit, Jesus also taught on the importance of “words.” People probably do not think about this very often, but Jesus places great importance on the words a person speaks. Why? Well, what we say directly relates to what we think… “Out of the heart the mouth speaks.” Of course, what is in our “heart” is really who we are, a reflection of what we believe.

Some of the Pharisees wanted another sign from Jesus. He had already given them dozens of signs over the last couple of years. Jesus had this to say… He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.  For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.  The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed, a greater than Jonah is here.  The queen of the South will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed, a greater than Solomon is here.”   (Matt 12:38-42)

Jesus said that even the people of Nineveh repented when they heard what Jonah had to say. They will rise up in judgment against those that were rejecting Christ in that day. The Queen of Sheba herself will condemn the actions of the Jewish Pharisee of that day as they had so much proof that Jesus was the Messiah, yet they rejected Him. Yes, even these foreigners would know the obvious truth that these Pharisees were ignoring. They were truly living in an “evil and adulterous generation.” Also, it is important to note that Jesus did say that He was going to give them one sign… the sign of the prophet Jonah. What was that sign? Jonah was buried for three days and then rose again from his ‘grave’ in the belly of a great fish. Jesus was telling these Pharisees and others to watch for something analogous to this… it was going to happen soon.

And it happened, as He spoke these things, that a certain woman from the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, "Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts which nursed You!"  But He said, "More than that, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!" (Luke 11:27-28)

Once again, Jesus responds to a person pointing out the truth of the blessedness of Mary being given the great opportunity to be the earthly mother of Christ. He tells them and us that anyone that hears His word and keeps it is truly the blessed person.

 And as He spoke, a certain Pharisee asked Him to dine with him. So, He went in and sat down to eat.  When the Pharisee saw it*,* he marveled that He had not first washed before dinner.  Then the Lord said to him, "Now you Pharisees make the outside of the cup and dish clean, but your inward part is full of greed and wickedness.  Foolish ones! Did not He who made the outside make the inside also?  But rather give alms of such things as you have; then indeed all things are clean to you.  But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs and pass by justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.  Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the best seats in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces.  Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like graves which are not seen, and the men who walk over them are not aware of them*."*  Then one of the lawyers answered and said to Him, "Teacher, by saying these things You reproach us also." (Matthew 11:37-45)

The Pharisees had created an elaborate code of laws that had little, if anything, to do with those Laws that God had set down in the Torah. Jesus was telling them that their man-made laws were just external ceremonies that actually helped them escape their true moral duties. The majority of the Pharisees tried to live by these rigid laws, many that were not even consistent with the Torah, while carrying on with their immoral lives. They were hypocrites and Jesus simply was speaking the truth.

And He said, "Woe to you also, lawyers! For you load men with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers.  Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets, and your fathers killed them.  In fact, you bear witness that you approve the deeds of your fathers; for they indeed killed them, and you build their tombs.  Therefore, the wisdom of God also said, 'I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will kill and persecute,' that the blood of all the prophets which was shed from the foundation of the world may be required of this generation, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah who perished between the altar and the temple. Yes, I say to you, it shall be required of this generation.  Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not enter in yourselves, and those who were entering in you hindered."  And as He said these things to them, the scribes and the Pharisees began to assail Him vehemently, and to cross-examine Him about many things, lying in wait for Him, and seeking to catch Him in something He might say, that they might accuse Him. (Luke 11:46-54)

Jesus continues on to assail the lawyers in the same manner as He upbraided the Pharisees. Virtually all of the scribes, Pharisees, and lawyers were simply caught up in their rituals and daily tasks through which they tended to lord over the common folk. Many of the lawyers tended to weigh down men with intolerable legal burdens. Jesus certainly was making Himself an enemy of these powerful people. He knew His time was now going to be short, but He was ready for what was going to happen.

Meanwhile, when a crowd of many thousands had gathered, so that they were trampling on one another, Jesus began to speak first to his disciples, saying:

"Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.  For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known.  Therefore, whatever you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have spoken in the ear in inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops.”   (Luke 12:1-3)

Here Jesus reminds His disciples that the Pharisees are hypocrites. They are always commanding the common man to live in a certain prescribed manner, the manner that they have outlined, not the manner that God has prescribed. Yet, they do not follow God’s Law themselves. Inwardly they are sinners, outwardly they profess to be these great men of God. Jesus hates hypocrisy… that is why He has so many harsh words for the Pharisees. Jesus tells His disciples that none of the thoughts or actions of any man or woman will go un-noticed by God. Also, there will come a time, when we will all have to answer for our every thought and action! There is nothing “that will not be revealed.”

The following words of Jesus are very familiar. Jesus used these same examples when teaching His twelve disciples before sending them out on their first solo mission. As a matter of fact, in the latter months of His public ministry, Jesus repeated certain points on a couple of occasions. He wanted to make sure that these lessons were learned by the people of that time… and those that would read His words in the centuries to come.

"And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.  But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him!  Are not five sparrows sold for two copper coins? And not one of them is forgotten before God.  But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.  "Also, I say to you, whoever confesses Me before men, him the Son of Man also will confess before the angels of God.  But he who denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God.” (Luke 12:4-10)

Jesus tells all of His children not to worry about our health or well-being. Do not fear death itself. There will be life after death. The fear we need have is concerning that One who has dominion over life and death… God. When we fear God and trust Him with our lives, He will take perfect care of our lives in every aspect. Jesus points out how God knows even the number of hairs on our heads! Jesus wants us to look to Him for our salvation and to make sure that we tell others all about Him. Jesus wants us to be so proud that He is our Lord and Savior that we tell the world about His love… His unbelievable sacrificial love. If we do this, He will tell the angels in heaven all about us! This speech by Jesus repeats portions of other messages that He had given over His ministry. As we would expect, repetition is an important aspect of making the “student” listener remember important points. Also, most of the people that heard one sermon would not be there for another. There are other instances of Jesus making the same point at two differing times in His preaching ministry.

“Now when they bring you to the synagogues and magistrates and authorities, do not worry about how or what you should answer, or what you should say.  For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say."   (Luke 12:11-12)

Here Jesus reminds His disciples that when they are in trouble the Holy Spirit will help them know what to say. This is something that we can call on if that situation ever arises. On the other hand, this is not to say that we should not prepare to witness or teach concerning Jesus when we have the time to prepare properly.

Then one from the crowd said to Him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me."  But He said to him, "Man, who made Me a judge or an arbitrator over you?"  And He said to them, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses."  Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully.  And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?' So, he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods.  And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry." (Luke 12:13-19)

Here Jesus talks of a man that does His best to lay up money and goods for His old age. He is very pleased with himself as He has apparently garnered a fine amount of “things” and money. As the next verse shows…God calls him a fool!

'But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?'  So is he who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God."   (Luke 12:20-21)

God constantly tells us that the only important things that we do in this life are those things we do for God. It is quite obvious that we cannot take any material thing with us when we die. Not only that but there is no guarantee that the money or goods that have been collected over one’s lifetime will remain from one year to the next. I am writing this paragraph as our stock market has plummeted over 50% in the last 15 months!

Obviously, there are millions of Americans that are getting a first-hand experience of what Jesus is alluding to in this parable. Financial “goods” are of no eternal value. Yet, in a real sense, we can “take” those spiritual things that we do for Jesus onward into heaven. He will reward us when we arrive in heaven for those things we did for Him with the correct, humble attitude.

Then He said to His disciples, "Therefore, I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; nor about the body, what you will put on.  Life is more than food, and the body is more than clothing. Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap, which have neither storehouse nor barn; and God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds?  And which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?  If you then are not able to do the least, why are you anxious for the rest?  Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.  If then God so clothes the grass, which today is in the field and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will He clothe you, O you of little faith?  And do not seek what you should eat or what you should drink, nor have an anxious mind.  For all these things the nations of the world seek after, and your Father knows that you need these things.  But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you. Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell what you have and give alms; provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches nor moth destroys.  For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Luke 12:22-34)

Jesus continues on to speak of the important things in our lives. Much of the preceding paragraph is the same as the latter portion of the famous Sermon on the Mount which Jesus had given earlier. He concludes this portion of scripture by noting that our heart is going to be where our treasure is (and vice versa). If our heart is on Godly things, we will treasure Bible study, telling others about Jesus, living a moral life, etc. If you find yourself being all wrapped up in other things, like money, sports, sex, your job, etc., then what exactly is your treasure.

Is Jesus your treasure? It is worth thinking about this. Jesus says that if you really have Jesus as your treasure, and you seek after Him with all of your heart, all of the necessary things needed in this life on earth will be “added to you.” If you study the Bible carefully, you will see how this fact is demonstrated over and over again as it relates to the many people written about in the Old and New Testaments.

"Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning; and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately.  Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat and will come and serve them.  And if he should come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants.  But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into.  Therefore, you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect." (Luke 12:35-40)

Jesus tells His disciples to always be vigilant concerning His return. He will come as a “thief in the night.” When Jesus does finally come back to rapture His followers and soon thereafter to defeat Satan at the Battle of Armageddon to usher in His Millennial Kingdom, He certainly wants to find His children ready and expectantly waiting… not taken by surprise at His sudden return. All Christians should live lives as if Jesus might be coming at any moment, since He may. They should always be engaged in an activity or task of which He would approve. And what sort of activity would that be? We need to be doing things that would advance the Kingdom of God in one way or another and we should be living a life that would make Jesus proud.

Then Peter said to Him, "Lord, do You speak this parable only to us, or to all people?*"* (Luke 12:41)

Peter wonders if this statement by Jesus applies to all people or only to the Christian leaders. Would there be one plan for the disciples and another for the masses?

And the Lord said, "Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his master will make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season?  Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes.  Truly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all that he has.  But if that servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and be drunk, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him*,* and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.  And that servant who knew his master's will and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.” (Luke 12:42-48)

Although Jesus does not answer Peter’s question directly, He does note that those people who have more knowledge of the truth concerning His true identity and His will, will be held to a higher standard as to how they live their lives while waiting on His return. As Jesus states on more than one occasion, He expects more from those that He blesses with more of anything (money, intelligence, wisdom, leadership ability, etc.) than those who have received less. On the other hand, as another parable will show, Jesus expects and requires *every* person to use the talents that He has given them to the best of their ability.

"I came to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!  But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am till it is accomplished!

(Luke 12:49-50)

Jesus is looking forward to those final days when all true believers, Jew and Gentile alike will be working together with Jesus during the Millennial Kingdom. Jesus brought fire (judgment) into the world. It obviously had begun during those years of preaching in the 1st century B.C. People of all ages must make a decision concerning Jesus. A person either accepts Jesus as their Lord and Savior… or they reject Him. A “no decision” is a rejection, by the way. At a future time, all of these decisions will have been made and all judgment will have been concluded by Jesus.

Before that can happen, He must do what He came to earth to accomplish – He must die and suffer the punishment for the sins of all mankind. Only a perfect man is able to be the adequate sacrifice for sinful mankind. Jesus is/was that Man. Certainly, that would be a most difficult task for Him… but one He willingly would perform.

Do you suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather division.  For from now on five in one house will be divided: three against two, and two against three.  Father will be divided against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law."   (Luke 12:51-53)

Followers of Christ may well find their allegiance to the Savior a very contentious thing. Even among families, this trust in Jesus will often cause marked dissension between family members. This is especially true when people repent and believe in Jesus while the other members of their family continue to follow another path… such as Judaism, Islam, Jehovah Witness, Mormonism, etc. In those cases, there are massive repercussions to the new found Christian believer. It is also true that one person may have a greater commitment to work for the Lord than another Christian in a given family… this also can cause dissension.

Then He also said to the multitudes, "Whenever you see a cloud rising out of the west, immediately you say, 'A shower is coming'; and so it is.  And when you see the south wind blow, you say, 'There will be hot weather'; and there is.  Hypocrites! You can discern the face of the sky and of the earth, but how is it you do not discern this time? (Luke 12:54-56)

Here Jesus is pointing out that so many of the leaders of the people, the Pharisees and scribes, seem unable to see the blatant evidence (given by God Himself in the Old Testament and Jesus through His life and miracles) that Jesus is the promised Messiah! Jesus was obviously saddened and upset that they were so close minded that they would not be receptive to the obvious facts. They were just content with their current lot in life as leaders with the perks that came with their jobs and position, that they did not want the facts to get in the way.

That is exactly the way it is with so many politicians in our world today! These leaders in Jesus’ day and the leaders in Washington today are markedly more concerned with how the next five to ten years of *their life* is going to work out compared to what will happen to the world or country. It is a rare man or woman that will stand up against the crowd and do what they know is right in their heart. When I see how virtually every congressman and senator simply follow their party line, it is blatantly obvious that they are NOT always doing what they believe to be right on every given issue. And why do we not hear the Christian senators and congressmen let it be known without apology where they stand on Jesus? What are they saving themselves for? They have a great bully pulpit. Unfortunately, these modern-day leaders are doing the same thing as they did in the time of Jesus… the religious leaders of that day did not want anyone, even God Himself, upsetting their applecart.

"Yes, and why, even of yourselves, do you not judge what is right?  When you go with your adversary to the magistrate, make every effort along the way to settle with him, lest he drag you to the judge, the judge deliver you to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison.  I tell you, you shall not depart from there till you have paid the very last mite." (Luke 12:57-59)

Jesus tells them that they are making a big mistake! They had better make “every effort along the way to settle with Him.” God’s judgment is coming and it is final! (Luke 12:58)

Jesus continued on with His teaching as He was slowly making His way to Jerusalem. He was asked a question concerning the reason why some folks seemed to have calamity come upon them suddenly. In particular, why had Pilate killed a group of Galileans who were presenting sacrifices to the Lord? What had they done wrong?

Jesus added another recent example of eighteen people dying when involved in an accident involving the tower of Siloam. Many people in that day, as well as way back in the time of Job (about 2000 B.C.) were under the impression that certain people suffered more than others as a direct relation to hidden sin in their lives. So, this is the basis of their question. Was that, in fact, the case?

And Jesus answered and said to them, "Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things?  I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.  Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem?  I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish."   (Luke 13:1-5)

Jesus said that it was not that these people had done some heinous sin. It is true, however, that bad health and accidents are related to the fact that we live in a fallen and sin-filled earth. Typically, those accidents or illnesses that befall a person do not directly correlate with a particular sin that they have committed. There are cases, however, that a particular illness or accidental death or injury would be traceable to a sin… this should be quite obvious. His last point is that unless we repent and turn to Him for salvation, *all* of us will end up perishing… i.e. we will not have everlasting life in heaven.

He also spoke this parable: "A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none.  Then he said to the keeper of his vineyard, 'Look, for three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none. Cut it down; why does it use up the ground?'  But he answered and said to him, 'Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and fertilize it*.*  And if it bears fruit, well*.* But if not, after that you can cut it down.' " (Luke 13:6-9)

Jesus continues His teaching by drawing a parallel between a fig tree and a person. If a fig tree does not produce fruit after a reasonable amount of time and cultivation, it is cut down. The fig tree generally was a symbol for Israel in the scriptures. Jesus had been witnessing to the Jews for over three years now… and still the Jews had produced very little fruit. If people continue to spurn Jesus, including those who may claim to be Christians but produce no fruit, apparently the time will come where they need be “cut down” as well. A true Christian will produce fruit as the book of James tells us so clearly.

Now He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath.  And behold, there was a woman who had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years and was bent over and could in no way raise herself up.  But when Jesus saw her, He called her to Him and said to her, "Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity." And He laid His hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God.  But the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath; and he said to the crowd, "There are six days on which men ought to work; therefore, come and be healed on them, and not on the Sabbath day."  The Lord then answered him and said, "Hypocrite! Does not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or donkey from the stall, and lead it away to water it?  So, ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound--think of it--for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath?" (Luke 13:10-16)

This parable is a good example of the lack of fruit in the Jewish hierarchy. Here a woman was healed of a serious chronic malady. She was ecstatic and rightfully so. Yet, the ruler of the synagogue was very upset as it was the Sabbath. He came out and began to upbraid Jesus for “working” on the Sabbath. As he had done earlier in His ministry on a similar occasion, Jesus answered this petty man by asking him if it were not true that everyone there would not free a donkey or ox if they found it “cast” (e.g. stuck against a stall) on a Sabbath day? The answer was obviously, “Yes.” Well, Jesus suggests that a daughter of Abraham deserves at least as much as a donkey – she needed to be loosed from the bonds of Satan!

And when He said these things, all His adversaries were put to shame; and all the multitude rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by Him. Then He said, "What is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it?  It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and put in his garden; and it grew and became a large tree, and the birds of the air nested in its branches."  And again, He said, "To what shall I liken the kingdom of God?  It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened." (Luke 13:17-21)

This was the same message that Jesus had given on His second Galilean tour as He sat on a boat while addressing the masses. First century Jews were expecting the kingdom of God to be brought in by the Messiah suddenly and in great glory and power. Yet here and on other occasions Jesus used the analogy to the mustard seed to show how the Kingdom would grow. The mustard seed is incredibly tiny and is able to grow into a tree that is massively larger than the original seed. That is what the point of this parable is… the kingdom of God will begin with just a few converts but will grow to include hundreds of millions of people. This is what has happened over the millennia.

In this teaching episode, Jesus also uses leaven to show how the message will spread throughout the world just as leaven spreads throughout bread as it causes the bread to rise/grow.

And He went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem. Then one said to Him, "Lord, are there few who are saved?" And He said to them, "Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able.  When once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open for us,' and He will answer and say to you, 'I do not know you, where you are from,' then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets.'  But He will say, 'I tell you I do not know you, where you are from. Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity.'  There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out.  They will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God.  And indeed, there are last who will be first, and there are first who will be last." (Luke 13:22-30)

Jesus reminds His listeners (and readers) that there is but a narrow way to heaven. This is in direct contrast to much of the modern day teaching we hear today. So many people, even ministers of the various faiths, state that there are many ways to heaven. The major point is that all one has to do is follow whatever faith you latch on to and that will lead you to your “god” and thus to some form of heaven one day… even if you have to go through many re-incarnations along the way. Others say that some day we as humans will bring heaven down here to earth… the New Age folks believe this lie. However, Jesus says there is but one way… I am the Way, the Truth and the Life, no man comes to the Father but through Me.” (John 14:6) Jesus also gives a stern warning to those preachers and evangelists and so-called Christians that really do not “trust, follow and obey” Him. He will one day say… “I do not know you. Depart from Me all you workers of iniquity!” (Luke 13:27)

The final line notes that the *last* shall be *first* (e.g. many Gentiles will accept Jesus into their lives) and the *first* shall be *last* (so many of Jesus’ chosen people would reject Him). This idea also points out that many that are considered on the “top of the world,” so to speak, will be *last* from God’s point of view just as those who may be paupers and invalids will very likely be *first* in the Kingdom.

On that very day some Pharisees came, saying to Him, "Get out and depart from here, for Herod wants to kill You."  And He said to them, "Go, tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected.' Nevertheless, I must journey today, tomorrow, and the day following; for it cannot be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem.  "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate; and assuredly, I say to you, you shall not see Me until the time comes when you say, *'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!'"* (Luke 13:31-35)

Interestingly, a few Pharisees came to Jesus with some inside information that Herod was planning on arresting Him with the intent of killing Him as he had done to John the Baptist. Jesus says that not even King Herod can keep Him from His appointment with His destiny at Calvary. He was saying that he would not be arrested until it was His time. Then Jesus spoke some words of longing as He spoke of His love of Israel and His brother Jews. He wanted so much to gather them up and take care of them, save them right then and there. Yet, that was not to be their choice. Jesus was not to be their choice at that time in history. One day, they would see Him return, and on that occasion, they would cry out, “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.” (Psalms 118:26)

Soon thereafter, Jesus was invited to have dinner with one of rulers of the Pharisees. It was a Sabbath day. While He was there, He noticed a man who had dropsy. Recalling past episodes of their anger when He had healed people on the Sabbath, Jesus tried a new tack, He asked the lawyers and Pharisees that were in the room if it were lawful to heal on the Sabbath. They remained silent. That being the case…

He took him and healed him and let him go.  Then He answered them, saying, "Which of you, having a donkey or an ox that has fallen into a pit, will not immediately pull him out on the Sabbath day?"   (Luke 14:4-5)

Jesus used the same basic example that He had used earlier in explaining the logic behind healing on the Sabbath. He felt that given they would all help out these animals, it should be obvious to them that curing a human would be so much more appropriate… even on a Sabbath.

And they could not answer Him regarding these things. So, He told a parable to those who were invited, when He noted how they chose the best places, saying to them: "When you are invited by anyone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in the best place, lest one more honorable than you be invited by him; and he who invited you and him come and say to you, 'Give place to this man,' and then you begin with shame to take the lowest place.  But when you are invited, go and sit down in the lowest place, so that when he who invited you comes he may say to you, 'Friend, go up higher.' Then you will have glory in the presence of those who sit at the table with you.  For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." (Luke 14:6-11)

This is an intriguing practical example of how the actual practice of humility can bring a better outcome. We all should allow only others to give us feedback concerning our positive actions. Most importantly, we should do everything that we do because we know it is what God wants us to do (to the best of our knowledge). Then, let God or others judge the merits of our work. As for oneself… be modest… be humble. God will take care of things. God’s opinion of a person is certainly all that really counts.

Then Jesus gives a few examples of how Christians can help others with a truly giving spirit…

Then He also said to him who invited Him, "When you give a dinner or a supper, do not ask your friends, your brothers, your relatives, nor rich neighbors, lest they also invite you back, and you be repaid.  But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind.  And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just."  Now when one of those who sat at the table with Him heard these things, he said to Him, "Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God!"  Then He said to him, "A certain man gave a great supper and invited many and sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited, 'Come, for all things are now ready.'  But they all with one accord began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused.'  And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused.'  Still another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.'  So that servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind.' And the servant said, 'Master, it is done as you commanded, and still there is room.'  Then the master said to the servant, 'Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.  For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper.'" (Luke 14:12-24)

Here Jesus is referring to Israel as the pre-invited guests. The excuses noted above were all very lame and really indicated people that simply did not want to come to the feast. Given that these invited guests were not now planning on coming, the Master of the Supper had no intention of calling off His great dinner plans. Instead, He would invite those who wanted to come… the poor, lame, blind, deaf, dumb, and maimed. In fact, anyone that wanted could come. Of course, that would include any and all Gentiles. The only requirement was to respond in a positive way to His invitation. There will be room for everyone that follows Jesus! On the other hand, those originally invited (most of the Jews of that day) would not taste of His supper.

 Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them, "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. (Luke 14:25-26)

The Greek word used here does not mean “hate” in the sense that we use that word today. Instead it means that a person should not value anyone over the value that they place on Jesus. Jesus has to take first place in our hearts. If it were not for Him, we would not be here, our loved ones would not be here, and none of us would have the opportunity for life eternal in a place of everlasting peace and joy – heaven. Jesus gave His life for all that we hold dear.

And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.  For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it*--* lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.'  Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand?  Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace. So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple. "Salt is good; but if the salt has lost its flavor, how shall it be seasoned?  It is neither fit for the land nor for the dunghill, but men throw it out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" (Luke 14:27-35)

Lastly, Jesus tells all of us that we should count the cost of following Him. Surely there are unbelievably great rewards, but we are signing up to be His disciples. We need to understand what that means, what He is asking us to do. If we are not willing to follow His commands and directives, we should not turn to Him to lead us. If we are going to repent and give our lives to Christ, do it with vigor and take any necessary lumps that come with our “cross” that we bear as believers!

  Jesus continued on to preach a message on salvation and how God views His children. He taught concerning the utmost importance to God of every single person. The first of three parables was very similar to one Jesus told a little earlier in His ministry – when addressing His disciples.

He spoke this parable to them, saying:  "What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it?  And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing.  And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!'  I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.  "Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it?  And when she has found it*,* she calls her friends and neighbors together, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I lost!'  Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents." (Luke 15:4-10)

Then Jesus followed those two examples with this famous parable…

 "A certain man had two sons.  And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.*'* So, he divided to them his livelihood.  And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living.  But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want.  Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.  And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything*.*  But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!  I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants."’ And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.  And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.'  But the father said to his servants, 'Bring out the best robe and put it on him and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet.  And bring the fatted calf here and kill it and let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' And they began to be merry.  Now his older son was in the field. And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. So, he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant.  And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and because he has received him safe and sound, your father has killed the fatted calf.'  But he was angry and would not go in. Therefore, his father came out and pleaded with him. So, he answered and said to his father, 'Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends.  But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.'  And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.' " (Luke 15:11-32)

This parable is one of my favorites in the entire Bible. It is found only in Luke. What wonderful love is shown by the father of this prodigal son. God, of course, is the Father. The prodigal son is the sinner. God is waiting in eager anticipation for His child to turn back from his life of sin to come Home. Once he does this, once he repents, God is so overjoyed that He comes running to give his son (or daughter) a great big bear hug and kiss. God then has the great joy of giving his son all that He had waiting for him. With great joy, God celebrates, as do the angels in heaven, as each lost child turns back to their Father God.

Another point Jesus makes in this parable. There are those who sometimes feel a little upset when they see that God will be so lenient, even happy, to welcome back a wayward soul even after a near lifetime of sin… even horrendous sin. They think that they should be given more, at the very least. Somehow, they feel that they are being left out. God tells these Christians to be reasonable, remember all that God has forgiven them and that everything that He has is theirs. If they ever run into trouble, He will be there for them every bit as much as he is there for their wayward, needy brother or sister. Remember, we are all sinners and are lostwithout the Grace of God through Jesus which will save us from our sins.

It is intriguing that the three successive parables described above seem to show each person of the Trinity, one at a time. In the first, concerning the Shepherd, Jesus comes to mind. The second, where the woman uses the Light to find her lost coins, shows us the Holy Spirit. Of course, the last parable, points out God the Father’s love for the lost sinner.

Jesus next taught his disciples concerning their use of earthly things for eternal rewards. He used an example of a dishonest employee who just happened to be shrewdly unscrupulous when it came to providing himself with a comfortable future while on this earth. Jesus does not commend the evil intent of this steward, but He does suggest that we should all be shrewd enough to use our possessions here on this earth for future spiritual benefit.

"There was a certain rich man who had a steward, and an accusation was brought to him that this man was wasting his goods.  So, he called him and said to him, 'What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your stewardship, for you can no longer be steward.'  Then the steward said within himself, 'What shall I do? For my master is taking the stewardship away from me. I cannot dig; I am ashamed to beg.  I have resolved what to do, that when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.' So, he called every one of his master's debtors to him, and said to the first, 'How much do you owe my master?'  And he said, 'A hundred measures of oil.' So, he said to him, 'Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.'  Then he said to another, 'And how much do you owe?' So, he said, 'A hundred measures of wheat.' And he said to him, 'Take your bill, and write eighty.' So, the master commended the unjust steward because he had dealt shrewdly. For the sons of this world are more shrewd in their generation than the sons of light.”   (Luke 16:1-8)

Here Jesus notes what we know to be true. There are many non-Christian businessmen who are brilliant when it comes to making money. He suggests that every Christian use their inherent intelligence and their knowledge to advance the cause of Christ on the earth. Many times, God’s gifts to mankind can be used for evil or good. We need always use it for good. A Christian can use money to advance the cause of Christ on the earth. Then, after showing that one can be faithful in the use of money, God may well trust more important spiritual matters to that person.

“And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home. He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much.  Therefore, if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?  And if you have not been faithful in what is another man's, who will give you what is your own?  No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."   (Luke 16:9-13)

Money itself is valuable as a tool to advance the Kingdom of God. That is, there is nothing inherently wrong with money or a rich man. On the other hand, the “*love* of money is the root of all evil.” (1 Timothy 6:10)

Now, let us look at the Pharisees…

Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, also heard all these things, and they derided Him. And He said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God.  The law and the prophets were until John.” (Luke 16:14-16)

John the Baptist ushered in a new time, a new covenant, as John ushered in Jesus, the King Himself. It was true that the Law was the covenant that applied up until the time of Jesus… no longer, however. Yet, through a reasonable study of the Old Testament it should have been apparent to any open-minded Jew that Jesus was the promised Messiah… especially considering the proofs that He was constantly providing of His Godly Power. Now it was time to preach concerning the Kingdom.

Since that time (since John the Baptist) the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it.  And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one tittle of the law to fail (Jesus adds this to point out that the Kingdom of which He speaks does not nullify any of the Law).  Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced from her husband commits adultery (a fuller discussion on divorce is given at another time, but here Jesus gives this as an example of the Law… this was not what the Pharisees had been teaching concerning divorce, by the way).   (Luke 16:16-18)

Then Jesus gives this parable…"There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day.  But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate, desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table (this description by Jesus would have made this beggar odious in the eyes of the typical Pharisee. They looked at this type of man or woman as being despised by God… again, similar to Job’s friends’ viewpoint). Moreover, the dogs came and licked his sores.  So, it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom (obviously God had another opinion of this man). The rich man also died and was buried.  And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom (his lofty status on earth was of no benefit at the conclusion of his life).

Then he cried and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.'  But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented.  And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.'  Then he said, 'I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.' Abraham said to him, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.'  And he said, 'No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.'  But he said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.'" (Luke 16:19-31)

Wow, these are some amazing words. There are two important points made here. First, once you are dead, your fate is sealed… there will be no second chances, no re-incarnation no “do-overs” (i.e. no mulligans). Second, Jesus points out that even with all of the amazing evidence that He gave the world, the world still mostly rejected Him and His message. As Jesus said, if these people cannot even recognize the blatantly obvious fulfillment of prophesy that can be seen in my life, they will not be persuaded even if they see someone rise up from the dead. Oh yeah, come to think of it, many had seen this! Jesus gave a second chance at life to a child and a man and soon would do it again… for His good friend Lazarus. Then, more impressive, if that is even possible, He, Himself, would rise from the grave after three days! And, still there were many doubters as there are even today! The Bible makes it plain that unbelief is primarily a spiritual problem as opposed to an intellectual problem. For this reason, many people will never come to Christ no matter the amount of evidence that they have presented. They are not ready spiritually to open their eyes to the Savior. Typically, these people have too much pride to consider the supernatural… that is God and Jesus… as the reason for all things, including our entrance into heaven one day.

Prayer for God’s providential intervention and setting a good example are the best hope for these folks.

Then He said to the disciples, "It is impossible that no offenses should come, but woe to him through whom they do come!  It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones.”   (Luke 17:1-2)

Jesus was reminding His disciples that it would be a great offense to do anything that would be an impediment to any lost person (especially a child) entering into the rest that Jesus has provided for all who trust in Him. Some people would certainly commit this kind of an offense, but don’t let it be you!

“Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him.  And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, 'I repent,' you shall forgive him."   (Luke 17:3-4)

Here again Jesus reminds His followers that there should be no limit on the granting of forgiveness for the truly repentant… just as God sets no limits when He forgives us. Earlier Jesus had stated that a person should forgive seventy times seven when asked by Peter how often forgiveness should be granted. Of course, Jesus is saying that there should be no limit to the number of times we should forgive one another just as He sets no limit on how many times He will forgive His children of their sins.

And the apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith." So, the Lord said, "If you have faith as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be pulled up by the roots and be planted in the sea,' and it would obey you.”   (Luke 17:5-6)

This statement about the power of faith is one more example where Jesus uses the mustard seed as an analogy to our faith. Faith, like a mustard seed, may start small. With proper cultivation and time, both the mustard seed and our faith will grow and the result can and will be quite impressive. It is God that makes things happen, but He acts based on our faith in His power. There is something very special to God about the faith of His children. For some reason, God is adamant about our using the faith that He gives us. In fact, “without faith we cannot please God.” (Hebrews 11:6)

“And which of you, having a servant plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come at once and sit down to eat'?  But will he not rather say to him, 'Prepare something for my supper, and gird yourself and serve me till I have eaten and drunk, and afterward you will eat and drink'?  Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not. So, likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.' " (Luke 17:7-10)

Interestingly, Jesus tells us that it is our duty to do those things He has commanded of us without us getting proud about it when we follow His instructions. That is what we are supposed to do. That is our part of the deal when we asked Jesus into our lives. We should set about to worship and follow and obey Jesus. In exchange, we get an eternity of bliss, starting with His ever-present help while we traverse this difficult time we are on this earth. Always we need be humble.

**The approach into Jerusalem: (winter A.D. 31)**

Now it happened as He went to Jerusalem that He passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee.  Then as He entered a certain village, there met Him ten men who were lepers, who stood afar off.  And they lifted up their voices and said, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" So, when He saw them, He said to them, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And so it was that as they went, they were cleansed.  And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks. And he was a Samaritan. So, Jesus answered and said, "Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine?  Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?"  And He said to him, "Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well." (Luke 17:11-19)

Let us remember to always thank Jesus for those gifts He gives us… those answers to prayers and so much more. In the case of the lepers above, only the Samaritan had the courtesy to thank Jesus for his healing. He notices these things … and everything else for that matter.

Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come,

This may well have been a mocking question, however…

He answered them and said, "The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!'” (Luke 17:20)

Jesus said that it will not be as they expected. The Messiah will not suddenly come into Jerusalem and immediately attack the Roman legions thus taking over as King of the World. Not this time around, anyway. Instead…

“For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you."   (Luke 17:21)

Initially, the Kingdom would be manifest within an army of believers. These Christians would make up the Kingdom during the age of the Gentiles. Later, Jesus would return to set up the Millennial Kingdom. That would be more akin to what the Pharisees were expecting… but that was not coming during the time Jesus first came to earth.

Then He said to the disciples, "The days will come when you will desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it.  And they will say to you, 'Look here!' or 'Look there!' Do not go after them or follow them*.*  For as the lightning that flashes out of one part under heaven shines to the other part under heaven, so also the Son of Man will be in His day.  But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation. And as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man:  They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.  Likewise, as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all.  Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed. In that day, he who is on the housetop, and his goods are in the house, let him not come down to take them away. And, likewise, the one who is in the field, let him not turn back. Remember Lot's wife. Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it.  I tell you, in that night there will be two men in one bed: the one will be taken and the other will be left.  Two women will be grinding together: the one will be taken and the other left.  Two men will be in the field: the one will be taken and the other left."   (Luke 17:22-36)

Here Jesus for the first time talks of His death as He has been rejected by men on this first visit to earth, then His return into heaven, then what the times will be like just before His second coming. Jesus will go into much more detail on this topic when He gives His Olivet Discourse in a little while. But, next Jesus spoke a parable that demonstrates the importance of earnest prayer:

Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart, saying: "There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor regard man.  Now there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, 'Get justice for me from my adversary.'  And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, 'Though I do not fear God nor regard man, yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.'" Then the Lord said, "Hear what the unjust judge said.  And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them?  I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:1-8)

Simply put, Jesus is telling us that if an unjust judge will respond to the persistence of this widow, how much more will a loving God respond and grant the prayer requests of His children. Of course, we must remember to pray in His will and to remember that God responds on His own time schedule.

Jesus then continued with a parable contrasting two types of prayer…

"Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men--extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector.  I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.'  And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!'  I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."   (Luke 18:9-14)

This parable of Jesus should be easily understood when we remember that He hates the proud and has respect for the humble. We all should know deep within our souls that we are indeed sinners and owe everything to the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. He did it all for us. We need to try our best to follow Him, although we will never succeed as we should.

Then He arose from there and came to the region of Judea by the other side of the Jordan (this area is called Perea). And multitudes gathered to Him again, and as He was accustomed, He taught them again. The Pharisees came and asked Him, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" testing Him.  And He answered and said to them, "What did Moses command you?"  They said, "Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce, and to dismiss her.*"*  And Jesus answered and said to them, "Because of the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept.  But from the beginning of the creation, God *'made them male and female.'*  *'For this reason, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife,* *and the two shall become one flesh';* so, then they are no longer two, but one flesh.  Therefore, what God has joined together, let not man separate."  In the house His disciples also asked Him again about the same matter*.* So, He said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her.  And if a woman divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery." (Mark 10:1-12)

Here Jesus elaborates on the topic of divorce. He notes that Moses had allowed certain writs of divorce due to the need to protect the wives of certain husbands that tended to make a mockery of marriage. They would ask for divorce for the silliest of reasons. Mosaic Law offered some protection for the wife in cases like these. Jesus goes on to say that the whole conception of marriage is to bind together one man and one woman for life. They become one flesh. That is what God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit have in mind when a man and a woman get married.

Then they also brought infants to Him that He might touch them; but when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them.  But Jesus called them to Him and said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it."  And He took them up into His arms and laying His hands on them, He blessed them. (Luke 18:15-17)

Jesus loves children. Children are always drawn to Christ. All who want salvation need to come to Christ as a little child… simply give ourselves to Him in simple child-like faith. Once you have decided to repent and turn to Him, forget any further detailed analysis of the situation, just give yourself to Him. He will accept you and give you peace as you continue to follow Him in faith. As time passes, God will honor this step of faith by providing answers to certain perplexing questions that may arise at times. More importantly, God will increase our faith as we exercise the faith that He has already given us.

A little while after this episode, a man came and told Jesus of a terrible sickness that had overtaken Lazarus in Bethany. Lazarus was the brother of Mary and Martha. All were very good friends of Jesus ever since His visit earlier when Mary had anointed His feet with fragrant oil. Jesus being aware of the situation, said,

"This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it." (John 11:4)

Now Jesus had a special friendship with this family, yet He chose to stay an additional two days before He said to His disciples…

"Let us go to Judea again." (John 11:7)

The disciples were wary of this idea as they knew that the Pharisees and other officials planned to stone Him if given the chance. However, Jesus did, of course, go on to Judea to the home of Lazarus. Then he spoke to the disciples again…

 These things He said, and after that He said to them, "Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up."  Then His disciples said, "Lord, if he sleeps he will get well." However, Jesus spoke of his death, but they thought that He was speaking about taking rest in sleep.  Then Jesus said to them plainly, "Lazarus is dead.  And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, that you may believe. Nevertheless, let us go to him."

It was the intent of Jesus all along to allow for Lazarus to be dead long enough that there would be no doubt in any of the witnesses there that Jesus had raised a man, who had been dead for days, from the grave! He did this to build the faith of His friends and as proof to all that He was God incarnate. Certainly, Mary, Martha, and their friends and family must have been praying in earnest for many days as they asked God to send His Son, Jesus, to save Lazarus. Yet, it was not the will of God to answer their prayers in the manner that they had hoped. But, it was always God’s intent to answer their prayers in His timing and in His glorious manner. This example is something we should remember when we pray. God will answer our prayers… but, always in His timing and consistent with His will.

Then Thomas, who is called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with Him."   (John 11:11-16)

Thomas has an interesting comment here. He is to be commended for his devotion to accompany Jesus, but surely, he lacks the faith that he should have developed after all this time.

So, when Jesus came, He found that he had already been in the tomb four days.  Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles away.  And many of the Jews had joined the women around Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother.  Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met Him, but Mary was sitting in the house.  Then Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.  But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You."  Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again."  Martha said to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."  Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.  And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11:17-26)

Martha was glad to see Jesus but told Him that He was too late to save her brother. Jesus told her that her brother was going to rise again. Martha, a good Jew, believed in heaven and told Jesus she knew that Lazarus would rise again at the last day. Jesus did not mean “the last day”… He meant that day! He asked her if she had that kind of faith in Him.

She said to Him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world."  And when she had said these things, she went her way and secretly called Mary her sister, saying, "The Teacher has come and is calling for you."  As soon as she heard that*,* she arose quickly and came to Him.  Now Jesus had not yet come into the town but was in the place where Martha met Him.  Then the Jews who were with her in the house, and comforting her, when they saw that Mary rose up quickly and went out, followed her, saying, "She is going to the tomb to weep there."  Then, when Mary came where Jesus was, and saw Him, she fell down at His feet, saying to Him, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died."  Therefore, when Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled.  And He said, "Where have you laid him?" (John 11:27-34)

They said to Him, "Lord, come and see."  Jesus wept.  Then the Jews said, "See how He loved him!"  And some of them said, "Could not this Man, who opened the eyes of the blind, also have kept this man from dying?"  Then Jesus, again groaning in Himself, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it.  Jesus said, "Take away the stone."

Martha, the sister of him who was dead, said to Him, "Lord, by this time there is a stench, for he has been dead four days."  Jesus said to her, "Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?"  Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead man was lying. And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, "Father, I thank You that You have heard Me.  And I know that You always hear Me, but because of the people who are standing by I said this, that they may believe that You sent Me."  Now when He had said these things, He cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth!"  And he who had died came out bound hand and foot with graveclothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Loose him, and let him go." (John 11:34-44)

John 11:35, “Jesus wept,” is famous for being the shortest verse in the Bible. It surely is a verse that lends itself to discussion. Why did Jesus weep? Was it because His close friends lacked the proper faith that He wants for us all? Was it simply because He was so upset to see how the fallen world we all live in gives so many so much pain? Was it simply that He was saddened that His friend, Lazarus, had just gone through with the painful process of death? Likely, it was a combination of all of these things.

So, Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. He had been dead for four days! No question this was one of the greatest miracles He performed while on earth. Many of the people who came to the home Mary and Martha believed. Yet, as was always the case, there were some who went to the Pharisees and told of what they had just seen.

Then the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council and said, "What shall we do? For this Man works many signs.  If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation."

(John 11:47-48)

The Pharisees and chief priests (Sadducees) were concerned that the Romans might cause the nation of Israel serious problems for what Jesus was doing and saying. Jesus was becoming a little too well known and popular with the people. The best thing for the leaders of Israel was to ‘stay under the radar’ with respect to Rome. Any trouble like this would threaten their power and position.

And one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all, nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that *one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish*."  Now this he did not say on his own authority; but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, and not for that nation only, but also that He would gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad.   (John 11:49-52)

In the statement above, Caiaphas unwittingly prophesied just exactly what Jesus would soon be doing… one man dying for the whole nation and even the whole world. Caiaphas served as high priest for eighteen years (18-36 A.D.). Of course, he was unaware of what his comments meant in reality… he was just noting that it was better that the Jewish authorities would kill Jesus than possibly let Him cause the downfall of the state to the Romans. He was convinced that this man Jesus would cause the downfall of Israel, and hence his own downfall, if He was not stopped.

Then, from that day on, they plotted to put Him to death. Therefore, Jesus no longer walked openly among the Jews, but went from there into the country near the wilderness, to a city called Ephraim (probably very near Bethel, about 10 miles north of Jerusalem), and there remained with His disciples.  And the Passover of the Jews was near, and many went from the country up to Jerusalem before the Passover, to purify themselves.  Then they sought Jesus, and spoke among themselves as they stood in the temple, "What do you think--that He will not come to the feast?"  Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a command, that if anyone knew where He was, he should report it, that they might seize Him. (John 11:47-57)

Now it was getting dangerously close to the time of the great sacrifice that Jesus had been born to give for all of mankind – His very life. Many believe this to have been early in the year 31 A.D. It almost assuredly was between 30 A.D. and 33 A.D. Jesus stayed very nearby to Jerusalem… yet, not too close.

Now a certain ruler asked Him, saying, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"  So Jesus said to him, (Matthew 19:16)

Here begins an interesting interchange of thoughts by a rich young man and Jesus. The rich man asks the eternal question, “How can I be saved?”

"Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God.  You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not bear false witness,' 'Honor your father and your mother.'*"*  (Matthew 19:17-19)

Jesus first points out that only God is good…everyone else falls short. Of course, Jesus is God, so He is “good.” The man inadvertently had gotten that right. Then Jesus notes just a few of the Laws that the man was required to keep perfectly. This had proven to be impossible for all men up to that time… except Jesus.

And he said, "All these things I have kept from my youth." So, when Jesus heard these things, He said to him, "You still lack one thing. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."

(Matthew 19:20-21)

Jesus notes the prideful answer and instead of reprimanding him for it, He just continues and tells him the next requirement… the one that would be too hard for the rich man to perform…

But when he heard this, he became very sorrowful, for he was very rich.

(Matthew 19:22)

As it turned out his god was mammon (money)… not the God of the universe. It is not the money that will keep many out of heaven, but it is the **love of money** that is the problem. It is not the possessions that a person has that are the stumbling block to a man or woman inheriting eternal life, it is the **love of possessions (i.e. *things*)** that is the problem. Absolutely *nothing* can come between a person and Jesus! This point is made in the gospels as well as the epistles. (1 Timothy 6:10)

And when Jesus saw that he became very sorrowful, He said, "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!  For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." (Matthew 19:23-24)

As the Old Testament Law had taught everyone, it was impossible for man to keep the Law perfectly. Jesus was saying, for the typical rich man, it was even more difficult than for the average man. This was contrary to popular belief for that time as the Talmud taught that people could purchase salvation by buying alms. The more alms he could give, the more sacrifices he could offer and thus purchase his salvation. Now Jesus was noting that this was not true. So, how could anyone be saved?

And those who heard it said, "Who then can be saved?" But He said, "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God."  Then Peter said, "See, we have left all and followed You." So, He said to them, "Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration (regeneration refers to the new birth… the glorified body that all resurrection saints will receive one day), when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first.” (Matthew 19:25-30)

Peter and the others hearing the discussion were somewhat perplexed by the words of Jesus. Peter asked for some clarification as to what would become of the disciples considering that they had left everything behind to follow and obey Jesus. Jesus told him not to worry… He tells us not to worry… everything will work out just as it should. Keep in mind that these rewards are eternal and certainly there are some that may not realize their rewards until they are in heaven.

Then Jesus goes on and gives a parable that explains how salvation and rewards are given by God… in God’s economy…

"For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard.  Now when he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard.  And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.' So, they went.  Again, he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour and did likewise.  And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle, and said to them, 'Why have you been standing here idle all day?' They said to him, 'Because no one hired us.' He said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right you will receive.' So, when evening had come, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, 'Call the laborers and give them their wages, beginning with the last to the first.'  And when those came who were hired about the eleventh hour, they each received a denarius.  But when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more; and they likewise received each a denarius.  And when they had received it, they complained against the landowner, saying, 'These last men have worked only one hour, and you made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the heat of the day.'  But he answered one of them and said, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius?  Take what is yours and go your way. I wish to give to this last man the same as to you.  Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?' So, the last will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few chosen." (Matthew 20:1-16)

Simply put, it does not matter when a man or woman accepts Jesus as their Savior, they are instantly entitled to all that their adopted Father has to offer… from that moment on. It is still true today, that some people feel it is unfair that some terrible sinners who have a “deathbed conversion” should be able to go straight to heaven after their death and have the same rights as a great saint such as a Billy Graham, for example. Yet, that is God’s prerogative as He says here in these verses in Matthew. He makes the rules. All of us are invited into heaven by His grace as we are all sinners. None of us earn entrance.

Then, continuing up to Jerusalem, He took the twelve aside on the road and said to them, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man will be accomplished.  For He will be delivered to the Gentiles and will be mocked and insulted and spit upon.  They will scourge Him and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again." (Matthew 20:17-19)

But they understood none of these things; this saying was hidden from them, and they did not know the things which were spoken.

Jesus continued to give more details about His soon coming trial and crucifixion. He also told them plainly that He would rise from the grave on the third day. Although the disciples were filled with awe and fear, they did not really understand what He was saying.

Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Him with her sons, kneeling down and asking something from Him.  And He said to her, "What do you wish?" She said to Him, "Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on the left, in Your kingdom."   (Matthew 20:20-21)

This seems kind of funny. Here the mother of two of the disciples tries to lobby for her two sons to get them what she feels is the best seat and position when they all get to heaven. Jesus treats her kindly but notes that she really does not know what she is asking. For one thing, is she ready to have her sons go through the “baptism of fire” that is going to be required of them? Even more importantly, their positions in the next world will be determined by God the Father. It is not for the mother to decide.

But Jesus answered and said, "You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" They said to Him, "We are able." So, He said to them, "You will indeed drink My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with (Jesus did note that they would drink of His cup one day… John would be exiled for Him and James would be beheaded); but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared by My Father." (Matthew 20:22-23)

It was only human nature when the other ten disciples were irritated when they found out what these two had been up two… and their mother. Then Jesus stopped all of the bickering by noting that it was the humblest servant that would be first in the world to come… the opposite of what people tended to believe on the earth. The best example of that was Christ Himself! He came to serve His fellow man… always helping others in a very humble manner… eventually giving all, His life, for mankind.

And when the ten heard it, they were greatly displeased with the two brothers.  But Jesus called them to Himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them.  Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant.  And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave-- just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

Now as they went out of Jericho, a great multitude followed Him.  And behold, two blind men sitting by the road, when they heard that Jesus was passing by, cried out, saying, "Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David!"  Then the multitude warned them that they should be quiet; but they cried out all the more, saying, "Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David!" So, Jesus stood still and called them, and said, "What do you want Me to do for you?"  They said to Him, "Lord, that our eyes may be opened." So, Jesus had compassion and touched their eyes. Then Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has made you well. And immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed Him, glorifying God. (Matt 20:24-34) (Luke 18:42-43)

Jesus continued on His way to Jerusalem for Passover and once again made the time to serve men by healing two more people of blindness. During all of this commotion, there was a small man named Zacchaeus, a wealthy chief tax collector, who wanted to see this famous man, Jesus. He ran ahead and climbed up a sycamore tree for a good view as Jesus was about to pass by. When Jesus got up to the tree, He looked up and said to him:

"Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house." So, he made haste and came down, and received Him joyfully.  But when they saw it*,* they all complained, saying, "He has gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner."  Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold."  And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham; for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." (Luke 19:1-10)

As was always the case and still is, Jesus is seeking all lost men and women. As he had a few years earlier with another tax collector (Matthew), Jesus saved Zacchaeus. This man wanted to follow Jesus and had the requisite faith to do so. As also was always the case, the prideful “establishment” could only scoff at this encounter.

Jesus was getting very close to Jerusalem now…

Now as they heard these things, He spoke another parable, because He was near Jerusalem and because they thought the kingdom of God would appear immediately. Therefore, He said: "A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. So, he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas, and said to them, 'Do business till I come.'  But his citizens hated him, and sent a delegation after him, saying, 'We will not have this man to reign over us.'  And so it was that when he returned, having received the kingdom, he then commanded these servants, to whom he had given the money, to be called to him, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading.  Then came the first, saying, 'Master, your mina has earned ten minas.'  And he said to him, 'Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities.'  And the second came, saying, 'Master, your mina has earned five minas.'  Likewise, he said to him, 'You also be over five cities.' Then another came, saying, 'Master, here is your mina, which I have kept put away in a handkerchief.  For I feared you, because you are an austere man. You collect what you did not deposit and reap what you did not sow.'  And he said to him, 'Out of your own mouth I will judge you, you wicked servant. You knew that I was an austere man, collecting what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow.  Why then did you not put my money in the bank, that at my coming I might have collected it with interest?' And he said to those who stood by, 'Take the mina from him, and give it to him who has ten minas.'  (But they said to him, 'Master, he has ten minas.')  For I say to you, that to everyone who has will be given; and from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.  But bring here those enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, and slay them before me.' "   (Luke 19:11-27)

The above parable certainly has some interesting information. Jesus was upset about the servant who was unwilling to work for His Master, the Lord. For those Christians who give it their all to do the Lord’s work, their reward in heaven will be great. Those who are lazy and ashamed will have to face the Lord at the Bema Judgment seat and explain their lack of dedication. Is there really any excuse? No. Also, I think it is very reasonable to suggest that Jesus would view the subject of *working* in the world in the same way. In other words, those who work are deserving of their pay. Those who do not work, should not be paid. It is fairly simple. Of course, those who cannot work because of infirmity or age should be helped by others.

Now it was time for Jesus to go to Jerusalem. It was time for Him to ready Himself for the major purpose of His coming to the earth on this first occasion... His sacrificial death on the cross. Jesus had spent much of these last weeks in the vicinity of Jericho. Now He headed down the road as He made the 15-mile trip to Bethany. Bethany was just a couple of miles east of Jerusalem and Jesus would spend His evenings there in the company of good friends.

**From Jericho to Bethany: (Spring A.D. 31)**

And the Passover of the Jews was near, and many went from the country up to Jerusalem before the Passover, to purify themselves.  Then they sought Jesus, and spoke among themselves as they stood in the temple, "What do you think--that He will not come to the feast?"  Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a command, that if anyone knew where He was, he should report it, that they might seize Him. (John 11:55-57)

It was only a few days before Passover. The chief priests and Pharisees wondered aloud whether Jesus would appear given the fact that He had to be aware of the danger that would entail. They sent out many people as informants to make sure that they would not miss Him if He showed.

**Final Week of Jesus’ Life – Saturday;**

Then, six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus was who had been dead, whom He had raised from the dead.  There they made Him a supper; and Martha served, but Lazarus was one of those who sat at the table with Him.  Then Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil.  Then one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son*,* who would betray Him, said, "Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?"  This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it.  But Jesus said, "Let her alone; she has kept this for the day of My burial.  For the poor you have with you always, but Me you do not have always." (John 12:1-8)

Jesus allowed Mary to honor Him in her beautiful, humble way as His gift to this beautiful, saintly woman. She would gain so much herself by the giving of herself and this fragrant gift to the Savior. This gift also heralded the coming death of Jesus as the dead were prepared using costly perfumes. As for Judas, he was only interested in how much less he would now be able to steal.

Now a great many of the Jews knew that He was there; and they came, not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might also see Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead.  But the chief priests plotted to put Lazarus to death also, because on account of him many of the Jews went away and believed in Jesus.   (John 12:9-11)

The recent miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead was not doing the chief priests argument that Jesus was a fraud any good at all. Maybe they could get rid of Lazarus and put an end to this embarrassing situation. He was a witness to the power of Jesus Christ that lived very close to Jerusalem. It would do no good to have a man like this living so nearby. What stories he could tell!

**Sunday:**

When He had said this, He went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem.  And it came to pass, when He came near to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mountain called Olivet, that He sent two of His disciples, saying, "Go into the village opposite you, where as you enter you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat (only a colt that had never been ridden was fit for this sacred purpose). Loose it and bring it here*.*  And if anyone asks you, 'Why are you loosing it?*'* thus you shall say to him, 'Because the Lord has need of it.'" So, those who were sent went their way and found it just as He had said to them.  But as they were loosing the colt, the owners of it said to them, "Why are you loosing the colt?"  And they said, "The Lord has need of him."  Then they brought him to Jesus. And they threw their own clothes on the colt, and they set Jesus on him.  And as He went, many spread their clothes on the road.  Then, as He was now drawing near the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works they had seen, saying: "*'Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!'* (Psalm 118:26) Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" (Luke 19:28-39)

Jesus and His disciples were now ready to make their entrance into the holy city of Jerusalem. Jesus entered upon a donkey as was prophesied earlier in the Old Testament scriptures. Bethany and Bethpage are two towns that are separated by approximately one mile and located just to the east of Jerusalem on the slopes of the Mount of Olives. Bethany, as noted above, was the hometown of Lazarus and his sisters.

Jesus then entered into Jerusalem on the donkey, affirming the prophecy and His royalty. The coats arranged on the donkey’s back also connoted the royal purpose of the donkey’s mission. Jesus was coming into the holy city as a king of peace on the back of a donkey… not as a warrior king.

And many spread their clothes on the road, and others cut down leafy branches from the trees and spread them on the road (these actions also were evidence of the royal nature of this procession). Then those who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: "Hosanna! *'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord-the King of Israel!'* Blessed *is* the *kingdom of our father David. Hosanna in the highest!"* (Psalms 18:25-26)

(John 12:13) (Mark 11:8-10)

Now all this was done that might be fulfilled by the prophet, saying*…"Fear not, daughter of Zion;* *Behold, your King is coming,* *Sitting on a donkey's colt."* (Zechariah 9:9)  His disciples did not understand these things at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written about Him and that they had done these things to Him.  Therefore, the people, who were with Him when He called Lazarus out of his tomb and raised him from the dead, bore witness.  For this reason, the people also met Him, because they heard that He had done this sign.  The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, "You see that you are accomplishing nothing. Look, the world has gone after Him!" (John 12:15-19)

These events were prophesied in the Old Testament. The disciples did not recognize this fulfillment of prophesy at this time, but later, after His death, they became aware as they recalled the pertinent Old Testament scriptures. Note also, in the last verse, that the Pharisees had begun to realize that many people were beginning to turn to Him. This had them very concerned. They were just about to do something about this difficult situation.

And some of the Pharisees called to Him from the crowd, "Teacher, rebuke Your disciples."  But He answered and said to them, "I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out." (Luke 19:39-40)

The Pharisees seem to give Jesus one last chance to reverse the growing belief that He was the promised Messiah. However, Jesus would not deny Himself.

Next, Jesus weeps over His beloved city. Remember that the Trinity always has had a great love for this city. So many of the great men and woman of Jewish history have lived and reigned there. Someday, this city will once again be a wonderful and powerful capital city of the world! But at that time Jesus said…

Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it, saying,

"If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes.  For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation." (Luke 19:41-42)

This happened just as Jesus described (building an embankment around the city and systematically defeating various sections of the city, one by one) about 38 years later as Rome leveled Jerusalem in A.D. 70. In A.D. 66 the Jews revolted against the tyrannical Roman rule. Three years later, Titus, the son of Emperor Vespasian, was sent to crush this rebellion. Six hundred thousand Jews were killed during this onslaught and the temple was utterly destroyed and leveled.

And when He had come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, "Who is this?" So,the multitudes said, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee." Then Jesus went into the temple of God and when He had looked around on everything, as the hour was already late, He went out to Bethany with the twelve. (Matthew 21:10-11) (Mark 11:11)

Jesus had arrived into town for Passover week. As it was late, he made a short trip to the Temple and then decided to get rest for the big days to come. Jesus and His friends soon headed back outside the city proper for a good night’s rest. Apparently, Jesus and the disciples often stayed at night with Lazarus and his family during the festivals of the Jews. That is where they went that night as it was not safe for Jesus to stay in the city.

**Monday:**

And on the morrow, when they were come out from Bethany, he hungered.  And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find anything thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for it was not the season of figs.  And he answered and said unto it, no man eat fruit from thee henceforward forever. And his disciples heard it. (Mark 11:12-14)

That was Monday morning. Jesus used the fig tree as a parable for the nation Israel. The tree was alive as it had leaves… but it did not produce anything! Obviously, Jesus was not pleased by this.

Then Jesus went into the temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold in the temple and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves.  And He would not allow anyone to carry wares through the temple.  Then He taught, saying to them, "Is it not written, *'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations'?* (Isaiah 56:7) But you have made it a *'den of thieves.'"* (Jeremiah 7:11)

And the scribes and chief priests heard it and sought how they might destroy Him; for they feared Him, because all the people were astonished at His teaching.

(Mark 11:15-19)

Once again, as He had done earlier, Jesus cleared His temple of the evil doers and their wares. The Temple was a house of prayer and where people came to commune with God… not a place of business… and certainly not the business of these unscrupulous people! Next Jesus did what He always was doing… helping others and healing the sick.

Then the blind and the lame came to Him in the temple, and He healed them.  But when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that He did, and the children crying out in the temple and saying, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" they were indignant and said to Him, "Do You hear what these are saying?" And Jesus said to them, "Yes. Have you never read, *'Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants* *You have perfected praise'?"*  (Psalms 8:2)

And He left them, and when evening came He went out of the city to Bethany and lodged there.

After hearing the praise of the common folk and children, Jesus also heard the always present cries of His detractors. As the day drew to a close, Jesus once again went back Monday night to spend the evening with His friends.

**Tuesday:**

Now in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. And Peter, remembering, said to Him, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree which You cursed has withered away."   (Mark 11:20-21) (Matthew 21:14-19)

The fig tree had always been a symbol for Israel. Of course, it was quite obvious by now that Israel was not going to accept the Messiah… Jesus. Since this was to be the case, their rejection of Jesus Christ, the Messiah, they would obviously not be able to bear fruit – add to the Kingdom of God. The fig tree, therefore, withered and died.

So, Jesus answered and said to them, "Have faith in God.  For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says.  Therefore, I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them*,* and you will have them*.*  "And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.  But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses." (Mark 11:22-26)

Jesus used this moment to teach on the value of faith. Sadly, the nation of Israel lacked faith in Jesus Christ, their Messiah. That was going to prove disastrous for them. Jesus pointed out that with the proper faith, wonderful things can be accomplished. One other point He added was that a person be forgiving of others. This is important as we all want our Father in heaven to forgive us our sins and answer our prayers. When we hold a grudge, this hinders God from granting our prayer requests.

Now when He came into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people confronted Him as He was teaching, and said, "By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority?"  But Jesus answered and said to them, "I also will ask you one thing, which if you tell Me, I likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things: The baptism of John--where was it from? From heaven or from men?" And they reasoned among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' He will say to us, 'Why then did you not believe him?'  But if we say, 'From men,' we fear the multitude, for all count John as a prophet." So, they answered Jesus and said, "We do not know." And He said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.

(Mark 11:27-33)

Jesus taught quite a lot in the Temple that last week before He went to the cross. Imagine the thoughts that must have been going through His mind as He was teaching yet still knowing what lay before Him just a couple days hence.

"But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, 'Son, go, work today in my vineyard.'  He answered and said, 'I will not,' but afterward he regretted it and went.  Then he came to the second and said likewise. And he answered and said, 'I go*,* sir,' but he did not go.  Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said to Him, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you.  For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him; but tax collectors and harlots believed him; and when you saw it*,* you did not afterward relent and believe him.”   (Matthew 21:28-32

Jesus here teaches the Pharisees and the common people that it will be those Jews who repent of their sins will be the ones who God will take into heaven one day. People like the *former* harlots and tax collectors will be welcomed into eternal life as they put their faith in Jesus. Those of the Jews who were too prideful to recognize the coming Messiah would not believe and therefore would not have their sins forgiven… they would not be entering the kingdom of God.

And He was teaching daily in the temple. But the chief priests, the scribes, and the leaders of the people sought to destroy Him and were unable to do anything; for all the people were very attentive to hear Him. (Luke 19:47-48)

"Hear another parable: There was a certain landowner (God) who planted a vineyard (Israel) and set a hedge around it, dug a winepress in it and built a tower. And he leased it to vinedressers (Jewish leaders) and went into a far country (heaven).  Now when vintage-time drew near, he sent his servants (good prophets and priests) to the vinedressers, that they might receive its fruit.  And the vinedressers took his servants, beat one, killed one, and stoned another.  Again, he sent other servants, more than the first, and they did likewise to them. Then last of all he sent his son (Jesus) to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.'  But when the vinedressers saw the son, they said among themselves, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance.' So, they took him and cast him out of the vineyard and killed him*.*  Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vinedressers?"  They said to Him, "He will destroy those wicked men miserably, and lease his vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons."  Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: *'The stone which the builders rejected* *Has become the chief cornerstone.* *This was the Lord's doing,* *and it is marvelous in our eyes'?*  (Psalms 118:22-23) "Therefore, I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it.  (The kingdom of God was about to be given to the Gentiles). And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder."  Now when the chief priests and Pharisees heard His parables, they perceived that He was speaking of them.  But when they sought to lay hands on Him, they feared the multitudes, because they took Him for a prophet. (Matt 21:33-46) (Mark 11:11-13)

The Jewish leaders were smart enough to understand that Jesus was speaking of them. They knew that Jesus was gaining a following and that it was certainly time to put a stop to this “rabble-rouser” before He gained too much influence over the people. They had it pretty good there in Jerusalem and they certainly did not want anyone causing a change in the way things were done or looked at. Most of all, they wanted to keep the Roman authorities happy.

Jesus made one other interesting point in this parable. The chief cornerstone would have a different effect on different people. Some would use it as the chief cornerstone for building of the Kingdom of God (the Christian). Some would stumble over this stone (the average Jew of that and subsequent times). Some would eventually be crushed to a powder (those who reject Jesus will be crushed by Him at the Great White Throne judgment).

Jesus continued and taught using another parable concerning the kingdom of heaven:

"The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son (Jesus), and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding (Israel); and they were not willing to come.  Again, he sent out other servants, saying, 'Tell those who are invited, "See, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatted cattle are killed, and all things are ready. Come to the wedding."'  But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business. And the rest seized his servants (e.g. prophets), treated them spitefully, and killed them*.*  But when the king heard aboutit*,* he was furious. And he sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.  Then he said to his servants (disciples, and other evangelists), 'The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy.  Therefore, go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding.' So, those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding hall was filled with guests.  But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. So, he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment (someone such as a Jewish Pharisee who refused to accept Jesus and His message of salvation)?' And he was speechless. Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'  For many are called, but few are chosen." (Matt 22:1-14)

Jesus taught about the kingdom of heaven very frequently in these closing weeks of His ministry. One of His major points was that all of mankind was invited into His kingdom. It was certainly a terrible shame that the original invitees had mostly spurned the offer… but, the invitation list was for all people in all the world. There would be many that would cheerfully accept! Jesus tells us in His words above that only those who are dressed correctly… dressed in the proper wedding garment… would be allowed to stay. What is that appropriate wedding garment? We need be covered in the “blood of the Lamb”… saved by Jesus Christ.

Then the Pharisees went and plotted how they might entangle Him in His talk.  And they sent to Him their disciples with the Herodians (Jews who supported Herod as the last hope of Israel to retain some form of national government separate from that of Roman authority), saying, "Teacher, we know that You are true, and teach the way of God in truth; nor do You care about anyone, for You do not regard the person of men.  Tell us, therefore, what do You think? Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?"  But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, "Why do you test Me, you hypocrites?  Show Me the tax money." So, they brought Him a denarius.  And He said to them, "Whose image and inscription is this?"  They said to Him, "Caesar's." And He said to them, "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."  When they had heard these words, they marveled, and left Him and went their way. (Matt 22:15-22)

Jesus had no interest in anarchy at all. He believed that in this world there was a reason for civil governments that the people should support. The Herodians and Pharisees believed that it was incompatible to be a good Jew and pay tribute to Caesar who claimed to be a god. On the other hand, God should always take precedence when there is a conflict between being true to God versus true to one’s national government.

The same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him and asked Him, saying: "Teacher, Moses said that if a man dies, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife and raise up offspring for his brother.  Now there were with us seven brothers. The first died after he had married, and having no offspring, left his wife to his brother.  Likewise, the second also, and the third, even to the seventh.  Last of all the woman died also.  Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife of the seven will she be? For they all had her."  Jesus answered and said to them, "You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God.  For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage but are like angels of God in heaven.  "The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage.  But those who are counted worthy to attain that age, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; nor can they die anymore, for they are equal to the angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection.”  (Matthew 22:23-31) (Luke 20:35-36)

Jesus is straightforward here as He tells us that there will be no marriage in heaven. Therefore, there will be no conflict in heaven in situations similar to that described in the Sadducees example. We certainly will know our earthly spouse and have a special relationship with him/her. However, it apparently will not be exactly the same as it is in our present age.

“But concerning the dead, that they rise, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the *burning* bush *passage,* how God spoke to him, saying, *'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'?*  He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living. You are therefore greatly mistaken." (Mark 12:26-27)

The Sadducees looked at only the Pentateuch (the Torah – Genesis through Deuteronomy) as being scripture. They did not ‘trust’ in the “prophets” portion of scripture as did most of the Jews including the Pharisees. They apparently had found no evidence in the Pentateuch for heaven. Jesus gave them at least some of the evidence found in these first five books of the Old Testament.

Since God told Moses in the burning bush that He *is* the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob… and since God is not a God over dead humanity… these men must still have been alive when God was talking to Moses! Yet, that was several hundred years since they had left this earth! How could that be? Because immediately after passing out of this world, they entered into ‘Paradise’ and waited there for Christ to save them for their entrance into heaven. They would be following Him there, coincidentally, within a week of the time of this interchange!

The next verse shows that this answer satisfied many.

And when the multitudes heard this*,* they were astonished at His teaching. Some of the scribes made answer and said, “Teacher, You have spoken well.” And no longer dared they to ask Him anything. (Matt 22:23-33) (Luke 20:34-40)

But when the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question*,* testing Him, and saying, "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?"  Jesus said to him, "*'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.'*  This is *the* first and great commandment.  And the second is like it: *'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'*  On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets." (Matthew 22:36-40)

The Pharisees had arrived at over 600 laws! They often met to discuss the relative importance of these laws as well as many other religious topics. At least one wanted to get this great theologian’s commentary on these laws… therefore he asked Jesus what He thought. With His words above, Jesus had just made a nice summary of the Ten Commandments. If a man loves God with all of his heart, soul and mind *and* loves other humans as himself, it would seem that all of the other commandments would take care of themselves… they would all be followed as a result of following these *two* *great commandments* of Jesus.

So, the scribe said to Him, "Well said*,* Teacher. You have spoken the truth, for there is one God, and there is no other but He.  And to love Him with all the heart, with all the understanding, with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices."  Now when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, He said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." But after that no one dared question Him. (Mark 12:32-34)

This man recognized the truth of what Jesus had said and pointed out that this love of God and one’s neighbor (and remember who a *neighbor* is) was what was really important… more important than their animal sacrifices. His last step needed was to reach out in faith and accept Jesus for who He was… God our Lord and Redeemer.

While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying, "What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?" They said to Him, "The Son of David."  He said to them, "How then does David in the Spirit call Him *'Lord,'* saying:  *'The Lord said to my Lord,* *"Sit at My right hand,* *Till I make Your enemies Your footstool"'?*  "If David then calls Him *'Lord,'* how is He his Son?" (Psalms 110:1)  And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor from that day on did anyone dare question Him anymore. (Matt 22:41-46)

Jesus gives another lesson during this Tuesday afternoon. He had just answered the questions of the Jewish leaders of that day. Now, Jesus turns the table and asks them a dandy question Himself. Jesus knew that these Pharisees were expecting a Messiah from the line of David. However, they were looking for a human figure who would lead them to victory over the Romans and to a world power similar to what Israel had experienced under King David and Solomon. They did not know that the Messiah would actually be God as well. So, Jesus gets them to thinking with the question…Why would David refer to his Lord as his son? This he did in Psalms 110:1. The answer is found in the person of Jesus. Jesus was David’s son and his Lord!

Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, saying: "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat.  Therefore, whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do.  For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.  But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments.  They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, 'Rabbi, Rabbi.'  But you, do not be called 'Rabbi'; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren.  Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven.  And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ.  But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”  (Matthew 23:1-12)

In this discourse, Jesus tells the people to listen to the words of the Pharisees and follow them as long as it is consistent with the scriptures. He then adds that the multitude should not follow after the pattern of behavior of these same leaders as they surely did not practice what the preached… with some exceptions such as Nicodemus. Jesus once again points out the value of humility. He also notes that there really is only one Father and that is God in heaven. There also is only one great Teacher and that is Christ Himself. It is certainly reasonable to give proper respect to a teacher of the Law and later to the apostles and other church leaders. On the other hand, all of these people are humans and should not be seen as anything other than that.

“But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves*,* nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.  Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. Therefore, you will receive greater condemnation.  Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.  Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'Whoever swears by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obliged to perform it.*'* Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that sanctifies the gold?  And, 'Whoever swears by the altar, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gift that is on it, he is obliged to perform it.*'*  Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gift or the altar that sanctifies the gift?  Therefore, he who swears by the altar, swears by it and by all things on it.  He who swears by the temple, swears by it and by Him who dwells in it.  And he who swears by heaven, swears by the throne of God and by Him who sits on it.  Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.  Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!  Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence.  Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also.  Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness.  Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.  Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, and say, 'If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.'  Therefore, you are witnesses against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets.  Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers' guilt*.*  Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell?  Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city, that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.  Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.  "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!  See! Your house is left to you desolate; for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, *'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!' "*

(Matt 23:13-39)

Jesus really blasts the Pharisees and scribes as hypocrites in this speech. He casts seven “woes” on to them (in contrast to the repeated blessings that Jesus bestowed in the beatitudes when He preached His Sermon on the Mount). Jesus shows them just how hypocritical they are and condemns their religious activities. Most important, the words and actions of these Jewish leaders were keeping some from following Jesus and thereby preventing them from entering into the kingdom of heaven.

Other “woes” spoken toward these leaders involved their false sense of importance on so many fairly unimportant things. They were sticklers for all of their laws (many of them man-made) yet did not show justice and mercy and faith.

Jesus concludes this speech by noting, with sadness, how He wishes that He could just gather His children from the House of Israel together as a hen gathers her chicks. Unfortunately, God’s absolute sense of justice made this impossible. Their free will gave them the opportunity to reject the Messiah and turn their back on Jesus. They chose to do just that to their eternal sorrow.

Now Jesus sat opposite the treasury and saw how the people put money into the treasury. And many who were rich put in much.  Then one poor widow came and threw in two mites, which make a quadrans. So, He called His disciples to Himself and said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury; for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood." (Mark 12:41-44)

As the widow gave her all, she gave more than everyone.

Now there were certain Greeks among those who came up to worship at the feast.  Then they came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and asked him, saying, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus."  Philip came and told Andrew, and in turn Andrew and Philip told Jesus.  (John 12:20-22)

Apparently, some Greeks came to Philip and asked if they might have an audience with Jesus. Philip was a Jew but had a Greek name. They knew Philip had a close relationship with this great man. Philip, in turn, got some moral support from Andrew and together they approached their Master with the request of these Gentiles.

But Jesus answered them, saying, "The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified.  Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.” (John 12:23-24)

Jesus tells them that the time had come that he was going to die! This was necessary in the same way as it was necessary for a grain of wheat to be buried in order for the production of much grain. Jesus was telling them that because of His death, burial and resurrection, millions would gain entrance into heaven. It was imperative that He die in order for so many to live.

“He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.  If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor.”  (John 12:25-26)

Those that follow Jesus must place obedience to Jesus before the pleasures and comforts of this current life on earth. If we follow Jesus while here on this earth, we will also follow Jesus right into heaven on our passing from this life onto the next!

"Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose, I came to this hour.  Father, glorify Your name." Then a voice came from heaven, saying*,* "I have both glorified it and will glorify it again."  Therefore, the people who stood by and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to Him."  Jesus answered and said, "This voice did not come because of Me, but for your sake.  Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out.  And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself."  This He said, signifying by what death He would die.  The people answered Him, "We have heard from the law that the Christ remains forever; and how can You say, 'The Son of Man must be lifted up'? Who is this Son of Man?"  Then Jesus said to them, "A little while longer the light is with you. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you; he who walks in darkness does not know where he is going.  While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light." (John 12:27-36)

Interestingly enough, Jesus has a very human moment here. He asks, rhetorically, if He should ask His Father to save Him from Their eternal plan to sacrifice Him on the cross. He immediately casts this idea aside as His sacrificial death was the major purpose of His coming to earth! God speaks audibly from heaven just at that time to let everyone know, including His Son, that His name had already been glorified by what Jesus had done and would be glorified even further by the coming events.

Jesus then told of His impending crucifixion which caused many to ask how the Messiah could die. They were certain the scriptures stated He should live forever. (e.g. For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.  Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. (Isaiah 9:6-7… other verses noting the eternal nature of the Messiah include Psalms 72:17 and Ezekiel 37:26-28)

As it turns out, Jesus left this question without a straight out answer at that time… the answer would be not long in coming, however. Soon after His resurrection, this answer became obvious. In the meantime, Jesus told the people to walk with Him while they still had the opportunity as that chance would not be there much longer.

These things Jesus spoke, and departed, and was hidden from them.  But although He had done so many signs before them, they did not believe in Him, that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke: *"Lord, who has believed our report?* *And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?"*  (Isaiah 53:1) Therefore, they could not believe, because Isaiah said again:  *"He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts,* *lest they should see with their eyes,* *lest they should understand with their hearts and turn,* *So that I should heal them."*  (Isaiah 6:10) These things Isaiah said when he saw His glory and spoke of Him.  Nevertheless, even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him*,* lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.

(John 12:36-43)

Jesus soon left the crowd. There were so many reasons for people to believe that He was the Messiah, yet relatively few were willing to step out in faith and accept Him as their Savior and Lord. Even many of the ruling class saw the logic in what Jesus claimed, yet for reasons of pride and worldly position, they sacrificed their eternal reward in heaven… they turned their back on their Messiah.

Jesus had one last appeal to the masses and once again laid out the situation that every human is faced with … all must decide what to do with Jesus. Is He going to be our Lord or not? So, Jesus lays out the situation for everyone…

Then Jesus cried out and said, "He who believes in Me, believes not in Me but in Him who sent Me.  And he who sees Me sees Him who sent Me.  I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness.  And if anyone hears My words and does not believe, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world.  He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him--the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.  For I have not spoken on My own authority*;* but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak.  And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak." (John 12:44-50)

After this final appeal to the people, Jesus left the Temple and walked back toward the Mount of Olives. When He got to the base of the Mountain, He sat down and looked back at the Temple and began to speak of future times… in fact, the end times. Jesus told His disciples what it would be like in the world just before He came back again to set up His Kingdom on earth… often called the Millennial Kingdom.

**Olivet Discourse:**

Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple.  And Jesus said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down."  (approximately 40 years later this prophesy would be fulfilled when the Romans, literally, leveled the Temple). Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked Him privately, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?"  And Jesus, answering them, began to say: (Mark 13:3-5)

"Take heed that no one deceives you.  For **many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many**.  And **you will hear of wars and rumors of wars**. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.  For **nation will rise against nation**, and kingdom against kingdom. And **there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places.**  All these are the beginning of sorrows. Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and **you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake.**  And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another.  Then **many false prophets** will rise up and deceive many. And because **lawlessness will abound**, the love of many will grow cold.  But he who endures to the end shall be saved.  And **this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come**. (Matthew 24:4-14)

It is quite obvious that we are now living in the time where every item that Jesus spoke of has either already come true or is just around the corner. In fact, about the only thing that has not already been fulfilled of those items above is that there may be a few areas where the gospel has not yet reached. Even this has arguably been completed when one considers the global reach of the internet, television and other means of mass communication. Certainly not every individual has heard the gospel, but it probably has been preached in all the world in our time… and this has only been the case in very, very recent times. Obviously, we are very close to the end times. The Rapture (when all Christians are caught up into heaven by Jesus) could happen at any time… of course, Jesus may not come for decades. It is hard to believe that the return of Jesus could be much more than 25-50 years away… at most… I say this due to not only the biblical signs that are fulfilled, but also the fact that there are so many people and nations that are on the verge of destroying the world with nuclear weapons. Jesus must come before someone detonates enough nuclear bombs to destroy the world… Jesus will not let that happen. Although His second coming is at hand, no one can know that day or hour as God Himself has said. However, the signs are *all* here now.

"But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. For there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people.  And they will fall by the edge of the sword and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. (Luke 21:23-24)

The first portion of the above prophecy was fulfilled in A.D. 70 when the Roman army conquered Jerusalem. When will the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled? This time will end when those Christian Gentiles and Jews are raptured into heaven. This will herald the onset of the seven-year Tribulation. Then God will return His attention to His original “chosen people” who He has never forgotten. Of course, they missed the Messiah’s first coming… they will be ready for His second, no doubt. In fact, the Jews will play a vital role during the tribulation period and will be champions once again for God and Christ.

The war that is mentioned by Jesus above will happen just before the second coming of Christ when Israel will be invaded by foreign powers during the seven-year tribulation.

"Therefore, when you see the *'abomination of desolation,'* (most believe this will occur at the mid-point of the tribulation) spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.  Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house.  And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes.  But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days!  And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath.  For then there will be **great tribulation**, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be.  And **unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened.**  Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe it*.*  For **false christs and false prophets will** rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.  See, I have told you beforehand.  Therefore, if they say to you, 'Look, He is in the desert!' do not go out; or 'Look, He is in the inner rooms!' do not believe it*.*  For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.  For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together.  "**Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven;** men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth **and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.  Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.  And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.** Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near." (Matthew 24:15-31) (Luke 21:25-28)

Jesus continues on with His prophetic look at the end times. Just before total annihilation would occur, He will come in great power and glory… much different than His first coming… with His angels and the elect (millions of Old Testament saints and all of the Christian saints in heaven) to put a stop to the carnage and put all of the evil doers in their rightful place… this will include Satan.

 "Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near.  (The fig tree is likely a picture of the nation of Israel. Israel became a nation once again in 1948. It certainly is putting out *tender leaves* as it begins to grow and prosper in the world after re-establishing its nation. No people have ever gone nearly so long… since 605 B.C…. and then come together as an independent nation in the same land! This *miracle* took place simply because God was and is behind it… Israel is and always has been God’s “chosen people”). So, you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near--at the doors!  Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. (once these end-time events begin to happen en-masse, the second coming of Christ will not be far behind).  Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.  "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only.  But as the days of Noah were*,* so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.  For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.  Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left.  Two womenwillbe grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left.  Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming.  But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into.  Therefore, you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.  "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season?  Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods.  But if that evil servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' and begins to beat his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (Matt 24:32-51)

Simply put, Jesus wants us to be always ready for His re-appearing. He also wants us to be expecting and watching for His coming. He speaks of this again with another parable…

"Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.  Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.  But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept.  And at midnight a cry was heard*:* 'Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!'  Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.'  But the wise answered, saying, 'No*,* lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.'  And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut.  Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us!' But he answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.'  Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming. (Matt 25:1-13)

Every person should always be living for Jesus Christ. All Christians should live their lives as if they knew that Jesus was going to appear “that very day… that very minute.” Although this is very difficult to do, it should be our goal in life. When He calls for us… and that call can come in an instant of time, let us all be absolutely ready to make Him proud!

 "For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them.  And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey.  Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them and made another five talents.  And likewise, he who had received two gained two more also.  But he who had received one went and dug in the ground and hid his lord's money.  After a long time, the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them. So, he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, 'Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.'  His lord said to him, 'Well done*,* good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'  He also who had received two talents came and said, 'Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them.'  His lord said to him, 'Well done*,* good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'  Then he who had received the one talent came and said, 'Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed.  And I was afraid and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have whatis yours.'  But his lord answered and said to him, 'You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed. So, you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest.  Therefore, take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents.  For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away.  And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' (Matt 25:14-30)

Wow! This is an intriguing parable. Just what is Jesus saying? God allots a certain amount of resources to every person. He expects that each person will take these resources… which can be a variety of things such as money, property, intelligence, athletic skill, vocal abilities (oratory, singing), teaching or preaching talents, writing skill, etc., and develop and use these resources to the glory of God and His kingdom. The amount of talent/resources that we are given will vary. On the other hand, we are all supposed to use these resources to the maximum. If we do, we are doing His will and we will be rewarded… either on this earth, in heaven or both. If a person squanders their talents and gifts, God will punish him/her. It is as simple as that.

I think that this situation can easily and properly be extended to how God looks at how people use their earthly skills in their daily life even when it does not directly relate to work for the kingdom. Since everything a Christian does reflects on His Father in heaven, it is obvious God wants every Christian to work hard and contribute to society. People who can work need to work. However, when a person is unable to do so through no fault of their own (the classic cases would be widows and children), Christians who can, need to come to their aid.

 "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory.  All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.   (Matthew 25:31-33)

Here Jesus talks of that day in the future when He will be coming in all of His power and glory. At that time, He will separate the sheep (Christians) from the goats (those who have rejected the gospel). He spoke of this in earlier sermons.

Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.'  Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You*,* or thirsty and give You drink?  When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You*?*  Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?'  And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.'   (Matthew 25:34-40)

When we do good and loving deeds for others it as if we did it for our Lord Himself! Let us remember this the next time we have the chance to do a kind task for someone less fortunate… and let them know of our Lord as we help them. That would be the greatest favor we could ever do for someone in need!

Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels:  for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink;  I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.'  Then they also will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?'  Then He will answer them, saying, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.'  And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." (Matt 25:41-46)

Now it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, that He said to His disciples, "You know that after two days is the Passover, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified."  Then the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders of the people assembled at the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, and plotted to take Jesus by trickery and kill Him*.*  But they said, "Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar among the people." (Matt 26:1-5)

Now it was only two days before the annual feast of Passover. Jesus told His disciples that this was now that time that He had been telling them would be coming – the time when He would be offered up as a sacrifice for all mankind. While this poignant conversation was going on, the officers of the Jews were plotting their next course of action. They would arrest Jesus very soon, but not until after Passover. Not coincidentally, Judas then entered into their presence and asked what they would give him if he would deliver up Jesus to them.

At night He went out and stayed on the mountain called Olivet.  Then early in the morning all the people came to Him in the temple to hear Him. (Luke 21:37-38)

After His very important sermon, Jesus headed on back to the home of His good friends to visit and spend the night once again. His disciples also accompanied Him. Early Wednesday morning, Jesus went back into the city to speak to the people and His disciples. Time was getting short.

**Wednesday:** “day of silence” – no mention of the details of His day in the Bible

**Thursday**: **Passover**

Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, "What are you willing to give me if I deliver Him to you?" And they counted out to him thirty pieces of silver. So, from that time he sought opportunity to betray Him. (Matt 26:14-16)

The Old Testament predicted that the Messiah would be betrayed for thirty pieces of silver. (Zechariah 11:12)

Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they killed the Passover lamb*,* His disciples said to Him, "Where do You want us to go and prepare, that You may eat the Passover?" And He sent out two of His disciples and said to them, "Go into the city, and a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him.  Wherever he goes in, say to the master of the house, 'The Teacher says, "Where is the guest room in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples?"'  “Then he will show you a large upper room, furnished and prepared; there make ready for us." So, His disciples went out, and came into the city, and found it just as He had said to them; and they prepared the Passover. (Matthew 26:17-19)

Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end. So, with supper begun, the devil having already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son*,* to betray Him, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God, rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself.  After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded.  Then He came to Simon Peter. And Peter said to Him, "Lord, are You washing my feet?"  Jesus answered and said to him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this."  Peter said to Him, "You shall never wash my feet!" Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me."   (John 13:1-8)

Judas was ready to betray His best friend, Jesus. Satan had already gained a foothold in the soul and spirit of this man. It would only be minutes before he left the room to act out his betrayal. Jesus, on the other hand, was now ready to give His faithful disciples an object lesson.

Peter felt that it was not right for Jesus to stoop to wash his feet. First of all, in that time, the washing of feet was reserved for menial servants. Although the disciples would have washed the feet of Jesus, they would not have done so to one another. Now, Jesus is washing all of their feet! What was going on here? There are two object lessons to be gained from this demonstration of service by Jesus. First, a spiritual one… as Jesus noted correctly to Peter, if a person is not *washed in the blood of the Lamb*, that person will have no part of Jesus… ever… no chance at eternal life in heaven. When Jesus explained the necessity of the washing, Peter was all for it, and more. Jesus, once again, taught Peter (and all people) that one washing will do – the sacrificial death of Jesus on the cross was a onetime necessary and sufficient event – to save people from their sins. The second object lesson, a more obvious one, was to show the marked importance of humility and selfless service that should typify all Christians.

Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!" Jesus said to him, "He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you." (Judas was not *clean - saved*) For He knew who would betray Him; therefore, He said, "You are not all clean." So, when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you?  You call me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am.  If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.  For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.  Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.  I do not speak concerning all of you. I know whom I have chosen; but that the Scripture may be fulfilled, *'He who eats bread with Me* *has lifted up his heel against Me.'* (Psalms 41:9) Now, I tell you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe that I am He*.*  Most assuredly, I say to you, he who receives whomever I send receives Me; and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me."

When Jesus had said these things, He was troubled in spirit, and testified and said, "Most assuredly, one of you who eats with Me will betray Me."  And they began to be sorrowful, and to say to Him one by one, "Is it I?" And another said*,* "Is it I?"  He answered and said to them, "It is one of the twelve, who dips with Me in the dish.  The Son of Man indeed goes just as it is written of Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had never been born." (John 13:9-22) (Mark 14:18-21)

Obviously, it troubled Jesus that Judas would do such a thing to Him. Frankly, Jesus did not feel bad about the fact that this action by His disciple would lead to His arrest in a few hours… that was what He wanted to happen anyway. It was just that He was saddened that this friend of His was throwing His life away. It would literally have been better if Judas had never been born just as Jesus said. By the way, that goes for all non-Christians that are alive today!

Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved (i.e. John).  Simon Peter therefore motioned to him to ask who it was of whom He spoke.  Then, leaning back on Jesus' breast, he said to Him, "Lord, who is it?"  Jesus answered, "It is he to whom I shall give a piece of bread when I have dipped it*."* And having dipped the bread, He gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon.  Now after the piece of bread, Satan entered him. Then Jesus said to him, "What you do, do quickly."  But no one at the table knew for what reason He said this to him.  For some thought, because Judas had the money box, that Jesus had said to him, "Buy those things we need for the feast," or that he should give something to the poor.  Having received the piece of bread, he then went out immediately. And it was night.  So, when he had gone out, Jesus said,

"Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in Him.  If God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and glorify Him immediately.  Little children, I shall be with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, 'Where I am going, you cannot come,' so now I say to you.  A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.  By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another

Then He said to them, "With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I say to you, I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it*,* and gave it to them and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me." Then He took the cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, and they all drank from it.  And He said to them, "This is My blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for many for the remission of sins.  Assuredly, I say to you, I will no longer drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God." (John 13:23-34) (Mark 14:12-26) (Luke 22:14-15)

So here we have a neat tie-in of the Old Testament feast of Passover with a new celebration… the Lord’s Supper. So many years earlier, God had instituted Passover to continually remind the Israelites of how He saved them from their slavery to the Egyptians… and to herald the coming salvation that He would provide through His only begotten Son… Jesus, the Messiah. Almost 1500 years later, this incredibly important time had arrived.

Also note that Jesus will next celebrate this feast with all Christians in heaven… one day all those who trust in Jesus for their salvation will join together for a wonderful supper… the “marriage supper of the Lamb.” What an absolutely wonderful occasion that will be!

Now there was also a dispute among them, as to which of them should be considered the greatest.  And He said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called 'benefactors.'  But not so among you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves.  For who is greater, he who sits at the table, or he who serves? Is it not he who sits at the table? Yet I am among you as the One who serves. But you are those who have continued with Me in My trials.  And I bestow upon you a kingdom, just as My Father bestowed one upon Me, that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." (Luke 22:24-30)

Once again, Jesus points out the importance of humility and service in His economy. Remember, the first shall be last, the last shall be first. However, Jesus does tell His disciples that they all (except for Judas) will have very important positions in heaven.

Next, Peter wanted to get back to the topic Jesus had brought up about going someplace that they could not go with Him. So, Peter asks…

"Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, where are You going?" Jesus answered him, "Where I am going you cannot follow Me now, but you shall follow Me afterward." (John 13:36)

Peter said to Him, "Lord, why can I not follow You now? I will lay down my life for Your sake." (John 13:24-38)

And the Lord said, "Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat.  But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me*,* strengthen your brethren."

Although Jesus knew that Peter was about to have a terribly bad night, He also knew, of course, that a short time thereafter, Peter would become a stalwart apostle for Jesus. Jesus told him so right here. He told Peter to remember to “strengthen his brethren” after he “returned” to his typical strong faith in Jesus.

But he said to Him, "Lord, I am ready to go with You, both to prison and to death."  Then He said, "I tell you, Peter, the rooster shall not crow this day before you will deny three times that you know Me." (Luke 22:31-34)

Unfortunately, Peter was unable to speak up for His Savior later that night. This should give every Christian pause… if a man like Peter failed Jesus in this clutch situation, how can we be absolutely sure how we will react to potential situations like this? I hope we would stand up for Jesus even unto death. Our Lord certainly did that and much more for us (recall that He had to suffer the penalty for all of our sins in addition to His horrible beatings and crucifixion)!

Although Jesus has just delivered a blow to Peter that certainly must have shaken his confidence greatly, Jesus now is about to give a comforting message to His followers. He tells the disciples, and other Christians to follow, what is in store for those who ‘finish the race’…

"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me.  In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so*,* I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.  And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.  And where I go you know, and the way you know."   (John 14:1-4)

Jesus had recently been speaking a lot on going away… on His upcoming death. He now tells the disciples that He will be going on to heaven to prepare a place for all people who put their faith in Him. Jesus tells them that they will someday follow as they know the way. Thomas is not so sure…

Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?"  Jesus said to him, "**I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.** (John 14:5-6)

Jesus states some of the most powerful and important words ever spoken in answer to Thomas’ question. The question was “how can we know the way” to heaven? The answer was that Jesus was the way… there was no other way possible! Anyone who wants to pass from this life into the next must go through Jesus. He has the answer, He is the truth, He is the One who gives life, now and forever. Anyone else claiming any power over death is a liar. It is interesting how many religions state that there are many ways to heaven – Jesus says there is only one. If we believe Him, we must go through Him, follow Him and obey Him.

"If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him."  Philip said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us." Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? **He who has seen Me has seen the Father**; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?  Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority*;* but the Father who dwells in Me does the works.  Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves.  "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father.   (John 14:7-12)

In these next few sentences to Philip, Jesus tells him that to see Him is to see God the Father. Jesus shows a little disappointment that Philip did not already understand this after having spent all those years together.

Jesus also notes that in the years to follow, greater works will be done in His name by His followers than even He had done over the past few years. That, of course, proved to be true as more miracles were performed, more souls were saved, more countries were converted to Christianity, etc.

And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it*.*  "**If you love Me, keep My commandments**.  (John 14:13-15)

Here Jesus makes two more important points:

* Whatever we ask in Jesus’ name and that is in God’s will, Jesus will do so that God will be glorified.
* Jesus tells the disciples and He tells us… if we love Him, keep His commandments – that is the evidence that we do love Jesus

And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper (the Holy Spirit), that He may abide with you forever--the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for ***He dwells with you and will be in you***.  I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.  "A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. **Because I live, you will live also**.  At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.  **He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me**. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him."  Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, "Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?"  Jesus answered and said to him, (John 14:16-22)

Judas is asking Jesus how He will be able to communicate with His children, Christians, yet not be seen by the rest of the world. Jesus then tells Judas the “secret” of the Holy Spirit’s ministry.

"**If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word**; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him (the Holy Spirit will live within every Christian).  He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent Me.  "These things I have spoken to you while being present with you.  But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.   (John 14:23-26)

When Jesus left the earth and returned to heaven, He soon sent to each believer the third person of the Holy Trinity… the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will be our daily helper… helping us to live our lives as we should to become more like Jesus… also helping us to interpret the Bible as we study God’s Word. The Holy Spirit helped each of the writers of the books of the New Testament so that God’s word would be written without error and as God directed.

Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.  (John 14:27)

Jesus promises to be with each Christian as we face the difficulties of life. He offers us His peace. We should cling to Him through all of our trying times knowing that He will see us through. Jesus loves us and will help us and eventually bring all of His children to heaven for a wonderful eternal life with Him and our Christian brothers and sisters.

You have heard Me say to you, 'I am going away and coming back to you.' If you loved Me, you would rejoice because I said, 'I am going to the Father,' for My Father is greater than I.  And now I have told you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe.  I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me.  But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave Me commandment, so I do. Arise, let us go from here. (John 14:28-31)

Jesus has predicted His soon coming death so that they would understand that it was all His plan. He was glad to be going back to His Father. He wanted them to know that everything was totally under control even though the events of the next day would look shocking to them. For a moment, the god of this world would have his moment… but, Satan has no power over Jesus. Whatever was going to happen was solely because it was what Jesus wanted.

Jesus continued His last day teaching as He spoke a parable concerning Himself, His Father and His followers…

"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.  Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.  You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.  I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. (John 15:1-5)

The grapevine is a symbol of Israel in the Old Testament (as is the fig tree). God had carefully planted this “vine,” and nurtured it. Unfortunately, Israel had ultimately let God down. Even in the days of Jesus, only a relatively few of the Jews had chosen to accept Jesus as the Messiah. Of course, that remains true today.

Jesus then tells His listeners that He is the true vine, a vine that certainly will never let anyone down. The followers of Jesus, both Jews and Christians are the branches. The branches can grow and produce fruit if and only if they remain solidly attached to the vine.

If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.  If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.  By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so, you will be My disciples.  "As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love.  If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.  These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.  (John 15:6-11)

Jesus then restates the fact that true followers will abide in Him and obey Him. Jesus tells us that by doing these things we will have the joy that comes from following Him… and joy is a by-product of obeying and giving one’s life to Jesus.

There are different interpretations concerning the branches Jesus says that shall be burned in the fire. Some believe these are people who never really were Christians (those that believe that once a person is saved they will always be saved). Some believe that these are Christians that later turned their back on Jesus (those that believe that a person can lose their salvation). Whatever the case, the only way to be a productive Christian is to abide in Jesus!

This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.  **Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends**.  You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.  No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.  (John 15:12-15)

Jesus, the King of the universe calls us His friends! In those days, disciples of rabbis, like Jesus, were called servants. Jesus does not look at His disciples, or any other Christian, as servants. He also is noted elsewhere to be like a Brother and a Father to those who follow Him.

He gives us a specific commandment to love one another as He loved us. Wow! That means we should be ready to give our life for our brothers and sisters in Christ.

You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.  (John 15:16)

Here Jesus states the obvious to the disciples… that He chose them. On the other hand, it is not so blatantly apparent that He also chose all other Christians… yet, He is saying that here as well.

These things I command you, that you love one another.  "If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before ithated you.  If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.  Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also.  But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know Him who sent Me.  (John 15:17-21)

Jesus tells His disciples that they can expect harsh treatment just as Jesus got harsh treatment… and they surely did get treated terribly by the “world.” Many, many Christians today still suffer greatly for their faith… thousands, if not millions, to the point of death!

If I had not come and spoken to them, they would have no sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. He who hates Me hates My Father also.  If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would have no sin; but now they have seen and also hated both Me and My Father.  But thishappened that the word might be fulfilled which is written in their law, *'They hated Me without a cause.'* (Psalms 69:4) "But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me.  And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning. (John 15:22-27)

"These things I have spoken to you, that you should not be made to stumble.  They will put you out of the synagogues; yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service.  And these things they will do to you because they have not known the Father nor Me.  But these things I have told you, that when the time comes, you may remember that I told you of them. And these things I did not say to you at the beginning, because I was with you.  "But now I go away to Him who sent Me, and none of you asks Me, 'Where are You going?'  But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart.  Nevertheless, I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.  And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:  of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.  I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.  However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority*,* but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.  He will glorify Me (the Holy Spirit will glorify Jesus), for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you (the Holy Spirit will reveal truths about Jesus to the believer through prayer and Bible study).  All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore, I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you. (John 16:1-15)

Jesus prepared the way for the Holy Spirit in the verses above. Up until this time, the disciples did not have to take much abuse for the sake of their Messiah… Jesus was the “lightning rod” Himself. Unfortunately, now that Jesus would soon be gone, that situation was about to change.

Jesus told the disciples that they would have a rough time in the years to come as they took the message of the Gospel to the outside world. Most of the people would not accept their message, unfortunately. They would suffer mental, emotional, and physical pain as they obeyed and followed Jesus. Jesus would not be able to be with them as He later would be in heaven. On the other hand, because He went to the Father, He would send the third person of the Holy Trinity to literally live within each apostle and personally help them for the remainder of their lives! Because of the Holy Spirit, the apostles would have amazing power to do glorious things for Christ… and they would do these miracles and spread the Gospel all over the world of that time.

"A little while, and you will not see Me (upon His crucifixion); and again, a little while (on the third day), and you will see Me, because I go to the Father."  Then some of His disciples said among themselves, "What is this that He says to us, 'A little while, and you will not see Me; and again, a little while, and you will see Me'; and, 'because I go to the Father'?"  They said therefore, "What is this that He says, 'A little while'? We do not know what He is saying."  Now Jesus knew that they desired to ask Him, and He said to them, "Are you inquiring among yourselves about what I said, 'A little while, and you will not see Me; and again, a little while, and you will see Me'? Most assuredly, I say to you that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; and you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy.  A woman, when she is in labor, has sorrow because her hour has come; but as soon as she has given birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world.  Therefore, you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you.  (John 16:16-22)

When Jesus died on the cross, the disciples were extremely saddened. They were stunned that their friend and supposed Messiah had actually left them alone… apparently, they thought, without accomplishing His mission. They also must have been ashamed of how they had reacted to His capture, trial and execution. They certainly had not stood up for their best friend! Yet, Jesus is predicting, in His words above, that soon after this miserable time in their lives… this very painful time… that joy would come. Jesus would be coming back to them as He would miraculously rise from the dead!

An analogous situation is seen for all Christians as we pass from life on this earth to life with Jesus in heaven. The pain that we all feel on this side of the “curtain,” as we approach death, will totally be forgotten (in milliseconds) as we step onto those golden streets of heaven.

And in that day, you will ask Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you.  Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.  "These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; but the time is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but I will tell you plainly about the Father.  In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I shall pray the Father for you; for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from God (God loves those who love His Son). I came forth from the Father and have come into the world. Again, I leave the world and go to the Father." His disciples said to Him, "See, now You are speaking plainly, and using no figure of speech!  Now we are sure that You know all things and have no need that anyone should question You. By this we believe that You came forth from God."  Jesus answered them, "Do you now believe?  Indeed, the hour is coming, yes, has now come, that you will be scattered, each to his own, and will leave Me alone (Jesus predicts their defections coming up in a couple of days). And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me (of course, His Father will be with Him at all times just as He is with us at all times).  These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." (John 16:23-33)

Jesus now prays to God His Father:

Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: "Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him.  And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.  I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.  And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.  "I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. (Now Jesus begins a petition on behalf of His disciples). They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word.  Now they have known that all things which You have given Me are from You.  For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received them*,* and have known surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent Me.  I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours.  (Interestingly, Jesus here tells God that He is specifically praying for the disciples… not for those who had rejected His message nor those who would reject it in the future. He asks for God’s blessings on the twelve… they were going to need a lot of help and they were going to get it through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit). I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are*.*  (Jesus prays that all of His disciples will be as the Holy Trinity… that is, together in heaven one day)! While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name. Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled (Jesus took perfect care of all of His disciples and all would one day be in heaven… the lone exception was Judas Iscariot, but that was a special circumstance to say the least).  But now I come to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves.  I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.  I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one.  (Jesus prays for God’s protection for these future apostles as they navigate through this treacherous world, a world that is influenced terribly by Satan). They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by Your truth. (Jesus asks God to purify Christians as they go through their lives on this earth… it should be the goal of all Christians to become more like Jesus each day of their lives). Your word is truth.  As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.  And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth.  (In these next few sentences, Jesus expands His request to His Father as He asks for God’s blessing on all future Christians… including eternal life in heaven). "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.  And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one:  I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.  Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.  O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me.  And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it*,* that **the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them**." (Jesus would live in the believer as would the love of the Father). (John 17:1-26)

Jesus finishes his prayer by noting that the world did not know God. That is, of course, still true today. Yet, Jesus notes that He has successfully given the message to the disciples and they would pass this gospel message on through the ages.

And He said to them, "When I sent you without money bag, knapsack, and sandals, did you lack anything?" So, they said, "Nothing."  Then He said to them, "But now, he who has a money bag, let him take it*,* and likewise a knapsack; and he who has no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one.  (Luke 22:35-36)

In the earlier times of His ministry, Jesus had specifically told His disciples to limit their preparations as they went out to accomplish their ministry work. Jesus saw to it through His sovereign power that all of their needs were met. Now, with Jesus about to be crucified, He was telling them that in the future, they would be more responsible for this preparatory work. The same is true for us today. Although Jesus will always be with us, He expects for us to do the best we can when it comes to working for Him and His kingdom. Proper study and other methods of preparation are our responsibility.

For I say to you that this which is written must still be accomplished in Me: *'And He was numbered with the transgressors.'* (Isaiah 53:12) For the things concerning Me have an end." So, they said, "Lord, look, here are two swords." And He said to them, "It is enough." (Luke 22:37-38)

And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. (Mark 14:26)

The disciples gave Jesus a quick answer that they at least had some weapons for self-protection as they were about to head back out of town to the Mount of Olives. Jesus had plans to spend the night in prayer…

 Then Jesus said to them, "All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: *'I will strike the Shepherd,* *and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.'* (Zechariah 13:7) But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee."  Peter answered and said to Him, "Even if all are made to stumble because of You, I will never be made to stumble."  Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you that this night, before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times."  Peter said to Him, "Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!" And so said all the disciples.   (Mark 14:27-31)

Jesus tells Peter that he will not have the courage to stand up for His Messiah that very night! That amazes the disciple, but it would be the truth of the matter. Actually, none of the disciples stood up for their Master although they all said they would not deny Him. Peter would deny Him before the morning crowing of a rooster. Some believe that the various gospel accounts suggest that Peter actually denied Jesus three times before the cock crowed at all PLUS three more times before the cock crowed twice. The first mention by Jesus of this coming denial comes while eating the Last Supper (seen in Luke and John)… just before Jesus gives His great farewell speech. The second mention by Jesus of this denial came while the men were walking to the Mount of Olives (in Matthew and Mark). I believe that the only important point is that Peter was going to deny Jesus, even though he was so adamant of his love and concern for his Master that very same night! I wonder how we would have done? By the way, do you stand up for Jesus in every and all situations? Are you proud to be a Christian? Do you let *everyone* know it when a reasonable opportunity presents itself?

**Crossing the Kidron Valley into the Garden of Gethsemane:**

When Jesus had spoken these words, He went out with His disciples over the Brook Kidron, where there was a garden, which He and His disciples entered. (John 18:1-2)

Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to the disciples, "Sit here while I go and pray over there."  And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and He began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed.  Then He said to them, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. (Isaiah 53:3) Stay here and watch with Me." (Mark 14:32-34)

Keeping in mind that Jesus never sinned, it is worth noting that He apparently was anxious and, in some manner, a little depressed at the prospects of His immediate future. It only makes sense that a human (and Jesus was fully human as He was fully God) would be concerned mightily while facing this amazing amount of torture, death and the massive penalty for all of mankind’s sin! Certainly, the main cause for His concern was the incredibly horrendous thought of dealing with the penalty that had to be paid to rescue all humanity from their cesspool of sin.

When we as humans are facing difficult situations or horrible things happen in our lives, I do not believe that God labels our natural human emotions as sin when we at times become depressed or anxious. It is my opinion, that as long as we are doing all that we can to overcome these detrimental emotions by turning to God in prayer and trying our best to turn things over to Him, He will honor that commitment by helping us deal with these problems and our reaction to them.

He went a little farther, and fell on the ground, and prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him.  And He said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will*."*  (Mark 14:35-37)

This certainly is an interesting verse! Here Jesus speaks to His Father and notes that since “all things are possible” for God, could His Father take the *cup* meant for Him away? Of course, what Jesus was *really* asking was if there were some other mechanism, other than His crucifixion, that *would result in the salvation of mankind from their sins*. Jesus would prefer that over what He now faced for obvious reasons. Yet, if not, He was ready to face the new day coming. Whatever the will of the Father… that is what Jesus wanted and that is what we should want.

Then He came to the disciples and found them asleep, and said to Peter, "What? Could you not watch with Me one hour?  Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."  Again, a second time, He went away and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if this cup cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it, Your will be done."  And He came and found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy. So, He left them, went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words.   (Matthew 26:40-44)

Then an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him.  And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.  When He rose up from prayer, and had come to His disciples, He found them sleeping from sorrow.  Then He said to them, "Why do you sleep? Rise and pray, lest you enter into temptation." (Luke 22:43-46)

God sent an angel to help Jesus through this incredibly difficult time. Not only did Jesus know what was about to happen in the hours that lay ahead, but His great enemy was spending all of His evil energy on tempting Jesus and persecuting Jesus as the hour of our Lord’s sacrifice approached. Although there is absolutely no doubt that God has omnipotent power and will always prevail against Satan, the devil is no “weak sister.” The humanity of Jesus was tested by all of the power of Satan. Our Savior came through the night as we have all come to expect… victorious… but it was still a very difficult night!

Unfortunately, the twelve disciples did not have one of their best nights as they kept falling asleep instead of praying and standing guard. Guess who was just about to come up to meet them...?

Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners.  Rise, let us be going. See, My betrayer is at hand."  And while He was still speaking, behold, Judas, one of the twelve, with a great multitude with swords and clubs, came from the chief priests and elders of the people.  Now His betrayer had given them a sign, saying, "Whomever I kiss, He is the One; seize Him."  Immediately he went up to Jesus and said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" and kissed Him.

But Jesus said to him, "Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?"

(Matthew 26:45-50) (Luke 22:48)

Jesus therefore, knowing all things that would come upon Him, went forward and said to them, "Whom are you seeking?"  They answered Him, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus said to them, "I am He*."* And Judas, who betrayed Him, also stood with them.  Now when He said to them, "I am He*,"* they drew back and fell to the ground.  Then He asked them again, "Whom are you seeking?" And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth."  Jesus answered, "I have told you that I am He*.* Therefore, if you seek Me, let these go their way," that the saying might be fulfilled which He spoke, "Of those whom You gave Me I have lost none."  Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus. (John 18:4-10)

As is frequently the case with prophetic statements, here is another that Jesus actually quotes, that has a *double fulfillment* over time…"Of those whom You gave Me I have lost none.” While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name. Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. (John 17:12)

Here Jesus uses it to show that none of his “saved” disciples will be lost that night. This verse also has a more important meaning as well. Not one person who puts their faith in Jesus as their Lord and Savior will ever be snatched out of the Savior’s hand. All will be saved and enter their eternal rest in heaven one day.

But Jesus said to him, "Permit even this." And He touched his ear and healed him.

"Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword.  Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels?  How then could the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must happen thus?"   (Matthew 26:52-53) (Luke 22:51)

Peter was obviously fighting mad and showed it! Jesus stopped the bloodshed and told the disciples to let Him handle the situation. In fact, Jesus said that what was happening was happening only because it was what needed to happen to fulfill the scriptures. If this was not what His Father and He wanted to take place, twelve legions of heavenly angels would have put an abrupt stop to the Romans right then and there.

Then Jesus said to the chief priests, captains of the temple, and the elders who had come to Him, "Have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs?  When I was with you daily in the temple, you did not try to seize Me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness." (Luke 22:52-53)

Jesus notes that these people who had come to arrest him had many opportunities to take Him captive over the previous 4-5 days. Why did they wait until the middle of this night? Were they not men enough to face the consequences of arresting Him in daylight? No, they were much more comfortable working their sinful deeds in the darkness so well-known and used by their master… Satan!

Then they all forsook Him and fled.  Now a certain young man followed Him, having a linen cloth thrown around his naked body*.* And the young men laid hold of him, and he left the linen cloth and fled from them naked. (Mark 14:50-52)

After the arrest of Jesus, a long night of trials was about to begin. Only the gospel of Mark records the incident of this young man. Tradition suggests that this man may have been Mark himself, although this is only conjecture.

**From Gethsemane to Annas’ house:**

Then the detachment of troops and the captain and the officers of the Jews arrested Jesus and bound Him.  And they led Him away to Annas first, for he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas who was high priest that year.   (John 18:12-13)

The high priest therefore asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his teaching.  Jesus answered him, I have spoken openly to the world; I ever taught in synagogues, and in the temple, where all the Jews come together; and in secret spake I nothing.  Why askest thou me? Ask them that have heard me, what I spake unto them: behold, these know the things which I said.  And when he had said this, one of the officers standing by struck Jesus with his hand, saying, answerest thou the high priest so?  Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me? Then Annas sent Him bound to Caiaphas the high priest’s house where all of the chief priest and the elders and the scribes had gathered together. (John 18:19-24)

Jesus was first brought to the house of Annas, the father-in-law of the high priest. Jesus pointed out that He had spoken very openly in the Temple and in the synagogues in the region. It should be no mystery as to what He believed nor what He said. Jesus suggested that Annas just ask any and all of those that had listened to Him over the years of His ministry. All Jesus got was a sharp clout with a guard’s hand. Annas was not at all interested in getting involved in this case so he promptly sent Jesus on to the trial that was about to begin at Caiaphas’s house.

**From Annas to Caiaphas:**

Now it was Caiaphas who advised the Jews that it was expedient that one man should die for the people. (John 18:14)

Recall that earlier Caiaphas had made this statement when plotting the demise of Jesus. Now he was going to have his chance to hasten His death.

Now the chief priests and the whole council sought false witness against Jesus, that they might put him to death; and they found it not, though many false witnesses came. (Matthew 26:59-60)

Obviously, this trial was a classic “kangaroo court.” The truth was totally irrelevant… in fact, the truth was to be avoided at all costs. Instead, the high priest kept interviewing false witnesses until he found a statement that he could use against Jesus.

But afterward came two, and said, this man said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days.  And the high priest stood up, and said unto him, answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee?  But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou art the Christ, the Son of God.  Jesus said unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Henceforth ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.  Then the high priest rent his garments, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy: what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard the blasphemy:  what think ye? They answered and said, He is worthy of death. (Matthew 26:61-66)

Jesus had actually spoken in the third person… that is, He said, “Destroy this Temple and I shall raise it up on the third day.” This He said concerning Himself. In any event, Caiaphas was using these words against Jesus in this exchange. Jesus did not answer the accusers’ lies. As had been prophesied in Isaiah, Jesus remained silent.

Next Caiaphas decided to ask Jesus point blank whether He was the Messiah. Jesus answered truthfully that Caiaphas was correct in His assumption… Jesus was indeed the Messiah. In fact, soon He would be sitting at the right hand of His Father, God, in heaven! Also, He would be coming back some day to rule and reign on the earth. Wow! That statement was dynamite!

With those words of Jesus, Caiaphas had a conniption fit and tore his clothes and branded Jesus a blasphemer… this was worthy of the death penalty as far as that court was concerned.

And the men that held Jesus mocked him and beat him.  And they blindfolded him, and asked him, saying, Prophesy: who is he that struck thee?  And many other things spake they against him, reviling him.   (Luke 22:63-66, 70-71)

As the evening went on, Peter tried to see what was happening to Jesus as he was interrogated by Annas and then Caiaphas. Several people appeared to recognize him as one of the group who followed Jesus. Not only the people already mentioned, but so did another woman as he passed by a gateway and another man as well. Not only that, but a kinsman of the man that Peter had struck with his sword was convinced that he had seen Peter in the garden earlier that night. He was with a group of men who also noted that Peter’s speech was of a Galilean, confirming in their minds that he was indeed a follower of Jesus! Surely thou art one of them: for thou art a Galilaean, and thy speech agreeth thereto. (Mark 14:70) In every case, Peter vehemently denied that he even knew Christ and even began to curse and swear. The Apostle John described it this way…

Simon Peter kept following Jesus from afar off, even to the courtyard of the high priest, and so did another disciple. And that disciple (most commentators believe this to be John) was known to the high priest and went into the courtyard with Jesus but Peter stood outside the door. Then the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to her who kept the door, and brought Peter in.  Then the servant girl who kept the door said to Peter, "You are not also one of this Man's disciples, are you?" He said, **"I am not."**  And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals; for it was cold: and they warmed themselves: and Simon Peter stood with them and warmed himself. They said therefore unto him, Art not thou also one of his disciples? He denied it, and said, **I am not**. One of the servants of the high priest, being his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with him? **Peter then denied again**: and **immediately the cock crew**. (John 18:15-18; 25-27)

Mark wrote that Peter’s last denial was actually, “**I know not this man of who you speak**. Man, I know not what you are talking about.” (Mark 14:66-72) **And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew**.  And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how that he said unto him, Before the cock crow this day thou shalt deny me thrice.  And he went out and wept bitterly. (Luke 22:60-62)

After Caiaphas had his say, Jesus still faced a council of priests and scribes who were about to pronounce the same judgment on the Messiah. This trial took place very early on Friday morning. They asked Jesus the same question that the High Priest had asked just a few hours earlier…

As soon as it was day, the elders of the people, both chief priests and scribes, came together and led Him into their council, saying, "If You are the Christ, tell us." But He said to them, "If I tell you, you will by no means believe.  And if I also ask you, you will by no means answer Me or let Me go.  Hereafter the Son of Man will sit on the right hand of the power of God."  Then they all said, "Are You then the Son of God?" So, He said to them, "You rightly say that I am."  And they said, "What further testimony do we need? For we have heard it ourselves from His own mouth." (Luke 22:66-71)

While the trial of Jesus was progressing, Judas was definitely having second thoughts on the evil deed that he had just perpetrated on Jesus…

Then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that He had been condemned, was remorseful and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." And they said, "What is that to us? You see to it!" Then he threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed and went and hanged himself.  But the chief priests took the silver pieces and said, "It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, because they are the price of blood."  And they consulted together and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in.  Therefore, that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day.  Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, *"And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the value of Him who was priced,* whom they of the children of Israel priced, *and gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord directed me."* (Jeremiah 32:6-9) (Zechariah 11:13) (Matt 27:3-10)

The deed and its aftermath were both predicted in the scriptures… which should be no surprise to any Christian. The main prophecy is found in the eleventh chapter of Zechariah. After this brief mention of the fate of Judas, the New Testament account returns to the trial of Jesus…

After this meeting, they led Jesus to the Praetorium. It was still early morning. This would be the fourth “court” that Jesus would appear before within just a few hours! But they themselves did not go into the Praetorium, lest they should be defiled, but that they might eat the Passover.  Pilate then went out to them and said, "What accusation do you bring against this Man?"  They answered and said to him, "If He were not an evildoer, we would not have delivered Him up to you."  Then Pilate said to them, "You take Him and judge Him according to your law." Therefore, the Jews said to him, "It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death," that the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled which He spoke, signifying by what death He would die. (John 18:28-32)

Jesus had always predicted that He would die via the cross. This was the method of execution by the Romans. The Jews used stoning as their form of execution. Apparently, the Jews were not able to give the death penalty to anyone without the backing of the Roman government. In this case, the Jewish leaders were handing Jesus to Pilate for crimes that they claimed were worthy of the death penalty. Now they wanted him to find Jesus guilty!

They began to accuse Him, saying, “We have found this fellow perverting the nation and forbidding to pay tribute to Caesar, saying that He Himself is Messiah, a king.”

(Luke 23:2)

They continued to spew false charges against Jesus at Pilate while Jesus stood in silence. Pilate was marveling at the scene. Finally, he began to talk to Jesus…

Then Pilate entered the Praetorium again, called Jesus, and said to Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?" Jesus answered him, "Are you speaking for yourself about this, or did others tell you this concerning Me?"  Pilate answered, "Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered You to me. What have You done?"  Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here."  Pilate therefore said to Him, "Are You a king then?" Jesus answered, "You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."  Pilate said to Him, "What is truth?" And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews… and said to the chief priests and the crowd, "I find no fault in this Man." But they were the more fierce, saying, "He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee to this place." (Luke 23:4-5) (John 18:33-38)

However, the crowd kept insisting that Jesus was a real trouble maker from Galilee to Jerusalem. That last sentence gave Pilate an idea… maybe Jesus was a Galilean. He asked and found out that he was indeed from that region and therefore came under the jurisdiction of Herod. Let Herod deal with this problem. It was a no-win situation for whoever would make the final decision. Luckily, Herod was in town that day. So, Jesus was taken to King Herod and had to go through another grilling. The result was the same.

Now when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad: for he was of a long time desirous to see him, because he had heard concerning him; and he hoped to see some miracle done by him.  And he questioned him in many words; but he answered him nothing.  And the chief priests and the scribes stood, vehemently accusing him.  And Herod with his soldiers set him at nought, and mocked him, and arraying him in gorgeous apparel sent him back to Pilate.  And Herod and Pilate became friends with each other that very day: for before they were at enmity between themselves. (Luke 23:8-12)

So, Jesus was now back in front of Pilate. Apparently, all Herod wanted was to see Jesus perform a miracle or two… and he wanted, simply, to see this famous man. Jesus did not say anything before King Herod as it was certainly pointless. Herod refused to rule on the case and quickly sent Him back to Pilate.

Pilate once again addressed the Jews. He said that he found no guilt in Jesus concerning the things of which He had been accused. In particular, He certainly was not guilty of anything remotely deserving of death. So, he tried another tack…

"But you have a custom that I should release someone to you at the Passover. Do you therefore want me to release to you the King of the Jews?"  Then they all cried again, saying, "Not this Man, but Barabbas!" Now Barabbas was a robber. (John 18:39-40)

The Jews had a custom that they could have one prisoner released each year at Passover, whomever the people wanted. Pilate had suggested that they choose Jesus. He had all along had a bad feeling about condemning Jesus and now that feeling had gotten worse. His wife had come to him and told him that she had just had a vivid dream. She said that she suffered many terrible things in the dream because of Jesus. She was terribly worried what was going to happen to the both of them should her husband, Pilate, send Jesus to the cross. Pilate tried his best to assuage the crowd’s anger toward Jesus by having his soldiers scourge the Messiah severely. They also spit in His face all throughout this beating. After this was finished and Jesus was horribly beaten, Pilate showed the crowd the results of the beating and once again told the crowd that he saw no reason for any further punishment…

And Pilate went out again, and saith unto them, Behold, I bring him out to you, that ye may know that I find no crime in him.  Jesus therefore came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple garment. And Pilate saith unto them, Behold, the man!  When therefore the chief priests and the officers saw him, they cried out, saying, crucify him, crucify him! Pilate saith unto them, take him yourselves, and crucify him: for I find no crime in him. The Jews answered him, we have a law, and by that law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God.  When Pilate therefore heard this saying, he was the more afraid; and he entered into the Praetorium again, and saith unto Jesus, Whence art thou? But Jesus gave him no answer.  Pilate therefore saith unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? Knowest thou not that I have power to release thee, and have power to crucify thee? Jesus answered him, Thou wouldest have no power against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath greater sin.  Upon this Pilate sought to release him: but the Jews cried out, saying, If thou release this man, thou art not Caesar's friend: every one that maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar.  When Pilate therefore heard these words, he brought Jesus out, and sat down on the judgment-seat at a place called The Pavement, but in Hebrew, Gabbatha.  Now it was the Preparation of the Passover: it was about the sixth hour (John used the Roman method of reckoning time – hence, this would have been 6:00 A.M.). And he saith unto the Jews, Behold, your King!  They therefore cried out, away with him, away with him, crucify him! Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, we have no king but Caesar. (John 19:4-17)

Well, it was certainly evident that the Jews wanted Jesus to be crucified. The Pharisees, chief priests and scribes has worked assiduously in getting the crowd on their side. People were joining the “band wagon” against Jesus… they now had developed a “lynching” mentality. Pilate gave up trying to save Jesus from the crowd. Instead, he tried his best to make sure the blame for this man’s death did not rest on him…

So, when Pilate saw that he prevailed nothing, but rather that a tumult was arising, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this righteous man; see ye to it.  And all the people answered and said, His blood be on us, and on our children. (Matt 27:21-25)

And Pilate, wishing to content the multitude, released unto them Barabbas, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified.  And the soldiers led him away within the court, which is the Praetorium; and they call together the whole band.  And they clothe him with purple, and platting a crown of thorns, they put it on him; and they began to salute him, Hail, King of the Jews!  And they smote his head with a reed, and spat upon him, and bowing their knees worshipped him.  And when they had mocked him, they took off from him the purple, and put on him his garments. And they led him out to crucify him. And they compelled one passing by, Simon of Cyrene, coming from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to go with them, that he might bear his cross.

(Mark 15:15-20)

So, now the sentence had been delivered. Jesus was going to be crucified. After several beatings and terrible mocking, He was just about ready to make the extremely difficult trip up to Golgotha. The soldiers seemed to get a great deal of morbid pleasure in crushing a crown of thorns onto the head of Jesus and wrapping a purple robe around His shoulders. Purple was the color of royalty. Apparently, they made Jesus make one more horrible trip around the courtyard to the jeers of the crowd, and then they prepared to take Him to His death on the cross.

This walk now began. There were certainly still some faithful followers…

And there followed him a great multitude of the people, and of women who bewailed and lamented him.  But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children.  For behold, the days are coming, in which they shall say, blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the breasts that never gave suck.  Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us.  For if they do these things in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry? (Luke 23:27-31)

In the words above, Jesus expressed His sorrow over the fate of Israel one last time. This related to the coming Roman destruction in A.D. 70.

And they brought him unto the place Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, the place of a skull. And they offered him wine mingled with myrrh: but he received it not.

And Pilate wrote a title also and put it on the cross. And there was written, JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS.  This title therefore read many of the Jews, for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city; and it was written in Hebrew, and in Latin, and in Greek.  The chief priests of the Jews therefore said to Pilate, Write not, The King of the Jews; but that he said, I am King of the Jews.  Pilate answered, what I have written I have written.   (Mark 15:22-23) (John 19:19-22)

This is an interesting point. Pilate had the proper title written across the cross. The chief priest thought that he had simply made a slight error… forgetting to make the sign say that ‘He said, I am the King of the Jews’. As it turns out, Pilate had made no mistake in the lettering and he told the Jews that the lettering would remain as written. The signs were written in Hebrew, Greek and Roman lettering.

The soldiers therefore, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also the coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout.  They said therefore one to another, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, *They parted my garments among them, And upon my vesture did they cast lots.* (Psalm 22:18) These things therefore the soldiers did. (John 19:23-24)

And it was the third hour (9:00 A.M. – the Jewish method of measuring time was being used by all of the gospel writers except John), and they crucified him. And Jesus said, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.  And with him they crucified two robbers; one on his right hand, and one on his left.  *And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, and he was reckoned with transgressors*. (Isaiah 53:12) And one of the malefactors that were hanged railed on him, saying, Art not thou the Christ? Save thyself and us.  But the other answered, and rebuking him said, Dost thou not even fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?  And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss.  And he said, Jesus, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom.  And he said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise. (Mark 15:27-28) (Luke 23:34, 39-43)

Here Jesus shows that He will save a person no matter how late a true conversion takes place. The robber turned to Jesus in faith. He realized that the Messiah was going to be with His Father in heaven a little later that day, and he simply asked Jesus to remember him. Jesus did so much more than that… He gave him an eternal home in heaven with Him!

And they that passed by railed on him, wagging their heads, and saying, Ha! Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself, and come down from the cross.  In like manner also the chief priests mocked him among themselves with the scribes said, He saved others; himself he cannot save.  Let the Christ, the King of Israel, now come down from the cross, that we may see and believe

But there were standing by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.  When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by whom he loved (John), he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold, thy mother! And from that hour the disciple took her unto his own home. (Mark 15:29-32) (John 19:25-27) (Matthew 27:39-41)

Here we see that Jesus had His mother, John and Mary Magdalene near the foot of the cross. Jesus took the time to ask John to take care of His mother while He was gone… Mary would treat John as a son.

And when the sixth hour (noon) was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour (3:00 P.M.), the sun’s light failing.  And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?  And some of them that stood by, when they heard it, said, Behold, he calleth Elijah.  And one ran, and filling a sponge full of vinegar, put it on a reed, and gave him to drink, saying, Let be; let us see whether Elijah cometh to take him down. (Mark 15:33-36) (Matthew 27:45-49)

From noon until 3:00 P.M. darkness enveloped the area. At 3:00 P.M., Jesus was just about to enter into His Father’s hands… Before this happened, God did turn away from His Son as Jesus took the penalty for all mankind’s sins onto Himself. God cannot look at sin and this brief yet horrible separation of the Father and the Son was agonizing for Jesus… and, presumably for the Father as well. Also, this three hours of darkness had to be a supernatural “eclipse” as the Jewish Passover always fell on a full moon. Therefore, a solar eclipse could not have occurred.

After this Jesus, knowing that all things are now finished, that the scripture might be accomplished, saith, I thirst.  There was set there a vessel full of vinegar: so they put a sponge full of the vinegar upon hyssop, and brought it to his mouth.  When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said this, he gave up the ghost. (John 19:28-30)

Now Jesus had finished His job here on earth. He had successfully lived a sinless life, taught all men and women how to live a life pleasing to God, then died as a perfect sacrifice for all mankind. Now, He would return to heaven and His rightful position at the right hand of God, His Father.

And the veil of the temple was rent in two from the top to the bottom. And the earth did quake; and the rocks were rent; and the tombs were opened; and many bodies of the saints that had fallen asleep were raised; and coming forth out of the tombs after his resurrection they entered into the holy city and appeared unto many.

And when the centurion, who stood by over against him, saw that he so gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God.

And all the multitudes that came together to this sight, when they beheld the things that were done, returned smiting their breasts. And there were also women beholding from afar: among whom were both Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome; who, when he was in Galilee, followed him, and ministered unto him; and many other women that came up with him unto Jerusalem. (Mark 15:37-41) (Matthew 27:39-53)

Immediately after Jesus gave up the ghost, amazing things began to happen as described above. Probably most significant was the earthquake which resulted in the renting in half, from top to bottom, the veil that had always signified the separation between the ordinary man and God. Now that Jesus had become the Christian’s intermediary, a person no longer had a barrier to coming to the Father directly… hence, the veil was no longer an impediment. So many incredible things happened at that time it became obvious to the centurion that, “Truly, this man was the Son of God!”

**His burial:**

The Jews therefore, because it was the Preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath, that the bodies should not remain on the cross upon the Sabbath (for the day of that Sabbath was a high day), asked of Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. The soldiers therefore came, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other that was crucified with him: but when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: howbeit one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and straightway there came out blood and water.  And he that hath seen hath borne witness, and his witness is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye also may believe.  For these things came to pass, that the scripture might be fulfilled, “*A bone of him shall not be broken.”* (Psalm 34:20, Exodus 12:46, Numbers 9:12) And again another scripture saith, “*They shall look on him whom they pierced.”* (Zachariah 12:10)

And when even was now come, there came Joseph of Arimathaea, a councillor of honorable estate (he had not consented to their counsel and deed), who also himself was looking for the kingdom of God; and he boldly went in unto Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus.  And Pilate wondered if he were already dead: and calling unto him the centurion, he asked him whether he had been any while dead.  And when he learned it of the centurion, he granted the corpse to Joseph. He bought therefore cloth of fine linen and went and took down the body. And there came also Nicodemus (he who at the beginning came to Jesus at night), bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about 75 pounds. So, they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as the custom of the Jews is to bury. (John 19:31-40)

Some of the ruling class were believers in Jesus… and they helped their Messiah to a proper burial at this time.

And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses beheld where he was laid.  And they returned and prepared spices and ointments, and sitting across from the sepulcher, they saw the tomb and how His body was laid. Jesus was laid him in a tomb which had been hewn out of a rock and where never man had yet lain; and they rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. They (i.e. the friends of Jesus) rested on the Sabbath according to the commandments. (Luke 23:51,53,56) (Mark 15:42-47)

Now on the morrow, which is the day after the Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees were gathered together unto Pilate, saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said while he was yet alive, After three days I rise again.  Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest haply his disciples come and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: and the last error will be worse than the first.  Pilate said unto them, Ye have a guard: go, make it as sure as ye can. So, they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, the guard being with them. (Matt 27:62-66)

The Jewish leadership wanted to make sure that Jesus stayed in the tomb. They asked the Romans to guard the tomb carefully. Their request was granted, especially as the Romans also had a vested interest in Jesus staying in the tomb, themselves. No chance would be taken that someone would open His tomb and possibly take Him away. There was really no need of this, however, as there was no group of people who would care to see a dead Jesus come out of the tomb! He certainly would be of no value to His disciples in that state… a dead Jesus would be just a reminder of how much they had been duped over the last 3-4 years!

**Sunday Morning:**

Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary the mother of James, and Salome, bought spices that they might come and anoint Him. And on the first day of the week at early dawn they came, and certain others with them, to see the sepulcher, bringing the spices and ointments which they had prepared.

And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled away the stone, and sat upon it.  His appearance was as lightning, and his raiment white as snow: and for fear of him the guards did quake and became as dead men.   (Matthew 28:1-4)

There apparently was not enough time to properly prepare the body of Jesus before Sabbath began on Friday evening. Therefore, after the Sabbath day, Mary Magdalene was anxious to go to her Messiah and anoint Him. What a reception awaited her!

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. She ran therefore and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, he whom Jesus loved (John), and said to them, “They took away the Lord from the sepulcher! And we know not where they laid Him.” But Peter went forth, and the other disciple, and they went toward the tomb.  And they ran both together: and the other disciple outran Peter, and came first to the tomb; and stooping and looking in, he seeth the linen cloths lying; yet entered he not in.  Simon Peter therefore also cometh, following him, and entered into the tomb; and he beholdeth the linen cloths lying, and the napkin, that was upon his head, not lying with the linen cloths, but rolled up in a place by itself.  Then entered in therefore the other disciple also, who came first to the tomb, and he saw, and believed.  [For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise from the dead]. So, the disciples went away again unto their own home. (John 20:1-10)

Finally, these two disciples recognized that Jesus had, in fact, done just what He said He would do… rise from the grave! The fact that the empty tomb was left with the grave clothes just lying there was evidence that Jesus had just risen *through* His clothes. No one would remove grave clothes if they were going to steal a body. Of course, no one would consider stealing this body unless they had a terrible death wish of their own as they would have been put to death by the Roman authorities for such an attempt. That assumes they would have been able to get past the guards… which would have been extremely difficult! More to the point, there was no one who wanted any possible evidence that this person, Jesus, might have possibly risen from the dead. The Jews certainly did not want His claims to come true. They believed that they had just shut down the claims of this man of being the Messiah. They surely did not want the more amazing claim that He just risen from the dead! The Romans wanted no one to be looked at as a rival to Caesar… Caesar was god, wasn’t he? The disciples had been apparently severely disappointed in their Messiah. If He had truly just died and left them there to fend for themselves, they all would not perpetuate a lie that would someday eventuate in virtually all of them dying martyrs’ deaths. No… no one had any reason for emptying the tomb of the body of Jesus… except God Himself!

**The risen Christ appears to Mary Magdalene – Sunday morning:**

But Mary was standing without at the tomb weeping: so, as she wept, she stooped and looked into the tomb; and she beholdeth two angels in white sitting, one at the head, and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.  And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.  When she had thus said, she turned herself back, and beholdeth Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus.  Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou hast borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.  Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turneth herself, and saith unto him in Hebrew, Rabboni; which is to say, Teacher.  Jesus saith to her, touch me not; for I am not yet ascended unto the Father: but go unto my brethren, and say to them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and my God and your God.  Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord; and that he had spoken these things unto her. (John 20:11-18)

When Jesus spoke to Mary and told her to go unto His brethren, He was showing all Christians that we now are considered His brother. God is the Father of Jesus and our Father as well! Even though the disciples had all been told by Jesus that He would rise from the dead… and do it on the third day… they still found it necessary to see for themselves.

Now Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them came to the sepulcher when the sun had risen. And they were saying among themselves, “Who will roll away the stone from the door of the sepulcher?” [For it was very great]. But when they looked up they saw that the stone had been rolled away. Then upon entering the sepulcher they found not the body of Lord Jesus. But it came to pass as they were much perplexed about this, they saw a young man sitting at the right side, clothed in a long white garment. And they were greatly amazed. Behold two men stood by them in two white garments. And as they became terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye; for I know that ye seek Jesus, who hath been crucified.  Why seek ye the living among the dead?  He is not here but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, saying that the Son of man must be delivered up into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.  And go quickly, and tell his disciples, He is risen from the dead; and lo, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you.  And they departed quickly and fled from the sepulcher; for they trembled and were amazed. (Mark 16:1-8)

**Jesus meets the women: 2nd Resurrection Appearance**

But as they were on their way, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and took hold of his feet and worshipped him. Then saith Jesus unto them, Fear not: go tell my brethren that they depart into Galilee, and there shall they see me.

They returned from the tomb, and told all these things to the eleven, and to all the rest. And these words appeared in their sight as idle talk; and they disbelieved them. (Matt 28:9-10) (Luke 24:10-11)

**The guards report the missing Jesus:**

Now while they were going, behold, some of the guard came into the city, and told unto the chief priests all the things that were come to pass.  And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave much money unto the soldiers, saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept.  And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and rid you of care. So, they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying was spread abroad among the Jews, and continueth until this day. (Matt 28:11-15)

Over the next several weeks, Jesus made several earthly appearances. These visits had the effect one would expect. One of the more excellent proofs that Jesus is who He says He is (that is, the Messiah and God the Son) was the incredible change in the attitude and actions of the disciples (later called apostles) from that period of time immediately surrounding the crucifixion to the way that they all spoke, lived and worked just a few days after Christ died and for the rest of their lives. Take a moment to think about this. When Jesus was arrested, no one, with the possible exception of John, wanted to be seen anywhere near Him. Certainly not one of the disciples would claim Jesus as their friend or stand up for Him at His trials. They were too afraid and, frankly, probably too confused concerning Jesus, Himself. After His horrible death, a similar situation persisted. They had no hope for the future, no concept that anything that Jesus had started would go on. It was all over with. They were readying themselves to go back to their pre-Jesus lives… fishermen, etc. That was the plan. To say that they were depressed and perplexed would be an understatement. And why shouldn’t they be? Here was this man, Jesus, who had convinced them that He was a special messenger from God Himself! He even said He and God were one and the same! They had dropped everything… their jobs, families, security and safety for this itinerant preacher. He told them everything would be all right and that He would take care of them. He had told them that their jobs, as His evangelists, would be so very important. All of eternity hung in the balance, according to Him. Now He had ingloriously died on the cross! He was dead! Where was the evidence of power that He said He had? Would God simply die on the cross and that would be the end? They surely did not think so. Yet, there had been so many times that Jesus had demonstrated extraordinary power. So many times, He had convinced them that He really was the Messiah. And, He certainly was perfect in all of His words and actions! No one could ever say that they had seen Him sin. No wonder they were perplexed. Yet, if that was all that there was to be of Jesus… He could not be God. God would not have ended it that way.

As it turned out, it did *not* end with the death of Jesus on the cross. And those eleven disciples, plus many, many more people, spent the rest of their lives telling others just what the “rest of the story” was! They also were amazingly bold and brave in telling this Gospel story… even to the point of their martyred deaths! Why would they do this? Because, Jesus had risen from the dead on the third day which had changed their lives forever! In fact, there simply is not any other answer for the change that was seen in the apostles’ lives other than the resurrection of their Lord, Jesus! No other explanation makes any sense.

Now, let’s see what the New Testament writers had to say concerning some of His other post-resurrection appearances.

After that resurrection morning, Jesus continued to appear to His disciples on several other occasions. He also appeared to many other fortunate individuals.

**Third Resurrection Appearance of Jesus:** Later that afternoon, two of the followers of Jesus were making the trip from Jerusalem to a village named Emmaus – about 60 furlongs away. They were naturally speaking of the events of the past few days. While walking, a man came up alongside of them and began to speak… What communications are these that ye have one with another, as ye walk? (Luke 24:17)

This man was Jesus! But for some reason, these men did not recognize Him at first. They answered: And one of them, named Cleopas, answering said unto him, Dost thou alone sojourn in Jerusalem and not know the things which are come to pass there in these days?  And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, The things concerning Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people:  and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him.  But we hoped that it was he who should redeem Israel. Yea and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things came to pass.  Moreover, certain women of our company amazed us, having been early at the tomb; and when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive.  And certain of them that were with us went to the tomb and found it even so as the women had said: but him they saw not. (Luke 24:18-24)

Then Jesus revealed Himself with the following comments and detailed exposition from the Old Testament scriptures concerning the need for these recent events:

O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things, and then enter into his glory? (Luke 24:25-26)

As His inner circle of men, the chosen twelve, had been, these two men also were guilty of not believing the obvious signs of His identity… from the scriptures, His miracles, John the Baptist, etc. Even those incredible events on the afternoon of the crucifixion should have convinced people of His credentials. But Jesus now pointed out these things:

And beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself.  And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they were going: and he made as though he would go further.  And they constrained him, saying, abide with us; for it is toward evening, and the day is now far spent. And he went in to abide with them.  And it came to pass, when he had sat down with them to meat, he took the bread and blessed; and breaking it he gave to them.  And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight.   (Luke 24:27-31)

Jesus took the time to review the scriptures with these men… in detail. They certainly had open minds about the Messiah and were soon convinced that Jesus was the Christ. Then, all of a sudden, the veil was lifted and they recognized that this stranger was, in fact, Jesus Christ! Jesus then exercised one of the differences between His earthly body (and ours) and His glorified body… He simply vanished from their sight!

And they said one to another, was not our heart burning within us, while he spake to us in the way, while he opened to us the scriptures?  And they rose up that very hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.  (**4th Resurrection** **Appearance** - apparently, Jesus showed Himself to Peter earlier in the day before He came to visit all of the disciples in the evening). And they rehearsed the things that happened in the way, and how he was known of them in the breaking of the bread. (Luke 24:32-35)

These men returned to their friends and told them what had just happened. They were giving confirmation to the earlier stories from the women. Still there were some in the room who did not believe… such as Thomas. Just at that time, Sunday night, another astounding event took place… Jesus somehow was in the room and began to speak!

**Fifth Resurrection Appearance:**

Peace be unto you.  But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed that they beheld a spirit.  And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and wherefore do questionings arise in your heart?  See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye behold me having.  And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet.  And while they still disbelieved for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here anything to eat?  And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish.  And he took it and ate before them.  (Luke 24:36-43)

Jesus showed us that our heavenly bodies will be still eat and function in many ways just as our current bodies. Yet, they will have many major “improvements!”

And he said unto them, These are my words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must needs be fulfilled, which are written in the law of Moses, and the prophets, and the psalms, concerning me.  Then opened he their mind, that they might understand the scriptures; and he said unto them, Thus, it is written, that the Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.  Ye are witnesses of these things.  And behold, I send forth the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city, until ye be clothed with power from on high. (Luke 24:44-49)

Jesus then reminds these close friends concerning the reasons for the recent events… the absolute necessity of His death and resurrection. He also reminded them of their future work… but, He told them to wait a little while as He would send them a wonderful gift to guide them and give them power for the rest of their lives… that is, the Holy Spirit. The Apostle John recorded this appearance as follows…

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!"  After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.  Again, Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."  And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit.  If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."  Now Thomas (called Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. 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 20:19-25)

Wow! This is how Thomas got his nickname… “Doubting” Thomas. Soon, Thomas would not have to wonder any longer…

**Sixth Resurrection Appearance:**

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!" 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."  Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"  Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." (John 20:26-29)

These are important words that Jesus has for all of us. Blessed are they that have not seen – those people like us – and yet have believed. Remember, God says that “without faith we cannot not please Him.” (Hebrews 11:6) He has given us massive evidence that He is real, that His Son is real and the Holy Spirit is real… Yet, God has not appeared to the vast majority of us… He is asking us to take that final small step of faith and believe in Him and His Son. This surely seems reasonable to me.

After these appearances, Jesus still was to manifest Himself to His friends a few more times according to the New Testament. Paul records that Jesus appeared to James (resulting in his conversion and to him subsequently becoming the leader of the Jerusalem church) and at least 500 additional people prior to His ascension.

After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. (1 Cor 15:6-8)

One of our Lord’s more notable post-resurrection appearances came at the sea of Tiberias. Several of the disciples went out fishing one night, taking nothing with them…

**Seventh Resurrection Appearance:**

There was together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples. When day was now breaking, Jesus stood on the beach: yet the disciples knew not that it was Jesus.  Jesus therefore saith unto them, Children, have ye aught to eat? They answered him, No.  And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and ye shall find.

They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes. That disciple therefore whom Jesus loved (John) saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. So, when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his coat about him (for he was naked), and cast himself into the sea.  (John 21:1-7)

Peter was quite an interesting character, no doubt. Impetuous as can be. But, after that disastrous episode the night before the crucifixion, he would always stand up for his Lord Jesus for the rest of his life. Peter became a powerful evangelist, spreading the “Good News” about Jesus.

But the other disciples came in the little boat (for they were not far from the land, but about two hundred cubits off), dragging the net full of fishes.  So, when they got out upon the land, they see a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread. Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now taken.  Simon Peter therefore went up, and drew the net to land, full of great fishes, a hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, the net was not rent.  Jesus saith unto them, Come and have breakfast. And none of the disciples dared to inquire of him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord.  Jesus came, and took the bread, and gave it to them, and the fish likewise. This is now the third time that Jesus was manifested to the disciples, after that he was risen from the dead. (John 21:8-14)

Following breakfast, Jesus had an intriguing conversation with Peter

Simon, son of John, lovest (agapao) thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love (phileo) thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.  He saith to him again a second time, Simon, son of John, lovest (agapao) thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love (phileo) thee. He saith unto him, Tend my sheep. (John 21:15-16)

Jesus had just asked Peter twice if Peter loved Him with a divine form of love (agapao)… Peter, probably being ignorant of this quality of love, answered that he loved Jesus with a most warm affection (phileo) as between two human friends. Finally, Jesus asks Peter a third time…

He saith unto him the third time, Lovest (phileo) thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love (phileo) thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep. (John 21:17)

This time Jesus uses the word for love that Peter had been using. At a later date, when Peter had received the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and was steeped in its love and had matured in Christ, I am sure his answer would have been that he loved Jesus with an *agapao* love.

Then Jesus predicts the ultimate fate of Peter here on earth… Peter would be hanged on a cross in a martyr’s death for his Savior.

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." Now this he spake, signifying by what manner of death (death on the cross… possibly upside down, according to tradition) he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me. (John 21:18-19)

Peter then wonders aloud to Jesus what would be the fate of John. Jesus answers that it was not for Peter to know. In fact, if it were the plan of God to allow John to live until the second coming of Christ, so be it. It was not God’s plan… but, if it had been, it was not for Peter to know. By the way, this verse gave rise to the idea in the latter half of the first century that Jesus would come before John would die. Not true, obviously. The Bible pointed this out right here…

Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; who also leaned back on his breast at the supper, and said, Lord, who is he that betrayeth thee?  Peter therefore seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do?  Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me.  This saying therefore went forth among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, that he should not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?   (John 21:20-23)

John wraps up his gospel by pointing out that he had written about only a tiny amount of the amazing evidences of Jesus’ divinity. When one really notes all that was written, there is certainly more than enough information to allow an open-minded person to trust in Jesus as their Savior.

This is the disciple that beareth witness of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his witness is true.  And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that should be written… but these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name. (John 21:24-25)

But the eleven disciples went into Galilee, unto the mountain where Jesus had appointed them.  And when they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted.  And Jesus came to them and spake unto them, saying, All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth.  Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. (Matt 28:16-20)

And he led them out until they were over against Bethany: and he lifted up his hands and blessed them.  And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he parted from them, and was carried up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God.  And they worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: and were continually in the temple, blessing God. And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word by the signs that followed.

(Mark 16:19-20) (Luke 24:50-53)

The gospels conclude with the words above. Jesus went up into heaven to sit down at the right hand of His Father. The disciples were ecstatic about the recent events. Jesus was the Messiah. Their friend was God and would take care of them forever. Soon He would be giving them a wonderful gift… the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. They were to wait in Jerusalem together until the gift came. One more mention of this comes as the book of Acts begins…

Luke opens the book of Acts noting that Jesus told the disciples not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, said he, ye heard from me: For John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days hence. They therefore, when they were come together, asked him, saying, Lord, dost thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?  And he said unto them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons, which the Father hath set within His own authority.  But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” (Acts 1:4-8)

Then, approximately forty days after His resurrection, Jesus lifted up His hands, blessed His disciples, and ascended to the right hand of God, His Father in heaven. The disciples were to wait in Jerusalem for an incredible gift from God – His Holy Spirit would soon come to live within each apostle and imbue them with miraculous power to preach the gospel and to perform miracles. Pentecost came only ten days after the ascension of Christ… that is when the gift of the Holy Spirit came with great power to the apostles. It is also true that the Holy Spirit comes to live within every Christian immediately upon conversion.

**Conclusion:**

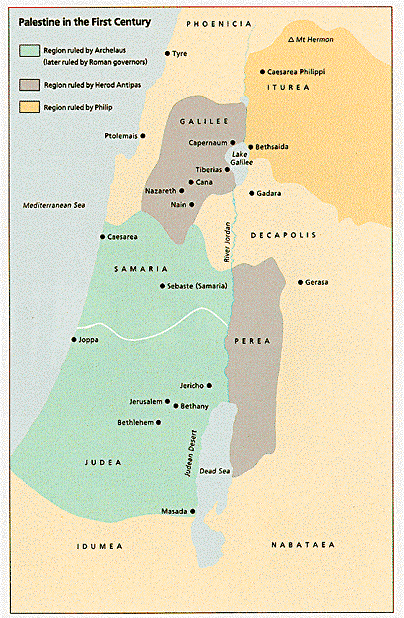
This concludes the discussion of the most beautiful life ever lived on this earth… the *Life of Christ*. Christ had a relatively short time on this earth but was able to accomplish so many invaluable things. Jesus gave us all a model for us to attempt to emulate. It should be every person’s goal to become more like Jesus each day of their life. He taught us so much with His preaching and teaching. When writing this treatise, I was somewhat surprised as to the significant quantity of parables and sermons that the gospel writers have given us to read, study and learn from as we go through our lives. Jesus taught us a lot… He has given us excellent instructions on how to live our lives. Of course, it is our responsibility to obey Him… life is as simple and as difficult as that! What does it mean to obey Jesus? First, we must accept Him as our Savior and make Him the Lord of our life. Then, we must strive daily, with the help He has given us via the Holy Spirit, to live our lives in a way that would give our Lord honor. If we do these things, one day we may be blessed enough to hear Him say…. “Well done, My good and faithful servant.” Let us all live our lives with that goal in mind.

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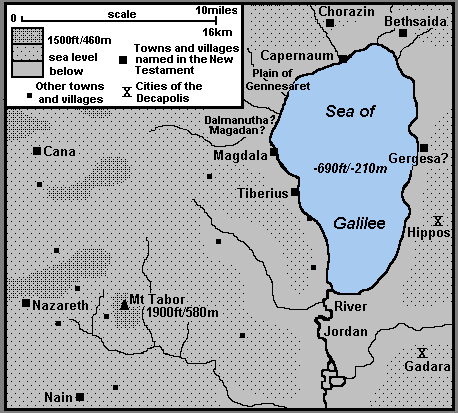




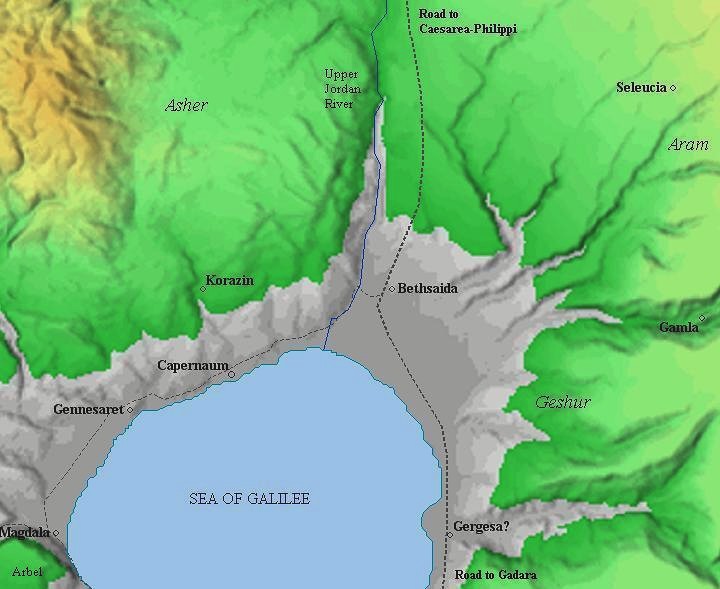
**Palestine in the First Century**



**Galilee in the First Century A.D.**



**Northern Galilee in the time of Jesus**



**Bethsaida, Capernaum, and Gennesaret**

