

Knowing Jesus
through the
nativity, His
teachings, His
miracles, and
His ministry



SEPARATING THE BIBLICAL TRUTH ABOUT JESUS FROM CULTURE CONCEPTS AND PRESENTATIONS

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE TRUE NATIVITY STORY

YES, WE KNOW THAT JESUS WAS PROBABLY NOT BORN ON DECEMBER 25. Let's be honest, what matters is that Jesus Christ WAS born, that He was both God and Man, and that He lived a life without sin..He was crucified for the sins of mankind (a perfect sacrifice because He committed no sins Himself), He was buried in the earth, and on the third day God raised Him from the dead.He ascended to Heaven, where He is now at the right hand of God.Because of these truths, those who believe in Him can look forward with hope to a future in the New Kingdom with Christ after the Second Coming.On that day, all of mankind will be raised from the dead and judged before the throne of God.Those made righteous in Christ will move on to eternal life; those judged wicked will be condemned.

These are the truths . What other truths do we know?

Part of the reason we don't know the exact day of Christ's birth is that calendars have changed over the past few centuries.The Julian calendar took effect in 45 BC; the Gregorian calendar took effect in 1582 A.D . For that matter, we didn't start using BC or AD until the year 525 AD.

We can, however, narrow down the approximate year that Christ was born through information provided in the Bible.Luke 2:1 states that Caesar Augustus (Octavian) reigned at the time of Christ's birth.Augustus reigned 27 BD to 14 AD . Luke 1:5 states that Herod the Great was King of Judea (appointed by Rome) at the time of Christ's childhood.Herod reigned 37 BC to 4 BC . From this, theologians have estimated that Jesus was born sometime between 6 BC to 4 BC.

Why did the early church not track the birthdate of Christ? Examination of the historical and culture context yields a simple answer: For the first 300 years of the church, the birthdates of historical figures was not given much emphasis (dates of their deaths were more of a concern).



Why was December 25 chosen as the day to celebrate Christ's birth? There are several theories on this question. The date is close to the winter solstice, a time when many cultures held festivals and feasts (including the Jewish culture). Roman culture had Saturnalia, which was celebrated by giving gifts to the poor, celebrating emancipation and the triumph of light after the longest night of the year. Christ is viewed as the light of the world and triumphant over the darkness of sins. Christmas is celebrated by the giving of gifts. It is possible that having the celebration of Christ coincide with the Roman holiday helped Christians avoid persecution for refusing to join in the cultural festivities. Others theorize that the celebration of Christ was an alternative to the heavy drinking and other behaviors considered immoral during some of the solstice-time festivals and feasts.

Still others theorize the date of December 25 may owe to the Jewish belief in "integral age" (the belief that the date of a prophet's birth or conception would also be the day that they died). Christ is believed to have died in March or April, this would be considered the time that the angel Gabriel visited Mary and Christ was conceived through the Holy Spirit. December 25 would be approximately nine months later.

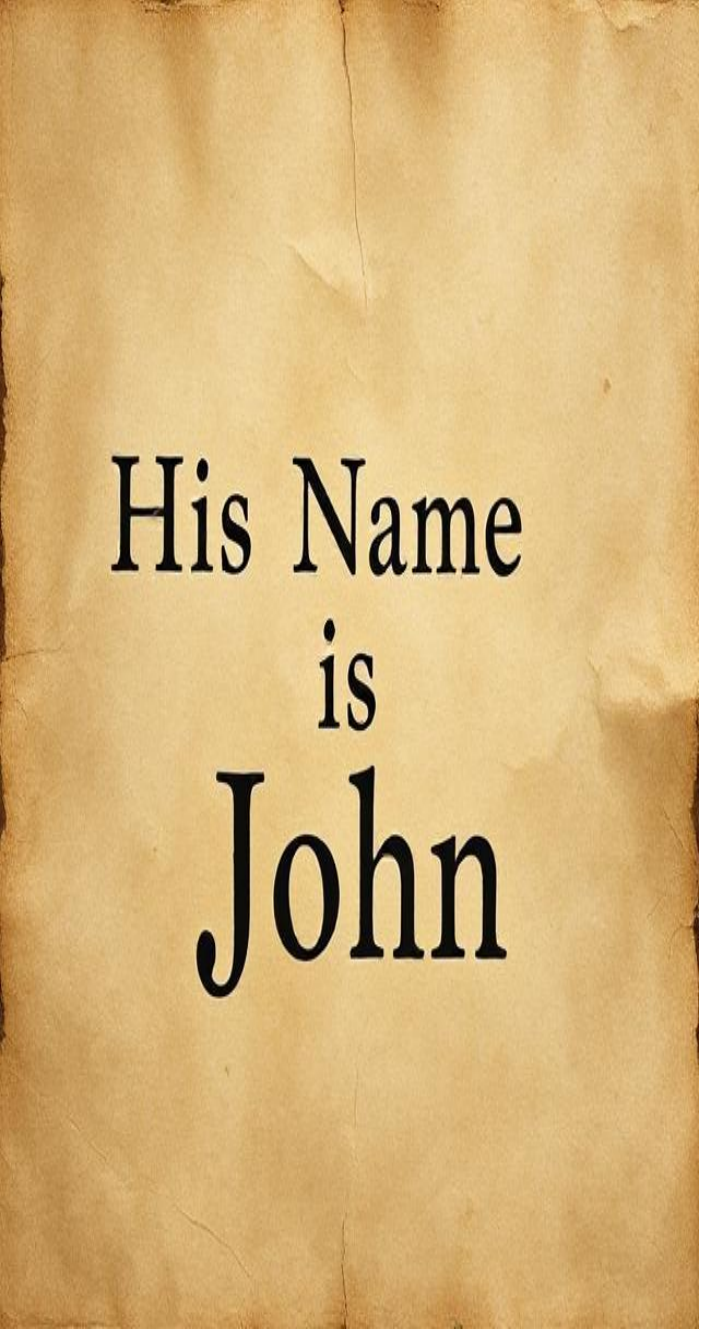
Another key aspect of the birth of Jesus Christ was that it occurred only by the direct actions of God as He again interceded to guide redemption history. We saw in the Book of Genesis and the narrative of Abraham that God displayed His sovereignty over creation by making it possible for Sarah to conceive a child even though she was beyond childbearing age. This child, Isaac, was a foreshadow of Christ. Just as Abraham was willing to sacrifice Isaac if it was God's will, so too was God willing to give His only Son as sacrifice. Fortunately for Abraham, it was God's plan that Isaac live to bear descendants that would include Jesus.

Human response plays a role in God's intervention for humankind. Although God does not require our help to enact His divine plans, He does ask one thing of us: A response of faith in His Word, His righteousness, and His ability to do what He says he will do.

When Sarah was told that she would bear Abraham a son, her response was laughter (not of joy but of doubt). Abraham responded with faith. Of course, Abraham and Sarah both demonstrated the human tendency to want to accomplish God's purposes by their own efforts. Sarah gave her handmaiden Hagar to be the mother of Abraham's promised child. Hagar gave birth to Ishmael. This created many complications between Sarah and Hagar and Abraham, especially when Sarah gave birth to the promised child, Isaac. The tensions between the descendants of Ishmael and the descendants of Isaac continue even to this day.

Centuries later, we come to the New Testament and a tale of two more miraculous children and two very different human responses to God's sovereignty. The first child would be born to a Jewish priest named Zechariah and his wife, Elizabeth (who was a descendant of Moses' brother Aaron, the first priest of the Israelite people). Zechariah was visited by the angel Gabriel while burning incense alone in the Temple of God. Gabriel conveyed God's promise that Elizabeth would bear a son. That son was to be named John, and he would prepare the way for the Messiah.

Zechariah's response was not faith, praise, gratitude, or worship. It was disbelief. He did not believe it was possible for Elizabeth to have a son at her age. Because he did not believe the angel's word, he was struck mute until the day came for the baby to be born. When Elizabeth gave birth and the time came to name the infant, Zechariah obeyed the Lord's command to name him John. Zechariah's speech was restored. These two acts---the miraculous conception of John the Baptist and Zechariah's ability speak being taken and then restored---again demonstrate God's sovereignty over all things of creation and His faithfulness to do everything that He promises to do. When he obeyed, Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and began to prophesize about the Messiah and God's salvation (Luke 1:68-80). So too does the Holy Spirit empower all who believe God faithfully and receive Christ as their savior.

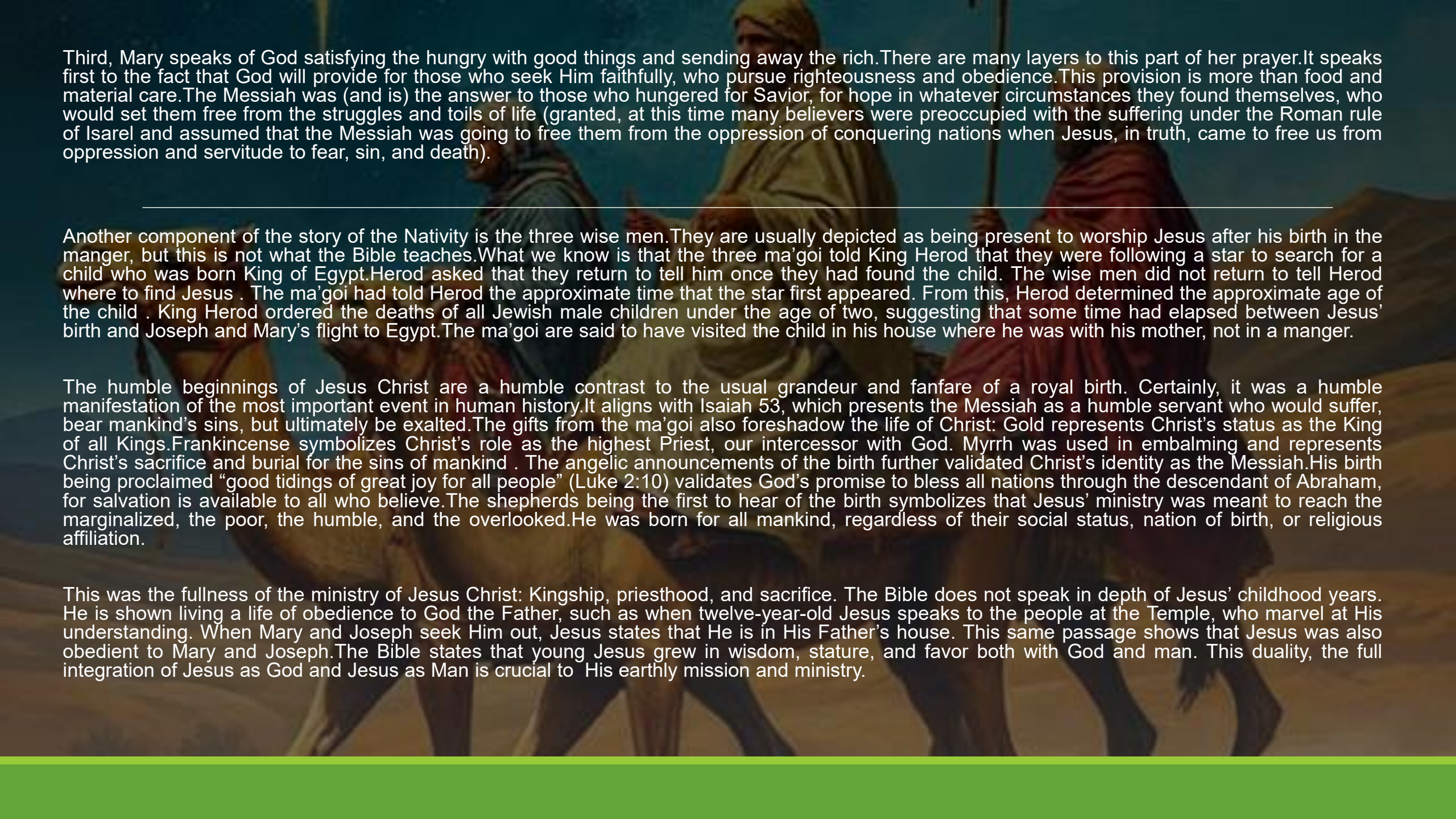


His Name
is
John



Contrast the episode with Zechariah and the story of Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ. When the angel Gabriel visited Mary with the news that she had found favor with God and was chosen to bear a son (even though she was still a virgin and not yet married), Mary's response was a simple question: *How?* She had no doubt in the angel's word or in God's ability to cause her to bear a son, she merely wished to understand the Lord's plan. She humbly calls herself the Lord's servant and freely submits to God's will for her life. This was no small act on her part, for she risked her betrothal to Joseph, her reputation, her family's scorn, and possibly even death. Fortunately, Joseph also believed when the Lord commanded him to take Mary as his wife and that the child would be the Son of God. Mary responded to this news with a prayer of worship and gratitude to the Lord, a prayer known as the Magnificat or Canticle of Mary. This hymn is still used today by the Catholic Church at the Liturgy of the Hours.

Her response to God is one to which all believers should aspire: Faith, gratitude, praise, worship, humble submission, and obedience. What can we learn from Mary's prayer? First, it speaks against pride (she says that God has scattered the proud). Pride is one of the great inhibitors to obedience and submission, it can derail our relationship with God and His purposes for our lives. Sending away the rich echoes Jesus' encounter with a faithful but wealthy young man in Matthew 19:16-22, Mark 10:17-22, and Luke 18:18-23. The man asks what he must do to obtain eternal life. Jesus instructs him first to obey the commandments and secondly to give away his possessions and give to the poor. The man goes away dejected. Love of material goods can also derail our relationship with God when we prioritize possessions above obedience. We must choose whether to prioritize God or money in . Second, Mary speaks of God exalting the lowly. Jesus would also speak of how God blesses the poor in spirit, the meek, and those who pursue righteousness. Mary was a girl of no particular status among humankind but she was chosen to bear God's greatest gift to mankind. We should remember that God does not see the world in the same way that culture sees it; His priorities are not our wealth, achievements, social status, occupation, or anything else that culture considered to make people have worth. God examines our hearts, and He knows whose hearts belong to Him.



Third, Mary speaks of God satisfying the hungry with good things and sending away the rich. There are many layers to this part of her prayer. It speaks first to the fact that God will provide for those who seek Him faithfully, who pursue righteousness and obedience. This provision is more than food and material care. The Messiah was (and is) the answer to those who hungered for Savior, for hope in whatever circumstances they found themselves, who would set them free from the struggles and toils of life (granted, at this time many believers were preoccupied with the suffering under the Roman rule of Israel and assumed that the Messiah was going to free them from the oppression of conquering nations when Jesus, in truth, came to free us from oppression and servitude to fear, sin, and death).

Another component of the story of the Nativity is the three wise men. They are usually depicted as being present to worship Jesus after his birth in the manger, but this is not what the Bible teaches. What we know is that the three magi told King Herod that they were following a star to search for a child who was born King of Egypt. Herod asked that they return to tell him once they had found the child. The wise men did not return to tell Herod where to find Jesus. The magi had told Herod the approximate time that the star first appeared. From this, Herod determined the approximate age of the child. King Herod ordered the deaths of all Jewish male children under the age of two, suggesting that some time had elapsed between Jesus' birth and Joseph and Mary's flight to Egypt. The magi are said to have visited the child in his house where he was with his mother, not in a manger.

The humble beginnings of Jesus Christ are a humble contrast to the usual grandeur and fanfare of a royal birth. Certainly, it was a humble manifestation of the most important event in human history. It aligns with Isaiah 53, which presents the Messiah as a humble servant who would suffer, bear mankind's sins, but ultimately be exalted. The gifts from the magi also foreshadow the life of Christ: Gold represents Christ's status as the King of all Kings. Frankincense symbolizes Christ's role as the highest Priest, our intercessor with God. Myrrh was used in embalming and represents Christ's sacrifice and burial for the sins of mankind. The angelic announcements of the birth further validated Christ's identity as the Messiah. His birth being proclaimed "good tidings of great joy for all people" (Luke 2:10) validates God's promise to bless all nations through the descendant of Abraham, for salvation is available to all who believe. The shepherds being the first to hear of the birth symbolizes that Jesus' ministry was meant to reach the marginalized, the poor, the humble, and the overlooked. He was born for all mankind, regardless of their social status, nation of birth, or religious affiliation.

This was the fullness of the ministry of Jesus Christ: Kingship, priesthood, and sacrifice. The Bible does not speak in depth of Jesus' childhood years. He is shown living a life of obedience to God the Father, such as when twelve-year-old Jesus speaks to the people at the Temple, who marvel at His understanding. When Mary and Joseph seek Him out, Jesus states that He is in His Father's house. This same passage shows that Jesus was also obedient to Mary and Joseph. The Bible states that young Jesus grew in wisdom, stature, and favor both with God and man. This duality, the full integration of Jesus as God and Jesus as Man is crucial to His earthly mission and ministry.

What are some of the many prophecies of the Messiah that were fulfilled in the life of Christ?

He would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2. Fulfilled: Matthew 2:1)
He would be born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:4. Fulfilled: Luke 1:26-31)
He would be a descendant of Isaac (Genesis 17:19. Fulfilled: Luke 3:34)
He would come from the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:10. Fulfilled: Luke 3:33)
He would spend a season in Egypt (Hosea 11:1. Fulfilled: Matthew 2:14-15)
There would be a massacre of children at His birthplace (Jeremiah 31:15. Fulfilled: Matthew 2:16-18)
A messenger would prepare the way for the Messiah (Isaiah 40:3-5. Fulfilled: Luke 3:3-6)
He would be rejected by His own people (Isaiah 53:3. Fulfilled: John 1:11)
He would be a prophet (Deuteronomy 18:15. Fulfilled: Acts 3:20-22)
He would be called a Nazarene (Isaiah 11:1. Fulfilled: Matthew 2:23)
He would be declared the Son of God (Psalm 2:7. Fulfilled: Matthew 3:16-17)
He would speak in parables (Isaiah 6:9-10. Fulfilled: Matthew 13:10-15)
He would be a priest after the order of Melchizedek (Psalm 110:4. Fulfilled: Hebrews 5:5-6)
He would be called King (Zechariah 9:9. Fulfilled: Mark 11:7-11)
He would enter Jerusalem riding on a donkey (Zechariah 11:12. Fulfilled: Matthew 21:4-5)
He would be betrayed (Zechariah 11:12-13. Fulfilled: Luke 22:47-48)
His price money would be used to buy a potter's field (Zechariah 11:12-13. Fulfilled: Matthew 27:9-10)
He would be crucified with criminals (Isaiah 53:12. Fulfilled: Mark 15:27-28)
He would be given vinegar to drink (Psalm 69:21 Fulfilled: John 19:28-30)
His hands and feet would be pierced (Zechariah 12:10. Fulfilled: John 20:25-27)
Soldiers would gamble for the Messiah's garments (Psalm 22:18 Fulfilled: Luke 23:34)
He would be forsaken by God (Psalm 22:1. Fulfilled: Matthew 27:46)
He would be resurrected from the dead (Psalm 49:15. Fulfilled: Acts 2:22-32)
He would ascend to heaven (Psalm 24:7-10. Fulfilled: Mark 16:19)
He would return a second time (Daniel 7:13-14. Fulfilled: Revelation 19)

We have seen in previous lessons that baptism has much symbolic meaning in Christianity but does not actually bring about our salvation. A believer is baptized as an act of symbolically being buried with Christ (by going under the water just as Jesus went into the tomb) and raised to new eternal life like Christ (by being raised out of the water). It is an action that confirms the believer has received Jesus as Savior and committed to following Jesus' teachings. For Jesus Himself, His baptism by John the Baptist (son of Zechariah and Elizabeth who came in the spirit of Elijah) was a symbolic act of identification with humankind and the commencement of His public ministry. We also learned in previous lessons that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (the Holy Trinity) are a triune Godhead (three Persons in one Godhead) and work as one in mind and purpose. The Father speaks, declaring Jesus as His Son during the Baptism, and the Holy Spirit alights as a dove. The presence of all three Persons of the Godhead makes this event a divinely ordained commencement and further confirms Christ's identity as Son of God and Son of Man, the Messiah.

Water in Christianity is symbolic of cleansing, purification, and new beginnings. Jesus had no need to be purified, for He was without sin. His baptism symbolizes His role in symbolically cleansing all mankind of our sins. It foreshadows His future work of atonement, His acceptance of the responsibility of removing the burden of our sins (and the death penalty of our sins).

There is a second form of baptism in Christianity: The Baptism of the Holy Spirit. John the Baptist speaks of it in Mark 1:7-8: *⁷ And this was his message: "After me comes the one more powerful than I, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. ⁸ I baptize you with^⓪ water, but he will baptize you with[Ⓜ] the Holy Spirit."* We saw it first with Zechariah in the temple (Luke 1:5-25). The next occurrence is at Pentecost in the Book of Acts. Zechariah was filled with the Spirit and prophesied. The actual Baptism of the Holy Spirit indwells the believer and places the believer into union with Jesus Christ and with other believers. It can lead to the onset of spiritual gifts as we see with the apostles in Acts (when they are given the ability to speak in tongues). For the believer, the indwelling Holy Spirit becomes helps us to understand God's Word and empowers us to live in a manner that is pleasing and obedient to God.





Just as believers will face temptations by Satan in the course of our relationship with God, so too did Jesus Christ endure trials following His baptism. This part of the ministry is sometimes referred to as Satan tempting Christ, but the word “tempted” is misleading. Christ was never tempted by anything that Satan said because, in truth, Satan had no real power or authority over Christ or the kingdom of God. The Lord cannot be tempted because His nature is holy, righteous, and just. There is symbolism in what Satan offered Christ—they are the same temptations with which he manipulates and deceives believers even today.

The first temptation was symbolic of Satan offering men shortcuts to satisfying their physical needs (he tells Jesus to turn stones to bread). Jesus’s response is that man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God. This tells us that we must prioritize the spiritual above the physical, acknowledging our absolute dependence upon God to provide for our every need when we submit to His will. Satan wishes to break our trust in God’s provision. We must hold to the truth and evidence of God’s ability and willingness to provide for us.

Satan secondly tells Jesus to throw Himself from the mountain so that the angels will catch him. Satan wants us to test whether God will protect us and to exploit God’s promises for our own personal gain. Jesus tells us that we shall not put God to the test. God will do for us as He says He will do, not according to our timing or our parameters but according to His will, His timing, and His plans.

Lastly, Satan offers Christ worldly power and glory. “Worldly” because true power and authority, and the true, eternal Kingdom, are under God’s sovereignty and authority. Satan was giving Jesus a shortcut to worldly authority that God had already established for Christ. Any power that comes from Satan is corrupted by sin and wickedness and temporary, for the enemy and his worldly kingdom will pass away when Christ returns. Christ tells us to worship only God, not the enemy or the other principalities and powers of this world. Only the kingdom that God establishes will be true, holy, and eternal. Neither are we to fear the enemy, who does not hold power over our eternal soul.

What do we learn from Jesus' testing by Satan?

- 1) The power of faith and obedience to God.
- 2) The power of God's Word when we understand it and submit to its authority. It is a powerful defense in times of spiritual warfare, protecting us from being deceived and showing us what is right and holy.
- 3) This testing and the baptism that preceded it were the foundation of the ministry of Jesus that would follow.

Jesus' ministry would have several key theological factors. The first is His devotion to God the Father and complete submission to God's will (including Christ's sacrifice on the cross). Obedience to God is the victory of all Christians. Through obedience we saw that Jesus was fully able to resist the testing of Satan and fully able to endure the brutality of His death on the cross. We learn, then, that obedience to God will also give us spiritual fortitude for life and for ministry.

It is important that we stay grounded in God's Word and fully understand it's teachings through the guidance of the Spirit. We see in this narrative that Satan's nature is deception, including using Scripture to appeal to human desires. Evil is fully able to masquerade as righteous and to misrepresent Scripture. We need to pray that we rightly discern God's Word and teach it correctly to others.

Jesus was devoted to the Father and is our model for faith and hope that is rooted in knowing God's goodness, grace, mercy and love. He wasn't just rooted in the Scriptures, He was the Word of God made flesh. As a human, He remained in relationship with the Father and the Holy Spirit, which gave Him fortitude to endure all that He experienced, including testing and sacrifice.

We also see in the baptism that Jesus intentionally identified with humankind. Remember that Jesus was flesh and blood and had the same human experiences that we have: Family, friendship, love, grief, betrayal, joy, hope in the love, testing by the enemy, suffering, and death. He lost loved ones and friends (including his father, Joseph, and second cousin, John the Baptist). We will identify with Him in being raised to eternal life and transformed by the power of God.

TEACHINGS AND MIRACLES: THE CORNERSTONES OF CHRIST'S MINISTRY

TEACHINGS

Jesus' teachings were a radical reorientation of human understanding and relationship with God. Jesus repeatedly stated that He did not speak His own words but rather the words of God (John 7:16, John 14:10, John 17:8). He spoke the truth of God with God's authority (Matthew 28:19, Matthew 11:25-27).

He stated that His words were eternal, that His teachings would outlast the heavens and earth (Luke 21:33). He gives the spirit and life through His words (John 6:63). Christ made it clear that wise people not only hear His words, they also put them into action. They acknowledge Him as Lord without shame before the people in this world (and Christ will one day acknowledge believers before God). Believers who hear Christ's words and obey by putting these teachings into practice in life will bear spiritual fruit for the Lord. (Matthew 13:23). Eternal life depends on hearing and following the word of Christ (John 5:24-25).

His teachings often took the form of *parables*, which are stories that use everyday life to convey profound spiritual truths. Understanding of Christ's teachings is facilitated by the Holy Spirit. It was the Holy Spirit who guided the biblical authors in recalling Christ's words and rightly recording them in the Scriptures.

MIRACLES

Miracles were demonstrations (and verification) of Christ's divine authority and the imminent arrival of the New Kingdom of God.

Believers need to be clear about this point: The Kingdom of Christ is already here. It's true that we live in a world that is in a fallen condition, in a creation that will ultimately pass away to make clear the way for a brand new and perfected creation from God. But we are not awaiting the Kingdom of Christ. It arrived with His birth, ministry, and death. It is present in His people, the Church body and bride of Christ. It is visible in His people when they follow His teachings, obey the teachings of Scripture, and pursue relationship with God. Believers are the image of God in Christ, the image of Christ's kingdom in the present world.

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE PARABLES OF JESUS CHRIST

We will do an in-depth examination of the individual parables of Christ in later lessons. For our purpose here, we will briefly list the overall message of each parable. I encourage you to read them for yourself to discover their beauty and meaning.

PARABLE OF THE LAMP (Matthew 5:14-16): Speaks of the importance of believers being the “light” in the world by being imitators of Christ in words and in actions. We are to do this boldly and without shame, not hiding the light within us but allowing it to shine to draw others to Christ.

PARABLE OF THE SPECK AND THE LOG (Matthew 7:1-5): Reminds Christians that we are not appointed to be judgmental of others when we are imperfect ourselves. We should not be as hypocrites, judging others when we are also doing wrong.

PARABLE OF THE NEW CLOTH AND THE OLD GARMENT (Matthew 9:16-17): A more complicated parable. Jesus was teaching people who had been raised in the Jewish teachings of the Law. The message He preached was a radical change from these traditions. It required believers to be flexible and adaptable to receiving and practicing these new teachings in order to grow. His teachings would not be conformed to the Law because Jesus would fulfill and replace the Law. Similarly for modern believers, Jesus’ teachings will not be conformed to our social and cultural norms or our sinful teachings. We are conformed to Jesus. The Spirit makes us new vessels that can contain His Word.

PARABLE OF THE DIVIDED KINGDOM: (Matthew 12:24-30): Though Jesus is responding to people who basically accused Him of being in league with Satan (as if!) by asking “Why would Satan drive out his own demons?”, there are applications for Christians. We cannot be divided in our priorities or devotion: We can follow God or we can follow the ways of the world. We cannot do both. In unity with other believers, there is spiritual growth and spiritual fortitude and resistance to evil.



A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE PARABLES OF JESUS CHRIST

PARABLE OF THE SOWER (Matthew 13:1-23): Basically talks about people's response to hearing the Gospel message of Christ. Some people do not understand the Word or reject it for whatever reason (pride, self-reliance, desire for things of the world, manipulations of Satan). Some people hear it and are initially joyful, but they do not pursue the Word or the relationship with God, so they do not develop spiritual roots to sustain them in times of temptation or persecution. Some people try to live the word, but the distractions and concerns of life take priority, and they do not bear spiritual fruit for the Lord. Then there are the people who hear the Word, understand it, receive it, and put it into practice in their lives through service and sharing the message in turn, bearing fruit for God.

PARABLE OF THE WEEDS AMONG WHEAT (Matthew 13:24-30): Refers to the fact that there are believers in this world and people corrupted by sin and evil in this world. There will be a time when the wicked will be separated from the righteous, the saved from the unsaved, but that will happen in God's timing. It's difficult to understand, but God can use wicked things in this world to serve good purposes. A person may experience terrible evil but instead of being destroyed by it, that person is brought to faith in God. We are to focus on growing in spirituality ourselves and trust that there will be a reckoning during which God will finally remove evil from the world. This parable also references the concept of destruction of the wicked by fire.

PARABLE OF THE MUSTARD SEED (Matthew 13:31-32): This is a message about the power of even a small amount of faith within us, how it can grow exponentially and transform our lives, which in turn can lead to great outcomes. It also refers to the nature of the Kingdom of Christ as a place of refuge for believers.

PARABLE OF THE LEAVEN (Matthew 13:33-34): Is a similar message of how the Gospel message slowly permeates the whole world, transforming the people and growing the Kingdom of Christ.



A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE PARABLES OF JESUS CHRIST

PARABLE OF THE HIDDEN TREASURE (Matthew 13:44): Teaches us the believer's response to discovering the Gospel message of Jesus Christ, how Jesus should become our greatest treasure, so great that we would give up all that we have in order that the salvation it gives is not taken from us.

PARABLE OF THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE (Matthew 13:45-46): Again, Christ is the pearl of great value, more important than anything this world has to offer us.

PARABLE OF THE NET (Matthew 13:47-50): Again speaks of the coming Day of Judgement at which time the righteous will be separated from the wicked. It speaks of the wicked being cast into flames amidst much weeping and suffering. It also speaks of the work of those who spread the Gospel message, which is the net cast to gather believers, those destined for Christ, to salvation.

PARABLE OF THE HEART OF MAN (Matthew 15:10-20): Jesus knew that people would encounter evil in this world, see evil things in this world. We cannot avoid it. He is more concerned with our response to evil and temptation. Our hearts are not revealed by what we see but by the words that we speak, the choices we make, and the actions we take. These things reveal whether our hearts truly belong to Christ or whether our hearts belong to the wickedness in this world. The Bible warns us that our words have the power to cause great harm.

PARABLE OF THE LOST SHEEP (Matthew 18:10-14): One of the more familiar parables which tells us that every last sinner in heaven is so valuable that the whole of heaven will work to bring that sinner to salvation and will celebrate when he or she receives Christ and is saved. Jesus knows every single person in this world who is destined for Him and will not rest until every last believer has been restored to Him and saved. Every. Last. One. God is delaying the second coming of Christ so that every person has the opportunity to hear of Christ. We're that loved.



A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE PARABLES OF JESUS CHRIST

PARABLE OF THE UNFORGIVING SERVANT (Matthew 18:23-35): It's this simple: God loves us. He has forgiven us. He has shown us mercy, kindness, and grace. We have become His children and His servants. He expects us to show other people love, forgiveness, kindness, mercy, and grace in turn. It's so important that the Bible flatly tells us that if we do not forgive others for the sake of our faith in Christ, we will not be forgiven.

PARABLE OF THE LABORERS IN THE VINEYARD (Matthew 20:1-6): God shows no favoritism. That's good for us, as it means He loves us all equally. We have to be careful that we do not become jealous, prideful, or envious of others, thinking that we are somehow entitled to greater reward. The spiritual elder is not greater than the spiritual newcomer, we are all part of the family of God laboring for the glory of the kingdom. The Bible reminds us here and in other sections that those who desire to be greater are humbled, and those who are humble are exalted. In love, we should not consider ourselves as better than others, especially not in the eyes of God. Conversely, we should not consider ourselves less loved or less valuable than other believers. Again, God shows no favoritism and pursues every one of us for the treasured children that we are.

PARABLE OF THE TWO SONS (Matthew 21:28-32): True devotion to God is not found in words of praise or professed devotion but in acting obediently on God's Word in how we live, showing that the Spirit is truly working within us.

PARABLE OF THE TENANT FARMERS (Matthew 21:33-45): Speaks of the response of the Jewish leaders both to the prophets of the Old Testament and to the arrival of Jesus Christ. They rejected the prophets' call to repentance. They not only rejected Jesus' call to repentance, they also crucified Him. The Kingdom of Christ is not for the disobedient and the unbelievers, but for those who turn to Christ as Savior in love and in obedience, regardless of their nation of origin.



A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE PARABLES OF JESUS CHRIST

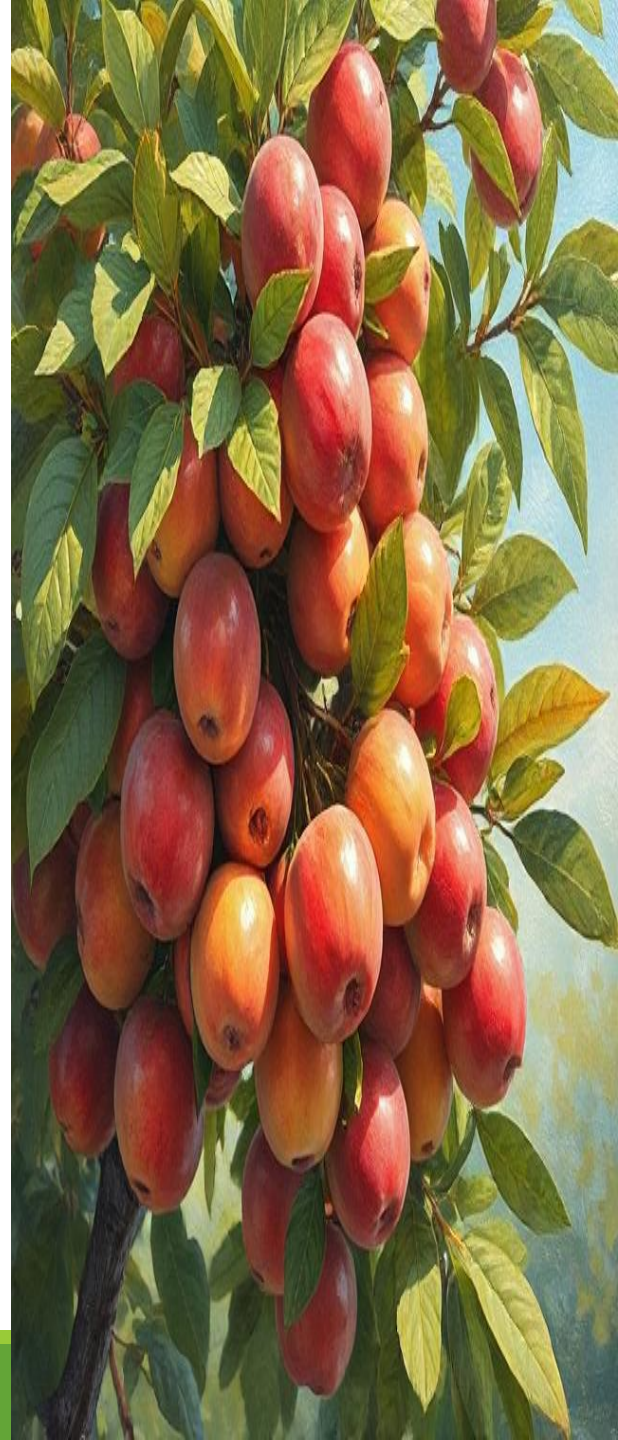
PARABLE OF THE MARRIAGE FEAST (Matthew 22:1-4): God has sent the invitation to salvation and restoration through many messengers, not just in biblical history but even today. The wedding feast is a metaphor for salvation in the Kingdom of Christ. First, God invited the people of Israel, but many rejected Him and then rejected Christ. God extended the invitation to the other nations of the world, where some received it and some rejected it. Some even professed to receive it but were deceitful and remained in their worldly ways. Many have been called, but not everyone has received the gift of salvation that God has offered.

PARABLE OF THE BUDDING FIG TREE (Matthew 24:32-35): The Bible lists many signs of the return of Christ and the day of judgement. We need to pay attention to these signs. Everything that God has promised to do in the Bible will be done.

PARABLE OF THE FAITHFUL VS. THE WICKED SERVANT (Matthew 24:45-51): When we make ourselves the servants of Christ, we must live that way. When we say that we follow Christ but live in a manner that does not reflect a faithful, transformed heart, we will not fool God nor will it help us on the day of judgement, which can come at any time.

PARABLE OF THE TEN VIRGINS (Matthew 25:1-13): Again, we need to be living in a manner that pleases God right now, that we are reflecting God to the world and doing what we can to bear fruit for Him. We need to choose Jesus, the bridegroom, right now and not be distracted by the things of the world so that we are ready when Christ returns.

PARABLE OF THE TEN TALENTS (Matthew 25:14-30): We have seen that believers are equipped in some way to do good for the Lord by living in way that pleases Him and obeys Him. We are to share the message of Christ and demonstrate His love for others. When we do this, our lives bear fruit for the Lord (how much fruit depends on how much we dedicate ourselves to following Him). The most important fruit that Christ wants is for us to help bring others to saving faith through our words, deeds, and efforts.





A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE PARABLES OF JESUS CHRIST

PARABLE OF THE LAMP (Mark 4:21-25): When we are converted to Christ and given the Word of God, it is important to hold it in our hearts. It is equally important that we share it. We shouldn't hide our faith but rather let it be a lamp that leads other people out of the darkness of sin and separation from God to the true light of Christ. The more that we serve Christ, the more that Christ will entrust us with greater responsibility in His kingdom (that's a good thing as it gives us the chance to bear more fruit). If we don't live in the Word in reality of Christ, the enemy can turn our hearts back to sin and away from salvation.

PARABLE OF THE NEW CLOTH ON THE OLD GARMENT (Mark 2:21-22): Again, when we receive Christ, we die to our old sinful selves because that old self was not capable of receiving Christ. The Holy Spirit transforms us into people who can receive and live the Word of Christ. This parallels the parable of the wineskin.

PARABLE OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN (Luke 10:29-37): We have to understand that the Jewish people considered the Samaritans to be Gentiles. They would take a circuitous route when traveling out of Israel so that they could avoid going into Samaria. This parable teaches us that there are people who say they are believers of Jesus with their words but do not practice His commands to love other people or to show them mercy. There are unbelievers who can act as better Christians than those who profess to be faithful. We have to be careful that we remember we are first to love God but then we are also to love our neighbors and care for them just as we would want to be cared for in turn.

PARABLE OF THE FRIEND AT MIDNIGHT (Luke 11:5-13): When we pursue Christ, we need to pursue Him with diligence. When we pray to the Lord, we are to pray with persistence, pray without ceasing. Above all else, we are to trust that God has good plans for us. God is our Father, and a Father knows how to care for His children and will care for them with love.



A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE PARABLES OF JESUS CHRIST

PARABLE OF THE RICH FOOL (Luke 12:13-21): We do not know how much time we have to live, yet we worry about storing up material goods and things of the world every day. Our labors will ultimately benefit only our heirs. There's nothing inherently wrong with this, but it shouldn't be the focus of our lives. We can't lose sight of the fact that the most important thing we can do with our lives is use it to share Christ with the world, serve others, and develop our relationship with God. Trust God with the details and to provide what you need for life. These are the things that we take with us when we leave this world to enter the Kingdom of Christ.

PARABLE OF THE BARREN FIG TREE (Luke 13:6-9): Again, the Lord expects us to do good with the gifts that the Spirit gives us, whether that gift is preaching, teaching, or serving other people for the glory of God. The Holy Spirit will always try to keep us in right relationship with God and help us understand His Word so that we can bear fruit for God. However, there is a limited time for us to do this---after we die or when Christ returns (whichever comes first), it will be too late to choose Christ and live a life that pleases God.

PARABLE OF THE INVITED GUESTS (Luke 14:7-14): Christ expects us to live humbly and to love others with humility, always thinking of others as better than ourselves. Status, power, and wealth are things of this world, and the only one who truly should be glorified is God. We are to do good for people who cannot repay us (and we should not have the expectation to be repaid, for it is the Lord who will reward us according to our deeds on the Day of Judgement).

PARABLE OF THE LOST COIN (Luke 15:8-10): Again shows the joy in heaven when a sinner repents and comes to saving faith in Christ.

PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON (Luke 15:11-32): God loves those who choose Jesus because they are His own children. He will always love them and care for them. Sometimes, those who choose Jesus backslide and become lost in sin. When that sinner repents and returns to Jesus, he or she will be forgiven and restored to God and there will be much celebrating in heaven. Let us not resent this but rather celebrate alongside God.



A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE PARABLES OF JESUS CHRIST

PARABLE OF THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS (Luke 16:19-31): We are to listen to the message to repent NOW. We are to love Christ, obey Him, glorify God, and demonstrate God's love and mercy to all people we encounter every day. Those who suffer, mourn, starve, grieve, or otherwise recognize their need for God's comfort and mercy will receive it and will share eternity with God. Those who choose the things of this world, who do not live in obedience to God or show His love and mercy to others risk eternal separation from God and judgement at the end times. It will be too late to choose Christ and live by God's Word afterwards.

PARABLE OF THE PERSISTENT WIDOW (Luke 18:1-8): There are people in the world who cry out to God for justice, comfort, peace, mercy. They recognize their need for God. He will hear them and He will provide for these needs. God also expects us to provide for others and to do so willingly, not grudgingly or hesitantly. He will know every instance where we have not demonstrated forgiveness or mercy or justice when we were asked or had the opportunity.

PARABLE OF THE PHARISEE AND THE TAX COLLECTOR (Luke 18:9-14): God exalts the lowly and humbles the proud. God is more likely to be pleased with a sinner who recognizes his or her sinful condition and begs forgiveness than with a person who is prideful. We are all sinners in need of the Lord and we are all equal in the eyes of the Lord, who shows no favoritism. Again, in humility, we should not think of ourselves as better than others or more holy than others nor are we appointed to judge others. When we humble ourselves before God seeking Him with a sincere and repentant heart, He is faithful, just, and merciful to forgive us.

PARABLE OF THE GROWING SEED (Mark 4:26-29): Is a metaphor for how the seed of the Kingdom of Christ has been planted. When the time comes, Christ will return to gather those who belong to that kingdom.

The Miracles of Jesus Christ

There were different kinds of miracles performed by Jesus Christ, all of which had specific applications for spiritual understanding.

Jesus performed miracles of healing (the blind, the lame, issues of blood, back injuries, deafness, and the mute. This shows God's ability to provide for His children, His compassion, and mercy. It demonstrates the importance of our faith in this care, love, and provision, and in the ability of God to do all that He promises to do. The healing we receive through faith in Christ is not just physical, it is also the spiritual healing through our restoration to God.

Jesus performed miracles which demonstrated His authority over nature and all creation (such as calming the storm or filling the nets of the fishermen). The miracle of calming the storm also illustrates the importance of believers to trust in God's ability to deliver us from all dangers (physical and spiritual).

Miracles Of JesusTurning Water into Wine (Wedding at Cana) – John 2:1-11

Healing the Official's Son – John 4:46-54

Healing the Paralyzed Man at Bethesda – John 5:1-15

Feeding the 5,000 – Matthew 14:13-21; Mark 6:30-44; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-14

Walking on Water – Matthew 14:22-33; Mark 6:45-52; John 6:16-21

Jesus cured Peter's mother-in-law of a fever (Mark 1:30-31)

Catching a large number of fish – Luke 5:3-10

Healing the Blind Man (Born Blind) – John 9:1-41

Feeding the 4,000 – Matthew 15:32-39; Mark 8:1-10

Cursing the Fig Tree – Matthew 21:18-22; Mark 11:12-14, 20-24:

Healing two blind men – Matthew 9:27-31

Healing the Centurion's Servant – Matthew 8:5-13; Luke 7:1-10

Healing the Man with a Withered Hand – Matthew 12:9-14; Mark 3:1-6; Luke 6:6-11

Raising Jairus' Daughter from the Dead – Matthew 9:18-26; Mark 5:21-43; Luke 8:40-56:

Healing the Woman with the Issue of Blood – Matthew 9:20-22; Mark 5:25-34; Luke 8:43-48

Casting out an Unclean Spirit – Mark 1:21-28; Luke 4:31-37

Healing the Leper – Matthew 8:1-4; Mark 1:40-45; Luke 5:12-16

Healing the Paralyzed Man Lowered Through the Roof – Matthew 9:1-8; Mark 2:1-12; Luke 5:17-26:

Casting out a Demon from a Mute Man – Matthew 9:32-34

The Miracles of Jesus Christ

Jesus' miracles of exorcisms demonstrates that God has singular authority over the spiritual realm as well as creation. Jesus came to free us from enslavement to sin—whether that enslavement is obvious like possessions or whether it is subtle, deceitful as in temptations by Satan. Jesus is also the living Word of God, which means that these miracles also symbolize the power of the Word to defend us from the attacks of the enemy when the Word is at work within us through the Holy Spirit. The power of the name of Jesus alone is enough to make the devil flee from us *when we are connected through the Spirit to Jesus*.

Jesus also demonstrates resurrection power. This is symbolic of Christ's authority over life and death (the ultimate victory over death would be completed on the cross). Christ is the source of life.

Healing a Demon-Possessed Man in the Gadarenes – Matthew 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-20; Luke 8:26-39

Healing the Canaanite Woman's Daughter – Matthew 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30

Healing the Blind and Mute Man – Matthew 12:22-23

Healing the Demon-Possessed Boy – Matthew 17:14-21; Mark 9:14-29; Luke 9:37-43

Healing the Woman with a Bent Back – Luke 13:10-17

Healing the Ten Lepers – Luke 17:11-19

Catching a Great Number of Fish – Luke 5:1-11

Turning Five Loaves and Two Fishes into Enough to Feed 5,000 Men – Luke 9:10-17

Walking on Water – John 6:16-21

Healing a Blind Man in Bethsaida – Mark 8:22-26

Healing a Deaf and Mute Man – Mark 7:31-37

Coin in the Fish's Mouth – Matthew 17:24-27

Healing a Blind Man in Jericho (Bartimaeus) – Matthew 20:29-34; Mark 10:46-52; Luke 18:35-43

Cleansing Ten Lepers on the Way to Jerusalem – Luke 17:11-19

Withering the Fig Tree – Matthew 21:18-22; Mark 11:12-14, 20-24

The Miracles of Jesus Christ

Jesus also performs miracles of provision (such as feeding 5000 people with only 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish). This shows that God is able to provide for every need of man and that we can trust Him to care for us.

Faith and Belief: Jesus' many miracles invite individuals to believe in Jesus' divine nature and his role as the Messiah.

Kingdom of God: Jesus' miracles serve as signs of the coming Kingdom, illustrating God's reign and the restoration of creation.

Compassion and Care: These miracles reflect Jesus' deep compassion for human suffering and his desire to bring healing and hope.

Authority: These miracles demonstrated that the Father had given all authority over heaven and earth to the Son, who will sit on the throne of David in the Kingdom of Christ.

Resurrection of Lazarus – John 11:1-44

Healing of Malchus' Ear – Luke 22:50-51

Resurrection of Jesus Christ – Matthew 28:1-20; Mark 16:1-20; Luke 24:1-53; John 20:1-31:

Catching 153 Fish in the Net – John 21:1-14:

Above all else, the miracles and teachings of Jesus point believers to the Kingdom of God and demonstrate God's ultimate sovereignty over all things of creation (the physical and the spiritual). The miracles underscored Jesus' compassion and love, alleviated suffering and revealed the very real presence of God, and the transformative power of His love.

The miracles affirmed the identity of Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God, and the Son of Man, which in turn affirmed the truth of His message. The Kingdom of Christ, which is already real and present today through His church body, is one of healing, wholeness, and eternal life. The miracles were the foundation for the transformation of the hearts of believers. They spoke of the New Covenant between God and mankind, a covenant that would be sealed by Christ's sacrificial death on the cross.

His ministry is also an important example for Christians. He lived humbly. Though He was God, He humbled Himself to live as man. During that ministry, He served others and gave of Himself. He shared fellowship with others. He spread the message of God and the call to repentance and restoration of relationship with God. He empowered His believers to also carry this message, even gifted some of them to perform miracles in His name. He was submissive in every aspect of His life to the will of God. Believers have big shoes to fill when we say we will walk in the way of life. Fortunately, because of all Christ has done for us, we are empowered by His Spirit for this journey and can be confident that this journey will ultimately lead us to His Kingdom for eternal life.

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