

What do
You
Think
about the
Christ?

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Foreword

In this book, I have attempted to tell the story of Jesus in chronological order. I believe that all four of the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) are accurate and divinely inspired. Therefore, I have tried to do no violence to any of the four.

Although I have told the story of Jesus in my own words, I have tried to let the words of Jesus shine forth in their true brightness; for His words are pearls of wisdom, diamonds of truth, emeralds of hope, and rubies of love.

I have leaned heavily on the “New International Version of the Holy Bible,” published by Zondervan Bible Publishers of Grand Rapids, Michigan. Most of the quotations are taken from the NIV, and are indicated as being from that source.

A few of the quotations come from other versions, and I tried to show from which version all the sizable quotes are taken. Occasionally, I translated a passage myself, and in that case, I have identified these occurrences with “RWT” (Richard Walker, Translator).

I assume that the gospels were written in the following order:

1. The gospel of Matthew
2. The Gospel of Luke
3. The Gospel of Mark
4. The Gospel of John.

In addition to historical reasons for thinking that this is the order in which they were written, there is internal evidence that supports this order as well.

I have heard that about 80% of Mark’s material can be found almost word for word in either the gospel of Matthew or the gospel of Luke. Although I have not checked out the percentage, I estimate that 80% is about right.

It is unreasonable to think that Matthew and Luke sat together and said to each other, “I will take this verse from Mark, and you take that

verse,” or “I’ll take this phrase from Mark, and you take that phrase.” It seems highly improbable that something like that took place, but it would have taken place if Mark were the first of the three.

Therefore, the material passed, not from the Gospel of Mark to the gospels of Matthew and Luke, but the other way around. It flowed from Matthew and Luke to Mark. Thus, Mark wrote his gospel after Matthew and Luke had already written their gospels, and he used wording from each of them.

John’s gospel was the last of the four to be written. This is shown by the fact that John avoided, for the most part, material that had already been given in the earlier gospels. John tells some of the additional things that Jesus did and said, in addition to what was told in the three previous gospels.

In telling the story of Jesus, I have tried to follow the order of events as presented by the Gospel of Mark. I chose Mark to be my guide because I think he was the last of the three synoptic writers to write and had, presumably, the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Luke before him as he wrote.

I realize, of course, that no one can do justice to the story of Jesus. It has been said that the story of Jesus is “the greatest story ever told.” I am sure this is true, because Jesus was the greatest person who has ever lived.

The questions at the end of each chapter are designed to encourage readers to think about Jesus and to answer for themselves the question, which He asked, “What do you think about the Christ?”

Richard Walker
Lubbock, Texas
March 11, 2005

Abbreviations

Gen	Genesis	Matt	Matthew
Exo	Exodus	Rom	Romans
Lev	Leviticus	1 Cor	1 Corinthians
Num	Numbers	Gal	Galatians
Deu	Deuteronomy	Eph	Ephesians
1 Ki	1 Kings	Php	Philippians
2 Ki	2 Kings	Col	Colossians
2 Chr	2 Chronicles	1 Th	1 Thessalonians
Psa	Psalms	2 Th	2 Thessalonians
Pro	Proverbs	Heb	Hebrews
Isa	Isaiah	Jam	James
Jer	Jeremiah	1 Pet	1 Peter
Eze	Ezekiel	Rev	Revelation
Dan	Daniel		
Hos	Hosea		
Mic	Micah		
Zec	Zechariah		
Mal	Malachi		

ASV	American Standard Bible
ESV	English Standard Version
ISV	International Standard Version
KJV	King James Version
NIV	New International Version
NKJV	New King James Version
RSV	Revised Standard Version
NASB	New American Standard Bible
RSV	Revised Standard Version
RWT	Richard Walker Translation

***THE STORY OF
JOHN THE
BAPTIST AND
JESUS' BIRTH
AND EARLY DAYS***

1

John the Baptist

*Matthew 3:1-12; Mark 1:2-8;
Luke 1:5-25, 57-80; 3:1-20;
and John 1:19-29*

The story of Jesus begins with John the Baptist, who was the son of a priest named Zechariah (Luke 1:5). While Zechariah was serving as priest in the temple in Jerusalem, the angel Gabriel appeared to him and told him that his wife would bear a son and that his son should be given the name “John” (Luke 1:13). The angel also said that John should drink no wine or strong drink and that from his birth he would be filled with the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:15).

Zechariah was slow to believe what Gabriel had said, because he and his wife were elderly. Because of Zechariah’s disbelief, Gabriel told him that he would lose his ability to speak (Luke 1:20). So Zechariah lost his speech and did not regain it until after John was born. After regaining his speech, Zechariah spoke a beautiful psalm (song) that contains prophecies concerning things that were about to happen (Luke 1:67-79).

John could have, presumably, become a priest, like his father; but God had other plans for him. God did not send John to sit at the feet of the learned teachers in Jerusalem. Instead, He sent him into the wilderness, where he grew and became strong in spirit (Luke 1:80).

John’s attire was similar to that of the prophet Elijah (2 Ki 1:8). He wore a plain garment made of camel’s hair, which he held together with a leather belt around the waist. John’s lifestyle was severe. He often ate locusts and wild honey, which could be found in the wilderness (Mark 1:6). John began to preach during the 15th year of the emperor Tiberius Caesar (Luke 3:1), that is, about 28 AD. He preached in the region around the Jordan River, saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near” (Matt 3:2 NIV). In doing this, John fulfilled a prophecy by Isaiah, which said,

I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare
your way--a voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the
way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'

Mark 1:2-3; Isa 40:3 NIV

John identified himself as being the one that God had sent to be a voice "calling in the desert" (John 1:23). John's message was that the kingdom of God was about to break forth and that people should get ready to receive it by repenting of their sins.

John also preached a "baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" (Mark 1:4). This does not mean that he preached that people should get baptized in order to be able to repent. Rather, it means that people should repent so as to become proper subjects for baptism. John was not anxious to baptize any unrepentant persons that came to him. He said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath?" (Luke 3:7 NIV) John also said to the Pharisees and Sadducees, "Produce fruit in keeping with repentance" (Luke 3:8).

John mentioned some specific things that people could do to demonstrate their repentance. He said that anyone that had two coats should give one away to someone that had none (Luke 3:11). Anyone that had (extra) food should do the same (Luke 3:11). John said that tax collectors should not collect more money than was due to them (Luke 3:13). To soldiers he said, "Don't extort money and don't accuse people falsely" and "Be content with your wages" (Luke 3:14). John said nothing, as far as the record goes, about keeping the Sabbath, celebrating the festivals, circumcising baby boys, or tithing, all of which seemed very important to most pious people in Israel in John's day.

Many people thought that John the Baptist might be the Christ (Messiah), but John assured them that he was not (Luke 3:15-17). He preached that the Messiah would come after him and that the Messiah would be greater than he (John). John said,

I baptize you with water. But one more powerful than I will
come, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to

untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

Luke 3:16 NIV

When John started preaching, he did not know the identity of the Messiah (John 1:31). He knew, however, that the Messiah was coming. He also knew that the Messiah would be like a sacrificial lamb. On a certain day, after John had baptized Jesus, he saw Jesus walking by and remarked to others about Him, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29 NIV)

Thought Questions

1. Do you think John could have served God, and advanced the kingdom of God more effectively, if he had served as a priest like his father? Please explain.
2. Were the people whom John baptized informed about the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus before they were baptized? If they were not, does that make John’s baptism different from the baptism which Jesus’ disciples later preached and practiced after Jesus was raised from the dead?
3. Jesus said that there had been no one born of woman greater than John the Baptist (Matt 11:11). What do you suppose it was about John the Baptist that caused Jesus to praise him so highly?
4. Do you think you would have enjoyed associating with John the Baptist?

2

Joseph and His Genealogy

Matthew 1:2-25; 2:13-23

When Joseph found out that Mary, to whom he was engaged, was expecting a child, he did not want to accept her as his wife. Being a kindly man, however, and not wanting to expose her to shame or

punishment, he planned to break off their engagement quietly. In the meanwhile, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said,

Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as
your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the
Holy Spirit.

Matthew 1:20 NIV

After Joseph heard this, he took Mary to be his wife (Matt 1:24). When her baby was born, Joseph gave Him the name “Jesus” (Savior), because the angel had said to him,

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.

Matthew 1:21 NIV

Matthew's genealogy shows that Joseph was a descendant of Abraham through King David (Matt 1:1-17). A different genealogy can be found in the gospel of Luke (Luke 3:23-37). If we are to believe both genealogies, which I do, then one of them must be the family tree of Mary while the other must be the family tree of Joseph.

Both genealogies trace Jesus' lineage back to King David. They show Jesus to be a legal descendant of King David through Joseph and a biological descendant of King David through Mary. It was extremely important that Jesus be shown to be descended from King David, because the Christ (Messiah) was expected to come from David's family (Jer 23:5).

In one place, Jesus is called “the carpenter” (Mark 6:3). In another He is called “the carpenter's son” (Matt 13:55). This suggests that Joseph was a carpenter and that Jesus learned the carpenter-trade from him.

We know that Joseph tried to abide by the laws of the land, for he went to Bethlehem in order to pay his tax, as a good citizen should; and he took Mary along with him.

We know that Joseph tried to comply also with the laws of God, for he had the baby Jesus circumcised on the eighth day, as the Law of

Moses prescribed (Luke 2:21). In addition, he took Jesus to Jerusalem in order to present Him to the Lord, as was proper; and he and Mary offered the appropriate sacrifice at the temple (Luke 2:22-24).

Joseph also seems to have been responsive to God's prompting. When an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and told him to escape to Egypt with his little family (Matt 2:13), Joseph left immediately for Egypt (Matt 2:14).

After King Herod died, an angel appeared to Joseph in Egypt and told him to return to the Land of Canaan, and he returned (Matt 2:19-21). Joseph did not settle in Judah, however, due to the fact that King Herod's son Archelaus reigned there. Instead, he went north to Nazareth, in Galilee (Matt 2:22-23).

It was at Nazareth that Jesus grew to manhood. Joseph's custom was to make a trip to Jerusalem every year for the Passover with his growing family (Luke 2:41).

Mary bore Joseph several children. Their sons were James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas; and there were some daughters (Matt 13:55-56).

Thought Questions

1. What do you think about Joseph? What kind of man was he?
2. Look through the genealogies in Matthew (chapter one) and in Luke (chapter three), and see if there are any names that you recognize. Please tell a thing or two about some of the persons, whose names you recognize in the genealogies.
3. Do you think Joseph faithfully carried out the responsibilities that God entrusted to him?

3

Mary, the Mother of Jesus

Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-56

The angel Gabriel appeared to a young virgin named Mary in the town of Nazareth in Galilee. This occurred when Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist was six months pregnant. Mary was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph, who was a carpenter.

The angel Gabriel said to Mary, “Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you” (Luke 1:28 NIV).

Mary was greatly troubled at this greeting and did not know what to think of it. So the angel said to her,

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.

Luke 1:30-31 NIV

After Gabriel had said this, He spoke to Mary about the son, whom she would bear. He said,

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.

Luke 1:32-33 NIV

Notice all the wonderful things that Gabriel said about Mary's son. He said:

- Her son would be great.
- He would be “the Son of the Most High.”
- He would sit on “the throne of his father David.”
- He would “reign over the house of Jacob forever.”
- Of His kingdom there would be no end.

Mary replied, “How will this be, since I am a virgin?” The angel Gabriel explained how it would be that she would conceive a child. He said,

The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the
Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be
born will be called the Son of God.

Luke 1:35 NIV

The angel also informed Mary that her kinswoman Elizabeth was going to have a child, in her old age. The angel finished his conversation with Mary by saying, “For nothing is impossible with God” (Luke 1:37 NIV). Mary showed her submissive spirit by replying to the angel, “I am the Lord’s servant, May it be to me as you have said” (Luke 1:38 NIV)

After the angel left Mary, she immediately traveled south to the hill country of Judea, where Elizabeth lived. When Mary entered Elizabeth and Zechariah’s house and spoke, Elizabeth’s baby jumped in her womb. At that moment Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, and she said to Mary in a raised voice,

Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you
will bear! But why am I so favored, that the mother of my
Lord should come to me?

Luke 1:42 NIV

Elizabeth spoke an additional blessing upon Mary, because Mary had believed what the Lord had told her through an angel.

In response to Elizabeth’s blessing Mary spoke beautiful words that sound poetic. She said,

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.

Luke 1:46-49 NIV

Mary continued speaking in words (Luke 1:50-55), which remind the reader of the Psalms of David.

Mary stayed with Elizabeth in Judea for about three months before returning to her home in Galilee.

Every mother in the tribe of Judah had hoped that her son would be the Christ (Messiah), and now for Mary, it was coming true. It was for her joy unspeakable! She knew nothing yet of the hurt that His suffering and death would cause her.

Mary is presented in the New Testament as being a very wonderful woman. She was well educated in the Scriptures, devout and holy; but she was, for all that, only a member of the human race, not divine.

Thought Questions

1. Have you ever noticed that many baby girls are given the name "Mary?" Why do you think that is so?
2. Do you think Mary did her job well of being the mother to the Christ (Messiah)? What makes you think as you do?
3. Do you think Elizabeth was a help to Mary? In what way was she a help to her?
4. Is Mary ever called in the Holy Scriptures the "Mother of God?" What would you say to a person who said to you that you should pray to Mary?

4

The Birth of Jesus

Matthew 2:1-18; Luke 2:1-39

The Roman Emperor, Caesar Augustus, ordered a census to be taken of the Roman world. In order for Joseph and Mary to be registered for the census, they had to leave their home in Nazareth and go south to Bethlehem, a distance of about 60 miles. This was because Joseph and

Mary belonged to the family of King David and because Bethlehem was “the city of David.”

It was not a good time for Mary to travel, since she was large with child. To complicate matters, when she and Joseph arrived in Bethlehem, they found the city so overcrowded that there was no room in the inn. So they stayed in an animal shelter. If the inhabitants of Bethlehem had realized that the long-awaited Christ (Messiah) would be born in their city that night, every home would have been open to them.

As it happened, however, Mary gave birth to her firstborn child in a shed where animals were fed. After the baby was born, Mary wrapped Him in cloths and laid him in the animal shelter, possibly, in a feeding trough.

Shepherds were out in a nearby field that night, watching over their flock, when, suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared to them. The bright glory of the Lord shone around about them, and they became afraid. The angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people” (Luke 2:10 NIV).

What good news was the angel speaking about? The angel explained, “Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:11 NIV).

This was, indeed, good news! The shepherds, like everyone else in Israel, had long been looking for the Christ (Messiah) to be born. The shepherds wanted to see this child, but where could they find Him? The angel directed them, saying, “This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger” (Luke 2:12 NIV).

After the angel said this, there appeared with the angel a whole crowd of heavenly warriors, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased” (Luke 2:14 NASB).

These words described aptly what the Christ (Messiah) would accomplish. He would, indeed, glorify God and bring peace among those who want to please God.

After the angels left, the shepherds said to each other, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about" (Luke 2:15 NIV)

The shepherds rushed to Bethlehem and found Mary and Joseph with the baby, who was lying in the animal shelter. After the shepherds had seen the baby, they spread the news about Him to others. Everyone who heard their story was amazed. As for Mary, she stored up these things in her heart (Luke 2:19).

The shepherds were euphoric that they had seen the baby. As they returned to their flock they were glorifying God and praising Him for all the things they had seen and heard.

When the eighth day came, the baby was circumcised, as the Law of Moses prescribed; and He was given the name "Jesus" (Savior) (Luke 2:21), as the angel had instructed Joseph (Matt 1:21; Luke 1:31).

When the forty days that were prescribed by the Law of Moses for Mary's purification (Lev 12:2-6) had passed, Joseph and Mary took Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem in order to present Him to the Lord. The Law of Moses said that the first born males of both humans and animals belonged to the Lord (Exo 13:2, 13, 15) and that they should be purchased from the Lord with a sacrifice. If people were poor, as Joseph and Mary were, the sacrifice was only a pair of doves and two young pigeons (Lev 12:8).

While Joseph and Mary were at the temple in Jerusalem, they met a just and devout man named "Simeon." The Holy Spirit had revealed to Simeon that the Christ would be born during his lifetime and that he would see Him. When Simeon saw Jesus, he took Him up in his arms and said,

Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss
your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your
salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all
people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to
your people Israel.

Luke 2:29-32 NIV

Notice that Simeon said that Jesus would bring not only glory to the people of Israel, but also light to the Gentiles. Joseph and Mary marveled at what Simeon said. Simeon blessed them and spoke to Mary about the changes that Jesus would bring about in Israel. He said,

This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed.

Luke 2:34-35a

Simeon made another statement, which, no doubt, caused Mary to have great apprehension. He said to her, “And a sword will pierce your own soul too” (Luke 2:35b NIV).

There was also an elderly widow present at the temple, a prophetess, named “Anna,” who spent most of her time fasting and praying. She approached Joseph, Mary, and the baby and gave thanks to God. She extolled the baby Jesus as being the Messiah to all that were expecting the Christ (Messiah).

The gospel of Luke gives the impression (Luke 2:39) that Joseph immediately took his little family to Nazareth. Luke, however, may not have intended to imply that Joseph did it immediately, for it seems that from Jerusalem they went back to Bethlehem, where the Wise Men found them. Luke may have thought it was not necessary to tell the story of the Wise Men, because Matthew had already told it.

The question that the Wise Men asked in Jerusalem could hardly have been phrased in a way that would have caused greater consternation. The Wise men asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him” (Matt 2:2 NIV).

That question was bound to upset the leaders in Jerusalem, for it meant that there was a pretender to the throne. King Herod considered this so serious that he called the chief priest and the teachers of the law together and asked them where the Christ (Messiah) was to be born. They informed Him that the Christ should be born in Bethlehem, and they quoted the words of Micah the prophet, who said,

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

Mic 5:2; Matt 2:6 NIV

After King Herod found out where the Messiah should be born, he summoned the Wise Men and asked them when they had first seen the star. Having learned from the wise men the time, King Herod sent them to Bethlehem and told them to report back to him what they found.

After the Wise Men left Jerusalem, they went on their way to Bethlehem, and they were overjoyed that the star led them directly there. Upon arriving, they found Joseph, Mary, and the Child now living in a house. Entering the house, they saw baby Jesus; and falling down before Him, they worshipped Him. Then they opened their treasures and presented gifts of gold, incense, and myrrh to Jesus.

The Wise Men did not return to King Herod, as he has requested, for they had been warned in a dream not to do so. Instead, they returned to their own country without going to Jerusalem.

When King Herod realized that the Wise Men had not followed his instructions, he was furious and gave orders to kill all the boy babies in and around Bethlehem that were two years old and under, counting from the time the Wise Men first saw the star. This caused many mothers in that area to weep, which reminded Matthew, the gospel writer, of what Jeremiah the prophet had said about Ramah (a place near Bethlehem), namely,

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

Jer 31:15; Matt 2:18 NIV

Jesus was not among the children that King Herod put to death, for an angel of the Lord had warned Joseph to take Mary and Jesus and flee to Egypt (Matt 2:13-14).

Thought Questions

1. How do you suppose Mary traveled to Bethlehem? Do you think she rode an animal, rode in a cart, or walked?
2. Is it disturbing to you to think that the Christ (Messiah) was born in an animal shelter instead of in a palace? Please explain your answer?
3. Does it appear incongruous to you that the angel announced the birth of Jesus to shepherds? Should not the angel have announced it to someone more important than shepherds?
4. Why do you think the Wise Men bowed down before Baby Jesus and worshipped Him, instead of worshipping Mary, His mother? Why did they present their gifts to Jesus instead of to His parents?
5. Do you see any special significance in the kinds of gifts the Wise Man gave to Jesus? If so, please explain.

5

Jesus as a Boy

Luke 2:40-52

Already as a boy Jesus would have been aware that His name meant “Savior.” He would have been taught in the synagogue, and at home, about the great hero Joshua (or Jesus), who bore that name before Him. Jesus would also have come to realize, as He read in the Scriptures, that the unusual circumstances surrounding His birth fulfilled a prophecy in the Old Testament, which said,

The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and
they will call him Immanuel’ --which means, ‘God with us.’

Matthew 1:23 NIV

Not much is known about Jesus as a boy. We do know a few things, however. He grew up in a little town called Nazareth, which is in the hills west of the Sea of Galilee. We know that the people in Nazareth had a synagogue (Luke 4:16), and it is reasonable to assume that Jesus acquired

at Nazareth His life-long habit of going to the Synagogue. We also know that Jesus was able to read (Luke 4:16-19). He may have learned to read at the Synagogue in Nazareth.

In addition, we know also that Jesus made annual trips to Jerusalem with Joseph and Mary to celebrate the Feast of the Passover (Luke 2:41-42). This would suggest that Jesus' family was faithful to celebrate the other festivals as well.

The New Testament gives some details about a trip that the family made to Jerusalem when Jesus was twelve years old. When the Passover Feast was over, Jesus' parents started back for Galilee. They assumed that Jesus was among their friends and relatives. After they had traveled a day, however, they discovered that Jesus was not in their company. So they hastened back to Jerusalem to look for Him.

After three days, they finally found Him at the temple, in the company of teachers of the Law of Moses, listening to them and asking them questions. Everyone that overheard His conversation with the teachers was astonished at His questions and answers (Luke 2:47). His parents were upset when they found Jesus, because He had caused them much inconvenience and concern. Mary did not hesitate to call Jesus to account for His actions. She said to Him, "Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you" (Luke 2:48 NIV).

Jesus replied to Mary and Joseph, "Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" (Luke 2:49 NKJV) It is instructive to see that at the age of twelve Jesus already referred to God as, "My Father." Indeed, the word "Father" became His favorite designation for God. In the Old Testament, God was called "Jahweh," "Elohim," "Adonai," and so forth; but for Jesus, He was simply "Father."

This suggests that Jesus felt a strong kinship to God. When He said that He must be about His "Father's business," He showed that He knew early on that He bore a special responsibility for the things of His Father. His parents, however, did not at that time understand what He meant when He said, "I must be about My Father's business" (Luke 2:50).

After this episode, Jesus returned to Nazareth with His parents, and He was subject to them, as was proper, and His mother treasured up all His sayings in her heart (Luke 2:51).

Jesus grew up with younger brothers and sisters in the family, for Joseph and Mary had several children together after Jesus was born. His brothers and sisters were aware, no doubt, that Jesus was an unusual boy; but they likely did not grasp the full significance of just how special He was.

This is suggested by the fact that they were slow to believe in Him (John 7:5). Indeed, it is not certain that all of His brothers and sisters ever came to believe in Him. Their lack of belief suggests that Jesus did not do any miraculous works as a boy.

Jesus showed at the age of twelve that He was mature beyond His years; yet there is no reason to think that, as He was growing up, He was a mature man in a child's body. It seems that He had to go through the process of growing up just as every other child does, for the Gospel of Luke says of Him, "And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men" (Luke 2:52 NIV).

It would be a mistake to think that Jesus did not have to suffer the growing pains that other youngsters suffer, for He was tempted just as every other person is tempted, but He resisted all temptations. The book of Hebrews says,

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize
with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been
tempted in every way, just as we are --yet was without sin.

Heb 4:15 NIV

Thought Questions

1. Do you think Joseph and Mary told Jesus about the unusual circumstances surrounding His birth? If Jesus knew these things about His birth, how do you think it made Him feel as a boy? Do you think it affected His childhood in any way? Please explain.

2. Was Mary's displeasure with Jesus at the temple justified, or was it not?
3. Do you suppose that Jesus appeared to His brothers and sisters to be unusual in any way? If so, in what way do you suppose He appeared unusual to them?
4. Do you think the people of Nazareth were sympathetic to Jesus when He was growing up?
5. Does the thought disturb you that Jesus, who was so strong and great as an adult, may have been somewhat like other children when He was a child? What do you make of Php 2:6-8?

6

The Baptism of Jesus

Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22

When Jesus was about 30 years old (Luke 3:23), and ready to start His public ministry, He did not go down to Jerusalem to seek the advice of the scribes, the Pharisees, and the Sadducees. He went, instead, out to where John the Baptist was baptizing in the Jordan River (Matt 3:13), so that John could baptize Him.

John and Jesus were likely acquainted with each other prior to this meeting in the wilderness, for their mothers were friends (Luke 1:36-45). John seemed to know that Jesus was a godly man. It is interesting to watch the interplay between these two holy young men. Jesus approved of John and of his work, otherwise He would not have wanted to be baptized at John's hands.

John, for his part, who had been so bold when confronting theologians, lawyers, and soldiers, seemed almost meek as Jesus stood before him. At the beginning of their interaction in the wilderness, John had no reason to think that Jesus was the Messiah (Christ), yet he seemed awed by Jesus' goodness; for when Jesus came seeking baptism, John

said to Him, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” (Matt 3:14 NIV)

John’s hesitancy to baptize Jesus is understandable. He must have asked himself, “Why did Jesus need to be baptized?” Jesus, however, insisted that John baptize Him; and John was persuaded after Jesus convinced him that it was the right thing to do, by saying, “Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness” (Matt 3:15 NIV). In compliance with Jesus’ request, John baptized (immersed) Jesus, in the Jordan River. (To “baptize” means to “immerse.”)

After Jesus was baptized, He came up out of the water praying (Luke 3:21). While He was praying, the heavens open up (Mark 1:10) and the Holy Spirit came down in the form of a dove (Luke 3:22) and alighted upon Him (Matt 3:16). Both Jesus and John saw it happen. In addition, there was a voice that spoke from heaven, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matt 3:17 NKJV).

You will recall that at the age of twelve, Jesus had called God “my Father” (Luke 2:49); and now, at Jesus’ baptism, God called Jesus “my beloved Son.”

The voice that sounded from heaven testified to three things: (1) Jesus is God’s Son, (2) God loves Jesus, and (3) God is “well pleased” with Jesus.

When the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus, His natural kinship with God was overlaid with God’s Holy Spirit, so that He was, afterwards, doubly prepared to meet the challenges that lay before Him: He was God’s Son by birth and was endowed with God’s Holy Spirit.

Thought Questions

1. Why did Jesus not begin His public ministry before He got baptized? What do you think?
2. Why do you suppose it was that Jesus wanted John, and not someone else, to baptize Him?
3. Why did John hesitate to baptize Jesus? Can you suggest some possible reasons?

4. How did John's baptizing Jesus "fulfill all righteousness?" Matthew 3:15.
5. Do you get the impression that Jesus thought baptism was important? What is your understanding of why He thought it was important? Is it important today? If Jesus had not been baptized, do you think people today would consider baptism to be important?
6. Why did the Holy Spirit come upon Jesus after His baptism instead of before it? What do you think?
7. If a person is baptized today, does that person's baptism symbolize anything? If so, what does it symbolize? See Rom 6:1-4. Is baptism more than a symbol?

7

The Temptations of Jesus

Matthew 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-13

Shortly after Jesus was baptized, the Holy Spirit led Him into the wilderness so that Satan (the devil) could tempt him there. Remember that Jesus was already "filled with the Holy Spirit" before the ordeal of His temptations began (Luke 4:1).

For forty days and forty nights Jesus was out in the wilderness with the animals (Mark 1:13). During that time He ate nothing at all. He may have drunk a little water (but the text does not say that He did), and all the while Satan was tempting Him (Luke 4:2).

At the end of the forty days, Jesus became very hungry. It was then that Satan, the tempter, said to Him, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread" (Matt 4:3 NIV). Jesus found Himself in a situation that reminded Him of the children of Israel in the wilderness when they did not know what they would eat, and God provided "manna" for them. Jesus recalled what Moses had written, and Jesus said to Satan,

It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone,
but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'

Matthew 4:4; Deu 8:3 NIV

In this way, Jesus used Scripture to counter temptation, but Satan was not finished with Jesus. He took Him to Jerusalem and stood Him on a high point of the temple area 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.'

Matthew 4:6; Psa 91:11-12 NKJV

With these words Satan showed that he, too, could quote Scripture, but he misapplied the passage; for Psalm 91 (from which Satan quoted) speaks to people in physical danger, but Jesus was in no physical danger. The only danger He faced was that He might listen to Satan and do something foolish in order to test (and show) whether or not God would protect Him from the consequences of what He did.

This second temptation reminded Jesus of a comment that Moses had made concerning the time when the children of Israel were in the Desert of Sin (Exo 17:1-7) and demanded that Moses give them water. Jesus quoted Moses' comment, namely, "Do not put the Lord your God to the test" (Matt 4:7; Deu 6:16 NIV).

Satan tempted Jesus in yet another way. He took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. No longer did Satan go through the charade of saying, "If you are the Son of God." He went right to the point. He wanted Jesus to worship him in the same way that Jesus worshipped God. So he said to Jesus,

I will give you all their [the world's] authority and splendor,
for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I
want to. So if you worship me, it will all be yours.

Luke 4:6-7 NIV

It is doubtful that Satan could actually deliver all that he promised, or that he would even try. If it were true, however, that Satan could give Jesus control over all earthly authority, it would enable Jesus to accomplish many of His goals and do it with much less pain and suffering to Himself.

Jesus, however, did not fall for it. Satan's proposal reminded Jesus of the temptation that the children of Israel faced when they were told that if they would fall down before foreign gods (idols) and worship them, things would go better for them. This time, Satan had gone too far. Jesus was fed up with him and with his temptations. He said,

Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.'

Matthew 4:10; Deu 6:13 NKJV

Jesus had passed the test. He had proved that He could eat food or not eat, as God provided. He had proved that He would not use His miraculous power for personal convenience or for show. He had also proved that He did not aspire to become a political ruler in the world. So Satan left off tempting Jesus, until another time; and angels came and took care of Jesus (Matt 4:11).

Thought Questions

1. Why do you suppose it was that the Holy Spirit led Jesus away into a desert place to be tempted? Why in a desert place? What do you think?
2. Why did the Holy Spirit wait until after Jesus was baptized before He led Jesus out to be tempted?
3. Why did not God do the testing Himself, rather than turn it over to Satan? See Jam 1:13-15.
4. Do you think it was hard for Jesus to resist these temptations? Please explain.

5. Do you get the idea that Jesus' familiarity with the Scriptures helped Him in the time of temptation? Would a familiarity with Scriptures (both Old and New Testaments) help us in time of temptation?
6. Have you ever been tempted to think that God would not take care of you? Please, tell about it, if you feel free to do so.

8

Endorsement By John the Baptist

John 1:6-9, 15, 19-36

Many common people were wondering whether or not John the Baptist was the Christ (Messiah). The religious leaders in Jerusalem were wondering that, too; and they sent some of the priests and Levites from Jerusalem to John to find out whether or not He was the Christ. They knew that John would tell them the truth.

John was baptizing near Bethany on the other side of the Jordan River and emissaries from Jerusalem came and asked him if he were the Christ, and John said, "I am not the Christ" (John 1:20).

The priests and Levites asked, "Who are you then? Are you Elijah?"

John said, "I am not."

They asked, "Are you 'the Prophet?'"

He answered, "No."

Then they asked, "Who are you? Tell us so that we can give an answer to those that sent us. What do you say for yourself?"

John replied with a quotation from the prophet Isaiah, which said, "I am the voice of one calling in the desert, 'Make straight the way for the Lord'" (John 1:23 NIV; Isa 40:3).

The emissaries that had been sent by the Pharisees asked John, "Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?"

John explained that there was a man, whom they did not know, and that this man was greater than he (John). John said,

“I baptize with water, but among you stands one you do not know. He is the one who comes after me, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.

John 1:26-27

The next day after John had said these words, Jesus came walking by where John was baptizing; and John saw Him and said of Jesus, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29 NIV) Then John added, “This is the one I meant when I said, ‘A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me’” (John 1:30 NIV). In this manner, John the Baptist identified Jesus as the Christ (Messiah). John explained that he had, at first, not known that Jesus was the Christ. John said,

I myself did not know him [the Christ], but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel.

John 1:31 NIV

Only after John saw the Holy Spirit descending upon Jesus, did he realize that Jesus was the Christ. John said, “I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him” (John 1:32 NIV).

Indeed, John might not have recognized that Jesus was the Christ, if God had not previously said to him, “The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptize with the Holy Spirit” (John 1:33b NIV).

Still referring to Jesus, John said to the people that were standing around, “I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God” (John 1:34 NIV).

Thought Questions

1. How did the fact that John was baptizing people help reveal the Messiah to Israel?

2. Do you think that John the Baptist was surprised that Jesus turned out to be the Messiah? Please explain.
3. Do you think that John the Baptist was in a position to know whether Jesus was the Messiah or not? Was John's testimony about Jesus clear and understandable? Was his testimony convincing? Was it reliable?
4. Did Jesus place value on John's testimony? Please read John 5:31-36.
5. Do you see any evidence that John the Baptist established his own church?

9

Jesus' First Followers

John 1:35-51

Two of John the Baptist's disciples heard John say that Jesus was the "Lamb of God," and they started following Jesus. When Jesus turned around and saw the two following Him, He asked, "What do you want?"

They said, "Rabbi (Teacher), where are you staying?"

He said "Come and you will see."

This was the first invitation, so far as we know, that Jesus issued to anyone to follow Him. These two men went with Jesus, saw where He was staying, and spent the rest of the day with Him. One of the two men was Andrew, who had a brother named Simon. The first thing Andrew did, after finding Jesus, was to go to his brother, Simon, and tell him, "We have found the Messiah (Christ)!" Thus, Andrew led Simon to Jesus.

Jesus, who was always quick to size up a person's true character, said to Simon the moment He laid eyes on him, "You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas" (John 1:42 NIV).

Jesus saw something rock-like in Simon's character, so He called him "Cephas," which in Aramaic means "rock." ("Peter" is a Greek word for "rock.") Jesus was the one who gave Simon the name "Peter."

The next day, Jesus wanted to leave the area where John was baptizing and return to Galilee. Before He left, however, He ran into a man named Philip, and He said to Philip, "Follow me."

Philip was from the town of Bethsaida, at the northern tip of the Sea of Galilee. (Peter, Andrew, and Philip were from the same town.) Philip was quick to figure out that Jesus was the Messiah. As a result of his having figured out who Jesus was, Philip went looking for his friend Nathanael. When he found Nathanael, he said to him,

We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and
about whom the prophets also wrote-Jesus of Nazareth, the
son of Joseph.

John 1:45 NIV

Philip's words show that he knew what the Old Testament said about the Messiah, for he identified Jesus as being the one (Messiah) about whom Moses (Deu 18:18) and the Prophets had written. Philip's words also show that Philip expected his friend Nathanael to know what the Old Testament said about the Messiah.

Yet when Nathaniel heard that Jesus was from Nazareth, he was skeptical. He did not think highly of the little town of Nazareth. Also, he likely knew that the Messiah was to be born at Bethlehem (Matt 2:4-6), not at Nazareth. So Nathanael said, "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" (John 1:46)

In response to Nathanael's skepticism, Philip insisted, "Come and see" (John 1:46).

When Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, Jesus said, "Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false" (John 1:47 NIV).

Nathanael was amazed that Jesus could size up his character so quickly and so well. So he asked Jesus, "How do you know me?"

Jesus answered, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you."

Nathanael knew that it could only have been by a miracle that Jesus had seen him. Therefore, Jesus' words convinced Nathanael that Jesus was, indeed, the one about of whom Moses and the Prophets had

written; so Nathanael declared, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel” (John 1:49 NIV).

With this statement, Nathanael revealed that he, too, had great understanding of the Old Testament, for Philip had said nothing to him, so far as we know, about Jesus’ being either “the Son of God” or “the King of Israel.”

Philip had only said that Jesus was the one about whom Moses and the Prophets had written. Nathanael had deduced the rest; and Nathanael was right, for if Jesus were the one about whom Moses and the Prophets had written, then He was also “the Son of God” and “the King of Israel.”

Jesus said to Nathanael, “You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You shall see greater things than that” (John 1:50 NIV). Then Jesus added, “I tell you the truth, you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man” (John 1:51 NIV). With this Jesus made reference to the ladder that Jacob, their forefather, had seen in a dream (Gen 28:12), upon which angels commuted between heaven and earth. Jesus knew that He Himself would also be a link between heaven and earth.

Thought Questions

1. What was the first thing Andrew did after he got acquainted with Jesus? See John 1:41. Is Andrew’s action an example for us in any way? If so, in what way?
2. Do you think angels are still commuting between heaven and earth? Does God still send angels to help His people? See Heb 1:14.
3. Why did Jesus want Peter, Andrew, Philip, and Nathanael to “follow” Him? What did He have in mind for them?

10

The Wedding Feast at Cana

John 2:1-11

After Jesus had been baptized by John the Baptist and tempted by Satan, Jesus returned to Galilee. One of the first things He did when He got back to Galilee was to attend a wedding feast at a place called Cana. Cana is thought to have been located between the Sea of Galilee and the Mediterranean Sea.

Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding feast, as was His mother, Mary. Mary felt responsible that things went well at the wedding feast. So when the wine ran out, she said to Jesus, "They have no wine." Jesus, however, did not seem to think it was His or His mother's responsibility to be concerned about the wine. He said to her, "Woman, what does that have to do with us?" (John 2:4a NASB)

Jesus addressed His mother as, "Woman," which sounds gruff to us; but it may have been nothing more than a playful response on His part. Jesus seems to have thought that His mother was asking Him to perform a miracle, for He said to her, "My time has not yet come" (John 2:4b NIV).

Yet, in spite of the fact that it might rush His schedule to perform a miracle so early in His career, Jesus allowed His love for His mother to influence His timetable. Mary was, doubtless, accustomed to relying upon Jesus, her eldest son. She seemed to know that He would do something about the shortage of wine, so she said to those that were serving, "Do whatever he tells you" (John 2:5 NIV).

Now, there were six stone jars standing around, which held water for ritual washing. Each of these jars held twenty to thirty gallons of water. Jesus told the servers, "Fill up the jars with water," and they filled them up. Then He told them to dip out some of the water and take it to the banquet master.

They did as Jesus had said, and the banquet master tasted it, not realizing where it had come from. The servers, however, knew where it had come from. Then the banquet master took the bridegroom aside and said to him,

Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the
cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink;
but you have saved the best till now.

John 2:10 NIV

This was Jesus' first miraculous sign. It showed His glory and caused His disciples to believe in Him all the more (John 2:11).

Not long after the wedding feast at Cana, Jesus went down to Capernaum and stayed there a while. His mother and His brothers went with Him. His disciples went with Him as well (John 2:12). Capernaum was below the level of the Mediterranean Sea, and it was a pleasant place to spend the winter. It is comforting to think that Jesus began His ministry in a pleasant and leisurely fashion, before the rush of events overtook Him. As spring came, however, when it was almost time for the Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem (John 2:13), as had been His custom since childhood.

Thought Questions

1. Are you surprised that the first thing that Jesus did in Galilee was to attend a wedding? What does that tell you about Jesus' view of marriage?
2. Are you surprised that Jesus performed His first miracle at His mother's request? What does that tell you about His relationship with His mother?
3. Are you surprised that Jesus' first miracle was to make wine for a wedding feast? Does that tell you anything about His appreciation for the importance of joy?
4. Are you surprised that the wine that Jesus made was of the finest quality? What can we learn from that?

***JESUS' FIRST
TRIP TO
JERUSALEM
AFTER HE BEGAN
HIS PUBLIC
MINISTRY***

11

Jesus Cleared Out the Temple

John 2:13-25

Jesus' evangelistic work in Galilee had hardly begun before it was time for Him to make His annual trip to Jerusalem for the Passover. When He got to Jerusalem, He went up to the temple grounds. There, Jesus, the quiet teacher from Galilee, was incensed at what He saw: People were selling cattle, sheep, and doves within the temple complex.

There was probably no law prohibiting the selling of animals and birds on the temple grounds, but Jesus found it unacceptable; for the sellers were making merchandise out of religion and doing it at the most sacred place in the nation. What was worse, there were moneychangers sitting at tables, ready to exchange local coins for foreign coins, because foreign coins could not be used at the temple. Jesus did not bother to complain to the priests. That would have done no good, for the priests no doubt profited from the selling of animals and the exchanging of money.

So Jesus made a whip of cords and drove the sheep and cattle from the temple area and overturned the tables of the moneychangers and scattered their coins. He said to the people that sold doves, "Take these things away! Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise!" (John 2:16 NKJV) Jesus was very protective of the temple, which He considered to be His Father's house. Much later, Jesus' disciples remembered that it was written of Him in the Psalms, "Zeal for your house will consume me" (John 2:17 NIV; Psa 69:9).

Jesus' actions got the attention of the people. They perceived that His driving the animals out and His overturning the tables of the moneychangers was a religious and symbolical act, something like what a prophet might do. So they demanded of Jesus, "What sign do you show to us, since you do these things?" (John 2:18 NKJV)

Jesus responded with an enigmatic prophecy. He said, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days” (John 2:19 NIV). Jesus knew, of course, that those people would not understand the significance of His enigmatic remark, but He was not ready to explain to them what His mission was. His words show us, however, that He already saw the dark clouds that hung over His mission and the rosy dawn that would follow.

The people ridiculed Jesus' words, saying, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?” The apostle John, who recorded this conversation, explained the Jesus was not referring to the temple but to His own body (John 2:21). The apostle John also recorded (John 2:22) that Jesus' disciples recalled this prophecy after Jesus was raised from the dead and that it caused them (all the more) to believe the Scriptures and what Jesus had said.

There were many people present in Jerusalem for that Passover Feast, and they saw the signs that Jesus did, and many of them believed on His name (John 2:23); but Jesus did not fully trust any of them; because He knew what kind of people they were (John 2:24-25).

Thought Questions

1. Why did Jesus drive the animals out of the temple grounds and overturned the tables of the moneychangers? Was He making a statement by doing this? What statement do you think He was making?
2. Do you find it uncharacteristic of Jesus that He made a whip and drove the animals from the temple? Does it suggest to you that Jesus condoned violence? Did Jesus hit any persons with his little whip?
3. Do you suppose that the moneychangers had a hard time identifying their coins and getting their coins back together after Jesus overturned their tables? Do you think it angered the moneychangers? Do you suppose it angered the priests? Do you think that Jesus cared whether it angered them or not?

4. Do you think some people respected Jesus all the more because He tried to stop the desecration of the temple? Do you suppose many people in Jerusalem were talking about what He did?

12

Nicodemus

John 3:1-21

While Jesus was in Jerusalem for the Passover, a man named Nicodemus, who was a Pharisee and a member of the Sanhedrin, came to Jesus by night, and said,

Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God.
For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are
doing if God were not with him.

John 3:2 NIV

In reply, Jesus went right to the heart of the problem that the Pharisees had. Unless they changed the way they thought and the way they lived, they could not participate in the kingdom of God. Jesus said to Nicodemus, “I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again” (John 3:3 NIV).

Nicodemus was a literal-minded man. He asked, “How can a man be born when he is old?” (John 3:4 NIV) Nicodemus added, “Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb to be born” (John 3:4 NIV)!

Jesus ignored Nicodemus’ sarcasm, but answered his question by explaining that two things are involved in being born again: They are water and Spirit. Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit” (John 3:5 NIV).

The “water” of which Jesus here spoke is baptism. How could it be anything else? John the Baptist had been prescribing baptism, and Jesus

would Himself shortly prescribe it in the Judean countryside (John 3:22). The Pharisees, however, were resisting John the Baptist's efforts to get them into the water for baptism. They resisted because they rejected God's purpose for themselves (Luke 7:29-30).

Yet the new birth involves more than being immersed in water. A birth "of the Spirit" is also necessary (John 3:5). Jesus explained that when a person is born of the Spirit, he or she takes on the nature of the Spirit. Jesus said,

Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.
You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be
born again.'

John 3:6-7 NIV

It was only natural that Jesus should compare the Spirit to the wind, for in the Hebrew language the word for both "Spirit" and "wind" is the same word. (This is true in Greek, too.) Jesus said,

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

John 3:8 NIV

Just as no one can figure out in advance precisely how the wind will blow, so no one can figure out, by using his own intellect, what God's Spirit requires. A person must let God teach him.

This was very puzzling to Nicodemus, and he expressed some doubt about it all. He asked, "How can this be?"

Nicodemus' long-standing acquaintance with the Old Testament should have equipped him to understand what Jesus meant. Jesus asked him, "Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things?" (John 3:10 NKJV) Jesus chided Nicodemus for not believing His message. Jesus said,

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

John 3:11 NIV

What Jesus had said to Nicodemus so far had dealt with things that transpire on earth things. Jesus said, “I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe” (John 3:12a NIV).

Then Jesus asked, “How then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things?” (John 3:12b NIV)

Jesus assured Nicodemus that He (Jesus) was amply qualified to tell him of heavenly things. Jesus said, “No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven -the Son of Man” (John 3:13 NIV).

Then Jesus told Nicodemus a secret that He had not been sharing with everyone. He said,

Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.

John 3:14-15 NIV

With these words, Jesus compared Himself to the bronze snake that was lifted up in the desert, and which brought healing to the people of Israel (Num 21:8-9). In this way Jesus made reference to His own death.

It is not certain that the following passage (John 3:16-21) was spoken by Jesus. The apostle John, who wrote the Gospel of John, may have written it. Irrespective of whether Jesus or John framed the following words, they are true and precious. The passage says,

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

John 3:16 NIV

The passage goes on to say that God did not send His Son into the world to judge (condemn) the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him (John 3:17). The person that believes in the Son will not be judged (condemned); but the person that does not believe is judged (condemned) already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God (John 3:18).

The passage also tells why some people do not come to Jesus' light. It is because, although light has come into the world, they love darkness rather than the light; for their works are evil (John 3:19). Everyone that does evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds be reproved (John 3:20). The person, however, that acts according to truth comes to the light, in order that his works be shown to have been done in God (John 3:21).

Thought Questions

1. In what way was Jesus' death on the cross (John 3:14-15) like the snake that was lifted up in the wilderness (Num 21:8-9)?
2. Do you think Nicodemus was influenced by his conversation with Jesus? See John 7:50 and John 19:39.
3. Did Jesus imply (in John 3:5) that no one can enter the kingdom of God without water baptism?
4. Did Jesus imply that no one can enter the kingdom of God without a rebirth of (or from) the Spirit?
5. Did Jesus link water baptism and the birth of the Spirit? What do you think?
6. Please quote from memory John 3:16, if you can.

13

John the Baptist Endorsed Jesus Again

John 3:22-36

Jesus and His disciples left the city of Jerusalem after the Passover and went into the surrounding countryside of Judea, where they spent a few days (John 3:22). Jesus was teaching and baptizing people (John 3:22), as John the Baptist was doing. Jesus did not baptize people with His own hands, however. He let His disciples do that (John 4:2).

Meanwhile, John the Baptist was baptizing at a place called Aenon, near Salim on the Jordan River. He was baptizing at that place because a lot of water was there (John 3:23), and people were coming to him and being baptized.

While John was at Aenon, a controversy arose between John's disciples and other people over certain purification rites. John's disciples came to him with their questions; and in the course of their conversation, John's disciples remarked to him,

Rabbi, He who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom
you have testified--behold, He is baptizing, and all are
coming to Him!

John 3:26 NKJV

John's disciples seemed concerned that Jesus was becoming more popular than John; but John showed no jealousy. He was glad that people were coming to Jesus. He replied,

A man can receive only what is given him from heaven. You
yourselves can testify that I said, 'I am not the Christ but
am sent ahead of him.'

John 3:27-28 NIV

John compared himself to the friend of a bridegroom. He said,

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

John 3:29 NIV

John knew that Jesus would eclipse him. John said, "He must become greater; I must become less" (John 3:30 NIV). The verses that follow in the Gospel of John sound like the words of the apostle John, who wrote the Gospel of John, instead of the words of John the Baptist.

The verses (John 3:31-36) assert that Jesus, who came from above, is above all. In contrast to this, a person from the earth is earthy and speaks things of the earth (John 3:31). Jesus, on the other hand, came to testify to what He had seen and heard (in heaven); but (almost) no one was accepting His testimony (John 3:32).

The person, however, who does accept Jesus' testimony places his stamp that God is true (John 3:33). We know that Jesus, whom God sent, speaks the words of God, for God does not dole out His Spirit by measure (John 3:34); for the Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand (John 3:35). The person that believes in the Son has eternal life, but the person that disobeys the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God remains upon him (John 3:36).

Thought Questions

1. What did John the Baptist think of Jesus? Do you consider that John the Baptist was a generous and unassuming man? If so, why?
2. If a person does not have faith in Jesus, is it his lack of faith that condemns him, or do his sins condemn him?
3. Why do you suppose it was that Jesus did not baptize people with His own hands?
4. Why do you suppose it is that the wrath of God (John 3:36) remains on people who do not believe in Jesus?

14

The Woman at the Well

John 4:1-26

While in Judea, Jesus became aware that the Pharisees had learned that He was making more disciples and baptizing more people than John the Baptist. This, apparently, played a role in Jesus' decision to break off His work in Judea and postpone it until later (John 4:1-2).

Another reason why Jesus left Judea at this time was that He had heard that John the Baptist had been arrested and put into prison (Mark 1:14). So from this point on, the responsibility for announcing the approach of the kingdom of God rested on Jesus' shoulders.

In order to reach Galilee, however, Jesus and His disciples passed through Samaria. In the course of their journey, they came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, where Jacob's well was.

Jesus was weary from the journey and sat down by the well to rest while His disciples went into town to buy food. About noontime a Samaritan woman came to the well to draw water, and Jesus asked her, "Will you give me a drink?"

This shocked the woman, for she recognized that Jesus belonged to the children of Israel, who customarily did not speak to Samaritans. She said, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How is it you ask me for a drink?"

Jesus replied,

If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.

John 4:10 NIV

The woman observed that Jesus did not have anything with which to bring water up from the well, and she knew the well was deep; so she asked Him, "Where do you get this 'living water'" (John 4:11)? (The

expression “living water” can also mean fresh, running water.)

Then the woman asked, “Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his flocks and herds” (John 4:12 NIV)?

Jesus did not respond to her affirmation that Jacob was the father of the Samaritans. Instead, He persisted with His water analogy, and said,

Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but
whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst.

John 4:13-14a NIV

Then Jesus added, “Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life” (John 4:14b NIV).

The woman may not have understood the full significance of what Jesus said. She got the idea that she would not have to come to the well anymore to get water if she had the water of which Jesus spoke. That appealed to her; so she said, “Sir, give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.”

Even though the woman was thinking about her own convenience, she had asked Jesus for help; and her request gave Him an opportunity to help her, although not in the way that she expected. He said to her, “Go, call your husband and come back” (John 4:16 NIV).

She replied, “I have no husband.”

Her honesty allowed Jesus to intervene in her life even more. He said,

You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is,
you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is
not your husband. What you have just said is quite true.

John 4:17-18 NIV

The woman was stunned that Jesus knew personal facts about her. What is more, He laid His finger on the central problem of her life. She replied,

Sir, I can see that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.

John 4:19-20 NIV

Jesus had deftly opened her heart, so that she asked for His thoughts on a central point of contention between the Samaritans and the children of Israel. Now that her heart was open, He said to her,

Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.

John 4:21 NIV

If the proper place to worship was neither Samaria nor Jerusalem, then where was it? Jesus explained,

You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks.

John 4:22-23 NIV

From this it is clear that Jesus looked at worship in a new way. For Him, the place where one worshipped was not as important as that worship should be done in spirit and according to truth. Jesus explained, further, “God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24 NIV).

All of this confused the woman. She was well informed, however, on one point. She knew that when the Messiah (Christ) came, He would explain all of this (John 4:25).

The awakening of the woman’s interest in spiritual truth led Jesus to confide in her that He was the Messiah. He said, “I who speak to you am he” (John 4:26 NIV).

Thought Questions

1. What do you think the religious leaders of the Samaritans would have thought about Jesus' statement (John 4:21) that the time would come in which the worship of God would not be centered at a place in Samaria?
2. What do you think the religious leaders of the children of Israel would have thought about Jesus' statement (John 4:21) that the time would come in which the worship of God would no longer be centered at Jerusalem?
3. What would you say to someone who told you that people should worship God in only one particular city or in one particular kind of building?
4. What did Jesus mean when He said that people should worship God "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24)?

15

Many Samaritans Believed

John 4:27-43

When Jesus' disciples, who had been in the town buying food, returned to the well, they found Jesus talking with the Samaritan woman, and they were surprised; but no one asked Him why He was talking with her.

The woman, meanwhile, left her water jar standing at the well, and rushed back into town and said to the people, "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ" (John 4:29 NIV).

While the people were coming out of the town, Jesus' disciples urged Him to eat something, but He said to them, "I have food to eat that you know nothing about" (John 4:32 NIV).

The disciples supposed that Jesus meant that someone had brought Him something to eat, so He explained to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work" (John 4:34 NKJV).

Jesus expanded on this by giving His disciples a lesson about the urgency of “harvesting” people for the kingdom of God. He said,

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!

John 4:35 NKJV

The joy that Jesus was experiencing was a part of His reward for the work He was doing. He said,

Even now the reaper draws his wages, even now he harvests the crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together. Thus the saying ‘One sows and another reaps’ is true.

John 4:36-37 NIV

Jesus realized, of course, that He was not the first one to teach good things. Moses and the Prophets and others had gone before Him. They had prepared the way for the work that He and His disciples were doing and would be doing in the future. He said to them,

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

John 4:38 NIV

Many Samaritans started believing in Jesus because of what the woman said; and many more came to believe in Him because of what He Himself said to them. They said to the woman,

We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world.

John 4:42 NIV

As a result, they asked Jesus to stay a while with them; and He stayed there two days.

Thought Questions

1. What do you think Jesus' "food" was, of which He spoke and about which His disciples knew nothing (John 4:34)?
2. What caused the Samaritan woman to start believing in Jesus? What caused the Samaritans from the town to believe in Him?
3. Is reaping a harvest of souls for the kingdom of heaven a rewarding experience? If it is rewarding, in what way is it rewarding?

***THE BEGINNING
OF JESUS'
GALILEAN
MINISTRY***

16

Jesus' Return to Galilee and His First Rejection at Nazareth

Luke 4:14-30; John 4:43-45

When Jesus heard that John the Baptist had been arrested (Matt 4:12; Mark 1:14), He returned to Galilee. Prior to His returning, Jesus had been in Jerusalem, as you will recall, where He drove the merchants out of the temple. It was also at Jerusalem that Jesus taught Nicodemus in a private conversation.

After leaving Jerusalem, Jesus spent a few days teaching in the Judean countryside. Then, on His way back to Galilee, He taught the Samaritan woman at the well and stayed two days with the Samaritans.

The Gospel of Luke says that Jesus returned to Galilee “in the power of the Spirit” and that the news about Him spread throughout the whole countryside (Luke 4:14). The Galileans welcomed Him, because many of them had been in Jerusalem at the Passover and had seen all that He had done there (John 4:45).

One of the first places Jesus visited upon His return to Galilee was Nazareth, where He was raised. At Nazareth He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as was His custom. In the synagogue, an attendant brought Him the book (scroll) that contained the words of the prophet Isaiah. Jesus opened the book and read aloud the passage that says,

The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me
to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to
proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight
for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year
of the Lord's favor.

Luke 4:18-19 NIV; Isa 61:1-2a

When Jesus finished reading, He closed the book and returned it to the attendant and sat down; and all the people in the synagogue stared at

Him. They were well aware that He had just read a prophecy about the Messiah; and they were, no doubt, curious to know whether or not He would confirm the rumor that He was Himself the Messiah. What He said was, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:21 NIV). This amounted to a confirmation that He was, indeed, the Messiah.

At first the people at Nazareth were enthralled with His graceful words; but, for some reason, their sentiments changed. They asked, "Is this not Joseph's son?" Jesus knew what they were thinking. He knew that they were hoping He would perform a miracle, as He had done in other places, so He said to them,

Surely you will quote this proverb to me: 'Physician, heal yourself! Do here in your hometown what we have heard that you did in Capernaum.'

Luke 4:23 NIV

Then Jesus said, "Assuredly, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own country" (Luke 4:24 NKJV). Judging by what Jesus said next, the people at Nazareth must have been extremely loyal to their town and to their nation. They must have thought that Jesus' words were a slap at them. Whatever they thought, Jesus sought to counter their local pride by saying,

I assure you that there were many widows in Israel in Elijah's time, when the sky was shut for three and a half years and there was a severe famine throughout the land. Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon.

Luke 4:25-26 NIV

With these words Jesus referred to Elijah the prophet, who had been sent to a widow in a foreign place to bless her with his presence and with food (1 Ki 17:8-16). If His words so far did not please the people of Nazareth, His next statement pleased them even less. He said,

And there were many in Israel with leprosy in the time of Elisha the prophet, yet not one of them was cleansed -only Naaman the Syrian.

Luke 4:27 NIV

Jesus here referred to the fact that Naaman, a foreign general, was cleansed of Leprosy in the time of Elisha (2 Ki 5:14).

These statements caused the people of Nazareth to get so mad that they rose up and pushed Jesus out of the town. They forced Him to the brow of the hill on which the town stood. They intended to throw Him down the precipice; but, as if by a miracle, He walked right through the midst of them and went on His way.

Thought Questions

1. In what way did Jesus' fulfill the prophecy in Isa 61:1-2? Did the fact that He fulfilled the prophecy identify Him as the Messiah?
2. Why did it not rain for a long time in Israel in the days of Elijah? What do you think? See 1 Ki 16:30; and 1 Ki 17:1 and its following verses.
3. Why was only Naaman the Syrian healed of leprosy in the days of Elisha? What do you think? See 2 Ki 5:1 and its following verses.
4. Please describe how you think that Jesus felt about the people of Israel? Did He love them? Was He a zealot for their nationalistic cause, or was He equally concerned about the welfare of all peoples around the world?

17

***Healing of
a Royal Officer's Son and
Jesus' Move to Capernaum******Matthew 4:13-16; Luke 4:31-32; John 4:46-54***

After Jesus got back to back to Galilee, one of the places He visited was Cana (John 4:46), where He had made water into wine. Now, a certain royal officer, likely an Israelite in the service of the king, had a son that lay sick at Capernaum. The man had heard that Jesus had returned to Galilee from Judea and came to Cana to intercept Him (John 4:46). When the man found Jesus, he asked Him to come down to Capernaum and heal his son, saying that his son was so sick that he was about to die. Jesus tested the man's faith by rebuffing Him. Jesus said, "Unless you people see signs and wonders, you do not believe."

However, the rebuff did not deter the man from seeking Jesus' aid. He urged Jesus, saying, "Sir, come down before my son dies."

Jesus gave the man an unexpected reply. He said, "Go, your son lives."

The man had enough faith to take Jesus' word for it and he left. As the man was going down to Capernaum, his servants met him and told him that his son was alive. Then, the royal officer asked them when it was that his son had begun to recover. They told him that the fever left him on the previous day, at about the seventh hour. The royal officer knew that this was the time that Jesus had said to him, "Your son lives," and he began to believe in Jesus. His whole house believed also.

This was the second miraculous sign that Jesus performed after returning to Galilee (John 4:54). The fact that it was only Jesus' second miraculous sign shows that it took place rather soon after He returned to Galilee.

When Jesus got to Capernaum, He began to teach in the synagogue there on the Sabbath days (Luke 4:41), and Capernaum became His new

home (Matt 4:13). His mother and brothers may have been living at Capernaum, also (John 2:12).

Matthew (who wrote the gospel of Matthew) found that Jesus' move to Capernaum fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, in which "Zebulun" and "Naphtali" were mentioned. (Zebulun was the general area that lay between the Sea of Galilee and the Mediterranean Sea. Naphtali was the area north and west of the Sea of Galilee.) Isaiah had said,

Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the way to the sea,
along the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles – the people living
in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the
land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.

Matthew 4:15-16 NIV; Isa 9:1-2

These early days in the ministry of Jesus were a wonderful time in His life. He was young and dynamic; and although people were anxious to hear Him speak, crowds were not surrounding Him from dawn to dusk, as was later the case.

Many people were astonished at His teaching, because He delivered His messages with authority (Luke 4:32). He backed up His teaching with quotations from the Old Testament, where it was appropriate to do so; but He did not try to substantiate what He said with quotations from the Rabbis.

Thought Questions

1. Does Jesus appear to have been anxious to help the royal officer?
2. Did it make any difference whether or not Jesus was present with a sick person in order to heal him? Do you see a difference between the way that Jesus healed and the way in which modern (so-called) "faith healers" (purport to) heal?
3. Did the healing of the royal officer's son depend upon the son's having faith that he could be healed? If it did not depend upon the sons' having faith, then upon what (or whom) did the son's healing depend?

4. Why did Jesus leave Nazareth and move to Capernaum? What do you think?
5. What was the “light” that was beginning to shine in the land of Galilee (Matt 4:15)? What was the significance of the “light?”

18

The Preliminary Call of the Four and the Casting Out of a Demon

Matthew 4:18-22; Mark 1:16-28; Luke 4:31-37

After Jesus moved to Capernaum, He was walking one day along the shore of the nearby Sea of Galilee and saw Simon Peter and his brother Andrew casting nets into the Sea. Jesus was already acquainted with these two men (John 1:40-42). He said to them, “Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Matt 4:19).

Simon Peter and Andrew left their nets at once and began to follow Jesus.

Jesus went along the seashore and saw two other brothers. They were James and John, who were also in the fishing business. They were in a boat with their father, Zebedee, repairing nets. Jesus called them and they, too, left their boat (and their father) and followed Jesus.

However, it does not seem that these four fishermen started following Jesus fulltime at this point; for they appear to have been called yet again in Luke chapter five.

While Jesus was teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum on a Sabbath Day (Mark 1:23-24), there was a man present, who had an unclean spirit (demon).

The man cried out in a loud voice, “Ha! What do you want from us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God” (Luke 4:34 NIV)!

Jesus had already shown that He could, with God’s help, turn water to wine and heal a man’s son at a distance; but what about demons?

Would they intimidate Him? Not at all! Jesus commanded the demon, saying, “Be quiet! Come out of him!” (Luke 4:35)

Then the demon threw the man down before all the people and came out of him, without harming the man.

This is the first time that we read that Jesus cast a demon out of anyone. When He did it, amazement came over all of the people in the synagogue; and they said to each other, “What is this teaching? With authority and power he gives orders to the unclean spirits and they come out” (Luke 4:36 NIV)!

As a result this miracle, the news about Jesus began to spread more and more throughout the surrounding area (Mark 1:28 and Luke 4:37).

Thought Questions

1. Why did Jesus choose humble fishermen instead of priests and scholars to be His disciples? What qualities was Jesus looking for in the men He chose?
2. What would you have done if you had been alive in Jesus’ day and He had called you to be a disciple of His? Would you have been willing to leave all and follow Him?
3. Is Jesus still calling people to follow Him today? How does He call people? See 2 Th 2:14.

***JESUS' FIRST
PREACHING
TOUR IN GALILEE***

19

Simon's Mother-in-law, Many Miracles, and Jesus' First Preaching Tour in Galilee

Matthew 4:23-25; 8:14-17;

Mark 1:29-39; Luke 4:38-44

After He had cast the demon out of a man in the synagogue at Capernaum, Jesus left the synagogue and went into the home of Simon Peter and his brother, Andrew. James and John also went with Him. Immediately they told Jesus that Simon's mother-in-law was sick. They found her in bed with a high fever. Jesus came near where she lay; and taking her by the hand, He rebuked the fever and it left her. Then she got up at once and started serving them.

That same afternoon, as the sun was setting and the whole town was gathered at Simon Peter's door, many people were brought to be healed. They had various kinds of sicknesses and some were also demon possessed. Laying His hands on each one, He healed them all (Luke 4:40). Demons came out of many of them, shouting, "You are the Son of God!" But Jesus rebuked the demons and would not let them speak, because they knew He was the Christ (Luke 4:41). The gospel of Matthew tells that Jesus' miraculous healings fulfilled what the Prophet Isaiah had said about the Messiah, namely, "He took up our infirmities and carried our diseases" (Matt 8:17 NIV; Isa 53:4).

The next morning, while it was still dark, Jesus left Simon Peter's house and went out to a solitary place to pray. Simon Peter and others came searching for Him. When they found Him, they told Him that everyone was looking for Him.

The people of Capernaum had gotten wind that Jesus was planning to leave them; so they implored Him not to leave, but He explained that

He must go and evangelize other towns also. He said to those that were with Him, "Let us go somewhere else to the nearby villages so I can preach there also. That is why I have come" (Mark 1:38 NIV).

Therefore, Jesus went everywhere in Galilee teaching in their synagogues (Matt 4:23), preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. He was preaching, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:15 NKJV).

News about him began to spread to neighboring Syria, and people brought to him all that were ill with various diseases, some suffering severe pain, some demon possessed, some having seizures, and some paralyzed; and He healed them.

Large crowds followed Him, not only from Galilee, but also from the Decapolis (ten cities), from Jerusalem and Judea, and from the region across (east of) the Jordan River (Matt 4:24-25).

Thought Questions

1. Do you think Simon Peter was a married man? Does God require that gospel preachers be single? Does God require that gospel preachers be married?
2. Jesus did not allow demons to announce that He was the Christ? Why did He not want demons to do that?
3. It appears that Jesus thought that preaching and teaching was His main mission (Luke 4:43). That being the case, why do you think He also healed people?
4. Do you think Jesus was pleased that He was being cast in the eyes of people more as a "healer" than as a "teacher?"
5. Why do you think Jesus went to a solitary place to pray?
6. Why did Jesus not stay in Capernaum and preach there? Why did He want to go preach in other places?

20

The Final Call of Peter, Andrew, James, and John

Luke 5:1-11

Following His first (rather short) preaching tour in Galilee, Jesus was at home at Capernaum again. One day He went out along the shore of the Sea of Galilee, and people were crowding around Him in order to hear the word of God (Luke 5:1). He saw two boats sitting on the shore beside the sea. The fishermen had gotten out of the boats and were washing their nets. Jesus got into the boat that belonged to Simon Peter and asked him to pull out a little from the shore. Then Jesus sat down and taught the crowd from the boat (Luke 5:3).

When Jesus finished teaching the people, He said to Simon Peter, “Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch” (Luke 5:4 NIV).

Simon Peter answered, “Master, we’ve worked hard all night and haven’t caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets” (Luke 5:5 NIV). When they did this, they caught a very large number of fish. They caught so many that their nets began to break. They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled the boats so full that they both began to sink.

Amazement overcame Simon Peter and all those that were with him at the huge catch they had taken. Likewise, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, partners with Simon, were overcome with amazement. When Simon Peter saw the catch, he fell at Jesus’ knees and said, “Go away from me, Lord; for I am a sinful man” (Luke 5:8)!

Jesus said to Simon, “Don’t be afraid; from now on you will be fishing for men” (Luke 5:10).

The fishermen pulled their boats on shore, left everything and followed Jesus. It seems that from that time forward they were Jesus’ fulltime followers and trainees.

Thought Questions

1. Does the thought disturb you that Jesus may have had to call Simon Peter and his friends twice? If He had to call them twice, what does that suggest to you?
2. Do you think the huge catch of fish was a miracle? Did Simon Peter think it was a miracle? Did the huge catch of fish have anything to do with the decision of Simon Peter and his friends to follow Jesus permanently? What does the huge catch of fish suggest?
3. Was it “prudent” of these four men to leave everything and follow Jesus?
4. Did James and John leave their father, Zebedee, in a bind? Were they justified in leaving him as they did?

21

Sermon on the Mount: Concerning True Righteousness

Matthew 5:1-48

The gospel of Matthew contains Jesus' “Sermon on the Mount,” which gives a good view of what Jesus emphasized early in His Galilean ministry. Many people had started coming to Jesus to be taught and to be healed. On one occasion He went up on a hillside and sat down. His closest disciples came to Him, as well as others, and He taught them all.

He began His message by announcing (or pronouncing) a blessing upon a very unlikely group of people. He said that the “poor in spirit” were blessed, as well as those that “mourn;” and He said that “the meek” and those that “hunger and thirst for righteousness” were blessed.

He also announced (or pronounced) a blessing upon the “merciful,” the “pure in heart,” the “peacemakers,” and those that are “persecuted for righteousness’ sake” (Matt 5:3-11). Such people were not considered to be blessed in those days, nor are they considered to be blessed today.

Jesus explained that their blessedness resided in the reward they would get.

Jesus then compared His followers to salt and said that if they should lose their saltiness, they would have no value (Matt 5:13). They are also like a city set on a hill that cannot be hidden (Matt 5:14), and they should let their light shine so that all may see their good works and glorify their Father in heaven (Matt 5:15-16).

Jesus did not want people to think that He came to destroy the Law and the Prophets (Matt 5:17), for He came to fulfill them (Matt 5:18-19). He said,

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

Matthew 5:20 NIV

Jesus described how His teaching contrasted with, and improved upon, the Law of Moses and the Prophets. The Law, in one of the Ten Commandments, said, “You shall not kill” (Exo 20:13). That was a good commandment, but Jesus had a better one. He said, “But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment” (Matt 5:22a NIV).

Even a mild expression of disregard for another person is worthy of punishment, according to Jesus. He said,

Again, anyone who says to his brother, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell.

Matthew 5:22b NIV

Jesus gave next an illustration of how a person’s righteousness should exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law (scribes). He said that when anyone stood before the altar on the temple grounds in Jerusalem and there remembered that his brother had a legitimate complaint against him, he should leave his gift before the altar.

He should then go and be reconciled to his brother, before offering his gift (Matt 5:23-26).

Jesus quoted another of the Ten Commandments, which said, "You shall not commit adultery (Exo 20:14)." Regarding this, Jesus said,

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

Matthew 5:28 NIV

Thus we see that Jesus upgraded the Ten Commandments. He showed that there is a righteousness that goes beyond the Ten Commandments. Jesus was very serious about this. He said that if a person's right eye caused him to sin, he would be better off if his eye were pulled out (Matt 5:29). He said that if a person's right hand caused him to sin, he would be better off if his hand were cut off (Matt 5:30).

Jesus also referred to the fact that, according to the Law of Moses, a man who divorces his wife must give her a "certificate of divorce" (Deu 24:1). Jesus had a higher concept of how binding marriage is. In His eyes, marriage was not to be dissolved merely by giving a spouse a "certificate of divorce." He taught that any man that divorces his wife, unless she has committed fornication, puts her in jeopardy of committing adultery. He said,

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

Matthew 5:32 NIV

Again, the Old Testament said that a person should not swear falsely (Lev 19:12) and that he should fulfill every oath that he makes to the Lord (Num 30:2). Jesus, on the other hand, thought it would be better for a person neither to swear nor to take an oath. He said,

But I tell you, Do not swear at all: either by heaven, for it is God's throne; or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King.

Matthew 5:34-35 NIV

Jesus thought it would be nonsensical for a person to swear by his head, since he cannot make one hair of his head white or black (Matt 5:36). He admonished, "Simply let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one" (Matt 5:37 NIV).

As Jesus continued teaching, He referred to another phrase from the Old Testament: "You have heard," He said, "Eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth" (Exo 21:24). He said, however, "But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also" (Matt 5:39 NIV).

He took a similar attitude toward a person's defending his or her possessions. He said, "And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well" (Matt 5:40 NIV). He extended this attitude also to the service that one person renders to another. He said,

If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.
Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from
the one who wants to borrow from you.

Matthew 5:41-42 NIV

Jesus referred, at that point, to a common feeling among people that they should love their neighbor (which the Old Testament commends, in Lev 19:18) and hate their enemy (which the Old Testament does not commend).

This attitude was all-too-common then, as it is now; but was it not satisfactory in Jesus' eyes. He said,

But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who
persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in
heaven.

Matthew 5:44-45a NIV

Jesus made reference to the fact that God causes His sun to rise both on evil people and on good people and that He sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous (Matt 5:45b). Then He said,

If you love those who love you, what reward will you get?
Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet
only your brothers, what are you doing more than others?
Do not even pagans do that?

Matthew 5:46-47 NIV

Jesus concluded His discussion of true righteousness by saying, “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matt 5:48 NIV).

Thought Questions

1. Why did Jesus consider the “poor in spirit” to be blessed? See Matthew 5:3. Why did He consider each of the following to be blessed: “those who mourn,” “the meek,” “those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,” “the merciful,” “the pure in heart,” “the peacemakers,” and “those that are persecuted because of righteousness?” See Matthew 5:4-12.
2. How can a follower of Jesus keep his or her “saltiness?” What is his or her “saltiness?”
3. How can a follower of Jesus let his or her light shine (Matt 5:13-16)?
4. How can a person avoid committing adultery in his heart? Matthew 5:27-30.
5. Should Jesus’ teaching about divorce (Matt 5:31-32) and oaths (Matt 5:33-37) be followed today?
6. Jesus said, “Do not resist an evil person” (Matt 5:39). What did He mean by that? Does what Jesus said still apply for His followers today?
7. Jesus said, “If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles” (Matt 5:41). What does that mean? Does it still apply today?
8. How can a person learn to love his or her enemies?

22

Sermon on the Mount: Concerning Personal Piety

Matthew 6:1-34

In the “Sermon on the Mount” Jesus set forth His high standards for personal piety. He warned people not to make a show of their good deeds, otherwise no reward would be forthcoming from their heavenly Father (Matt 6:1). If a person were to blow a trumpet before himself when he made a charitable gift, as some of the hypocrites were doing, people would know that he made the gift; but that is all the reward he would get (Matt 6:2). Jesus said,

But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Matthew 6:3-4 NIV

Jesus taught that a person should not make a show of praying. He warned His followers not to be like the hypocrites, who loved to pray in the synagogues and while standing on the corners of the streets, thus showing people that they were praying. Jesus said, “Verily, I tell you, they have their reward” (Matt 6:5). He said,

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

Matthew 6:6 NIV

Jesus warned that when people pray, they should not “babble” like Gentiles, who think they will be heard because of their many words (Matt 6:7). He said, “Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him” (Matt 6:8 NIV).

At this point, Jesus said that people should pray in this manner: “Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name” (Matt 6:9 KJV). Notice that Jesus taught that a prayer should be addressed to the Father.

The prayer continued: “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven” (Matt 6:10 KJV). Notice that the coming of God’s “kingdom” is the same as His will being done on earth.

The prayer continued: “Give us this day our daily bread” (Matt 6:11 KJV). Notice how modest the request is: It is a request only for bread for one day.

The prayer continued: “And forgive us our debts [wrongs], as we forgive our debtors [those who wrong us]” (Matt 6:12 KJV).

Jesus then ended the prayer by saying,

And lead us not into temptation [testing], but deliver us from
evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,
for ever. Amen.

Matthew 6:13 KJV

After Jesus had given this prayer, He emphasized how important it is for people to forgive others. He said that if people forgive others, their Father in heaven would forgive them. If, however, people do not forgive others, their Father will not forgive their sins (Matt 5:14-15).

Jesus said that people should not act sad when they fast, as hypocrites do, nor distort their faces in order to let other people know that they are fasting. People who do that already have their reward (Matt 6:16). Then He added,

But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face,
so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting,
but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father,
who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Matthew 6:17-18 NIV

Jesus warned people not to store up treasures for themselves on earth, where moth and rust can destroy, and where thieves break in and steal (Matt 6:19). Rather, He advised,

But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Matthew 6:20-21 NIV

Jesus did not want His followers to be blinded by greed. He taught that a person's eye is the source of light for his whole body, and if a person's eye is "single" (healthy), his whole body will be full of light (Matt 6:22). However, if a person's eye is bad, his whole body will be full of darkness. Jesus exclaimed, "If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!" (Matt 6:23 NIV)

Jesus reminded His listeners that no one can serve two masters, for he will either hate one master and love the other, or he will be loyal to one master and despise the other. Then Jesus cautioned, "You cannot serve God and mammon [money]" (Matt 6:24b NKJV).

Matthew chapter six comes to a close with Jesus' beautiful dialogue concerning anxiety. Here are Jesus' words: (No comment on them is necessary.)

Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God

clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.

Matthew 6:25-32 NIV

Jesus summed up His teaching against worry by saying,

But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

Matthew 6:33-34 NIV

Thought Questions

1. What did Jesus mean when He said (Matt 6:3), "Let not your left hand know what your right hand is doing?"
2. Jesus warned (Matt 6:7) that when we pray we should not "babble" like the Gentiles. What did He mean by this?
3. Is the "Lord's Prayer" (Matt 6:9-13) to be prayed on all occasions? Or is it a sample prayer, which Jesus used to show us how to pray? What can be learned from this prayer?
4. Why should people keep their fasting a secret (Matt 6:16)?
5. What is wrong with our storing up treasures for ourselves on earth (Matt 6:19)?
6. Is it true that greed blinds people? If it is true, how does greed blind people?
7. How can we learn to stop worrying about food and clothing?
8. What does it mean to seek "God's kingdom and His righteousness" (Matt 6:33)? Why should we seek these "first?" What reward is promised for seeking God's kingdom and His righteousness first?

23

The Sermon on the Mount: Concerning Various Topics

Matthew 7:1-23

Jesus did not want His followers to be judgmental in their dealings with people. He explained that they would be judged the same way they judged others. He also explained that the standard they used to measure out to others would be used to measure out to them (Matt 7:1-2). Then He admonished, “Do not judge, or you too will be judged” (Matt 7:1 NIV). He wondered how a person could look at the speck in his brother’s eye and not notice that he had a plank in his own eye. Jesus asked,

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

Matthew 7:4 NIV

Jesus spoke harshly concerning the person who might overlook the plank in his own eye. He said,

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

Matthew 7:5 NIV

Jesus’ followers must use wisdom in deciding to whom they should impart Jesus’ teaching, for He warned,

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

Matthew 7:6 NIV

After having said these things, Jesus began to encourage His people to pray, saying,

Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.

Matthew 7:7-8 NIV

A disciple's confidence in the effectiveness of prayer appears to be based on that person's confidence in the goodness of God, for Jesus asked,

Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone?
Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!

Matthew 7:9-11 NIV

At this point, Jesus came to what is called "the Golden Rule." He admonished,

So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

Matthew 7:12 NIV

Jesus was aware that it is not always easy to live as He suggested, for He said,

Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

Matthew 7:13-14 NIV

He warned against false prophets, who would try to lead His followers away from the truth and righteousness:

Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.

Matthew 7:15 NIV

Then Jesus explained how a person could recognize a "false prophet:"

By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

Matthew 7:16-20 NIV

Nearing the conclusion of His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus informed His followers that entrance into the kingdom in heaven would be selective:

Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

Matthew 7:21 NIV

There will be unpleasant surprises on the Judgment Day, for Jesus said,

Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'

Matthew 7:22-23 NIV

Jesus concluded His “Sermon on the Mount” with a parable concerning a wise man and a foolish man. He said that everyone that hears His words and puts them into practice is like a wise man that built his house on the rock. The rain came and the streams rose and the winds blew and beat against that house, but it did not fall because it was built on the rock.

He said that everyone that hears His words and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man that built his house on the sand. The rain came and the streams rose and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.

The people who heard the Sermon on the Mount were entranced by it. It was beautiful, simple, forceful, and compelling. People were also impressed that Jesus taught with authority. Some of what He said was similar to what the people had heard before, but much of it was new. Jesus’ teaching left no room for duplicity or sophistry. He emphasized the importance of pleasing God in the best and highest way possible. This was new and exciting!

Thought Questions

1. Why does God not want His people to judge others (Matt 7:1)? What do you think? Is there a difference between judging people and making decisions about right and wrong? What is the difference? Please explain.
2. Jesus wants His followers to ask God for the things they need (Matt 7:9-11)? Why do you suppose He wants them to do that? Are we permitted to ask God for things we want but may not need? What do you think?
3. How does “the Golden Rule” (Matt 7:12) sum up the Law and the Prophets?
4. Does it take effort to lead a Christian life? Is it difficult or easy? See Matthew 7:13-14. What do you think?
5. How can you recognize a false prophet? See Matthew 7:16-20. Have you ever seen a false prophet?

6. Is it possible that people who prophesy in Jesus' name and who (supposedly) cast out demons and heal people could be denied entrance into heaven? If it is possible, on what basis would entrance be denied them? See Matthew 7:21-23.

***THE MAIN BODY
OF JESUS'
ACTIVITIES IN
GALILEE***

24

The Healing of a Leper

Matthew 8:1-4; Mark 1:40-45; Luke 5:12-16

Jesus came down from the mountainside, after He had spoken His “Sermon on the Mount,” and large crowds of people followed Him as He went from town to town in Galilee.

While Jesus was in one of the towns, a man who was covered with leprosy came and fell down before Him and begged Him, saying, “Lord, if you were willing, you could cleanse me” (Matt 8:2).

This is the first time that we read that a leper came to Jesus for healing. What would Jesus do? Would He touch the leper? Yes, He reached out His hand and touched him, saying, “I am willing. Be cleansed!” (Matt 8:3)

Immediately, the man’s leprosy left him; and this, no doubt, had a tremendous impact on the people, as they watched leprosy disappear from the man’s skin.

Jesus attempted to ward off an increase in the spread of His fame, by saying to the man whom He had healed,

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

Mark 1:44 NIV

The question is, would the priest believe a man, who came claiming that Jesus had healed him of leprosy, or would the priest be so attached to rituals and traditions that he would not be able to believe?

Whether or not the man actually went to the priest as Jesus told him to do, we do not know; but we do know that He did not keep quiet about what Jesus had done for him. He began telling many things about Jesus and spreading the news of Him abroad (Mark 1:45).

The man's activity resulted in so many people coming out of the villages and towns to hear Jesus and to be healed that Jesus could no longer go into a town and teach (Mark 1:45). Instead, He was forced to stay out in countryside, where great crowds came to Him from all over. He withdrew often, however, to wilderness areas to pray (Luke 5:16).

Thought Questions

1. Why did Jesus tell the man that He had healed to go and show himself to a priest? See Lev 14:2-7.
2. How was the cleansing of a leper a testimony to the priests? Do you think the priests were inclined, or disinclined, to believe in Jesus?
3. Did the man's disobedience to Jesus' command to keep quiet about his healing cause inconvenience to Jesus? Did His disobedience impede the progress of Jesus' work? What can we conclude from this?
4. Why did Jesus withdraw to wilderness areas in order to pray? What can we learn from this?

25

The Healing of a Paralyzed Man

Matthew 9:1-8; Mark 2:1-12; Luke 5:17-26

Jesus temporarily left off teaching in the area around the Sea of Galilee and started back to Capernaum. In order to get to there, He crossed the Sea of Galilee in a boat (Matt 9:1), thereby losing the crowd that had been following Him.

While He was at Capernaum, a delegation of Pharisees and scribes (teachers of the Law) came to Him from every village of Galilee, and even from Judea and Jerusalem; and He taught them. So many people came that there was no room left either in the house where He was teaching or outside the door.

While Jesus was teaching the Pharisees and the scribes, four men came carrying a paralyzed man on a small bed; but they could not get the man into the house, because there were so many people in it.

The four men were very ingenious and very determined. They took the paralyzed man up on the roof of the house and tore a hole in the roof (Mark 2:4). They lowered the bed, on which the man lay, down through the roof right in front of Jesus.

The Gospel of Matthew says that Jesus “saw their faith” (Matt 9:2) and said to the paralyzed man, “Take heart, my child. Your sins are forgiven” (Matt 9:2 RWT).

Some of the Pharisees and scribes, who were sitting in the house, thought to themselves, “Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone” (Luke 5:21 NIV)?

Knowing their thoughts, Jesus asked them,

Why do you entertain evil thoughts in your hearts? Which is easier: to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up and walk?’

Matthew 9:4-5 NIV

Jesus continued, “But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins...” (Matt 9:6a NIV), and then He said to the paralytic, “Get up, take your bed and go home” (Matt 9:6).

Immediately, the man got up and picked up the little bed on which he had been carried and went out of the house before them all, praising God. At that, amazement came over all of those that witnessed what Jesus had done. They praised God that God had given such power (authority) to men (Matt 9:8). Some of them were filled with fear, and said, “We have never seen such things,” and, “We have seen remarkable things today!”

Thought Questions

1. What did Matthew mean when he wrote (Matt 9:2) that Jesus “saw their faith?” How can faith be seen?

2. Do you think that the healing of the paralyzed man should have convinced the Pharisees and scribes that Jesus was the Messiah? Why did it not convince them?
3. Are you surprised that Jesus had power on earth to forgive sins? Please explain.
4. Do you think Jesus handled the healing of the paralyzed man well? Please, explain.

26

The Calling of Matthew and a Discussion of Fasting

Matthew 9:9-17; Mark 2:13-22; Luke 5:27-39

Jesus went out for a walk by the Sea of Galilee and a large crowd of people started following Him; and He began teaching them, as was His custom. As He walked along the shore, He saw a tax collector named “Matthew” (Matt 9:9) sitting at the tax collector’s booth. Jesus said to the tax collector, “Follow me.” Matthew, whom we also know as “Levi the son of Alphaeus” (Mark 2:14; Luke 5:27), got up, left everything, and followed Jesus.

To celebrate his being called by Jesus, Matthew threw a feast at his house, to which he invited Jesus and many of Jesus’ followers. He also invited many of his fellow tax collectors and others.

Some of the Pharisees saw Jesus and His followers eating with the tax collectors and others, all of whom they regarded as “sinners.” Then the Pharisees and teachers of the Law (scribes) asked Jesus’ disciples, “Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and ‘sinners?’” (Luke 5:30 NIV)

Upon hearing this question, Jesus gave the Pharisees an apt answer. He said, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick” (Luke 5:31 NIV).

Jesus also cited a passage from Hosea, which would have changed their attitude, had they understood it. Jesus said, “But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice’” (Hos 6:6; Matt 9:13a NIV). Then Jesus added, “For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Luke 5:32 NIV).

Following that, the Pharisees and their associates brought another complaint against Jesus. They said, “John’s disciples often fast and pray, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees, but yours go on eating and drinking” (Luke 5:33 NIV).

Jesus replied, “Can you make the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them?” (Luke 5:34 NIV) Jesus was “the Bridegroom,” according to John the Baptist (John 3:27-30); and Jesus accepted that designation. In fact, He used the designation to speak prophetically about His death. He said,

But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken
from them; in those days they will fast.

Luke 5:35 NIV

Then Jesus used a metaphor to explain why His disciples did not fast on the customary fast days. He said,

No one tears a patch from a new garment and sews it on an
old one. If he does, he will have torn the new garment, and
the patch from the new will not match the old.

Luke 5:36 NIV

Jesus did not come into the world merely to “patch” up a system of religion that was becoming outdated. Instead, He brought something very new into the world. Jesus then used another metaphor to illustrate the folly of trying to mix His teaching with old customs. He said,

And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does,
the new wine will burst the skins, the wine will run out and
the wineskins will be ruined.

Luke 5:37 NIV

He added, "No, new wine must be poured into new wineskins" (Luke 5:38 NIV). Jesus then characterized (in a half-humorous way) the attitude that the Pharisees and teachers of the Law had toward His teaching. He said, "And no one after drinking old wine wants the new, for he says, 'The old is better'" (Luke 5:39 NIV).

Thought Questions

1. What did God mean when He said (through Hosea), "I desire mercy, not sacrifice" (Hos 6:6)?
2. Why did Jesus associate with all kinds of people? What did Jesus mean when He said, "I have not come to call the righteous but sinners?"
3. To what was Jesus referring when He spoke of a "patch from a new garment" and of the "new wine?" Was He referring to His teaching as being new?
4. If the expressions "patch from a new garment" and "new wine" refer to Jesus' teaching, to what then do the expressions the "old garment" and the "old wineskins" refer?
5. Did Jesus set any fast days for His followers? Does Jesus' teaching have anything to do with the observance of certain days? See Gal 4:10-11. Do you think that people who believe in Jesus should observe the special days that God gave the children of Israel to keep? See Col 2:16-17.

27

Plucking Grain on the Sabbath

Matthew 12:1-8; Mark 2:23-28; Luke 6:1-5

As Jesus and His disciples were walking through grain fields on a Sabbath, His disciples grew hungry. They began to pluck heads of grain and eat them, rubbing the husks from the grain with their hands. Certain of the Pharisees, who were following along after Jesus, said to Him,

“Look, your disciples are doing what is not permitted to do on the Sabbath (Matt 12:2) Why are they doing what is not permitted” (Luke 6:2)? Jesus answered, “Haven’t you read what David did when he and his companions were hungry?” (Matt 12:3 NIV)

Jesus was referring to the time when David fled from King Saul and went into the house of God and asked Abiathar, the high priest, for food. Abiathar then gave David some of the consecrated bread, which only the priests were supposed to eat; and David and his men ate it (Mark 2:26).

The Pharisees were willing to overlook what David did, because they knew that He was God’s anointed one. By the same token, they should have been willing to overlook what Jesus’ disciples were doing, in view of the fact that also Jesus was God’s anointed one; but they were not willing.

Jesus pointed out for the Pharisees that the priests at the temple break the Sabbath when they sacrifice animals on the Sabbath. He said,

Or haven’t you read in the Law that on the Sabbath the
priests in the temple desecrate the day and yet are innocent?

Matthew 12:5 NIV

Jesus’ critics were willing to overlook what the priests were doing at the temple because of the significance of the temple. Jesus said, “I tell you that one greater than the temple is here” (Matt 12:6 NIV).

Only by the most stringent interpretation to the Sabbath law could anyone think that Jesus’ disciples were doing anything wrong by plucking a few grains out of the field and eating the grains. Jesus said (Matt 12:7) that the Pharisees would not have condemned His disciples, if they had understood the meaning of the passage in Hosea, which says, “I desire mercy and not sacrifice” (Hos 6:6).

Some of the Pharisees apparently felt that the Sabbath should be strictly kept, no matter what difficulty it placed upon people. Jesus said to them, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath” (Mark 2:27 NIV). He also said, “So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath” (Mark 2:28 NIV). The charge that the Pharisees leveled against

Jesus' disciples was unjustified for two reasons: First, Jesus was the Lord of the Sabbath and could do as He pleased; and, second, the Pharisees were not showing mercy (compassion) in their judgments.

Thought Questions

1. Do you think Jesus' disciples were really breaking Exo 20:8-11? Could what the disciples were doing be rightfully called "work?"
2. How would an understanding of the passage, "I desire mercy not sacrifice," have kept the Pharisees from condemning Jesus' disciples for plucking a little grain to eat as they passed by on the Sabbath?
3. Could Jesus, as Lord of the Sabbath, have totally disregarded the Sabbath Law, if He had chosen to do so? Did He totally disregard it? Why do you suppose He did not choose to disregard it totally?

28

A Man With a Withered Hand

Matthew 12:9-14; Mark 3:1-6; Luke 6:6-11

On a subsequent Sabbath, as Jesus was going from town to town in Galilee, He went into a synagogue at a certain place and found there a man with a withered hand. Some of the scribes and Pharisees in the synagogue were watching Jesus to see whether or not He would heal the man's withered hand on the Sabbath. They wanted to find something against Jesus in order to accuse Him. So they asked Him, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath" (Matt 12:10)?

Jesus was not deceived by their innocent sounding question. He knew that they were trying to trick Him into saying something against the Sabbath or into healing the man on the Sabbath and thereby breaking (as they supposed) the Sabbath law. Jesus accepted their challenge, even though He was aware that it was dangerous to do so; for breaking the Sabbath was punishable by death (Exo 31:15). He said to the man with the withered hand, "Stand up in front of everyone" (Mark 3:3); and the

man stood up. To the scribes and Pharisees Jesus put the following question: “I ask you, is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save a life or to destroy it?” (Luke 6:9 NASB)

The scribes and Pharisees did not answer with a single word. They would not even concede that it might be better to do good on the Sabbath than to do harm. Looking around at them, Jesus became very angry with them (Mark 3:5). His anger, however, was tinged with sadness at their hardness of heart (Mark 3:5); and He tried to reason with them, saying,

If any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will you not take hold of it and lift it out? How much more valuable is a man than a sheep! Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.

Matthew 12:11-12 NIV

Even though the scribes and Pharisees could not dispute the truthfulness of what Jesus had said, they were not moved by it.

So then, Jesus said to the man with the withered hand, “Stretch out your hand.” He stretched it out and it was restored as healthy as the other (Matt 12:13).

At this, the Pharisees were filled with rage. Jesus had defeated them both by His argument and by His power to heal. Stymied, they went out and sought advice from the Herodians (politicians), how they might do away with Him (Mark 3:5). Thus, we see opposition to Jesus beginning to harden. No longer were His enemies only thinking bad thoughts about him, or asking tricky questions of Him. Some of them were now plotting to bring about His death.

Jesus knew what the scribes and Pharisees were up to and He left that place; but many people that wanted to be healed followed Him. He healed them all, but He cautioned them not to make Him known (Matt 12:16). Matthew, who wrote the Gospel of Matthew, explained that Jesus’ desire for secrecy about His cures fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which said,

Here is my servant whom I have chosen, the one I love, in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will proclaim justice to the nations. He will not quarrel or cry out; no one will hear his voice in the streets.

Matthew 12:18-19; Isa 42:1-2 NIV

Isaiah also said,

A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out, till he leads justice to victory. In his name the nations will put their hope.

Matthew 12:20-21; Isa 42:3-4 NIV

Jesus fulfilled these prophecies by teaching people quietly and healing them as secretly as possible. He was not a rabble-rouser, who made loud speeches; nor did He hurt anyone.

Thought Questions

1. If the replies that Jesus gave to the scribes and Pharisees were reasonable and mild, why did they get so mad at Him?
2. Why did some of the scribes and Pharisees want to put Jesus to death? What do you think?
3. Do you think that the Sabbath law actually forbid a doctor to tend to a patient on the Sabbath, or was that merely one of their traditions?
4. What do you think the prophecy meant, which said, "No one will hear his voice in the streets" (Isa 42:2)?
5. What do you think the prophecy meant, which said, "A bruised reed he will not break" (Isa 42:3)?

29

Choosing the Twelve Apostles

Matthew 10:1-4; Mark 3:13-19; Luke 6:12-16

As opposition to Jesus grew from the scribes and Pharisees, so grew also His fame and popularity among a wide variety of people. Jesus walked one day with His disciples near the Sea of Galilee and a large number of people from Galilee were following Him. People were also present from Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, and the region on the other side of the Jordan, as well as from around Tyre and Sidon; for many people had heard about all the things that He was doing. The people had all kinds of afflictions and they were flocking to Him so they could touch Him. For that reason, He asked His disciples to find Him a boat to get into, so that the people would not crowd Him so (Mark 3:9); and He healed many.

Occasionally, when people with unclean spirits saw Him, they fell down before Him and cried out, “You are the Son of God” (Mark 3:11); but He ordered them repeatedly not to make Him known (Mark 3:12).

It came to pass one day that Jesus went up on a hillside to pray and spent all night in prayer to God (Luke 6:12). When it was day, He called for certain of His disciples to come to Him, and He chose from among them twelve to be with Him on a continuing basis (Mark 3:14). These twelve He called “apostles” (Luke 6:13), because He intended to send them out to preach and to cast out demons (Mark 3:15). The word “apostle” means someone that is sent on a mission of some kind.

Among those whom Jesus chose to be apostles were Simon (to whom He gave the name “Peter”), and Peter’s brother Andrew, and James the son of Zebedee, and James’ brother John (whom He called “sons of thunder”) (Mark 3:17). He also chose Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, and Matthew the tax collector. In addition, He chose James the son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus (whom Luke calls “Judas the son of

James”), Simon the Canaanite (who was known as a “Zealot”), and Judas Iscariot (who betrayed Him).

Thought Questions

1. Why do you suppose Jesus instructed the people with unclean spirits not to make Him known? Did He want to keep His work a secret? Or did He not want the good news about Him to be proclaimed by people with unclean spirits? What do you think?
2. Why do you suppose Jesus chose twelve apostles? Is the number twelve significant in any way? Why did Jesus want the Twelve to be with Him on a continuing basis?
3. Do you get the impression that Jesus had plans for the dispersion of His teaching and for the expansion of His kingdom?
4. Do you think Jesus was planning for His kingdom to take on concrete form on earth? Do you think He envisioned the church?

30

Sermon in the Field

Luke 6:17-49

After Jesus had chosen the Twelve Apostles, He and the Twelve came down from the hillside. They found a great crowd of disciples waiting. Some of them were from Judea and Jerusalem, and others were from the coastal area of Tyre and Sidon. They had come to hear Jesus and to be healed. Those that were burdened with unclean spirits were cleansed. The whole crowd was trying to touch Him, because power was going out from Him to heal (Luke 6:19).

While the crowd was gathered around Jesus in a level place (a field), He spoke one of His great sermons. It is similar to the Sermon on the Mount, yet slightly different. He spoke this sermon to His disciples (Luke 6:20), but many other people heard the message as well. The Sermon in

the Field (or level place) began with Beatitudes (blessings), as had the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said,

Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.

Luke 6:20-21 NIV

The blessings in this sermon seem to be more oriented toward the afterlife than are the blessings in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5:3-12). For example, the blessing on those that are hated and persecuted because of Him is that they will be greatly rewarded in heaven (Luke 6:22). He said,

Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their fathers treated the prophets.

Luke 6:23 NIV

In contrast to the Sermon on the Mount, the Sermon in the Field also contains “woes.” Jesus said,

But woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort. Woe to you who are well fed now, for you will go hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep. Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for that is how their fathers treated the false prophets.

Luke 6:24-26 NIV

It did not take Jesus long to get down to the core of His message. He said,

But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.

Luke 6:27-28 NIV

As we see, Jesus gave specific instructions concerning how His followers should treat the people that hate them, curse them, or mistreat them. They should do good things for those people, bless them, and pray for them. He also gave specific instructions as to what His followers should do in case someone hits them in the face or takes away their coat. He said,

If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak [coat], do not stop him from taking your tunic [shirt].

Luke 6:29 NIV

We do not often hear anyone mentioning what Jesus said next. He said, "Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back" (Luke 6:30 NIV). Jesus included the "golden Rule" in this sermon, as He had done in the Sermon on the Mount. He said, "Do to others as you would have them do to you" (Luke 6:31 NIV).

It is nothing special if Jesus' followers love those that love them, because even sinners love those that love them (Luke 6:32). Also, it is nothing special if His followers do good things for those that do good things for them, for sinners do that, too (Luke 6:33).

Then He asked His followers what special credit it was to them if they lent to people, whom they knew would pay them back. He explained, "Even sinners lend to sinners, expecting to be repaid in full" (Luke 6:34). Jesus maintained that His followers should lend even to their enemies, saying, "But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back" (Luke 6:35a NIV).

Jesus indicated that if His followers lend to enemies, they would be imitating God, who is "kind even to the ungrateful and the wicked" (Luke 6:35b). Then Jesus urged, "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful" (Luke 6:36 NIV).

Jesus also warned against judging, saying

Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.

Luke 6:37 NIV

He emphasized that people would be treated the way they treat others. If they give to others, others will give to them in “good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over” (Luke 6:38).

Then, turning to another subject, He asked, “Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit?” (Luke 6:39 NIV)

He said that a student is not above his teacher and that every student that has been fully trained is like his teacher (Luke 6:40).

As He had done in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 7:3-5), Jesus pointed out how ridiculous it would be if one of His followers were to try to take a speck out of his brother’s eye while he had a plank in his own eye (Luke 6:41-42a). Jesus admonished,

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

Luke 6:42b NIV

Next, Jesus spoke about a tree and its fruit. He said that the quality of a tree can be determined by the kind of fruit it produces (Luke 6:43-44). He added,

The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks.

Luke 6:45 NIV

Jesus brought His Sermon in the Field to a close (Luke 6:46-49) by reciting basically the same parable that He had used to close His Sermon on the Mount (Matt 7:24-27). The parable is about two men, one of whom built his house on a good foundation. That man is like the person

that hears Jesus' words and puts them into practice. The other man built his house on land that had no foundation. That man is like a person that hears Jesus' words and does not put them into practice.

Thought Questions

1. Do you think Jesus meant for us to do good things for those that hate us? Did He mean for us literally to speak a blessing to those that curse us? Does He want us actually to pray for those that mistreat us?
2. Do you think that Jesus really wants us to turn the other cheek to someone that hits us? Do you think Jesus really wants us to offer our shirt to a person that takes our coat? Did Jesus get this teaching from the Old Testament, or was it new?
3. Do you think Jesus wants us to lend to people who may not pay us back? Suppose a brother or sister comes and wants to borrow from us again and again, what should we do? Should we tell the church about it and ask for the church's help in the matter?
4. How can we avoid judging people in view of the fact that we must decide between what is right and what is wrong?
5. Is it a good policy in life to be generous with what we have? If so, why is it a good policy?

31

The Centurion's Servant

Matthew 8:5-13; Luke 7:1-10

After Jesus had finished His Sermon in the Field, He went back to Capernaum (Luke 7:1). As He was going into Capernaum, some of the local elders met Him. A centurion in the Roman army had heard about Jesus and he sent the elders to ask Jesus to come and cure his servant, who was on the point of death.

It must have been through the elders that the centurion said to Jesus, "Lord, my servant is at home smitten with paralysis, suffering greatly"

(Matt 8:6). By combining the accounts of Matthew and Luke, one comes to the conclusion that the centurion went along with the elders (Matt 8:5), even though He may have stayed at a distance.

The elders of Capernaum did not seem to doubt that Jesus could heal the centurion's servant. They encouraged Jesus to come quickly, saying that the centurion was worthy of Jesus' doing this for him, since he loved their nation and had built them a synagogue (Luke 7:5). Jesus also had no doubt that He could heal the servant; for He said, "I will come and heal him" (Matt 8:7), and He went with them (Luke 7:6).

The centurion must have returned to his house before Jesus arrived and there remembered that the children of Israel did not customarily go into the house of a Gentile. They thought such a house was unclean. So, when Jesus was not far from the centurion's house, he sent friends to Jesus, who said,

Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have
you come under my roof; therefore I did not presume to
come to you. But say the word, and let my servant be
healed.

Luke 7:6-7 RSV

The centurion's message continued,

For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under
me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,'
and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it.

Luke 7:8 NIV

When Jesus heard what the man said, He marveled. Turning to the crowd that followed Him, He remarked, "I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith" (Matt 8:10 NIV). Then Jesus made a statement that was pregnant with meaning for the future. He indicated that there would be people from all nations in heaven. He said,

I say to you that many will come from the east and the west,
and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac
and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 8:11 NIV

Jesus then indicated that the children of Israel (whom one would expect to see in heaven) will not all be there. He said,

But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into
the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of
teeth.

Matthew 8:12 NIV

Following that, Jesus assured the centurion (by means of centurion's friends) that it would be done for him, just as he had believed that it would. Even though Jesus did not go to the centurion's house, the man's servant was healed at that very hour. When those that had been sent by the centurion returned to the house, they found the servant well.

Thought Questions

1. Why was Jesus impressed with the centurion's words? What do you think?
2. Do you get the impression that the miracles, which Jesus was doing, seemed to be growing more and more astonishing? Please explain what you think.
3. What do you think the reason is why some of the kinsmen of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob may not be at the heavenly feast?
4. Do you expect to see people from other races and nations, in addition to some of the children of Israel, in heaven? What reason do you have to expect that people from other nations and races will be there?

32

The Raising of the Widow's Son at Nain

Luke 7:11-17

After Jesus had healed the Centurions' servant at Capernaum, He next went to a town in Galilee called, "Nain." Nain is thought to have been about ten miles southeast of Nazareth. Jesus' disciples and a large crowd of people went along with Him.

As Jesus drew near the gate of Nain, it happened that a young man that had died was being carried out to be buried or placed in a tomb. The dead man was the only son of his mother, a widow. A large crowd of people was coming out of the town with her. When the Lord saw her, He knew immediately what the situation was. He was moved with compassion for her and said to her, "Don't cry."

Jesus then went up to the litter on which the young man was being carried and touched it; and the men that were carrying it stood still. Jesus spoke, "Young man, I say to you, 'Get up!'"

At that, the dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus presented him back to his mother. The effect was so great on the people that witnessed this miracle that awe seized them. They all praised God, saying, "A great prophet has been raised up among us" and "God has come to help His people" (Luke 7:16).

News about these activities in Galilee spread south into Judea and into all the surrounding countryside.

Thought Questions

1. What motivated Jesus to raise the young man back to life?
2. Is the raising of the widow's son at Nain the only instance of Jesus' having raised someone from the dead?
3. What does this miracle say about Jesus?

33

John the Baptist's Question

Matthew 11:2-19; Luke 7:18-35

While John the Baptist was in prison, his disciples came to him and reported what Jesus was doing. John sent two of his disciples to ask Jesus, "Are you the one (Messiah) who is to come, or should we expect someone else?"

The two disciples whom John sent came to Jesus and said, "John the Baptist sent us to ask, 'Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?'"

When John's disciples arrived, Jesus had just cured many people of their afflictions. He had cast out evil spirits and given sight to many people that were blind. So Jesus replied to John's messengers,

Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard:

The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me.

Luke 7:22-23 NIV

Jesus knew that John was well acquainted with the prophecies of Old Testament and that he would know that the Messiah was supposed to do the very things that Jesus was doing.

After John's messengers left, Jesus began to speak to the crowd concerning John. He asked,

What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed swayed by the wind? If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes?

Luke 7:24-25a NIV

Jesus answered His own question, by saying, “No, those who wear expensive clothes and indulge in luxury are in palaces” (Luke 7:25b NIV).

Continuing to speak of John the Baptist, Jesus asked,

But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written [Mal 3:1]: ‘I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.’

Luke 7:26-27 NIV

Then Jesus said,

Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has risen no one greater than John the Baptist; yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

Matthew 11:11 RSV

Having said these things, Jesus began to speak about the “kingdom of heaven.” In the Gospel of Luke the “kingdom of heaven” is called the “kingdom of God” (Luke 7:28), showing that two expressions are the same.

Some violent men and ruling authorities among the children of Israel misunderstood the kingdom of God. They thought they could bring it about by force. Jesus said,

From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and men of violence take it by force.

Matthew 11:12 RSV

Yet, in spite the misunderstanding and misdeeds of violent men, God was in the process of ushering in the kingdom in His own way, and according to His own plan. John the Baptist was a part of that plan. Jesus said of John,

For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come.

Matthew 11:13-14 RSV

Then Jesus added, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear" (Matt 11:15 RSV).

Luke, who wrote the Gospel of Luke, interposed a comment about the way in which people had received John's message. Luke said that all of the people, even tax collectors that heard John's words, acknowledged that God's way was right and just. They acknowledged it by allowing themselves to be baptized by John (Luke 7:29).

The Pharisees and the experts in the Law, however, rejected God's purpose for themselves, in that they did not submit to baptism by John (Luke 7:30). Jesus found an apt analogy to the people that resisted both His and John's message. He said they were like children sitting in the marketplace, whom nothing pleased. Some of the children called out to others, "We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not cry" (Luke 7:32 NIV).

Jesus explained His analogy by saying,

For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and you say, 'He has a demon.' The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and you say, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and 'sinners.'

Luke 7:33-34 NIV

The Pharisees and experts in the Law tried to discredit both Jesus and John the Baptist, but their accusations proved to be inconsistent and were, therefore, self-defeating. Jesus said, "Wisdom is proved right by all her children" (Luke 7:35 NIV). That is to say, every proposition is proven right or wrong by all of its consequences and implications.

Thought Questions

1. Why was it that John the Baptist sent messengers to Jesus to ask whether or not Jesus was the one who was to come? Do you think John was disappointed in some way with what Jesus was doing?
2. In what way (or ways) are the persons who are least in the kingdom of God greater than (Luke 7:28) John the Baptist?
3. What did the answer mean, which Jesus sent back to John the Baptist (Luke 7:22-23)? Does the fact that Jesus performed all those miracles show that He was the Messiah? See Isa 29:18; 35:5; and 61:1.
4. Are the people today, who refuse baptism, rejecting God's purpose for themselves, as the Pharisees and experts in the Law did (Luke 7:30)? See Mark 16:15-16.

34

In the House of Simon the Pharisee

Luke 7:36-50

Tension was building between Jesus and the Pharisees, not only in Jerusalem, but also in Galilee. In spite of this tension, a Pharisee named Simon invited Jesus to eat with him; and Jesus went into the Pharisees' house and sat down. More accurately, He "reclined" for the meal, as was the custom.

A certain woman, who had the reputation in the town of being a sinner, learned that Jesus was at Simon's house. She came into the house and brought with her myrrh (expensive, oily perfume) in an alabaster jar. Standing behind Jesus' feet, the woman wept; and her tears dropped on His feet. Seeing this, she began to dry His feet with her long hair. She also kissed His feet and anointed them with myrrh (Luke 7:38).

When the Pharisee, who had invited Jesus, saw what the woman was doing, he thought to himself, "If this man were a prophet, He would know who was touching Him and that she is a sinner" (Luke 7:38).

As it turned out, Jesus knew far more than the Pharisee could guess: He knew what had happened in the woman's life, and He knew what the Pharisee was thinking. Calling the Pharisee by name, Jesus said to him,

"Simon, I have something to say to you."

Simon said, "Tell me, Teacher."

At this, Jesus asked him a riddle. He said: "Two men were in debt to a certain moneylender. One man owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. Neither of them had the money to pay, so the moneylender canceled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him the more" (Luke 7:42)?

Simon answered, "I suppose the one for whom the bigger debt was canceled."

"You have judged rightly," Jesus said. Then Jesus turned to the woman but said to Simon,

Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with myrrh" (Luke 7:44-46). Continuing to speak to Simon, Jesus said, "Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much.

Luke 7:47a RSV

Then Jesus gave Simon something to think about, relative to his own life. He said, "But he who is forgiven little, loves little" (Luke 7:47b RSV). Simon had not loved Jesus even enough to show Him common courtesy. His lack of love showed that Simon either had not recognized his own sins or, having recognized them had not repented of them, and for that reason had not been forgiven of them.

To the woman, Jesus spoke reassuringly by saying, “Your sins are forgiven” (Luke 7:48 NIV).

Others who were eating with Jesus began to say among themselves, “Who is this who even forgives sins?” (Luke 7:49)

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

After this, Jesus traveled about in Galilee from one town or village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God; and the Twelve were with him (Luke 8:1). Certain women whom Jesus had cured of evil spirits and diseases were also with Him, including Mary (called Magdalene), from whom seven demons had come out. In addition, Joanna the wife of Cuza (the manager of Herod’s household) was with Him, as well as Susanna, and many others. These women helped support Jesus and the apostles out of their own means (Luke 7:2-3).

Thought Questions

1. Do you get the impression that some of the Pharisees that invited Jesus to eat with them were wealthy men?
2. Why do you suppose it was that Simon the Pharisee invited Jesus to eat with him?
3. Do you find fault with Jesus for allowing the woman to caress His feet? Please explain.
4. What did Jesus mean when He said that the woman’s faith had saved her? Did He mean that her faith alone, without repentance, had saved her? Or did He mean that He exempted her from the normal rule of having to be baptized, as others had been? Or did He mean that she had been saved because she had heard the good news about the kingdom, repented of her sins, and been immersed for the forgiveness of her sins? What do you think?

35

Was Jesus in His Right Mind?***Matthew 12:22-37; Mark 3:20-30***

When Jesus entered a certain house in Galilee, so many people came together in that house that He and His disciples could not even eat their food (Mark 3:20). Some of the people brought to Jesus a demon-possessed man, who was both blind and mute. In spite of the man's severe disabilities, Jesus healed him so that he could both talk and see (Matt 12:22).

All the people who witnessed this healing were astonished and some of them asked, "Could this be the Son of David" (Matt 12:23 NIV)?

Now, about that same time, certain scribes (experts in the Law of Moses) had come down from Jerusalem to Galilee and brought with them the newest theory that the Pharisees had concocted to explain how Jesus was able to heal people. They said, "He is possessed by Beelzebub! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons" (Mark 3:22 NIV).

When the Pharisees heard the people asking if Jesus were the Messiah (Son of David), the Pharisees replied, "It is only by Beelzebub, the prince of demons, that this fellow drives out demons" (Matt 12:24 NIV).

Jesus knew their thoughts (Matt 12:25), and He had no difficulty refuting their charge. He called the scribes and Pharisees to Him and, by means of parables (Mark 3:23), showed them how ridiculous their explanation for the source of His miraculous power was. He asked, "How can Satan drive out Satan?" (Mark 3:23 NIV)

Then He said, "Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand" (Matt 12:25 NIV). He said further, "And if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand; his end has come" (Mark 3:26 NIV).

Then Jesus asked the scribes and Pharisees, "And if I drive out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your people drive them out?" (Matt

12:27a NIV) He added, “So then, they will be your judges” (Matt 12:27b NIV).

The scribes and Pharisees were not drawing the right conclusion from what they were seeing. They should have realized that something of great importance was taking place in their day. Jesus said, “But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you” (Matt 12:28 NIV).

Unless Jesus had in some way bound Satan, He (Jesus) could not have been snatching people out of Satan’s kingdom. Jesus said,

In fact, no one can enter a strong man’s house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man. Then he can rob his house.

Mark 3:27 NIV

Actually, while Jesus was gathering people, Satan was scattering them. Jesus said, “He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters” (Matt 12:30 NIV). So, the scribes and Pharisees were not only mistaken about the source of Jesus’ power, they were also guilty of blasphemy. They were guilty of blasphemy because they ascribed Jesus’ work through the Holy Spirit as being from the devil. Jesus said,

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.

Matthew 12:31-32 NKJV

The failure of the scribes and Pharisees to recognize what kind of a spirit was in Jesus demonstrated what kind of people they were. Jesus said,

Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit.

Matthew 12:33 NIV

Then Jesus castigated them, by saying, “You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks” (Matt 12:34 NIV). He explained,

The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him.

Matthew 12:35 NIV

Jesus warned that a day of reckoning would come. He said,

But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.

Matthew 12:36-37 NIV

While Jesus was teaching in this house, His family came to speak with Him. They had heard rumors about Him; and they had come to take charge of Him, because they thought He must be out of His mind (Mark 3:21).

Thought Questions

1. What do you suppose Jesus' mother and brothers were hearing about Him that made them think they should come and take charge of Him (Mark 3:21)?
2. Who is “the strong man,” to whom Jesus referred in Mark 3:27? In what way was Jesus robbing Him?
3. What is the sin of blasphemy? How does a person commit that sin?

4. It appears that the scribes and Pharisees were guilty of blaspheming the Holy Spirit. In what way were they blaspheming the Holy Spirit? See Mark 3:30. Is it possible for people to blaspheme the Holy Spirit today?
5. Will people be called upon at the final Judgment to give account for the words that they have spoken? See Matthew 12:36-37?

36

The Sign of Jonah and Jesus' Mother and Brothers

Matthew 12:38-50; Mark 3:31-35; Luke 8:19-

Jesus was still in the house in Galilee, where He had healed a demon-possessed man that could neither see nor talk (Matt 12:22-23). He was speaking to the scribes and Pharisees about their sins and about the Judgment to come, but they seemed anxious to change the subject (Matt 12:34-35). Some of them said to Him, “Teacher, we want to see a miraculous sign from you” (Matt 12:38).

By this time, Jesus may have grown weary of hearing such people ask for signs (miracles), for He responded harshly to their request. He said,

A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.

Matthew 12:39 NIV

Jesus then explained what He meant by the “the sign of the prophet Jonah.” He said,

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

Matthew 12:40 NIV

We, living on this side of the Cross of Jesus, are in a better position to understand Jesus' allusion to "three days and three nights" than the people of His generation may have been.

Jesus contrasted the people of His generation with the people of Nineveh in the days of Jonah. The Ninevites repented at the preaching of Jonah, but most of the people of Jesus' generation had not repented at His preaching. Jesus said,

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

Matthew 12:41 NIV

Jesus spoke, next, of the Queen of Sheba, who showed respect for King Solomon and listened to His sayings (1 Ki 10:1-13). Jesus contrasted the respect that she showed to King Solomon with the lack of respect His generation was showing to Him. Jesus said,

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

Matthew 12:42 NIV

Jesus knew that, even though He was engaged in the most effective campaign that had ever been waged against evil, its effects in the lives of many people would be short lived. His generation would become just like it was before He appeared. He explained that,

When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, 'I will return to the house I left.' When it arrives, it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order.

Matthew 12:43-44 NIV

An evil spirit is not content to resume living in its old house in the heart of a person, all by itself. It desires company. Jesus said,

Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there.

Matthew 45a NIV

Jesus foresaw the sad things that were in store for His generation and said, “And the final condition of that man is worse than the first. That is how it will be with this wicked generation” (Matt 12:45b NIV).

Jesus mother and brothers had come to speak with Him (Matt 12:47) and, possibly, to take charge of Him (Mark 3:21); but they could not even get close to Him because of the crowd (Luke 8:19). They were still standing outside the house and finally sent someone in to call Him (Mark 3:31).

On the inside of the house, a crowd was sitting around Jesus and someone said to Him, “Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you” (Mark 3:32 NIV). Jesus replied, “Who are my mother and my brothers?” (Mark 3:33 NIV) Then He looked at those seated around him (Mark 3:34) and, pointing to His disciples, said, “Here are my mother and my brothers!” (Matt 12:49 NIV) Then He added, “For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother” (Matt 12:50 NIV).

Thought Questions

1. Why did the scribes and Pharisees ask to see a sign from Jesus? What do you think? Why did He not give them a sign?
2. What was Jesus talking about when He said that the Son of Man would be “three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” (Matt 12:40)?
3. How did “the sign of the prophet Jonah” (Matt 12:39) show that Jesus was the Messiah?

4. Did Jesus claim that He was greater than the prophet Jonah and greater than King Solomon (Matt 12:41-42)? If He did, what do you make of that claim?
5. Did Jesus expect His generation of people to become better or to get worse, as time went on? See Matthew 12:45.
6. What did Jesus mean when He said that His disciples were His “mother and brothers” (Matt 12:49)?
7. What did He mean when He said, “Whoever does God’s will is my brother and sister and mother” (Mark 3:35)? Can people today be related to Jesus?
8. Why did Jesus’ mother and brothers not take custody of Him as they had intended to do (Mark 3:21)? What do you think?

37

The Parable of the Sower

Matthew 13:1-23; Mark 4:1-20; Luke 8:4-15

In the afternoon of the day on which Jesus had already encountered Pharisees in two different homes, He went out and sat by the Sea of Galilee (Matt 13:1). As He sat there, people were coming to Him from town after town. Finally, there were so many people gathered that Jesus had to get into a boat, as He had done before; and He taught them from the boat while the people stood on the shore. He had often taught in a figurative or allegorical way, but on this afternoon He decided to speak mostly in parables (stories).

Among the parables that Jesus told was a story of a farmer that went out to sow seed in a field. The story describes the way that people were responding to His message. Jesus said that as the farmer was sowing his seed, some of the seed fell on the path and were trampled upon, and the birds came and ate them up. Also, He said that some of the farmer’s seed fell on rocky places, where there was not much soil. Although those seed sprang up quickly, the plants were scorched and they withered when the

sun came up; because they were in shallow soil and did not have deep roots. Again, He said that some of the seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. Finally, He said that some of the seed fell on good ground, where they produced a crop that was 100, 60, or 30 times as much as was sown. Then Jesus said, “He who has ears, let him hear” (Matt 13:9 NIV).

After Jesus had told this parable, His disciples came to Him and asked Him why He was speaking in parables. Prior to this, He had spoken openly to the people. Jesus explained that He was speaking in parables because knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven had been given only to them (His disciples) and not to people in general (Matt 13:11).

Then He explained,

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

Matthew 13:12 NIV

Jesus knew that even though people saw what He did, they would not understand the significance of it; and even though they heard what He said, they would not know what He meant (Matt 13:13). He found that the failure of people to comprehend in His day was just like it was in Isaiah’s day. God said through Isaiah, “You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving” (Matt 13:14 NIV; Isa 6:9).

Jesus quoted further what God said about the people in Isaiah’s day, for it described Jesus’ day as well. Jesus said,

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

Matthew 13:15 NIV; Isa 6:10

What Jesus was saying and doing affected His disciples differently than it did people in general. He pointed out that what His disciples were seeing and hearing was a blessing to them. He said, "But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear" (Matt 13:16 NIV).

Then He added,

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

Matthew 13:17 NIV

Even Jesus' disciples did not fully comprehend the Parable of the Sower; but they wanted to get it clear in their minds, so they asked Him what it meant. He told them that the seed that was sown was "the word of God" (Luke 8:11). Then He explained to them the meaning of the seed that was sown on the path, by saying,

Those along the path are the ones who hear, and then the
devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so
that they may not believe and be saved.

Luke 8:12 NIV

He also explained what the rocky soil meant. He said,

The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the
man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy.
But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When
trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he
quickly falls away.

Matthew 13:20-21 NIV

Next, He explained what the soil with the thorns meant. He said,

The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is
the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life

and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful.

Matthew 13:22 NIV

Jesus also explained about the good soil. He said,

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

Matthew 13:23 NIV

Jesus seems to have taught this parable to describe how people were receiving His teaching. Some were receiving it well, but others were rejecting it; and they were rejecting it for a variety of reasons. It was important for the disciples to understand this, because they would be faced with similar situations.

As a trainer of teachers, Jesus faced the problem of how to teach His disciples with so many people present. One of the solutions He found was to teach in parables, which were hidden from the public but which were (hopefully) clear to His disciples.

Thought Questions

1. What lessons can we learn from the Parable of the Sower? Do people today respond to the gospel in the same ways?
2. Do you consider it just (or fair) that to the people who already have, more will be given, and that from the people, who do not have much, what they have will be taken away from them? What does Matthew 13:12 actually mean? Who is responsible for taking the word of God away from people?
3. Why are the eyes and ears of some people closed, as regards the gospel? What is the cause for this?
4. What is the significance of the fact that the Word of God is the seed that Jesus sowed (taught)? What seed should we be sowing (teaching) today?

38

The Parable of the Weeds

Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

The Parable of the Weeds describes the conflict that is going on between Jesus and the devil, and it foretells something of what the outcome of that conflict will be. It appears that Jesus told the Parable of the Weeds on the same day that He told the Parable of the Sower.

In the Parable of the Weeds, Jesus said that the kingdom of heaven, which He was working to advance, is like a man that sowed good seed in his field. While everyone slept, however, the man's enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and then went away.

So when the wheat sprouted and produced grain, the weeds also appeared. The owner's servants came to him and said, "Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?"

The man replied, "An enemy did this."

Then the servants asked him, "Do you want us to go and pull up the weeds?"

"No," the man said, "Because in pulling up the weeds, you might also root out the wheat."

The man told his servants to let the wheat and the weeds grow together until the harvest. He said that he would at that time tell the harvesters to pull up the weeds first and tie them in bundles to be burned. The man also said that he would tell the harvesters to gather the wheat into his barn.

Jesus did not teach the crowd anything that day without using parables (Matt 13:34). Thus, He fulfilled a statement of Asaph (a psalmist and a prophet), who said, "I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things hidden since the creation of the world" (Matt 13:35 NIV; Psa 78:2).

After Jesus had finished telling parables, He concluded His public speaking for the day and went into a certain house. It had been a long

day for Him. His disciples came to Him in the house and said, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field.”

Jesus began, at that, to explain the wide implications of the Parable of the Weeds. He explained, first of all, that the sower is “the Son of Man.” He said, “The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man” (Matt 13:37 NIV).

Next, He explained that the field represents the world (Matt 13:38a). That is to say, Jesus sowed good seed in the world. He said, “And the good seed [crop] stands for the sons of the kingdom” (Matt 13:38b NIV). Jesus sowed the “good seed” (His teaching) in order to produce a crop of good people for God’s kingdom. Some people, however, were opposing Jesus’ teaching. They were “weeds.” They were opposing Jesus’ teaching due to the work of the evil one (the devil). Jesus said, “The weeds are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy who sows them is the devil” (Matt 13:38c-39a NIV).

Many of Jesus’ parables teach only one thing, but this parable touches reality at several points. Jesus explained that the angels would be the ones that would take the “weeds” from the world. He also explained when the angels would take them. He said, “The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels” (Matt 13:39b NIV).

Jesus also explained what would happen to the “weeds,” once they have been taken from the world. He said, “As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age” (Matt 13:40 NIV).

For a moment, Jesus looked away from the fate of the “weeds” that would be taken from the world. He foretold would happen to “weeds” that might, perchance, be in the kingdom of God. He said, “The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil” (Matt 13:41 NIV).

Then Jesus explained that “weeds” taken out of the kingdom would fare no better than the “weeds” taken from the world. He said, “They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matt 13:42 NIV).

The “sons of the kingdom,” however, have a glorious future awaiting them! Jesus said, “Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear” (Matt 13:43 NIV).

Jesus' comments in this parable appear to be among His earliest remarks about how the conflict between good and evil would end.

Thought Questions

1. Did Jesus think that some unseen force was causing people to oppose His work? Who (or what) was causing people to oppose it? See Matthew 13:39. Do you think there is some hidden cause for opposition to the gospel today?
2. Do you get the impression that Jesus thought that everyone in the world would one day be in the kingdom of heaven? Or did He think that the difference between the “sons of the kingdom” and the “sons of the evil one” would continue until the end of time? See Matthew 13:40-41.
3. Do you get the impression that Jesus thought that the “sons of the evil one” would be punished? See Matthew 13:42. Did He seem to think they would be lightly punished or severely punished?
4. Did Jesus seem to think that “the righteous” would be richly rewarded? See Matthew 13:43.

39

Assorted Parables

*Matthew 13:31-35, 44-52;
Mark 4:21-34; Luke 8:16-18*

It appears that on the same day that Jesus spoke the Parable of the Sower and the Parable of the Weeds, He also spoke several other, lesser parables. The other parables are lesser only in the sense that they are shorter. They are not lesser in significance.

The Parable of the Lampstand

Mark 4:21-23; Luke 8:16-18

One of Jesus' parables concerned putting a lamp on a lampstand, where it would give light to all that are in a house. He had already touched upon this in His Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5:15), where it teaches and individuals should let their light shine. The parable teaches here that truth will come to light (Mark 4:22 and Luke 8:17).

The Parable of the Seed Growing of Itself

Mark 4:26-29

Jesus said that the kingdom of God is like when a man scatters seed in a field. The man goes to bed at night and sleeps, and he arises the next day. The seed grows even though the man does not know how it happens. Jesus said, "All by itself the soil produces grain first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head" (Mark 4:28 NIV).

Then He said, "As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come" (Mark 4:29 NIV).

This parable illustrates that there is something inherent in the word of God that allows the kingdom of God to grow in the hearts of people when the word of God is faithfully taught.

The Parable of the Mustard Seed

Matthew 13:31-32; Mark 4:30-32; Luke 13:18-19

Jesus said that the kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Although it is the smallest of the seeds, when it grows it is the largest of the vegetables and becomes a tree; so that the birds of the heaven come and nest in its branches. This parable describes the external growth of the kingdom.

The Parable of the Yeast

Matthew 13:33; Luke 13:20-21

Jesus said that the kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, until the whole was leavened. This parable has two possible meanings. It may describe the leavening influence that the kingdom of heaven has on society, or it may describe the spiritual and moral development of people within the kingdom.

The Parable of the Hidden Treasure

Matthew 13:44

Jesus said that the kingdom of heaven is like a treasure that was hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again; and he went with joy and sold all he had and bought the field. This parable is about a person that unexpectedly comes across the kingdom of heaven and who wants to be in it so badly that he is willing to sacrifice all for it.

The Parable of the Beautiful Pearl

Matthew 13:45-46

Jesus said that the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant that was looking for beautiful pearls. When the merchant found a pearl of great value, he went and sold everything he had and bought it. This parable is about a person that is seeking the kingdom of heaven and is willing to give all that he has in order to be in it.

The Parable of the Net

Matthew 13:47-50

Jesus said that the kingdom of heaven is like a net that is thrown into the sea and catches all kinds of fish. When the net is full, the fishermen drag it onto the shore. Then they sit down and collect the good fish into baskets, but the bad fish they throw away. Jesus said,

This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Matthew 13:49-50 NIV

This parable is about the fact that all kinds of people are caught up in the gospel's net. Some can be kept but others cannot be kept.

After Jesus spoke these parables, He asked His disciples, "Did you understand all these things?"

They said, "Yes."

So He did not have to explain these parables to them.

The Parable of the Expert in the Law

Matthew 13:52

Although the day was growing long, Jesus told His disciples yet another parable. He said that every expert in the Law of Moses that has been instructed in things about the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house, who brings out of his storeroom new treasures, as well as old treasures.

This parable is descriptive of the work that the apostles and others would do in preaching the gospel and teaching people the word of God. They would bring forth the (new) teaching of Jesus as well as what they found applicable from the Old Testament.

Thought Questions

1. What is the message in the Parable of the Seed Growing by Itself (Mark 4:26-29)? What does the "seed" represent? See Luke 8:11. Must the seed be sown before a crop will grow?
2. What does the Parable of the Mustard Seed (Matt 13:31-32; Mark 4:30-32; Luke 13:18-19) tell about the growth of the kingdom of heaven?

3. What does the Parable of the Yeast (Matt 13:33; Luke 13:20-21) teach about the growth of the kingdom of heaven? Is the Parable of the Yeast in any way similar to the Parable of the Mustard Seed?" In what way is it similar? Is it dissimilar in any way? If so, in what way?
4. Why did the man sell all that he had (Matt 13:44) in order to buy the field with the treasure in it? Is there a lesson for us here? What is it?
5. Is the Parable of the Beautiful Pearl (Matt 13:45-46) similar to the Parable of the Hidden Treasure? In what way is it similar or dissimilar?
6. What does the Parable of the Net (Matt 13:47-50) teach? Will God be able to keep every person that accepts the gospel? If not, why not?

40

Calming the Storm

Matthew 8:23-27; Mark 4:35-41; Luke 8:22-25

It had been a long, hard day for Jesus. He had taught Pharisees and other religious leaders in one house and had eaten a meal with Pharisees in another. Later in the day, He had taught a number of parables to a crowd from a boat in the Sea of Galilee; and at the end of the day He had a conversation with His disciples in a house.

So it was late when Jesus said to His disciples "Let us cross over to the other side of the sea." Whereupon, the disciples dismissed the crowd and took Jesus in the boat with them just as He was (Mark 4:36), and Jesus fell asleep in the boat (Luke 8:23). There were also other boats that followed (Mark 4:36).

Without warning, a furious squall came up. The waves of the sea washed over the boat, and water began to fill it. All the while, Jesus was in the back of the boat asleep on a cushion (Mark 4:38).

The disciples came to Jesus and awakened Him, and exclaimed with great alarm, "Master, save us, don't you care if we die?"

Jesus awoke and responded, “How fearful you are! O, you of little faith!” Then He got up and rebuked the winds and said to the sea, “Quiet! Be still!” As He said this, the winds died down and the sea became calm.

He asked His disciples, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?” (Mark 4:40 NIV)

The disciples were terrified at all of this, and they asked each other with wonderment, “What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!” (Matt 8:27 NIV)

Thought Questions

1. Do you suppose Jesus wanted to cross over the sea because He wanted to get away from the crowd for a little rest? Does it disturb you that Jesus’ physical body got tired and that His nerves became frayed, as with other humans? Please explain.
2. Do you sense that Jesus’ miracles seemed to be getting more dramatic as time went on? Please elaborate on this.
3. When Jesus stilled the wind and the waves, did it seem to bring the disciples a step forward in their appreciation of the greatness of Jesus?
4. What was the source of Jesus’ confidence that they would be safe? Why did the disciples not yet share His confidence?
5. What does Jesus’ ability to calm the storm tell you about Him?

41

The Gadarene Demoniac

Matthew 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-20; Luke 8:26-39

After Jesus had calmed the storm, He and His apostles arrived at the region of the Gerasenes (Gadarenes), on the Eastern Shore. This was the first time, so far as we know, that Jesus had been in Gentile territory, after He began His public ministry.

As Jesus got out of the boat and was coming up on the land, a demon-possessed man, who had been living in tombs saw Jesus from afar and ran to meet Him. (Matt 8:28 tells us that there were actually two demoniacs.) The man that ran to Jesus had, in times past, been so violent that no one could pass that way; and for a long time he had not worn clothes or lived in a house. Sometimes an unclean spirit would seize him and drive him into solitary places, where night and day he would be heard crying out in the tombs and in the hills. He would also cut himself with rocks. Often he had been bound with chains and with foot irons, but he pulled the chains apart and broke the foot irons; and no one was able to tame him.

This man came and fell down before Jesus and cried with a loud voice, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, don't torture me" (Luke 8:28 NIV)!

After Jesus had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man (Luke 8:29), He asked him, "What is your name?"

The man answered, "My name is 'Legion' for we are many."

The unclean spirits that were in the man begged Jesus not to send them into the Abyss but to send them into the pigs, which were feeding on a hill nearby; and Jesus said, "Go."

Then the unclean spirits came out of the man and went into the pigs; and the herd of about two thousand pigs came rushing down the steep bank into the sea, and they were drowned in the sea. When those that had been tending the pigs saw what had happened, they ran off and reported it to people both in the town and in the countryside; and the whole town came out to meet Jesus.

Then the herdsmen, who that had witnessed what had happened, explained it to the townspeople. When the townspeople saw the man that had been formerly demon-possessed sitting, dressed, and in his right mind, it scared them. So they pleaded with Jesus to leave their region, because they were afraid.

As Jesus was getting into the boat to leave, the formerly demon-possessed man begged Jesus to allow him to go with Him; but Jesus refused. Jesus told to him, "Go to your home and to your people and tell

them how much the Lord has done for you and that He has had mercy on you” (Mark 5:19 RWT).

Then the man went on his way and began to proclaim in the cities of the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him, and everyone that heard the man was amazed at what he said.

Thought Questions

1. Did you notice anything in this story that would suggest to you that the land of Gadarenes was not occupied by Israelites? What did you notice?
2. Jesus spoke to the demons in the man (or men). Do you think that we ought to try to speak to demons today? Do you think demons would obey us if we did? See Acts 19:13-17.
3. Why do you suppose Jesus did not permit the formerly demon-possessed man to go with Him?
4. Was it a good work that Jesus assigned the man to do (Mark 5:19)? Does his assignment give you any ideas as to what we might do? If so, what ideas?

42

Jairus' Daughter

Matthew 9:18-26; Mark 5:21-43; Luke 8:40-56

Now Jesus returned to Galilee, where He had been teaching the crowd, prior to His crossing the Sea to Gadara. The people were expecting Him, and they welcomed Him back (Luke 8:40).

The Disciples of John the Baptist came and asked Jesus why His disciples were not fasting, as they and the Pharisees' disciples were doing (Matt 9:14). This, being basically the same question that some of the people had asked Jesus at Matthew's feast (Mark 2:18; Luke 5:33), Jesus gave essentially the same answer (Matt 9:15-17) as He had given before (Mark 2:19-22; Luke 5:34-39).

While Jesus was teaching John's disciples about fasting, a man came with great urgency and interrupted Him (Matt 9:18). The man was Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue. He fell at Jesus' feet and pleaded with Him to come to his house. Jairus said to Jesus, "My daughter is on the point of death, but come and put your hand on her, and she will live." The sick girl was Jairus' only daughter, a girl of about twelve years of age.

So Jesus got up and went with the man, and His disciples came, too. As they were going along, the crowd pressed close around Jesus, and there was a woman in the crowd that had been bleeding for twelve years. She had suffered many things at the hands of many doctors and had spent everything that she had, but nothing helped. Instead of getting better, she only got worse. When she heard about Jesus, she came to Him and touched the hem of His garment; and immediately, her bleeding stopped.

Jesus sensed that power had gone out from Him; and looking around to see who it was, He asked, "Who touched me?"

His disciples answered, "You see the people crowding around you and yet you ask, 'Who touched me' (Mark 5:31)?"

When the woman saw that she could not remain unnoticed, she came and knelt down before Jesus and told Him the whole truth, in the presence of all the people. Then Jesus said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering" (Mark 5:34 NIV).

While Jesus was still speaking with her, men came from the house of Jairus and said to Jairus, "Your daughter is dead. Why bother the teacher anymore?"

Jesus ignored what they said and told Jairus, "Don't be afraid; just believe, and she will be healed" (Luke 8:50 NIV).

When Jesus arrived at Jairus' house, He saw the flute players and heard the noisy mourners, and He said, "Go away. The girl is not dead but asleep" (Matt 9:24 NIV). They laughed at him, for they knew she was dead. After He ushered them all out, He went in where the child was; and He allowed only the child's parents and three of His disciples to go

in with Him. Then Jesus took the girl by the hand (Mark 5:41) and said to her, “Talitha koum!” (Little girl, I say to you, get up!).

Immediately, her spirit returned, and she stood up and walked about. At this, they were all completely astonished (Mark 5:42); and Jesus told them to give her something to eat (Mark 5:43). He then gave them strict orders not to let anyone know what had happened (Mark 5:43). Nonetheless, the news about the miracle spread throughout that region (Matt 9:26).

Thought Questions

1. Did you notice how willing Jesus was to go with Jairus and heal his daughter? What does this suggest to you about Jesus?
2. Did Jesus seem to have any doubts about whether or not He could heal Jairus’ daughter? What does this indicate to you?
3. When Jesus told the woman that her faith had healed her, did He mean that it was her faith by itself that had healed her, or did He mean that He and God had healed her because she had faith?
4. Why did Jesus not want Jairus and others to tell anyone that He had raised the little girl from the dead? What do you think?

43

Jesus in a Synagogue in His “Hometown”

Matthew 13:53-58; Mark 6:1-6

Jesus left the place where Jairus and his family lived (Mark 6:1) and came to “His hometown” (Matt 13:54 and Mark 6:1).

It is not clear whether the expression “His hometown” (or home place) refers to Nazareth or to Capernaum. Nazareth, of course, was where Jesus grew up (Matt 2:23); but Capernaum had become His adopted hometown (Matt 4:13), and He made mission tours into the countryside from Capernaum.

If Nazareth is here intended, then it appears that Jesus went back there for a second time, even though the people of Nazareth had rejected Him once before (Luke 4:14-30). Whether it was Nazareth or Capernaum, Jesus went into the synagogue on a Sabbath Day, as was His custom, and began to teach the people that were there (Mark 6:2). Many of those who heard Him speak were amazed.

They asked, "Where did this man get this wisdom and these powerful miracles" (Matt 13:54)? Thus, the people conceded that Jesus was both wise and powerful, but they were unable to view Him as the Messiah.

Some of the people appear to have found it difficult to accept that anyone from among their own number could possess such wisdom and powers, and they took offence at Him (Matt 13:57). They asked,

Isn't this the carpenter's son? Isn't his mother's name Mary,
and aren't his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas?
Aren't all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get
all these things?

Matthew 13:55-56 NIV

Jesus responded to them in a way that is reminiscent of what He had said (earlier) (Luke 4:24) when He had been rejected at Nazareth. He said, "Only in his hometown, among his relatives and in his own house is a prophet without honor" (Mark 6:4 NIV).

Matthew tells us that Jesus did not perform many powerful miracles there, because of their lack of faith (Matt 13:58). Mark tells us that Jesus was not able to perform a single powerful miracle there, other than to heal a few sick people by laying His hands on them (Mark 6:5). Mark also records that Jesus was amazed at their lack of faith (Mark 6:6).

Thought Questions

1. The Gospel of Mark says that Jesus was not able (Mark 6:5) to perform a single powerful miracle among the people (that day). Why was Jesus not able? What do you think?

2. Mark, who wrote the Gospel of Mark, did not seem to regard Jesus' healing sick people to be of the same category as His more powerful miracles (Mark 6:5). Does that suggest that Jesus healed so many sick people that Mark did not consider His doing so to be unusual? What do you think?
3. Jesus was amazed at the people's lack of faith. Why was He amazed at their lack of faith? What do you think?
4. Were you aware that Jesus had brothers and sisters (Matt 13:55-56)? Were Jesus' brothers and sisters Mary's children? Was Joseph their father? What do you think?
5. The Gospels say that the people called Jesus "the carpenter's son" (Matt 13:55) or "the carpenter" (Mark 6:3). Did Jesus ever work at the carpentry trade? What do you think?

***JESUS' APOSTLES
SENT OUT ON
THEIR FIRST
MISSION
JOURNEY***

44

Mission of The Twelve

Matthew 9:35-10:22; Mark 6:7-13; Luke 9:1-6

Jesus was going to all the towns and villages of Galilee (Matt 9:35) and was teaching in their synagogues. He was preaching the gospel (good news) of the kingdom and healing every ill or disabled person that was brought to Him.

As He saw the crowds of people that were coming to Him, He was moved with compassion; for they were worn down and as helpless as sheep without a shepherd (Matt 9:36). He remarked to His disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few” (Matt 9:37 NIV). Then Jesus told His disciples to pray about the shortage of workers. He said, “Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest” (Matt 9:38 NKJV).

Jesus had been training His disciples for months to do the same type of evangelistic work that He was doing and that John the Baptist had done, before John was imprisoned. Eventually, the time came for Jesus to send His disciples out to try their hand at spreading the gospel of the kingdom.

So Jesus called the Twelve together and gave them authority to drive out unclean spirits and to heal all kinds of illnesses and disabilities (Matt 10:1). Before He sent them out, however, He instructed them to go only to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matt 10:6). That is, they were not to go among the Gentiles or into any town of the Samaritans. They should announce that the kingdom of heaven was near (Matt 10:7), as John the Baptist had done and as Jesus was currently doing. He commissioned them to heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, and to cast out demons. He also cautioned them not to charge money for their services. He said, “Freely you have received, freely give” (Matt 10:8b).

He instructed them to make no preparations for their journey but to go just as they were. He cautioned them not to take any gold, silver, or

copper coins in their pockets. Nor should they take along a bag, an extra tunic, sandals, or a staff (Matt 10:9-10; Mark 6:8; Luke 9:3); for, as Jesus said, “the worker is worth his keep” (Matt 10:10 NIV).

He told them that when they went into a town or a village they should find out who is worthy there and stay with that person until they left. As they entered a home, they should greet it, presumably by saying, “Shalom” (peace). If the home was worthy of their blessing of “peace,” peace would rest upon that home; but if it were not worthy, their blessing would return to them (Matt 10:12-13).

Jesus said that if anyone did not welcome them or did not listen to their words, they should shake the dust off their feet as they left that home or that town (Matt 10:14). He predicted it would not go well on the Day of Judgment with any town that refused to hear their message. He said, “I tell you the truth, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town” (Matt 9:15 NIV).

Then Jesus warned His apostles, “I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves” (Matt 10:16 NIV).

He forewarned that they would be persecuted (Matt 10:17) and led before rulers and kings for His sake as a witness to them and to the nations (Matt 10:18). He told them not to worry, however, about what they should say, because it would be given them in that hour (Matt 10:19), for the Spirit of the Father would be speaking by them (Matt 10:20).

He warned that a brother would deliver up a brother to death, and a father a child and that children would rise up against their parents and kill them (Matt 10:21). He said, “All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved” (Matt 10:22 NIV).

Thought Questions

1. Can you think of any reason why Jesus sent His Twelve Apostles only to the “lost sheep of the house of Israel?” Please share your thoughts.

2. Why do you suppose Jesus did not want His apostles to make any preparations for their first mission-journey but to go just as they were? What do you think the reason was?
3. Do the restrictions that Jesus placed on His apostles apply to missionaries today? That is, are they instructed not to take anything with them? See Luke 22:35-36.
4. Jesus instructed His apostles not to charge money for their services? Why do you suppose He did not want them to charge?
5. Jesus told His apostles that the Holy Spirit would give them what they should say when they were called before kings and rulers (Matt 10:19-20). Does that promise apply to Jesus' followers today? What do you think?

45

More Advice for The Twelve

Matthew 10:23-42

As Jesus continued speaking to His Twelve Apostles, He forewarned them of the dangers they would face on their mission. He did not want them to die needlessly, so He told them that if they were persecuted in one town, they should flee to another (Matt 10:23a).

Due to the fact that the kingdom of God was coming so soon, however, He told them that they would not finish evangelizing the cities of Israel before it would be established. Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, you will not finish going through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes" (Matt 10:23b NIV).

Jesus reminded His apostles that a pupil is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master (Matt 10:24). Therefore, a pupil should not expect to be treated better than his teacher nor a servant better than his master (Matt 10:25a). He said further, "If the head of the house has been called Beelzebub, how much more the members of his household!" (Matt 10:25b NIV)

Jesus assured His apostles that everything that He had told them in darkness (privately) would come to light (Matt 10:26). Indeed, they should proclaim it from the housetops (Matt 10:27).

He admonished them not to be afraid, saying,

Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill
the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both
soul and body in hell.

Matthew 10:28 NIV

Jesus wanted His apostles to understand that they were precious in God's sight. He asked them, "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny?" Yet not even a sparrow falls to the ground without God's knowing it (Matt 10:29). He told them that even the hairs of their head were numbered (Matt 10:30). Then He said, "So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows" (Matt 10:31 NIV).

After having said this, Jesus spoke of the reward that His apostles would receive: "Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven" (Matt 10:32 NIV). Jesus warned them that there would also be a reverse side to this, namely, "But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven" (Matt 10:33 NIV).

At this point, Jesus described the disruptive effect that His teaching would have upon society. He said, "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword" (Matt 10:34 NIV).

Jesus then quoted a passage from the prophet Micah, which expressed how disruptive God's message can be. The passage says,

For I have come to turn 'a man against his father, a daughter
against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-
in-law--a man's enemies will be the members of his own
household.'

Matt 10:35-36; Mic 7:6 NIV

Yet, in spite of the possibility that this could happen, people need to be brought to a decision. Jesus said,

Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

Matthew 10:37 NIV

Jesus continued, “And anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me” (Matt 10:38 NIV). In addition, Jesus promised, “Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it” (Matt 10:39 NIV).

Jesus closed His instructions to His apostles with a few words about the importance of their work. He said, “He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives the one who sent me” (Matt 10:40 NIV).

Jesus promised that any person that receives a prophet, in the name of a prophet, would get a prophet’s reward. He also said that if any person receives a just person, in the name of a just person, that person will get a just person’s reward (Matt 10:41). Then He said,

And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward.

Matthew 10:42 NIV

After He had finished saying these things, Jesus sent His apostles out, two by two; and they went through the villages, preaching the gospel and healing people everywhere (Luke 9:6).

Jesus, also, went from that place teaching and preaching in the towns of Galilee, without His apostles (Matt 11:1).

Thought Questions

1. What did Jesus mean when He said (Matt 10:31) that His disciples were worth more than many sparrows? Do you feel that you are worth more than many sparrows?
2. What did Jesus mean when He told His disciples (Matt 10:30) that the hairs of their head were numbered? Do you think the hairs of your head are numbered?
3. What did Jesus mean when He said (Matt 10:34) that He did not come to bring peace but a sword?
4. Why is a person that loves father or mother, son or daughter more than he loves Jesus (Matt 10:37) not worthy of Jesus?
5. Why is a person that does not take up his cross and follow Jesus (Matt 10:38) not worthy of Him? Does every person have a cross to bear?
6. What did Jesus mean when He said, "Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it" (Matt 10:39)?

***JESUS' SECOND
TRIP TO
JERUSALEM,
WHERE HE
ATTENDED
A FEAST,
FOLLOWED BY
A SHORT STAY
IN GALILEE***

46

Healing by the Pool in Jerusalem

John 5:1-30

Amidst all the activities in Galilee, Jesus made a quick trip (south) to Jerusalem for one of the feasts (John 5:1). The Gospels do not tell us which feast it was. When Jesus got to Jerusalem, He found a great number of disabled persons lying beside a pool called “Bethesda,” near the Sheep Gate. The pool had five covered colonnades surrounding it, and one of the persons that was lying there was a man who had been there for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw the man and learned that he had been for such a long time in that condition, He asked the man, “Do you want to get well?”

The man replied, “Sir, I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone goes down ahead of me.”

Some (not-very-early) manuscripts of the Gospel of John say (John 5:4) that at certain times an angel caused an agitation of the water in the pool and that the first person to get into the pool would be healed.

Jesus said to the man, “Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.” At that, the man was cured, and he picked up his mat and walked.

This happened on a Sabbath; and people in Jerusalem saw the man carrying his mat and said to him, “It is the Sabbath, and it is not lawful for you to carry your mat!” The man tried to defend himself by explaining, “The one who healed me said to me, ‘Pick up your mat and walk.’”

Upon hearing this, the people wanted to know who it was that had healed him on the Sabbath. This they considered to be a breach of the law; but the man did not know who it was, because Jesus had moved on in the crowd.

Jesus found the man later on the temple grounds and said to him, "See, you are well again. Stop sinning lest something worse happen to you" (John 5:14).

The man went straight to the people that had asked who had healed him and reported to them that it was Jesus. Then the religious leaders started persecuting Jesus. They did so, because breaking the Sabbath was considered to be a serious matter in Jerusalem in those days. The Old Testament prescribes death by stoning for anyone that broke the Sabbath (Num 15:35), and the people in Jesus' day were rabid about enforcing this law. So they came to Jesus and called upon Him to give an account for His having healed on the Sabbath. Jesus explained His action by saying, "My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working" (John 5:17 NASB).

This explanation did not satisfy the religious leaders. They wanted all the more to kill Jesus, not only because He (according to their interpretation) broke the Sabbath, but also because He said that God was his own Father, thus making himself equal with God (John 5:18).

Jesus could have let the issue of His relationship with the Father drop and have gone quietly back to Galilee; but, instead, chose to respond to His critics.

He explained to them that it is only natural for a son to imitate his father (John 5:19), for a father loves his son and shows him what he does (John 5:20). This implied that God had shown Jesus to heal on the Sabbath. God had shown it to Him by the fact that He (God) also heals on the Sabbath.

Jesus said that the Father would show Him even greater things, so much that they would be amazed (John 5:20). He began then to describe some of the "greater things" that God would show Him. He said,

For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life,
even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it.

John 5:21 NIV

One would think that by saying this, Jesus would have reached the ultimate in identifying Himself with the Father; but no, there was more.

He explained that the Father would entrust to Him even the final Judgment. He said, “Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son” (John 5:22 NIV).

The reason why the Father intends to entrust the final Judgment to the Son is so that all people may come to honor the Son as they honor the Father (John 5:23). In spite of God’s desire that the Son be honored, Jesus’ accusers were not honoring Jesus. The real reason that they were not honoring Jesus was that they did not honor the Father, who had sent Him (John 5:23).

Jesus appealed to His accusers to believe what He said. They should believe for their own benefit. He urged,

I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him
who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he
has crossed over from death to life.

John 4:24 NIV

Jesus then described the role that He would play in the resurrecting of the dead. He said that the dead would hear His voice and that those who hear Him would live (John 5:25).

He said, further, that since He is the “Son of Man,” the Father had given Him the authority to judge and had made it possible for Him to have life in Himself (John 5:26-27). Jesus cautioned them,

Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who
are in their graves will hear his voice and come out -those
who have done good will rise to live, and those who have
done evil will rise to be condemned.

John 5:28-29 NIV

Jesus explained to His accusers that He did not seek to please Himself, but to please the Father who had sent Him. He said, “By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me” (John 5:30 NIV).

It is astonishing that Jesus spoke so openly about His relationship with God. He must, surely, have known that His accusers would use what He said against Him; but perhaps it did not matter, since they were already seeking to kill Him.

Thought Questions

1. Do you think the man by the pool was sick because of the sins he had committed? What prompts you to think as you do? Are illnesses always related to the sins that people commit? See John 9:3.
2. Do you think that Jesus actually broke the Sabbath law by healing a man on the Sabbath, or was it only their traditions that He broke?
3. Do you think the man whom Jesus healed was malicious in reporting to the religious leaders that it was Jesus who had healed Him, or was he just unthinking?
4. Will Jesus be involved in resurrecting people from the dead? See John 5:25.
5. Will Jesus be involved in judging people at the Final Judgment? See John 5:27-28.

47

Jesus' Evidence for His Messiahship

John 5:31-47

The religious leaders in Jerusalem started interrogating Jesus because He had healed a man on the Sabbath (John 5:8). Jesus explained to them (John 5:16-30) that His Father, God, was the source of His authority to heal on the Sabbath. His explanation, however, fell on deaf ears; because they were not willing to concede that He was the Messiah.

For that reason, what He said about His close relationship with God sounded like blasphemy to them. It made them want, all the more, to put

Him to death; for blasphemy was also punishable by death under the Law of Moses (Lev 24:14), as was Sabbath-breaking.

Knowing that His accusers needed to see evidence for His claim to be the Messiah, Jesus proceeded to lay out for them an argument in His defense. He conceded that if He were the only one bearing witness, His witness would not stand in court (John 5:31); but He said that there was another person who bore witness to Him, namely, John the Baptist.

John the Baptist was still out in the wilderness, calling people to repentance and baptizing them and telling them that Jesus was the Messiah. Then Jesus said that He (Jesus) knew that John's witness was true (John 5:32).

The religious leaders, who were questioning Jesus may have been the very men that had sent emissaries to ask John the Baptist if he (John) were the Messiah; and John had told them that not he (John 1:19-20) but Jesus was the Messiah (John 1:29,36). Jesus said, "You have sent to John and he has testified to the truth" (John 5:33 NIV).

Jesus assured them that for Himself He did not need the testimony of any man in order to know that He was the Messiah (John 5:34) but that He had brought the subject of John's testimony up solely for the benefit of those who were questioning Him. He brought it up so that they might be saved (John 5:34).

Jesus said that they (His accusers) had wanted for a time to bask in John's light, for John the Baptist was a burning and shining lamp (John 5:35). Now they seemed not to think as much of John as before. The testimony of John the Baptist, however, was the first argument that Jesus made in His defense.

Jesus assured them that He had yet another proof, greater than the testimony of John the Baptist, namely, His miracles. He said,

But the testimony which I have is greater than the testimony
of John; for the works which the Father has given Me to
accomplish--the very works that I do— testify about Me,
that the Father has sent Me

John 5:36 NASB

Jesus' accusers were well acquainted with the fact that Jesus had been doing miracles; for they could not dispute that He had cured a man that had been a cripple in their city for thirty-eight years (John 5:9). Jesus referred to His miracles as His second argument.

Jesus' third argument was that the Father Himself had given witness to Him (John 5:37). Jesus was referring, no doubt, to the voice from Heaven, which had said at His baptism, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt 3:17 NKJV).

Jesus' accusers could have checked it out, if they had cared to do so, whether or not such a voice had been heard from heaven. John the Baptist would have been pleased to tell them all about it. Chances are, however, they already knew that a voice had been heard at Jesus' baptism but were discounting that fact.

Jesus realized, at some point, that His words were having no effect on His accusers. So He told them that they were not in a position to judge the matter of His messiahship, since they had never heard God's voice nor ever seen God's form (John 5:37). He also told them that they did not have God's word residing in them, otherwise they would have believed the one whom God had sent (John 5:38).

This brought Jesus to His fourth argument: Namely, the Old Testament Scriptures. He said,

You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life.

John 5:39-40 NIV

Indeed, the Old Testament Scriptures could have helped Jesus' accusers find eternal life, because they (the Old Testament Scriptures) point to Jesus, in whom life is to be found.

Jesus told His critics that He was not seeking their praise (John 5:41), because He knew what kind of men they were. He accused them of not having the love of God in their hearts (John 5:41-42).

Jesus said that even though He had come in His Father's name and not in His own name, they did not accept Him. He said that if another

person were to come in his own name, Him they would accept (John 5:43).

Jesus was well aware that they loved the praise of men, so He asked them, “How can you believe, who receive honor from one another, and do not seek the honor that comes from the only God?” (John 5:44 NKJV)

Jesus told His critics that He would not be the one to accuse them before the Father (John 5:45a). He said, “Your accuser is Moses, on whom your hopes are set. If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me” (John 5:45b-46 NIV).

Then Jesus further said, “But since you do not believe what he [Moses] wrote, how are you going to believe what I say?” (John 5:47 NIV)

Thought Questions

1. Why was it so difficult for the religious leaders in Jerusalem to believe in Jesus? Do religious leaders face similar difficulties today?
2. Do you think it is difficult for anyone to believe in Jesus who wants to be great or famous in the eyes of others?
3. What passage was Jesus referring to when He said that Moses had spoken of Him? Was He referring to Deu 18:15-19?
4. Are there any additional arguments that could be used in support of Jesus, other than the ones Jesus used? Please name some of them if you can.

48

Death of John the Baptist

Matthew 14:1-12; Mark 6:14-29; Luke 9:7-9

John the Baptist was opposed to the marriage of King Herod Antipas to Herodias, the wife of his half-brother, Herod Philip. Because John the

Baptist spoke out against the marriage, Herod Antipas had John arrested and thrown into prison.

Herod was king, not only over Galilee, but also over Peraea. Peraea was the strip of land along the east bank of the Jordan River, where John the Baptist had been baptizing. All the while that King Herod held John in prison, Jesus was going about His work in Galilee, teaching and healing people.

Herodias, the wife of King Herod, was angry with John the Baptist and wanted to have John put to death; but she was unable to arrange it (Mark 6:19), because King Herod feared John. Earlier, King Herod had himself wanted to kill John; but he was afraid of the people, who held John to be a prophet (Matt 14:5).

Herod protected John because he knew that John was a holy man (Mark 6:20), and he liked to hear him speak. He heard him speak from time to time in spite of the fact that when he heard him, he was greatly disturbed by what he heard (Mark 6:20).

When King Herod's birthday came around, Herod gave a banquet for his high officials, the military commanders, and the leading men of Galilee (Mark 6:21). The entertainment at the banquet included a dance by Herodias' daughter. Her dance pleased Herod and his guests so much that Herod said to her, "Ask me for anything you want, and I'll give it to you, up to half my kingdom" (Mark 6:23).

Whereupon, the girl went out and asked her mother, "What shall I ask for?"

Herodias answered, "The head of John the Baptist."

So the girl hurried back to Herod with her shocking request. She said, "Give me here on a platter the head of John the Baptist" (Matt 14:8 NIV).

King Herod was greatly distressed when he heard her request, yet he did not refuse the girl because of his oath and because of his dinner guests (Mark 6:26). So he sent an executioner with orders to bring John's head.

The executioner went and beheaded John in the prison (Matt 14:10) and brought John's head on a platter. He presented it to the girl, and she gave it to her mother (Mark 6:28).

When John's disciples heard this, they came and took John's body and laid it in a tomb (Mark 6:29); and then they went and told Jesus about it (Matt 14:12).

King Herod was, at a later date, perplexed when he heard people saying that Jesus was none other than John the Baptist, who had been raised from the dead (Luke 9:7-8). Herod himself came to hold that same opinion about Jesus. He said, "John, the man I beheaded, has been raised from the dead" (Mark 6:14)! Herod tried to arrange to see Jesus (Luke 9:9).

Thought Questions

1. Do you think John the Baptist should have kept quiet about his opposition to King Herod Antipas' marriage to his own sister-in-law, or was he right to have spoken out about it?
2. Do you think Herod was a weak person? Do you think Herod was drunk when he issued the order to take John's life? Do you think that Herodias was the dominant person in their marriage and that she controlled Herod?
3. Was John the Baptist a martyr in the interest of the sanctity of marriage? What can we do today to increase the awareness of the sanctity of marriage?
4. Why do you think John's disciples went to Jesus and told Him about John's death?
5. What do you suppose Jesus thought about the execution of John the Baptist? What do you imagine Jesus could have said in prayer to His Father about John's execution?

49

Feeding the 5,000

Matthew 14:13-21; Mark 6:30-44;

Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-15

Jesus was not idle while His apostles were away on their first mission-journey. He was healing the sick and many people were following Him and He was, no doubt, also teaching them.

It appears that Jesus' twelve apostles returned shortly after John the Baptist's disciples had come and told Jesus that John had been beheaded in prison. Jesus may have preferred to be by Himself for a while and to talk with God about what had happened to John the Baptist and about what might lie in the future for Himself; but He could not get away, for there were too many people around Him. His apostles also gathered around Him and reported all that they had said and done on their journey. So many people were coming and going that Jesus and His apostles could not even find time to eat; so He said to His apostles, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest" (Mark 6:31 NIV).

So, they got into a boat and went away to a solitary place near the northeastern shore of the Sea of Galilee, where they hoped to be by themselves. Many people from the towns saw Jesus and His apostles leave. They ran along the shore toward where Jesus and His apostles appeared to be going, and they got there ahead of them. When Jesus and the apostles landed, they did not find the peace and quiet that Jesus had been seeking. Instead, they found a large crowd of people waiting for Jesus.

However, He was not upset with them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So He went up on the hillside and sat down with His disciples and began to teach the people many things about the kingdom of God, and He also healed their sick.

Later that day, Jesus' disciples came to Him and said, "This is a

remote place and it's already very late. Send the people away so they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat" (Mark 6:35-36 NIV).

Jesus replied, "You give them something to eat."

Jesus looked up and saw people still coming to Him, and He said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat" (John 6:5 NIV)? Jesus asked this to test Philip, for Jesus already knew what He was going to do.

Philip answered, "Eight months' wages wouldn't buy enough bread for each one to have a bite. Should we go and spend that much money on bread for them" (John 6:7)?

"How many loaves do you have?" He asked. "Go and see" (Mark 6:38 NIV).

Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up, and said, "Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many" (John 6:8)?

"Bring them here to me," Jesus said.

Now, there was plenty of grass at that place, so Jesus told His disciples to tell the people to sit on the grass; and they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, Jesus blessed the bread (gave thanks); then He broke the loaves and gave them to His disciples to set before the people. Afterwards, He divided the two fish among them all.

When all the people had had enough to eat, Jesus said to His disciples, "Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted" (John 6:12 NIV). So they gathered the pieces and filled twelve baskets with the pieces that were left over.

Immediately following this, Jesus instructed His apostles to get into the boat and go on ahead of Him to Bethsaida, while He dismissed the crowd. After the people had seen the miraculous sign that Jesus did, they began to say, "Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world" (John 6:14 NIV).

Jesus knew that they intended to come and try to force Him to become their king (John 6:15). Had that happened, it would have been

disastrous. It would have meant rebellion against Rome; and Rome would surely have sent soldiers to put down the rebellion with the sword. Besides, their idea of a kingdom was not the type of kingdom that Jesus had in mind; so He withdrew to a mountain by Himself to pray.

Thought Questions

1. What do you make of the fact that Jesus and His disciples had no food with them? Were they accustomed to going long periods of time without food? Did Jesus ever perform a miracle, so far as you know, to provide food for Himself or His disciples?
2. Should we follow Jesus' example of giving thanks for our food before (or after) we eat? What should we say in prayer regarding the food we eat?
3. What do you suppose Jesus' motives were in telling His disciples to pick up the pieces of food that were left over? What can we learn from that?
4. The people said, "Surely this is the Prophet, who is to come into the world" (John 6:14). Were they referring to the "prophet" of whom Moses spoke in Deu 18:18-19? What do you think?
5. Why did Jesus not allow these people to make Him their king? What kind of a king did they want Jesus to be? What do you think? Was this the first time that Jesus had been offered an earthly kingdom?

50

Walking on Water and Healing at Gennesaret

Matthew 14:22-36; Mark 6:45-56; John 6:15-21

No one knows exactly where it was that Jesus fed the 5000, but some people think it was on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee, just south of the town of Bethsaida. After Jesus had fed the 5,000, He sent His apostles on ahead of Him by boat to Bethsaida (Mark 6:45). Then He

sent the crowd away and went up on a mountainside by Himself to pray (Matt 14:23); and He was there until early the next morning.

In the meanwhile, His disciples were in the boat about three and a half miles from land, and the wind was blowing hard, and the waves were buffeting them. As a result, it was hard making headway, because the winds were against them.

Between three and six o'clock in the morning, Jesus went out to them, walking on the sea (Matt 14:25); and He saw them straining at the oars (Mark 6:48). They also saw Jesus approaching, walking on the water. He appeared to be about to pass them by, when they cried out in fear, "It's a ghost!" (Matt 14:26).

Jesus, however, immediately spoke to them and said, "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid" (Matt 14:27 NIV).

Then Peter said, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water" (Matt 14:28 NKJV).

Jesus said, "Come."

So Peter climbed down out of the boat. He walked on the water and came toward Jesus; but when Peter noticed the strong wind (Matt 14:30), he got scared and began to sink. He cried out, "Lord, save me" (Matt 14:30)!

Immediately, Jesus reached out his hand and caught hold of Peter and said to him, "Oh, you of little faith, why did you doubt?" (Matt 14:31)

Then the disciples desired to take Jesus into the boat with them (John 6:21). After Jesus and Peter had climbed into the boat, the wind died down. This caused the disciples to be completely amazed, for they had not yet understood the implications of the fact that Jesus had fed 5,000 people with only five loaves of bread (Mark 6:51). The reason they had not understood about the bread was because their hearts were still hardened (Mark 6:52).

Then, those in the boat bowed down before Jesus, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God" (Matt 14:33).

Very shortly after this, the boat reached the shore, a little beyond Bethsaida. They anchored at a place called, Gennesaret, which was a little

field on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee, just south of Capernaum. As soon as they got out of the boat, the people there recognized Jesus, and they quickly sent word to all the surrounding countryside that Jesus was present.

It had become customary for people to bring all their sick people to Jesus whenever He went into any village, town, or countryside. They placed their sick in the marketplaces and begged Him to let them just touch the edge of His garment; and everyone that touched Him was healed (Mark 6:56).

Thought Questions

1. Would you consider Jesus' walking on water to be one of His most outstanding miracles? What are some of His other outstanding miracles?
2. Why did Peter begin to sink after he took a few steps on the water? What can we learn from that?
3. The Gospel of Mark says that the apostles did not yet understand about the loaves and fishes (Mark 6:52). If they had understood about the loaves and fishes, how would that have helped them know what to think about Jesus' walking on the water and about the wind and waves dying down as He got into the boat?

51

A Conversation with the People from Tiberias

John 6:23-40

Certain people from Tiberias came across the Sea of Galilee in several boats and landed near where Jesus had fed the 5,000; but He and His disciples had already left that place. So the people got back in their boats and went on to Capernaum in search of Him.

When they found Him, they asked him, “Rabbi (Teacher), when did you get here” (John 6:25)?

Jesus knew immediately what these people had in mind. They wanted Jesus to give them some more of the bread that He could provide by miraculous means. Jesus responded to them by saying,

I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you
saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and
had your fill.

John 6:26 NIV

Jesus cautioned them, therefore, not to seek physical food as the main thing in life but to seek food for eternal life. He said,

Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures
to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him
God the Father has placed his seal of approval.

John 6:27 NIV

The people from Tiberias were not sure what it was that Jesus wanted them to do. So they asked, “What must we do in order to be doing the works of God” (John 6:28 RSV)?

Jesus answered, “The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent” (John 6:29 NIV).

When the people heard this, they thought they saw a way to induce Jesus to give them bread. They asked Him, “What miraculous sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do” (John 6:30 NIV)?

Then they buttressed their request by saying, “Our forefathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written: ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat’” (John 6:31 NIV).

Jesus corrected their reference to history, by saying, “I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven” (John 6:32 NIV). Jesus then identified for them the “bread from heaven,” or the “bread of

God.” He said, “For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world” (John 6:32-33 NIV). It was entirely appropriate for Jesus to refer to Himself as the “bread of God,” because He is the one who came down from heaven and also because He is the one who can give life to the world.

The people may not have been sure what Jesus was offering them; but whatever it was, they wanted it. They requested, “Sir, give us this bread from now on” (John 6:34).

Jesus tried to make His meaning a little more specific, by declaring to them, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty” (John 6:35 NIV).

The people from Tiberias did not really believe what Jesus was saying. This is shown by the fact that Jesus reproached them for not believing even though they had seen Him (John 6:36). Their unbelief made it obvious that they were not among the ones whom God had given to Jesus to be His followers. So He said, “All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away” (John 6:37 NIV).

It must have been a disappointment for Jesus to face the fact that not everyone was willing to believe in Him and could not, for that reason, be counted among His disciples. No matter how great the disappointment may have been, He still wanted to do what God had sent Him to do. He explained, “For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me” (John 6:38 NIV).

It was not God’s will, of course, that Jesus lose any one of those whom God had given Him (John 6:39). He said,

For my Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son
and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise
him up at the last day.

John 6:40 NIV

It seems that some of this rather long conversation (possibly, as much of it as we have looked at so far) took place in or near the town of Capernaum, where Jesus encountered the people from Tiberias.

Thought Questions

1. When the people from Tiberias asked Jesus to give them bread from heaven from then on (John 6:34), were they asking for Jesus to be with them always? Or were they asking to have the truth of His word always? Or were they asking to have physical bread from heaven always? What do you think they were asking?
2. What does it mean to “look to the Son” and to “believe in him” (John 6:40)? How can a person know if he is looking to the Son and believing in Him?
3. Did you notice that Jesus said that He would raise the dead? Did He say that He would raise the dead on a specific day? On which day will He raise the dead? See John 6:39-40.

52

More Teaching About “The Bread of Life” in a Synagogue at Capernaum

John 6:41-71

This is a continuation of the long conversation that Jesus’ had with people who had come from Tiberias. The following part of the conversation took place in a synagogue at Capernaum (John 6:59).

Some of the people were grumbling (John 6:41) that Jesus had implied (John 6:32-33,35) that He was the true bread that had come down from heaven. Their comment was, “Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, ‘I came down from heaven’” (John 6:42 NIV)?

The people who grumbled did not understand what Jesus had meant when He said. “I am the bread of life” (John 6:35).

Their grumbling showed that they were not willing to allow God to lead them to Jesus. If they had been willing, they would have gotten

much more from Jesus than a loaf of bread. He said to them, "Do not grumble among yourselves. No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day" (John 6:43-44 NASB).

Had they been more familiar with the Old Testament, and had they believed it and lived by it, God could have led them to Jesus; and He would have instructed them further. Jesus said.

It is written in the Prophets: "They will all be taught by God."
Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him
comes to me.

John 6:45 NIV; Isa 54:13

Due to Jesus' close relationship with the Father, He is not only able to instruct those who come to Him, but He is also able to give them life. He said,

No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God;
only he has seen the Father. I tell you the truth, he who
believes has everlasting life. I am the bread of life.

John 6:46-48 NIV

Jesus was trying to lead these people away from the notion that physical bread can, by itself, sustain life. Not even the manna that the children of Israel ate in the wilderness could sustain life forever. Jesus, however, can give everlasting life; for He is the one who will raise the dead on the last day. Therefore, He is the true "bread of life." He said,

Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died.
But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which
a man may eat and not die.

John 6:49-50 NIV

Indeed, Jesus is far greater than physical bread, in that He is "living." He said, "I am the living bread that came down from heaven" (John 6:51a NIV).

Carrying the metaphor further, Jesus said, “If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world” (John 6:51b NIV).

Since the people did not understand, they began to argue sharply among themselves. Some were saying, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat” (John 6:52)? In spite of their lack of understanding, Jesus pressed His metaphor still further. He said,

I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man
and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats
my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will
raise him up at the last day.

John 6:53-54 NIV

Continuing this, He said, “For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him” (John 6:55-56 NIV).

Those people needed, first of all, to consume Jesus’ word, to imbibe His teaching, and to accept His challenge. If they could have done that, all other blessings would have flowed to them, even eternal life. Jesus said, “Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me” (John 6:57 NIV).

Summing up, then, Jesus said, “This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your forefathers ate manna and died, but he who feeds on this bread will live forever” (John 6:58 NIV).

Even some of Jesus’ disciples had trouble with Jesus’ having compared Himself to physical bread and also with the idea that He had come down from heaven. They remarked, “This is a difficult teaching. Who can accept it” (John 6:60)?

When Jesus became aware that even His disciples were upset by what He had said, He asked them, “Does this offend you? What if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before?” (John 6:61b-62 NIV)

Jesus then explained that He had not been speaking literally about eating His flesh. He said,

The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words
I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life. Yet there
are some of you who do not believe.

John 6:63-64 NIV

At this point in the narrative, the apostle John, who wrote the Gospel of John, mentioned that Jesus had known from the beginning which of His followers did not truly believe in Him (John 6:64). It was because of this that Jesus had said (John 6:44) that no one could come to Him unless it be given him from the Father (John 6:65).

This teaching may have been too difficult even for some of Jesus' followers to grasp. As a result, many of them turned back and followed Him no longer (John 6:66). So Jesus asked the Twelve, "You don't want to go away too, do you" (John 6:67)?

Simon Peter answered, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God" (John 6:68-69 NIV).

Then Jesus replied, "Did not I choose you the twelve, and one of you is a devil" (John 6:70 ASV)? Jesus was speaking, of course, of Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, who would betray Him (John 6:71).

Thought Questions

1. Do you think that Joseph, the husband of Mary, was still alive at the time this conversation took place? See John 6:42.
2. What did Jesus mean when He said, "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35)? What did He mean when He said that those who come to Him will never go hungry and those who believe in Him will never be thirsty (John 6:35)?
3. What did Jesus mean when He said that people should eat His flesh and drink His blood (John 6:54-56)? In what way should people "eat" His flesh and "drink" His blood?
4. Was Jesus speaking about partaking of the Lord's Supper when He said that people should eat His flesh and drink His blood?

***JESUS' THIRD
TRIP TO
JERUSALEM AND
HIS TRIP
THROUGH
GALILEE
ON HIS WAY
TO PHOENICIA***

53

The Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem

John 7:1-24

Jesus had been going to different places in and around Galilee, where He taught and healed many people. He was avoiding Judea and Jerusalem on purpose, because He knew that some of the leaders of the people, headquartered in Jerusalem, wanted to take His life (John 7:1).

When the Feast of Tabernacles was near, however, Jesus' brothers, who did not believe in Him (John 7:5), said to Him, "You ought to leave here and go to Judea, so that your disciples may see the miracles you do. No one who wants to become a public figure acts in secret. Since you are doing these things, show yourself to the world" (John 7:3-4 NIV).

Jesus, however, was not prepared to go to that Feast, at least, not yet. Sensing a sting in His brother's remarks, He said to them, "The right time for me has not yet come; for you any time is right" (John 7:6 NIV). Jesus then warned His brothers of the spiritual condition that they were in. He said, "The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify that what it does is evil" (John 7:7 NIV).

Then He said to them, "You go to the Feast. I am not yet going up to this Feast, because for me the right time has not yet come" (John 7:8 NIV). After Jesus had said this, He stayed in Galilee for a while. A few days later, however, He went to Jerusalem for the Feast, but not publicly.

Now, the people at Jerusalem were talking about Jesus and watching to see if He would come to the Feast. They were asking, "Where is that man?" Some were saying, "He is a good man" (John 7:12); but others disagreed. They said, "No, he deceives the people." Yet no one was saying anything about Him openly, because they feared the religious leaders (John 7:13).

Not until the feast was half over did Jesus finally go up to Jerusalem. When He got there, He went into the temple courts and began to teach.

As He was teaching, the people were amazed, for many of the inhabitants of Jerusalem had not heard Him teach before. Some of them asked, "How did this man get such learning without having studied?" (John 7:15).

Jesus answered, "My teaching is not my own. It comes from him who sent me" (John 7:16 NIV).

Anyone could determine for himself whether or not what Jesus was saying came from God. It depended on that person's attitude toward God. Jesus said, "If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own" (John 7:17 NIV).

The very nature of Jesus' teaching also shows that He did not make it up out of His own mind. He said,

He who speaks on his own does so to gain honor for himself,
but he who works for the honor of the one who sent him is
a man of truth; there is nothing false about him.

John 7:18 NIV

Then, Jesus uncovered the hidden motive of some of those that were listening to Him in Jerusalem. He accused them of not keeping the Law themselves and, at the same time, of trying to kill Him for not (as they supposed) keeping it. He said, "Has not Moses given you the law? Yet not one of you keeps the law. Why are you trying to kill me?" (John 7:19 NIV)

The crowd answered, "You are demon-possessed. Who is trying to kill you" (John 7:20)?

In reply, Jesus referred to the way that the religious leaders in Jerusalem had earlier reacted when He had healed a man on the Sabbath (John 5:8-9). He said, "I did one miracle, and you are all astonished" (John 7:21 NIV).

Jesus then defended His practice of healing on the Sabbath by referring to their practice of circumcising male babies on the 8th day, irrespective of whether or not the 8th day fell on a Sabbath. He said,

Yet, because Moses gave you circumcision (though actually it did not come from Moses, but from the patriarchs), you circumcise a child on the Sabbath. Now if a child can be circumcised on the Sabbath so that the law of Moses may not be broken, why are you angry with me for healing the whole man on the Sabbath?

John 7:22-23 NIV

Jesus concluded this line of thought by urging, “Stop judging by mere appearances, and make a right judgment” (John 7:24 NIV).

Thought Questions

1. Was Jesus afraid for His life? Was that the reason He did not seek an early confrontation with His enemies in Judea? Was He afraid? What do you think? What did Jesus mean when He said that the time was not right for Him (John 7:6)?
2. Why did the world of Jesus’ day hate Him? See John 7:7. Do many people hate Jesus today? Do many people love Jesus today?
3. Can a person tell whether Jesus originated His teaching by Himself or whether it came from God? How can a person tell? See John 7:17. How does a decision to “do God’s will” help a person determine the truthfulness of Jesus’ teaching?
4. Do you agree that a person that teaches or preaches His own ideas is trying to gain honor for himself? See John 7:18. Please comment.
5. How can we avoid making judgments on the basis of appearances?

54

Is This the Christ?

John 7:25-36

Jesus was correct in saying (John 7:19) that the leaders in Jerusalem were trying to kill Him. This became evident for all to see when some of

the people in Jerusalem started asking, "Isn't this the man they are trying to kill" (John 7:25)? They said, "Here he is, speaking publicly, and they are not saying a word to him. Have the authorities really concluded that he is the Christ" (John 7:26)?

Some of the people thought that Jesus could not be the Christ, because it was generally assumed that He was from Galilee. They said, "But we know where this man is from; when the Christ comes, no one will know where he is from" (John 7:27).

The people that made that last statement were ill informed in two ways: They were wrong in thinking that no one was supposed to know where the Christ would come from (although the Old Testament clearly states in Mic 5:2 that the Christ would come from Bethlehem). They were also wrong in thinking that Jesus was born in Galilee. Jesus was aware that people in Jerusalem were saying such things about Him, and He cried out in irony, "Yes, you know me, and you know where I am from" (John 7:28a NIV).

They thought they knew all about Jesus, but they actually knew very little about Him. He said, "I am not here on my own, but he who sent me is true. You do not know him" (John 7:28b NIV). Jesus said, regarding God, "But I know him because I am from him and he sent me" (John 7:29 NIV). Jesus' listeners correctly understood that He was claiming to have been sent by God, and this claim made some of them so angry that they wanted to seize Him; but no one laid a hand on Him, because His time had not yet come (John 7:30).

In spite of opposition to His teaching from some in the crowd, many others put their faith in Him (John 7:31). They said, "When the Christ comes, will he do more miraculous signs than this man?" (John 7:31 NIV)

The Pharisees heard the crowd whispering such things about Jesus, and they thought that something ought to be done about Him. So the chief priests and Pharisees sent temple guards to arrest Him (John 7:32). To those of the crowd who were still listening, Jesus said,

I am with you for only a short time, and then I go to the one who sent me. You will look for me, but you will not find me; and where I am, you cannot come.

John 7:33-34 NIV

They asked one another, “Where does this man intend to go that we cannot find him? Will he go where our people live scattered among the Greeks, and teach the Greeks” (John 7:35 NIV)?

Some of them asked what Jesus meant when He said, “‘You will look for me, but you will not find me,’ and ‘Where I am, you cannot come’” (John 7:36).

Thought Questions

1. What led some of the people to put their faith in Jesus? See John 7:31.
2. What did Jesus mean when He said (John 7:33), “I go to the one who sent me?”
3. Jesus said that He was going to a place where His listeners could not go (John 7:34). Where do you think He was going? Why could they not go there?

55

Rivers of Living Water

John 7:37-52

On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him” (John 7:37-38 NIV).

Jesus meant by this that if anyone would come to Him and believe on Him, that person would receive the Holy Spirit in due time. The Holy Spirit was not yet being given to people at that time, due to the fact that

Jesus had not yet been “glorified” (John 7:39).

On hearing Jesus' words, some of the people said, “Surely this man is the Prophet” (John 7:40). Others went so far as to affirm, “He is the Christ” (John 7:41). Still others, unaware that Jesus had been born in Bethlehem, asked, “How can the Christ come from Galilee? Does not the Scripture say that the Christ will come from David's family and from Bethlehem [Mic 5:3], the town where David lived?” (John 7:42 NIV)

Thus, the people were divided about Jesus. Some of them wanted to seize him, but no one laid a hand on him. (John 7:43-44).

Finally the temple guards, who had been sent out to apprehend Jesus (John 7:32), went back empty handed to the chief priests and Pharisees.

The chief priests and Pharisees asked them, “Why didn't you bring him in?” (John 7:45 NIV)

The guards answered, “No one ever spoke the way this man does” (John 7:46 NIV).

The Pharisees replied, “You mean he has deceived you also? Has any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed in him? No! But this crowd that knows nothing of the law is under God's curse” (John 7:47-49 NIV).

Nicodemus, who had come to talk to Jesus earlier (John 3:1-21), put in a good word for Jesus. Nicodemus asked his fellow rulers, “Does our law condemn anyone without first hearing him to find out what he is doing?” (John 7:51 NIV).

The Pharisees turned on Nicodemus, and asked him, “Are you from Galilee, too? Look into it, and you will find that a prophet does not come out of Galilee” (John 7:52 NIV).

Some late manuscripts of the Gospel of John say that while everyone went to his own home, Jesus went out to the Mount of Olives (John 7:53-8:1).

Thought Questions

1. The apostle John, who wrote the Gospel of John, stated that Jesus had not yet been “glorified” (John 7:39). Did the apostle John mean that Jesus had not yet risen from the dead, or that Jesus had not yet

- ascended to the Father, or that Jesus had not yet been seated at God's right hand, or all three? What do you think John meant?
2. The temple guards did not arrest Jesus on this occasion (John 7:44). What reason did they give for not bringing Him in? What was it, do you suppose, about Jesus' manner of speaking (or about His message) that made it difficult for them to take Him into custody?
 3. Why did Nicodemus speak up (John 7:51-52) for Jesus? Do you think that He had been impressed with Jesus earlier when they had spoken together (John 3:1-21)? Do you think that Nicodemus was, at the time that he defended Jesus, a believer in Jesus?

56

Woman Caught in Adultery

John 8:1-11

At dawn on the day following the Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus went up again to the temple courts in Jerusalem. He went there in spite of the fact that the religious rulers had, on the previous day, sent temple guards to arrest Him.

When He arrived at the temple, all the people there gathered around Him; and He sat down to teach them. While He was there, some of the teachers of the Law and some of the Pharisees brought in a woman that had been caught in the act of adultery. They made her stand before everyone and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law [Lev 20:10], Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say" (John 8:4-5 NIV)?

Jesus was aware that they were trying to trap Him with this question in order to find something they could use against Him (John 8:6). So Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with His finger. All the while the lawyers and Pharisees kept on questioning Him. At last He straightened up and said to them, "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her" (John 8:7 NIV).

Then He stooped down again and continued writing on the ground. As He did so, those who heard what He said, began to go away. They left one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left; and the woman was still standing there (John 8:9).

Finally Jesus straightened up and asked the woman, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” (John 8:10 NIV)

She said, “No one, sir.”

Whereupon, Jesus declared, “Then neither do I condemn you. Go now and leave your life of sin” (John 8:11).

Thought Questions

1. If Jesus had told the teachers of the Law and the Pharisees to stone the woman, what accusation do you think they would have brought against Him?
2. If Jesus had told them not to stone the woman, of what do you think they would have accused Him?
3. Did Jesus treat the woman compassionately? What do you think?
4. Why did the woman's accusers leave? What do you think? Why did the older ones leave first?
5. Why did Jesus not condemn her sin? Do you think the woman left her life of sin?

57

The Light of the World

John 8:12-30

As Jesus was speaking to the people in Jerusalem on the day after the feast, He made another bold assertion about Himself, much as He had done the day before (John 7:37). This time He said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (John 8:12 NIV).

Such a statement was sure to invite opposition from the Pharisees, and it did. They responded as though they were trying Him before a court. They accused Him of having no one to back up what He was saying about Himself. They said, “Here you are, appearing as your own witness; your testimony is not valid” (John 8:13 NIV). Jesus, however, did not back down. He replied,

Even if I testify on my own behalf, my testimony is valid, for
I know where I came from and where I am going. But you
have no idea where I come from or where I am going.

John 8:14 NIV

Then Jesus said that His hecklers (John 8:15) were looking at things from a human point of view. He pointed out that He, in contrast to them, allowed God’s decisions to prevail. He said, “But if I do judge, my decisions are right, because I am not alone. I stand with the Father, who sent me” (John 8:16 NIV).

Jesus granted that the testimony of two people is necessary for a matter to prevail in court. He said, “In your own Law it is written that the testimony of two men is valid” (John 8:17 NIV).

He reminded them, however, that He did have two witnesses. He said, “I am one who testifies for myself; my other witness is the Father, who sent me” (John 8:18 NIV).

As a result of this statement, they asked Jesus, “Where is your father” (John 8:19a)? Jesus replied, “You do not know me or my Father” (John 8:19b NIV).

He added further, “If you knew me, you would know my Father also” (John 8:19c NIV).

Jesus spoke these words while teaching at the temple, near the place where monetary offerings for the temple were laid. Amazingly, no one seized Him, in spite of the openness of His speech. They were not able to seize Him because His time had not yet come (John 8:20).

Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am going away, and you will look for me, and you will die in your sin. Where I go, you cannot come” (John 8:21 NIV).

This made some of the people ask, “Will he kill himself? Is that why he says, ‘Where I go, you cannot come?’” (John 8:22 NIV)

Jesus continued speaking in words that were truthful, but which, no doubt, seemed arrogant to His critics. He said, “You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world” (John 8:23 NIV).

Jesus sharpened His accusations even further, by saying, “I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am [the one I claim to be], you will indeed die in your sins” (John 8:24 NIV).

So they asked, “Who are you?”

He replied, “Just what I have been claiming to be all along” (John 8:25 NIV).

As if to explain why He had spoken to His accusers in such a judgmental way, Jesus said, “I have much to say in judgment of you. But he who sent me is reliable, and what I have heard from him I tell the world” (John 8:26 NIV).

Jesus then made a reference to His crucifixion, but the people may not have understood it at the time. He said,

When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know
that I am [the one I claim to be] and that I do nothing on
my own but speak just what the Father has taught me.

John 8:28 NIV

Jesus went on to say, “The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him” (John 8:29 NIV).

The teaching that Jesus did that day proved to be very fruitful; for many of the people that were listening to Him concluded that He spoke the truth, and they began to believe in Him, even as He spoke (John 8:30).

Thought Questions

1. Is it true that people that follow Jesus do not walk in darkness but have light for their life? In what way does Jesus provide light?

2. Several times Jesus used the expression “I am” in this discussion (John 8:24, 28). Do you suppose that this reminded His listeners of the words that God spoke to Moses, when God said, “I am who I am” (Exo 3:14)? Do you think that what Jesus said sounded like blasphemy to some of those people in Jerusalem? What does Jesus’ use of the expression “I am” imply to those of us who believe on Him?
3. Jesus said that He always did what pleased God (John 8:29). Do you suppose that Jesus went to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles because God indicated to Him that He should go, even though Jesus had told His brothers that He did not intend to go (John 7:8)?
4. Do you think God had communicated to Jesus that He should speak boldly in Jerusalem, in spite of the obvious danger? Do you suppose that God assured Jesus that He would protect Him on this trip to Jerusalem?
5. Do you think that Jesus always spoke the truth, even if it offended the people that heard Him? Should we do the same? How can we be sure that our assessments of people and situations are correct? Should we not be careful about expressing judgments on people?
6. Do you get the impression that the tension at this point between Jesus and the religious leaders in Jerusalem was growing?

58

The Truth Will Make You Free

John 8:31-47

As Jesus continued teaching in Jerusalem, He instructed His listeners how they could be sure that they were His disciples. He said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples” (John 8:31 NIV).

Then He told them that the truth He was teaching, would set them free. He said, “Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:32 NIV).

Those of Jesus' listeners who were rejecting His teaching retorted, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free" (John 8:33 NIV)?

It was not true that the children of Israel had never been slaves. Some of Jesus' listeners had forgotten that their forefathers were slaves in Egypt and that they themselves were slaves to sins? So Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin" (John 8:34 NIV).

If they persisted in being slaves to sin, it would cancel their right to be in the family of God. Jesus said, "Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever" (John 8:35 NIV).

God's Son, however, can set people free from sin. Jesus said, "So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed" (John 8:36 NIV).

Jesus conceded that His listeners were physical descendants of Abraham, saying, "I know you are Abraham's descendants" (John 8:37a NIV). He pointed out, however, "Yet you are ready to kill me, because you have no room for my word" (John 8:37b NIV).

If they had not been so occupied with doing what their father (the devil) told them to do, they would have listened to Jesus' description of what He had seen in God's presence. Jesus said, "I am telling you what I have seen in the Father's presence, and you do what you have heard from your father" (John 8:38 NIV).

Still, the people maintained ardently, "Abraham is our father." Whereupon, Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would do the things Abraham did" (John 8:39 RSV). Jesus then pointed out in what way they were not acting like Abraham's children. He said, "As it is, you are determined to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. Abraham did not do such things" (John 8:40 NIV). He accused them of acting more like children of someone other than Abraham. He said, "You are doing the things your own father does" (John 8:41 NIV).

At that, they changed their statement as to whose children they were. They protested, "We are not illegitimate children. The only Father we have is God himself" (John 8:41).

Then Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now I am here. I have not come on my own; but he sent me” (John 8:42).

Jesus’ hecklers could not understand what He was talking about. Could it be that there was something wrong with their hearing? Jesus asked them, “Why is my language not clear to you? Is it because you are unable to hear what I say?” (John 8:43 RWT)

Jesus then identified their real father. He accused them of being the devil’s children and of wanting to carry out the devil’s desire. He said,

You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

John 8:44 NIV

Not only were Jesus’ allegations extremely distasteful to them, but He was speaking the truth (and not lies, which they preferred); and that, in itself, made it difficult for them to believe in Him. He said to them, “Yet because I tell the truth, you do not believe me!” (John 8:45 NIV)

There was nothing in what Jesus had said, or had done, that could excuse them for not believing what He said. He asked, “Can any of you prove me guilty of sin? If I am telling the truth, why don’t you believe me?” (John 8:46 NIV)

Their unwillingness to accept what Jesus was saying showed clearly to whom they belonged. He said, “He who belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God” (John 8:47 NIV).

Thought Questions

1. How can Jesus’ true disciples be identified? See John 8:31.
2. Jesus said that the truth sets people free (John 8:32). How does it set people free?

3. Jesus accused those people of wanting to carry out the desire of the devil (John 8:44)? Are there people today who want to carry out the devil's desire? How can we recognize such people?
4. Jesus said that the devil is a liar (John 8:44). Do you think the devil is still propagating lies? How can a person tell the difference between the truth and a lie?
5. Did anyone ever prove Jesus guilty of sin? See Heb 4:15.

59

Before Abraham Was, I Am

John 8:48-59

The strong debate between Jesus and His adversaries in Jerusalem continued. His adversaries insulted Him by asking Him, "Aren't we right in saying that you are a Samaritan and demon-possessed?" (John 8:48 NIV)

Jesus answered, "I have not a demon, but I honor my Father and you dishonor me" (John 8:49 RSV). Jesus expanded upon this by saying, "I am not seeking glory for myself; but there is one who seeks it, and he is the judge" (John 8:50 NIV). Then Jesus challenged them with an important assertion. He said, "I tell you the truth, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death" (John 8:51 NIV).

His adversaries did not understand how a person could avoid seeing death. They exclaimed, "Now we know that you are demon-possessed! Abraham died and so did the prophets, yet you say that if anyone keeps your word, he will never taste death" (John 8:52 NIV). Then they asked, "Are you greater than our father Abraham? He died, and so did the prophets. Who do you think you are" (John 8:53 NIV)?

They felt that Jesus was exalting Himself; but they were wrong, for Jesus did not need to exalt Himself. God would do that; so He said, "If I glorify myself, my glory means nothing. My Father, whom you claim as your God, is the one who glorifies me" (John 8:54 NIV).

Then Jesus laid His finger on the basic problem of His adversaries. He accused them of not knowing God. He said, “Though you do not know him, I know him. If I said I did not, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and keep his word” (John 8:55 NIV).

Jesus spoke about things that were beyond their comprehension when He said, “Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad” (John 8:56 NIV).

That caused them to become exasperated with Jesus. They said, “You are not yet fifty years old, and you have seen Abraham!” (John 8:57 NIV)

Jesus told them next something that made them lose all restraint. He said, “I tell you the truth, before Abraham was born, I am!” (John 8:58) Jesus used the “I am” expression again, and He also claimed to have existed before Abraham. That was more than they could stand. So they picked up rocks to stone Him then and there; but Jesus evaded them (John 8:59), for His time had not yet come.

Thought Questions

1. What did Jesus mean when He said (John 8:51) that if anyone kept His word, that person would never see death?
2. In what way do you think Abraham saw Jesus’ day (John 8:56)? Did he see it by faith?
3. Why was it, do you suppose, that Abraham rejoiced at seeing Jesus’ day?
4. If Jesus was before Abraham, what does that imply about Jesus? See John 1:1-3.

60

Traditions of Men

Matthew 15:1-20; Mark 7:1-23

It was likely after Jesus returned to Galilee from Jerusalem that some of the Pharisees and scribes came from Jerusalem and gathered around

Him (Mark 7:1). They observed that His disciples were eating food without washing their hands (Mark 7:2).

Now, it was the custom of the Pharisees and other children of Israel not to eat anything when they, for example, came from the marketplace, unless they had first washed their hands in a ceremonial way (Mark 7:3-4). They also had other traditions, which they received from their elders regarding the washing of cups, pitchers, and bowls.

So the Pharisees from Jerusalem and those with them asked Jesus, "Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? They don't wash their hands before they eat" (Matt 15:2 NIV)!

This question brought forth a challenging response from Jesus. He asked the Pharisees, "And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition?" (Matt 15:3 NIV)

This challenge may have taken the Pharisees by surprise. He accused them of having let go of the commands of God and of holding to the traditions of men (Mark 7:8). He said further, "You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions!" (Mark 7:9 NIV)

Jesus was referring to the excuse that some of the Pharisees were giving for neglecting their aged parents. He reminded them of what God had said through Moses, namely, "Honor your father and mother' and 'Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death'" (Matt 15:4 NIV; Exo 20:12; Exo 21:17).

Some of them seem to have thought that if a person were to say to his father or mother, "Whatever help you may have expected to get from me is 'Corban'" (devoted to God), he could be free from helping his parents (Matt 15:5-6 and Mark 7:11-12). Concerning this, Jesus said, "Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that" (Mark 7:13 NIV).

Jesus also said,

Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: "These people honor me with their lips, but

their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.”

Mark 7:6-7 NIV; Isa 29:13

Then Jesus called the crowd to Him and explained why it is not a sin for a person to eat without washing his hands. He said,

Listen and understand. What goes into a man’s mouth does not make him ‘unclean,’ but what comes out of his mouth, that is what makes him ‘unclean.’

Matthew 15:10-11 NIV

This teaching was revolutionary. It went against what the Pharisees had been taught from childhood. So Jesus’ disciples came to Him and said, “Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this” (Matt 15:12)?

Jesus, however, was not perturbed that the Pharisees were offended. He said,

Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be pulled up by the roots. Leave them; they are blind guides. If a blind man leads a blind man, both will fall into a pit.

Matthew 15:13-14 NIV

Jesus then left the crowd and entered into the house (Mark 7:17), and His disciples went in with Him. Inside the house, Jesus’ disciples asked Him to explain His teaching about “clean” and “unclean” foods. Even for His disciples, this was too revolutionary to grasp immediately. So Peter thought that Jesus must have been speaking in parables. For that reason Peter requested, “Explain the parable to us.”

Then Jesus asked them, “Are you still so dull?” He also asked, “Don’t you see that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and then out of the body?” (Matt 15:17 NIV)

Then He explained,

But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these make a man 'unclean.' For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what make a man 'unclean'; but eating with unwashed hands does not make him 'unclean.'

Matthew 15:18-20 NIV

The Gospel of Mark says that with these words Jesus “declared all foods ‘clean’” (Mark 7:19 NIV). Thus, Jesus broke down the barrier between “clean” and “unclean” foods.

Thought Questions

1. Do Jesus' followers have to follow the dietary restrictions (Lev 11:1-47) of the Old Testament? See Mark 7:19.
2. Which is more important for Jesus' followers, the traditions of men or the words of Jesus?
3. Why does it make our worship of God “vain” (Mark 7:6-7) if we follow teachings and rules made by men.
4. Why was Jesus not perturbed (Matt 15:12) when His disciples told Him that the Pharisees were offended by what He had said?
5. Do “the traditions of men” still pose a problem for some of Jesus' followers today? If you answer “Yes,” then in what way do “the traditions of men” pose a problem for Jesus' followers today?

61

The Syrophenician Woman

Matthew 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30

Sometime after this, Jesus left Galilee and went north to the Canaanite region near Tyre and Sidon (Matt 15:21), on the Mediterranean Sea. Near Tyre, Jesus entered a certain house, but He did not want

anyone to know that He was there. Nevertheless, a Gentile woman, a Greek from the area where Syria and Phoenicia overlap, found out that Jesus was present.

Now, the Syrophoenician woman had a little daughter, who was possessed by an evil spirit (demon). So the woman came to Jesus and begged Him to drive the evil spirit out of her daughter. The woman cried out, “Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is suffering terribly from demon-possession” (Matt 25:22 NIV); but Jesus did not pay any attention to her.

His disciples urged him, saying, “Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us” (Matt 15:23).

Finally, however, Jesus relented and explained to the woman, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel” (Matt 15:24 NIV).

That did not deter the woman. She came and knelt before Jesus and pleaded, “Lord, help me!”

He told her, “First let the children eat all they want; it is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to their dogs” (Mark 7:27 NIV).

Even this harsh sounding rebuff did not stop the woman. She answered, “Yes, Lord, but even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs that fall from their masters’ table” (Matt 15:27; Mark 7:28).

After she said this, Jesus answered her, “O woman, your faith is great; be it done for you as you wish” (Matt 15:28 NASB). Then Jesus added, “For such a reply, you may go; the demon has left your daughter.” (Mark 7:29 NIV) From that very hour, the woman’s daughter was healed. When the woman got home, she found her child lying on the bed and the demon gone (Matt 15:28; Mark 7:30).

Thought Questions

1. Do you have any suggestions as to why Jesus at this juncture temporarily left off working in Galilee? If you have any suggestions, please share them.

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2. Jesus was at first gruff with the Syrophenician woman. Why did He not want to help her? What do you think?
 3. What made Jesus change His mind about helping this woman? What can we learn from her words (Mark 7:28)?
 4. Was this the first time that Jesus had healed a Gentile? See Matthew 8:28-34?
 5. Jesus said that God had sent Him only to the “lost sheep of the house of Israel?” What did that mean?
 6. Did God have a plan for helping Gentiles? See Eph 3:1-6. What are God’s plans for Gentiles?

***JESUS' TWO
TRIPS TO THE
DECAPOLIS,
INTERSPERSED
WITH A SHORT
STAY IN GALILEE***

62

A Deaf and Dumb Man in the Region of the Decapolis

Mark 7:31-37

Jesus left the area of Tyre and Sidon and came to the region of the Decapolis (Mark 7:31), which lay east and south of the Sea of Galilee. Once He was there, people brought Him a deaf man, who could hardly talk. The people begged Jesus to place His hand on the man in order to heal him (Mark 7:32).

In response, Jesus took the deaf man aside, away from the crowd, and put His fingers in the man's ears. Then He spit and touched the man's tongue (Mark 7:33). Jesus looked up to heaven, and with a deep sigh said to the deaf man, "Ephphatha!" (Be opened!).

At that, the man's ears were opened; his tongue was loosed; and he began to speak plainly (Mark 7:35). Following this, Jesus ordered them not to tell anyone.

However, the more He told them not to tell, the more they kept telling people about it (Mark 7:36). The people from the Decapolis were overwhelmed with amazement when they saw the mute speaking, the crippled made well, the lame walking, and the blind seeing. They said, "He has done everything well; He even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak" (Mark 7:37).

Thought Questions

1. Did there seem to be any type of illness that Jesus could not heal? What do you think? What do you conclude about Jesus from your answer?
2. The people that brought the deaf and dumb man to Jesus wanted Jesus to heal the man by placing His hands on him, but Jesus did something different. He spit and touched the man's tongue. In that way, He healed the man's ears (and the man's tongue). The question

is, did Jesus seem to have a set ritual for healing people? Did He heal in a specific way, as, for example, by putting His hands on people? What do you think?

3. Jesus did not want the people in the Decapolis to tell others that He had healed the deaf and dumb man? Why did He not want them to tell others? What do you think?

63

Feeding the 4,000

Matthew 15:29-39; Mark 8:1-10

After some days spent near the Decapolis (Ten Cities), Jesus again walked along the Sea of Galilee, but in an area that was thinly populated. He went up on a hillside and sat down (Matt 15:29), and many people started coming to Him, as they usually did. They brought their lame, their blind, their crippled, their mute, and many others and laid them at His feet; and He healed them (Matt 15:30). The gospel of Matthew says, "The people were amazed when they saw the mute speaking, the crippled made well, the lame walking, and the blind seeing; and they praised the God of Israel" (Matt 15:31).

Since there was no place nearby to get food, Jesus called His disciples to Him and said to them,

I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. If I send them home hungry, they will collapse on the way, because some of them have come a long distance.

Mark 8:2-3 NIV

His disciples responded, "Where could we get enough bread in this remote place to feed such a crowd" (Matt 15:33 NIV)?

Jesus asked, "How many loaves do you have?"

"Seven," they replied, "and a few small fish" (Matt 15:34).

Then Jesus told the people to sit down on the ground, and He took the seven loaves and the fish. When He had given thanks, He broke them and gave them to the disciples. They, in turn, gave them to the people (Matt 15:36); and they all ate and were satisfied. When they had finished eating, the disciples picked up seven baskets full of broken pieces that were left over (Matt 15:37). That day, four thousand men had eaten, not counting women and children (Matt 15:38).

After Jesus had sent the crowd away, He got into the boat with His disciples and went to the vicinity of Magadan (Matt 15:39). The Gospel of Mark calls the place “Dalmanutha” (Mark 8:10). It is thought to have been near the town of Tiberias, on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee.

Thought Questions

1. Do you get the impression that Jesus’ notoriety as a healer had spread far and wide?
2. Do you get the impression that Jesus’ healing ministry was rapidly supplanting His teaching ministry? Do you think Jesus was content to spend His time primarily with healing people? Please explain.
3. What motivated Jesus to feed the people on this occasion? See Mark 8:2.
4. Jesus fed 4,000 men on this occasion. How many people do you think He may have fed on this occasion, including women and children?
5. Why did Jesus provide food for people only twice (so far as we know)? What do you think? Why did He not provide food on a continuing basis?

64

The Leaven of the Pharisees

Matthew 16:1-12; Mark 8:11-21

Many of the Pharisees and Sadducees had come to the conclusion that Jesus was not the Messiah, and some of them came to Galilee to try to trip Him up with questions. Intending this, they asked Him to show them a sign from heaven (Matt 16:1).

Jesus had already done many wonderful and miraculous things, from which the Pharisees and Sadducees could have known that Jesus was the Messiah. Jesus, therefore, found it strange that they could not recognize that He was the Messiah. He said to them,

When evening comes, you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red,' and in the morning, 'Today it will be stormy, for the sky is red and overcast.'

Matthew 16:2-3a NIV

They could forecast the weather but they could not recognize that the days of the Messiah were upon them. He said, "You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times" (Matt 16:3b NIV).

Instead of performing a miracle, as the Pharisees and Sadducees requested, Jesus gave them the same answer that He had given earlier when some of them had asked for a sign (Matt 12:39-40). He said, "A wicked and adulterous generation looks for a miraculous sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah" (Matt 16:4 NIV).

Jesus and His disciples then got into the boat and left that place and went across the Sea of Galilee (Matt 16:5). Those of His disciples, who were responsible for the food, forgot to take bread along. The rest of the disciples were, apparently, disappointed that food had been forgotten. As they were discussing it among themselves, Jesus said to them, "Be careful; be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees, of the

Sadducees, and of Herod” (Matt 16:6).

The disciples heard what Jesus said, but they were not sure what He meant. As they were discussing this, they surmised that Jesus was talking about bread when He warned about “the yeast of the Pharisees” (Matt 16:7). Jesus became aware of their discussions, and chided them for doubting that God would take care of them. He asked,

Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not see or understand? Are your hearts hardened? Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear? And don’t you remember?

Mark 8:17-18 NIV

What was it that Jesus wanted them to remember? He explained, “When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?” (Mark 8:19 NIV)

“Seven,” they replied.

Then He said, “How is it you don’t understand that I was not talking to you about bread? But be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees” (Matt 16:11 NIV).

The disciples, then, understood that Jesus was not talking about the yeast that is used in baking bread but about the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees (Matt 16:12).

Thought Questions

1. What evidence could the Pharisees and Sadducees have seen, if they had cared to see it, that could have convinced them that the Messiah had come and that the kingdom of God was near?
2. Was it wrong for the Pharisees and Sadducees to ask for a sign? Is it all right for people to ask for a sign from heaven today? Do we need a sign from heaven to show us the right way? In what way is “the sign of Jonah” a sign also for us today?
3. What is the “yeast” (Matt 16:6,12) against which Jesus warned? Were the Pharisees and other religious leaders preoccupied with material

things? Did they doubt that God takes care of His people? What did the Pharisees teach by their actions?

65

The Blind Man at Bethsaida

Mark 8:22-26

It would not be fair to say that Jesus had abandoned Galilee, but the evangelization of Galilee seemed no longer to have been His main concern. Instead, He and His disciples were spending a lot of time in their boat, crossing the Sea of Galilee, and landing here and there. Once again they came to Bethsaida (Mark 8:22), a town thought to have been on the north Shore of the Sea of Galilee.

At Bethsaida, people brought Jesus a blind man and begged Jesus to touch him. So Jesus took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village. There, He spat on the man's eyes and put His hands on him. Then Jesus asked, "Do you see anything?" (Mark 8:23)?

The man looked up and said, "I see people; they look like trees walking around" (Mark 8:24 NIV).

So Jesus put His hands on the man's eyes. At that, the man's eyes were opened and his sight was restored, so that he saw everything clearly. Then Jesus sent the man home, saying, "Don't go back into the village" (Matt 8:26).

Thought Questions

1. Do you have any ideas as to why Jesus was no longer concentrating on evangelizing Galilee? Please share your ideas. Had He already won a lot of followers in Galilee? What do you think?
2. What do you think may have gone through the mind of the blind man when he first found that he could see?
3. Jesus told the man to go straight home and not to go into the village? Why did Jesus tell the man that? What is your thinking?

4. Do you have any thoughts as to why Jesus first spat on the man's eyes, instead of touching him, as He was requested to do? Did it matter how Jesus healed people? Could He have healed without even touching the man if He had cared to do so?

66

Simon Peter's Confession

*Matthew 16:13-20; Mark 8:27-30;
Luke 9:18-21*

Jesus started out with His disciples once again for the Decapolis. He was headed for the villages near the city of Caesarea Philippi (Mark 8:27). As they were underway (Mark 8:27), Jesus paused in route in order to pray (Luke 9:18). At the place where they paused, Jesus asked His disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" (Matt 16:13 NIV)

The disciples understood (correctly) that Jesus was speaking of Himself when He spoke of the "Son of Man." So they answered Him, "Some say you are John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, that one of the prophets of long ago has come back to life" (Luke 9:19).

Then Jesus asked them, "But what about you? Who do you say that I am?"

Then Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God!" (Matt 16:16 NIV)

After Simon Peter had made this tremendous statement, Jesus pronounced a blessing upon him. Jesus told Simon Peter that God Himself had revealed this truth to him (Peter). Jesus said, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven" (Matt 16:17 NIV).

It was significant that Simon, to whom Jesus had given the name "Peter" (which means a stone), had arrived early at this bedrock truth, namely, that Jesus was the Christ (Messiah). Jesus said, "And I tell you

that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church,...” (Matt 16:18a NIV).

The Greek word for “Peter” is *petros*. The Greek word, however, that is used in Matthew 16:18 for “rock” is *petra*. The difference between *petros* and *petra* is that *petros* represents a rock that is small enough to be thrown, whereas *petra* represents immovable bedrock.

Notice that Jesus announced in the above verse (Matt 16:18) that He was planning to build a “church.” He was not thinking of a building to be constructed of wood, or of stone, or of some other building material. He was thinking an ingathering of people; for the Greek word *ekklesia*, which is found in Matthew 16:18, and which is translated “church,” means an assembly of people.

From this time forward it became clear that the kingdom of heaven was not to be a nebulous thing but to be something that had a definite form. It was to be a gathering of people. Jesus had said many times that the kingdom of heaven (or kingdom of God) was near. Both He and John the Baptist had been preparing people to receive the kingdom of heaven when it came.

Jesus knew that the church would face resistance; but He predicted that it would be triumphant in spite of resistance. He said, “...and the gates of Hades will not overcome it” (Matt 16:18b NIV). Although Jesus did not base His church on Simon Peter’s person, He did grant Peter and the other apostles (John 20:23) the privilege of helping to introduce the church. They were to speak for God after Jesus was no longer on earth. Jesus promised Peter,

I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever
you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever
you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

Matthew 16:19 NIV

Jesus cautioned His disciples to tell no one that He was the Christ (Matt 16:20; Luke 9:21). They were permitted, of course, to announce it later, when the time came.

Thought Questions

1. Was this the first time that Jesus identified Himself as the “Son of Man?” See, for example, Matthew 8:20.
2. Are you surprised that the kingdom of heaven (or kingdom of God) was to be a gathering of people, a church? Did you expect the kingdom of heaven to be something different from that? Are you disappointed? Please explain.
3. Was the church founded on Simon Peter? See 1 Cor 3:11.
4. Did Jesus appoint Peter (in Matthew 16:18) to be the first pope? Was the apostle Peter to be over the other apostles in some administrative way? See Matthew 20:25-26. Was Peter supposed to be the head of the church? See Eph 5:23.
5. Jesus gave the “keys of the kingdom” to Peter (Matt 16:19). What was it that Peter was to unlock and to lock with the keys?
6. To whom does Jesus’ church belong? Whose name should it wear?

67

His Death and Resurrection Foretold

*Matthew 16:21-28; Mark 8:31-9:1;
Luke 9:22-27*

After Simon Peter confessed his belief that Jesus was the Christ (Messiah), Jesus explained to Peter and to all the apostles that He (Jesus) must go to Jerusalem, where the elders, chief priests, and teachers of the Law would reject Him. He said that He would have to suffer many things at the hands of the leaders and be put to death. He also said that He would be raised to life on the third day (Matt 16:21; Mark 8:31; Luke 9:22).

This was not the first time that Jesus had made reference to His death and resurrection (Matt 12:40; John 2:19-21); but this time, He told His disciples plainly (Mark 8:32) what would happen.

This upset Simon Peter so much that he took Jesus aside and said to Him, "Never, Lord! This shall never happen to you!"

Jesus then turned; and looking toward the disciples, He said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men" (Matt 16:23 NIV).

After that, Jesus called the crowd to Him (Mark 8:34) and repeated for them some of what He had told His twelve apostles before He sent them out on their first mission journey (Matt 10:38). He said, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Matt 16:24 NIV).

This may sound as though Jesus were asking something unreasonable of His followers; but it was not unreasonable, because self-sacrificial living is the only reasonable way to live. Jesus explained, "For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it" (Mark 8:35 NIV).

Many people seem to think that the most important things in life are health, power, prosperity, and pleasure; but Jesus knew otherwise. He asked, "What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matt 16:26 NIV)

Jesus wanted His people to be aware of what will happen at the end of time. He said, "For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done" (Matt 16:27 NIV).

Jesus knew that some of His followers might turn aside from following Him and become ashamed of Him and of His words. He warned that if that should happen, He (Jesus) would be ashamed of such people at the end of time. He said,

If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous

and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels.

Mark 8:38 NIV

Jesus assured His listeners that the kingdom of God (the church) would be introduced in the lifetime of some of them. He said, "I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:27 NIV).

Thought Questions

1. Why did Jesus call Simon Peter "Satan" (Matt 16:23)? How was Peter a stumbling block to Jesus?
2. Does Jesus ask people to bear a cross today? Name a few of the "crosses" that people are sometimes called upon to bear.
3. Please explain how a person that wants to save his life might lose it (Matt 16:25). Please, give an example if you can.
4. Please explain how a person that is willing to lose his life for Jesus' sake, and for the gospel's, might save it. Give an example if you can.
5. The kingdom of God (the church) had, obviously, not yet come into existence when Jesus said, "Some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God (Luke 9:27) come with power" (Mark 9:1). When was the kingdom of God (the church) introduced "with power?" See Acts 1:6-8; 2:1-36.
6. Jesus will return (Mark 8:48) in His Father's glory and with His holy angels. When will that happen? Will it be at the end of time? See Matthew 24:30-31.

***THE CLOSING
DAYS OF JESUS'
MINISTRY IN
GALILEE***

68

The Transfiguration

Matthew 17:1-13; Mark 9:2-13; Luke 9:28-36

One week after Simon Peter confessed that He believed that Jesus was the Messiah, Jesus led three of His disciples up on a high mountain to pray. Peter, James, and John were alone there with Jesus. They were very sleepy and began to doze off. As Jesus was praying, His appearance changed (Luke 9:29). His face began to shine like the sun (Matt 17:2); and His clothes became as bright as light; and two men appeared with Him in glorious splendor (Luke 9:30-31). Their clothes were whiter than anyone on earth could bleach them (Mark 9:3).

When the three disciples were fully awake, they saw Jesus' radiance, and they also saw Moses and Elijah standing with Him (Luke 9:32). Moses and Elijah were talking with Jesus about His death, which would take place very soon at Jerusalem (Luke 9:31).

When Moses and Elijah were on the point of leaving (Luke 9:33), Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters--one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah" (Matt 17:4 NIV). Peter was so frightened that he did not know what he was talking about (Luke 9:33); and James and John were frightened, too (Mark 9:6).

While Peter was still speaking, a bright cloud began to overshadow them (Matt 17:5); and they became even more frightened as the cloud came over them (Luke 9:34). A voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, whom I have chosen; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!" (Matt 17:5; Mark 9:7; Luke 9:35 RWT)

When the disciples heard the voice, they fell face down on the ground and were terrified (Matt 17:6), but Jesus came to them, touched them, and said, "Get up, and do not be afraid" (Matt 17:7 NASB).

When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus. As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus instructed them to tell no one what

they had seen until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead (Mark 9:9). So they kept the matter to themselves (Luke 9:36). They discussed it among themselves, however, what Jesus could have meant when He spoke of His “rising from the dead.”

The thought of their having seen Moses and Elijah, prompted the three disciples to ask Jesus, “Why then do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first” (Matt 17:10 NIV)? They were referring to a prophecy that Malachi had made (Mal 4:5-6). Jesus replied to them, “To be sure, Elijah does come first, and restores all things” (Mark 9:12a NIV).

Jesus then raised one of the central issues of the Bible, by asking them, “Why then is it written that the Son of Man must suffer much and be rejected?” (Mark 9:12b NIV)

Jesus did not immediately give an answer to that question; but later on, His answer to it became clear from what He did and what He said. Jesus resumed talking about Elijah. He said, “But I tell you, Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but have done to him everything they wished” (Matt 17:12a NIV).

The disciples understood that He was talking about John the Baptist. It seems that the things that happened to John the Baptist were an indication of what would happen to Jesus. Jesus said, “In the same way the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands” (Matt 17:12b NIV).

Thought Questions

1. The voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, whom I have chosen; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him” (Matt 17:5; Mark 9:7; Luke 9:35)! Is it more important, today, for people to listen to Jesus than it is for them to listen to Moses and the Prophets of the Old Testament? What do you think?
2. What do you think the significance is of the transfiguration of Jesus? What did His transfiguration show?
3. The Old Testament foretold that a man called “Elijah” would come (Mal 4:5-6). Jesus confirmed that John the Baptist was the “Elijah” of

whom Malachi had spoken (Matt 17:11-13) and that he (John the Baptist) would “restore all things” (Mark 9:12). What was it that John the Baptist began to restore? See Luke 1:16-17.

4. Does Jesus also have a part in restoring all things? Has the restoration of all things now been completed? See Acts 3:21.
5. It is written in the Old Testament that the Messiah would suffer much and be rejected? See Psa 22:6; Isa 53:3; and Dan 9:26. Jesus asked, “Why then is it written that the Son of Man must suffer much and be rejected” (Mark 9:12b NIV). What do you think the answer to Jesus’ question is?

69

The Boy with an Unclean Spirit

Matthew 17:14-21; Mark 9:14-29;

Luke 9:37-43

The day after (Luke 9:37) Jesus was transfigured, He came down from the mountain with Peter, James, and John. They came to the place where the rest of His disciples were waiting.

Jesus saw the waiting disciples being besieged by scribes, who were arguing with them. He also saw a large crowd of people surrounding them (Mark 9:14). As soon as the people in the crowd saw Jesus, they became excited and rushed to greet Him (Mark 9:15). Jesus asked them what they had been arguing about with His disciples (Mark 9:16).

A man from the crowd approached Jesus, bowed down (Matt 17:14), and called out a plea for Jesus to look at his only son (Luke 9:38). The man said, “Teacher, I brought you my son. He is possessed by an evil spirit (demon), which has robbed him of His speech. Whenever the spirit seizes him, it throws him to the ground; and he foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth, and becomes rigid” (Mark 9:17-18a). The man continued, “The spirit scarcely ever leaves him and is destroying him”

(Luke 9:39b). The man added, "I begged your disciples to drive it out, but they could not" (Luke 9:40).

Jesus seemed disappointed, possibly because His disciples could not heal the boy, or possibly because the boy's father did not have much faith. Jesus said, "O unbelieving generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him to Me" (Mark 9:19 RWT).

Then they brought the boy to Jesus. When the evil spirit saw Jesus, it threw the boy into a convulsion. The boy fell to the ground and rolled around, foaming at the mouth (Mark 9:20). Jesus asked the boy's father, "How long has this been happening to him?" (Mark 9:21 NKJV)

The man answered that it had been happening since the boy's childhood. The man added, "Often the evil spirit has thrown him into the fire or into the water to destroy him. Have compassion on us and help us, if you can" (Mark 9:22).

Jesus did not seem to be pleased with the words, "If you can," which the man used. These words implied that the man did not fully believe that Jesus was able to drive out the spirit, so Jesus said to the man, "Everything is possible for him who believes" (Mark 9:23 NIV).

The boy's father was aware that his faith was weak, so he exclaimed, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!" (Mark 9:24 NIV)

While people were still coming to Jesus, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "Deaf and dumb spirit, I command you, come out of him and enter him no more!" (Mark 9:25)

Then the spirit cried out, convulsed the boy greatly, and came out of him. Afterwards, the boy looked so weak that many people said, "He is dead;" but Jesus took the boy by the hand and lifted him up. At that, the boy stood up (Mark 9:27) and Jesus gave him back to his father. Everyone that witnessed this was amazed at the greatness of God, and they marveled at all the things that Jesus was doing (Luke 9:43).

After Jesus had gone indoors with His disciples, the disciples asked Him privately why they could not drive out the evil spirit (Mark 9:28). Jesus replied,

Because you have so little faith. I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.

Matthew 17:20 NIV

Jesus added, however, “This kind can come out only by prayer” (Mark 9:29 NIV).

Some versions say, “This kind can come out only by prayer and fasting.” However, the words “and fasting” are not found in this verse in the oldest Greek manuscripts.

Thought Questions

1. Jesus said, “Everything is possible for him who believes” (Mark 9:23 NIV). Did Jesus mean that any person can perform miracles of healing, if he believes that he can? Or did He mean that He, Jesus, was especially willing to heal people who had faith in Him? What do you think?
2. When Jesus said to the apostles, “Nothing will be impossible for you” (Matt 17:20), did He mean that every person can do anything, no matter how great, as long as he believes he can? Or did Jesus mean that the apostles could do anything that they had enough faith to do? What do you think?

70

Jesus Foretold His Death Again, and the Temple Tax

*Matthew 17:22-27; Mark 9:30-32;
Luke 9:43b-45*

Jesus and His disciples left the place where Jesus had healed the boy that had an unclean spirit, and Jesus and His disciples passed through

Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone to know that He was there, because He was spending all the time He could teaching His disciples (Mark 9:30-31). He was preparing them for what would happen at Jerusalem. He said to them, "The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise" (Mark 9:31 NIV).

The disciples did not grasp the full significance of what Jesus was saying, because it was hidden from them (Luke 9:45); and they were afraid to ask Him about it (Mark 9:32).

After Jesus and his disciples arrived in Capernaum, the collectors of the two-drachma tax came to Simon Peter and asked, "Doesn't your teacher pay the temple tax" (Matt 17:24)?

Peter replied, "Yes, He does."

When Peter went into the house where Jesus was, Jesus spoke first. Jesus knew that Peter had been asked for the temple tax, even before Peter mentioned it. Jesus asked Simon Peter, "What do you think, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth take customs or taxes, from their sons or from strangers?" (Matt 17:25 NKJV)

Peter answered, "From strangers" (Matt 17:26a), which was the correct answer, for kings in those days exacted customs from merchants and travelers passing through their lands.

So Jesus said to Peter,

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.

Matthew 17:26b-27 NKJV

Thought Questions

1. The disciples had difficulty understanding (Mark 9:32) that Jesus was going to be put to death in Jerusalem and be raised again after three days. Why was it difficult for them to understand this? What do you think?

2. In what way have the nations of the earth changed their taxation policies since Jesus' day?
3. God spoke of Jesus as "My Son" (Matt 17:5); and Jesus spoke of the temple as "My father's house" (Luke 2:49). Since Jesus is God's Son, and since the temple belongs to His Father, does that imply that Jesus should be free of having to pay the temple-tax? What do you think?
4. If Jesus was not obligated to pay the temple tax, why did He pay it? What can we learn from His having paid it?

71

Who Is the Greatest? and "He Who Is Not Against Us Is for Us"

Matthew 18:1-5; Mark 9:33-41; Luke 9:46-50

When Jesus and His disciples were in the house in Capernaum, Jesus asked them, "What were you arguing about on the road?" (Mark 9:33 NIV) They had been arguing about who was the greatest among them (Mark 9:34); but they were, apparently, too ashamed to give Jesus an immediate answer. However, Jesus knew what they had been arguing about (Luke 9:47); so He sat down and called the Twelve to Him and said to them, "If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all" (Mark 9:35 NIV).

Finally, they got around to asking Jesus, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt 18:1)?

In response, Jesus called a little child into their presence (Matt 18:2). He then took the child into His arms (Mark 9:36) and said to them, "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matt 18:3 NIV). Then Jesus said, "Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest

in the kingdom of heaven” (Matt 18:4 NIV). Continuing to speak about the child, He said,

Whoever welcomes this little child in my name welcomes me;
and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me.
For he who is least among you all— he is the greatest.

Luke 9:48 NIV

The disciples seemed to be anxious to change the subject. So John, the brother of James, spoke up and said, “Master, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name, and we forbade him because he does not follow with us” (Luke 9:49 NKJV).

Jesus did not go into the question of whether or not the man, whom the disciples saw, should have been trying to cast out demons in Jesus' name. Instead, Jesus seemed more interested in correcting the attitude that John had expressed. Concerning the man, Jesus said, “Do not forbid him, for no one who works a miracle in My name can soon afterward speak evil of Me. For he who is not against us is on our side” (Mark 9:39-40 NKJV).

Jesus told His disciples that if anyone aided them in any way, that person would be rewarded for having helped them. He said, “I tell you the truth, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to Christ will certainly not lose his reward” (Mark 9:41 NIV).

Thought Questions

1. Why is it not possible for a person to enter the kingdom of heaven (Matt 18:3) unless he becomes like a little child? What do you think?
2. Why must a person humble himself before he can become great in the kingdom of heaven (Matt 18:4)? If a person succeeds in humbling himself, is he then at liberty to lord it over his brothers and sisters?
3. What did Jesus mean when He said, “Whoever welcomes this little child in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me” (Luke 9:48 NIV)?
4. Jesus told His disciples not to hinder a person that cast out demons

- in His name, even if that person did not follow with Jesus' disciples (Luke 9:50). What can we learn from this?
5. How can Jesus statement in Mark 9:40 ("For he who is not against us is on our side") be reconciled with Jesus' statement in Matthew 12:30 ("He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters")? Was Jesus speaking about the same person in both verses? Was He speaking about the devil in Matthew 12:29-30?
 6. What did Jesus mean when He said, "Anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to Christ will not lose his reward" (Mark 9:41)?

72

Causing Little Ones to Sin

Matthew 18:6-10; Mark 9:42-50

Jesus had just called a little child into His presence (Matt 18:2) and told His disciples that they must become like children (Matt 18:3). Following that, Jesus spoke of the punishment that is coming upon those that cause little ones to sin. He said,

But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.

Matthew 18:6 NIV

Jesus then spoke a "woe" over the world because of the many temptations that cause people to sin. He said, "Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to sin!" (Matt 18:7a NIV) Sadly, temptations to sin are in this world unavoidable. Jesus spoke a "woe" also over the individual that sets temptations, which cause other people to sin. He said, "Such things must come, but woe to the man through whom they come!" (Matt 18:7b NIV)

Jesus advised His followers to get rid of everything that causes them to sin. He said, "If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out" (Mark 9:43 NIV).

Similarly, He said, "And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell" (Mark 9:45 NIV).

In addition, He said, "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 than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell..." (Mark 9:47 NIV).

Jesus then spoke further about hell. He said (quoting Isa 66:24) that hell is a place, "where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched" (Mark 9:48 NIV).

He added, "Everyone will be salted with fire" (Mark 9:49 NIV).

These statements seem to refer to the persistence and severity of punishment in hell. Next, Jesus said, "Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with each other" (Mark 9:50 NIV).

Finally, speaking again of the "little ones," Jesus said, "See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven" (Matt 18:10 NIV).

Thought Questions

1. Was Jesus speaking only of getting rid of a hand, a foot, or an eye (Mark 9:43-47; Matthew 18:9)? Or was He illustrating how drastically a person ought to get rid of everything that causes that person to sin?
2. Can a person that has caused a child to sin find forgiveness? Can a person that has caused some adult to sin find forgiveness? What do you think? What can that person do to find forgiveness?
3. The angels of the "little ones" "always see the face" (Matt 18:10) of God in heaven? How is that a reason not to "look down on" the "little ones" (Matt 18:10)? What do you think?

4. This was not the first time (Mark 9:50) that Jesus spoke about salt losing its saltiness. He had spoken about it in Matthew 5:13 and He would speak about it again in Luke 14:34. What did Jesus mean when He said (Mark 9:50), “Have salt in yourselves and be at peace with each other?”

73

Parable of a Lost Sheep and Dealing With a Brother or Sister Who Sins

Matthew 18:11-20

Jesus warned His disciples not to look down on any of the little ones who believe on Him (Matt 18:10). Coming to the thought that God is interested in saving everyone, Jesus said, “For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost” (Matt 18:11 NKJV). (The thought expressed in Matthew 18:11 does not appear at this point in some manuscripts. It does appear, however, in Matthew 9:13 and Luke 19:10.)

To illustrate the importance of each person, Jesus told a version His parable about a man that owned a hundred sheep and lost one. He said,

What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off?

Matthew 18:12 NIV

Then Jesus said, “And if he finds it, I tell you the truth, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off” (Matt 18:13 NIV). Jesus explained the message of His parable, by saying, “In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost” (Matt 18:14 NIV).

Jesus then gave some practical advice about retrieving a lost brother. He said, "If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over" (Matt 18:15 NIV).

Jesus, next, told what a member of the church should do, if a brother that has offended him, refuses to listen to his admonition. He said, "But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses'" (Matt 18:16 NIV).

Jesus explained how the church, which He planned to establish, could be called upon to help resolve disagreements among brethren. Jesus said,

If he refuses to listen to them [the witnesses], tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

Matthew 18:17 NIV

From this it becomes clear that God respects the decisions, which a local congregation makes with regards to withholding fellowship from the unrighteous brother, who refuses to acknowledge his fault. Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven" (Matt 18:18 NIV).

Thus we see that a local congregation of Jesus' followers can, in a sense, "bind" and "loose;" for what a congregation lays before the Father in prayer, and what it decides upon, influences the Father. Jesus said, "Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven" (Matt 18:19 NIV).

The respect that God has for the decisions that a congregation makes, is an indication of how important congregations are in God's sight. Congregations are important also because Jesus is present in their gatherings. Jesus said, "For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them" (Matt 18:20 NIV).

Thought Questions

1. What can we learn from the parable of the shepherd that went out looking for a lost sheep and was happy when he found it (Matt 18:12-14)?
2. If you feel that a brother or sister in the church has wronged you, what should you do? See Matthew 18:15.
3. What should you do if the brother or sister that has wronged you does not acknowledge that he or she has done wrong, even though you have pointed it out to him or her? See Mathew 18:16.
4. What should you do if a brother or sister, who has wronged you refuses to admit it and make it right, even though you have taken one or two other brethren with you to talk to that brother or sister? See Matthew 18:17.
5. In what way does a congregation of Jesus' followers have the right to "bind" (Matt 18:18)? Should a congregation try to "bind" by making laws on its own?
6. How can a congregation "loose"? Does a congregation have the right to "loose" any teaching or any command that Jesus gave?

74

The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant

Matt 18:21-19:1

Jesus had been teaching His disciples about how they should treat a brother that sins against them (Matt 18:15-20). Afterwards, Simon Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times" (Matt 18:21 NIV)? Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times" (Matt 18:22 NIV).

In order to give a fuller answer to Peter's question about how many

times, Jesus told a parable to illustrate the attitude that His followers should have toward each other. He said, "Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants" (Matt 18:23 NIV).

As the king began settling accounts, a servant who owed him ten thousand talents was brought before him. The servant was not able to pay. So the lord of that servant ordered him to be sold, including his wife, his children, and all that he had, in order to pay the debt. At that, the servant fell to his knees and begged, "Be patient with me, and I will pay back everything." Then his lord took pity on him, canceled the debt, and let him go.

Now, when that servant went out, he found a fellow servant that owed him only a hundred denarii. In spite of the fact that this debt was relatively small, he grabbed his fellow servant by the neck and began to choke him, saying, "Pay me what you owe me!" The unforgiving servant refused to listen to his fellow servant, even though that servant fell to his knees and begged, "Be patient with me, and I will pay you back." Instead, he went and had the fellow servant thrown into prison, until he could pay the debt (Matt 18:30).

When the other servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed. So they went to their lord and told him everything that had happened. Then the king called the servant in and 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?" (Matt 18:32-33 NKJV)

The servant's lord was so angry that he turned the servant over to the torturers, until he could pay the debt (Matt 18:34). Regarding this, Jesus said, "So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses" (Matt 18:35 NKJV).

When Jesus finished speaking these things, He brought His Galilean ministry to a close. He left Galilee and came to the area of Judea that was on the eastern side of the Jordan River (Matt 19:1). So far as we know, Jesus did not return to Galilee until after He had arisen from the dead (John 21:1).

Thought Questions

1. God wants us to forgive each other. Why does He want us to forgive each other? Will God forgive us if we do not forgive others?
2. How many times should we be willing to forgive a brother or a sister of the same fault? Should we forgive only seventy-seven times? What do you think?
3. How large was the debt, which the first servant owed? The weight of a talent is about 30 kilograms. Assuming that the debt was in gold, about how much did he owe?
4. About how large was the second servant's debt? The value of a denarius was about the wage that was paid a man for a day's labor. What do you deduce from the disparity in the size of the two debts?
5. Will God punish us for the sins that He does not forgive? What do you think?

***THE BEGINNING
OF JESUS' WORK
IN JUDEA***

75

A Samaritan Village and Would-Be Followers

Matthew 8:19-22; Luke 9:51-62

You will remember that Jesus had been going back and forth across the Sea of Galilee and making short visits beyond Galilee. You will also remember that He was avoiding the crowds and was spending much time in teaching His disciples. Finally, however, the time drew near for Him to be taken up (to heaven), so Jesus started out for Jerusalem (Luke 9:51).

He traveled south by way of Samaria, sending messengers on ahead to make arrangements for Him and the disciples. The messengers came into a Samaritan village where antagonism toward the children of Israel was high. The people of that village were unwilling to receive Jesus into their village, because He and His followers were going toward Jerusalem (Luke 9:53).

Two of Jesus' disciples, James and John, considered it to be an affront that the Samaritans would not receive them, and they asked Jesus, "Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them" (Luke 9:54 NIV)? At this, Jesus turned toward James and John and rebuked the two of them (Luke 9:55). Then Jesus and His disciples simply went on their way to another village.

As they were walking along the road, a man made a bold assertion. He said to Jesus, "I will follow you wherever you go" (Luke 9:57 NIV). [It is difficult to get the chronology of this incident sorted out, because the Gospel of Matthew (Matt 8:18-22) appears to describe it as happening earlier, but it should be remembered that the first part of Matthew is not strictly chronological.]

Matthew tells us that this man was a "scribe," that is, an expert in the Law of Moses (Matt 8:19). Jesus did not reject the scribe as a possible disciple, but He warned him that his bold commitment might involve more than he (the scribe) realized. Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes

and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head” (Luke 9:58 NIV).

From this we note that Jesus was still collecting followers. In fact, He said to another man, “Follow me.” (Luke 9:59 NIV)

This man was willing to follow Jesus, but he said, “Lord, first let me go and bury my father” (Luke 9:59).

To which Jesus replied, “Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:60 NIV).

Still another man volunteered, “I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say good-by to my family” (Luke 9:61 NIV).

To this Jesus replied, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:62).

Thought Questions

1. Why was Jesus unwilling to call down fire from heaven on a Samaritan village, as James and John had wanted (Luke 9:54)? What do you think?
2. What did Jesus imply by saying, “Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head” (Luke 9:58 NIV)?
3. Did the man, who wanted to go and bury his father, make a reasonable request? What did Jesus mean when He told the man, “Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:60 NIV)? What was the reason for the urgency? Is there still a reason for urgency?
4. Why is a person, who puts his hand to the plow and looks back not fit for the kingdom of God (Luke 9:62)? What do you think?

76

Seventy-two Sent Out and Woes to Galilean Cities

Matthew 11:20-24; Luke 10:1-16

After Jesus left Galilee, He worked in Judea in the same way He had in Galilee. He selected seventy-two (some Bibles say seventy) additional disciples and sent them out, two-by-two, to the places where He Himself intended to go (Luke 10:1).

Before Jesus sent them out, however, He repeated for them much of what He had said to the Twelve (Matt 10:1-42). He said, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field” (Luke 10:2 NIV).

Jesus warned the Seventy-two that their work could be dangerous. He said to them, “Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves” (Luke 10:3 NIV). He cautioned them, as He had cautioned the Twelve (Matt 10:9-10), to go just as they were and not take anything with them, saying, “Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road” (Luke 10:4 NIV).

Concerning where they should stay in the towns into which they would come, He said,

When you enter a house, first say, ‘Peace to this house.’ If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; if not, it will return to you. Stay in that house, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house.

Luke 10:5-7 NIV

The Seventy-two were to be content with what people gave them to eat. He said, “When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is set before you” (Luke 10:8 NIV).

In describing the work that the Seventy-two should do on their mission, He said, "Heal the sick who are there and tell them, 'The kingdom of God is near you'" (Luke 10:9 NIV).

Concerning what they should do if any town would not welcome them, He said,

But when you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and say, 'Even the dust of your town that sticks to our feet we wipe off against you. Yet be sure of this: The kingdom of God is near.'

Luke 10:10-11 NIV

It will not go well in the Judgment with any town that refused to welcome His messengers. He said, "I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town" (Luke 10:12 NIV).

He spoke of some of the towns in Galilee, which had not repented when He taught and performed miracles in them. He said,

Woe to you, Korazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you.

Luke 10:13-14 NIV

See also Matthew 11:21-22

Also concerning Capernaum, His adopted hometown, Jesus said, "And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths." (Luke 10:15 NIV; see also Matthew 11:23-24)

Then He said, "He who listens to you listens to me; he who rejects you rejects me; but he who rejects me rejects him who sent me" (Luke 10:16 NIV).

Thought Questions

1. Why did Jesus not want His disciples, whom He sent out on the two limited commissions to take any personal belongings with them?
2. Why did Jesus not want the Seventy-two to greet anyone along the road (Luke 10:4)? Does 2 Ki 4:14-29 suggest an answer to you? What does it suggest?
3. Why did Jesus not want the Twelve (Luke 9:4) or the Seventy-two (Luke 10:7) to move about from house to house? What do you think?
4. Why will it not go well with Korazin and Bethsaida in the Judgment (Luke 10:13-14)? Why will Capernaum be punished instead of praised (Luke 10:15)? What do you think?

77

The Return of the Seventy-two

Matthew 11:25-30; Luke 10:17-24

After Jesus' Seventy-two disciples had completed their mission, they returned with joy. They said to Jesus, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name" (Luke 10:17). Jesus was glad, no doubt, that demons had been subject to the Seventy-two, but He did not seem surprised by it, for He said, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven" (Luke 10:18 NIV).

Continuing to speak to the Seventy-two, He said, "I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you" (Luke 10:19 NIV). He warned them that the possession of such authority was not the true reason for them to rejoice. He said, "However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven" (Luke 10:20 NIV).

In spite of the suffering that was awaiting Him at Jerusalem, Jesus did not act sad and gloomy. He rejoiced with the very special joy that came to Him by the Holy Spirit (Luke 10:21a).

At that moment, He was overcome with an awareness of how wonderfully God had arranged things and spoke a quick prayer expressing His appreciation, saying,

I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure.

Luke 10:21b NIV

Then He gave His followers some insight into His own personal relationship with the Father. He said,

All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows who the Son is except the Father, and no one knows who the Father is except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

Luke 10:22 NIV

Jesus' close relationship with the Father made it possible for Him to issue an invitation to those that needed His help. He said, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matt 11:28 NIV).

Jesus spoke specifically about how He could help people. He said, "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Matt 11:29-30 NIV).

Jesus then turned to His disciples and reminded them privately of how blessed they were. He said,

Blessed are the eyes that see what you see. For I tell you that many prophets and kings wanted to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.

Luke 10:23-24 NIV

Thought Questions

1. To whom did Jesus give authority to drive out demons? Did He give it to all of His followers or only to the Twelve (Matt10:8) and the Seventy-two (Luke 10:19)?
2. Jesus praised (or thanked) God that God had hidden certain things from wise and learned men and had revealed them to little children (Luke 10:21). What are some of the things that God has hidden from wise and learned men but revealed to little children?
3. What did Jesus mean when He said that all things had been committed to Him by His Father (Luke 10:22)? Please, name a few of the things that have been committed to Jesus.
4. What did Jesus mean when He said that no one knows who the Son is, except the Father, and no one knows who the Father is, except the Son (Luke 10:22)?
5. What is the purpose of putting a yoke on an animal? Is the yoke designed to hurt the animal or to help it pull its load? Can a person learn from Jesus without taking up His “yoke?” What do you think?
6. What was it that Jesus’ immediate followers saw, which prophets and kings had wanted to see, but did not see (Luke 10:24)? Perhaps, the passage in 1 Pet 1:10 will help you find an answer.

78

The Parable of the Good Samaritan

Luke 10:25-37

There was a certain lawyer, who wanted to test Jesus, so he asked Him, “Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life” (Luke 10:25)?

Jesus responded by asking the lawyer, “What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?” (Luke 10:26 NKJV)

The lawyer answered by reciting Deu 6:5, which says, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength..." Luke 10:27a NIV. The lawyer also quoted from Lev 19:18, which says, "And 'Love your neighbor as yourself'" (Luke 10:27c NIV).

It is not clear whether the lawyer answered Jesus out of his own conviction or whether he was merely echoing Jesus' teaching, in order to set Jesus up for an additional questions; but, be that as it may, Jesus said to him, "You have answered right; do this, and you will live" (Luke 10:28 RSV).

The lawyer rebutted with a question that he may have thought to be a tough question. He asked, "And who is my neighbor" (Luke 10:29 NIV)?

In response, Jesus told a parable about an Israelite, who was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho and who fell into the hands of robbers. The robbers stripped the Israelite of his clothes and beat him. They then went on their way, leaving him half-dead (Luke 10:30).

Now, it happened that one of the priests of the children of Israel happened to be going down that same road and saw the wounded man, but the priest did not stop and help his fellow-countryman. Instead, he passed by on the other side of the road (Luke 10:31).

Next, a Levite came by that way. He also saw the wounded man. He, too, passed by on the other side, without helping him (Luke 10:32).

A foreigner, however, a Samaritan that was traveling, came to the wounded Israelite, saw him, and took pity on him. He went to him, bandaged his wounds, and poured oil and wine on them. He then set the wounded man on his own donkey and led him to an inn, where he took care of him (Luke 10:33-34).

The next day, the Samaritan took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper, and said, "Look after him and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have had" (Luke 10:35).

After Jesus had finished His story, He asked the lawyer, "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" (Luke 10:36 NIV)

To his credit, the lawyer replied, "The one who had mercy on him" (Luke 10:37a NIV).

At that, Jesus told the lawyer, “Go and do likewise” (Luke 10:37b NIV).

Thought Questions

1. Do you think the lawyer was sincere or did he only want to trick Jesus into saying something wrong? What are the reasons for your thinking as you do?
2. The lawyer asked, “Who is my neighbor?” Did he consider that to be a difficult question? What do you think?
3. Which of the men in Jesus’ parable complied with the scripture that says, “Love your neighbor as yourself?” Was it the Priest, the Levite, or the Samaritan?
4. What can we learn from Jesus’ parable? Who is our “neighbor?” Is our neighbor only the person that lives next door?

79

Jesus’ Visit with Martha and Mary

Luke 10:38-42

Jesus came to the village in Judea, in which a certain woman named Martha and her sister, Mary, lived; and Martha opened her home to Jesus (Luke 10:38). While Martha was busy with serving her guest (or guests), Mary sat at Jesus’ feet and listened to what He had to say (Luke 10:39). After a while, Martha came to Jesus and complained about Mary, saying, “Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me to do the serving alone? Tell her to help me” (Luke 10:40)!

Jesus did not tell Mary to get up and help Martha, as Martha requested. Instead, He gently chided Martha, saying to her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed” (Luke 10:41-42a).

Concerning Mary, Jesus said, "Mary has chosen the good part, and it will not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:42b).

Thought Questions

1. Do you get the impression that Martha was older than Mary? What causes you to think as you do?
2. Do you think Jesus felt at home at Martha and Mary's home? Do you think that Jesus was thankful for all the things that Martha did for Him?
3. Can we learn something from Martha's example? What can we learn from her? Why did Jesus chide Martha? Was Martha doing something wrong? If so, what?
4. Jesus said, "but only one thing is needed" (Luke 10:41-42a). What is that "one thing?"
5. What can we learn from Mary? What is "the good part," which Mary chose? How can we choose "the good part?" What do you think?
6. Would you like to become more like Mary or more like Martha? Please explain.

80

Teaching on Prayer

Luke 11:1-13

In spite of His being very busy, Jesus did not forget to pray. One day, after He had finished praying in a certain place in Judea, one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples" (Luke 11:1 NIV).

In response to their request, Jesus taught them a new prayer. It was similar to, but slightly different from, the prayer that He had taught them earlier in His Sermon on the Mount in Galilee (Matt 6:9-13). He said to His disciples,

When you pray, say: ‘Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation.’

Luke 11:2-4 NIV

Then, Jesus told His disciples a parable that illustrated the need for boldness in prayer. He told them about a man, who had no bread to set before a guest that had arrived very late to spend the night with him.

The man went to his neighbor and said, “Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him” (Luke 11:5-6 NIV).

The neighbor, from inside his house, said, “Don’t bother me. The door is already locked, and my children are with me in bed. I can’t get up and give you anything” (Luke 11:7).

After telling the parable, Jesus made a comment on it. He said,

I tell you, though he will not get up and give him the bread because he is his friend, yet because of the man’s boldness he will get up and give him as much as he needs

Luke 11:8 NIV

To elaborate the lesson that should be drawn from this parable, Jesus said, “So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you” (Luke 11:9 NIV).

Then Jesus explained, “For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened” (Luke 11:10 NIV).

To emphasize God’s goodness and generosity to His children, Jesus said, “Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion?” (Luke 11:11-12 NIV)

God’s capacity for kindness far exceeds the capacity of any human father. Jesus said, “If you then, though you are evil, know how to give

good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" (Luke 11:13 NIV)

Thought Questions

1. Which prayer do you like the best, the one in Matthew 6:9-13 or the one in Luke 11:2-4? Do you see any differences between them? If so, what are some of the differences?
2. Was either of these prayers (Matt 6:9-13 and Luke 11:2-4) intended to be used as a ritual? Is it better to pray a memorized prayer or to pray what is on your heart?
3. Do you have the freedom sometimes to speak a memorized prayer when it expresses what is on your heart? What do you think?
4. Is it permissible to repeat a request to God over and over again? Is there any danger that our prayers might become a burden to Him? Please, explain.
5. Was Jesus' promise that God would answer prayers (Luke 11:9-10) given to everyone or only to God's children? Does God sometimes answer the prayers of people that are not His children? Does He always answer the prayers of His children? Please, elaborate.
6. Does God give the Holy Spirit to His children? See Luke 11:13.
7. Upon what conditions does God give the Holy Spirit to His children? See Acts 2:38-39. Would it do any good "to ask" God for the Holy Spirit if we did not intend to do what God has said? See Acts 5:32.

81

Beelzebub and the Sign of Jonah (Again)

Luke 11:14-36

Jesus encountered once again a man who had been robbed of his speech by a demon. So Jesus drove the demon out and the man spoke

(Luke 11:14). The crowd that had witnessed the event was amazed, as people usually were, when they heard a dumb man speak.

However, some of the people in the crowd repeated a charge that had, by now, become commonplace among Jesus' opponents. They said that Jesus drove the demons out by the power of Beelzebub, the prince of demons (Luke 11:15).

Jesus responded to this charge in the same way that He had responded to it earlier in Galilee (Matt 12:25-26; Mark 3:23-26). He said that if He drove out Satan by Satan, then Satan's house would be divided and Satan's kingdom would not stand (Luke 11:17-18). It is not surprising that Jesus responded to this charge in the same way that He had responded to it earlier, for it was the perfect answer. Furthermore, a good teacher often repeats himself (or herself).

Jesus took this opportunity to tell people how they should think about His miracles. He said, "But if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come to you" (Luke 11:20 NIV). People should have realized that Jesus' ability to drive out demons showed that He was stronger than Satan. Jesus said,

When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are safe. But when someone stronger attacks and overpowers him, he takes away the armor in which the man trusted and divides up the spoils.

Luke 11:21-22 NIV

When Jesus drove out demons, it did not indicate that He and the demons were working together. Rather, it indicated just the opposite.

In this connection, Jesus repeated something that He had said earlier in Galilee (Matt 12:30). He said, "He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me, scatters" (Luke 11:23 NIV). Again, Jesus repeated what He had said regarding evil spirits (Matt 12:43-45), namely,

When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, 'I will

return to the house I left.' When it arrives, it finds the house swept clean and put in order. Then it goes and takes seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that man is worse than the first.

Luke 11:24-26 NIV

While Jesus was saying these things, a woman in the crowd called out, "Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you" (Luke 11:27 NIV). Jesus corrected her, by saying, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it" (Luke 11:28 NIV).

Many of the people in the crowd had come only to see Jesus work a miracle. So He said, as He had said earlier (Matt 12:39-42), "This is a wicked generation. It asks for a miraculous sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah" (Luke 11:29 NIV).

Jonah, you will recall, had been able to save the people of Nineveh from destruction, because they believed his message and repented of their sins. So the question for Jesus' generation was, would Jesus be able to save them from destruction? It depended upon whether or not they, like the Ninevites, believed and repented. Jesus said, "For as Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, so also will the Son of Man be to this generation" (Luke 11:30 NIV).

Jesus warned that the Queen of Sheba would rise up at the Judgment and condemn the people of His generation. He said, "...for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon's wisdom, and now one greater than Solomon is here" (Luke 11:31b NIV).

Jesus warned that also the people of Nineveh would rise up at the Judgment and condemn the people of His generation. He explained, "...for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now one greater than Jonah is here" (Luke 11:32b NIV).

Jesus defended His speaking so openly and plainly, by saying, "No one lights a lamp and puts it in a place where it will be hidden, or under a bowl. Instead he puts it on its stand, so that those who come in may see the light" (Luke 11:33 NIV).

Jesus implied that the people who could not see the light of His message were blind, saying, “Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eyes are good, your whole body also is full of light. But when they are bad, your body also is full of darkness” (Luke 11:34 NIV).

Then, Jesus admonished the people,

See to it, then, that the light within you is not darkness.

Therefore, if your whole body is full of light, and no part of it dark, it will be completely lighted, as when the light of a lamp shines on you.

Luke 11:35-36 NIV

Thought Questions

1. What conclusion should the people of Jesus’ day have drawn from their seeing Jesus drive out demons? See Luke 11:20.
2. Jesus said that He would give the people of His generation “the sign of Jonah (Luke 11:29).” What was “the sign of Jonah?” How did Jesus give them “the sign of Jonah?” See Matthew 12:40.
3. What accusation will the Queen of Sheba (Luke 11:31) bring against the people of Jesus’ generation on the Day of Judgment?
4. What accusation will the people of Nineveh (Luke 11:32) bring against the people of Jesus’ generation in the Judgment?

82

Eating With Unwashed Hands and Six Woes

Luke 11:37-54

As Jesus finished speaking to a crowd in Judea, one of the Pharisees invited Him to eat with him (Luke 11:37). Jesus went with the Pharisee to his house and sat down to eat, and the Pharisee was surprised that Jesus did not wash His hands before the meal (Luke 11:38). Jesus knew what

the Pharisee was thinking and He began to criticize the Pharisees for over-emphasizing external things in general. Jesus said,

Now then, you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness. You foolish people! Did not the one who made the outside make the inside also?

Luke 11:39-40 NIV

Jesus told the Pharisees something they could do to become clean on the inside. He said, "But give what is inside [the cup or dish] to the poor, and everything will be clean for you" (Luke 11:41 NIV).

Jesus then also pronounced three "woes" over the Pharisees. The first "woe" was pronounced because the Pharisees tithed mint, rue, and other garden herbs, but neglected justice and the love of God (Luke 11:42).

Jesus pronounced the second "woe" over the Pharisees, because they loved to sit in prominent places in the synagogues and to be greeted in the marketplaces (Luke 11:43).

The third "woe" He pronounced over them, because they were, He said, like unmarked graves, over which people walked without knowing what was underneath (Luke 11:44).

One of the men that heard these words was a lawyer; and the lawyer replied to Jesus, "Teacher, when you say these things, you insult us, too."

At that, Jesus pronounced a "woe" also over the lawyers; because they loaded people down with burdens that the people could hardly bare, while the lawyers themselves did not lift a finger to help them (Luke 11:46).

He pronounced an additional "woe" over the Pharisees and lawyers because they built tombs for the prophets, which their fathers had killed (Luke 11:47). The Pharisees and lawyers appeared to have been honoring the prophets by building tombs for them; but, actually, they were showing their approval of the works of their fathers (Luke 11:48). Furthermore, they were just as guilty as their fathers were, because they were planning to do away with Jesus.

Then Jesus said that the wisdom of God had foretold that the children of Israel would persecute the prophets and kill some of them (Luke 11:49). He prophesied that the generation of people, among whom He lived, would be held accountable for the blood of all the prophets, saying, “Therefore this generation will be held responsible for the blood of all the prophets that has been shed since the beginning of the world” (Luke 11:50 NIV).

Jesus then referred to the first and last of the righteous men, who were killed in Old Testament times. He referred to Abel (Luke 11:51a), who had been slain by Cain at the very beginning of Hebrew history (Gen 4:8). And He also referred to Zechariah (Luke 11:51a), who was stoned on the temple grounds, as recorded in the last book of the Hebrew Old Testament (2 Chr 24:20-21). Jesus said, “Yes, I tell you, this generation will be held responsible for it all” (Luke 11:51b NIV).

Jesus’ words may have been a warning of the upcoming destruction of Jerusalem, which took place some 35 years after He spoke these words.

Jesus pronounced a final “woe” over the lawyers; for instead of helping people understand the Scriptures, they had closed the Scriptures to them. He said, “Woe to you experts in the law, because you have taken away the key to knowledge. You yourselves have not entered, and you have hindered those who were entering” (Luke 11:52 NIV).

The scribes and Pharisees could endure Jesus’ words no longer. So they turned fiercely against Him. They besieged Him with questions whenever they could, and they kept on trying to catch Him in something He might say (Luke 11:53).

Thought Questions

1. Jesus did not keep the tradition of washing His hands in a ceremonial way before eating, as the Pharisees did. Why do you suppose He did not keep that tradition?
2. Do you think Jesus spoke too harshly to the Pharisees and experts in the Law? Please elaborate. Should we speak plainly to people about

the truth? Can we speak plainly without being unnecessarily offensive? What do you think?

3. God held the people of Jesus' generation (Luke 11:51) accountable for the deaths of all the prophets that had been killed. Were the people of Jesus' generation held accountable because they had a better opportunity to know the truth and to reform their lives than their fathers? What do you think?
4. If the people of Jesus' generation had accepted Jesus as the Messiah, would they have been spared the destruction that came upon their nation in AD 70? What do you think?
5. Do you think that some of today's so-called experts in the Scriptures "take away the key to knowledge" by their traditions, with the results that some people cannot understand the Scriptures? Please explain.

***JESUS' SPEECH
TO A GREAT
CROWD IN JUDEA***

83

The Beginning of Jesus' Speech to a Great Crowd in Judea

Luke 12:1-12

When a crowd of many thousands of people was gathered in Judea, Jesus began to speak to them. Although He addressed His remarks to His disciples, He was teaching the crowd as well. Much of what He had to say on that day had been previously said to His disciples while they were still in Galilee. For example, He had warned His disciples previously against the “yeast of the Pharisees” (Matt 16:6). Now, He let people in general hear His warning, saying, “Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy” (Luke 12:1 NIV).

With the following words, He assured His disciples (and people listening) that His message would continue to be spread. He said,

There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. What you have said in the dark will be heard in the daylight, and what you have whispered in the ear in the inner rooms will be proclaimed from the roofs.

Luke 12:2-3 NIV

Similar thoughts can be found in Matthew 10:26-27 and Luke 8:17.

Jesus did not want His disciples to be afraid of anything, except of disobeying God. He said to them,

I tell you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear him who, after the killing of the body, has power to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him.

Luke 12:4-5 NIV

Words similar to these had been said by Jesus when He sent the Twelve out on their limited commission (Matt 10:28).

Next, He assured His listeners of God's great concern for them. He said,

Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

Luke 12:6-7 NIV

Thoughts such as the above had been previously expressed (Matt 10:29-31) and would be expressed yet again (Luke 21:18). They were a standard part of Jesus' teaching.

He continued giving the crowd a synopsis of His sermons from the past, saying,

I tell you, whoever acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man will also acknowledge him before the angels of God. But he who disowns me before men will be disowned before the angels of God.

Luke 12:8-9 NIV

This also echoes something that He had said earlier (Matt 10:32-33, Mark 8:38, and Luke 9:26).

Then, He repeated a word of caution for the Pharisees and others, who were saying that Jesus drove demons out by the power of Beelzebub (Matt 12:31-32; Mark 3:28-29). He said, "And everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven" (Luke 12:10 NIV).

Following that, Jesus assured His disciples that God would help them know what to say when they were called to give an account for their faith. He said,

When you are brought before synagogues, rulers and authorities, do not worry about how you will defend yourselves or what you will say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say.

Luke 12:11 NIV

These words remind us of what Jesus said, as recorded in Matthew 10:19-20, and what He would say later, as recorded in Mark 13:11 and Luke 21:14-15.

Thought Questions

1. Jesus mentioned that someone, whom He did not specify, has the “power” to throw people into hell (Luke 12:5). Who has the power to throw people into hell? Is it God or is it Satan? What do you think?
2. How can a person learn not to be afraid of what people might do to him (or her)?
3. Jesus warned His disciples that if they should come to disown Him before men, they would be disowned before the angels of God (Luke 12:9). Who is it that will disown disciples who disown Jesus? See Matthew 10:32-33. When will this take place? See Mark 8:38 and Luke 9:26.
4. Are you usually able to find something to say when people question you about your faith? Does a familiarity with the Scriptures help a person know what to say? What do you think?

84

Parable of the Rich Fool

Luke 12:13-34

As Jesus was speaking to His disciples and to a great crowd in Judea, a man in the crowd interrupted Him with a request. He said, “Teacher,

tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me” (Luke 12:13).

Jesus replied, “Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?” (Luke 12:14 NIV) Rather than help the man get some of his rightful inheritance, Jesus warned him not to be filled with greed. Jesus said, “Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions” (Luke 12:15 NIV).

To illustrate how foolish it would be for anyone to concentrate on material possessions above all else, Jesus told a parable about a rich man, whose farms produced a good crop.

The rich man thought to himself, “What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.” Then he said to himself,

This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I'll say to myself, 'You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.'

Luke 12:18-19 NIV

Jesus continued by saying, “But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?’” (Luke 12:20 NIV)

Then Jesus made a comment. He said, “This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God” (Luke 12:21 NIV).

After Jesus had taught the above parable, He warned His listeners, saying, “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. Life is more than food, and the body more than clothes” (Luke 12:22-23 NIV).

Jesus had already cautioned His disciples not to worry about food and clothing (Matt 6:25), but this may have been new to many in the crowd in Judea. In addition, He repeated what He had taught earlier about the ravens (Matt 6:26). He said, “Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds!” (Luke 12:24 NIV)

Jesus also asked, as He had done previously (Matt 6:27), “Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?” (Luke 12:25 NIV) Further, He asked, “Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest?” (Luke 12:26 NIV)

Jesus also mentioned the beauty of the flowers, as He had done in His Sermon on the Mount (Matt 6:28-30), saying,

Consider how the lilies grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith!

Luke 12:27-28 NIV

Concerning food, Jesus said, “And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it” (Luke 12:29 NIV). Jesus’ attitude differed widely from the way most people thought (and think) about material things. He said, “For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them” (Luke 12:30 NIV).

Then Jesus showed His confidence in God’s providence by promising, “But seek his [God’s] kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well” (Luke 12:31 NIV).

Jesus made yet another, even greater promise. He said, “Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom” (Luke 12:32 NIV).

Following that, Jesus gave some advice, which not many people are willing to heed. He said,

Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys.

Luke 12:33 NIV

As if to justify His point of view, Jesus explained, “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Luke 12:34 NIV).

Thought Questions

1. Jesus spoke of people that store up goods for themselves, but who are “not rich toward God” (Luke 12:21). How does a person get to be rich toward God?
2. When Jesus said that we should not worry about food and clothing (Luke 12:24-30), did He mean that His followers should not work and provide for themselves and for their families? See 1 Th 4:11-12. Is there a difference between providing for the future and worrying about the future?
3. Did Jesus promise that if we seek God’s kingdom, material things would be provided for us (Luke 12:31)? What does it mean to “seek God’s kingdom?” Does Luke 12:31 differ from Matthew 6:33? If so, how?
4. Jesus said, “Sell your possessions and give to the poor” (Luke 12:33). Did Jesus mean for all of His followers to sell all of their possessions? What do you think?
5. Is there anything that Satan, or any evil person, could have done to thwart the establishment of the kingdom of which Jesus spoke in Luke 12:32? See Matthew 16:18.

85

Be Ready!

Luke 12:35-48

In His long speech in Judea, Jesus began teaching His disciples about His Second Coming. Prior to this, He had only briefly alluded to His Second Coming (Matt 16:27; Mark 8:38). Here, Jesus compared Himself to a royal bridegroom, who had gone away to get married and who will

return to His servants. He cautioned His disciples to stand ready for His Second Coming just as royal servants await their Lord's return. He said,

Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning,
like men waiting for their Lord to return from a wedding
banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can
immediately open the door for him.

Luke 12:35-36

Jesus promised that when He returns (after His ascension), His relationship with His followers will be changed, in that He will then serve them. He said,

It will be good for those servants, whose Lord finds them
watching when he comes. I tell you the truth, he will dress
himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will
come and wait on them.

Luke 12:37

They should be ready to receive their Lord no matter when He arrives, whether it be by day or by night; for Jesus said, "And if he shall come in the second watch, and if in the third, and find (them) so, blessed are those (servants)" (Luke 12:38 ASV).

To illustrate that no one knows when Jesus will return, He compared His return to the coming of a thief. He said,

But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at
what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his
house be broken into. You also must be ready, because the
Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect
him.

Luke 12:39-40 NIV

Upon hearing these things, Peter was confused. He was not certain whether Jesus was referring to the disciples or to all the people. So Peter

asked Jesus, "Lord, are you telling this parable to us, or to everyone" (Luke 12:41 NIV)?

In response to Peter's question, Jesus asked Peter, "Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom the Lord puts in charge of His servants to give them their food allowance at the proper time?" (Luke 12:42)

By asking this, Jesus implied that Peter knew (or could figure out) who the "faithful and wise steward" was. Then Jesus said, "Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord when He comes finds so doing. Of a truth I say unto you, that He will set him over all that He has" (Luke 12:43-44).

Next, Jesus described what would happen to a servant that abused his fellow servants, who were set under him. He said,

But suppose the servant says to himself, 'My Lord is taking a long time in coming,' and he then begins to beat the menservants and maidservants and to eat and drink and get drunk. The Lord of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the unbelievers.

Luke 12:45-46

Jesus holds His servants accountable for their deeds. He said, "That servant who knows his Lord's will and does not get ready or does not do what his Lord wants will be beaten with many blows" (Luke 12:47).

It is possible, of course, that a follower of Jesus might not know what the Lord expects of him. Concerning such an eventuality, Jesus said, "But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows" (Luke 12:48a NIV).

God expects everyone, however, to live up to his or her capabilities and opportunities for service. Jesus said, "From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked" (Luke 12:48b NIV).

Thought Questions

1. What can a person do in order to be ready for the Lord's return?
2. Are you surprised that the Lord will serve His servants when He returns (Luke 12:37)? What does this tell you about the nature of God? What does this tell you about the future that is awaiting God's people?
3. When Jesus spoke of the "wise and faithful servant" (Luke 12:42) was He speaking only of Peter? Or was He speaking of everyone, to whom God gives a position of responsibility? What do you think?
4. Do you think this lesson about responsibility is only for leaders of a congregation or for all the members of a congregation, as well?

86

Judge for Yourselves What Is Right

Luke 12:49-59

Near the close of His long speech to the great crowd in Judea, Jesus expressed some of His personal feelings about His work. He said, "I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!" (Luke 12:49 NIV) Jesus knew that before the "fire" could be kindled, He would have to undergo a baptism of suffering, and He was in anguish until it was over with. He said, "But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is completed!" (Luke 12:50 NIV)

Jesus was under no illusion as to the effect that His work would have. The "fire" of which He spoke would be a blessing for many people, but it would not be a unifying force in society. He asked, "Do you think that I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division" (Luke 12:51 NIV).

He knew specifically what the division would be like, and He described it, by saying, "From now on there will be five in one family divided against each other, three against two and two against three" (Luke 12:52 NIV). To illustrate how complete the division in some families would be, Jesus quoted from the prophet Micah, as follows,

They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.

Luke 12:53 NIV; Mic 7:6

This division would occur because not everyone would understand His message, in spite of the fact that many of them were otherwise very astute. To the Judeans He said,

When you see a cloud rising in the west, immediately you say, 'It's going to rain,' and it does. And when the south wind blows, you say, 'It's going to be hot,' and it is.

Luke 12:54-55 NIV

This was similar to, but slightly different from what He had said to people in Galilee (Matt 16:1-3), where climactic conditions were similar, but slightly different. Even though climactic conditions differed between Judea and Galilee, people in both localities could predict the weather in their own locality; but they could not, as a whole, recognize that their Messiah was among them. For this He castigated them, saying, "Hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of the earth and the sky. How is it that you don't know how to interpret this present time?" (Luke 12:56 NIV)

Jesus wanted people to use the minds that God had given them, so they could come to right conclusions. He asked, "Why don't you judge for yourselves what is right?" (Luke 12:57 NIV)

Jesus also wanted people to arrive at a just settlement of disputes. He said,

As you are going with your adversary to the magistrate, try hard to be reconciled to him on the way, or he may drag you off to the judge, and the judge turn you over to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison.

Luke 12:58 NIV

He warned, “I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny” (Luke 12:59 NIV).

The verses in Luke 12:57-59 are similar to what Jesus said in His Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:23-26.

Thought Questions

1. Please describe the “fire” (Luke 12:49) that Jesus brought to the earth. Was the “fire” fully kindled before Jesus had given His life? Are there signs that the “fire” is still burning? If so, what are some of the signs that it is still burning?
2. What was the “baptism” (Luke 12:50) that Jesus had yet to undergo?
3. How does Jesus cause divisions (Luke 12:51-53) among people? If a person finds himself (or herself) in a divided family, what can he (or she) do about it? What do you think?
4. Why do people find it so difficult to seek reconciliation with an adversary? What do you think?

87

Repent or Perish and the Parable of the Barren Fig Tree

Luke 13:1-9

Jesus had just finished speaking to His disciples and others in a great crowd in Judea when some of the people present told him about certain Galileans, whom Pilate, the Roman governor, had killed. Pilate, for some

reason, seems to have ordered the Galileans killed as they were offering sacrifices at the temple in Jerusalem.

Jesus did not respond to this news as some of them may have expected; for He neither castigated Pilate for the atrocity nor expressed sympathy for the people that were killed. Instead, He asked, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way?" (Luke 13:2 NIV)

Jesus answered His own question, by saying, "I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish" (Luke 13:3 NIV).

As we see, Jesus did not challenge the idea that people are punished in this life for the sins that they commit. Rather, He warned His listeners that they ought to change their ways. He reminded them of the eighteen people, who had died when the tower fell on them in Siloam. Concerning them Jesus also asked, "Do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem?" (Luke 13:4b NIV)

Jesus answered this question, too. He answered it the same way that He had answered the other question that He had asked. He said, "I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish" (Luke 13:5 NIV).

Jesus then told the Parable about a Fig Tree, in which a fig tree seems to represent the people of Israel (as in Isa 5:1-7). Jesus said, "A man had a fig tree, planted in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it, but did not find any" (Luke 13:6 NIV).

This was not the first time that the owner of the vineyard in Jesus' parable had come looking for fruit on his fig tree but did not find any. So the owner told his vinedresser, "For three years now I've been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven't found any" (Luke 13:7b NIV).

The owner decided that the fig tree was useless, so he told his vinedresser, "Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?" (Luke 13:7c NIV)

The vinedresser, however, thought that the tree could possibly be saved, so he intervened and said, "Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and fertilize it" (Luke 13:8 NKJV).

The vinedresser continued, "If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down" (Luke 13:9 NIV).

Thought Questions

1. Jesus said to His listeners that they would all perish unless they repented (Luke 13:3,5). Was He referring to the destruction that He knew was coming upon the nation of Israel and the city of Jerusalem, unless they changed their way of living? Or was He referring to the fact that everyone that does not repent will be punished at the Last Judgment? What do you think?
2. What does Jesus' Parable of the Fig Tree teach? Does it teach that God is waiting for each of us to bear fruit? What kind of fruit does God want His people to bear?
3. Does God often delay punishment in order to give us time to change our ways before disaster strikes? What do you think?

TEACHING AND HEALING IN JUDEA

88

The Healing of a Woman and the Parable of the Mustard Seed

Luke 13:10-21

As Jesus was teaching on a Sabbath day in one of the synagogues in Judea, there was a woman present who was nearly bent over double and could not straighten up. She had been in that condition for eighteen years, due to the influence of an evil spirit (Luke 13:10-11). Jesus saw her and called her to Himself and said to her, “Woman, you are set free from your infirmity” (Luke 13:12b NIV). Then Jesus laid His hands on the woman and she was made to straighten up immediately and praised God (Luke 13:13).

Yet, the ruler of the synagogue was indignant that Jesus had healed her. He was indignant because Jesus had healed her on the Sabbath. Instead of criticizing Jesus, however, the ruler of the synagogue criticized the people, and indirectly, the woman. He said, “There are six days for work. So come and be healed on those days, not on the Sabbath” (Luke 13:14b NIV).

The Lord, in turn, criticized the ruler of the synagogue. (Notice that Luke, who recorded this story, calls Jesus here “Lord.”) The Lord said, “You hypocrites! Doesn’t each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or donkey from the stall and lead it out to give it water?” (Luke 13:15 NIV)

Jesus was right, of course; for even the ruler of the synagogue would lead his donkey out to drink water on the Sabbath. Therefore, Jesus asked, “Then should not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has kept bound for eighteen long years, be set free on the Sabbath day from what bound her?” (Luke 13:16 NIV)

When Jesus said this, all His opponents were humiliated; but the people that had witnessed this healing rejoiced over the many praiseworthy things that were happening through Jesus (Luke 13:17).

Such praiseworthy things were, however, only the beginning of the great things they would see. Jesus asked,

What is the kingdom of God like? What shall I compare it to?

It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his garden. It grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air perched in its branches.

Luke 13:18-19 NIV

With this parable Jesus predicted the growth of the size of His kingdom.

He next predicted that His kingdom would grow in an additional way. It would have a leavening influence on the lives of people. Again Jesus asked, “What shall I compare the kingdom of God to? It is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough” (Luke 13:20-21 NIV).

Thought Questions

1. Did Jesus seem to think that it was wrong for Him to heal on the Sabbath? Is the Sabbath holier than other days? Is every day holy for a follower of Jesus? What do you think?
2. Why did the ruler of the synagogue criticize the people instead of Jesus (Luke 13:14)? What do you think?
3. Jesus had taught the Parable of the Mustard Seed prior to this time (Matt 13:31-32). Was Jesus using the Parable of the Mustard seed merely to predict that many people would come to believe on Him; or was He predicting the expansive growth of His church, or both? What do you think?
4. Jesus had also taught the Parable of the Yeast prior to this time (Matt 13:33). Was Jesus using the Parable of the Yeast to predict that some people would develop into true saints within His church; or was He predicting that His kingdom would have a leavening influence on society, or both? What do you think?

89

The Narrow Door

Luke 13:22-30

As Jesus was going through the towns and villages of Judea, He was teaching and gradually making His way toward Jerusalem. In one place, someone asked Him, “Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?” (Luke 13:23)

Jesus did not at that time give a direct answer to the question of whether few or many would be saved. Instead, He seems to have been more interested in the welfare of the person that asked this question than He was in satisfying that person’s curiosity. So He cautioned the person, “Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to” (Luke 13:24 NIV).

Jesus’ answer implied that some people would not make it through the “narrow door,” of which He spoke. He gave then an analogy that made His meaning clearer. He said, “Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, ‘Sir, open the door for us’ (Luke 13:25a NIV).

The owner of the house, however, will say to those who are standing outside and who want to get in, “I don’t know you or where you come from” (Luke 13:25b NIV). They will then plead that they had a special relationship with Jesus. They will say, “We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets” (Luke 13:26 NIV).

But the owner of the house will reply, “I don’t know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers!” (Luke 13:27 NIV)

Jesus described what the reaction of those people would be, who spurned Him, when they find themselves shut out. He said,

There will be weeping there, and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves thrown out.

Luke 13:28 NIV

The people who could have been with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will find it especially painful when they see people from all the directions of the compass occupying places in the kingdom of God, which could have belonged to them. Jesus said, “And they will come from east and west and from north and south, and will recline at the table in the kingdom of God” (Luke 13:29 NASB).

This thought prompted Jesus to make this general observation: “And behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last” (Luke 13:30 RSV).

Thought Questions

1. Is Jesus’ teaching about the “narrow door” (Luke 13:24) the same as what He taught about the “narrow gate,” in Matthew 7:13-14?
2. To where does the “narrow gate” (Matt 7:13-14) lead? Does the “narrow door” (Luke 13:24) lead to the same place as the “narrow gate?”
3. What was Jesus’ answer to the question about whether few or many would be saved? See Matthew 7:14.
4. Jesus said that the “the owner of the house” would close the door (Luke 13:25). Was He speaking about the door to heaven?
5. Once the door to heaven is closed, will those on the outside still have an opportunity to get in? Did Jesus offer any hope to those, who do not respond to Him before the door is closed?
6. Jesus spoke (Luke 13:29) about there being a “feast in the kingdom of God.” Was He speaking about a literal “feast?” Will the feast take place here on this earth or in heaven? What do you think?
7. Jesus spoke of people coming “from east and west and from north and south” and reclining “at the table in the kingdom of God” (Luke 13:29). Of whom was Jesus speaking? Was He speaking of Gentiles who could come to believe on Him through the preaching of the gospel? What do you think?

8. Please, explain the saying, as it is used here, “And behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last” (Luke 13:30 RSV).

90

Jesus’ First Lament Over Jerusalem

Luke 13:31-35

While Jesus was discussing whether many or few people would be saved (Luke 13:22-30), some Pharisees came to Him and warned Him, “Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you” (Luke 13:31 NIV).

Jesus, however, had no fear of King Herod (of Galilee). He replied to the Pharisees, “Go tell that fox, ‘I will drive out demons and heal people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal.’” (Luke 13:32 NIV).

Jesus was resigned to the fact that He would be killed; but He knew that His death could take place only at Jerusalem. He said to the Pharisees, “Nevertheless I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following; for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem” (Luke 13:33 RSV).

Jesus had already been in Jerusalem several times since He began His public ministry; and He had found that many people in Jerusalem were hostile to Him, especially the religious leaders. The people that lived from the temple and from the temple trade wanted nothing to do with Jesus. Even though Jesus was not in Jerusalem, He began to lament over the city, saying,

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone
those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your

children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!

Luke 13:34 NIV

Jesus knew that if the people of Jerusalem continued in their present course, it would lead to destruction. However, if they would accept Him, it would avert the destruction of Jerusalem; but Jesus knew that they did not want to accept either Him or His help.

For that reason, Jesus knew that the destruction of Jerusalem was inevitable. As if speaking to the people of Jerusalem He said, “Look, your house is left to you desolate” (Luke 13:35a NIV).

He also said, “I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord’” (Luke 13:35b NIV). The phrase, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord,” is a quotation from the 118th Psalm (verse 26). The phrase appears to have been intended as a ceremonial greeting for the rightful King of Israel as he approached the temple.

Jesus predicted, in Luke 13:35, that the people of Jerusalem would not see Him until they said, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.” When Jesus made this prediction, He may not have been thinking of His upcoming ceremonial entrance into the city, as it is described in Matthew 21:9 and Luke 19:38. The reason for saying this is that Jesus repeated this same prophecy (Matt 23:39) even after He had made His ceremonial entry.

Therefore, Jesus may have been thinking of the more remote future. He may have been thinking of a time when the children of Israel would long to see their Messiah but would not see Him until they said of Jesus, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord,” which would be an acknowledgement that Jesus is the Messiah.

Thought Questions

1. Why was Jesus not afraid of what King Herod might try to do to Him? What do you think?
2. Jesus felt that Jerusalem was the place where He must be put to

- death. Why might He have felt that way?
3. What did Jesus mean when He said (as if speaking to the people of Jerusalem), “I often have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings” (Luke 13:34)? What do you think?
 4. If the people of Jerusalem had allowed themselves to be gathered to Jesus, how would that have affected their lives?
 5. Do you think that God destroyed Jerusalem because the people refused to accept their Messiah; or do you think that the Messiah was the last hope for changing their hearts, which would have resulted in a peaceful solution to their problems with the Romans?
 6. Do you think Jesus felt joy or remorse over the fact that Jerusalem would be destroyed? What are the reasons for your answer?

91

In the House of a Leading Pharisee

Luke 14:1-14

When Jesus went into the house of a leading Pharisee in Judea to eat, other Pharisees that were in the house were watching Him closely (Luke 14:1). Now, there was a man right in front of Jesus, who had dropsy (that is, swollen arms or swollen legs, or both). Whereupon, Jesus put a question to the lawyers and Pharisees, who had been invited. It was a question that He had often asked such people. He asked, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?” (Luke 14:3 NIV)

The lawyers and Pharisees could not give a satisfactory answer to Jesus’ question, so they remained silent. Jesus then took hold of the man, healed him, and sent him away (Luke 14:4).

After that, Jesus asked them, “If one of you has a son or an ox that falls into a well on the Sabbath day, will you not immediately pull him out?” (Luke 14:5 NIV)

The lawyers and Pharisees had nothing to say in opposition to this; for they knew that they would, indeed, pull their son or their ox out of a well, even if it were the Sabbath (Luke 14:6).

Jesus noticed that, as the guests came in, they chose the places of honor, so He began to teach them by describing a hypothetical situation (Luke 14:7). He said,

When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited. If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, ‘Give this man your seat.’ Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place.

Luke 14:8-9 NIV

Jesus’ advised the guests,

But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, ‘Friend, move up to a better place.’ Then you will be honored in the presence of all your fellow guests.

Luke 14:10 NIV

Following that, He taught them a general truth, by saying, “For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted” (Luke 14:11 NIV). After Jesus had said this to the guests, He had some advice for His host. Jesus said to him,

When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid.

Luke 14:12 NIV

Jesus gave an example of how a person could avoid being repaid. He said, “But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed” (Luke 14:13-14a NIV).

Inviting the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind would bring a future blessing. Jesus explained, “Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous” (Luke 14:14 NIV).

Thought Questions

1. Why could the Pharisees not give a satisfactory answer to the question of whether or not it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath? What do you think?
2. Do you find it true that, “Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted” (Luke 14:11)? Please cite some examples, if you can.
3. Why is it better to invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind rather than one’s friends, brothers, relatives, and rich neighbors when one makes a feast? Do you know anyone who has ever done this? Did Jesus intend for His followers to take this advice seriously and follow it? What do you think?
4. Is it better to be fully repaid in this life for the good that one does, or not to be fully repaid in this life? What do you think, and why?
5. Can you think of examples of how a person might hide something good that he (or she) does? Is there any joy in hiding the good that one does?
6. Jesus mentioned “the resurrection of the righteous” (Luke 14:14). When will that take place? See John 5:28-29.

92

The Parable of the Great Banquet

Luke 14:15-24

As Jesus sat in the house of one of the leading Pharisees in Judea, a man that sat at table with Jesus said, “Blessed is the man who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God” (Luke 14:15 NIV). In response to this

comment, Jesus told a parable about a man that gave a great banquet. He said, “A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests” (Luke 14:16 NIV).

When the hour for the banquet arrived, the man sent his servant to say to those that were invited, “Come, for everything is now ready” (Luke 14:17b NIV).

Those that were invited, however, all began to make excuses. The first one said, “I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me” (Luke 14:18b NIV).

Another one said, “I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I’m on my way to try them out. Please excuse me” (Luke 14:19 NIV).

Still another said, “I just got married, so I can’t come” (Luke 14:20 NIV).

The servant returned and reported all this to his master. When the owner of the house heard all of this, he became angry and said to his servant, “Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame” (Luke 14:21b NIV).

The servant did as his Lord commanded; and after a while he returned, and said, “Lord, what you ordered has been done, but there is still room” (Luke 14:22).

Then the man said to the servant, “Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in, so that my house will be full” (Luke 14:23 NIV). Then he added, “I tell you, not one of those men who were invited will get a taste of my banquet” (Luke 14:24 NIV).

Thought Questions

1. Did any of the invited guests in Jesus’ parable have a good excuse for not attending the banquet? Are there any good excuses for not responding to Jesus’ invitation? What do you think?
2. The owner of the house got angry (Luke 14:21) when none of his invited guests came to his banquet. Was his anger justified? Do you think that God is angry with people if they do not respond to His kind invitation?

3. The man told his servant to bring in “the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame” (Luke 14:21). Does Jesus want such people in His church? What do you think?
4. The man told his servant to go into “the roads and country lanes,” and he should compel whomever he met to come to the banquet (Luke 14:23). Do you think Jesus meant that His servants should use physical force to compel people to become Christians?
5. Do you think that the man that prepared the great banquet was justified in saying (Luke 14:24) that none of those people that had been originally invited would get to taste his banquet? See Pro 1:24-27.
6. Did Jesus imply that people who refuse His invitation would not get into heaven? What do you think?
7. Will men and women be treated as equals in heaven? See Matthew 22:30.

93

Counting the Cost

Luke 14:25-35

Large crowds of people were trailing along with Jesus in Judea. He turned to them and began to tell them what it would cost them to be His disciples. He warned, “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters-yes, even his own life he cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:26 NIV).

Jesus also repeated something that He had told His apostles before He had sent them out on their first mission journey. He said, “And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:27 NIV).

Jesus then put a hypothetical example before the people that were walking along with Him. He said, “Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has

enough money to complete it?” (Luke 14:28 NIV) The obvious answer to Jesus’ question is, “Yes, he will sit down and estimate whether or not he has enough money to complete the tower.”

Jesus continued, “For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, saying, ‘This fellow began to build and was not able to finish’” (Luke 14:29-30 NIV).

Jesus then set another hypothetical example before His walking companions. He said,

Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king.
Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is able
with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against
him with twenty thousand?

Luke 14:31 NIV

Again, the obvious answer is, “Yes, the king will sit down and consider whether or not he has enough troops to go against his enemy.” Enlarging upon this, Jesus said, “If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace” (Luke 14:32 NIV).

Jesus also warned His walking companions that they must be prepared to say “good-bye” to their possessions if they want to be His disciples. He said, “So therefore, whoever of you does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:33 RSV).

A person that is not willing to do all that Jesus has said is like salt that has lost its saltiness. Jesus said, “Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure pile; it is thrown out” (Luke 14:34-35a NIV). He then admonished His companions, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear” (Luke 14:35b NIV).

Thought Questions

1. Earlier, Jesus told His apostles that anyone who loved father or mother more than Him is not worthy of Him (Matt 10:37). Here

(Luke 14:26), Jesus said that if anyone does not hate his father and mother, that person cannot be His disciple. Do you see any difference between these two remarks: If you do see a difference, please tell what the difference is?

2. Earlier, Jesus said that anyone that did not take his cross and follow Him is “not worthy” of Him (Matt 10:38). Here, He said (Luke 14:27) that such a person “cannot be my disciple.” Do you see any difference between these two remarks? If you do, what is the difference?
3. Jesus said, “So therefore, whoever of you does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:33 RSV). Did Jesus mean that a prospective disciple should go out immediately and sell everything he (or she) owns and give it away? Or did Jesus mean that a person should realize that being His follower might cost him or her everything that he or she has? (In order to see how the earliest Christians interpreted their responsibility as regards their possessions, read Acts 4:32 and Acts 5:4.)
4. Do you think that Jesus was trying to frighten people away? If not that, what was He doing?
5. Do you think it is a mistake for a person to become a Christian without counting the cost? Is it wrong for us to encourage people to become Christians without warning them of the possible cost? What do you think?

94

The Parable of the Lost Sheep and the Parable of the Lost Coin

Luke 15:1-10

Not only did scribes (teachers of the Law of Moses) and Pharisees often gather around Jesus to hear what He had to say, but ordinary people did that, too. At one point, a group of tax collectors gathered

around Him. Now, as you will remember, tax collectors were generally considered to be unpatriotic, because they collected taxes for a foreign power (Rome). In addition, some other people, whom the Pharisees would consider to be “sinners,” were also gathered around Jesus. Even these people wanted to hear what Jesus had to say.

The scribes and Pharisees that were present held it against Jesus that He associated with such people; and they muttered, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them” (Luke 15:2 NIV).

In response to their muttering, Jesus told them this parable. He said, “What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep and has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open pasture and go after the one which is lost until he finds it?” (Luke 14:4 NASB).

Jesus continued: “And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep’” (Luke 15:5-6 NIV). Jesus drew the following lesson from His parable. He said, “I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent” (Luke 15:7 NIV).

Next, using a different parable, Jesus taught the same lesson again. He said, “Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Does she not light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it?” (Luke 15:8 NIV). Jesus continued: “And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin’” (Luke 15:9 NIV).

Jesus drew from the Parable of the Lost Coin the identical lesson that He had drawn from the Parable of the Lost Sheep. He said, “In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents” (Luke 15:10 NIV).

Thought Questions

1. Why did Jesus associate with tax collectors and sinners? What do you think?

2. Is it permissible for Christians to associate with sinners? See 1 Cor 5:9-11. Can Christians participate in everything that sinners do?
3. Should Christians seek out and try to save people that are lost? Why should they do this?
4. Why does heaven rejoice over each sinner that repents?

95

The Parable of the Lost Son

Luke 15:11-32

Continuing to teach about lost things, Jesus told a parable about a man who had two sons. The younger of his two sons said to their father, “Father, give me the share of the estate that falls to me” (Luke 15:12). The man did as his younger son requested. He divided his property between his two sons.

Not long after that, the younger son got together all that he had and set off for a distant country. In that country the young man squandered all his wealth in wild living. After he had wasted everything, there came a severe famine over that land and he began to be in need.

So he hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. The young man longed to fill his stomach even with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything to eat. When the young man came to his senses, he said to himself, “How many of my father’s hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death!” (Luke 15:17 NIV).

The young man decided,

I will set out and go back to my father and say to him:
‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am
no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one
of your hired men.’

Luke 15:18-19 NIV

Jesus continued His parable by saying,

So he got up and went to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

Luke 15:20 NIV

The son said to his father, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son” (Luke 15:21 NIV).

Before the son could finish his speech, however, his father interrupted him and said to his servants,

Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.

Luke 15:22-24a NIV

Then they began to celebrate.

Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. As he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. He called one of the servants to him and asked him what was going on. The servant replied, “Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has gotten him back in health” (Luke 15:27).

At that, the older brother became angry and refused to go in, but his father went out to him and pleaded with him; but the older brother answered his father, saying,

Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!

Luke 15:29-30 NIV

The father replied, “My son, you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found” (Luke 15:31-32 NIV).

Thought Questions

1. The younger son wanted to leave home. Do you have any ideas as to what may have motivated him to want to leave home?
2. The younger son told his father that he had sinned? What, specifically, was his sin? Can you put a name to it?
3. Was it only a coincidence that the father was out looking down the road that day? Or do you think the father was often looking down that road? What does this suggest to you about God?
4. What was it that irritated the older son. Was he irritated because he did not get to eat a calf? What do you think his problem was?
5. All three of Jesus’ parables in Luke chapter fifteen concern lost things. Are the three parables similar to each other in any way? What do they teach?

96

The Parable of the Dishonest Manager

Luke 16:1-13

Presumably, the tax collectors and “sinners” (Luke 15:1) were still listening to Jesus as He told His disciples the following parable. Jesus said that there was a rich man whose manager was accused of wasting the possessions of the rich man. So the rich man called his manager in and asked him, “What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your management, because you cannot be manager any longer” (Luke 16:2 NIV).

The dishonest manager thought to himself, “What shall I do now? My master is taking away my job. I’m not strong enough to dig, and I’m ashamed to beg” (Luke 16:3 NIV).

A way finally occurred to the dishonest manager how he could provide for his future. He said, “I know what I’ll do so that, when I lose my job here, people will welcome me into their houses” (Luke 16:4 NIV). The dishonest manager called in each of his master’s debtors. The first one he asked, “How much do you owe my master?” (Luke 16:5 NIV)?

The man answered, “Nine hundred gallons of olive oil.”

So the manager told the debtor, “Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it four hundred and fifty.” In this way the dishonest manager caused his master to lose about four hundred and fifty gallons of olive oil; but by doing so, he made friends for himself among his master’s debtors. Then the dishonest manager asked another of his master’s debtors, “How much do you owe?”

“A thousand bushels of wheat,” the debtor answered.

The dishonest manager told him, “Take your bill and make it eight hundred.” In this way the dishonest manager caused his master to lose 200 bushels of wheat; but he made more friends for himself among his master’s debtors.

At this point, Jesus’ parable took an unexpected turn, in that He did not condemn the dishonest manager. What Jesus said was, “The master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly” (Luke 16:8a NIV).

Jesus explained, “For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light” (Luke 16:8b NIV). Then Jesus advised His followers, “I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings” (Luke 16:9 NIV).

Concerning honest and dishonest people, Jesus said, “Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much” (Luke 16:10 NIV).

Then, Jesus warned His listeners, “So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches?” (Luke 16:11 NIV). Further, Jesus said, “And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else’s property, who will give you property of your own?” (Luke 16:12 NIV).

In this connection, Jesus repeated something that He had said in Galilee (Matt 6:24), namely, “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” (Luke 16:13a NKJV). Then Jesus said, “You cannot serve God and mammon [money]” (Luke 16:13b NKJV).

Thought Questions

1. Was what the dishonest manager did morally right? How can it be said that the dishonest manager acted “shrewdly” (Luke 16:8)?
2. Who are the “people of light,” of whom Jesus spoke (Luke 16:8)? Should “people of light” be as diligent in providing for their future in heaven as are “the people of this world” in providing for their material welfare on earth? Please, explain.
3. How can a person use “worldly wealth” (Luke 16:9) to make friends for himself in heaven?
4. Jesus contrasted “worldly wealth” with “true riches” (Luke 16:11). What are the “true riches” of which Jesus spoke?
5. Jesus spoke of a person’s being “trustworthy with someone else’s property” (Luke 16:12). Has each of us been entrusted with “property” that is not our own? What “property” has been entrusted to us?
6. Jesus implied that “property” would be given to His followers in the future. Apparently, it will be “property” that will belong to His followers themselves (Luke 16:12). Did Jesus imply that in heaven His people would be not only guests but also property owners? What do you think?

7. Why is it not possible for a person to serve God and money (Luke 16:13)? Is it because God will not permit it, or is it because it is inherently impossible, or both? What do you think?

97

Jesus Instructed Some Pharisees

Luke 16:14-18

Some of the Pharisees heard Jesus teach His parable about the Dishonest Manager. They sneered at Him (Luke 16:14) when He said (Luke 16:13) that a person cannot serve both God and money. They sneered because they were lovers of money.

In reply to them, Jesus gave them His frank appraisal of their attitude. He said to them, “You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of men, but God knows your hearts” (Luke 16:15a NIV).

They were looking at things as people do, rather than as God does. Jesus said, “What is highly valued among men is detestable in God’s sight” (Luke 16:15b NIV).

Loving money, however, was not the only fault that these Pharisees had. Many of them were blind to what God was doing in their day. They were not aware that the time for the Law and the Prophets was drawing to a close. Jesus said to them, “The law and the prophets were until John. Since that time the kingdom of God has been preached,...” (Luke 16:16a NKJV).

In contrast to most of the Pharisees, many of the common people recognized that the kingdom of God was approaching; and they were striving to get into it. Jesus alluded to this, when He said, “and everyone is pressing into it.” (Luke 16:16b NKJV)

The Pharisees, however, appear to have feared that if people followed Jesus, people’s respect for the Law and the Prophets would decrease. Jesus assured them, however, that if people became His follower, the Law and the Prophets would still be important but,

perhaps, not important in the same way as before. He said, “But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one stroke of a letter of the Law to fail” (Luke 16:17 NASB).

Then Jesus put His finger on one especially harmful practice among the Pharisees. He said, “Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery, and the man who marries a divorced woman commits adultery” (Luke 16:18 NIV).

Thought Questions

1. What is wrong with being a “lover of money?” Is it dangerous? If it is dangerous, why is it?
2. Jesus said, “But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one stroke of a letter of the Law to fail” (Luke 16:17 NASB). Did Jesus mean that His followers must live by the Old Testament? See Gal 3:24-25. By which law, then, should Jesus’ followers live? See Gal 6:2.
3. Is it better for a man not to divorce his wife? What do you think?
4. Is it better for a Christian man not to marry a woman that some man has divorced? What do you think?
5. Is it better for a woman not to divorce her husband? What do you think?
6. Is it better for a Christian woman not to marry a man that some woman has divorced? What do you think?

98

The Story of the Rich Man and Lazarus

Luke 16:19-31

To some of the Pharisees, who loved money (Luke 16:14), Jesus told a story about a rich man and a beggar. The beggar’s name was Lazarus. Lazarus was laid at the rich man’s gate, and Lazarus longed to eat the bits

of food that fell from the rich man's table. Lazarus was covered with sores, and dogs came and licked his sores (Luke 6:21).

Now it came about that Lazarus died and was carried by angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried (Luke 16:22). The rich man found himself in Hades in torment. He lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far away and he saw that Lazarus was by Abraham's side (Luke 16:23). Then the rich man called out to Abraham, saying, "Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire" (Luke 16:24 NIV).

Abraham replied, "Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony" (Luke 16:25 NIV).

Abraham continued, "And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us" (Luke 16:26 NIV).

Then the rich man answered, saying, "Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father's house, for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment" (Luke 16:27-28 NIV).

Abraham replied, "They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them" (Luke 16:29 NIV).

The man said, "No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent" (Luke 16:30 NKJV).

Again, Abraham replied, "If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead" (Luke 16:31 NIV).

Thought Questions

1. Does having riches in this life help a person for the life to come, or is being rich a disadvantage for the life to come? What do you think?

2. A great chasm has been fixed between where Abraham and Lazarus are and where the rich man is, so that no one can pass from one part to the other. In view of this, do you think that prayers spoken by living people on behalf of the dead make it possible for a dead person to pass from one part to the other?
3. What do you think the rich man wanted Lazarus to say to his brothers?
4. Abraham did not think that it would help the rich man's brothers if Lazarus went back from the dead to warn them. Is it still true that if people will not listen to what God said in the Bible, they would not listen if someone were to come back from the dead to warn them?

99

Forgiveness and Faith

Luke 17:1-10

Jesus warned His disciples that there would be people who would cause others to sin. He said, "It is inevitable that stumbling blocks come, but woe to him through whom they come!" (Luke 17:1 NASB). Jesus predicted here, as He had done before (Matt 18:7-9), that there would be dire consequences for anyone that causes others to sin. He said, "It would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around his neck than for him to cause one of these little ones to sin" (Luke 17:2 NIV). Then He advised, "So watch yourselves" (Luke 17:3a NIV).

Following this, Jesus began to discuss how His disciples should react when a brother sins against them. He said, "If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him" (Luke 17:3b NIV). Jesus reminded them that they should be willing to forgive a brother not just once but often. See Matthew 18:21-22. He added, "If he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times comes back to you and says, 'I repent,' forgive him" (Luke 17:4 NIV).

The disciples had difficulty accepting the idea that they should forgive the same person for the same offense over and over again. They said to their Lord, “Increase our faith!” (Luke 17:5)

Jesus replied, “If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, and had said to this mulberry tree, ‘Be rooted up and planted in the sea;’ it would have obeyed you.” (Luke 17:6)

Jesus then turned to another topic. In order to keep His disciples from becoming prideful, He reminded them that they were servants. He said, “Suppose one of you had a servant plowing or looking after the sheep. Would he say to the servant when he comes in from the field, ‘Come along now and sit down to eat?’” (Luke 17:7 NIV).

He continued: “Would he not rather say, ‘Prepare my supper, get yourself ready and wait on me while I eat and drink; after that you may eat and drink?’” (Luke 17:8 NIV)

Jesus asked further, “Would he thank the servant because he did what he was told to do?” (Luke 17:9 NIV)

Jesus concluded His remarks on this occasion, by saying, “So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, ‘We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty’” (Luke 17:10 NIV).

Thought Questions

1. Should Jesus’ disciples rebuke everyone that sins against them, or are they supposed to rebuke only their brothers and sisters in the Lord? See Luke 17:3b. What do you think?
2. If you rebuke a person and that person does not repent, are you supposed to forgive him? What do you think?
3. Is there any limit to the number of times that we should be willing to forgive a person? What do you think?
4. Jesus said to His disciples that if they had faith “as a mustard seed,” they could have said to a tree “be planted in the sea,” and it would have happened (Luke 17:6). Was Jesus talking only about moving trees? What do you think?

5. Did Jesus mean that people today can perform miracles just as the apostles did?
6. Is there some sense, however, in which people today can accomplish great things by faith? What do you think?
7. Is there any reason for us to be prideful over the service that we give to God? How should we feel about our service? See Luke 17:10.

100

The Ten Lepers

Luke 17:11-19

Jesus slowly made His way toward Jerusalem, and He passed along the border between Samaria and Galilee. As He was going through a certain village, ten men who were lepers met Him. They stood at a distance, as they should, and called out with a loud voice, “Jesus, Master, have pity on us” (Luke 17:13)!

When Jesus saw the lepers, He said simply, “Go, show yourselves to the priests.” (According to Lev 14:1-7, this is what people that had recovered from leprosy were supposed to do.) So the lepers started off immediately to obey Jesus’ words. As they went, they were cleansed of their leprosy (Luke 17:14).

One of them, when he saw that he was clean, he came back to Jesus. He praised God in a loud voice, and fell on his face at Jesus’ feet and thanked Him. This man was not an Israelite but a Samaritan. When the man did this, Jesus asked, “Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?” (Luke 17:17 NIV)

Jesus enlarged upon this by asking, “Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?” (Luke 17:18 NIV) Jesus then said to the Samaritan, “Rise and go; your faith has made you well” (Luke 17:19 NIV).

Thought Questions

1. Were the ten lepers healed before they did what Jesus said or only after they started off to obey? Is this point of significance?
2. Is thankfulness an attribute that Jesus admired in people? Is this an attribute that you admire?
3. Have you ever known a person who was extremely grateful for what others did for him or her? Please tell about that person.
4. What is the significance of the fact that the leper that returned to give thanks was a Samaritan, a foreigner?

101

The Coming of the Kingdom of God and the Return of the Son of Man

Luke 17:20-37

Now, some of the Pharisees asked Jesus when the kingdom of God would come (Luke 17:20a). They seemed to have been thinking of the kingdom of God as an earthly kingdom. Jesus answered them by saying, “The kingdom of God does not come with observation; “nor will people say, ‘Here it is,’ or ‘There it is,...’” (Luke 17:20b-21a NKJV).

From this it was obvious that the kingdom of God was to be different from any earthly kingdom. It would not come with beating drums and marching soldiers; nor would people be able to say that it is limited to one particular place. Jesus explained why it is so. He said, “...because the kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:21b NIV).

Following this, Jesus began to teach His disciples what it would be like after He would be taken from them and before He would return. During that time His disciples would long to see one of the days of the Son of Man but would not see it (Luke 17:22). He warned, “Men will tell

you, “There he is!” or “Here he is!” (Luke 17:23a NIV). Therefore, He advised, “Do not go running off after them” (Luke 17:23b NIV).

It will not be necessary to go running after people who claim that Jesus is hidden somewhere on earth; because when He returns, all will see Him. He said, “For the Son of Man in his day will be like the lightning, which flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other” (Luke 17:24 NIV).

Jesus explained that before He would be able to come again He would have to undergo suffering and rejection. He said, “But first he [the Son of Man] must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation” (Luke 17:25 NIV).

Then, He compared the days in which He would return to the days of Noah, saying, “Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man” (Luke 17:26 NIV).

People will be no more expecting the Son of Man than they were expecting the flood in the days of Noah. Jesus said, “People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all” (Luke 17:27 NIV).

He also compared the people who will be alive on the day of His return to the people of Sodom. He said,

It was the same in the days of Lot. People were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building. But the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all. It will be just like this on the day the Son of Man is revealed.

Luke 17:28-30 NIV

He gave His followers some advice about the day of His return. He said, “On that day no one who is on the roof of his house, with his goods inside, should go down to get them. Likewise, no one in the field should go back for anything” (Luke 17:31 NIV).

Then He cautioned, “Remember Lot’s wife!” (Luke 17:32 NIV)

He urged His disciples to be ready to accept whatever persecution may come their way. He said, “Whoever tries to keep his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it” (Luke 17:33 NIV).

Where it is nighttime when Jesus returns, the following will happen: “I tell you, on that night two people will be in one bed; one will be taken and the other left” (Luke 17:34 NIV).

Where it is daytime, the following will happen: “Two women will be grinding grain together; one will be taken and the other left” (Luke 17:35 NIV).

Jesus’ disciples were very curious to know where all of this would take place. They asked, “Where, Lord?” (Luke 17:37)

His replied, “Where there is a dead body, there the vultures will gather” (Luke 17:37 NIV).

Thought Questions

1. Do you suppose that the Pharisees were hoping to see the kingdom of God come with blowing trumpets and marching soldiers? Did the kingdom of God make its appearance in such a way? When did the kingdom make its appearance? See Acts 2:1-36.
2. What did Jesus mean when He said, “The kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:21)? Did Jesus mean that the kingdom of God was already present among the people of His day, or did He mean that the nature of God’s kingdom is such that it resides in the hearts of people? What do you think?
3. What happened in the days of Lot? See Gen 19. Please, describe what happened?
4. Why should a person not go into his (or her) house to get any of his (or her) possessions (Luke 17:30-31) when the Son of Man is revealed? Will earthly possessions be of any value at that time? Will this be the end of the world?
5. What is the significance of Jesus’ injunction, “Remember Lot’s wife” (Luke 17:32)? What mistake did Lot’s wife make? See Gen 19:26. How can we avoid making the same mistake that Lot’s wife made?

6. What did Jesus mean when He said, “One will be taken and the other left” (Luke 17:34-35)? Did He mean that one person would be taken from the earth when Jesus comes and another left behind to experience the destruction of the earth? Will everyone then appear before the Judgment throne of God? See Matthew 25:32.
7. What did Jesus mean when He said, “Where there is a dead body, there the vultures will gather” (Luke 17:37)? Did He mean that His disciples need not worry about finding Him when He returns, because they would be drawn to Him? What do you think?

102

The Persistent Widow

Luke 18:1-8

After Jesus had instructed His disciples about His Second Coming (Luke 17:22-37), He taught them that they should always pray and not give up (Luke 18:1). To illustrate the value of persistent prayer, Jesus told His disciples a story about a judge in a certain city. He said that this judge did not fear God or respect people. Now, there was also a widow in that city, who came to the judge over and over again with the same plea. She pled, “Get justice for me from my adversary” (Luke 18:3 NKJV).

According to some translations, the woman said to the Judge, “Vindicate me” or “Avenge me.” It would seem, however, that she wanted redress for some financial injustice that had been done to her, not vengeance.

For a long time the judge would not help her but after a while he said to himself, “I don’t fear God or respect people. Yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will grant her justice. Otherwise, she will keep coming and wear me out” (Luke 18:4b-5 ISV).

Then Jesus said, “Pay attention to what the unjust judge says” (Luke 18:6). Jesus highlighted the lesson, which His parable taught, by asking, “Won’t God grant his chosen people justice when they cry out to him

day and night? Is he slow to help them?” (Luke 18:7 ISV) These were rhetorical questions, of course; but Jesus answered them anyway. He said, “I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly” (Luke 18:8 NIV).

God will grant justice to His chosen people. There is no doubt about that, but there is some doubt about whether or not His chosen people will have the faith to keep on praying until Jesus returns; Jesus asked, “However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:8 NIV)

Thought Questions

1. What would you say to people who find that God is very slow in answering their prayers for help?
2. Do people sometimes get so discouraged that they give up praying? What do you think?
3. Do you think the devil wants people to give up praying? In what way is it dangerous for God’s people to give up praying?
4. Do you find, from your own experience, that God eventually helps people that live according to the Bible and who plead for His help?
5. Is it possible for people to receive so many blessings that they no longer think it is necessary to pray? What do you think?
6. Do you think there will be faith on the earth when Jesus returns? Please explain why you think as you do?

103

A Pharisee and a Tax Collector

Luke 18:9-14

Jesus told this parable to some of the people who were convinced that they were righteous and who looked down upon everyone else. He said, “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector” (Luke 18:10 NIV).

The Pharisee in Jesus' story stood by himself and prayed, "God, I thank you that I am not like other men -robbers, evildoers, adulterers or even like this tax collector" (Luke 18:11b NIV). The Pharisee continued to list his good points in prayer. He said, "I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get" (Luke 18:12 NIV).

In contrast to this, the tax collector stood at a distance and would not even look up to heaven but beat his breast and said, "God, have mercy on me, a sinner" (Luke 18:13b NIV).

Jesus' comment concerning this was: "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other..." (Luke 18:14a NASB). Jesus continued, "For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." (Luke 18:14b NIV).

Thought Questions

1. The Pharisee thanked God that he was not a robber, an evildoer, or an adulterer (Luke 18:11). Was it wrong for the Pharisee to be thankful that he did not do those bad things? If not, what was wrong with his prayer?
2. The tax collector prayed a prayer that was different from the Pharisee's. What do you suppose it was that Jesus liked about the tax collector's prayer?
3. Jesus said that "everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted" (Luke 18:14b NIV). Did Jesus mean that proud people would be humbled in this life and that humble people would be exalted in this life; or did He mean that this would happen in heaven? What do you think?

***TEACHING
EAST OF THE
JORDAN RIVER***

104

Teaching About Divorce

Matthew 19:1-12; Mark 10:1-12

After having spent some time in Judea, Jesus crossed to the other side of the Jordan River (Matt 19:1). Matthew 19:1 seems to imply that Jesus went immediately to the other side of the Jordan after He left Galilee. However, Matthew may not have wished to leave that impression, since all the events narrated in Luke 9:51-18:14 took place after Jesus left Galilee (Luke 9:51) and before He crossed the Jordan.

Once Jesus was on the eastern side of the Jordan River, certain Pharisees came to Him to test Him. They asked Him, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?” (Matt 19:3 NIV).

These Pharisees, perhaps, knew that Jesus was opposed to divorce. They may have hoped to show that His views conflicted with the Law of Moses, and they had a scripture passage in mind, with which they hoped to trip Him.

Jesus knew, of course, what the Law of Moses said about divorce. He also knew what argument they intended to make, so He asked them, “What did Moses command you?” (Mark 10:3 NIV)

They replied, “Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away” (Mark 10:4 NIV). That is true. Moses did permit a man to divorce his wife, simply by giving her a certificate of divorce (Deu 24:1-4).

But Jesus went back to an earlier scripture (Gen 1:27). He asked them, “Haven’t you read that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female?’” (Matt 19:4)

Jesus continued, “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh” (Matt 19:5 NIV). He then concluded, “So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate” (Matt 19:6 NIV).

In rebuttal they asked, “Why then, did Moses command (Deu 24:1-4) that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?” (Matt 19:7)

Jesus explained, “Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning” (Matt 19:8 NIV).

Now, when Jesus and His disciples were indoors, the disciples asked Him about divorce (Mark 10:10). He explained, “I tell you that whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery” (Matt 19:9 ISV). What applies to a man also applies to a woman. Jesus said, “And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery” (Mark 10:12 NIV).

The disciples seem to have thought that what Jesus said about divorce and remarriage was very restricting. For they said, “If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry” (Matt 19:10 NIV).

To that Jesus replied, “Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given” (Matt 19:11 NIV).

Not everyone is willing to live by His rules, but some are; and everyone should try. He said,

For some are eunuchs because they were born that way;
others were made that way by men; and others have
renounced marriage because of the kingdom of heaven.

The one who can accept this should accept it.

Matthew 19:12 NIV

Thought Questions

1. Why did Moses permit a man to divorce his wife? See Matthew 19:8. What do you think about the custom of allowing a man to divorce his wife, simply by giving her a certificate of divorce? Is that a good custom?

2. What did Jesus think about divorce? Was He in favor of it or opposed to it? See Matthew 19:6. Why is divorce harmful, if it is? Whom does it harm? What do you think?
3. Must a man put away (divorce) his wife if she has been sexually unfaithful to him? Can he keep her if he likes? What do you think?
4. Does Jesus permit a man to marry again if he has justly put away (divorced) his wife because she was sexually unfaithful to him? See Matthew 19:9.
5. Does Jesus permit a woman who has been put away (divorced) to marry another man? See Matthew 5:32.
6. Does Jesus permit a man to marry a woman who has been put away (divorced)? See Matthew 5:32.
7. Does what Jesus said about men divorcing their wives apply equally as well to woman divorcing their husbands? What do you think?
8. Does God expect unmarried people to live without sexual activity? See 1 Th 4:3-5.
9. Did Jesus teach that it is better not to get married at all? Do you think the church should make a rule forbidding its teachers and preachers to marry?

105

Little Children Blessed

Matthew 19:13-15; Mark 10:13-16; Luke

18:15-17

People in Judea were bringing their children to Jesus so He could lay His hands on them and pray for them (Matt 19:13). Luke tells us that the children were babies (Luke 18:15). When the disciples saw people bringing their children to Jesus, they rebuked them (Luke 18:15).

However, when Jesus saw His disciples turning away the children and their parents, He was greatly distressed (Mark 10:14). So He called for the little children to return to Him (Luke 18:16) and said to His disciples,

“Let the little children alone and do not prevent them from coming to me, for the kingdom of heaven is of such as these” (Matt 19:14).

Jesus continued, “Truly I say to you, anyone that does not receive the kingdom of God like a child, will not get into it” (Mark 10:15; Luke 18:17). Jesus then embraced the little children and blessed them by putting His hands on each of them (Mark 10:16). After He had done this, He and His disciples moved on to other places (Matt 19:15).

Thought Questions

1. Why was it, do you suppose, that the disciples of Jesus were not allowing people to bring their small children to Jesus?
2. What did Jesus mean when He said, with regards to children, “for the kingdom of heaven is of such as these” (Matt 19:14)?
3. Matthew regularly referred to the kingdom as “the kingdom of heaven,” while Mark and Luke called it the “the kingdom of God.” Were they referring to the same thing?
4. It appears that Jesus could bless the children without actually pronouncing a blessing over them? Does this strike you as being strange? Does it suggest that His ability to bless people did not depend upon ritualistic words?
5. What did Jesus mean when He said, “Truly I say to you, anyone that does not receive the kingdom of God like a child, will not get into it” (Mark 10:15; Luke 18:17)? Did Jesus mean that the citizens of the kingdom of God must have a childlike quality about them? What quality (or qualities) do citizens of God’s kingdom have in common with children?
6. Did Jesus mean (Mark 10:15; Luke 18:17) that babies are supposed to be taken in as members of the church? Was He teaching that little children should be baptized? Did He mean that unless little children are baptized they will go to hell?

106

The Rich Young Ruler

*Matthew 19:16-30; Mark 10:17-31;
Luke 18:18-30*

Jesus started out on the road one day, on the eastern side of the Jordan River; and a man ran up Him and fell to his knees before Him (Mark 10:17). The man's brisk actions suggest that he was a young man. The Gospel of Luke tells us that he was also a "ruler" (Luke 18:18). The man came with an urgent question. He asked, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" (Mark 10:17 RSV)

Jesus replied, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone" (Mark 10:18 RSV).

So the young man put His question another way. He asked, "Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?" (Matt 19:16b NIV)

To this Jesus replied, "Why do you ask me about what is good?" If you want to enter life, obey the commandments." (Matt 19:17 NIV)

The young man was confused. Which commandments did Jesus mean? There are many commandments in the Old Testament. So the young man asked Him, "Which ones?" (Matt 19:18)

Jesus replied from Exo 20:12-17, "You know the commandments: 'Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not defraud, honor your father and mother'" (Mark 10:19 NIV).

To these Jesus added from Lev 19:18, "And love your neighbor as yourself." (Matt 19:19b NIV)

These were familiar commandments. The young man replied to Jesus, "Teacher, all these I have kept since I was a boy" (Mark 10:20 NIV).

Upon hearing this, Jesus looked at the young man with love in His heart (Mark 10:21) and said to him, "One thing you lack. If you want to

be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me” (Matt 19:21 NIV).

The young man, however, had great wealth and could not part with it; so he went away sorrowfully (Mark 10:22). At his departure, Jesus looked around at His disciples and remarked to them, “Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! 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” (Mark 10:24-25 NIV).

The disciples were amazed at what Jesus said. They asked each other, “Who then can be saved?” (Mark 10:26 NIV)

Jesus looked directly at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God” (Mark 10:27 NIV).

Then Peter, speaking for all the apostles, replied, “We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?” (Matt 19:27 NIV)

To Peter, and to the other apostles, Jesus replied,

I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Matthew 19:28 NIV

Jesus expanded His comments by saying,

I tell you the truth, no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields-and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life.

Mark 10:29-30 NIV

Then Jesus added, “But many who are first will be last, and the last first” (Mark 10:31 NIV).

Thought Questions

1. Jesus told the rich young ruler to obey the commandments (Matt 19:17b). This differs from what Peter said on the day of Pentecost. Peter said, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38 NIV). Why did Peter’s message differ from Jesus’ message? Is it because the rich young ruler lived under the old covenant, while Jesus’ followers, ever since Jesus’ resurrection and ascension, live under the new covenant?
2. Jesus told the rich young ruler, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor” (Matt 19:21 NIV). Jesus had not required this of all others. Why did He require that this young man sell everything and give it to the poor? What do you think?
3. Was Jesus disappointed when the rich young ruler turned away? What do you think?
4. Why is it hard for rich people to enter the kingdom of God? Is it impossible for rich people to be saved? What do you think?
5. Is it still true that people who leave their family and their possessions for the gospel’s sake will be rewarded both in this life and in the life to come (Mark 10:29-30)? What do you think?

107

The Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard

Matthew 20:1-16

Jesus was teaching on the other side of the Jordan River. He said that the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner that went out early in the morning to hire men to work in his vineyard. Having agreed with the workers to pay them one denarius for a day’s work, the landowner sent the workers into his vineyard (Matthew 20:2).

About the third hour of the day (nine o'clock), the landowner went out again and saw other men standing idle in the marketplace. He said, "You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right" (Matt 20:4 NIV).

Also they went to the vineyard. About the sixth and ninth hours, the landowner went out and did the same. About the eleventh hour, he found still others standing idle and asked them, "Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?" (Matt 20:6b NIV)

They replied, "Because no one hired us."

So he said to them, "You also go and work in my vineyard" (Matt 20:7b NIV).

When evening came, the master of the vineyard said to his foreman, "Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first" (Matt 20:8 NIV).

The workers hired about the eleventh hour came, and each one received a denarius. When the workers that had been hired first came, they expected to receive more, but each of them also got one denarius.

Having received only one denarius, they began to grumble against the landowner, saying, "These men, who were hired last, worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us, who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day" (Matt 20:12).

The owner replied to one of them, saying, "Friend, I am not being unfair to you. Didn't you agree to work for a denarius? Take your pay and go. I want to give the man who was hired last the same as I gave you" (Matt 20:13-14 NIV).

The landowner continued, "Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?" (Matt 20:15 NIV)

Jesus ended His parable with a saying that He had used before. He said, "So the last will be first, and the first will be last" (Matt 20:16 NIV)

Thought Questions

1. Is Jesus recruiting workers for His vineyard today?
2. What are some of the things that the workers in Jesus' vineyard are expected to do?
3. Do you think people will be rewarded in heaven for their work? Will the nature of the reward in heaven depend upon the number of years that a person has been in Christian service?
4. What did Jesus mean when He said that "The last will be first and the first will be last" (Matt 20:16)? What do you think?
5. Does it bother you that the workers in this parable all received the same pay? What does that tell you about the "landowner?" Was He unfair, or was He generous? What do you think?
6. Is there any reason for long-time Christians to feel that they are better or that they are more worthy than new Christians?

***JESUS RETURNS
TO THE VICINITY
OF JERUSALEM***

108

The Healing the Man Born Blind

John 9:1-40

After a short stay east of the Jordan, Jesus came back across the river and was in (or near) Jerusalem. As He walked along with His disciples, He and they saw a man who had been blind from birth. The disciples asked Jesus, “Teacher, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”

Jesus, knowing that He would give the man eyesight, answered, “Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but this happened in order that the works of God might be shown in him” (John 9:3).

Jesus’ explained how He felt about doing the “the works of God,” saying, “As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world” (John 9:4-5 NIV).

Jesus then spit on the ground, made mud with the saliva and put it on the man’s eyes; and He said to the man, “Go, wash in the Pool of Siloam” (John 9:7), which was in Jerusalem.

The man went and washed. When he came back and was able to see, his neighbors and people that had seen him begging asked, “Isn’t this the man who used to sit and beg?”

Some of them agreed that it was the man, but others disputed, saying, “No, he only looks like that man.”

The man himself said, “I am the man.”

They asked, “How then were your eyes opened?”

He replied, “The man they call Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes. He told me to go to Siloam and wash. So I went and washed, and then I could see” (John 9:11 NIV).

They asked him, “Where is this man?”

“I don’t know,” he replied.

Then the people led the man to the Pharisees. Now, it happened that it was a Sabbath day that Jesus had made mud and opened the man's eyes. Because it was on the Sabbath day that it happened, the Pharisees interrogated the man. They wanted to know exactly how he had regained his sight. "He put mud on my eyes," the man replied, "and I washed, and now I see" (John 9:15b NIV).

At that, the Pharisees began to discuss about Jesus, for He was on everyone's mind. Some of them said, "This man [Jesus] is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath" (John 9:16a NIV).

Others of them asked, "How can a sinner do such miraculous signs?" Thus, they were divided as to who Jesus was.

Eventually, they turned again to the blind man and demanded of Him, "What do you have to say about him? It was your eyes that he opened" (John 9:17). The man replied, "He is a prophet." The Pharisees did not believe that the man had been blind and had regained his sight until, that is, they had sent for his parents. Then they asked his parents, "Is this your son, whom you say was born blind? How is it that he now is able to see" (John 9:19)?

"We know he is our son," the parents answered, "and we know he was born blind. But how he can now see, or who opened his eyes, we don't know. Ask him. He is of age; he will speak for himself" (John 9:20-21 NIV). His parents answered this way because they were afraid of the Jews, for the Jews had already decided that anyone that acknowledged that Jesus was the Christ would be put out of the synagogue. That is why his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."

The Pharisees could not come to any satisfactory explanation of how the man had regained his sight; so they summoned the man for a second time and cautioned him, "Give the glory to God; We know this man [Jesus] is a sinner" (John 9:34).

Whereupon the man replied, "Whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!" (John 9:25 NIV)

Then they started questioning him all over again, asking, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?"

He answered, "I have told you already and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples, too?" (John 9:27 NIV)

That enraged the Pharisees. They hurled insults at the man and said, "You are this fellow's disciple! We are disciples of Moses! We know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this fellow, we don't even know where he comes from" (John 9:28-29 NIV).

The man answered, "Well, here is an amazing thing, that you do not know where He is from, and yet He opened my eyes. We know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is God-fearing, and does His will, He hears him. Since the beginning of time it has never been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. If this man were not from God, He could do nothing" (John 9:30-33 NASB).

This enraged the Pharisees even more. They said to the man, "You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us" (John 9:34 NIV); and the Pharisees threw him out of the synagogue.

When Jesus heard that the Pharisees had thrown the man out of the synagogue, He went looking for him. When He found him, He asked the man, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" (John 9:35b)

The man asked, "Who is it, Lord, that I may believe in him?"

Jesus said to him, "You have seen Him, and He is the one speaking with you" (John 9:37).

Then the man said, "I believe, Lord," and he bowed down before Jesus.

Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this world, so that those that do not see may see and those that see become blind" (John 9:39).

The Pharisees that were with Jesus heard Him say this, and they asked, "What? Are we blind too?" (John 9:40 NIV)

Jesus replied, "If you were blind, you would have no sin; but since you say, 'We see,' your sin remains" (John 9:41 NASB).

Thought Questions

1. Did the mud heal the man? Did the water in the Pool of Siloam heal him? What healed him?
2. Would the man have been healed if he had washed anywhere else, other than in the Pool of Siloam? Was there something ‘magical’ about the Pool of Siloam? Would he have been healed if he had not washed at all? What do you think?
3. Did the fact that Jesus opened the blind man’s eyes show that Jesus came from God? Was the man correct in saying, “If this man was not from God He could do nothing” (John 9:33)?
4. Was the formerly blind man right when he said that God does not hear sinners (John 9:31)? Does that mean that a sinner shouldn’t bother to pray? Does God sometimes hear and answer sinners’ prayers? What do you think? What type of prayer would God be most likely to respond to from a sinner?
5. The formerly blind man said, “But if anyone is God-fearing, and does His will, He hears him” (John 9:31). Was the man correct in this?
6. Will God be more likely to respond to the prayers of a God-fearing person, one who fears Him and does His will, than the prayers of a sinner? What do you think?

109

The Good Shepherd

John 10:1-21

While Jesus was speaking to people at Jerusalem, He spoke of Himself in terms that should have suggested to His listeners that He was the Shepherd King, of whom the prophets Ezekiel (Eze 34:23) and Micah (Mic 5:4) had spoken.

Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs over some other way, is a thief and a

robber” (John 10:1). Jesus identified Himself as the “Shepherd” by coming to the people of Israel in the right way, or, as He put it, by coming to the “sheep” through “the gate.” He said, “The man that comes in through the gate is the shepherd of the sheep” (John 10:2).

Jesus then described what happens when the rightful shepherd is present. He said, “The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out” (John 10:3 NIV).

The proper function of a shepherd is to lead all the sheep out to pasture. He will go on ahead of them, and they will follow because they recognize the shepherd’s voice (John 10:4). Jesus said, “But they will not follow a stranger; in fact, they will flee from him because they do not recognize a stranger’s voice” (John 10:5 NIV).

Jesus used the analogy a shepherd, but His listeners did not seem to grasp what He meant (John 10:6). So He explained His function in a slightly different way. He compared Himself to “the gate” of the sheep pen. He said, “I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep” (John 10:7 NIV).

All who had come before Him (claiming to be the Messiah) were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them (John 10:8). He said, “I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture” (John 10:9 NIV).

Next, Jesus contrasted himself with the people that had come before Him claiming to be the Christ, but were not. He said, “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full” (John 10:10 NIV).

Jesus contrasted Himself also with people that are paid to do what they do. He said,

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks

the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

John 10:11-13 NIV

Jesus described His special relationship with the sheep. He said, “I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep” (John 10:14-15 ISV).

Next, Jesus spoke of “other sheep” that would come to believe on Him. He said, “I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd” (John 10:16 NIV).

Finally, He spoke of His relationship with the Father, saying,

The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.

John 10:17-18 NIV

These words caused further dissention among the Jews. Many of them said, “He is demon-possessed and raving mad. Why listen to him” (John 10:20 NIV)? Others said, “These are not the sayings of a man possessed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind” (John 10:21 NIV)?

Thought Questions

1. How did Jesus differ from leaders that were supposed to be shepherds of the people, but who served only for pay? See John 10:11-13.
2. What was the “gate” (John 10:1) through which Jesus came? What was the Messiah supposed to do when He came? See Isa 53:2-7. How did the fact that Jesus came through “the gate” identify Him as the Messiah?

3. Do you think that humble people today, who have good hearts, can recognize (John 10:4) the Good Shepherd's voice as they read His words or hear His words read? How can they recognize His voice? How does His voice differ from the voice of others?
4. Jesus said He had "other sheep" (John 10:16). To whom was He referring? Was He referring to Gentiles that would come to believe on Him? What do you think?
5. How can Gentiles get into the flock and become one with Israel? What is the "gate" through which they have to go? See John 10:9.
6. Do sheep from the Gentiles form one flock with sheep from the house of Israel? See John 10:16. How many flocks does Jesus have?
7. Does the Good Shepherd know the names of His sheep? See John 10:3. If He knows their names, what does that indicate?
8. Was Jesus' life taken from Him or did He lay it down willingly? See John 10:18.

110

An Attempt to Stone Jesus at the Feast of Dedication

John 10:22-42

It was Jesus' last winter on earth and He was in Jerusalem at the time of the Feast of Dedication (Hanukkah). As He was walking in Solomon's Colonnade, in the temple area (John 10:23), some of the Jews gathered around Him. They demanded to know, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly" (John 10:24 NIV).

They either had not heard Jesus say that He was the "Good Shepherd" or they had not understood what He meant (John 10:11,14). Otherwise, they would have known that He had implied that He was the Christ (the Messiah). So Jesus answered, "I have told you, but you do not believe it" (John 10:25a ISV).

Then, He added, “The works that I do in my Father’s name testify on my behalf, but you do not believe because you do not belong to my sheep” (John 10:25b-26 ISV). His critics’ response to His teaching gave clear evidence that they did not belong to His sheep. Jesus said, “My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me” (John 10:27 NIV). Concerning His sheep, He said, “I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand” (John 10:28 NIV).

God was the one who had given the sheep to Jesus. Jesus said, “My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand” (John 10:29 NIV).

Then Jesus said, “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30 NIV). This last statement offended the Jews so deeply that they were prepared to take the law into their own hands. They lifted up stones with which to kill Jesus (John 10:31), to which Jesus responded, “I have shown you many good works from my Father. For which of them are you going to stone me?” (John 10:32 ISV).

They could not deny that Jesus had performed many great miracles, but they asserted, “We are not going to stone you for a good work but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, are making yourself God!” (John 10:33 NIV).

Whereupon, Jesus pointed out that the Old Testament sometimes referred to judges as “gods” (Psa 82:6). Jesus asked, “Is it not written in your Law, ‘I have said you are gods?’” (John 10:34 NIV).

Then Jesus asked,

If he called those to whom the word of God came ‘gods’
(and the Scripture cannot be set aside), how can you say to
the one whom the Father has consecrated and sent into the
world, ‘You are blaspheming,’ because I said, ‘I am the Son
of God?’

John 10:35-36 ISV

Then Jesus told them how they could determine whether or not He was speaking the truth. He said,

If I am not doing my Father's works, do not believe me. But if I am doing them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, so that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father.

John 10:37-38 ISV

This pleased them even less; and they tried to seize Him, but He eluded their grasp (John 10:39). After that, Jesus went back to the eastern side of the Jordan River, to the place where John the Baptist had baptized (John 10:40). Jesus stayed there for a while, for it was still some weeks before He would go up to Jerusalem for the last time.

The Gospel of John records that many people came to Him during this period of time. Some of them said, "Though John never performed a miraculous sign, all that John said about this man is true" (John 10:41). As a result, many people came to believe on Jesus at that place (John 10:42).

Thought Questions

1. Jesus said that the reason His critics did not believe Him was because they were not His (Jesus') sheep (John 10:26). Can everyone who desires to be one of Jesus' sheep become one? How do people act when they become His sheep? See John 10:27.
2. Can the devil snatch Jesus' sheep out of Jesus' hand? What do you think? See John 10:28-29.
3. In what sense were judges called "gods" in Psa 82:6?
4. What are some of the "works" that Jesus was doing, which were similar to what God does? Do these "works" show that Jesus was working hand in hand with God?

111

The Raising of Lazarus*John 11:1-44*

Mary and Martha lived at Bethany, which was not far from Jerusalem. They sent word to Jesus that Lazarus, their brother, was sick. When Jesus heard that Lazarus was sick, He said, “This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God’s glory so that God’s Son may be glorified through it” (John 11:4 NIV).

In spite of His love for Lazarus and his sisters, Jesus stayed where He was on the eastern side of the Jordan River for two days before saying to His disciples, “Let us go to Judea again” (John 11:7).

His disciples were surprised that He wanted to go back there so soon. They said, “Rabbi (Teacher), the Jews were just now seeking to stone you, and you are going there again?” (John 11:8)

Jesus seemed confident that He could go back to Judea safely, as long as He was walking by the light that God gave Him. He said, “Are there not twelve hours of daylight? A man who walks by day will not stumble, for he sees by this world’s light. It is when he walks by night that he stumbles, for he has no light” (John 11:9-10 NIV).

Then He told His disciples that Lazarus had fallen asleep and that He (Jesus) was going to Bethany to wake him up (John 11:11). The disciples thought Jesus meant that Lazarus was sleeping a natural sleep, so they said, “Lord, if he sleeps, he will be better.”

Jesus replied, “Lazarus is dead, and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him” (John 11:14b-15 NIV).

Then Thomas said to the other disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with him” (John 11:16). When Jesus got to Bethany, He found that Lazarus had been in the tomb already for four days. Many people had come to comfort Martha and Mary over their brother’s death.

When Martha heard that Jesus had come, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home. Martha gently chided Jesus, saying, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died, but even now, I know that God will grant you whatever you ask” (John 11:21-22 NIV).

Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again” (John 11:23 NIV).

Martha answered, “I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day” (John 11:24 NIV).

Jesus replied, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies” (John 11:25 NIV).

Then Jesus assured Martha that a believing person continues to live even though his body dies. Jesus said, “And whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?” (John 11:26 NIV).

Martha did not say that she understood this, but she did confirm her faith in Jesus. She said, “Yes, Lord, I have come to believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who comes into the world” (John 11:27). After Martha had said this, she went back and called Mary and said to her privately, “The Teacher is here, and is asking for you.”

The moment Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to Jesus. Now Jesus had not yet entered the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. When the people in the house, who had been comforting Mary, noticed how quickly Mary got up and went out, they followed her, thinking she was going to the tomb to mourn. When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw Him, she fell at his feet and said to Him, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died” (John 11:32b NIV). Jesus was deeply moved in His spirit and troubled when He saw Mary and the others weeping (John 11:33).

He asked, “Where have you laid him?” (John 11:34 NIV).

They replied, “Come and see, Lord.” At that, Jesus wept (John 11:35).

Then the people said, “See how he loved him” (John 11:36)! Some of them said, “Could not he, who opened the eyes of the blind man (John 9:7), have also kept this man from dying” (John 11:37 NIV)? Jesus was again deeply moved (John 11:38).

He came to the tomb, which was a cave with a stone across the entrance. Jesus said, “Take away the stone” (John 11:39a).

Martha warned, “Lord, by this time he smells bad, for he has been there four days.”

Jesus said to her, “Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?” (John 11:40 NIV).

So they took the stone away; and Jesus looked up and said, “Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me” (John 11:41-42 NIV).

Having said this, Jesus cried out with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” (John 11:43b NIV).

Then Lazarus came out of the tomb. He had his hands and feet still bound in cloths and a handkerchief wrapped around his face.

Jesus said to them, “Loose him and let him go” (John 11:44b).

Many of the Jews that had come to Mary saw what Jesus did and came to believe on Jesus; but some of them went to the Pharisees and reported what Jesus had done (John 11:46).

Thought Questions

1. Martha knew, of course, that every human being would be resurrected from the dead. She also knew when the resurrection would take place. When did she say it would take place? See John 11:24.
2. Does a believer cease to exist when that person’s body dies? See what Jesus said in John 11:25-26.
3. Do you think Lazarus had to face death again after Jesus raised him back to life? Please explain your thinking.
4. If Jesus could raise the dead, what does that tell you about Jesus?

112

The Leaders Plot to Kill Jesus

John 11:45-57

The Jews, who had come to console Mary over the death of her brother, saw that Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead; and many of them began to believe on Jesus (John 11:45). Some of them, however, went away to the Pharisees and reported what Jesus had done (John 11:46). Upon hearing their report, the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the Sanhedrin and asked, “What do we do? This man is performing many miraculous signs” (John 11:47).

They also said, “If we allow him to continue like this, everyone will come to believe on him and the Romans will come and take away our place and our nation” (John 11:48).

Then one of their number, a man named Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said, “You don’t know anything; nor do you realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish” (John 11:49b-50).

The apostle John, who recorded this incident, wrote (John 11:51) that Caiaphas did not make this statement on His own. Since Caiaphas was the High Priest, he was actually making a prophecy that Jesus was going to die, not only for the nation of Israel, but also in order to gather the scattered children of God into it (John 11:52).

From that day forward the leaders plotted to kill Jesus (John 11:53), and Jesus could no longer freely move about among the Jews. Instead, He went away to a village called Ephraim, near a deserted area; and He and His disciples stayed there for a while (John 11:54). For Jesus it must have been a time of reflection, introspection, and prayer, before the storm of conflict and suffering broke over Him.

Finally, the Jewish Passover was drawing near; and many people from the countryside went up to Jerusalem in order to cleanse themselves (John 11:55). The people who came to Jerusalem for the Passover kept

looking for Jesus. As they stood around in the temple area, they asked one another, “What do you think? Isn’t he coming to the Feast at all” (John 11:56 NIV)?

The chief priests and Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where Jesus was, he should report it so they could seize Him (John 11:57).

Thought Questions

1. Do you think the leaders of the nation of Israel understood what kind of a king the Messiah would be? Do you think the Romans would have cared whether or not the people of Israel accepted Jesus as their Messianic King, provided the people of Israel kept the peace and paid their taxes?
2. How did the High Priest think that Jesus’ death would benefit the nation of Israel? Was the High Priest right about how Jesus’ death would benefit the nation of Israel? In what way did Jesus’ death benefit the nation of Israel?
3. The apostle John implied (John 11:52) that Caiaphas, the High Priest, had unknowingly prophesied that Jesus’ death would cause the scattered children of God to be gathered into one nation (John 11:52). Did Jesus’ death contribute to gathering the scattered children of God into one nation? If so, how did it do it? See Eph 3:6
4. Would the nation of Israel have been better off if the people of Israel had accepted Jesus as their Messiah? If so, in what ways?

113

The Request of James and John

Matthew 20:17-28; Mark 10:32-45;

Luke 18:31-34

At last, the Passover was near; and the time had come for Jesus to go up to Jerusalem, where the leaders were anxious to put Him to death. So

a few days before the Passover, Jesus started off toward Jerusalem. He walked on ahead of His disciples, leading them. They were shocked, probably because He was going back there; and the people that followed were afraid (Mark 10:32).

Jesus called His twelve disciple's aside and explained that the prophecies about the Son of Man would be fulfilled (Luke 18:31). He said, "We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and the teachers of the law" (Matt 20:18 NIV). He added, "They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles, who will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him. Three days later he will rise" (Mark 10:33b-34 NIV). His disciples did not comprehend the full significance of what Jesus was saying. Its meaning was hidden from them (Luke 18:34).

As they were underway, the mother of James and John, Zebedee's sons, came to Jesus with her sons (Matt 20:20). They knelt down as though to ask a favor of Him.

"What do you want?" He asked.

They said, "Teacher, we want you to do for us what we are about to ask."

Then He asked, "What do you want me to do for you?" (Mark 10:36 NIV)

The mother said, "Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom" (Matt 20:21 NIV).

Jesus replied, "You don't know what you are asking. Can you drink the cup I am about to drink or be baptized with the baptism I am about to be baptized with?" (Mark 10:38)

"We can," they answered. Then Jesus said to them,

"You will indeed drink from my cup, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father" (Matt 20:23 NIV).

When the other ten Apostles heard what James and John had requested, they were angry with them. So Jesus called them all together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the

Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them” (Mark 10:42 NIV).

Jesus went on to explain that His followers were not to be organized like the Gentiles. He said, “Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all” (Mark 10:43-44 NIV).

Jesus cited His own example as the pattern for His disciples to follow. He said, “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45 NIV).

Thought Questions

1. Jesus foretold a number of things that would happen to Him (Matt 20:18-19 and Mark 10:33-34). How many of the things that Jesus foretold did actually happen to Him? Please list a few of them, if you can.
2. Were James and John (and their mother) seeking their personal advantage at a time when Jesus was on His way to lay down His life for others? Was their request especially ill timed? What do you think?
3. What was Jesus referring to when He asked, “Can you drink the cup that I am about to drink, or be baptized with the baptism I am about to be baptized with” (Mark 10:38b)? What were the “cup” and the “baptism” to which He was referring?
4. What was Jesus referring to when He said, “You will indeed drink from my cup” (Matt 20:23)? Was He referring to the death for James (Acts 12:2)? What do you think?
5. Is it proper for the organization of Christ’s church to be patterned after the governments of this world, with layers of authority, each of which is presided over by one or more human beings? What do you think? See Mark 10:42.
6. How does a person become “great” among Jesus’ followers?

114

Blind Men at Jericho

*Matthew 20:29-34; Mark 10:46-52;
Luke 18:35-43*

In spite of the fact that the leaders in Jerusalem were plotting to put Jesus to death, Jesus started up to the road to Jerusalem; and the road led through Jericho. A large crowd of people was following along after Jesus (Matt 20:29).

Now, two blind were sitting beside the road, where they were begging, as Jesus approached Jericho (Luke 18:35). They must have been sitting on the far side of the city, however, for Jesus encountered them as He was leaving Jericho (Matt 20:29).

One of the blind men was named Bartimaeus (which means the Son of Timaeus) (Mark 10:46). When Bartimaeus heard the crowd going by, he asked what was happening. The people told him, “Jesus of Nazareth is passing by” (Luke 18:37).

So Bartimaeus and the other blind man shouted, “Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us” (Matt 20:30). The crowd that led the way (Luke 18:38) rebuked (Matt 20:31) the blind men and told them to be quiet; but they shouted all the louder, “Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!”

At that, Jesus stopped and ordered Bartimaeus to be brought to Him (Luke 18:40). The people said to Bartimaeus, “Cheer up! On your feet! He’s calling you” (Mark 10:49 NIV). Bartimaeus threw his cloak aside, jumped to his feet and came to Jesus (Mark 10:50). Presumably, the other blind beggar came, too.

Jesus asked, “What do you want me to do for you?” (Matt 20:32)

“Lord,” they answered, “we want our sight” (Matt 20:33 NIV).

Jesus felt pity on them and touched their eyes (Matt 20:34) and said, “Go, your faith has saved you” (Mark 10:52).

Immediately, they received their sight (Matt 20:34) and began to follow Jesus, praising God (Luke 18:43); and all the people that saw it praised God, too (Luke 18:43).

Thought Questions

1. Had the blind men heard about Jesus prior to this encounter with Him? What do you think? Did they believe that Jesus could help them?
2. When the blind men shouted, “Lord, Son of David,” what were they asserting about Jesus’ identity? Were they asserting that He was the Messianic King?
3. Did Jesus seem to be impressed with the conduct of the blind men? What was it about their conduct that impressed Him? What do you think?
4. Jesus said that the blind men’s faith had saved them (Mark 10:52). From what had their faith saved them? Did it save them being blind or did it save them from being lost in hell? What do you think?

115

Zacchaeus

Luke 19:1-10

Jesus entered Jericho and passed through it (Luke 19:1). Now, there was a man in Jericho, known as Zacchaeus, who was a chief tax collector and rich (Luke 19:2). Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus, but he could not see Him because he was a short man (Luke 19:3). So he ran on ahead and climbed up in a sycamore-fig tree in order to see Jesus, because Jesus was about to pass that way (Luke 19:4). When Jesus came to that place, He looked up and, calling Zacchaeus by name, said to him, “Zacchaeus, hurry, come down; today I must stay at your house” (Luke 19:5).

So Zacchaeus climbed down hurriedly and welcomed Jesus with joy (Luke 19:6). All the people who witnessed this said, “He has gone in to

stay with a man who is a sinner” (Luke 19:7). Zacchaeus, for his part, stood up and said, “Behold, I give half of my possessions to the poor, Lord! And if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I pay back four times the amount” (Luke 19:8). Whereupon, Jesus commented, “Today salvation has come to this house, because also this man is a son of Abraham” (Luke 19:9).

Then Jesus added, “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost” (Luke 19:10 NIV).

Thought Questions

1. What was it about Zacchaeus that made Jesus decide to stay at his house? Was it the intense interest that he manifested in Jesus? Was it his disregard for propriety in his pursuit of information about Jesus? What do you think?
2. Do you think Jesus’ disciples stayed with Zacchaeus, too?
3. Was Jesus equally as concerned about the salvation of rich people as He was about the salvation of poor people? Is it possible for a rich person to be saved? See Mark 10:27.
4. Was it Zacchaeus’ custom to give half his goods to the poor? Or was it a sudden decision, brought on by the presence of Jesus? What do you think?
5. If it was a sudden decision, what do you think took place in Zacchaeus heart that made him decide to give half of his possessions to the poor? What made him decide to restore fourfold any money or goods that he may have taken unjustly? What do you think?
6. What does the Law of Moses say about a person returning more than he took unjustly? See Exo 22:1.

116

Parable of the Pounds

Luke 19:11-27

While the people were still listening to Jesus at Zacchaeus' house, He taught them the Parable of the Pounds. He taught them this parable because He was near to Jerusalem and some of them were thinking that the kingdom of God was about to appear (Luke 19:11).

The Parable of the Pounds is about a nobleman who went away to a distant country to get a kingdom for himself and then return (Luke 19:12). The nobleman called ten of his slaves to him before He left and gave one mina of silver to each of them. A mina weighs about 16 ounces, which is about a pound. The man said to his slaves, "Trade with this till I come back" (Luke 19:13).

The citizens, however, over whom the nobleman wanted to reign, hated him and sent a delegation after him saying, "We don't want this man to be our king" (Luke 19:14). Yet, in spite of their opposition, the nobleman was appointed king.

When he returned as king, he summoned the slaves to whom he had given the silver. He wanted to find out how much they had gained by trading (Luke 19:15). The first slave came and said, "Lord, your pound has earned ten pounds more" (Luke 19:16). The king said, "Well done, my good servant! Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities" (Luke 19:17 NIV).

The second slave came and said, "Lord, your pound has earned five pounds more." To this one, the king said, "And you, be over five cities" (Luke 19:19).

Then another servant came and said, "Lord, here is your pound, which I have kept safe in a handkerchief" (Luke 19:20). The servant explained, saying, "For I feared you, because you are an austere man. You collect what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow" (Luke 19:21 NKJV).

At that, the king said,

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?

Luke 19:22-23 NKJV

The king then said to those standing nearby, “Take his pound from him and give it to the one who has ten pounds” (Luke 19:24).

They objected to this, saying, “Lord, he already has ten pounds!”

The king replied, “I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but as for the one who has nothing, even what he has will be taken away” (Luke 19:26 NIV).

The king continued: “But those enemies of mine who did not want me to be king over them --bring them here and slaughter them in front of me” (Luke 19:27).

After Jesus had taught this parable, He continued on His way toward Jerusalem (Luke 19:28).

Thought Questions

1. Was Jesus a person of noble birth? Was He referring to Himself when He spoke of a nobleman, who was going away to receive a kingdom? What do you think?
2. Were many people of Jesus’ day expecting (Luke 19:11) that the Messiah would reign on earth as a king? Did the people at Zacchaeus’ house think that the Messiah’s earthly reign was about to begin? What do you think?
3. Do you suppose that many of the people at Zacchaeus’ house understood that it would be the church that would soon appear?
4. What can we learn from the Parable of the Pounds? Do we learn that we, as servants, should take advantage of the opportunities for service, which are given us? What do you think?

5. What is the value of an ounce of silver today? If each servant in this parable got one mina (pound) of silver, and if each mina (pound) has 16 ounces, how much money, in today's value, did the nobleman give to each slave to invest? Does this strike you as being a lot of money to invest or relatively little?
6. Does a disparity seem to exist between the amount of money given to each slave and the size of the reward. Does this disparity have anything to say to us?

117

Mary's Anointing of Jesus' Feet

John 12:1-11

After Jesus had taught the Parable of the Pounds in Jericho, He and His disciples continued on the way to Jerusalem (Luke 19:28). They came to Bethany (Mark 11:1), which was about two miles from Jerusalem, on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives. There they spent the night. The Gospel of John says that Jesus visited Bethany six days before the Passover (John 12:1), which began on Friday that year. So Jesus' visit to Bethany must have been on the Sabbath.

Now, Bethany was where Jesus' friend, Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. At Bethany, an evening meal was prepared. Martha did the serving, and Lazarus reclined at table with Jesus and others.

While they were reclining, Mary brought about a pint (12 ounces) of very precious oil, which was perfumed with genuine nard. She anointed Jesus' feet with it, and the house was filled with its fragrance. Then she dried His feet with her own hair.

Judas Iscariot, the disciple who would later betray Jesus, asked, "Why wasn't this perfumed oil sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor" (John 12:5)? (Now, three hundred denarii equaled about a year's wage, approximately 60 dollars.)

Judas said this, not because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief and carried the moneybag of the disciples and stole from it (John 12:6). Defending Mary, Jesus told Judas, “Leave her alone; she has saved this for the day of My burial” (John 12:7).

He also told Judas, “The poor you have with you always, but me you do not have always” (John 12:8).

Many people heard that Jesus was at Bethany; and a large crowd came, not only because Jesus was there, but also to see Lazarus, whom Jesus had raised from the dead (John 12:9). Many of the children of Israel were starting to believe on Jesus because of Lazarus. For that reason, the chief priests laid plans to kill both Jesus and Lazarus (John 12:10-11).

Thought Questions

1. Do you think Mary had heard about the penitent woman, who anointed Jesus’ feet at the home of Simon the Pharisee (Luke 7:36-38)? Do you suppose Mary was intentionally imitating that woman?
2. Why did Mary anoint Jesus’ feet? What was her motivation? Did she have the same motivation that the penitent woman had? What do you think?
3. Jesus said, “The poor you have with you always, but me you do not have always” (John 12:8). Did Jesus mean that there was no urgency in helping the poor? What do you think?
4. Do you think Judas intended to repay the money that he took from the common purse? If he did intend to repay it, would that excuse his actions? What do you think?
5. Would Jesus have forgiven Judas for stealing from their purse, if Judas had repented and confessed the sin? What do you think?

JESUS TEACHES IN JERUSALEM

118

Jesus' Approach to Jerusalem

Matthew 21:1-9; Mark 11:1-10;

Luke 19:28-40; John 12:12-19

The morning after His meal with Lazarus, Jesus continued on His way to Jerusalem (John 12:12). It was probably the first day of the week. As He got underway, He said to two of His disciples, "Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me" (Matt 21:2 NIV).

Jesus also said, "If anyone asks you, 'Why are you doing this?' tell him, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly'" (Mark 11:3 NIV).

The two disciples went and found the donkey and a colt, tied just as Jesus had said. Some of the people standing there asked, "What are you doing, untying that colt" (Mark 11:5 NIV)? The two disciples answered as Jesus had told them to answer, and the people let the animals go (Mark 11:6). The two disciples then brought the animals to Jesus.

They threw their cloaks over the animals, and Jesus sat on them (Matt 21:7). The Gospel of Matthew (Matt 21:4) says this took place to fulfill Old Testament prophecy that the Messiah would enter Jerusalem riding on a donkey. Matthew quotes, "Say to the Daughter of Zion, 'See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'" (Matt 21:5 NIV; Zec 9:9).

However, the disciples did not, at that time, realize that these things were happening in fulfillment of prophecy. It was only after Jesus had been glorified that they recalled that such things had been written about Him (John 12:16).

Many people had come to Jerusalem (John 12:12) for the Passover. Those of them that had witnessed the awakening of Lazarus were telling everyone about it (John 12:17). So when the people heard that Jesus was approaching the city, many of them went out to meet Him.

When they met up with Him, they accompanied Him on His way to Jerusalem. Some went on ahead and some followed behind (Matt 21:9a). They were shouting, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!” (Matt 21:9b NIV)

They also shouted, “Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!” (Mark 11:10a NIV)

Further, they shouted, “Blessed is the King of Israel!” (John 12:13c NIV)

Many of the people spread their cloaks ahead of Jesus, as He made His way toward the city. Others cut off branches from trees in the fields and spread them ahead of Him (Mark 11:8; Luke 19:36).

As He came near the place where the road goes down from the Mount of Olives to the Kidron Valley, the whole crowd began to praise God joyfully, with loud voices. They praised God because of all the miracles they had seen (Luke 19:37). They shouted, “Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!” (Luke 19:38 NIV)

The Pharisees, however, could not tolerate hearing Jesus praised in such magnificent terms; so they said to Him, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples” (Luke 19:39 NIV)! To them Jesus replied, “I tell you, if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.” (Luke 19:40 NIV)

The Pharisees were frustrated over the good reception that Jesus was receiving from the people. They said to one another, “See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him” (John 12:19 NIV)!

Thought Questions

1. The Gospel of Matthew leaves the impression that Jesus may have sat on both the donkey and the colt (Matt 21:7). Do you have any idea how He did this?
2. What were the people asserting when they shouted “Hosanna to the Son of David,” “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord,”

“Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David,” and “Blessed is the King of Israel?” Were they asserting that Jesus was the Christ (Messiah)? What do you think?

3. Jesus did not rebuke His disciples for such elaborate praise? Why did He not? What do you think?
4. Was the manner in which Jesus approached Jerusalem an open declaration of His Messiahship? What do you think?

119

Jesus' Triumphal Entrance into Jerusalem

Matthew 21:10-11; Mark 11:11; Luke 19:41-44

As Jesus approached Jerusalem, He looked out over the city and tears came to His eyes (Luke 19:41). As if speaking to the city, He said wistfully, “If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace...” (Luke 19:42a NIV). He sadly conceded, “...but now it is hidden from your eyes” (Luke 19:42b NIV). He made a dire prediction about what was going to happen to Jerusalem. He said,

The days will come upon you when your enemies will build
an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you
in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and
the children within your walls.

Luke 19:43-44a

Jesus explained why this would happen. He said, “They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time when God came to inspect you” (Luke 19:44b).

When Jesus finally entered the city, all the people of Jerusalem were excited. They asked, “Who is this” (Matt 21:10 NIV)? Some people, who were not fully aware of who Jesus was, answered, “This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee” (Matt 21:11 NIV).

The first thing that Jesus did upon entering the city of Jerusalem as its King, was to go up to the temple area and look around at everything. Since it was already late in the day, however, He did not do very much at the temple that day (Mark 11:11). Instead, He returned to Bethany with His disciples, where He spent the night.

Thought Questions

1. What was Jesus talking about when He said, “The days will come...when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side” (Luke 19:43 NIV)? Was He predicting the encirclement and destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 AD? What do you think?
2. Jesus said that the people of Jerusalem did not realize that God had come to inspect them (Luke 19:44)? What does that mean? Does it mean that God came to them in Jesus and they did not realize who He was? What do you think?
3. If the people of Jerusalem had understood who Jesus was, and if they had received Him as their King, would it have made a difference in what later happened to them? What do you think?

120

Jesus Caused a Fig Tree to Wither and Cleared Out the Temple

*Matthew 21:12-22; Mark 11:12-19;
Luke 19:45-48*

According to the order of events, as given in the Gospel of Mark, Jesus and His disciples left Bethany (Mark 11:12) early the next morning, the morning after His triumphal entrance into Jerusalem.

On His way back to Jerusalem, Jesus got hungry (Matt 21:18); and He saw, from a distance, a fig tree by the side of the road. It was too early in the year for figs to be ripe (Mark 11:13), but the tree did have leaves on it. The leaves suggested that the tree might, at least, have green figs, which poor people sometimes ate.

When Jesus and His disciples got to where the tree was, they found no figs on it at all. So Jesus said to the tree, “May no one ever eat fruit from you again” (Mark 11:14 NIV).

Jesus’ disciples heard Him say this (Mark 11:14), but they were amazed as they watched the fig tree wither (Matt 21:20a).

They asked Jesus, “How did the fig tree wither so quickly?” (Matt 21:20b NIV)

Jesus replied,

I tell you the truth, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and it will be done.

Matthew 21:21 NIV

He added, “If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer” (Matt 21:22 NIV).

After saying this, Jesus continued on His way to Jerusalem. When He got to Jerusalem, He went up to the temple and began driving the people out that were buying and selling things. He overturned their tables (Mark 11:15) and would not allow anyone to carry a container through the temple area (Mark 11:16).

He said, “Is it not written: ‘My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations?’ But you have made it ‘a den of robbers’” (Mark 11:17 NIV; Isa 56:7).

Then blind and lame people came to Him and He healed them (Matt 21:14).

The chief priests and scribes saw the amazing things that Jesus did; and they heard the children shouting in the temple area: “Hosanna to the

Son of David.” All of this caused them to become extremely indignant; and they said to Jesus, “Do you hear what these children are saying?”

He replied, “Yes, have you never read, ‘From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise’” (Matt 21:16 NIV; Psa 8:2).

The chief priests and the scribes feared Jesus, because all the people were enthralled with His teaching (Mark 11:18) and hung on His every word (Luke 19:47-48). Therefore, the chief priests and scribes wanted to kill Him, but they could not find a way to do it. When evening came, Jesus and His disciples left Jerusalem and returned to Bethany (Matt 21:17 and Mark 11:19).

Thought Questions

1. Jesus caused the fig tree to wither because it did not bear fruit. Is there a lesson in this for us? If so, what is the lesson?
2. Is there a sense in which all people, Christians and non-Christians alike, can accomplish great things if they believe they can? What do you think?
3. Did Jesus mean that everyone that has faith can cause a tree to wither by speaking to it? Or did He mean that His apostles would be able to do things like that, provided they had faith? What do you think?
4. When Christian people pray, should they expect that their requests will be granted? See John 15:7.
5. Was this the first time that Jesus had cleared out the temple area? See John 2:13-22.
6. What was wrong with people exchanging money and selling doves in the temple area? Please explain.
7. Why were the chief priests and the scribes afraid of Jesus? What do you think?

121

The Fig Tree Again and Jesus' Authority Questioned

*Matthew 21:23-27; Mark 11:20-33;
Luke 20:1-8*

After Jesus and His disciples had spent another night at Bethany, they returned to Jerusalem. As they walked along, they passed the fig tree, which Jesus had caused to wither the day before, and they saw that it had withered from the roots (Mark 11:20). The apostle Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, look! The fig tree you cursed has withered” (Mark 11:21 NIV). Jesus then reinforced His remarks of the day before, saying,

Have faith in God. I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him.

Mark 11:22-23 NIV

Jesus added, “Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours” (Mark 11:24 NIV). Jesus also said, “And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins” (Mark 11:25 NIV).

When they reached Jerusalem, Jesus went up to the temple and walked about (Mark 11:27). As He was teaching and preaching the gospel (Luke 20:1), a delegation of the most powerful and learned men of the nation came to Him. It was composed of chief priests, scribes, and elders of the people. They wanted to know by what authority He was doing all these things. They demanded, “Who gave you this authority?” (Luke 20:2)

He replied, “I will ask you one question. Answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things” (Mark 11:29 NIV).

Jesus' question had to do with John the Baptist. Jesus asked, "John's baptism--where did it come from? Was it from heaven, or from men?" (Matt 21:25a NIV)

They discussed it among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will ask, 'Then why didn't you believe him?' But if we say, 'From men'--we are afraid of the people, for they all hold that John was a prophet" (Matt 21:25b-26 NIV). So they answered, "We do not know where it was from" (Luke 20:7 NIV).

Then Jesus said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things." (Mark 11:33 NIV)

Thought Questions

1. Jesus said, "If anyone says to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him" (Mark 11:22-23 NIV). Was Jesus talking about a person who has faith in his or in her own ability to accomplish things? Or was Jesus talking about a person who has faith in God's help? Is there a difference? What do you think?
2. Is the promise found in Mark 11:24 a promise for everyone or only for those people who love Jesus and walk in His ways? What do you think?
3. Do Christian people sometimes have to prove that they have faith by supplementing it with action? What do you think?
4. Does God sometimes grant our requests in ways that we do not anticipate? Can you give an example from your own experience?
5. Does God sometimes say "no" to our requests? Are you prepared to accept His decision with regards to your requests?
6. Will God forgive us if we do not forgive others? See Mark 11:25.

122

The Parable of the Two Sons

Matthew 21:28-32

Jesus told the following parable to a delegation of religious leaders that questioned His authority. He said to them, “What do you think? There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work today in the vineyard’” (Matt 21:28 NIV).

The son said, “I will not,” but later changed his mind and went and worked in His father’s vineyard (Matt 21:29).

Jesus continued His parable by saying, “Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, ‘I will, sir,...’” (Matt 21:30a NIV). But that son did not go (Matt 21:30b).

So Jesus asked the leaders that had questioned His authority, “Which of the two did what his father wanted?” (Matt 21:31a NIV)

“The first,” they answered.

Then Jesus said to them, “I tell you the truth, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you” (Matt 21:31b NIV).

Jesus explained the point of His Parable about the Two Sons:

For John [the Baptist] came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him.

Matthew 21:32 NIV

Thought Questions

1. Which of the two sons in Jesus’ parable did the religious leaders most resemble, the first or the second? Please explain.
2. It seems that more tax collectors and prostitutes followed Jesus than religious leaders. Why was that? What do you think?

3. Religious leaders should be the first to follow Jesus. Yet this is often not the case. Why is it so difficult for some religious leaders to do what Jesus said? What do you think?
4. Are there people today who want to enjoy the blessings, which come from being a child of God, but who are not willing to work in His kingdom? What do you think?

123

The Parable of the Wicked Tenants

*Matthew 21:33-46; Mark 12:1-12;
Luke 20:9-19*

Jesus had just finished telling a parable to the religious leaders. It was a parable about a man that had two sons. One of the sons obeyed his father and the other did not.

Afterwards, Jesus told the religious leaders a parable about a landowner that had planted a vineyard. In the parable, the landowner put a wall around his vineyard, dug a winepress in it, and built a watchtower over it. Then he rented out his vineyard to tenants and went on a long journey (Matt 21:33).

When the harvest came, the owner of the vineyard sent a slave to the tenants to collect a part of the fruit of the vineyard (Mark 12:2); but the tenants seized the slave, beat him, and sent him away empty-handed. (Mark 12:3). Then the owner sent another slave. This one they struck on the head and treated shamefully (Mark 12:4). Him, too, they sent away empty-handed. The owner sent yet a third slave. Him they wounded and threw out of the vineyard (Luke 20:12).

In the course of time, the owner sent many other slaves. Some they beat and some they killed. (Mark 12:5). Finally, the owner of the vineyard said to himself, "What shall I do? I will send my son, whom I love; perhaps they will respect him" (Luke 20:13 NIV).

Last of all, the owner sent his only son. But when the tenants saw the son, they said to one another, “This is the heir. Come, let’s kill him, and the inheritance will be ours” (Mark 12:7 NIV).

So, as the tenants were throwing the son out of the vineyard, they killed him (Luke 20:15). At this point, Jesus asked His listeners, “Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?” (Matt 21:40 NIV)

They replied, “He will put those horrible men to a horrible death. Then he will lease the vineyard to other farmers who will give him his produce at harvest time” (Matt 21:41 ISV).

Jesus agreed with their answer and added, “He will come and destroy those vinedressers and give the vineyard to others” (Luke 20:16 NIV).

The religious leaders apparently understood that Jesus meant that their nation would be taken away from them and be given to others, for they said, “May this never be” (Luke 20:16b NIV).

Whereupon, Jesus looked straight at them and asked, “Have you never read in the Scriptures ‘The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes?’” (Matt 21:42 NIV; Psa 118:22-23)

He continued, “Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit” (Matt 21:43 NIV).

Then He warned, “He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed” (Matt 21:44 NIV).

The religious leaders knew that Jesus had spoken this parable against them (Luke 20:19); so they looked for a way to arrest Him immediately. However, they were afraid of the people, who held Jesus for a prophet (Matt 21:46). So the leaders left Jesus and went away (Mark 12:12).

Thought Questions

1. In the Parable of the Wicked Tenants, the “owner of the vineyard” represents someone. Who is the owner?

2. Who are the “wicked tenants” in this parable? Who are the “slaves,” who were sent to the wicked tenants?
3. Was Jesus referring to Himself when He spoke of “the stone,” which “the builders rejected (Matt 21:42)? What do you think?
4. Jesus said, “He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed” (Matt 21:44 NIV)? Did Jesus think it would go badly with the children of Israel if they rejected Him? What do you think?
5. Did Jesus think it possible that the kingdom of God would be taken from Israel and given to others? What do you think? See Matthew 21:43.
6. Was the kingdom of God actually taken away from Israel and given to others? If so, why was it taken away and to whom was it given? When was it taken away from them? What do you think?

124

The Parable of the Wedding Feast

Matthew 22:1-15

As we have seen, a group of religious leaders came to Jesus as He was teaching at the temple, and they were questioning Him about His authority (Matt 21:23). Jesus was replying to them with parables that were critical of them. For that reason, they were looking for a way to arrest Him; but they had not found a way to do it as yet (Matt 22:45-46).

In spite of their hostility, Jesus told them another parable. It was about a wedding feast. He said, “The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding feast for his son” (Matt 22:2).

When everything was ready, the king sent some of his slaves to tell the invited guests to come, but they did not want to attend (Matt 22:3.) So the king sent other slaves with a more urgent message, saying, “Tell those that have been invited that I have prepared my meal: My oxen and

fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast” (Matt 22:4).

The invited guests, however, disregarded this invitation, too. One of them went away to his field and another one to his business (Matt 22:5). Others of them seized the king’s slaves, mistreated them, and killed them (Matt 22:6).

Jesus said, “The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city” (Matt 22:7 NIV).

The king remarked to his slaves, “The wedding feast is ready, but those that were invited were not worthy” (Matt 22:8).

Then the king commanded his slaves, saying, “Go to where all the streets intersect and whomever you find invite to the wedding” (Matt 22:9).

So the slaves went out into the streets and gathered everyone they found, both bad people and good; and the wedding hall was filled with guests (Matt 22:10). Now, when the king came in to observe the guests, he noticed a certain man present that was not dressed in wedding clothes; and he asked him, “Fellow, how did you get in here without wedding clothes?” (Matt 22:12)

The man did not have anything to say; so the king told the attendants, “Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matt 22:13 NIV).

Jesus concluded His parable by remarking, “For many are called [invited], but few are chosen” (Matt 22:14).

After Jesus had said this, the Pharisees went away and discussed among themselves how they could possibly entrap Him in something He might say (Matt 22:15).

Thought Questions

1. The guests that were originally invited to the wedding feast represent someone? Whom do they represent?

2. Is God willing for bad people to be in His kingdom? If He is not willing, why did Jesus say that “bad people” were brought in from the streets? How do you explain this?
3. One of the guests was not wearing wedding clothes. Why was that guest not permitted to stay at the feast? What do you think?
4. Were the bad people that came to the feast expected to change their ways? Were they expected to change their ways before they got to the feast? What do you think?
5. Jesus said, “For many are called [invited], but few are chosen” (Matt 22:14). What did He mean by that? What do you think?
6. Did you notice that Jesus implied that more people were “called” (invited) than were “chosen?” Is it true today that Jesus invites more people into His kingdom than are chosen to be in the kingdom? On what basis are people chosen?

125

Paying Tax to Caesar

*Matthew 22:15-22; Mark 12:13-17;
Luke 20:20-26*

The scribes and Pharisees were angry with Jesus, because they knew that He was directing His parables against them (Luke 20:19). As a result, they wanted to arrest Him immediately; but did not, because they feared what the people might do. So they went away and discussed plans to entrap Him in something He might say (Matt 22:15).

Later that day (Tuesday), the Pharisees sent some of their disciples and some of the Herodians to spy on Jesus. The spies came to Jesus and spoke politely to Him, saying, “Teacher, we know you are a man of integrity. You aren’t swayed by men, because you pay no attention to who they are; but you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth” (Mark 12:14 NIV).

The spies pretended to be sincere; but they were actually laying a trap for Jesus (Mark 12:13), so they could turn Him over to the governor's power and authority (Luke 20:20). After they had complimented Him, they tried to spring their trap. They said, "Tell us then, what is your opinion? Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not?" (Matt 22:17 NIV)

Jesus saw through their treachery and did not fall into their trap. He responded to them by saying, "You hypocrites, why are you trying to trap me?" (Matt 22:18 NIV) He said to them, "Show me the coin used for paying the tax." (Matt 22:19 NIV)

They brought Him a denarius. He asked them, "Whose portrait is this? And whose inscription?" (Matt 22:20 NIV)

"Caesar's," they replied.

He said to them, "Then give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's" (Matt 22:21b).

When they heard this, they were amazed at His answer, because there was nothing they could say against it. They were unable to catch Him in what He said (Luke 20:26). So they were amazed and went away (Matt 22:22).

Thought Questions

1. Their question, "Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar," was a trap. How was it a trap? If Jesus had said it is not right to pay taxes to Caesar, of what would they have accused Him?
2. If Jesus had said it is right to pay taxes to Caesar, what would they have done? What do you think?
3. Did Jesus Himself pay taxes? See Matthew 17:24-27.
4. Is it right for Jesus' followers to pay taxes? See Rom 13:7.

126

Marriage and the Resurrection

*Matthew 22:23-33; Mark 12:18-27;
Luke 20:27-40*

When the Sadducees saw that the scribes and Pharisees had not been successful in their attempt to entrap Jesus, the Sadducees thought they would try it (Matt 22:23). Now, the Sadducees believed that there is no resurrection. So they said to Jesus, “Teacher, Moses said, ‘If a man dies having no children, his brother must marry the widow and have children for his brother’” (Matt 22:24 ISV). Then the Sadducees described a hypothetical situation. They said, “Now there were seven brothers among us. The first one married and died, and since he had no children, he left his wife to his brother” (Matt 22:25 NIV). They continued their description by saying, “The same thing happened to the second and third brother, right on down to the seventh. Finally, the woman died” (Matt 22:26-27 NIV). Having said that, the Sadducees asked, “Now then, at the resurrection whose wife will she be, since the seven were married to her?” (Luke 20:33 NIV)

It was not at all difficult for Jesus to answer this question, for He knew the Old Testament well. He also knew what happens to people when they die. So He replied to the Sadducees, “Are you not in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God?” (Mark 12:24 NIV)

Whereupon, He proceeded to highlight Sadducees’ ignorance of the power of God, by saying,

Those who belong to this age marry and are married, but those who are considered worthy of a place in that age and in the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage. Nor can they die anymore, for they are like the angels and, since they share in the resurrection, are God’s children.

Luke 20:34-36 ISV

He then highlighted their ignorant of the Scriptures, by saying, “Now about the dead rising--have you not read in the book of Moses, in the account of the bush, how God said to him, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?’” (Mark 12:26 NIV; Exo 3:6)

When God said that He is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Exo 3:6), God implied that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were still living. Concerning this Jesus said, “He is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for to him all are alive” (Luke 20:38 NIV).

Then, to the Sadducees Jesus said, “You are badly mistaken!” (Mark 12:27b NIV)

When the crowds heard this, they were astonished at His teaching (Matt 22:33). Even some of the scribes approved of the reply that Jesus had given the Sadducees, for the scribes believed in the resurrection. Therefore, they remarked to Jesus, “Teacher, well said” (Luke 20:39)! After that, none (of the Sadducees) dared ask Him any more questions (Luke 20:40).

Thought Questions

1. The Sadducees were wealthy and politically powerful. Why did they want to entrap Jesus? What do you think?
2. Where else does the Old Testament teach, in addition to Exo 3:6, that the dead will be resurrected? See Psa 16:9-10; Isa 26:19; and Dan 12:2.
3. What is the purpose of the husband-wife relationship on earth? See Mal 2:15.
4. Will men and women be living in a husband-wife relationship in heaven? See Luke 20:34-36.
5. Do you think the crowd (Matt 22:33) enjoyed hearing Jesus get the better of the Sadducees in an argument?

127***The Greatest Commandment******Matthew 22:34-40; Mark 12:28-34***

When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they met together (Matt 22:34). One of them, who was both a lawyer (Matt 22:35) and a scribe (Mark 12:28), observed that Jesus had answered the Sadducees well (Mark 12:28); so he decided to test Jesus with a question.

He asked Jesus, “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” (Matt 22:36 NIV)

Jesus answered,

The most important one is this: ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’

Mark 12:29-30 NIV

Jesus added further, “This is the first and greatest commandment” (Matt 22:38 NIV).

Then He said, “The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these” (Mark 12:31 NIV). Jesus concluded His answer to the Pharisee, who was both a scribe and a lawyer, by saying, “All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments” (Matt 22:40 NIV).

The man responded to Jesus, “Well said, teacher. You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices” (Mark 12:32-33 NIV).

When Jesus heard that the man had responded wisely, He said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God” (Mark 12:34a NIV).

From then on none (of the Pharisees) dared ask Him any more questions (Mark 12:34 NIV).

Thought Questions

1. Is the commandment, “Love your neighbor as yourself” found in the Old Testament? See Lev 19:18b. Is it found in any other places in the New Testament? See Gal 5:14 and Jam 2:8.
2. What did Jesus mean when He said, “All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments” (Matt 22:40 NIV)? What do you think?
3. Jesus told the Pharisee that he was not far from the kingdom of God (Mark 12:34). What did Jesus mean by that? What do you think?

128

Whose Son Is He?

*Matthew 22:41-46; Mark 12:35-37;
Luke 20:41-44*

The leaders in Jerusalem spent much of the day on Tuesday of the last week trying to get Jesus to say something that they could use against Him; but Jesus turned all their questions back on themselves. While the Pharisees (Matt 22:41) were gathered close to where Jesus was teaching in the temple (Mark 12:35), He asked them, “What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?” (Matt 22:42 NIV)

The Pharisees were confident that they knew the answer to this question. So without delay, they answered that the Christ (Messiah) would be “the son of David” (Matt 22:42b). Their answer showed that they expected the Christ to be a king just like king David, except perhaps more powerful.

After the Pharisees had said that the Christ was to be David’s son, Jesus pointed out that their answer was incorrect. It stood in contrast

with what David had said. Jesus asked, “How is it then that David, speaking by the Spirit, calls him ‘Lord?’” (Matt 22:43 NIV)

Jesus was referring, of course, to the 110th Psalm, where David wrote, “The Lord said to my Lord: ‘Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet’” (Matt 22:44 NIV; Psa 110:1).

The first “Lord” in this sentence refers to “Yahweh,” God. Consequently, the sentence says that God told someone to sit as His (God’s) right hand until He (God) would put all of that person’s enemies under that person’s feet.

Who is the person to whom God said this? Jesus knew, and Christians believe, that is it the Christ to whom God said this. Also the Pharisees would have agreed that it is the Christ.

So, the point of contention between Christ and the Pharisees was about the kind of king the Christ (Messiah) would be. The Pharisees believed that the Christ would be merely David’s son. In response to their belief, Jesus asked, “If then David calls him ‘Lord,’ how can he be his [David’s] son?” (Matt 22:45 NIV)

Following this, the Pharisees could not say a word in reply (Matt 22:46); for they had said that the Christ would be David’s son, but Jesus had shown that the Christ would be David’s Lord.

This shows that Jesus’ concept of the Christ (Messiah) was entirely different from the concept that the Pharisees had. They wanted a king on earth, but Jesus knew that the Christ (Messiah) would be a heavenly king, sitting at the right hand of God.

So with this exchange, Jesus stumped the Pharisees in debate; and from that day forward, none of His adversaries dared ask Him any more questions (Matt 22:46). The large crowd of people that heard Jesus debate with the Pharisees that day, enjoyed the debate very much (Mark 12:37). They knew that Jesus had gotten the better of the Pharisees.

Thought Questions

1. Did the Christ sit down at God’s right hand? If He did, when did He do it? See Mark 16:19.

2. David wrote (Psa 110:1) that God said that the Christ would reign until He (God) had put all of Christ's enemies under His (Christ's) feet. Has God already put all of Christ's enemies under Christ's feet? See 1 Cor 15:26.
3. If all of Christ's enemies have not yet been put under Christ's feet, does that indicate that Christ is still reigning? What do you think?
4. If Christ is still reigning, when will His reign be completed? See 1 Cor 15:25-26.
5. What will happen when Christ's reign has been completed? See 1 Cor 15:24, 28.

129

Jesus Denounced the Scribes and Pharisees

*Matthew 23:1-12; Mark 12:38-40;
Luke 20:45-47*

After Jesus had silenced the scribes and Pharisees, He continued to teach His disciples and others, who were gathered around Him. He warned them to be wary of the scribes, saying,

Beware of the scribes. They like to walk around in flowing robes and love to be greeted in the marketplaces. They devour widows' houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. Such men will be punished most severely.

Luke 20:46-47 NIV

Jesus described what the scribes and Pharisees of His day were doing. He said, "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" (Matt 23:2-3 NKJV).

Jesus continued describing them, saying, “They tie up burdens that are heavy and unbearable and lay them on people’s shoulders, but they refuse to lift a finger to remove them” (Matt 23:4 ISV).

Much of what the scribes and Pharisees did was done to make them appear holy in people’s eyes (Matt 23:5a). Jesus explained,

They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long; they love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; they love to be greeted in the marketplaces and to have men call them ‘Rabbi.’

Matthew 23:5-7 NIV

In order to keep His disciples from acting as the Pharisees did, Jesus said to them, “Don’t be called ‘rabbi’ (teacher) for you have one Teacher, and you are all brethren” (Matt 23:8).

Jesus warned His disciples not to call anyone on earth, “Father,” cautioning them, “And do not call anyone on earth ‘father,’ for you have one Father, and he is in heaven” (Matt 23:9 NIV).

He also warned His disciples against allowing themselves to be called “Masters.” He said, “Don’t be called ‘Masters’ for you have one Master, the Christ” (Matt 23:10).

He reminded them of what He had said earlier (Matt 20:26-27), namely, “The greatest among you will be your servant” (Matt 23:11 NIV).

Then He reminded them of something else He had said earlier (Luke 14:11 and Luke 18:14), namely, “For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted” (Matt 23:12 NIV).

Thought Questions

1. Did Jesus want His disciples to make a show of piety and religion? What do you think?

2. Our word “doctor” means “a teacher,” and our word “master” means someone that is so proficient in a skill or a subject that he or she can teach it. Do you think Jesus’ followers should seek titles, such as “Doctor of Divinity,” “Doctor of Religion,” “Master of Divinity,” and “Master of Religion?” What is wrong with Jesus’ disciples wearing titles like these?
3. Is it by accident that many academic titles, which are awarded today, are the very same titles that Jesus warned His disciples against? What do you think?
4. When Jesus said, “Do not call anyone on earth ‘father’” (Matt 23:9), did He mean that His disciples should not call their own earthly fathers, “father?” Or did He mean that none of His disciples should call anyone “Father” in a religious sense? What do you think?
5. The religious leaders of Jesus’ day set a bad example. Can we learn anything from their bad example? What can we learn?

130

Four of the “Woes” That Jesus Pronounced over the Scribes and Pharisees

Matthew 23:13-22

The scribes and Pharisees had done their best to trip up Jesus with questions. However, He had been able to turn all their questions back on themselves. For that reason, they gave up asking Him questions. Toward the close of Tuesday of Jesus’ last week, He began pronouncing “woes” over the scribes and Pharisees, wherein He repeated some of the things that He had said prior to this (Luke 11:43-52).

He pronounced the first “woe” over them, because they kept people out of the kingdom of heaven. He said, “But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut the kingdom of heaven in people’s

faces. For you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in” (Matt 23:13 ESV).

Some ancient manuscripts and some translations of the New Testament omit the second “woe,” possibly because Jesus had used similar wording in Mark 12:40 and Luke 20:47; but that is no reason to think that Jesus could not have repeated Himself here. The second “woe” that Jesus pronounced was: “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows’ houses and for a pretense you make long prayers; therefore you will receive greater condemnation” (Matt 23:14 ESV).

He pronounced His third “woe” because the scribes and Pharisees made people worse instead of making them better. He said,

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel across sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves.

Matthew 23:15 ESV

He pronounced His fourth “woe” because the scribes and Pharisees avoided doing what they had sworn to do. He said, “Woe to you, blind guides, who say, ‘If anyone swears by the temple, it is nothing, but if anyone swears by the gold of the temple, he is bound by his oath’” (Matt 23:16 ESV).

Jesus castigated them, saying, “You blind fools! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that has made the gold sacred?” (Matt 23:17 ESV) He further described their deception, saying, “And you say, ‘If anyone swears by the altar, it is nothing, but if anyone swears by the gift that is on the altar, he is bound by his oath’” (Matt 23:18 ESV). Because of such deceit, Jesus called them “blind men.” He asked, “For which is greater, the gift or the altar that makes the gift sacred?” (Matt 23:19 ESV)

In an attempt to correct their thinking, He said,

So whoever swears by the altar swears by it and by everything on it. And whoever swears by the temple swears by it and

by him who dwells in it. And whoever swears by heaven
swears by the throne of God and by him who sits upon it.

Matthew 23:20-22 ESV

Thought Questions

1. Jesus said that the scribes and Pharisees neither entered the kingdom of heaven nor allowed other people to go into it (Matt 23:13). Did He say that because they were not following Him and were trying to keep other people from following Him? What do you think?
2. Jesus said that the scribes and Pharisees were “shutting the kingdom of heaven in people’s faces” (Matt 23:13). How were they shutting up the kingdom of heaven in peoples’ faces? Were they doing it by telling people not to follow Jesus? What do you think?
3. Did Jesus find joy in pronouncing these “woes” over the leaders of His people? What do you think? How do you think He felt about having to pronounce such “woes?”
4. Should Jesus have kept silent and not castigated the leaders for of the terrible things they were doing? What do you think?
5. What did Jesus teach about taking oaths? See Matthew 5:34-36. Should Jesus’ followers take oaths? What do you think?

131

Four More “Woes” over the Scribes and Pharisees

Matthew 23:23-32

Jesus pronounced His fifth “woe” over the scribes and Pharisees because they emphasized minor things and neglected more important things. He said,

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe
mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier

matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others.

Matthew 23:23 ESV

Jesus found that the scribes and Pharisees were poor guides for the people. He said, “You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel!” (Matt 23:24 ESV)

He pronounced His sixth “woe” over them, because they were more interested in cleaning the outside of the cup or the plate than they were in cleaning the inside. He said, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence” (Matt 23:25 ESV).

Jesus gave them this advice. He said, “You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean” (Matt 23:26 ESV).

Jesus pronounced His seventh “woe” over the scribes and Pharisees, because they were like tombs that had been painted white on the outside. He said, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people’s bones and all uncleanness” (Matt 23:27 ESV).

He then explained how they were like whitewashed tombs. He said, “So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness” (Matt 23:28 ESV).

Jesus came to the eighth “woe” and pronounced it over them, because they decorated the tombs of the prophets, whom their fathers had murdered. Jesus said,

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You build tombs for the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous. And you say, ‘If we had lived in the days of our forefathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’

Matthew 23:29-30

It may have appeared that, by building monumental tombs for the prophets, the scribes and Pharisees showed their outrage at the murder of the prophets; but it was not so. Rather than showing outrage at what their fathers did, it showed that they were a part of a murderous lineage. Jesus said, “So you testify against yourselves that you are the descendants of those who murdered the prophets” (Matt 23:29 NIV).

After Jesus had said this to the scribes and Pharisees, He said to them, in derision, “Fill up, then, the measure of the sin of your forefathers!” (Matt 23:32 NIV)

Thought Questions

1. Jesus accused the scribes and Pharisees of being hypocrites (Matt 23:13-15, 23, 27, 29). What is a “hypocrite?”
2. What did Jesus mean when He said that the scribes and Pharisees strained out a gnat but swallowed a camel (Matt 23:24)? Is it possible for people to do that same thing today? Please give an example.
3. In what way were the scribes and Pharisees like cups and plates that had been washed on the outside but not on the inside (Matt 23:25-26)? How can we avoid being like that?
4. In what way were the scribes and Pharisees like whitewashed tombs? See Matthew 23:27-28. How can we avoid being like that?

132

Jesus Lamented Again over Jerusalem

Matthew 23:33-39

After Jesus had pronounced “woes” over the scribes and Pharisees, He continued speaking to them in the strongest of terms. He said, “You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell?” (Matt 23:33 NIV)

Jesus foretold how the prophets, the wise men and the teachers would be treated, whom He was planning to send to Jerusalem. He said, “Therefore I am sending you prophets and wise men and teachers. Some of them you will kill and crucify; others you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town” (Matt 23:34 NIV).

Jesus forewarned that Jerusalem would be punished for the murder of all the righteous people, whose deaths are recorded in the Old Testament. He said,

And so upon you will come all the righteous blood that has
been shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to
the blood of Zechariah son of Berekiah, whom you
murdered between the temple and the altar.

Matthew 23:35 NIV

Jesus emphasized that retribution would come upon the generation of people then living. He said, “I tell you the truth, all this will come upon this generation” (Matt 23:36 NIV).

Therefore, Jesus lamented over Jerusalem, as He had done earlier (Luke 13:34). He said,

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone
those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your
children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her
wings, but you were not willing.

Matthew 23:37 NIV

Jesus went on to describe the sad state that those who might possibly survive the destruction of Jerusalem. He said, “Look, your house is left to you desolate” (Matt 23:38 NIV)

He foretold that they would not see Him again until they said to Him, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord” (Matt 23:39; Psa 118:26).

Thought Questions

1. Jesus said that some of the prophets, the wise men, and the teachers, whom He would send to Jerusalem would be put to death (Matt 23:34). Can you name a few of the people whom Jesus later sent to Jerusalem?
2. Why were the people of Jesus' generation held accountable for the murder of all of the prophets? What did they do to earn such a fate?
3. What did Jesus mean when He said that He longed to gather the people of Jerusalem together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings (Matt 23:37)?
4. Did Jesus love Jerusalem? Was Jerusalem, in some special way, a special city to Him? What do you think? Please explain.

133

The Widow's Offering

Mark 12:41-44; Luke 21:1-4

Tuesday was for Jesus a very busy day. One event led to another. The first opportunity that He had to get away from controversy seems to have been after He had pronounced eight “woes” over the scribes and Pharisees (Matt 23:13-36) and had lamented (Matt 23:37-39) over Jerusalem.

It may have been at this point, then, that Jesus left the temple grounds and went out to the Mount of Olives, where He spent the night (Luke 21:37). If this is an accurate portrayal of events, then it was likely on Wednesday that He sat opposite the place where the people were putting their contributions into the temple treasury (Mark 12:41).

Jesus watched as many rich people came by and put large amounts of money into the treasury. He also watched as a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, worth less than a penny (Mark 12:42). Upon seeing Her do this, Jesus called His disciples to Him and said to them, “I

tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others” (Mark 12:43 NIV).

He explained, “They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on” (Mark 12:44 NIV).

Thought Questions

1. What motivated the poor widow to put everything that she had into the temple treasury? What is your guess?
2. Does God want His people to be generous with their possessions? Please explain?
3. Did Jesus actually commend the woman for having put everything that she had into the temple treasury, or was He merely commenting on the size of her gift? What do you think?
4. Does God evaluate the size of gifts differently from the way man evaluates them? Please comment on this.

134

Some Greeks Ask to See Jesus

John 12:20-36

There were Greek-speaking worshippers in the city of Jerusalem at that time. Some of them came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida, the same place that Peter and Andrew were from (John 1:44), and said to Philip, “Sir, we would like to see Jesus” (John 22:21).

So Philip went to Andrew and told Andrew; and they both went to Jesus and told Him (John 12:22). Jesus, presumably talking to the Greek-speaking worshippers, said, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified” (John 12:23 NASB)

Jesus then gave them an illustration that showed how He would glorify God and why it was necessary for Him to die. He said, “I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds” (John 12:24

NIV). What is true for seeds is true for humans as well. Jesus said, “The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life” (John 12:25 NIV).

Jesus promised His followers that if they lived self-sacrificial lives here on earth, they would have the privilege of being with Him and God would honor them. He said, “Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me” (John 12:26 NIV).

Jesus revealed His feelings concerning what was about to happen to Him. He said, “Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour?’ No, for this purpose I have come to this hour” (John 12:27 RSV). After that, in a brief prayer He said, “Father, glorify your name!” (John 12:28a NIV)

In response to His prayer, a voice from heaven spoke, saying, “I have glorified it, and will glorify it again” (John 12:28b NIV).

The crowd of people, which was standing nearby, heard the voice. Some of them said it had thundered. Others said that an angel had spoken to Jesus (John 12:29). Jesus Himself said, “This voice was not for my benefit, but for yours” (John 12:30).

Jesus knew that the world was approaching an hour of decision. He said, “Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out” (John 12:31 NIV).

Next, He predicted one of the effects that His death would have, saying, “But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself” (John 12:32 NIV). By saying He would be “lifted up from the earth,” Jesus showed how certain He was that He was going to die (John 12:33).

What Jesus said confused the crowd. So they said to Him, “We have heard from the Law that the Christ will remain forever, so how can you say, ‘The Son of Man must be lifted up?’” They also asked, “Who is this ‘Son of Man?’” (John 12:34 NIV)

Jesus replied to them, “For a little while longer the Light is among you. Walk while you have the Light, so that darkness will not overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes” (John

12:35 NASB). Jesus admonished them, “While you have the Light, believe in the Light, so that you may become sons of Light” (John 12:36a NASB).

After He had said these things, He hid Himself from them (John 12:36b).

Thought Questions

1. Jesus gave a reason as to why it was necessary for Him to die. What reason did He give? See John 12:24.
2. Who is the “prince of this world” (John 12:31)?
3. How does Jesus’ sacrificial death represent a judgment on this world? What do you think?
4. To what was Jesus referring when He said, “But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself” (John 12:32 NIV)?
5. Some of the people thought that the Christ (Messiah) would remain on earth forever (John 12:34). What kind of a Messiah were they expecting? What do you think?
6. Jesus said, “While you have the Light, believe in the Light” (John 12:36 NASB). Was Jesus implying that He was the light, which people should believe in? What do you think?

135

Being Judged by the Sayings of Jesus

John 12:37-50

The Gospel of John makes it clear that the children of Israel did not, as a whole, believe on Jesus. They did not believe, in spite of the fact that He did many miraculous signs in their presence (John 12:37).

In the Gospel of John it is pointed out that the people of Jesus’ day were a lot like the people in Isaiah’s day. Isaiah the Prophet had said, “Lord, who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the

Lord been revealed?” (Isa 53:1; John 12:38 NIV) Isaiah accounted for the disbelief of the people, by saying, “He [God] has blinded their eyes and deadened their hearts, so they can neither see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts, nor turn...” (John 12:40a; Isa 6:10). Yet, if they would turn, God said, “I would heal them” (John 12:40b NIV; Isa 6:10). Isaiah said this because he had seen Jesus’ glory (John 12:41).

In spite of the fact that all the people of Israel did not accept Jesus as their Messiah, many individuals did. Even among their religious leaders there were some that accepted Him. Yet they did not openly confess their faith in Jesus, because they feared the Pharisees would have them put out of the synagogue (John 12:42) and because they loved the praise of men more than they loved the praise of God (John 12:43).

Concerning belief in Him, Jesus cried out, “The one who believes on me, does not believe on me, but on the one who sent me” (John 12:44). Jesus added, “He who sees me, sees also the one who sent me” (John 12:45).

Jesus explained that He had come as light. He said, “I have come as light into the world, so that no one who believes on me stays in darkness” (John 12:46). Jesus wanted everyone to understand that He had come into the world, not to condemn the world but to save it. He said, “And if anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world” (John 12:47).

Jesus knew that it would not be necessary for Him to pass judgment on the people who rejected Him and His teaching. He said, “He that rejects me and does not accept my sayings has one that judges him: The word that I spoke will judge him in the last day” (John 12:48).

Jesus claimed no originality for what He had taught. He said, “For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me gave me a command what I should say and what I should speak” (John 12:49). Jesus had absolute confidence in what the Father had told Him. Jesus said, “And I know that his command is eternal life. Therefore the things I say, I speak just as the Father told me” (John 12:50).

Thought Questions

1. Does our telling people about Jesus help them to believe in God? What do you think? See John 12:44.
2. What did Jesus mean when He said, “He who sees me, sees also the one that sent me” (John 12:45)? What do you think He meant?
3. Is Jesus still a shining light (John 12:46)? How is He still shining, if He is?
4. Will people at the Judgment be confronted with what Jesus taught? See John 12:48.
5. Jesus had confidence in what God told Him to say (John 12:50). Does Jesus’ confidence in what God told Him to do and say help us to have confidence in Jesus and in His teaching? What do you think?

136

Things That Must Happen Before the End Comes

Matthew 24:1-14; Mark 13:1-13; Luke 21:5-19

Jesus left the temple (Matt 24:1) for the last time, presumably on Wednesday of His last week. As He was walking away, His disciples called His attention to how attractive the temple buildings were (Luke 21:5). They said, “Look, Teacher! What massive stones! What magnificent buildings” (Mark 13:1 NIV)!

Whereupon, He asked them, “Do you see all these great buildings?” (Mark 13:2a NIV) Then He said, “I tell you the truth, not one stone here will be left upon another; which will not be thrown down” (Matt 24:2b).

Jesus and His disciples went out of the city of Jerusalem and sat down opposite the temple, on the Mount of Olives (Mark 13:3a). While Jesus was sitting there, four of His disciples (Peter, James, John, and Andrew) came to Him with questions (Mark 13b). They wanted to know (1) when the temple would be destroyed and what would be the sign that

it was about to take place (Luke 21:7). In addition, they wanted to know (2) what the sign would be of His coming and the end of the age (Matt 24:3b). (Notice that they rightly connected His coming with the end of the age.)

Jesus answered their second question first. He began by emphasizing that He would not be returning soon. He said, “Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many” (Matt 24:4-5 NIV). He predicted that deceivers would say, “The time is near” (Luke 21:8b NIV). But He cautioned His disciples, “Do not follow them” (Luke 21:8c NIV).

He warned them that “wars and rumors of wars” would not be a sign that the end was near. He said, “And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars; see that you are not alarmed; for this must take place, but the end is not yet” (Matt 24:6 RSV). Then He said, “These things must happen first, but the end will not come right away” (Luke 21:9b NIV; see also Mark 13:7). Further, He said, “Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be great earthquakes, famines and pestilences in various places, and fearful events and great signs from heaven” (Luke 21:10-11 NIV). Not even such things would be signs that His return was near. He said, “All these are the beginning of birth pains” (Matt 24:8 NIV).

Jesus pointed out some of the frightful thing that would happen to His disciples, personally. He said that people would lay hands on them and persecute them (Luke 21:12). They would hand them over to local councils, synagogues, and prisons, where they would be flogged (Mark 13:9). He said that they would be brought before kings and governors on account of His name. The results would be that they would become His witnesses to kings and governors (Luke 21:13). He warned that some of them would be put to death. In addition, they would be hated by all nations because of Him (Matt 24:9).

They should not worry, however, about how they would speak when they were arrested and brought to trial (Mark 13:11a). He said, “But make up your mind not to worry beforehand how you will defend yourselves” (Luke 21:14 NIV). He advised, “Just say whatever is given

you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit” (Mark 13:11b NIV). Then He promised, “For I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict” (Luke 21:15 NIV).

He also predicted that many of His followers would turn away from the faith (Matt 24:10a) because of these persecutions. He said that relatives and friends would betray them (Luke 21:16) and that children would rebel against their parents and have them put to death (Mark 12:12). He predicted that some of His followers would even hate each other and that many false prophets would appear and deceive many people (Matt 24:10b-11). In addition, He predicted that love would grow cold in the hearts of many, due to an increase of wickedness (Matt 24:12).

Apparently speaking about the end, He said, “Yet not a hair of your head will perish. By your endurance You will gain your life” (Luke 21:18-19 NIV).

Then, He spoke an additional word of encouragement, saying, “But he who stands firm to the end will be saved” (Matt 24:13 NIV).

He assured them that the end would not come until the gospel of the kingdom had been preached in the whole world. He said, “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come” (Matt 24:14 NIV).

Thought Questions

1. Where else in the Gospels did Jesus indicate that His return and the end of the age (world) would take place together? See Matthew 24:30-31; 25:31-32; Luke 17:29-30; John 14:3.
2. Do we hear of wars and rumors of wars today? Do they signal that the end is near? What do you think? See Matthew 24:6 and Mark 13:7.
3. Jesus said to His disciples, “Say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit” (Mark 13:11b). Was Jesus speaking to His Twelve Apostles only when He said this? Or was He

- speaking to all of His followers, including us? What do you think?
4. Have you ever known anyone personally who experienced persecution because of his or her faith in Jesus? If you have, please tell about it.
 5. Jesus said that not a hair would perish (Luke 21:18) on the heads of His disciples, who stand firm (Luke 21:19). How is that to be understood?
 6. Jesus said that the gospel of the kingdom would be preached in the whole world before the end came. See Matthew 24:14. Has the gospel already been preached in the whole world? What do you think?

137

The Sign of the Destruction of Temple

*Matthew 24:15-22; Mark 13:14-20;
Luke 21:20-24*

While Jesus and His disciples were on the Mount of Olives overlooking the temple, Jesus had begun answering His disciples' questions about the future. He answered their second question first (Matt 24:3b). It was a question about Jesus' return and the end of the age. He explained that His return and the end of the age would not take place soon (Luke 21:9b).

After He had answered this question, He turned to their first question, which concerned the temple. They had asked what sign would indicate that the temple was about to be destroyed (Luke 21:7).

In answer to this question, Jesus explained that armies would surround Jerusalem. When that happened, it would be the sign that Jerusalem and the temple were about to be destroyed. He said, "When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near" (Luke 21:20 NIV).

Then He warned that they should flee when they see the city of Jerusalem surrounded. Those of them that were in Judea at that time should also flee. He said,

Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those in the city get out, and let those in the country not enter the city. For this is the time of punishment in fulfillment of all that has been written.

Luke 21:21-22 NIV

The prophet Daniel had spoken of an “abomination that causes desolation” (Dan 9:27), and Jesus used the same expression for what would soon take place in Jerusalem. He said,

So when you see standing in the holy place ‘the abomination that causes desolation,’ spoken of through the prophet Daniel--let the reader understand--then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.

Matthew 24:15-16 NIV

Jesus warned His followers to flee the very minute they learned that the temple in Jerusalem had been desecrated. He said, “Let no one on the roof of his house go down to take anything out of the house. Let no one in the field go back to get his cloak” (Matt 24:17-18 NIV).

Jesus was filled with sympathy for His followers, who would have to flee. He remarked, sadly, “Woe to those who are with child and to those who nurse babes in those days; for there will be great distress upon the land, and wrath to this people” (Luke 21:23 NASB).

Then He described the horrible things that would happen to the people of Jerusalem and Judea, who were not of His followers and who would, therefore, not know to flee. He said,

And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled

underfoot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.

Luke 21:24 NASB

He instructed His followers to pray that their suffering would be lessened. He said,

Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath. For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now--and never to be equaled again. If those days had not been cut short, no flesh would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened.

Matthew 24:20-22

Thought Questions

1. When was the temple in Jerusalem destroyed? Has it ever been rebuilt? What building stands on the temple site today?
2. Why did Jesus advise His followers to pray that their flight not take place in winter (Matt 24:20)?
3. Jesus also advised His followers to pray that their flight not take place on the Sabbath (Matt 24:20). Why did He advise them to pray that?
4. Do you know whether or not Jesus' disciples, who lived in Jerusalem, were actually saved alive when the city was destroyed? Please share what information you have about this.

138

***The Coming of the Son of Man
and the End of the Age***

*Matthew 24:23-31; Mark 13:21-27;
Luke 21:25-28*

You will recall that Jesus sat on the Mount of Olives (Mark 13:3) answering His disciples' questions about the future. In so doing, He cautioned them not to think that He would return soon (Matt 24:4-14). He also told them what sign would show that the temple was about to be destroyed (Matt 24:15-22).

Next, He returned to their question: "And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" (Matt 24:3b NASB) It should be noted, perhaps, that the word "coming," which is used in Matthew 24:3, is translated from the Greek word *parousia*, which literally means "presence." So the disciples were asking, "What will be the sign of your presence?"

In reply, Jesus forewarned them that some people would claim, prematurely, that He had returned. He said,

At that time if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or, 'There he is!' do not believe it. For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect --if that were possible.

Matthew 24:23-24 NIV

Then He admonished them, "So be on your guard; I have told you everything ahead of time" (Mark 13:23 NIV). He continued, "So if anyone tells you, 'There he is, out in the desert,' do not go out; or, 'Here he is, in the inner rooms,' do not believe it" (Matt 24:26 NIV).

His followers should not believe that He would be hidden, for when He comes, all will see Him. Jesus said, "For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming [parousia] of the

Son of Man” (Matt 24:27 NIV). Then He added, “Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather” (Matt 24:28 NIV).

Following that, Jesus passed from a discussion of the coming of the Son of Man to a discussion of the end of the age (world). He passed from one to the other in such a seamless way that He seemed to link them together. He said, “Immediately after the distress of those days ‘the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken’” (Matt 24:29 NIV).

Then He described in more detail what would happen at the end of the age (world), saying, “There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea” (Luke 21:25 NIV).

He also described how the people on earth would react to these events. He said, “Men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken” (Luke 21:26 NIV).

While these things are happening, the Son of Man will appear. Jesus said,

At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory.

Matthew 24:30 NIV

When the Son of Man (Jesus) comes, He will gather His elect (chosen people). Jesus said, “And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other” (Matt 24:31 NIV).

He then told His followers how they should react when they see these things happening. He said, “When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near” (Luke 21:28 NIV).

Thought Questions

1. When the sun is darkened and stars fall from the sky will it be the end of the world? What do you think?
2. What did Jesus mean when He said, “Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather” (Matt 24:28 NIV)? Did Jesus mean that His chosen people would be drawn to Him when He comes again?
3. Why will the nations of the earth mourn (Matt 24:30) when they see the sign of the Son of Man appearing in the sky? What do you think?
4. How should Jesus’ followers react when they see “signs in the sun, moon and stars” and the seas roaring and tossing (Luke 21:25). Should they be afraid? What do you think? See Luke 21:28.

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The Lesson of the Fig Tree

*Matthew 24:32-36; Mark 13:28-32;
Luke 21:29-33*

In speaking to His disciples about the future, Jesus mentioned the lesson of the fig tree and all the trees (Luke 21:29). He said, “Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near” (Matt 24:32 NIV). This seems to mean that when God starts a process, He continues it inexorably until He finishes it.

Jesus said, “Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door” (Matt 24:33 NIV).

The truthfulness of what the fig tree and the other trees teach will be born out, I believe, when end-time events get started. For when Jesus appears and His people are gathered to Him like vultures (Matt 24:27), other end-time events will follow inexorably. The sun and the moon will be darkened and stars will fall (Matt 24:29); and these events will indicate that (the heavenly phase of) the kingdom of God is near; for Jesus said,

“Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near” (Luke 21:31 NIV).

Now, just as the truthfulness of Jesus’ parable about the fig tree and the other trees, will be born out at the end time, so the truthfulness of His parable, as it applied to Jerusalem, was born out when Jerusalem fell. For when Roman armies surrounded Jerusalem, the city’s destruction came about inexorably and soon.

Concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened” (Matt 24:34 NIV). This proved to be true. Some of the people of Jesus’ generation did, indeed, live to see Jerusalem’s destruction in AD 70.

The proximity of Matthew 24:33 to Matthew 24:34 leads some people to conclude that Jesus expected the world to end when Jerusalem fell. But it is not necessary to conclude that Jesus thought this; because the narrative of Jesus’ conversation with His disciples, as we have it in the Gospels, may represent only a shorted version of His full conversation with them concerning the future.

The full conversation may have extended over several hours. It almost certainly lasted longer than it takes a person to read the accounts of it in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21. Therefore, it is probable--even likely--that the discussion switched back and forth several times between (1) the destruction of Jerusalem and (2) Jesus’ return at the end of the age.

Therefore the principle of interpretation, which says that a person ought first to look at the context of a passage in interpreting it, may not be the only principle that applies in this case, where the topic of conversation switched back and forth several times.

In a case such as this, we may need to use our best judgment and apply Jesus’ comments to whichever of the two topics they best fit, just as the Apostles no doubt did, as they listened to His words. For we would not want to interpret what Jesus said in Matthew 24:34 in a way that would bring it into conflict with what He said elsewhere. We know that elsewhere Jesus said that the end time was not near (Matt 24:6-8,14;

Mark 13:7-8; Luke 21:9) and that the destruction of Jerusalem was near (Matt 23:36; Luke 11:50-51).

After saying the above things, Jesus asserted that everything that He had been telling His disciples, whether about the end time or about the destruction of Jerusalem, would prove to be true. He said, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away” (Matt 24:35 NIV).

Regarding the return of the Son of Man at the end of the age, however, Jesus said, “No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father” (Matt 24:36 NIV).

Thought Questions

1. Did Jesus establish a kingdom when He came to earth the first time? See Matt 16:18-19 and Acts 2:1-41. If He did, what is the kingdom that He established? Is it the church?
2. Does the kingdom that Jesus established still exist today? What do you think? See 1 Cor 15:25-28.
3. Did Jesus indicate elsewhere that Jerusalem would be destroyed before much longer? See Matt 23:36 and Luke 11:50-51.
4. Did Jesus indicate elsewhere that His return at the end of the age (world) would not be soon? See Matt 24:6-8,14; Mark 13:7-8; Luke 21:9.
5. Is it good that we do not know when the Son of Man (Jesus) will come back? What do you think?

140

What the End Will Be Like?

Matthew 24:37-44

Jesus continued discussing the future with His disciples. He described what the world would be like at the time when the Son of Man

returns. He repeated His description (Luke 17:26-27) of how people's lives at that time would be going on as usual when He, the Son of Man, returns. He said,

As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark;

Matthew 24:37-38 NIV

Just as the great flood came as a big surprise to people of Noah's day, so also Jesus' return will be a surprise to many. He said, "And they were unaware until the flood came and took them all away, so also will be the coming of the Son of Man" (Matt 24:39).

When the Son of Man returns, He will gather (Mark 13:27) His people from the earth. Jesus said, "Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left" (Matt 24:40-41 NIV). Concerning this, Jesus admonished His disciples by saying, "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come" (Matt 24:42 NIV).

Jesus seemed to enjoy comparing His return to the coming of a thief. (See Luke 12:39.) His point was that the Son of Man would come as a surprise. Jesus said to His disciples, "But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into" (Matt 24:43 NIV).

From this Jesus drew a lesson on being prepared. He said, "So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him" (Matt 24:44 NIV).

Thought Questions

1. Why will people be surprised when the Son of Man returns? What do you think?

2. Why will some people “be taken” and others “left” (Matt 24:40-41)? Who will be taken? Where will Jesus take them? See 1 Th 4:17.
3. What can a person do to prepare for the Lord’s return?

141

The Faithful and Wise Servant

*Matthew 24:45-51; Mark 13:33-37;
Luke 21:34-38*

Jesus told His disciples that they should get ready for His return. He said to them, “Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come” (Mark 13:33 NIV).

He then compared Himself to a householder that was getting ready to go on a journey. He said, “It’s like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with his assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch” (Mark 13:24 NIV). Jesus brought His disciples into His analogy by cautioning them, as though they themselves were the servants of whom He spoke. He said to them,

Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back--whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping.

Mark 13:35-36 NIV

Then He said, “What I say to you, I say to everyone: ‘Watch!’” (Mark 13:37 NIV)

Next, Jesus taught His disciples a lesson that was similar to one He had taught them earlier (Luke 12:42-46). He said, “Who then is the faithful and wise slave, whom the master has put in charge of his household to give them their food at the right time?” (Matt 24:45)

Jesus indicated that a servant that is faithful and wise will be richly rewarded. He said, “Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing

when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions” (Matt 24:46-47).

It is possible that a slave that is elevated to a responsible position could turn out to be a wicked man. Jesus said,

But if that wicked slave says to himself, ‘My master is slow in coming’ and begins to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with drunkards, the master of that slave will come on a day when he doesn’t expect him and at an hour he doesn’t know.

Matthew 24:48-50

Jesus then described some of the terrible things that a master might do to such a wicked slave. He said, “He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matt 24:51 NIV). Jesus added other warnings for His disciples, saying, “But take heed to yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a snare” (Luke 21:34 RSV).

Jesus was obviously referring to the end time with the above words and not to the destruction of Jerusalem, for He added, “For it will come upon all those who live on the face of the whole earth” (Luke 21:35 NIV).

Then He cautioned them, saying, “Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all the things that are about to happen and to be able to stand before the Son of Man” (Luke 21:36).

Thought Questions

1. Why does it matter whether or not a servant is watching at the time his master returns? Please explain.
2. Should we be always thinking, “Our Lord might return today?” What do you think?

3. Was Jesus talking about Simon Peter when He said that the master would put “the faithful and wise servant” in charge of all His possessions (Matt 24:46-47)? What do you think?
4. Jesus said that a slave that takes care of his master’s household, and does it in a wise manner, will be blessed with even greater responsibility (Matt 24:46-47). Does that indicate that there will be positions of responsibility in heaven? What do you think?
5. How do dissipation and drunkenness (Luke 21:34) weigh down peoples’ hearts? Please explain.

142

The Parable of the Ten Virgins

Matthew 25:1-13

Jesus continued teaching His disciples about their being prepared for His return. He said to them, “At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom” (Matt 25:1 NIV). The virgins were not all equally wise. Jesus said of them, “Five of them were foolish and five were wise” (Matt 25:2 NIV) The foolish ones brought their lamps but they did not bring any extra oil with them. The wise ones, however, brought oil in jars along with their lamps (Matt 25:3-4).

The bridegroom was so long in coming that all of the virgins got drowsy and fell asleep (Matt 25:5). Suddenly, in the middle of the night the cry rang out: “Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!” (Matt 25:6)

All ten of them woke up and trimmed their lamps (Matt 25:7). The foolish ones said to the wise ones, “Give us some of your oil because our lamps are going out” (Matt 25:8). The wise one replied, “There may not be enough for both us and you. So go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves” (Matt 25:9). While they were gone the bridegroom came,

and those who were ready went in with him into the wedding feast, and the door was shut (Matt 25:10).

Later, the rest of the virgins came and said, “Lord, Lord, “Open the door for us!” (Matt 25:11) He answered, “I tell you the truth, I don’t know you” (Matt 25:12 NIV)

Then Jesus cautioned His disciples, “Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour” (Matt 25:13 NIV).

Thought Questions

1. Who is the bridegroom in the Parable of the Ten Virgins? Who are the five wise virgins?
2. What could the “oil” in this parable represent? What do you think?
3. The foolish virgins did not think ahead. Is it foolish of a person not to get prepared for his or her eternal future? How does a person prepare for his or her eternal future?
4. Jesus cautioned His people to “keep watch.” What does it mean, “to keep watch?” How can a person know whether or not he is keeping watch?

143

The Parable of the Talents

Matthew 25:14-30

Jesus was speaking to His disciples about the future, and He had just told them that the kingdom of heaven would be like ten virgins, five of whom were wise and five were foolish (Matt 25:1-13).

Next, He told them the Parable of the Talents. In it He compared the kingdom of heaven to a man that went on a journey (Matt 24:14). Before the man left, He called in his three slaves and turned his possessions over to them. To one slave he gave five talents. To another he gave two talents, and to the third he gave one talent. In this way, he divided his possessions among his slaves, to each according to his ability. Then he

left on his journey (Matt 25:15). Now, a “talent” is an ancient unit of weight, which was used for weighing precious metals. It weighs about 30 kilograms (a little over 66 lbs.).

The slave that got five talents went at once and put his master’s money to work and gained five more talents (Matt 25:16). Similarly, the slave that got two talents gained two more talents (Matt 25:17). The slave, however, that got only one talent went away, dug a hole in the ground, and hid his master’s money (Matt 25:18).

After a long time, the master of those slaves came back and settled accounts with them (Matt 25:19). The slave that had received five talents came and brought five additional talents to his master, saying, “Sir, you gave me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents” (Matt 25:20). His master 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” (Matt 25:21 NKJV).

The slave that had received two talents came and said, “Sir, you gave me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents” (Matt 25:22).

To him His master said, “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” (Matt 25:23 NKJV).

Then the slave that had received but one talent came and said, “Sir, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. I was afraid so I went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, here you have what is yours” (Matt 25:24-25).

The master 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.

Matthew 25:26-27 NKJV

Then the master commanded,

So 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.

Matthew 25:28-29 NKJV

The master also commanded, “And cast the unprofitable slave into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matt 25:30 NKJV).

Thought Questions

1. What would a talent of gold (about 30 kilograms) be worth today? What would five talents of gold be worth today? What would two talents be worth?
2. Do you get the impression that Jesus thought it might be a long time before He returned? See Matthew 25:19.
3. What does the Parable of the Talents teach? Does it teach that God has given to each person unique abilities and opportunities for service? What do you think?
4. Was the two-talent slave expected to do as well as the five-talent slave? Was he condemned for not doing as well as the five-talent slave?
5. Did Jesus indicate that there would be positions of responsibility in heaven? See Matthew 25:21,23.
6. Jesus said, “For to everyone who has, more will be given...but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away” (Matt 25:28-29 NKJV). What did Jesus mean by that? Is that fair? Did Jesus mean that God abundantly rewards industry in His service? What do you think?

144

The Final Judgment of the Nations

Matthew 25:31-46

Jesus closed His discussion of future events with a description of the Judgment scene. He said that when the Son of Man comes, He will have all the angels with Him and will sit on His glorious throne (Matt 25:31). All the nations will be gathered before Him and He will separate the people, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats (Matt 25:32). The Son of Man will then put the sheep on His right side and the goats on His left (Matt 25:33); and He will say to those on His right, “Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world” (Matt 25:34 NIV).

Then the Son of Man will explain to them why they are being treated so well. He will say,

For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.

Matthew 15:34-36 NIV

The righteous people will ask,

Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?

Matthew 25:37-39 NIV

The King will explain, “I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me” (Matt 25:40 NIV).

After that, the King will say to those on His left, “Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matt 25:41 NIV). He will explain to them why they are being so harshly treated. He will say,

For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was
thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger
and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did
not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not
look after me.

Matthew 25:42-43 NIV

They will answer, “Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?” (Matt 25:44 NIV)

He will reply, “I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me” (Matt 25:45 NIV).

Concluding his description of the Judgment, Jesus said, “Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life” (Matt 25:46 NIV).

Thought Questions

1. The Judgment will take place in conjunction with the coming of the Son of Man (Matt 25:31-32). Will that be at the end of time? See Rev 20:11-15.
2. For whom has the heavenly kingdom been prepared? See Matthew 25:34.
3. Does Jesus expect His followers to feed people that don’t have anything to eat and to give a drink of water to those that don’t have anything to drink? Does He expect His followers to find housing for strangers, to put clothes on people that don’t have any, to take care

of the sick, and to visit people in prison? What do you think? See Matthew 25:34-36, 41-43.

4. If Jesus' followers help people in need, is that the same as helping Jesus? What do you think?
5. If Jesus' followers don't help people in need, is that the same as not helping Jesus? What do you think?
6. For whom is "the eternal fire" prepared? See Matthew 25:41. Will some people be put there? Is the "eternal fire" the same as hell? See Mark 9:43.
7. Will "eternal life" last forever (Matt 25:46)? If so, how long will "eternal punishment" last? Will it also last forever?

145

The Final Plot to Kill Jesus

Matthew 26:1-5; Mark 14:1-2; Luke 22:1-2

Jesus finished (Matt 26:1) the rather long discourse, which He gave to His disciples in answer to their questions about (1) the destruction of the temple and about (2) His return at the end of the age (world). Since He knew that in two days He would be put to death by crucifixion, He said to His disciples, "You know that in two days the Passover will take place and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified" (Matt 26:2 NIV).

In the meanwhile, the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders of the people came together at the house of Caiaphas, the high priest (Matt 26:3). They met in order to devise a plan to take Jesus by deception. They wanted to arrest Him as secretly as possible (Matt 26:4), because they were afraid of the people (Luke 22:2).

Caiaphas had already expressed his opinion that it would be better "that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish" (John 11:50 NIV). Most of the religious leaders present at the meeting at Caiaphas' house agreed with Him that Jesus should be put to death. They

said, however, “This must not happen during the Feast, lest there be a riot among the people” (Mark 14:2).

Thought Questions

1. Why was Jesus such a threat to the religious leaders? How did they think they would benefit by His death? What do you think?
2. Why did the religious leaders want to avoid a riot? Why did the religious leaders think that the people would object to their putting Jesus to death?
3. Are you amazed that Jesus knew exactly how He would die and when it would happen (Matt 26:2)?
4. Are you impressed that Jesus did not express any regrets for Himself or ask for sympathy?

146

The Anointing in the House of Simon the Leper

Matthew 26:6-16; Mark 14:3-11; Luke 22:3-6

After Jesus left off teaching in the temple, He returned to Bethany, where a meal was served for Him in the house of a man known as “Simon the Leper” (Matt 26:6). The meal was likely served on Wednesday of Jesus’ last week on earth.

While Jesus was reclining at table at Simon’s house, an incident took place, which was similar to what had happened a few days earlier at Lazarus’ house (John 12:1-8). A woman came, bringing an alabaster jar that contained expensive perfumed oil, which was made with genuine nard. She broke the jar open and poured oil on Jesus’ head (Mark 14:3).

When His disciples saw this, they were indignant (Matt 26:8). They echoed the complaint that Judas had made when Mary had poured perfumed oil on Jesus’ feet (John 12:3-6). They said, “Why was this

perfumed oil wasted? It might have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor” (Mark 14:5b).

They also rebuked the woman sharply. Jesus became aware of the disciples’ criticism of the woman and said to them, “Leave her alone. Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me” (Mark 14:6 NIV).

Jesus then told them the same that He had told Judas (John 12:8). He said, “The poor you will have with you always and you can help them any time you please; but you will not have me always” (Mark 14:7). Defending the woman, He said, “She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial” (Mark 14:8 NIV). Then He added, “I tell you the truth, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her” (Matt 26:13 NIV).

Shortly after this, Judas went to the chief priests (Matt 26:14) and offered to betray Jesus into their hands (Mark 14:10). Judas discussed with them how he could best do this. He also discussed it with officers of the temple guard (Luke 22:4). Judas asked the chief priests, “What are you willing to give me if I hand him over to you” (Matt 26:15)? They agreed to give him money (Mark 14:11) and they laid out thirty pieces of silver before him (Matt 26:15).

Judas agreed to this amount, and from that time on, he watched for an opportunity to hand Jesus over to them, when no crowd was present (Luke 22:6).

Thought Questions

1. Do you think that the woman, who poured perfumed oil on Jesus’ head at Simon the Leper’s house was the same woman who had poured perfumed oil on His feet at Lazarus’ house (John 12:1-11)?
2. Do you think this woman had heard what Mary, Lazarus’ sister, had done and was trying to imitate her?
3. Mary poured perfumed oil on Jesus’ feet (John 12:3) and dried His feet with her hair. This woman poured perfumed oil on Jesus’ head.

Why did she pour it on His head instead of on His feet? Do you have any thoughts on this? Please share them if you do?

4. Jesus said that there would always be poor people in the world (Mark 14:7). Has history shown this prediction to be true?
5. Jesus said that this woman's deed would be told everywhere that the gospel would be preached (Matt 26:13). Is that still happening?

THE LAST SUPPER

147

The Preparation for the Passover

*Matthew 26:17-19; Mark 14:12-16;
Luke 22:7-13*

On Thursday, the Feast of Unleavened Bread was finally at hand (Luke 22:7). The feast was to begin at sundown. The disciples came to Jesus and asked Him, “Where do you want us to go and make preparations for you to eat the Passover Meal” (Mark 14:12b)? Then Jesus sent Peter and John to Jerusalem with instructions to make preparations for the Passover Meal (Luke 22:8). He told them, “Just after you go into the city, a man carrying a jug of water will meet you. Follow him into the house that he enters” (Luke 22:10).

Jesus told them to say to the man, “The Teacher says, ‘My time is near. I will celebrate the Passover with my disciples at your house’” (Matt 26:18b). Jesus told them also to say to the man, “The teacher asks, ‘Where is my room where I can eat the Passover meal with my disciples?’” (Mark 14:14)

Jesus continued, “Then he will show you a large upstairs room that is furnished and ready. Make preparation for us there” (Mark 14:15).

So Peter and John left and went to Jerusalem, and they found everything just as Jesus had said; and they prepared the Passover Meal (Mark 14:16).

Thought Questions

1. How could Jesus have known that a man carrying a jug of water would meet Peter and John as soon as they went into the city?
2. How could Jesus have known that the house into which the man would go would have a room that was furnished and ready for their use?

3. How could Jesus have known that the owner of the house would let them have the meal in his house? What do you think?

148

Jesus Washed His Disciples' Feet

John 13:1-17

Jesus was well aware that He would shortly leave this world and return to the Father (John 13:1a). He knew that He had come from God and was returning to God (John 13:3). He also knew for a certainty that the Father had given all things into His hands.

Therefore, His heart was not filled with resentment or fear. Rather, it was filled with love for the people who belonged to Him. The Gospel of John says that Jesus loved His people “to the end” (John 13:1b). This could possibly mean that He loved them completely or it could mean that He loved them to the end of His life. Both statements would be true.

As the sun went down on Thursday, Jesus and the Twelve (Mark 14:17) arrived at the place where they were to eat the Passover Meal, and they went in and took their places at the table (Luke 22:14). By the time the meal was served, the devil had already put the plan into the heart of Judas, son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus (John 13:2).

Jesus got up during the meal and removed His outer robe. He took a towel and wrapped it around His waist. Then He poured water into a basin and began to wash His disciples' feet. He also dried their feet with the towel that He had wrapped around His waist (John 13:4-5).

When He came to Simon Peter to wash his feet, Simon asked Him, “Lord, are you going to wash my feet?”

Jesus replied to him, “You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand” (John 13:7 NIV)

Peter said, “No, you shall never wash my feet” (John 13:8a)!

To which Jesus replied, “Unless I wash you, you have no part with

me” (John 13:8b NIV)

“Then, Lord,” Simon Peter said, “not just my feet but my hands and my head as well” (John 13:9)!

Whereupon, Jesus said, “A person that has been washed does not need to be washed, except his feet. His whole body is clean” (John 13:10a)

Then Jesus added concerning the Apostles, “And you are clean, though not all of you” (John 13:10b)

Jesus knew which one would betray Him. That is why He said “not all of you” are clean (John 13:11). When He finished washing His disciples’ feet, He put His robe on and returned to His place. Then He asked them, “Do you understand what I have done for you? You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am” (John 13:12b-13 NIV).

He said, “Now if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet” (John 13:14). Jesus made His point more urgent by adding, “I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you” (John 13:15 NIV). Further, He said, “I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him” (John 13:16 NIV). Concluding His remarks about serving one another, Jesus said, “If you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them” (John 13:17 NIV).

Thought Questions

1. Why did Simon Peter refuse, at first, to let Jesus wash His feet? What do you think?
2. Jesus told Peter that unless he allowed Him to wash his feet, he could have no part with Him (John 13:8). To this Peter replied, “not just my feet but my hands and my head as well” (John 13:9). What did Peter mean when he said that?
3. Why did Jesus wash His disciples’ feet? What do you think? What was He trying to show them? See John 13:14-15.

4. Jesus said to the disciples, “I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you” (John 13:15). Question: Was He instructing them to have a foot washing ceremony? What do you think?
5. What are some of the ways in which Jesus’ followers can serve one another? Please name a few.

149

Jesus Foretold that Judas Would Betray Him

*Matthew 26:20-25; Mark 14:18-21;
John 13:18-21*

Jesus and the Twelve were at table for the Passover Meal. After He had washed His disciples’ feet (John 13:3-10), Jesus said that one of them was not clean (John 13:10c-11), referring, no doubt, to Judas. Jesus made it very clear, however, that He did not think that all of His Apostles were unclean. He said, “I am not referring to all of you; I know those I have chosen” (John 13:18a NIV).

Jesus went on to imply that Judas’ betrayal would be in fulfillment (John 13:18b) of Psa 41:9, which says, “He who shares my bread has lifted up his heel against me” (John 13:18c NIV). Jesus explained why He was telling them that one of them would betray Him. He said, “I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am He” (John 13:19 NIV).

Jesus assured His Apostles that their upcoming evangelistic ministry would be very important. He said, “I tell you the truth, whoever accepts anyone I send accepts me; and whoever accepts me accepts the one who sent me” (John 13:20 NIV).

While they were eating, Jesus said forthrightly, “I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me” (Matt 26:21 NIV).

They were deeply distressed to hear this; and each one began to ask to Jesus, “Surely, Lord, not I, is it?” (Matt 26:22)

He told them, “It is one of the Twelve, one who dips bread into the bowl with me” (Mark 14:20 NIV).

Right after Jesus said this, Judas dipped in the bowl from which they were eating; and Jesus said, “The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me” (Matt 26:23).

Jesus then pronounced a “woe” over Judas. Saying, “The Son of man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born” (Matt 26:24 RSV).

Judas more than likely overheard Jesus say this; yet he too asked Jesus, “Surely, Teacher, not I, is it?”

Jesus responded, “Yes, it is you” (Matt 26:25).

Thought Questions

1. The Old Testament Scriptures foretold that the Messiah would suffer (Matt 26:24). Please look at Psa 22 and Isa 53 to see some of what was foretold about His suffering.
2. Judas asked Jesus, “Surely, Teacher, not I, is it” (Matt 26:25)? Was Judas sincere in asking this? What do you think?
3. Did you notice that Judas did not call Jesus, “Lord” (Matt 26:25), as the other disciples had done (Matt 26:22)? Instead, he called Him “Teacher.” Is this significant? If so, in what way is it significant?

150

The Lord’s Supper Instituted

Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25;

Luke 22:15-20

Early in the Passover Meal, Jesus said to His disciples, “I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you, I will

not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God” (Luke 22:15-16 NIV).

Jesus accepted a cup, which was likely handed to Him. Then He gave thanks and said to His disciples, “Take this, and divide it among yourselves” (Luke 22:17 RSV).

He explained, “For I tell you that from now on I shall not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes” (Luke 22:18 RSV).

While they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to His disciples, saying, “Take and eat; this is my body” (Matt 26:26b NIV).

Concerning the bread He remarked, “This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19b NIV).

After the supper (Luke 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25), Jesus took the cup, gave thanks (Matt 26:27) and gave it to the disciples, saying, “Drink from it, all of you” (Matt 26:27b NIV).

Then He added, “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (Matt 26:28 NIV).

He also said, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you” (Luke 22:20b NIV).

The Apostle Paul recorded that Jesus said, “Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me” (1 Cor 11:25b NIV).

All disciples drank from it (Mark 14:23). Then He said, “I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father’s kingdom” (Matt 26:29 NIV).

Thought Questions

1. Why did Jesus look forward to the Passover Meal with eager anticipation (Luke 22:15)? What do you think?
2. Did Jesus intend for His followers to celebrate the Lord’s supper after He had gone? What do you think? See Luke 22:19.
3. Should every member of a congregation drink of the cup, or is it only for the clergy (preachers)? See Matthew 26:27.
4. Jesus said, “This is my body” (Luke 22:19). Did Jesus mean that the

- bread had been miraculously transformed into His actual body, or did He mean that the bread represented His body?
5. Jesus said, “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (Matt 26:28 NIV). Question: Was the fruit of the vine poured out for the forgiveness of sins, or was the blood of Jesus poured out for the forgiveness of sins?
 6. Does a member of the congregation partake of the Lord’s Supper in order to get his sins forgiven? Or does he partake of it in order to remember Jesus (Luke 22:19). What do you think?

151

Judas Left the Passover Feast

Luke 22:21-23; John 13:22-32

After Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper (Luke 22:19-20), He said, “But the hand of him who is going to betray me is with mine on the table” (Luke 22:21 NIV).

Then Jesus reiterated the “woe” that He had spoken previously in the Passover Meal over Judas (Matt 26:24). He said, “The Son of Man will go as it has been decreed, but woe to that man who betrays him” (Luke 22:22 NIV).

The disciples were still not sure which of them it would be that would betray Jesus (Luke 22:23). So Simon Peter signaled to the disciple whom Jesus loved, who was sitting next to Jesus, to ask Jesus whom He meant (John 13:23-24). The disciple whom Jesus loved leaned back against Jesus’ chest and asked, “Lord, who is it?” (John 13:25)

Jesus responded, “It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish” (John 13:26a NIV).

Then Jesus dipped a piece of bread and gave it to Judas Iscariot, son of Simon (John 13:26b). As soon as Judas had taken the bread, Satan entered into him (John 13:27a); and Jesus said to Judas, “What you are about to do, do quickly” (John 13:27b NIV).

None of those present understood why Jesus said this to Judas (John 13:28). Some supposed that, since Judas had the money bag, Jesus told him to buy what was needed for the Feast or that Jesus told him to give something to the poor (John 13:29).

As soon as Judas accepted the bread, which Jesus had dipped in the dish, Judas left the Passover Meal; and it was night (John 13:30). After Judas left, Jesus said, “Now has the Son of Man been glorified and God has been glorified in him” (John 13:31). Jesus also said, “If God has been glorified in him God will also glorify the Son, and he will glorify him immediately” (John 13:31-32).

Thought Questions

1. Do you think Jesus could have done anything or said anything that would have dissuaded Judas from betraying Him?
2. Satan entered Judas’ heart (John 13:27a). Did Satan force His way into Judas’ heart, or did Judas welcome him? What do you think?
3. Jesus told Judas, “What you are about to do, do quickly” (John 13:27b NIV). Why did Jesus tell him that? What do you think?
4. How had Jesus been glorifying God? What do you think?
5. Jesus said that God would glorify the Son “at once” (John 13:32). Did Jesus expect that God would glorify the Son by raising Him from the dead on the third day? What do you think? See Luke 9:22.

152

A Dispute About Who Was the Greatest

Luke 22:24-30

After Judas left the Passover Meal, a heated dispute arose among the Apostles as to which of them was considered the greatest (Luke 22:24). This dispute gave Jesus an opportunity to point out, once again, the difference between the kingdom of God and the kingdoms of the

Gentiles. He described the kingdoms of the Gentiles, by saying, “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them are called Benefactors” (Luke 22:25 NIV).

Things are different from this, however, in the kingdom of God. Jesus explained, “But you are not like that. Let the greatest among you become as the younger; and let the one that rules become as one that serves” (Luke 22:26).

In order to demonstrate whom the Gentile world considered to be the greatest, Jesus asked, “For who is greater, the one who sits at the table or the one who serves?” “Is it not the one who is at the table?” (Luke 22:27 NIV)

Using His own example, Jesus illustrated how the kingdom of God differs from the kingdoms of the Gentiles. He said, “But I am among you as one who serves” (Luke 22:27c NIV).

Now, concerning the honor due all of His Apostles, He said, “You are those who have stood by me in my trials” (Luke 22:28 NIV). Therefore, He promised them, “And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Luke 22:29-30 NIV).

Thought Questions

1. Do you think Jesus was disappointed to hear His Apostles still squabbling about which of them was the greatest?
2. Who should be considered the greatest among Jesus’ followers? See Luke 22:26-27.
3. Jesus was soon to tell Pilate that His (Jesus’) kingdom is “not of this world” (John 18:36). Does that imply that the kingdom, which Jesus promised to His Apostles (Luke 22:29-30), is also “not of this world?” What do you think?
4. Did Jesus intend for His Apostles to rule over the church on earth as if they were princes? Did Jesus give them any civil authority at all? What do you think?

153

Simon Peter's Denial Foretold

Luke 22:31-38; John 13:33-38

Knowing that His time was extremely short, Jesus said to His disciples, “My children, I will be with you only a little longer” (John 12:33a NIV).

The time would soon come when they would have to get along without His physical presence. He said, “You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come” (John 13:33b NIV).

He told them what kind of a relationship He wanted them to have with each other in His absence. He said, “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another” (John 13:34 NIV).

Jesus knew that His disciples’ love for one another would distinguish them from others. He said, “By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:35 NIV).

Simon Peter was troubled that Jesus was going to leave them. So he asked Jesus, “Lord, where are you going?” (John 13:36a)

Jesus replied, “Where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later” (John 13:36b NIV).

Peter asked, “Lord, why can’t I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you” (John 13:37 NIV).

Whereupon Jesus asked him, “Will you really lay down your life for me?” (John 12:38a NIV)

Then Jesus told Peter, “I tell you the truth, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times!” (John 13:38b NIV)

Jesus also said, “Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers” (Luke 22:31-32 NIV).

To this Simon Peter replied, “Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death” (Luke 22:33 NIV).

Jesus then began to speak with them about their worldwide mission. He asked them, “When I sent you without purse, bag or sandals, did you lack anything?” (Luke 22:35a NIV)

“Nothing,” they answered.

Then He said to them, “But now if you have a purse, take it, and also a bag; and if you don’t have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one” (Luke 22:36 NIV).

Jesus, next, began talking about how what would happen to Him would fulfill the Scriptures. He said, “It is written ‘And he was numbered with the transgressors; ‘and I tell you that this must be fulfilled in me. Yes, what is written about me is reaching its fulfillment” (Luke 22:37 NIV; Isa 53:12).

The disciples understood what Jesus said about a sword in a literal fashion. So they declared, “See, Lord, here are two swords.”

He replied, “That is enough” (Luke 22:38).

Thought Questions

1. What is the “new commandment,” which Jesus gave to His disciples? See John 13:34.
2. Jesus said they should love one another as much as He loved them (John 13:34)? How much did He love them? How can I tell if I love my brothers and sisters enough?
3. When people of the world look at a congregation of Christ’s people, what should they see? Read John 13:35.
4. Jesus was planning to go where His disciples could not follow (John 13:33). Where was He planning to go?
5. What did Jesus mean when He said (John 13:36) that they would follow Him later?

6. Jesus had told His Apostles not to take anything with them when He sent them out on their short mission journey (Matt 10:9-10). Why did He tell them, at this time, to take their purse and bag along with them (Luke 22:36)? What do you think?
7. Two swords (Luke 22:38) would not have provided much defense for the disciples. Was Jesus serious about their defending themselves with the sword? What do you think?

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The Way, the Truth, and the Life

John 14:1-14

Jesus continued to strengthen His Apostles for what lay ahead of them. He said, “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me” (John 14:1 NIV).

He told them He would prepare a home for them, saying, “In my Father’s house are many rooms; If it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you” (John 14:2 NIV).

He told them that, after going away, He would also return. He said, “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am” (John 14:3 NIV). He said, “You know the way to the place where I am going” (John 14:4 NIV).

At that, Thomas spoke up and said, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?” (John 14:5 NIV)

To Thomas (and to all of them), Jesus said, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6 NIV).

Then Jesus began to talk about His relationship with the Father. He said, “If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him” (John 14:7 NIV).

That remark led Philip to say, “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us” (John 14:8 NIV).

Jesus appeared to be disappointed that Philip had not yet understood that Jesus had been showing them the Father all along; so Jesus said to him, “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father?’” (John 14:9 NIV)

Then Jesus asked Philip, “Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work” (John 14:10 NIV). He urged them all, “Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves” (John 14:11 NIV).

After Jesus had said that, He made an astonishing announcement. He said, “I tell you the truth, anyone who believes in me will do the works that I do. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father” (John 14:12).

He also made an astonishing promise. He said, “And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. If you ask for anything in my name, I will do it” (John 14:13-14).

Thought Questions

1. Does our believing in God help us not to be afraid? See John 14:1.
2. Where is the “Father’s house,” of which Jesus spoke (John 14:2-3)? Has a place in the Father’s house been prepared for each of Jesus’ faithful followers? What do you think?
3. Jesus is “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). How is He the way? How is He the truth? How is He the life?
4. Jesus thought that Philip should have recognized the Father in Him (John 14:9). Can we, after all these years, still see the Father in Jesus? What do you think?

5. Are the miracles that Jesus performed evidence (John 14:11) that the Father was in Jesus and that Jesus was in the Father? What do you think?
6. Should a believer try to imitate Jesus? What do you think? See John 14:12.
7. Should a believer try to perform miracles, as Jesus did? What do you think?
8. How can a believer do “greater works” (John 14:12) than Jesus did? Please explain.
9. Do obedient believers have the privilege of making requests of the Father? See John 14:13-14.
10. In whose name should believers make their requests of God? See John 14:14.
11. Who is it that will carry out what believers ask in prayer? See John 14:14.

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Obedience and the Holy Spirit

John 14:15-24

In continuing to teach His Apostles, Jesus said to them, “If you love me, you will obey what I command” (John 14:15 NIV).

He then promised that if they would keep what He commanded them, He would ask the Father to send them another Counselor. He said, “I will ask the Father to give you another Counselor, to be with you always” (John 14:16). He identified this “Counselor” by saying, “He is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive,...” (John 14:17a ISV). Then He explained why the world cannot receive the “Spirit of truth.” He said, “...for it neither sees him nor recognizes him” (John 14:17b ISV). Jesus added, “But you recognize him, for he abides with you and will be in you” (John 14:17c ISV).

Jesus assured His disciples that He would not desert them. He said, “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you” (John 14:18 NIV). Knowing that they would see Him again, Jesus said to them, “Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you will also live” (John 14:19 NIV).

He was confident that when they saw Him again, they would know more about Him, for He said, “On that day you will know that I am in my Father and that you are in me and that I am in you” (John 14:20 ISV).

He identified, yet again, who it is that truly loves Him. He said, “Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me” (John 14:21a NIV).

Then He described some of the good things that would happen to those who love Him. He said, “He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and I will show myself plainly to him” (John 14:21b).

Judas, one of the Twelve but not Judas Iscariot, had apparently been under the impression that Jesus was intending to show Himself to the world. So Judas asked Jesus, “Lord, what then has transpired that You are going to show Yourself plainly to us, but not to the world” (John 14:22)?

Jesus explained that both He and the Holy Spirit would show themselves only to those that love Him (Jesus) enough to obey His teaching. He said, “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him” (John 14:23 NIV). Jesus explained why some people do not obey His teaching. He said, “He who does not love me will not obey my teaching” (John 14:24a NIV).

Next, He emphasized that His teaching did not originate with Him. He said, “These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me” (John 14:24b NIV).

Thought Questions

1. Why is it that the world cannot receive the Holy Spirit? See John 14:17.
2. Does God send His Holy Spirit to convert people, or does He send His Holy Spirit only to people that have already been converted? See John 14:16.
3. How can a person know whether or not He (or she) loves Jesus? See John 14:21. How can a person be assured that the Father and Jesus love him (or her)? See John 14:21.

156

My Peace I Give You

John 14:25-31

Jesus promised that the Father would send the Holy Spirit, who would counsel the Apostles. Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would (1) counsel the Apostles, (2) teach them, and (3) remind them of what Jesus had taught them.

Jesus said, “All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you” (John 14:25-26 NIV).

Jesus did not want His Apostles to be frightened by what was about to happen, so He said to them, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid” (John 14:27 NIV).

He wanted them to see the brighter side of what was going to happen. He said, “You heard me say, ‘I am going away and I am coming back to you.’ If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I” (John 14:28 NIV).

Jesus knew that it pained the Apostles to hear that He was going away, yet He had a special reason for wanting them to hear about it. He

said, “I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe” (John 14:29 NIV).

Jesus said to the Apostles, “I will not speak with you much longer, for the prince of this world is coming; but he has nothing on me” (John 14:30).

The “prince of this world” (Satan) would find nothing with which to incriminate Jesus. Yet, in spite of Jesus’ innocence, He would have to suffer; for Jesus said, “But the world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly as the Father has commanded me” (John 13:31).

At this point, Jesus suggested that He and the Apostles should leave the room where they had eaten the Passover Meal. He said, “Get up, let us go from here” (John 14:31 NASB).

Thought Questions

1. What did Jesus say that the Holy Spirit (Counselor) would do for the Apostles? See John 14:25-26. Does the Holy Spirit do these things for all believers? What do you think?
2. How would you characterize the peace (John 14:27) that Jesus gives?
3. Why is it important for the world to learn that Jesus loved the Father? (John 14:31)?
4. How can the world hear about Jesus’ love for the Father?

157

I Am the Vine and You Are the Branches

John 15:1-8

At the close of the Passover Meal Jesus had said to His Apostles, “Get up, let us go from here” (John 14:31 NASB). Jesus continued teaching His Apostles, however; and He said to them, “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener” (John 15:1 NIV).

Pruning the vines is an important part of the work of a vineyard. God Himself does the “pruning” in His vineyard. Jesus said, “Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh it away: and every (branch) that beareth fruit, he cleanseth it, that it may bear more fruit” (John 15:2 ASV).

Jesus does not appear to have thought that His Apostles needed to be further pruned (cleansed), for He said to them, “You are already made clean by the word which I have spoken to you” (John 15:3 RSV). Yet He warned them that they could bear no fruit unless they remained in Him. He cautioned, “Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me” (John 15:4 NIV). Repeating Himself just a bit, He said, “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5 NIV).

Jesus warned that bad things would happen to a disciple who does not remain in Him. He said, “If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned” (John 15:6 NIV).

On the other hand, the disciples that remain in Jesus will be blessed. Jesus said, “If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you” (John 15:7 NIV).

If Jesus’ disciples remain in His words, His words will teach them to pray in a way that will make their prayers answerable; and, as a consequence, they will bear much fruit to the glory of God. Jesus said, “In this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples” (John 15:8 NIV).

Thought Questions

1. Jesus said that His Father, the Gardener, “prunes” the branches so they can bear more fruit (John 15:2). Does God “prune” the members of the church? What do you think?

2. Jesus said that His Apostles had been “made clean” already (John 15:3). How had they been made “clean?” See John 15:3. Do you think that Jesus’ Apostles had been baptized?
3. What happens to branches (members) that do not stay connected to the vine (i.e. Jesus)? See John 15:6.
4. What are the two stipulations that are laid down in John 15:7 for getting prayers answered?
5. Please, identify some of the “fruit” that Jesus’ disciples bear. See Rom 1:13. See also Gal 5:22-23 and Heb 13:15.

158

Remain in My Love

John 15:9-17

Even though Jesus was facing death, He was confident that God loved Him. As a result of this confidence, His heart was filled with love, and He said to His Apostles, “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love” (John 15:9 NIV). He explained how it would be possible for His disciples to remain in His love. He said, “If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love” (John 15:10).

Thus, He shared His secret for remaining in God’s love. He shared it so that His disciples might experience the same joy that He (Jesus) experienced. He said, “I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete” (John 15:11 NIV).

Jesus then described the essence of His command to them, by saying, “My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you” (John 15:12 NIV). Jesus knew that He would soon be called upon to demonstrate the extent of His love. He said, “Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13 NIV).

He then identified who His friends are, by saying, “You are my friends if you do what I command you” (John 15:14 ISV). He explained why He was now calling His Apostles “friends.” He said,

I do not call you servants anymore, because a servant does not know what his master is doing. But I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father.

John 15:15 ISV

Next, Jesus revealed His purpose in choosing the Twelve. It was so that they would produce fruit and their fruit would last. He also revealed how they would produce fruit. He said, “You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you. I have appointed you to go and produce fruit that will last, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he will give it to you” (John 15:16 ISV).

Jesus then revealed His purpose in giving them the commands that He had given. He said, “These things I command you in order that you may love each other” (John 15:17).

Thought Questions

1. If we do not keep Jesus’ commands, is there a danger that we might not remain in His love? What do you think? See John 15:9-10.
2. If a person keeps Jesus’ commands, does he (or she) experience more joy than if he (or she) did not keep them? See John 15:10-11?
3. How did Jesus demonstrate His love? See John 15:13.
4. Would you like to be considered a “friend” of Jesus? How can a person become Jesus’ “friend?” See John 15:14.

159

Jesus Told His Apostles That They Would Be Persecuted

John 15:18-16:4

Jesus began to prepare His Apostles for the opposition that they would face. He said, “If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first” (John 15:18 NIV). He explained why the world would hate them, saying, “If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you” (John 15:19 NIV).

Jesus told them that people of the world would treat them just as they had treated Him. He said, “Remember the words I spoke to you: ‘No servant is greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also” (John 15:20 NIV).

It was because of Him and the Father that His Apostles would be persecuted. He said to them, “They will do all these things to you on account of my name, because they do not know the one who sent me” (John 15:21 ISV).

The fact that the Messiah came into the world made the children of Israel more accountable. If they had accepted Him, great blessings would have been theirs. Since they rejected Him, however, Jesus said, “If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin” (John 15:22 NASB).

Jesus explained why it is that some people hate Him. He said, “He who hates me hates my Father as well” (John 15:23 NIV).

Any excuse that the people of His generation might have had for not accepting Him was taken away by the miracles that He did. He said, “If I had not done works among them that no other has done, they would not be guilty of sin. But now, they have seen and have hated both me and the Father” (John 15:24).

The hatred that Jesus had encountered was foretold in the Old Testament. He said, “This happened in order that the word might be fulfilled, which is written in their law, “They hated me without cause”” (John 15:25; Psa 69:4).

In spite of His own impending tragedy, Jesus interjected a note of encouragement by telling His Apostles that He would send the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, to them. He said, “When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me” (John 15:26 NIV).

The Apostles would also be required to testify of Him. He said, “And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning” (John 15:27 NIV).

He told His Apostles why He was warning them of what would happen to them. He said, “I have told you this to keep you from falling away” (John 16:1 ISV). Again He forewarned, “They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God” (John 16:2 NIV). He continued explaining to the Apostles why people would do bad things to them. He said, “They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me” (John 16:3 NIV). Again He mentioned why He had told them that they would be persecuted. He said, “But I have told you this so that when their hour comes you may remember that I told you about them. I did not tell you this in the beginning, because I was with you” (John 16:4 ISV).

Thought Questions

1. Are we supposed to do what Jesus’ Apostles taught? See John 15:20.
2. Are Jesus’ works (miracles) unique? Has any other person ever done such works as He did? Why did the people reject Him in spite of His works? See John 15:21,24.
3. Jesus wanted His Apostles to know in advance what would happen to them (John 16:4). Why did He want them to know this? See John 16:1.

4. Did Jesus' description of what would happen to His Apostles turn out to be true? What do you think?

160

The Work of the Holy Spirit

John 16:5-15

Jesus had more comments to make about the work of the Holy Spirit. He introduced these comments by reminding the Apostles that He was on the verge of going away from them. He said, "But now I am going away to the one who sent me" (John 16:5a).

He seemed surprised that none of His Apostles asked Him, this time, where He was going. He remarked, "And none of you asks me, 'Where are you going?'" (John 16:5b ISV) Jesus acknowledged that His Apostles were sad, saying, "But because I have told you these things, sorrow has filled your hearts" (John 16:6).

His leaving them, however, was a blessing in disguise. He said, "But I tell you the truth: It is good for you that I am going away. For if I do not go, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you" (John 16:7).

Jesus outlined for them some of what the Counselor (the Holy Spirit) would do. He said, "And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment..." (John 16:8 KJV). Jesus explained why the Holy Spirit would reprove the (people of the) world: He would reprove them with reference to sin, He said, "because they do not believe on me" (John 16:9). Jesus also explained that the Holy Spirit would reprove the (people of the) world with reference to righteousness, as He said, "because I go to my Father, and you see me no more" (John 16:10). Jesus explained, in addition, that the Holy Spirit would reprove the (people of the) world with reference to judgment, because, Jesus said, "the prince of this world is judged" (John 16:11).

Jesus conceded that the information that He was giving them was not complete, saying, “I still have many things to say to you, but you are not able to bear them now” (John 16:12). He assured them, however, that the Holy Spirit would complete their education in spiritual matters. He said, “But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth” (John 16:13a).

Jesus was careful to let the Apostles know that what the Holy Spirit would say to them would be coming from Him. He said, “He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears...” (John 16:13b). Jesus also told them that the Holy Spirit would reveal facts about the future. Jesus said, “...and he will tell you what is yet to come” (John 16:13c).

Jesus was confident that Holy Spirit would add to His (Jesus’) glory. Jesus said, “He will bring glory to me, because He will take from what is mine and tell it to you” (John 16:14).

Jesus added, “Everything that the Father has is mine. That is why I said that He would take from what is mine and tell it to you” (John 16:15).

Thought Questions

1. Did it turn out for good that Jesus left the Apostles and returned to the Father? See Acts 2:1-4.
2. Does the Holy Spirit reprove the (people of the) world (John 16:8) today? If He does reprove them, how does He do it? Does He do it directly, or does He do it through the Bible and through the teaching that comes from the Bible? What do you think?
3. Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would guide the Apostles “into all truth” (John 10:13). Does the Holy Spirit guide people “into all truth” today? What do you think?

161

Jesus Assured His Apostles That Their Grief Would Turn to Joy

John 16:16-33

As Jesus continued conversing with His Apostles after the Passover meal, He began to bring their conversation to a close; and He said, “In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me” (John 16:16 NIV).

The Apostles did not understand what He meant by that. So they kept asking one another, “What does he mean by saying, ‘In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me,’ and ‘Because I am going to the Father?’” (John 16:17 NIV).

Jesus perceived that they were confused, and He asked them, “Are you asking one another what I meant when I said, ‘In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me?’” (John 16:19 NIV) By way of explanation of what He had meant, Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy” (John 16:20 NIV).

He told them that the ordeal that a woman goes through in childbirth is similar to what they would experience. He said, “A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when her baby is born she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world” (John 16:21 NIV).

Jesus told His Apostles that this is how it would be with them. He said, “So it is with you: Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy. In that day you will no longer ask me anything” (John 16:22-23a NIV).

Jesus knew that His death, resurrection, and ascension would change the relationship that His followers would have with God. The relationship would be changed in that they themselves would be able to

make requests of God. Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, whatever you request of the Father in my name, He will grant it to you” (John 16:23b).

Jesus reminded them that, as yet, they had made no requests of God in His (Jesus’) name. He said, “Until now you have not asked for anything in my name” (John 16:24a NIV). He urged them, however, to ask in His name in order that they might receive what they ask for, so that their joy might be complete. He said, “Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete” (John 16:24b NIV).

Jesus told them that He would not in the future speak to them in figurative language but that He would openly proclaim to them information about the Father. He said, “Though I have been speaking figuratively, a time is coming when I will no longer use this kind of language but will tell you plainly about my Father” (John 16:25 NIV).

He emphasized that also in the future His followers would have the privilege of making requests of God, provided they made them in His (Jesus’) name. He said, “In that day you will ask in my name. I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf” (John 16:26 NIV).

Henceforth, Jesus’ followers would have no need for Him to ask blessings from the Father upon them. He said, “No, the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God” (John 16:27 NIV).

Jesus knew that His Apostles had been puzzled by His statement that “in a little while” they would see Him no more. Therefore, He explained, “I came from the Father and entered the world; now I am leaving the world and going back to the Father” (John 16:28 NIV).

They replied to Him, “See, now You are speaking plainly, and using no figure of speech” (John 16:29 NKJV)! They also said, “Now we know that You know all things, and have no need for anyone to question You; by this we believe that You came from God” (John 16:30 NASB).

Jesus’ reply was, “You believe at last?” (John 16:31)

Even though they thought that they had reached a new level of understanding and belief, a more severe test still lay before them. Jesus forewarned, “But a time is coming, and has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home” (John 16:32a NIV). He foretold, “You

will leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me” (John 16:32b NIV).

Jesus was very concerned about the state of their minds and He said to them, “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace” (John 16:33a NIV). He consoled them by saying, “In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world” (John 16:33 NIV).

Thought Questions

1. Does God give us wide latitude with regards to what we may ask for in prayer? See John 16:23.
2. If today’s believers have requests to make, can they go directly to the Father with their requests? See John 16:24.
3. In whose name should believers ask for blessings? Should they ask for blessings in the name of some saint? See John 16:26.
4. Have any of your prayers ever been answered? If they have, how did it make you feel? Did it strengthen your faith? Please explain.
5. In what way did Jesus overcome the world (John 16:33)? What do you think?

162

Jesus’ Prayer

John 17:1-13

Somewhere in Jerusalem, before they crossed the Kidron Valley, Jesus raised His eyes toward heaven and began praying. He said, “Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you” (John 17:1b NIV).

Jesus, being aware that He was God’s Son, prayed, “For you granted him authority over all humanity so that everything that you have given him (eternal life) He might give to them” (John 17:2).

Jesus extolled God as being the source of eternal life, by saying, “Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent” (John 17:3 NIV).

Jesus referred to the way in which He had made the Father appear more glorious. He said, “I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do” (John 17:4 NIV).

It was, no doubt, comforting for Jesus to think about the glory that awaited Him. He said, “And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began” (John 17:5 NIV).

Concerning His Apostles, who may have been listening as He prayed, Jesus said to God, “I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word” (John 17:6 NIV).

Jesus seems to have been delighted at the progress of His Apostles in understanding. He prayed to the Father, “Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you” (John 17:7 NIV).

Jesus alluded to the process by which His Apostles had come to know that everything that Jesus said had come from God. He said, “For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me” (John 17:8 NIV).

He was deeply concerned about His Apostles, for He said, “I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours” (John 17:9 NIV).

Jesus felt that His Apostles had brought glory to Him (Jesus), for He prayed, “All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them” (John 17:10 NIV).

Now, with regard to what was about to occur, He prayed, “I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you” (John 17:11a NIV).

He asked the Father to keep the Apostles united. He said, “Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me, that they may be one even as We are” (John 17:11b NASB). Then He said, “While I was with them, I was keeping them in Your name which

You have given Me; and I guarded them...” (John 17:12a NASB). He was glad that only one of the Apostles He had chosen had been lost. He said, “...and not one of them perished but the son of perdition, so that the Scripture would be fulfilled” (John 17:12b NASB).

Jesus was fully aware that the time for His departure had come. He prayed to the Father, “I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have my joy fulfilled within themselves” (John 17:13).

Thought Questions

1. How had Jesus brought glory to the Father? See John 17:4.
2. Why did Jesus not pray for the world (John 17:9)? What do you think?
3. Why was Jesus so deeply concerned (John 17:9) about His Apostles? Can you suggest a reason? Please share your thoughts.
4. What do you think about Jesus’ prayer? To whom did Jesus address it? Was it a ritualistic prayer, or did Jesus speak from His heart? Is there a lesson here for us about how we should pray?

163

Jesus’ Prayer, Continued

John 17:14-26

Concerning His Apostles, Jesus also prayed, “I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world just as I am not of the world” (John 17:14). Jesus did not ask God to take His followers out of the world. Rather, He said, “I do not pray that you take them out of the world but that you keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world” (John 17:15-16).

Jesus knew that His followers would not be able to lead holy lives, unless they live according to the truth; so He prayed, “Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth” (John 17:17).

Concerning them, Jesus said, “As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world” (John 17:18 NIV).

Jesus had been able to teach His followers to lead holy lives, because He Himself had lived a holy life. He said, “For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be sanctified in truth” (John 17:19).

Jesus was not concerned about His Apostles only. He was concerned also about those, whom His Apostles would teach. He said, “I do not pray for them only, but also for those who believe on me through their word,...” (John 17:20).

Jesus desired that those, whom His Apostles would teach, would be as united as He and the Father are united. He prayed, “...that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me” (John 17:21).

Just as the Father had made Jesus glorious, so Jesus had made His Apostles glorious. Jesus said to the Father, “I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one...” (John 17:22 NIV).

Jesus described the oneness that He desired for His followers and why He wanted them to be united. He said, “...I in them and you in me, so that they may be completely one, In order that the world may know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me” (John 17:23).

Jesus also desired to have His followers with Him in heaven. He said, “Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world” (John 17:24 NIV).

Concerning His Apostles, Jesus prayed in addition, “Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me” (John 17:25 NIV).

Jesus concluded His prayer by saying, “I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them” (John 17:26 NIV).

When Jesus finished praying, He and His disciples crossed the Kidron Valley and came to a grove on the Mount of Olives (John 18:1).

Thought Questions

1. How did Jesus communicate with His Apostles? Did He communicate with them by words? See John 17:14.
2. How does God communicate with us today? Does He communicate with us by the words of Jesus and His Apostles? What do you think? See 1 Cor 2:13.
3. Why did Jesus want His disciples to be united? See John 17:21? Is the disunity among believers a hindrance to the spread of the Gospel? If so, how?
4. What kind of unity (John 17:21) did Jesus envision for His followers? Was it a unity enforced by the civil government? Or was it a unity that is based on what the Bible says? What do you think?
5. How would you describe the unity (John 17:21) that exists between Jesus and the Father? Is it a unity of the Spirit? Does it involve mutual love and respect? Does it imply harmony and cooperation? What do you think?
6. Does God love all of Jesus' followers? Does He love them in the same way that He loves Jesus? See John 17:23.
7. Did Jesus speak respectfully to the Father? Did Jesus speak about things that He was deeply concerned about? Should we pray as He did?

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The Flock Will Be Scattered

Matthew 26:30-35; Mark 14:26-31

Jesus and His Apostles crossed the Kidron Valley (John 18:1) and came to the Mount of Olives (Matt 26:30) to spend the night, as they often did (Luke 22:39), Jesus warned His Apostles that they would be

scattered. He said, “This very night you will all fall away on account of me, for it is written: ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered’” (Matt 26:31 NIV; Zec 13:7).

Jesus knew that their temporary desertion would not end their relationship. He said to them, “But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee” (Matt 26:32 NIV).

Peter insisted, however, that he would never fall away. He said, “Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will” (Matt 26:33 NIV).

Jesus knew that Peter would fall away, at least temporarily. So Jesus replied to Peter, as He had said to him before (John 13:38), “Truly I say to you, that this very night, before a rooster crows twice, you yourself will deny Me three times” (Mark 14:30 NASB).

Nonetheless, Peter asserted, “Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you” (Matt 26:35 NIV); and all the other disciples said the same.

Thought Questions

1. Do you think Peter really intended to stand by Jesus, and not deny Him.
2. Was Jesus willing to forgive Peter and the rest of the Apostles, if they denied Him? What do you think?
3. Was it a sin to deny Jesus? Was Peter later sorry that He denied Jesus? See Luke 22:62. Did He repent of it? Was Peter forgiven? What do you think?

JESUS'
ARREST, TRIAL,
CRUCIFIXION,
AND BURIAL

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Gethsemane

*Matthew 26:36-46; Mark 14:32-42;
Luke 22:39-46; John 18:1*

Upon reaching the Mount of Olives, Jesus and His Apostles came to an olive grove that was called “Gethsemane” (Matt 26:36). They went into the olive grove (John 18:1); and Jesus said to them, “Sit here while I go over there and pray” (Matt 26:36 NIV). He also said, “Pray that you will not fall into temptation” (Luke 22:40 NIV).

Jesus took Peter, James, and John and went a little further and began to be sorrowful and distressed (Matt 26:37); and He said to them, “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me” (Matt 26:38 NIV).

He went about a stone’s throw further (Luke 22:41), fell with His face to the ground and prayed that the hour might pass from Him (Mark 14:35), saying, “Abba, Father, everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will” (Mark 14:36 NIV).

An angel from heaven appeared to Him, strengthening Him (Luke 22:43). Yet, He was still in anguish and prayed more earnestly. Sweat began to roll from Him like drops of blood (Luke 22:44) and fell on the ground. When Jesus returned to Peter, James, and John, He found them asleep. He asked Peter, “Could you men not keep watch with me for one hour?” (Matt 26:40 NIV)

Then He advised them, “Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Matt 26:41).

He went away a second time and prayed, saying, “My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done” (Matt 26:42 NIV). When He came back, He again found them sleeping, and their eyes were so heavy they did not know what to say (Mark 14:40).

Then He went for a third time and prayed the same thing (Matt 26:44). He returned to the disciples and found them asleep, for they were exhausted from sorrow (Luke 22:45).

He asked them, "Are you still sleeping?"

Then He said, "Get up and pray so that you will not fall into temptation" (Luke 22:46 NIV).

Just then, as Jesus glanced up, He saw a group of people coming toward Him with torches. He knew what was happening. He said, "The hour has come. Look, the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners" (Mark 14:41b NIV).

Then He exhorted His disciples, "Rise, let us go! Here comes my betrayer!" (Matt 26:46 NIV)

Thought Questions

1. Have you ever been so tired you couldn't hold your eyes open? Can a person get worn out from sorrow? What do you think?
2. Why did Jesus not hide or do something to save His life? What do you think?
3. Why did Jesus pray, "Father, everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me" (Mark 14:36)? Do you think He was being tempted?
4. Did Jesus conclude that it was God's will for Him to "drink the cup?" What do you think?

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The Arrest of Jesus

*Matthew 26:47-56; Mark 14:43-52;
Luke 22:47-53; John 18:2-12*

Jesus was with His disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matt 26:47) when a large crowd of people arrived, carrying torches, lanterns, and weapons (John 18:3b). It was a detachment of soldiers and officials, who were armed with swords and clubs. Judas was leading them (John

18:3a). Judas knew the grove, because Jesus had often been there with His disciples (John 18:2).

Judas had arranged with the soldiers, saying, “The one I kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard” (Mark 14:44 NIV).

When Judas arrived with the soldiers, he approached Jesus at once and said, “Greetings, Teacher” (Matt 26:50)!

Jesus responded, “Fellow, why have you come?” (Matt 26:50)

Then Judas kissed Jesus.

Jesus said, “Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?” (Luke 22:48 NIV)

Jesus knew what was about to happen, so He went out to meet the soldiers and asked them, “Who is it you want?” (John 18:4 NIV)

“Jesus of Nazareth,” they replied.

He said to them, “I am he” (John 18:5 NIV).

At that, they drew back and fell to the ground (John 18:6). Again, Jesus asked them, “Who is it you want?” (John 18:7 NIV)

They answered, “Jesus of Nazareth.”

Jesus replied, “I told you that I am he” (John 18:8a NIV).

Then Jesus showed His concern for the safety of His disciples by saying to the soldiers and officials, “If you are looking for me, then let these men go” (John 18:8b NIV).

The Gospel of John says (John 18:9) that Jesus wanted to fulfill the desire that He had expressed when he prayed to the Father, “I have not lost one of those you gave me” (John 17:12a NIV).

The soldiers stepped forward, seized Jesus, and took Him into custody (Matt 26:50b). When the disciples saw what was happening, they asked Jesus, “Lord, should we strike with our swords” (Luke 22:49 NIV)? Simon Peter, who was standing near, did not wait for a word from Jesus. He drew his sword and struck Malchus, a servant of the high priest, cutting off the servant’s right ear (John 18:10).

Jesus’ reaction was swift. He said, “No more of this!” (Luke 22:51a NIV) Then Jesus touched Malchus’ ear and healed him (Luke 22:51b).

To Peter, Jesus said, “Put your sword back in its place, for all who draw the sword will die by the sword” (Matt 26:52 NIV).

Jesus asked Peter, “Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels?” (Matt 26:53 NIV)

Jesus also asked, “But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?” (Matt 26:54 NIV)

In addition Jesus asked, “Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?” (John 18:11b NIV)

Turning to the crowd, He asked, “Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? Every day I sat in the temple courts teaching, and you did not arrest me” (Matt 26:55 NIV).

He also said, “But this is your hour — when darkness reigns” (Luke 22:53b NIV).

Then He added, “But this has all taken place that the writings of the prophets might be fulfilled” (Matt 26:56a NIV).

So the detachment of soldiers and officials took Jesus into custody and bound Him (John 18:12).

All of His disciples left and fled (Matt 26:56b). One young man, however, who was following Jesus had nothing on His body but a linen garment. When the soldiers seized him, he fled naked, leaving his garment behind (Mark 14:51-52).

Thought Questions

1. Judas cautioned the soldiers to lead Jesus away “under guard” (Mark 14:44b NIV). Why do you suppose Judas said “under guard?”
2. The soldiers drew back and fell to the ground (John 18:6) after Jesus said, “I am He.” Why did they draw back and fall to the ground? What do you think?
3. Would you say that Peter was a skilled swordsman?
4. Why did Jesus not allow His disciples to defend Him with the sword? See John 18:36.
5. Jesus told Peter “Put your sword back in its place” (Matt 26:52 NIV). Was Jesus also opposed to His disciples’ defending themselves with the sword? What do you think?

6. Does the Old Testament say that the Christ would suffer? See Gen 3:15; Psa 22:16-18; and Isa 53:4-7.
7. Did Jesus want His disciples to escape arrest? See John 18:8-9. Was it shameful for them to flee? What do you think?

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Jesus Before Annas and Peter's First Denial

John 18:12-24

A detachment of soldiers and religious officials arrested Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. They bound Him (John 18:12) and led Him away. They led Him first to the house of Annas, one of the most powerful men among the children of Israel. Annas had been high priest in the past and was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the current high priest (John 18:13). Simon Peter and “another disciple” followed Jesus and His captors. The “other disciple” went into the courtyard (John 18:15), for he was known to the high priest.

Peter, however, was not allowed to go in. He had to stand outside until the “other disciple” came and spoke to the servant girl on duty at the door (John 18:16). Then she let him in. She said to Peter, “Are you not also one of his disciples?”

Peter replied, “I am not,” (John 18:17).

It was a cold night and the servants and officials had kindled a fire to keep warm. As they stood around the fire, Peter stood with them, warming himself (John 18:18). Then Peter, desiring to see what would happen, sat down in the courtyard with some of the servants that were warming themselves by the fire (Mark 14:54).

When one of the servant girls of the high priest came by and saw Peter sitting there in the light of the fire, she looked closely at him and said, “This man was with them” (Luke 22:56). To Peter, she said, “You also were with Jesus, the Nazarene” (Mark 14:67).

Peter denied it, saying to her, "I neither know nor understand what you're talking about" (Mark 14:68).

Meanwhile, the high priest questioned Jesus. The context in the Gospel of John suggests that it was Annas who questioned Jesus. Or it may have Caiaphas who questioned Him at Annas' house. Whoever it was that questioned Him, that person asked Jesus about His disciples and about His teaching (John 18:19). To which Jesus replied, "I have spoken openly to the world. I always taught in synagogues or at the temple, where all the Jews come together. I said nothing in secret" (John 18:20 NIV).

Then Jesus said, "Why question me? Ask those who heard me. Surely they know what I said" (John 18:21 NIV).

One of the officials who stood nearby struck Jesus in the face and asked, "Is this the way you answer the high priest?" (John 18:22 NIV)

Jesus replied, "If I said something wrong, testify as to what is wrong. But if I spoke the truth, why did you strike me?" (John 18:23 NIV)

After Jesus had been questioned at the house of Annas, Annas sent Him away, still bound, to Caiaphas, the ruling high priest (John 18:24).

Thought Questions

1. Peter was ready to fight with a sword to protect Jesus, but he could not bring himself to admit to a servant girl that He was one of Jesus' disciples. Do you have any explanation for that?
2. Jesus did not answer Annas' questions about His teaching and about His disciples? Why did He not? What do you think?
3. Do you suppose Jesus' wrists pained Him from having been bound so long?

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Peter Continued to Deny Jesus

Matthew 26:57-58, 69-75;

Mark 14:53-54; 66-72;

Luke 22:54-65; John 18:25-27

Annas sent Jesus to Caiaphas, in whose palace the Sanhedrin (Matt 26:59) had already gathered (Luke 22:66). The Sanhedrin was the highest tribunal. It was composed of elders of the people, chief priests, and scribes. They had come together at daybreak to seek (false) evidence against Jesus, so that they could put Him to death (Matt 26:59).

When Jesus was taken into Caiaphas' house (Luke 22:54) Peter followed at a distance (Matt 26:57-58). As best I can piece the story together, this that follows is what happened. Peter, for some reason, went out to the entryway to Caiaphas' courtyard. When a servant girl saw him there, she commented to those that were standing around, "He is one of them" (Mark 14:69). But Peter denied it (Mark 14:70).

A little later Peter was standing (John 18:25) by the fire and a man said to him, "You also are one of them" (Luke 22:58a).

Bluntly, Peter replied, "Man, I am not!" (Luke 22:58)

After about an hour had passed (Luke 22:59), those that were standing near Peter in the courtyard went up to him and insisted, "Surely you are one of them, a Galilean (Mark 14:70), for your accent gives you away" (Matt 26:73).

Then one of the high priest's servants, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, challenged Peter, saying, "Didn't I see you with him in the olive grove" (John 18:26 NIV)?

Peter replied, "Man, I don't know what you're talking about" (Luke 22:60a NIV)! Peter even called down divine curses on himself if his denials were not true. He swore to them and said, "I don't know this man you're talking about" (Mark 14:71 NIV).

At that moment (John 18:27), while Peter was still speaking (Luke 22:60), the rooster crowed for the second time (Mark 14:72); and Jesus turned and looked straight at Peter (Luke 22:61a). Then Peter remembered that Jesus had said, "Before the rooster crows today, you will deny me three times" (Luke 22:61b). Following that, Peter went out of the courtyard and wept bitterly (Luke 22:62).

In the meanwhile, even though no sentence had yet been passed, the guards began to mock and beat Jesus (Luke 22:63). They blindfolded Him and said to Him, "Prophecy! Who hit you" (Luke 22:64). They also said many other insulting things to Him (Luke 22:65).

Thought Questions

1. Did Peter demonstrate more courage than most of the disciples by following Jesus to Annas' and Caiaphas' houses? Do you give Peter any credit for this?
2. Peter not only denied being one of Jesus' disciples, but he also swore with an oath that He did not know Jesus (Mark 14:71). Does his having taken an oath make his sin any worse? What do you think?
3. What do you suppose Jesus thought when He looked across the courtyard at Peter and made eye contact with him?
4. Why did Peter go out and weep (Luke 22:62)?
5. Do Jesus' followers today sometimes deny Him? What do you think?
6. Did Jesus continue to love Peter even after Peter had denied Him?

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Jesus Before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin

*Matthew 26:57-68; Mark 14:53-65;
Luke 22:54, 66-71; John 18:24*

Here is a shortened description of what transpired at that tumultuous and illegal trial at Caiaphas' house, where the leaders of the people were

gathered: Many witnesses came forward (Matt 26:60b) and testified falsely against Jesus, but no evidence was found that would justify putting Him to death, because their statements did not agree (Mark 14:56).

Finally, two men came forward, stood up, and said, “We heard him say, ‘I will destroy this man-made temple and in three days will build another, not made by man’” (Mark 14:58 NIV). Also the testimony of these two men was not true (Mark 14:59 NIV).

Nonetheless, the high priest stood up before them and asked Jesus, “Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you” (Mark 14:60 NIV)? Jesus, however, remained silent (Mark 14:61).

Then the high priest said to Him, “I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God” (Matt 26:63).

Jesus knew that they would not believe on Him, no matter what He said. He also knew that they could give no satisfactory explanation for their unbelief, even if He asked them. So He said, “If I tell you, you will not believe; and if I ask you, you will not answer” (Luke 22:67-68 RSV). Jesus continued, by saying, “But from now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God” (Luke 22:69 NIV).

The men of the Sanhedrin had no problem with Jesus’ statement, as such, for it agreed with Dan 7:13-14. They wanted to know, however, whether or not Jesus identified Himself with the messianic person that is described in Dan 7:13-14.

So they asked Him, “Are you then the Son of God?” (Luke 22:70a NIV)

To which Jesus replied, “Yes, it is as you say” (Matt 26:64a NIV). Or, as Luke puts it, “You are right in saying I am” (Luke 22:70b NIV). Then Jesus added, “But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven” (Matt 26:64b NIV).

When the high priest heard this, he tore at his clothes and said to the assembly, “He has spoken blasphemy! Why do we need any more witnesses? Look, now you have heard the blasphemy!” (Matt 26:65 NIV)

So the high priest asked the assembled elders, priests, and teachers, "What do you think?"

They answered, "He is worthy of death" (Matt 26:66 NIV).

They began to spit in Jesus' face. They blindfolded Him. Others struck Him with their fists (Matt 26:67), and said, "Prophecy, Christ, who hit you" (Matt 26:68)! After that, the guards took Him and beat Him (Mark 14:65).

Thought Questions

1. Did Jesus say that He would destroy the temple in Jerusalem? What did He say? See John 2:19-22.
2. Do you think the religious officials cared whether the evidence against Jesus was true or false, as long as it was sufficient to justify their putting Him to death?
3. Did Jesus confess to His being the Messiah? What do you think?
4. To what was Jesus referring when He said, "In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven" (Matt 26:64 NIV)? See Matthew 24:30-31.

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Jesus Before Pilate

***Matthew 27:1-2, 11-14; Mark 15:1-5;
Luke 23:1-7; John 18:28-38***

After the Sanhedrin had sentenced Jesus to death (Matt 27:1), they bound Him again (Matt 27:2). Then all the members of the Sanhedrin rose and led Him off to Pilate, the Roman governor (Luke 23:1). When they got to the governors' palace (John 18:28), they handed Jesus over to Pilate (Matt 27:2).

The religious leaders, however, declined to go into the governor's palace. This was so that they would not become ceremonially unclean;

for, otherwise, they would not have been able to eat the Passover meal (John 18:28) that day.

So in deference to them, Pilate came outside and asked, “What charges are you bringing against this man” (John 18:29 NIV)?

They answered, “If he were not an evil doer, we would not have handed him over to you” (John 18:30).

From that, Pilate concluded that the charge they were bringing against Jesus was not very significant. So he said to them, “Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law” (John 18:31a NIV).

“But we have no right to execute anyone,” the Jews complained (John 18:31b NIV). The apostle John wrote that this happened to fulfill Jesus’ prophecy that He would die by execution (John 18:32).

Then the religious leaders brought three charges that they thought Pilate would consider serious. They said, “We have found this man [1] subverting our nation. [2] He opposes payment of taxes to Caesar and [3] claims to be Christ, a king” (Luke 23:2 NIV).

So Pilate asked Jesus, who stood before him, “Are you the king of the Jews?”

Jesus answered, “Yes, it is as you say” (Matt 27:11b NIV)

The chief priests also accused Jesus of many additional things (Mark 15:3); but Jesus made no reply to their charges (Matt 27:12).

Finally, Pilate asked him, “Don’t you hear the testimony they are bringing against you” (Matt 27:13 NIV)? “Aren’t you going to answer? See how many things they are accusing you of” (Mark 15:3 NIV).

Still, Jesus made no reply (Matt 27:14), and Pilate was amazed (Mark 15:5).

Then Pilate went back inside the palace and summoned Jesus to him and asked Him again, “Are you the king of the Jews?” (John 18:33)

Jesus responded by asking Pilate, “Is that your own idea, or did others talk to you about me?” (John 18:34 NIV)

“Am I a Jew?” Pilate retorted. “It was your people and your chief priests who handed you over to me. What is it you have done?” (John 18:35 NIV)

Jesus replied, "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would fight to prevent my being turned over to the Jews. But now my kingdom is not from here" (John 18:36).

Pilate retorted, "You are a king, then!" (John 18:37)

Jesus replied, "You are right in saying I am a king. To this I was born, and for this I came into the world, in order to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice" (John 18:37).

Pilate answered, "What is truth?" (John 18:38a) After this Pilate went out again to the Jews and said, "I find no guilt in him" (John 18:38b).

Still they insisted, "He stirs up the people all over Judea by his teaching. Starting in Galilee, he has come all the way here" (Luke 23:5 NIV).

On hearing that Jesus came from Galilee, Pilate asked if Jesus were a Galilean (Luke 23:6 NIV). When he learned that Jesus was from Galilee, he sent Him to King Herod; for Herod was in Jerusalem at that time (Luke 23:7 NIV), and Galilee was under Herod's jurisdiction.

Thought Questions

1. Were Pilate and the children of Israel on good terms with each other? What do you think?
2. Were the accusations, which the religious leaders made before Pilate (Luke 23:2 NIV), the same ones that they had made before the Sanhedrin? See Mark 14:58-65. If they are different, how are they different?
3. The religious leaders accused Jesus of being opposed to paying taxes to Caesar (Luke 23:2). Was Jesus opposed to paying taxes to Caesar? See Matthew 22:17-21.
4. They also said that Jesus claimed to be Christ, a king (Luke 23:2). Is it true that Jesus claimed to be the Christ (one anointed to be king)? See Matthew 26:63-64.
5. Why did Jesus' disciples not fight to keep Him from falling into His enemies' hands? What do you think? See John 18:36.

6. Do you think Pilate tried to make a fair decision regarding Jesus? See John 18:38.

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Jesus Before King Herod

Luke 23:8-12

When Pilate learned (Luke 23:5-6) that Jesus was under the jurisdiction of King Herod, He sent Him to Herod, who was in Jerusalem at that time (Luke 23:7). This was Herod Antipas, a son of Herod the Great. He was the man who had put John the Baptist to death and whom Jesus had described as “that fox” (Luke 13:32). When King Herod saw Jesus, he was greatly pleased, for he had heard about Him and wanted to see Him perform a miracle (Luke 23:8).

Herod questioned Jesus with many words, but Jesus gave him no reply (Luke 23:9). The chief priests and the scribes, who were standing before Pilate, accused Jesus vehemently (Luke 23:10). After a while, Herod grew tired of questioning Jesus. Then Herod and his soldiers began to ridicule and mock Jesus. Finally, they threw an elegant robe around Him and sent Him back to Pilate (Luke 23:11).

King Herod and Pilate had previously been enemies of each other, but they became friends that very day (Luke 23:12).

Thought Questions

1. King Herod wanted to see Jesus (Luke 23:8). He wanted to see Jesus perform a miracle. What does that tell you about Herod’s interests?
2. Jesus did not answer Herod’s questions (Luke 23:9). Why did Jesus not answer him? What do you think?
3. Herod and Pilate became friends with each other (Luke 23:12). Why did they become friends? What do you think?

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***Jesus Again Before Pilate and
the Choosing of Barabbas***

*Matthew 27:15-26; Mark 15:6-15;
Luke 23:13-25*

After Jesus was brought back to Pilate, Pilate called the chief priests, the rulers, and the people together (Luke 23:13).

Pilate said to them, “You brought me this man as one who was inciting the people to rebellion. I have examined him in your presence and have found no basis for your charges against him” (Luke 23:14 NIV).

Pilate continued, “Neither has Herod found anything against him, for he sent him back to us. As you can see, he has done nothing to deserve death” (Luke 23:15 NIV). “Therefore,” Pilate said, “I will punish him and then release him” (Luke 23:16 NIV).

Now, the governor made a practice of releasing a prisoner at Passover (Matt 27:15), so the crowd came to Pilate and asked him to keep his custom (Mark 15:8).

One of the prisoners in Pilate’s custody was a notorious robber. His name was Barabbas (John 18:40). He was in prison with others for murder and for causing an uprising in the city (Mark 15:7).

The elders and the priests had persuaded the crowd to ask that Barabbas be released and Jesus be executed (Matt 27:20). So when Pilate said that he would release Jesus, the crowd cried out with one voice, “Away with this man! Release Barabbas to us” (Luke 23:18)!

Pilate was aware that it was only out of envy that the chief priests had handed Jesus over to him (Mark 15:10). While Pilate was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent him a message, saying, “Don’t have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him” (Matt 27:19 NIV).

For various reasons then, Pilate wanted to release Jesus, and he asked the crowd (Luke 23:20), “Which one do you want me to release to you: Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?” (Matt 27:17).

They answered, “Barabbas” (Matt 27:21)!

Pilate asked, “What then shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ (Matt 27:22), King of the Jews” (Mark 15:12)?

They shouted, “Crucify him!” (Mark 15:13). They kept on shouting, “Crucify him! Crucify him” (Luke 23:21)!

Then Pilate tried for the third time to release Jesus. He asked them, “Why? What crime has this man committed? I have found in him no cause for the death penalty. Therefore I will have him punished and then release him” (Luke 23:22).

They shouted all the louder, “Crucify him” (Mark 15:14)!

Pilate finally saw that he was getting nowhere (Matt 27:24), and he decided to grant their demand (Luke 23:24). So he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd and said, “I am innocent of this man’s blood. It is your responsibility” (Matt 27:24)!

All the people answered, “Let his blood be on us and on our children” (Matt 27:25)!

So Pilate released Barabbas (Mark 15:15), a man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, but he had Jesus flogged. Then he handed Jesus over to be crucified (Matt 27:26 NIV).

Thought Questions

1. Do you suppose that Pilate thought that Jesus was a serious threat to the Roman government?
2. Do you think Pilate was sincere in wanting to avoid putting Jesus to death? Please state your reasons.
3. Did the crowd that clamored for Jesus’ death represent the views of all of the people of Galilee and of Judea? What do you think?
4. Pilate washed his hands. Did that make him free of guilt? What do you think?

5. The crowd said, "Let his blood be on us and on our children" (Matt 27:25)! Is there a sense in which this request has been fulfilled? What do you think?
6. Pilate had Jesus flogged (Matt 27:26). What is "flogging?" What kind of whip was used?

173

The Soldiers Mocked Jesus and Pilate's Last Effort to Set Jesus Free

*Matthew 27:27-31; Mark 15:16-20;
John 19:1-16*

After the governor's soldiers had flogged Jesus (John 19:1), they took Him into the Praetorium (Roman fortress), where the whole company of soldiers gathered around Him (Matt 27:27).

They put a purple robe on Him and twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on His head (Mark 15:17). Then they put a staff in His right hand (Matt 27:29). They went up to Him again and again; and falling on their knees, they paid (mock) homage to Him (Mark 15:18), saying, "Hail, king of the Jews!" They also struck Him in the face (John 19:3) and spit on Him (Matt 27:30).

Pilate came out again to the Jews and said, "Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no basis for a charge against him" (John 19:4 NIV).

When Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, Pilate said to them, "Behold, the man!" (John 19:5)

As soon as the chief priests and their officials saw Him, they shouted, "Crucify! Crucify!" (John 19:6 NIV)

Pilate answered, "You take him and crucify him. As for me, I find no basis for a charge against him" (John 19:6 NIV).

They insisted, “We have a law, and according to that law he must die, because he claimed to be the Son of God” (John 19:7 NIV).

When Pilate heard this, he was even more afraid (John 19:8). So he took Jesus once more inside the palace, and asked Him, “Where did you come from?” But Jesus gave no answer to him (John 19:9).

Pilate asked, “Do you refuse to speak to me? Don’t you realize that I have the power either to set you free or to crucify you” (John 19:10)?

Jesus answered, “You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above. Therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin” (John 19:11 NIV).

Pilate continued trying to set Jesus free until the people shouted, “If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. Everyone who makes himself king opposes Caesar” (John 19:12).

When Pilate heard this, he brought Jesus outside and sat down on the judge’s seat, which was at the place known as the “Stone Pavement” (John 19:13). He then said to them, “Behold your king” (John 19:14)!

They shouted, “Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!”

“Shall I crucify your king?” Pilate asked.

“We have no king but Caesar,” the chief priests answered (John 19:15 NIV).

Finally, at about 6 a.m. on Friday of the Passover week (John 19:14), Pilate handed Jesus over to be crucified (John 19:16).

Then the soldiers took the purple robe off of Jesus and put His own clothes on Him and led Him away to be crucified (Matt 27:31).

Thought Questions

1. The Jews claimed (John 19:7) that Jesus had broken their Law by saying He was the Son of God (Matt 26:63-64). Was it against their Law for Jesus to confess that He is the Son of God? What do you think? See John 10:34-37.
2. To whom was Jesus referring when He said that Pilate had received his power (authority) “from above” (John 19:11)? Was Jesus referring to Rome or to God? What do you think?

3. Was Pilate sincere in wanting to set Jesus free? Was Pilate driven by fear? What do you think? Did Pilate commit a sin by allowing Jesus to be crucified? See John 19:11.
4. If a rumor had reached Rome that Pilate was no friend of Caesar, would that have gotten Pilate into trouble with his superiors in Rome? What do you think?
5. Do you get the impression that the trial and condemnation of Jesus happened orderly and unhurriedly?

174

Judas Hanged Himself

Matthew 27:3-10; Acts 1:18-19

When Judas saw that Jesus had been condemned to die, He went to the chief priests and elders to return the thirty silver coins (Matt 27:3).

Judas said to them, "I have sinned, for I have betrayed innocent blood."

They replied, "What is that to us? That's your responsibility" (Matt 27:4).

As a response, Judas threw the money into the temple. Then he went away and hanged himself (Matt 27:5). As a result of which, his body fell headlong in such a way that it burst open and all his intestines spilled out (Acts 1:18).

The chief priests took the coins and said, "It is against the law to put this into the temple treasury, since it is blood money" (Matt 27:6 NIV). So they took counsel and decided to use the money to buy the Potter's Field as a place to bury foreigners (Matt 27:7).

Matthew explained (Matt 27:9) that when the potter's field was purchased for 30 silver coins, a prophecy was fulfilled. The prophecy that Matthew was referring to is found in that section of the Old Testament, which begins with the Book of Jeremiah. Matthew paraphrased the prophecy, as follows: "They took the thirty silver coins, the price set on

him by the people of Israel, and they used them to buy the potter's field, as the Lord commanded me" (Matt 27:9-10 NIV; Zec 11:12-13).

Everyone in Jerusalem heard what had happened to Judas; and for that reason, they called the field "Akeldama," which means in their language "Field of Blood" (Acts 1:19 NIV).

Thought Questions

1. Did the religious leaders think that Judas had committed a sin? Did they appear to be concerned about Judas' spiritual welfare? See Matthew 27:4.
2. Why did they not put the 30 silver coins into the temple treasury?
3. The religious leaders were willing to condemn an innocent man to death, yet they were not willing to put unclean money in the temple treasury? What do you say about that?

175

The Crucifixion

***Matthew 27:32-43; Mark 15:21-32;
Luke 23:26-38; John 19:16-24***

When the soldiers took charge of Jesus (John 19:16), they led Him away with two criminals to be crucified. As they were leaving the city, they came upon a man coming into the city from the countryside; and the soldiers put Jesus' cross on him to carry (Luke 23:26). The man was Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufas (Mark 15:21).

A large number of people followed behind Jesus, including women who mourned and wailed for Him (Luke 23:27). Jesus turned and said to them, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children" (Luke 23:28 NIV). He continued, "For the time will come when you will say, 'Blessed are the barren women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!'" (Luke 23:29 NIV)

Then, quoting from Hos 10:8, Jesus said, "Then 'they will say to the mountains, "Fall on us!" and to the hills, "Cover us!"' (Luke 23:30 NIV) Jesus also said, "For if men do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?" (Luke 23:31 NIV)

They arrived at the place called "Golgotha," which is Aramaic for "Place of the Skull" (John 19:17). There they offered Jesus wine mixed with myrrh (Mark 15:23). After He tasted it, He refused to drink it (Matt 27:34).

Then they crucified Him between two criminals, one on each side of Him (John 19:18). But Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34 a NIV).

It was about the third hour of the day, according to the Jewish method of counting hours (Mark 15:25). That would be about nine o'clock in the morning. Then the soldiers sat down and kept watch over Jesus (Matt 27:36).

Pilate had prepared a notice and had it fastened to the cross. It read: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS (John 19:19 NIV). The notice was written in Aramaic, Latin, and Greek; and many of the Jews read it, for it was near the city (John 19:20).

The chief priests, however, protested to Pilate, "Do not write 'The King of the Jews,' but that this man claimed to be king of the Jews" (John 19:21 NIV).

Pilate answered, "What I have written, I have written" (John 19:22).

The soldiers then took Jesus' clothes and divided them into four shares, one for each of them. The undergarment, which was seamlessly woven from top to bottom, was left over (John 19:23). So they said to one another, "Let's not tear it. Let's decide by lot who will get it." (John 19:24a NIV)

This happened that the scripture might be fulfilled, which says, "They divided my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing" (John 19:24b NIV; Psa 22:18).

People passing by hurled insults at Jesus, shaking their heads and saying, "You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three

days, save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!” (Matt 27:40 NIV).

Some people who stood watching said, “He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Christ of God, the Chosen One” (Luke 23:35 NIV)

The soldiers joined in mocking Jesus (Luke 23:36). They said, “If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself” (Luke 23:37).

The chief priests, the scribes, and the elders also mocked Him among themselves (Mark 15:31). “He saved others,” they said, “but he can’t save himself! He’s the King of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him” (Matt 27:42 NIV). They also said, “He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, ‘I am the Son of God.’” (Matt 27:43 NIV).

Thought Questions

1. The soldiers placed Jesus’ cross on someone else to carry. Why did they do that? What do you think?
2. Mark mentioned in his Gospel that Simon, who carried the cross for Jesus, was the father of Alexander and Rufus (Mark 15:21). Why do you suppose Mark mentioned that? Does this give you some idea about when the Gospel of Mark was written?
3. Jesus told the “daughters of Jerusalem” to weep for themselves and their children (Luke 23:28). What did Jesus foresee that was going to come over the “daughters of Jerusalem?” See Luke 19:41-44.
4. The soldiers offered Jesus wine mixed with myrrh (gall) (Mark 15:23). Myrrh was an anodyne against pain. After Jesus tasted it, He refused to drink it (Matt 27:34). Why did He not drink it? What do you think?
5. Jesus had taught His disciples to pray for those that mistreat them (Luke 6:28). Did Jesus follow His own teaching? See Luke 23:34.
6. Pilate refused to change the sign that he had put on Jesus’ cross (John 19:21-22). Why would he not change it? What do you think?
7. Jesus did not come down from the cross, as His accusers suggested (Matt 27:42). Why did He not come down? What do you think?

176

The Death of Jesus

*Matthew 27:44-56; Mark 15:33-41;
Luke 23:39-49; John 19:25-30*

Even the two robbers that were crucified with Jesus heaped insults on Him (Matt 27:44). One of them said to Jesus, “Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us” (Luke 23:39b)!

The other robber, however, rebuked the first robber, saying to him, “Don’t you fear God, since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong” (Luke 23:40-41 NIV). Then to Jesus he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom” (Luke 23:42 NIV).

Jesus replied, “I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:43 NIV).

Now, Jesus’ mother was standing near the cross with her sister (Mary the wife of Clopas) and Mary Magdalene (John 19:25). When Jesus saw His mother and the disciple whom Jesus loved standing near her, He said to her, “Woman, behold, your son” (John 19:26). To His disciple He said, “Behold, your mother” (John 19:27a). From that time forward this disciple took Jesus’ mother into his own home (John 19:27b).

About the sixth hour (12 noon) darkness came over the land (Luke 23:44). It lasted until the ninth hour (3 p.m.), for the sun had stopped shining (Luke 23:45 NIV).

About the ninth hour (3 p.m.) Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?” which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matt 27:46 NIV)

Some of those standing near heard this and said, “He’s calling Elijah” (Matt 27:47 NIV).

When Jesus saw that all had been fulfilled, He said, “I am thirsty” (John 19:28). Immediately, one of the men ran and got a sponge (Matt

27:48). They soaked it in wine vinegar and put it on a hyssop stalk, and lifted it to Jesus' lips (John 19:29).

They said, "Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to save him" (Matt 27:49 NIV).

When Jesus had received the drink, He said, "It is finished" (John 19:30 NIV).

He then cried out in a loud voice (Matt 27:50), bowed His head, breathed His last (Mark 15:37), and gave up His spirit (John 19:30).

At that moment, the curtain in the temple tore in two. It tore from the top to the bottom. The earth shook and rocks split (Matt 27:51). Some of the tombs were broken open and bodies of many holy people were raised to life (Matt 27:52). They came out of their tombs; and went into the holy city and appeared to many people after Jesus' resurrection (Matt 27:53).

When the centurion, who was standing in front of Jesus, and the other guards heard Him cry out and saw the earthquake, they were terrified at seeing how He had died. They said, "Truly, this was a righteous man (Luke 23:47)! Surely this man was God's Son" (Mark 15:39)!

When all the people who had gathered to witness the crucifixion saw what had happened, they beat their breasts and went away (Luke 23:48).

All the while, those who knew Jesus stood at a distance, watching these things (Luke 23:49). Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and Joses, and Salome (Mark 15:40). The mother of Zebedee's sons was also there (Matt 27:56). In addition, many other women that had come to Jerusalem with Jesus were standing there (Mark 15:41).

Since it was Friday (the day for getting ready for the Sabbath), and since the next day was a special Sabbath, the Jews did not want to leave bodies on a cross. For that reason, they asked Pilate to have the legs of the men broken and their bodies taken down (John 19:31).

So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first man and then those of the other man (John 19:32). But when they came to Jesus, they found Him already dead. Therefore, they did not break His legs (John

19:33). Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear and out flowed blood and water (John 19:34).

The Gospel of John says, "The one who saw this has testified, and his testimony is true. He knows he is telling the truth so that you, too, may believe" (John 19:35 ISV).

The Gospel of John also says (John 19:36) that these things happened so that the scripture would be fulfilled, which says, "Not one of his bones will be broken" (Psa 34:20). Another scripture (Zec 12:10) says, "They will look on the one they have pierced" (John 19:37).

Thought Questions

1. Jesus' cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me" (Matt 27:46). Was Jesus merely quoting an appropriate Psalm (Psa 22:1). Or did He truly feel that God had forsaken Him? What do you think?
2. What is the significance of the fact that the curtain, which separated the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place in the temple, tore (Matt 27:51)? See Heb 10:19-20. Is it significant that the curtain tore from the top to the bottom?
3. What is the significance of the fact that blood and water flowed from Jesus' side after His body was pierced (John 19:34)? What did that indicate?
4. Who is the man that testified (John 19:35) that the story of Jesus' death is true? Was it John the Apostle? What do you think?
5. What impact did Jesus' death have on His disciples?
6. What impact did Jesus' death have on the city of Jerusalem?
7. What impact has Jesus' death had on the world?
8. How does Jesus death affect you? See Eph 1:7

177

Jesus' Body Was Laid in a Tomb

*Matthew 27:57-61; Mark 15:42-47;
Luke 23:50-56; John 19:38-42*

Jesus was crucified on a Friday, the day on which preparations were made for the Sabbath (Mark 15:42). Toward evening of that Friday, a man named Joseph, who was from Arimathea in Judea (Luke 23:51), came boldly to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus (Mark 15:43).

Now, Joseph of Arimathea was a prominent and rich member of the Council (Luke 23:50), who had not consented to Jesus' death (Luke 23:51). He was also a good and upright man (Luke 23:50), who believed in the coming of the kingdom of God (Mark 15:43). He was a disciple of Jesus, but he was one secretly for fear of the Jews (John 19:38).

Pilate was amazed when he heard that Jesus was already dead, and he summoned the centurion (Mark 15:44) and confirmed that it was so. Then he granted Joseph of Arimathea permission to take the body of Jesus (Mark 15:45). Joseph of Arimathea purchased pure linen in which to wrap the body (Mark 15:46). Then he came and lifted the body down from the cross (Mark 19:46). Nicodemus also came to help. He brought with him about 75 pounds of aloes mixed with myrrh (John 19:39). You will recall that Nicodemus was the prominent Pharisee that had visited Jesus by night (John 3:1-2). In accordance with Jewish burial customs, they wrapped Jesus' body in sheets of linen and sprinkled the spices in between (John 19:40).

Then Joseph of Arimathea placed Jesus' body in his own new tomb, which had been cut out of the rock (Matt 27:60) that was a garden near where Jesus had been crucified (John 19:41). No one had been laid in that tomb before (Luke 23:53). Some of the women from Galilee followed Joseph of Arimathea and watched how he placed the body of Jesus in the tomb (Luke 23:55).

Since it was late in the day and the Sabbath was beginning (Luke 23:54), Joseph of Arimathea rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away (Matt 27:60).

Mary Magdalene, a woman out of whom Jesus had driven seven demons (Mark 16:9) and Mary the mother of Joses (Mark 15:47) remained sitting opposite the tomb for a while (Matt 27:61). Finally, they too went away and prepared spices and perfumes, but they rested on the Sabbath. They did this in obedience to the commandment concerning the Sabbath (Luke 23:56).

Thought Questions

1. Was Jesus' body laid to rest with great ceremony? Did very many people attend His funeral? Did anyone make a speech? What do you think?
2. Did Jesus' friends treat His body with due respect and honor? What do you think?
3. Is there any doubt about whether or not Jesus' body was actually placed in the tomb before the tomb was closed?
4. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses prepared spices and perfumes (Luke 23:56). Does that make you think that they expected Jesus to be raised from the dead in three days, or not? See John 20:9.

178

Guards Were Posted at the Tomb

Matthew 27:62-66

Early in the morning of the Sabbath, the chief priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate (Matt 27:62) and said to him, "Sir, we recalled that while this deceiver was still alive, He said, 'After three days I will rise again'" (Matt 27:63). They requested of Pilate, "So give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day, lest his disciples come and

steal the body and tell the people that he had been raised from the dead. This last deception would be worse than the first” (Matt 27:64).

Pilate granted their request. He told them, “You have a guard of soldiers; go, make it as secure as you can” (Matt 27:65 RSV).

So they went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting soldiers as guards (Matt 27:66).

Thought Questions

1. Was it proper for the chief priests and Pharisees to be walking around on the Sabbath? What do you think?
2. Were Jesus’ disciples the kind of people who would steal Jesus’ body and falsely claim that He had been raised from the dead? What do you think?

***JESUS APPEARS
TO MANY
AFTER HIS
RESURRECTION***

179

Peter and the “Other Disciple” Ran to the Tomb

John 20:1-10

Mary Magdalene appears to have been the first of Jesus’ followers to discover that the tomb was empty. She arrived at the tomb so early on Sunday morning that it was still dark (John 20:1). One or two of the other women may have been with her (Luke 24:22).

When Mary Magdalene discovered that the stone had been removed from the tomb (John 20:1), she ran and told Simon Peter and another disciple (John 20:2). She said, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don’t know where they have put him” (John 20:2 NIV)!

When Simon Peter and the other disciple heard that Jesus’ body had been taken away, they started for the tomb. They both ran, but the other disciple got to the tomb first (John 20:4). When he arrived at the tomb, he bent over and looked inside and saw the linen wrappings lying there; but he did not go inside the tomb (John 20:5).

Simon Peter, however, when he got to the tomb, entered it. He also saw the linen wrappings. He saw, in addition, that the facecloth was folded and lay separately by itself (John 20:6-7). After Peter went in, the other disciple entered the tomb. He began to believe when he saw everything (John 20:8). Peter, however, does not appear to have been convinced, as yet, that Jesus had been raised from the dead.

The Gospel of John explains that the disciples had not yet understood from the Old Testament that Jesus would arise from the dead (John 20:9).

Thought Questions

1. Who do you suppose the “other disciple” was? Do you think it was the Apostle John?

2. The “other disciple” got to the tomb first. How would you explain that?
3. What did the “other disciple” see (John 20:8) that caused him to believe? Would grave robbers have bothered to take the facecloth, fold it, and lay it by itself? What do you think?
4. Was Peter quick to believe in Jesus’ resurrection? Do you think the Apostles invented the story of Jesus’ resurrection?
5. Where does the Old Testament speak of the resurrection of Jesus? See Psa 16:10-11. Has anyone other than Jesus ever fulfilled Psa 16:10-11?

180

Jesus Appeared to Mary Magdalene

Mark 16:9-11; John 20:10-18

It seems that Mary Magdalene followed Simon Peter and the other disciple back to the tomb and stayed there after the two of them had left (John 20:10). While she was there, she bent over and looked inside the tomb (John 20:11) and saw two angels in white. They were seated where Jesus’ body had been, one at the head and one at the foot (John 20:12).

The angels asked her, “Woman, why are you weeping” (John 20:13a)?

She answered, “They have taken my Lord away, and I don’t know where they have laid Him” (John 20:13b).

Then, for some reason, she turned and saw that someone was standing behind her, but she did not realize that it was Jesus (John 20:14).

So Jesus asked her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Who are you are looking for?” (John 20:15a)

Mary Magdalene, thinking that it was the gardener, said to Him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him” (John 20:15b).

Then Jesus said to her, “Mary” (John 20:16).

Whereupon, she turned toward Him and cried out in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” (which means Teacher).

Mary Magdalene started to touch Jesus; and He said to her, “Don’t touch me, for I have not yet returned to the Father” (John 20:17a).

Then He instructed her, “Go instead to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God’” (John 20:17b).

In accordance with Jesus’ instruction, Mary Magdalene went to those who had been with Jesus (Mark 16:10). She found them mourning and weeping over Jesus’ death (Mark 16:10). She said to them, “I have seen the Lord” (John 20:18); but they did not believe her (Mark 16:11). Nonetheless, she told them what Jesus had told her to say (John 20:18).

Thought Questions

1. Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene (John 20:14-17). Why did Jesus appear first to her (Mark 16:9)? What do you think?
2. Mary Magdalene did not immediately recognize Jesus (John 20:14). Why did she not recognize Him? Was it still very early in the morning? What do you think?
3. Jesus did not permit Mary Magdalene to touch Him (John 20:17). Why did He not permit her to touch Him? What do you think?
4. Jesus had not yet returned to His Father (John 20:17). What did that have to do with whether or not Mary Magdalene should touch Him? What do you think?

181

Other Women at the Tomb

Matthew 28:1-10; Mark 16:1-8; Luke 24:1-12

As the first day of the week was dawning, other women were approaching the tomb (Luke 24:1). The fact that day was only then just dawning suggests that Mary Magdalene’s discovery of the empty tomb

and that Simon Peter's and the other disciple's race to the tomb had happened very quickly and that it all happened very early in the morning.

Among the women who were coming to the tomb at daybreak were Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and others (Luke 24:10). They came bringing spices (Luke 24:1) to anoint the body of Jesus, as Mary Magdalene had done (Mark 16:1).

While the women were on their way to the tomb, they were asking each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb" (Mark 16:2b-3 NIV)?

There was no need for the women to have worried about the stone, however, for it had already been rolled away (Mark 16:4). Earlier in the morning, there had been a violent earthquake and an angel of the Lord had come down from heaven. He had gone to the tomb, rolled away the stone, and sat on it (Matt 28:2). His appearance was like lightning and His clothes were as white as snow (Matt 28:3). When the guards saw him, they became so frightened that they shook and became like dead men (Matt 28:4).

While the women were still wondering what they would find at the tomb, two men (angels) suddenly appeared beside them. The clothing of the men shone like lightning (Luke 24:4).

One of the angels said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said" (Matt 28:5-6a NIV). In their fright, the women bowed their faces to the ground; and the angel said to them,

Why do you look for the living among the dead?" He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.'

Luke 24:5-7 NIV

It was then that the women remembered that Jesus had foretold (Luke 24:8) that He would be raised from the dead on the third day.

The angels also said to them, “Come and see the place where he lay” (Matt 28:6b NIV).

As the women entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and the women were alarmed (Mark 16:5 NIV). The angel said to them, “Don’t be alarmed. You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him” (Mark 16:6 NIV).

Then the angel said, “Go quickly and tell his disciples ‘He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you’” (Matt 28:7).

The angel made a point of specifically mentioning Peter in their instructions to the women. The angel said to them, “Go, tell his disciples and Peter” (Mark 16:7). The angel ended his words to the women by saying, “Now I have told you” (Matt 28:7c).

So the women hurried away, trembling and bewildered. At first, they dared not say anything to anyone, because they were so afraid (Mark 16:8). After a while, however, they set out running to tell Jesus’ disciples (Matt 28:8).

Mary Magdalene had likely not been with the other women as they were approaching the tomb; for if she had been with them, she would surely have told them that the stone had already been rolled away.

Mary Magdalene was definitely among the women, however, (Luke 24:10) as they ran to tell the disciples. While the women were running, Jesus suddenly appeared to them and said, “Greetings!” (Matt 28:9)

When the women saw Him, they came up to Him, took hold of His feet, and worshiped Him (Matt 28:9). To them He said, “Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me” (Matt 28:10 NIV).

Then, continuing on their way, the women came to the Eleven and the other disciples and told them everything that had happened (Luke 24:9). The Apostles, however, did not believe what the women said, for it seemed like nonsense to them (Luke 24:11).

Peter, nonetheless, got up and ran to the tomb again, thinking perhaps that He might see Jesus for Himself; but when he got to the

tomb, he found nothing there but the linen wrappings lying by themselves, as before. He saw neither Jesus nor the angels. Then Peter went away marveling at what had happened (Luke 24:12 NIV).

Thought Questions

1. On which day of the week did the women go to the tomb to anoint Jesus' body? See Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:2; Luke 24:1. On which day of the week did Jesus arise from the dead? Which is the first day of the week? Is it Sunday or Monday?
2. Did the women expect to find Jesus' body in the tomb, or did they not (Luke 24:1)? Did they invent the story of Jesus' resurrection? What do you think?
3. The angel said to the women, "Go, tell his disciples and Peter." Why did the angel specifically mention Peter? What do you think?
4. Why did Jesus appear to Mary Magdalene and the other women before He appeared to Peter or any of the Apostles? What do you think?
5. Jesus allowed the women to take hold of His feet and to worship Him (Matt 28:9). Why do you suppose Jesus permitted them to do that, after He had not permitted Mary Magdalene to touch Him (John 20:17)?
6. Would you like to read some of the passages, where Jesus foretold that He would be raised from the dead? If so, please look at the following: Matthew 16:21; 17:22-23; 20:18-19; Mark 10:33-34; and Luke 18:32-33.

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The Report of the Guards

Matthew 28:11-15

While the women were on their way to the disciples, some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests what had

happened (Matt 28:11). After the chief priests had heard the guards' report, they met with the elders and devised a plan. They decided to give the soldiers a large sum of money (Matt 28:12) and tell them, "You are to say, 'His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep'" (Matt 28:13 NIV). They also said to the soldiers. "If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble" (Matt 28:14 NIV). The soldiers took the money and did as they were told.

So the story was widely circulated among the Jews that the disciples had stolen Jesus' body. That story was still circulating at the time that Matthew wrote His Gospel (Matt 28:15).

Thought Questions

1. The chief priests told the guards to say that Jesus' disciples came during the night while they were asleep and stole His body (Matt 28:13 NIV). Does that story make any sense? What do you think?
2. Was this the first time that the religious leaders had tried to hide evidence that attested to Jesus? See John 12:9-11.
3. The chief priests told the guards that they would "satisfy" the governor (Matt 28:14). How do you suppose they were going to satisfy him? What does that tell you about the character of Pilate?

183

The Walk to Emmaus

Mark 16:12-13; Luke 24:13-35

On the day that Jesus arose from the dead, two of His disciples were walking in the country (Mark 16:12). They were going to a village called Emmaus, which was about seven miles from Jerusalem (Luke 24:13).

As they walked along, they were discussing with each other all the things that had happened (Luke 24:14). While they were talking about

these things, Jesus Himself came up to them and walked along with them; yet their eyes were kept from recognizing Him (Luke 24:15-16).

Jesus asked them, "What are you discussing as you walk along?"

At that, they stood still and were sad (Luke 24:17). One of them, a man named Cleopas, looking downcast, answered Jesus, "Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know what things have happened there in these days?" (Luke 24:18 NIV)

"What things?" He asked.

"About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied.

He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place."

Luke 24:19-21 NIV

The two men continued speaking:

In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see.

Luke 24:22-24 NIV

At this point, Jesus broke into their dialogue and said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" (Luke 24:25-26 NIV)

So, beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, Jesus explained to them the things concerning Himself, which are in all the Scriptures (Luke 24:27).

As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus pretended to be going farther (Luke 24:28). Whereupon, they urged Jesus to stay with them, saying, “Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over” (Luke 24:29 NIV). So He went in to stay with them (Luke 24:29).

Now, when He sat at table with them, He took bread, blessed it and broke it, and gave it to them (Luke 24:30). Then their eyes were opened and they recognized Him, and He disappeared from their sight (Luke 24:31).

They asked each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us” (Luke 24:32 NIV)?

Although it was late in the day, the two men got up at once and returned to Jerusalem (Luke 24:33), where they found the Eleven assembled in a house and the doors were locked for fear of the Jews. The two men reported what had happened on the road and how they had recognized Jesus when He broke the bread (Luke 24:35), but the Eleven and others did not believe them (Mark 16:13).

Thought Questions

1. Jesus appeared to many people after His resurrection. Was it a good thing that Jesus appeared to a lot of different people? Please explain.
2. If the disciples had been more familiar with the Scriptures, would they have more readily accepted the fact that Jesus had been raised from the dead? What do you think?
3. Would more people believe today if they knew the Bible better?
4. What are some of the passages that Jesus may have referred to (Luke 24:27), when He said that Moses and all the Prophets spoke of Him? Do you suppose that any of the following passages may have been among the ones to which Jesus referred? See Gen 3:15; 22:18; 26:4; 49:10; Num 21:9; Deu 18:15; Psa 16:9-10; 22:13,16-18; 110:1-7; 132:11; Isa 7:14; 9:2,6-7; 40:10-11; 53:1-12; Jer 23:5-6; 33:14-16; Eze 34:23-24; 37:24-25; Dan 7:13-14; Mal 3:1; 4:2.

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Jesus Appeared to the Eleven and Other Disciples

Mark 16:12-14; Luke 24:33-43; John 20:19-20

Cleopas and his companion hurried back to Jerusalem. They went to the Eleven and others, who were assembled (Luke 24:33) in a house where the doors were locked for fear of the Jews (John 20:19). Cleopas and his companion found the Eleven and the others confused by the reports that the Lord had appeared to various ones. Some were saying, “It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon” (Luke 24:34)! Then Cleopas and his companion reported what had happened to them on the road and how they recognized Jesus when He had broken the bread (Luke 24:35).

The Eleven, however, and the other disciples did not believe what Cleopas and his companion said (Mark 16:13) any more than they believed what Mary Magdalene (Mark 16:11) and the other women had said.

Later that evening, however, while they were eating (Mark 16:14) and discussing what had happened, Jesus Himself came and stood among them. He said to them, “Peace be with you” (Luke 24:36). He rebuked them for their lack of faith and for their stubborn refusal to believe those who had seen Him after He had risen (Mark 16:14). The disciples were startled and frightened, for they thought they saw a ghost (Luke 24:37).

So Jesus said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds?” (Luke 24:38 NIV). He also said to them, “Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have” (Luke 24:39 NIV). Then He showed them His hands and feet (Luke 24:40) and His side (John 20:20). So great was their joy and amazement that they could hardly believe that it was He (Luke 24:41a). So Jesus asked them, “Do you have here anything to eat?” (Luke 24:41b NIV).

They gave Him a piece of broiled fish, which He took and ate in their presence (Luke 24:42-43). After that, the disciples realized that it was Jesus, and they were overjoyed (John 20:20).

Thought Questions

1. Were the Apostles and disciples slow to believe that Jesus had been raised from the dead? What do you think?
2. Were the Apostles highly emotional and unstable men, or were they practical men with good common sense? What do you think?
3. Jesus showed His hands and His feet to the disciples (Luke 24:40). Why did He do that?
4. Jesus asked for food and ate a little broiled fish (Luke 24:42-43) in their presence? Why did He ask for food and eat it? What do you think?
5. Was Jesus' body raised from the dead? Or was He alive only in His spirit? What do you think?

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Jesus Opened His Disciples' Minds to Understand the Scriptures

Luke 24:44-49

Jesus continued conversing with His Apostles and others, who were gathered in a house in Jerusalem, in the evening of the day that He was raised from the dead. After he had eaten the piece of broiled fish, which they had given to Him, He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms" (Luke 24:44 NIV).

The Gospel of Luke says that Jesus then opened their minds so they could understand the Old Testament Scriptures (Luke 24:45). Jesus told

them, “This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day...” (Luke 24:46 NIV). He continued, “...and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (Luke 24:47 NIV).

Jesus reminded the Apostles that they were uniquely prepared for their mission. He said, “You are witnesses of these things” (Luke 24:48).

Jesus knew that the Apostles would need help in accomplishing their mission. They needed to be clothed with the power that God had promised, and which Jesus would send to them after He had ascended to heaven. Jesus said, “Behold, I will send the promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are clothed with power from on high” (Luke 24:49).

Thought Questions

1. Jesus opened His disciples’ minds so they could understand the Scriptures (Luke 24:45). Now, earlier in the day, when Jesus met two men on the road to Emmaus, He explained to them the meaning of Old Testament passages about Himself (Luke 24:27). Is this how Jesus opened His Apostles’ minds in Luke 24:45? What do you think?
2. Was Simon Peter the only one of the Apostles to whom the power to forgive sins was given, or were all of the Apostles able to forgive sins? See John 20:22-23.
3. How did the Apostles go about forgiving people’s sins? Did they do it by absolving them by pronouncement, or did they do it by teaching them the good news about Jesus and by baptizing them? See Acts 2:1-39.
4. Jesus told His Apostles to tarry in Jerusalem until they were “clothed with power from on high” (Luke 24:49). Did Jesus mean that Peter and others should ignore Jesus’ prior instruction (Matt 26:32; 28:10) to meet Him in Galilee? Do you think this confused the Apostles?

186

The World-Wide Mission of the Apostles

Mark 16:15-18; John 20:19-23

After Jesus had opened the minds of His Apostles to understand the Scriptures (Luke 24:44-49), He charged them with a great commission, saying, “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). Thus we see that Jesus wanted all people everywhere to hear the Gospel.

In addition, He wanted them also to believe the Gospel. Jesus wanted people not only to hear and believe the Gospel, but He wanted them also to submit to baptism. The reason why He wanted people to hear and believe the Gospel and to submit to baptism is because, then, they would not be condemned on the Day of Judgment but would be saved. Jesus said, “He who has believed and has been baptized will be saved; but he who has not believed will be condemned” (Mark 16:16 NKJV).

Jesus then began to speak to His disciples of the remarkable things that they would be doing in the not too distant future. He said, “And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues...” (Mark 16:17 NKJV).

Continuing to talk about the remarkable things that His immediate disciples, who believed on Him, would be doing, Jesus said, “...they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover” (Mark 16:18).

Then He said, “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you” (John 20:21b NIV).

His Apostles, whom He was sending, would need special guidance in order to be successful in their mission. So He breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit” (John 20:22).

Describing the type of work that His Apostles would be doing, Jesus said to them, “If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven” (John 20:23 NIV).

Thought Questions

1. The word “gospel” means “good news.” In what way is the Gospel of Jesus Christ good news?
2. Will people be saved on the Day of Judgment if they do not believe the Gospel? See Mark 16:16.
3. Does baptism precede salvation? See Mark 16:16. Should a person assume that he or she is saved before he or she is baptized?
4. How many things did Jesus mention in Mark 16:16 that a person must do in order to be saved?
5. How many things did Jesus mention in Mark 16:16 that it takes for a person to be condemned? Is it easier for a person to be condemned than it is for him or her to be saved? What do you think?
6. Is there a Biblical record of any of Jesus’ Apostles ever casting out demons? See Acts 16:16-18. Did Jesus say (Mark 16:17) that all of His followers would cast out demons?
7. Is there a record of any of Jesus’ Apostles ever speaking in new tongues (languages)? See 1 Cor 14:18? Did Jesus say (Mark 16:17) that all of His followers would be able to speak in new tongues (languages)?
8. Is there a record of a snake ever biting an Apostle without it harming the Apostle? See Acts 28:3-6. Did Jesus say (Mark 16:18) that all of His followers would be able to pick up snakes without harm?
9. How were the Apostles and others supposed to forgive people’s sins? Were they supposed to do it by pronouncing people free of their guilt, or were they to do it by teaching people the Gospel so they could obey the Gospel and be saved? See Rom 1:16.

187

Jesus Appeared to Thomas and Others

John 20:24-31

For some reason, Thomas (called Didymus), who was one of the Twelve, was not present when Jesus came to the disciples on the day of His resurrection (John 20:24). So the disciples later said to Thomas, “We have seen the Lord!”

To which Thomas retorted, “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 20:25 NIV).

One week later, when the disciples were again assembled in a house, Thomas was present with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came in and stood among them. He said to them, “Peace be with you!” (John 20:26)

To Thomas He said, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe” (John 20:27 NIV).

Thomas responded by saying, “My Lord and my God!” (John 20:28)

Then Jesus said to him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed” (John 20:29 NIV).

At this point in the narrative, the Gospel of John contains the following passage:

Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. “But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

John 20:30-31 NIV

Thought Questions

1. Did Thomas acknowledge the divinity of Jesus? See John 20:28. What do you think?
2. Has Thomas done us a service by doubting, for a time, that Jesus arose from the dead? What do you think?
3. Did Jesus perform more miracles than are recorded in the Gospel of John? See John 20:30. Do you think He performed more miracles than are recorded in all four of the Gospels (Matt, Mark, Luke, and John)?
4. Why was the Gospel of John written? What was its purpose? See John 20:31.
5. The author of the Gospel of John wanted his readers to believe that Jesus Christ is God's Son. Why did he want His readers to believe that? See John 20:31.

188

The Fish Catch in Galilee

John 21:1-14

After Jesus had appeared to His disciples at Jerusalem, He appeared to them also by the Sea of Tiberias (Galilee) (John 21:1). Jesus disciples had gone to Galilee just as He had told them to do (Matt 26:32; 28:10). Among them were Simon Peter, Thomas (called Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, two sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples (John 21:2).

Peter said to them, "I'm going fishing."

The others said, "We are going with you."

So they got into the boat, but they did not catch anything (John 21:3). Jesus stood on the shore early in the morning, but the disciples did not know that it was He (John 21:4).

He called out to them, "Friends, haven't you caught anything to eat?" (John 21:5)

They answered, “No.”

Then Jesus said to them, “Cast your net on the right side of the boat and you will find something” (John 21:6).

After they had cast their net on the right side, they caught so many fish that they were not able to haul the net into the boat.

The disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord!”

As soon as Simon Peter heard the disciple say, “It is the Lord,” he wrapped his outer garment around himself (for he had taken it off) and threw himself into the water (John 21:7). The other disciples came to shore in the boat. They had been only about a hundred yards from the shore. They came towing the net full of fish behind them (John 21:8). As they were getting out on the shore, they saw burning coals with fish lying on them; and they saw also some bread (John 21:9).

Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish that you have just now caught” (John 21:10 NIV).

Then Simon Peter got back in the boat and dragged the net, full of large fish (153 of them), on to the shore. Remarkably, the net did not break, in spite of their having caught so many fish (John 21:11).

Jesus said to them, “Come and eat breakfast” (John 21:12 NIV).

The disciples knew that it was the Lord. Therefore, none of them dared ask him, “Are you He?” Then Jesus took the bread, gave it to them. He did the same with the fish (John 21:13 NIV).

This was the third time that Jesus had appeared to His disciples as a group after He had been raised from the dead (John 21:14).

Thought Questions

1. Jesus told Peter and the other Apostles to go to Galilee and meet Him there? Why did He want them to meet Him in Galilee? What reason could He have had?
2. What do you suppose went through Peter’s mind when he saw that they had caught so many fish? See Luke 5:4-11
3. Is it helpful that Jesus made several appearances after His resurrection, instead of only one? See Acts 1:3. What do you think?

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***Jesus' Conversation with
Simon Peter in Galilee******John 21:15-25***

After the disciples had eaten bread and fish beside the Sea of Galilee, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" (John 21:15a)

"Yes, Lord," Simon answered, "you know I love you."

Whereupon, Jesus said to him, "Feed my lambs" (John 21:15b).

Jesus asked him again, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" (John 21:16a)

Simon answered, "Yes, Lord, you know I love you."

Jesus said, "Tend my sheep" (John 21:16b).

A third time Jesus asked him, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" (John 21:17a NIV)

Peter was hurt that Jesus asked him for the third time, "Do you love me?" So He said to Jesus, "Lord, you know all things; you know I love you."

Jesus responded, "Feed my sheep" (John 21:17b).

After Jesus had said these things to Peter, Jesus said to him,

I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed
yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old
you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress
you and lead you where you do not want to go.

John 21:18 NIV

With these words Jesus indicated by what death Peter would glorify God.

Jesus then said to Peter, "Follow me!" (John 21:19)

Glancing back, Peter saw that "the disciple whom Jesus loved" was following them. This was the one that had leaned against Jesus at the Passover Meal (John 13:25) and that had asked Jesus who was going to

betray Him (John 21:20)?

Concerning that disciple, Peter asked, “Lord, what about him?” (John 21:21 NIV)

Jesus answered, “If I want him to remain until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me” (John 21:22). The rumor spread among the brothers that Jesus said that the other disciple would not die, but Jesus did not say that he would not die. What He said was, “If I want him to remain until I return, what is that to you” (John 21:23 NIV)?

Next, the Gospel of John says, “This is the disciple who vouches for to these things and who wrote them down, and we know his testimony is true” (John 21:24).

The Gospel of John comes to an end with the words: “Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written” (John 21:25 NIV).

Thought Questions

1. Jesus told Peter “Feed my lambs,” “Tend my sheep,” and “Feed my sheep?” What was Jesus instructing Peter to do?
2. Did Jesus intend for Peter to become a Pope? What do you think?
3. Who was the disciple “whom Jesus loved?” Was it John, one of Zebedee’s sons and brother to James? What do you think?
4. Was the Gospel of John written by a person that was an eyewitness to the things that He described? See John 21:24.
5. Who wrote the Gospel of John? Was it John the Apostle? What do you think?

190

The Great Commission, Spoken in Galilee

Matthew 28:16-20

The Eleven went to the particular mountain in Galilee to which Jesus had told them to go (Matt 28:16). There, they saw Jesus and they worshiped Him. Yet, inexplicably, some of them still wavered in their faith (Matt 28:17).

Nonetheless, Jesus said to them, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth” (Matt 28:18 NASB).

Then He commanded, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit...” (Matt 28:19 NASB).

He continued, saying, “...teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matt 28:20 NASB).

Thought Questions

1. Jesus told His Apostles to go and make disciples of all the nations. Does Jesus want His followers today to continue to make disciples of all the nations? What do you think?
2. Were the Apostles supposed to teach people before they baptized them? See Matthew 28:19.
3. Were the Apostles supposed to continue teaching people after they baptized them? See Matthew 28:20.
4. Were the Apostles supposed to teach people to observe everything that Jesus taught? See Matthew 28:20.
5. Were the Apostles faithful to the charge that Jesus gave them? What do you think?

191

Jesus' Ascension into Heaven

Mark 16:19-20; Luke 24:50-53; Acts 1:1-13

On the day that Jesus arose from the dead (Luke 24:30-49), He told His Apostles that He was going to send them power from on high. He said, "I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49 NIV).

Jesus explained that the Holy Spirit would be the one who would clothe them with power. Indeed, they would be baptized (immersed) in the Holy Spirit. Jesus said,

Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized in water, but in a few days you will be baptized in the Holy Spirit.

Acts 1:4-5

Jesus showed Himself to His Apostles at various times and in different places for 40 days (1 Cor 15:1-8), and He gave them many convincing proofs that He was alive (Acts 1:3).

Jesus, you will recall, appeared to His Apostles in Galilee. After they had seen Him in Galilee, they returned to Jerusalem, and He met them in Jerusalem on the day that He ascended to heaven (Acts 1:6).

When the Apostles saw Him, they asked, "Lord, are you going to restore the kingdom to Israel at this time" (Acts 1:6)? Their question showed that they were thinking of an earthly kingdom. However, Jesus did not correct their thinking about that. Instead, He commented on their having inquired about God's timetable. He said, "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority" (Acts 1:7 NIV).

Jesus then explained that the Holy Spirit would give them the power that was promised in order to prepare them to be His witnesses. He said, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8 NIV).

After that, Jesus led them out to the vicinity of Bethany (Luke 24:50), which was about a Sabbath day’s journey (3 km) from Jerusalem (Acts 1:12). There, He raised His hands and blessed them (Luke 24:50). After He had blessed them, He was taken up into heaven; and the disciples watched intently until a cloud finally hid Him from their sight (Acts 1:9).

The Gospel of Mark tells us that Jesus “was taken up into heaven” and that He “sat down at the right hand of God” (Mark 16:19).

As the Apostles were staring into the sky, suddenly, two men dressed in white stood beside them (Acts 1:10); and they asked, “Men of Galilee, why are you standing here looking into the sky?” (Acts 1:11a) The men dressed in white said, “This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11b NIV). Then, after the disciples had worshiped Jesus, they returned to Jerusalem with great joy (Luke 24:52). They went to the upstairs room where they had been staying (Acts 1:13).

Among those that witnessed Jesus’ ascension were Peter, John, James, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James (Acts 1:13). Jesus had instructed His Apostles to bear witness to Him in Jerusalem before they started out to other places (Acts 1:8). For that reason, they did not leave Jerusalem immediately; but they “stayed continually at the temple, praising God” (Luke 24:53 NIV).

Ten days later, on the Day of Pentecost, the Apostle Peter stood up and preached a sermon that showed that Jesus is Lord (Acts 2:14-36). In his sermon, Peter commanded His listeners to repent. He also commended them to be baptized for the forgiveness of their sins (Acts 2:38).

Following his sermon, Peter continued warning the people and pleading with them, saying, “Save yourselves from this corrupt

generation” (Acts 2:40). The people who accepted Peter’s message were baptized; and, as a result, about three thousand people were added to the fellowship of the Apostles that day (Acts 2:41). They constituted the first congregation of Jesus’ church on earth.

With regards to this congregation of Jesus’ church, the book of Acts says, “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer” (Acts 2:42 NIV).

The Gospel of Mark comes to a close with the words: “Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it” (Mark 16:20 NIV).

Dear Reader, if you would like to learn more about how some of the Apostles fared on their mission to all the world, read the book of Acts.

Thought Questions

1. The Apostles asked Jesus, “Lord, are you going to restore the kingdom to Israel at this time” (Acts 1:6)? What were the Apostles asking? Were they asking whether or not Jesus would, at that time, become a mighty king and reign over Israel like David? What do you think?
2. Do you think that Jesus intended ever to restore an earthly kingdom to fleshly Israel? See Matthew 8:11-12; Matthew 21:41-43; Luke 17:20-21; John 3:3; and John 18:36.
3. Jesus told His Apostles that they would receive “power” when the Holy Spirit came upon them (Acts 1:8). When did the Holy Spirit come upon them? See Acts 2:1-4.
4. Jesus told His Apostles that they would be “baptized in the Holy Spirit” in a few days (Acts 1:5). When were they “baptized in the Holy Spirit?” Did it happen when the Holy Spirit came upon them? What do you think?
5. Does the baptism in the Holy Spirit come upon all believers, or did it come upon the Apostles to empower them to do their special work?
6. Mark 16:20 says that the Lord “worked with” His Apostles. Does He

work with His followers today? If He does, how does He do it? Does He work with them today in the same way that He worked with His Twelve Apostles?

7. Mark 16:20 also says that the Lord “confirmed His word” by the signs that accompanied it. Has the word of the Lord been confirmed? See Heb 2:3-4. Does the Lord “confirm His word” by signs today, as He did in the days of the Apostles? What do you think?
8. What affect did Jesus’ death, resurrection, and ascension have on the Eleven?
9. What affect did Jesus’ death, resurrection, and ascension have on the people of Jerusalem?
10. What affect has Jesus’ death, resurrection, and ascension had on the Jewish people as a whole?
11. What affect has Jesus’ death, resurrection and ascension had on the world?
12. What do you think about the Christ? What should your response to Him be?

