



The
Gospel
of Luke

Harold S. Martin

Bible
Commentary

BRETHREN NEW TESTAMENT COMMENTARY

GOSPEL OF LUKE

Harold S. Martin

BRF

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GENERAL PREFACE

This commentary is part of a new series of studies that will feature a number of volumes covering all of the New Testament books. There will be reliable expositions of the Bible text, a careful analysis of key words, easy outlines to follow, and helpful material to aid serious Bible students. The explanations are written from a conservative evangelical Brethren and Anabaptist point of view. The goal is to expound the Bible text accurately, and to produce a readable explanation of God's truth.

Each volume can be especially useful for pastors, Sunday School teachers, and lay persons. The writers aim for thoroughness, clarity, and loyalty to the Anabaptist/Pietist values. The meaning of the Greek text (both for those who know Greek and those who don't), will be part of the exposition when necessary.

The Brethren Revival Fellowship sponsored *Brethren New Testament Commentary* will simply take the biblical text as it is, and give the exposition, along with applications for everyday life. All who have been asked to write the commentaries in this series agree that the message of God's Word in its original documents was given without error, and that nothing more is necessary for spiritual growth.

Brethren Revival Fellowship is a renewal movement within the *Church of the Brethren* which aims to proclaim and preserve biblical values for living today. We believe the Bible is the infallible Word of God, the final authority for belief and practice, and that to personally accept Jesus Christ as Savior is the only means of salvation.

The Brethren Revival Fellowship Committee

DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to our second daughter Delphine Kaye Ramer. We remember your tender emotions and the ways by which you brought much joy to our home. Now you and Wesley have a family of your own. May the lives of each member of your family be blessed by the tender accounts in the book of Luke.

FOREWORD

The Gospel according to Luke

The series of biblical studies known as the *Brethren New Testament Commentary* aims to give a reliable and readable explanation of the New Testament text, with loyalty to Anabaptist and Pietist values. The Anabaptists and Pietists in Europe took the matter of Bible inspiration and authority very seriously. They searched the Word of God carefully, and set out to avoid the error of *selective obedience* to the Scriptures. They tried earnestly to obey all the instructions of Christ and His apostles—not to gain favor with God, but to please the Lord in all of life.

The first four books of the New Testament are commonly called *Gospels*. The word means "good tidings" or "good news." These are four records given by the true and living God, describing the life, ministry, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The first three Gospels are often called "synoptic" because they are parallel in many respects. The first three Gospels have a common view; the fourth Gospel differs in some respects.

The Gospels are important. The books before them (in the Old Testament) are anticipatory. The books after them are explanatory. The Gospels tell us a bit of history *that we must know*—for our soul's eternal salvation depends upon what happened in the earthly life of Christ. Throughout the New Testament Jesus is presented as the only Mediator between "God and men" (1 Timothy 2:5).

The emphasis in each Gospel is weighted toward the death of Christ. Two-sevenths of Matthew, three-eighths of Mark, one-fourth of Luke, and about one-half of John are devoted to the Passion Week. Important as *the life* of Christ is, it is through *His death* on the cross that He wrought redemption for lost sinners. Jesus did not die as a martyr for a noble cause; He died as a Redeemer for sinful human beings.

The message of the Gospels is this: He is here! The promised One has come! The One whom the prophets had foretold—has appeared! "There is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11). That message indeed is good news!

It is hoped that the expositions and applications of the Bible text found in this commentary will be a great blessing to preachers and Christian workers and young people and parents in the home—to all who set out to study the New Testament Scriptures. Readers will note that I gave more comment to those portions of the Gospel of Luke *which are found only in Luke*. Other portions from Luke are treated more briefly, and referenced to the commentary on Matthew.

I suggest that you keep your Bible open while using the pages of this study tool. It is my prayer that you will have a delightful and helpful experience. To study the Bible is our highest privilege. To obey the teachings of Scripture is our greatest responsibility. To share its message with others is to participate in bringing lasting joy to many hungry hearts.

My wife Priscilla, and Martha Hess, deserve much credit for the work they did in carefully checking all the Scripture references, proof-reading the manuscript for this book, and for the helpful suggestions they made. Those who teach and preach the Word may feel free to use any part of these studies which they find helpful. May God use this book to strengthen many hearts, to help steer believers from error, and to bring souls to the Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

The Gospel of Luke was written by a medical doctor named Luke. Luke was a traveling companion of the Apostle Paul. He was a non-Jewish writer and a scholarly historian. His purpose was to present a historically accurate account of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, and to present it in such a way that Jesus was seen as a perfect Savior who felt compassion especially for downtrodden people.

The emphasis in Luke is on the *perfect humanity* of Jesus. He is presented as the Son of Man, the human yet the perfect and divine Person. Matthew traces Jesus' genealogy back to Abraham, the father of the Jews (Matthew 1:2). Luke traces the genealogy back to Adam, the father of the human race (Luke 3:38). In Luke, Jesus is portrayed as a Man with great compassion for *all* people. In Matthew, Jesus sends His disciples to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 10:6); Luke omits that limitation.

There is much material found in Luke that is not contained in the other Gospel records. Luke refers to six miracles not named in the other Gospels—including the miraculous drought of fish (5:1-11), the raising of the widow of Nain's son (7:11-15), the cleansing of ten lepers (17:11-19), and the healing of the wounded ear of Malchus (22:50-51). Also, Luke names seventeen parables not described in the other Gospels—including the Good Samaritan (10:25-37), the rich fool and his barns (12:16-21), the builder who did not count the cost to finish his building (14:28-30), and the Pharisee and the publican (18:9-14).

Luke's Gospel is filled with sympathy and tender appeals to outcasts and to downtrodden people. Luke tells about the man aided by the Good Samaritan, the misery of the prodigal son, and the friend asking for bread at midnight. Women and children receive a prominent place in Luke's account. Luke mentions at least thirteen women not referred to in the other three Gospels—including Elizabeth, Anna, the woman with ten silver coins, and Joanna. In Luke, the reader learns about the childhood of Jesus, the widow of Nain, the sisters Mary and Martha, and the visit of Mary to the home of Elizabeth.

Luke is often considered the most interesting Gospel to read. One never grows tired of reading about the visits of the angel in connection with the humble birth of Jesus. All enjoy contrasting the personalities of Mary and Martha, the two sisters who lived in the village of Bethany. Luke is more interested in *persons* (especially those in trouble) than he is in *ideas*. Luke speaks about the small man Zacchaeus (19:1-10), the penitent thief (23:39-43), the contrite publican (18:9-14), and the one thankful leper (17:11-19).

After the introduction in chapters 1-4, where Luke informs the reader about Jesus' birth, childhood, ancestry, baptism, and temptation—he tells about Jesus' ministry in Galilee (chapters 4-9), His ministry on the way to Jerusalem, by way of Perea (chapters 10-19), and His arrest, death, and resurrection in Jerusalem (chapters 20-24).

The concluding words in Luke's Gospel assure the disciples of Jesus that He has indeed ascended into heaven. "He blessed them" and was "parted from them and carried up into heaven" (Luke 24:51). Writing sometime later in the book of Acts, Luke quotes the words of the angels, when they said, "This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven,

will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11). It is no wonder that the disciples had returned to Jerusalem with joy!

1. EVENTS PRECEDING THE BIRTH OF JESUS

Luke 1:1-25

The first four verses of Luke's Gospel tell us how Luke went about doing the job of the writing. As a good historian, he did careful first-hand research.

1. The Preface to the Gospel of Luke (1:1-4)

Many had begun writing histories of the Christian movement. Luke made a study of what had already been said, doing careful research by checking the facts with people who had been around since the early days of Jesus, but he also compiled and clarified some additional details. The Gospel of Luke is not a mixture of myth and gossip, but a dependable account of what really happened. It was directed to a Roman official named Theophilus.

(1:1-4) Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus, that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed.

Others had written narratives about Jesus' life (verse 1) and Luke had read those narratives. Luke also had checked with eyewitnesses (verse 2), persons who had actually seen Jesus. Luke carefully investigated (verse 3) everything "from the very first." The phrase "from the very first" (Greek, *anōthen*) can mean "again" or "from above." Here it may simply mean that Luke plans to set forth one more complete account of the life of Christ, but the use of the term *at least hints* that God affirmed Luke's findings by granting His approval *from above*. Luke set down an orderly account, as any good historian would do. Luke was certain that the whole task was superintended by God (verse 4).

Theophilus (verse 3) was likely a Roman government official (addressed with the title "most excellent." The Greek name *Theophilus* means "one who loves God." Brethren commentator, L. W. Teeter, states a view about Theophilus which is held by many.¹ Some suggest that he may have been the official who gave assistance in gaining release for the Apostle Paul from the house imprisonment in Rome.²

After the brief introduction of just four verses, the book of Luke begins with a detailed account of the birth of *two important baby boys*. The angel Gabriel appeared first to Zacharias and then to Elizabeth. Zacharias and Elizabeth in their old age are to become the parents of John the Baptist. Six months after Elizabeth had conceived, Gabriel brought a second birth announcement. This time the announcement was to a young virgin in Nazareth named Mary. Later, the angel (according to Matthew's account) explained matters to Joseph, the man to whom Mary was engaged.

John's birth was *exceptional*; his parents were both well-stricken in years. The birth of Jesus was *miraculous*; he was born without a human father. In the case of Zacharias and Elizabeth, Zacharias was the father and Elizabeth was the mother. The angel said to Zacharias, "*Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son*" (Luke 1:13). In the case of Joseph and Mary, the Holy Spirit overshadowed Mary, and Jesus was born without an earthly father. The text simply says, "*and she will bring forth a Son*" (Matthew 1:21).

2. The Birth of John the Baptist Foretold (1:5-25)

At this point Luke describes the events surrounding the unusual conception of John the Baptist. Herod the Great was ruling over all of Palestine from 37 B.C. to 4 B.C. Zacharias was a Jewish priest; he and his wife Elizabeth were an exemplary couple (verse 6), childless (verse 7), and advanced in years (verse 18).

(1:5-17) There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah. His wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both well advanced in years. So it was, that while he was serving as priest before God in the order of his division, according to the custom of the priesthood, his lot fell to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. And the whole multitude of the people was praying outside at the hour of incense. Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,' and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

The story begins in the days of "Herod, the king of Judea." The "Herod" named here was Herod the Great, the king who ordered the massacre of infants (described in Matthew's account). Herod was declared "king" by the Roman Senate, but he was never accepted by the Jewish people because (though part Jewish), he was not of the royal line of David.

Herod was a good manager and a great builder, but he was a man of great wickedness. He murdered his wife (Marianne), and his mother (Alexandria)—and slaughtered three of his sons because he suspected that they were trying to unseat him from power. In contrast to Herod, there was in the vicinity of Jerusalem, a priest named Zacharias, whose life was a model of godliness and decency. All priests were from the tribe of Levi. Zacharias' wife (Elizabeth) was also a descendant of Aaron. A priest who married a wife from priestly descent was considered especially blessed!

Zacharias was a priest of "the division (the order) of Abijah." Mosaic Law required that fresh incense must be burned on the altar each morning and each evening (Exodus 30:7-8). King David had established 24 divisions within the priesthood, in order to make things operate more efficiently (1 Chronicles 24:1-19). A priest would come to Jerusalem and serve at the Temple for two weeks out of the year. Because of the large number of priests,

the privilege of serving *inside the Temple* at the altar of incense occurred only once in a priest's lifetime. Verse 9 explains that at this time, it was Zacharias' lot "to burn incense," and so this was a very special time in the life of Zacharias.

Verse 6 declares that Zacharias and Elizabeth "were both³ righteous before God." They were obedient to the commandments of the Lord. They were righteous, not only in the eyes of men, but were righteous before God. And today, as in New Testament times, the Lord commits His most significant work to those who love Him and obey Him.

In verse 7 we are informed that the couple had no children. Many in our day of self-centeredness would rejoice at such a statement, but it was not so in ancient Israel. Children were considered among God's greatest blessings, and to be aging and childless, often led to ridicule and public shame. But in spite of their concern about Elizabeth's barrenness, there doesn't seem to be any bitterness in the lives of this godly couple.

Verses 8-10 give additional details about the work of the priest. While the priest was in the Holy Place of the Temple, at the altar of incense, the people were praying while they waited on the outside. At this high moment in Zacharias' life, verse 11 says "An angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing on the right side of the altar of incense." The "right side" indicates a position of favor or blessing. And while Zacharias at this time was surely in a spiritual frame of mind, he was troubled and fearful when he saw the angel. The angel had a message for Zacharias. This was the first time God spoke directly to His people for 400 years; it marked an end to what is commonly called "The 400 Silent Years."

We learn in verse 19 that the angel was Gabriel, who also had appeared in Old Testament times (Daniel 8:16; 9:21). The angel had come to deliver an important message, and in verse 13, Zacharias was told some good news. The first bit of good news is at the center of the verse: "Your prayer is heard." The second part of the angel's message was this: "Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son." And the son was to be named "John."

God was going to answer the prayers which Zacharias and Elizabeth had been praying over the years. Verses 15-17 tell what kind of person John would be. He would be set apart by the Holy Spirit from before his birth—and would be instrumental in pointing many Israelites to God.

(1:18-25) And Zacharias said to the angel, "How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is well advanced in years." And the angel answered and said to him, "I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and was sent to speak to you and bring you these glad tidings. But behold, you will be mute and not able to speak until the day these things take place, because you did not believe my words which will be fulfilled in their own time." And the people waited for Zacharias, and marveled that he lingered so long in the temple. But when he came out, he could not speak to them; and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple, for he beckoned to them and remained speechless. And so it was, as soon as the days of his service were completed, that he departed to his own house. Now after those days his wife Elizabeth conceived; and she hid herself five months, saying, "Thus the Lord has dealt with me, in the days when He looked on me, to take away my reproach among people."

Zacharias was struck in his mind by the impossibility of the promise. He and his wife were too old to become the parents of a child. The question Zacharias asked in verse 18 may

seem like an innocent inquiry, but verse 20 says that he was filled with doubt. Mary also asked a question, recorded in verse 34, but her question arose from faith (verse 45). Because Zacharias had doubted, he was destined to lose his speech⁴ until the child was born (verse 20).

The people praying outside the Temple were concerned because Zacharias had "lingered so long"—but when he returned they sensed that he had seen a vision. Verse 23 indicates that after Zacharias had served in his place of duty, he was free to return to his home in the hill country. We learn in verse 24 that shortly after his return, Elizabeth, in her old age, was expecting a child. She went into seclusion for five months but was rejoicing⁵ that the reproach which accompanied childlessness was being removed.

3. The Birth of Jesus Foretold (1:26-38)

The activity of the angel Gabriel was not limited to the conversation with Zacharias. In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, Gabriel also appeared to a young virgin named Mary.

(1:26-38) Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And having come in, the angel said to her, "Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!" But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end." Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?" And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God. Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible." Then Mary said, "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

This section is sometimes called "The Annunciation." We get a personal glimpse into the thoughts of Mary as she first became aware of her special role in God's plan for bringing the Messiah into the world.

Joseph and Mary at the time of the angel's announcement were both residing in Nazareth (verse 26), located more than 60 miles north of Jerusalem on a mountain plateau. Nazareth was a small town in Galilee, in the northern part of Israel. Nazareth was an obscure village and is thus in keeping with the rest of the story surrounding the humble circumstances associated with Christ's first advent.

Mary (verse 27) was engaged to be married to Joseph. Engagements usually occurred when girls were very young. A betrothal among the Jews *was a contract* negotiated by a friend representing the bride. It was confirmed by an oath and celebrated by a feast. Following that confirmation, the couple lived separately with their parents, and their

relationship was not sexually consummated until the espousal period of about a year was fulfilled. Betrothal was more binding than typical engagements in our time. If there was immoral conduct, an engagement could only be broken by divorce. Before Joseph knew the nature of Mary's conception, he was minded, in fact, to divorce Mary (Matthew 1:19).

A visible manifestation of angels was rare even in Bible times, and so needless to say, when the angel appeared to Mary (verse 28) with a message from God she was startled. After all, as far as she knew, Mary was just ordinary Mary—one of hundreds of Jewish girls who was planning soon to get married. The angel greeted her with the words, "Rejoice, highly favored one"—a promise of special blessing because God had chosen her for a unique purpose.

In verses 30-31, the angel reiterated the words of verse 28. In essence, the angel said to Mary: "Do not be afraid; you have found favor with God; you will be with child and will give birth to a Son."

Mary was "troubled at his saying" (verse 29) because she could not understand what was taking place. In the verses that follow, the angel announced that God was choosing her to be the mother of the long-awaited Messiah. Mary was perplexed. How could she, an unwed virgin, become the mother of the promised King? Mary "considered" (kept on pondering) the words of the angel. In our age of rush and hurry, this is a quality that we should seek to cultivate.⁶

Verses 31-33 contain the announcement of the Incarnation—the fact that the eternal Son of God ("Son of the Highest") would become flesh. He would be conceived and born of a virgin. In this special person, deity and humanity would be joined as an inseparable union. His name shall be called "Jesus"—a word that means "Savior" or more literally, "Jehovah saves." Just as Joshua delivered Israel from the desert wanderings into the Promised Land, so Jesus leads people from their bondage in sin to a home in heaven.

The angel said further, he "will be great" (verse 32a).⁷ The greatness of Jesus is lifted up throughout the New Testament. We read further in verse 32 that "The Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David." Verse 33 says that "of His kingdom there will be no end."⁸ The Davidic Covenant in 2 Samuel 7:12-16 was a promise to David that God would "establish the throne of his kingdom forever." The concept is expressed also in Daniel 2:44.

The attributes of the Son promised to Mary were unmistakably descriptive of God's Messiah. "He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end" (verses 32-33).

This announcement must have been breathtaking to the young peasant girl, and yet this is clearly what the prophet Isaiah (chapter 9:6) had promised—One who would be called "Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" reigning forever.

Mary's reply to the angel's announcement was different from Zacharias' unbelief. Mary was not disbelieving. Her question to the angel in verse 34 (*How can this be?*) indicated acceptance, but she was perplexed. Her question was an expression of wonder and astonishment, not of doubt and disbelief. Mary is not saying, "It cannot be"—but she is

asking for an explanation of how it *can* and how it *will* be done. How could she bear a child when she never had sexual relations with a man? Mary's question is "How?" God's answer is "The Holy Spirit."

The Bible teaches that there is a transmission of the sin nature from one generation to the next (Romans 5:12). Obviously then, God's Son, if He were to be sinless—would have to be born some other way than by normal human generation. That "way" was accomplished by the virgin birth. God doesn't tell us *how* it all happened. But that it did happen—is a conviction we hold because of a personal faith, based on the truthfulness of Holy Scripture.

The angel responded to Mary's question by saying that the Holy Spirit would become the agent of conception, and "the power of the Highest will overshadow you" (verse 35). The word *overshadow* does not have sexual overtones. Instead, it is an expression indicating God's presence in a unique way. The word is used in Matthew 17 to describe the Transfiguration of Jesus. We are told that "a bright cloud" *overshadowed* Jesus and the apostles. The presence of God was evident in such an obvious way that Peter wanted to set up some tents and stay there! Through a mysterious action on the part of the Holy Spirit, Mary was told that the Most High would *overshadow* her,⁹ and the child which would be born should be "called the Son of God" (verse 35b). Any denial of the virgin birth weakens the reality of the incarnation.

In verses 36-37 the angel encouraged Mary with the information that Elizabeth in her old age was expecting a child. Mary's older relative who had been barren, was now already in the sixth month of her pregnancy. This should underscore for Mary the fact that with God nothing is impossible. Similar statements about the unlimited power of God are found in Genesis 18:14, Jeremiah 32:17, and Matthew 19:26.

The core of Mary's response to the announcement of the angel is contained in just nine words: "*Let it be to me according to your word.*" This was a humble statement of commitment to God. It was also a courageous expression of wholehearted surrender, and a profound act of submission to the will of God.

Mary knew that tongues would wag, and that her reputation would be damaged because she was not yet married. She was aware that when she returned to Nazareth and the people learned that this unmarried local girl comes down from the hills already three months pregnant, there would be a lot of gossip. She would have to do some explaining to Joseph. She would have to face the taunts of her neighbors. She knew her story would be questioned; even Joseph questioned it (Matthew 1:18-25).

In fact, all through her life, the birth of Mary's baby was occasionally recalled. The people never seemed to completely forget it. Thirty years later, the whole thing was thrown into Jesus' face. His enemies said, "We were not born of fornication" (John 8:41)—implying that Jesus was born illegitimately. Historians say that many stories circulated, claiming that Jesus was the illegitimate son of Mary. Mary knew that she would be exposed to painful criticism and to ridicule, but she left these concerns about her reputation in the hands of God. Mary's enthusiastic acceptance of God's will, in spite of the scandal she knew it would cause—stands in sharp contrast to the cynical laughter of Sarah in the Old

Testament. Each of us should be able to say like Mary, "Let it be to me according to your word."

4. Mary Visits Elizabeth (1:39-56)

Mary visited Elizabeth soon after she had been given the message by Gabriel. Mary left Nazareth and journeyed to the village located in southern Judea.

(1:39-45) Now Mary arose in those days and went into the hill country with haste, to a city of Judah, and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth. And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. Then she spoke out with a loud voice and said, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For indeed, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord."

The journey from Nazareth to Judea was not a simple drive to the next town, but a difficult journey into the "hill country" (verse 39) that took two or three days. It was a major trip for a young woman traveling alone on foot. Mary apparently left Galilee almost immediately and undertook the arduous journey in order to have a long talk with Elizabeth.

We don't know what thoughts went through Mary's mind as she walked the hills and valleys to the home of Zacharias and Elizabeth,¹⁰ but when she arrived at their home (verse 40) the meeting was a very dramatic experience. Mary warmly greeted Elizabeth and she was welcomed into the home. Most of us have discovered that it's a great blessing to have trusted friends with whom we can share our joys and sorrows.

Not only did Elizabeth respond to the greeting with a great outburst of joy, but the 6-month-old fetus that she was carrying "leaped in her womb" (verse 41). It is not unusual for an expectant mother to feel movement of the fetus, but Elizabeth *sensed that this leaping* was done "for joy" (verse 44). She was certain that the baby in Mary's womb was destined for a special work.

When Mary had received the announcement from the angel Gabriel, she was at first confused by the message that she would become the mother of a child, but when the angel explained that God had chosen her to be the mother of the Christ-child, and when Elizabeth warmly embraced her and spoke some genuinely loving words, Mary was exuberant and joyful. Both Mary and Elizabeth, when pondering the work that God was doing in their lives, broke forth in praise to God. Their words of praise resemble *the songs of praise* found in the Old Testament book of Psalms.

Our lesson text says (verse 42) that Elizabeth spoke out "with a loud voice" and said, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!" Her words were really an unction from God; verse 41b says she "was filled with the Holy Spirit." Elizabeth could have envied Mary, whose Son would be even greater than her own, but Elizabeth spoke with a complete lack of jealousy.

Elizabeth said that Mary was blessed among women (verse 42), in that she was given the privilege of bearing the Messiah, and she said, the "fruit of the womb" is blessed, in that He is the Lord and Savior for the human family.

Elizabeth correctly identified Mary's child as the Messiah (the Savior), and called Mary "the mother of my Lord" (verse 43).¹¹ Elizabeth was happy and excited about the nature of the child that Mary would bear. Elizabeth said that "the babe leaped in my womb for joy" (verse 44). This was clear evidence of pre-birth personhood. John the Baptist was already a person with a tiny body (perhaps 9 inches long and weighing 1/2 pound). If Elizabeth had gotten an abortion, it would have been John the Baptist who was killed! It is highly inconsistent for us to oppose taking human life in times of national warfare, and at the same time approve of abortions.

Elizabeth said to Mary, "Blessed is she who believed" (verse 45), for Mary believed that which had never happened before—a baby would be conceived without a human father. Elizabeth was likely contrasting Mary's faith with Zacharias' doubt. Elizabeth's husband doubted God's promise through the angel, and as a result, he was stricken with the inability to speak for a period of time! Zacharias and Elizabeth learned some lessons from that experience, and now Elizabeth encouraged Mary by saying that surely in light of her faith God will fulfill the promises made by the angel to her.

The exchange of conversation between Mary and Elizabeth must have been encouraging to both. Surely they prayed together. They talked about child-birth and newborn babies. They must have discussed what these miracle births would mean in the future.

(1:46-49) And Mary said: "My soul magnifies the Lord, And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant; For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed. For He who is mighty has done great things for me, And holy is His name. "

Mary responded to Gabriel's announcement with a moving song of praise.¹² The song starts out (verse 46) with the words, "My soul magnifies the Lord." To "magnify" means "to declare one great." The Latin word for "magnify" is "magnificat"—and as a result, the entire song of Mary is often called "The Magnificat."

In verse 47, Mary affirmed her lowly estate, her own sinfulness, and her need of salvation. Mary was reared in obscurity and grew up in the despised town of Nazareth. She recognized that although she was a virtuous young woman, she herself had sinned and was in need of a Savior. She was rejoicing "in God my Savior."

When Mary said (verse 48) that "all generations will call me blessed"—she was not expressing pride, but was simply recognizing and accepting the gift which God had given her—the privilege of being the mother of the Savior who would come. And then Mary exalted God's power and holiness and mercy. She says, "He who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is His name."

(1:50-56) "And His mercy is on those who fear Him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty. He has helped His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy, as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed forever." And Mary remained with her about three months, and returned to her house.

In the second stanza of her song, Mary included all of God's people who fear Him from generation to generation (verse 50), and exalted God's power and mercy.

Mary no doubt spoke in these verses from her memory of Old Testament history.¹³ She remembered how Israel's God had "scattered the proud" and "put down the mighty" (verses 51-52). She remembered what happened to the Canaanites, the Philistines, Haman, and Belshazzar. God has repeatedly punished arrogant people, dispersing them and sending them "away empty."

Mary remembered too how God had "exalted the lowly" (verse 52b). She remembered how He had exalted Joseph, Moses, Samuel, Esther, and Daniel. She also must have remembered God's tenderness toward the Ninevites, and especially the 120,000 children who could not discern between their right hand and their left hand (Jonah 4:11).

Mary further declared that "God filled the hungry with good things" (verse 53). God's care for the physically hungry can be seen in Psalm 37:25, where the Psalmist says, "I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging bread." God's care for the spiritually hungry can be seen in Matthew 5:6, where Jesus says that those who hunger and thirst for righteousness "shall be filled."

The Lord God of Israel scatters the proud, exalts the humble, and fills the hungry with good things.

In verses 54-55 Mary lifts up what God did for Israel. Over and over again, God had helped Israel when the nation was in distress. God's care for Israel is expressed in Isaiah 63:9: "In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the Angel of his Presence saved them." God had shown "strength with His arm" (verse 51) in repeatedly bringing deliverance to the people of Israel. The phrase "strength with His arm" is a metaphor describing God's omnipotent power. The phrase is used in Exodus 15:16 to describe God's bringing the Israelites out of Egypt through the Red Sea on dry ground. At the same time the Egyptians drowned in the Sea.

It is a healing experience to cultivate a thankful heart. After Mary learned about the birth of Jesus, she uttered some of the Bible's most beautiful words of praise. In light of all that our heavenly Father has done for us, we should follow Mary's example. When is the last time you praised someone you care about—especially a child or a spouse? Who have you recently given a heartfelt compliment? When have you lifted up your eyes, observed carefully what God has been doing, and let out a volley of praise to the Lord?

Verse 56 says that Mary stayed in the home of Zacharias and Elizabeth for "about three months." Then Mary departed and returned to her family in Nazareth just days before John the Baptist was born.

5. The Birth of John the Baptist (1:57-80)

Less than twelve months had passed since the time when the angel first appear to Zacharias, and now at the appointed time, Elizabeth gave birth to a son.

(1:57-66) Now Elizabeth's full time came for her to be delivered, and she brought forth a son. When her neighbors and relatives heard how the Lord had shown great mercy to her, they rejoiced with her. So it was, on the eighth day, that they came to circumcise the child;

and they would have called him by the name of his father, Zacharias. His mother answered and said, "No; he shall be called John." But they said to her, "There is no one among your relatives who is called by this name." So they made signs to his father—what he would have him called. And he asked for a writing tablet, and wrote, saying, "His name is John." So they all marveled. Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, praising God. Then fear came on all who dwelt around them; and all these sayings were discussed throughout all the hill country of Judea. And all those who heard them kept them in their hearts, saying, "What kind of child will this be?" And the hand of the Lord was with him.

Elizabeth gave birth to a son (verse 57), just as the angel had said (verse 13). When the neighbors and relatives heard that "the Lord had shown great mercy" to Elizabeth, they "rejoiced with her" (verse 58). Elizabeth, an older woman who had been childless all her life, had now given birth to a son. That was astounding news and was considered an act of God's great mercy. God had taken away Elizabeth's barrenness.¹⁴ This was cause for great rejoicing by the whole community.

On the eighth day when the child was circumcised (verse 59), everybody seemed to think the child would be named Zacharias (especially in light of the unusual circumstances of his birth), but both Elizabeth and Zacharias indicated that his name would be *John*. Gabriel had already given that name at the time of his visit to Zacharias.

At that point Zacharias was able to speak again. There was an immediate awe that came upon the people (verse 65). The refusal of the parents to name the child for his father, and the miraculous loosing of Zacharias' tongue, indicated that this was no ordinary child. The neighbors and relatives wondered what kind of child this will be (verse 66).

(1:67-80) Now his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying: "Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited and redeemed His people, and has raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of His servant David, as He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, who have been since the world began, that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us, to perform the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember His holy covenant, the oath which He swore to our father Abraham: to grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life. And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest; for you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, to give knowledge of salvation to His people by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God, with which the Dayspring from on high has visited us; to give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace." So the child grew and became strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his manifestation to Israel.

Now that Zacharias had recovered his speech, he burst into a song of praise to God.¹⁵ The prophecy is divided into two parts. The first part is the section from verses 68-75. The second part is included in verses 76-79.

The first section speaks of the salvation which is about to appear in the person of the Messiah (Mary's son), and indicates that God has once again "visited and redeemed His people" (verse 68). The redemption is defined as "a horn of salvation" (verse 69)—a figure of speech¹⁶ found in 2 Samuel 22:3 as a symbol of power, indicating that Messiah would

be a powerful Savior. Salvation was to come through the house of David, and the Messiah would deliver Israel from their enemies (verses 71, 74). The Lord's spokesmen from Old Testament times had assured Israel that God would give them victory over all who opposed them as they followed God's leadership down through the years (verses 70-71). Man's greatest enemies are sin and Satan. The promise, however, may have had some political implications.

The second section of the Benedictus *relates to the son of Zacharias and Elizabeth*. John was to be called the "prophet of the Highest" and was to prepare the way for the Lord (verse 76). That preparation would involve proclaiming a message of forgiveness (verse 77), the spreading of light to those living in spiritual darkness (verse 79a), and guiding people into the ways of peace (verse 79b).

God in His mercy is sending the human family "the Dayspring from on high" to visit us (verse 78). For a long time, God's people had lived in darkness—under the domination of foreign governments, and under the weight of their own sins. Now, Zacharias, under the influence of the Holy Spirit (verse 67), declares that a new day is dawning. The Messianic Age for which Israel had so long prayed was about to be established. *The coming of the Redeemer would be like the sun coming at dawn*. We today continue to be beneficiaries of God's "sun" shining on us in this age of grace.

As is true of Jesus, practically nothing is known of John's boyhood. The only reference anywhere in the Bible to the boyhood and growth of John the Baptist is found in Luke 1:80. John was continuing to grow and to become "strong in spirit." John lived in the desert, while at approximately the same time Jesus was most likely serving as an apprentice in Joseph's carpenter shop.

The four Gospel accounts are unanimous in reporting that John lived "in the wilderness." It was there that he was called by God (Luke 3:2), and there he preached (Mark 1:4), and it was in the wilderness that he probably died. John's influence continued to live on after his death. When the Apostle Paul went to Ephesus nearly 30 years later, he found a group of John's disciples (Acts 19:1-7). Jesus said of John, "Among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist" (Matthew 11:11).

2. THE BIRTH AND BOYHOOD OF JESUS

Luke 2:1-52

The coming of Jesus into the world is truly worth taking time to celebrate. But Christians do not remember the Advent of Christ without thinking seriously about the death and resurrection of our Lord. At Christmas-time, we already begin to think about Easter. We must always remember that it is the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ that makes His *birth* so special to believers.

Surely at the Christmas season of the year we need to praise God for the fact that Jesus is "the Dayspring from on high" (Luke 1:78), who has come to give light to those who sit in darkness, and to guide our feet in the way of peace.

Most of us who are at least 40 years of age will never forget the time when men first set foot on the moon—but that achievement in 1969 was not nearly as great as the wonderful event in history when God in human flesh set foot upon the earth. Our world *has never been the same* since Jesus came. He has changed more than just our calendar. He continues to change individuals who come to Him in faith and obedience.

1. The Birth of Jesus in Bethlehem (2:1-7)

Luke provides more details about the birth of Jesus than any of the other Gospel writers do. Many of the readings commonly used at Christmas time are taken from Luke's account. It is always good to take a fresh look at this very familiar story.

(2:1-7) And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city. Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child. So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

Caesar Augustus was the ruler of the great Roman Empire. He had reigned as an absolute monarch for more than forty years, and maintained a high degree of order and peace. This helped to prepare the way for the rapid spread of Christianity. Augustus (near the time of Jesus' birth) decreed that a census should be taken for the purposes of taxation.

Each citizen was to report to the town of his ancestral heritage for the registration. Joseph and Mary were already husband and wife (Matthew 1:24), but since they did not consummate the marriage until after Jesus was born (Matthew 1:25), Mary is called his "betrothed wife." They were law-abiding citizens, and so together they went to Bethlehem—even though the time for the arrival of Mary's child was drawing near.

Seven hundred years earlier, God had spoken through the prophet Micah, and named the town where Jesus would be born (Micah 5:2). The omnipotent God had chosen Bethlehem to be the place of the Messiah's birth, and now God overruled events, so as to make the decree of a heathen emperor fulfill His promise, and carry out His word. Thus, by the will of God, Joseph and Mary came to Bethlehem.

When they arrived in Bethlehem, the town lodging places were filled (verse 7b), and so Joseph and Mary were directed to a stable among cattle. This was not like a cattle barn as most of us would think of it today, but was much more likely a cave cut into the limestone rock.

The phrase "no room for them in the inn" sometimes is taken to have been a hardship for Joseph and Mary, but actually the animal heat in the stable made it safer for both mother and child, than it would have been in the cold room of a Palestinian inn.

The great spiritual lesson drawn from the phrase ("no room for them in the inn") is this: What the Judean innkeeper did 2000 years ago is what many do today—they refuse to make room in their daily lives for the Son of God.

2. The Announcement to the Shepherds (2:8-20)

The night Jesus was born, shepherds were keeping watch over their flocks out in the fields.¹⁷ Some say the events of this chapter could not have taken place in the month of December, but scholarly studies make it clear that indeed shepherds did pasture their flocks in the winter. The Mediterranean climate of the Mideast does not produce winters such as many are familiar with. In Old Testament times Jacob complained about the frost by night while tending his flocks (Genesis 31:40).

a. The disclosure to the shepherds (2:8-14)

(2:8-14) Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!"

The angel who appeared with a message for the shepherds undoubtedly looked like the young man in white apparel described in Mark 16:5. The phrase "the glory of the Lord" suggests a cloud of amazing brightness. The brilliant light was likely the same heavenly light that led the Children of Israel through the wilderness, the same glory that shone around Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration, and the same light that blinded the eyes of Saul on the Damascus Road.

The angel said to the shepherds, "I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people" (verse 10). These words quieted the shepherds' fears, and then the angel made the greatest announcement ever heard on earth: "*There is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord*" (verse 11).

That message was "good news" (the gospel)—the beautiful message declaring that the Messiah's coming (and later, His death) provides for eternal salvation from sin. And this message is "to all people." All persons among every tribe and nation are invited to come to the Savior and find pardon and forgiveness and hope!

The word *Savior* means "deliverer"—the One who provides salvation for all human beings who are willing to embrace Him by faith, delivering them from the penalty of sin when they claim Him as their Redeemer. The word *Christ* is the equivalent of the Hebrew "Messiah." Jesus came as the Messiah promised in the Old Testament. The word *Lord* means "the One who is sovereign." He who came as the Messiah of Israel and Savior of the world, is the Lord of all. When we address Jesus Christ as "Lord"—it means that we are not our own boss anymore. We are now willing servants dedicated to doing our best to follow Christ as our Master.

Verse 12 says that God chose to come to earth in the frail body of a little child. The shepherds were given a sign, so that they could find Him. The baby would be "wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger." The word "swaddling" (Greek *spargano*) means "to swathe"—to snugly wrap in long strips of cloth to protect the baby's extremities. The manger, and the wrappings, would be a distinctive sign.

When God decided to draw near to cold, cruel, suffering humanity, He placed a baby in a manger. The quickest way to the human heart is by way of an innocent little child. When shopping at the grocery store, or visiting a home for the aging, a little baby will bring smiles and pleasant greetings.¹⁸

In verse 10, the angel who made the announcement about the "good tidings of great joy" was later joined by a chorus of angels who praised God for the "peace and good-will" that He is able to bring (verse 14). That phrase is best understood as given in those translations which say, "Peace among men with whom He is well pleased." The peace which the angels spoke about is not for everyone. It is for those with whom God is well pleased. Isaiah 26:3 says, "You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You." The hearts of the unsaved are always restless, like the troubled sea—but in Christ there is a calm that is hard to describe. Christ is the true Prince of Peace. He came to bring peace to human hearts, and He is the only hope for world peace. World peace will only come when Jesus reigns "from sea to (shining) sea" (Zechariah 9:10).

b. The visit made by the shepherds (2:15-20)

(2:15-20) So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, "Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us." And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger. Now when they had seen Him, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child. And all those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them.

There was not a shadow of doubt in the shepherds' minds that what they had been told, had indeed "come to pass." When the light disappeared, and the angels departed, and

night once more settled over the Judean hills—the shepherds set out, not to see *if* this thing had come to pass, but to "see this thing *that has come to pass*" (verse 15).

The shepherds "came with haste" (verse 16) and found Mary and Joseph and the Babe lying in a manger. This is the first picture of the Holy Family. It was a humble scene. It is interesting to note that often today the Savior is found by the poor, the humble, and the unlearned—while sometimes the rich, the intellectuals, and the elite are unaware of His gracious Presence.

The shepherds "made widely known" (verse 17) what they had heard and learned about the Christ child. The shepherds thus became the first evangelists of the new age of grace. Those who heard the message spread abroad by the shepherds, *marveled* (verse 18) at those things which were told them. Wherever the shepherds told their wondrous story, they left their hearers in deep thought.

Mary knew more about her Child than any other person (verse 19), but there were many things she still did not understand. Yet those things did not stagger her faith. She simply stored them up as precious memories, and from time to time pondered what they might mean.

Verse 20 says that "the shepherds returned...praising God." Meanwhile, the hundreds of rioting, laughing, cursing visitors to Bethlehem were unaware of what had taken place.

3. The Presentation at the Temple (2:21-39)

On the day that Joseph and Mary entered the Temple with the infant Jesus, there were two faithful saints of God who paid particular attention, and knew for sure that the wait for a Messiah was over. One was a devout older man named Simeon. The other was Anna the prophetess, one of the faithful remnant in Israel who was waiting also for the advent of the Messiah.

a. Jesus was presented in the Temple (2:21-24)

(2:21-24) And when eight days were completed for the circumcision of the Child, His name was called JESUS, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb. Now when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every male who opens the womb shall be called holy to the LORD"), and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, "A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons."

Luke tells in this section about two older persons who encountered the infant Jesus when Joseph and Mary brought Him to the Temple to care for purification rites.

There were three different rituals connected with the birth of Jesus: a) *The circumcision of Jesus*—took place when He was 8 days old (verse 21). b) *The purification of Mary*—took place when Jesus was 40 days old (verses 22a, 24). c) *The dedication of Jesus*—took place at the Temple in Jerusalem, also 40 days after Jesus' birth (verses 22b, 23).

Since Jesus was born without sin, these rites were not necessary for Him. But Joseph and Mary aimed to live in perfect submission to the plan of God. They observed the Old Testament purification rites for a male child, and for a woman following the birth of a child

(Leviticus 12:2-4). They were careful to show that Jesus was brought up in strict accordance with Jewish law. Jesus came from a family that sought to honor the Lord.

Ordinarily parents were to bring a lamb for a burnt offering, *and* a young pigeon—but in the case of the poor, they were permitted to bring a pair of doves or two young pigeons. The fact that Mary did not bring a lamb, but only two young pigeons (verse 24), is a reflection of the poverty into which Jesus was born.

b. The prophecy of Simeon (2:25-35)

(2:25-35) And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. So he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said: "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word; for my eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel." And Joseph and His mother marveled at those things which were spoken of Him. Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, "Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against (yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."

The Holy Spirit revealed to Simeon that before he died, he would see the Christ (verse 26).

Not much is known about Simeon. He likely was (in Israel) what we would call a "lay person." He was a "just and devout" man—that is, in conduct he was respectful toward other human beings, and he was reverent toward God.¹⁹

Simeon was just one of the many persons who looked for "the Consolation of Israel" (verse 25). That term was a name applied by the Jews to the Messiah. Simeon eagerly expected the Messiah to come and rescue his people. He knew the promise of Isaiah²⁰ about the Messianic kingdom when God would "comfort" His people.

Simeon sensed a divine impulse to go to the Temple at a precise day and hour—the very time when Joseph and Mary brought Jesus to the Temple. (The word "parents" in verse 27 is not a denial of the Virgin Birth. It simply acknowledges *that in a legal sense* Joseph and Mary were considered the parents of Jesus.)

When Simeon saw the baby Jesus, he took Him up in his arms and "blessed God" (verse 28). Simeon sensed that this very child was the Messiah. It was then that Simeon offered praise to God, in a song which is often known as the "Nunc Dimittis" (a Latin term which means "now you are dismissing"). Simeon's words were, "Now You are letting Your servant depart in peace" (verse 29). The word translated "depart" literally means "release." Simeon, now that he saw the Messiah, is asking to be relieved of his earthly duty and to be released from the heavy burdens of life.

In his song of praise, Simeon said further, "For my eyes have seen Your salvation" (verse 30). Simeon's *physical eyes* saw only a helpless Baby, but his *prophetic insight* saw the salvation which was potentially available for all.²¹

The salvation which Jesus would bring is two-fold:

1. *Salvation is a light*—the Gentiles living in darkness and ignorance needed the light of truth. Jesus revealed the true knowledge of God to the Gentiles. Without Him, they did not know the way to eternal life. They worshiped the works of their own hands.
2. *Salvation is a glory*—the Jews living under bondage to the pagan Romans needed glory. Jesus was a source of glory for the people of Israel. They had the patriarchs and covenants and promises, but under Roman rule it seemed as if they may have been forgotten.

Verse 33 says that Joseph and Mary "marveled at those things which were spoken of Him." Joseph and Mary knew that what Simeon had said about Jesus was true, but they marveled that these truths should come from a stranger, and that they were given under such unusual circumstances.

After Simeon had uttered his song of praise, he said to Mary, "This Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel" (verse 34). The attitudes people show toward *Jesus*, and the response they give *to Him*, will decide their eternal destiny.²²

Simeon spoke additional words. He said that Jesus was a "sign which will be spoken against" (verse 34b).²³ He said to Mary, "A sword will pierce through your own soul also" (verse 35). Sorrow as well as joy is to come to Mary through her relation with this unusual Child. Simeon looked across the decades of time, and pictured Jesus hanging on the cross, dying for the sins of the people. The "sword" which Mary will experience, is the pain of seeing her Son die. Simeon described the grief that would flood Mary's heart when she witnesses the crucifixion of her Son (John 19:25).

Simeon's prophecy concluded by declaring that "the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed" (verse 35b). Some will accept and others will reject Christ—and the way a person responds to the Savior is a test of the person's inward motives and affections.

Anna and the Christ Child (2:36-39)

(2:36-39) Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; and this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. And coming in that instant she gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem. So when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own city, Nazareth.

We learn Anna's father's name, the tribe to which she belonged, and her age.²⁴ Anna was a widow; she was married only seven years when her husband died. The mention of her lineage indicates that she came from a family of some distinction. She was living in Jerusalem at the time of Jesus' birth, and was in the Temple courtyards day and night

worshiping God through fasting and prayer. She was longing for the redemption promised through the Messiah.²⁵

Anna was faithful in interceding for others. Her great age did not deter her from serving the Lord. In fact, verse 38 indicates that she was an evangelist, in that she spoke of the Christ Child to "all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem." She told all who would listen that the Messiah had come. Their looking for the Christ was over!

After caring for the customary services related to child birth, Joseph and Mary returned to Nazareth where Jesus was to live until He began His public ministry at the age of thirty.

4. The Childhood Years of Jesus (2:40-52)

Luke does not record the flight of Joseph and Mary and Jesus to Egypt to escape the wrath of Herod the Great,²⁶ but he does give information about the childhood of Jesus.

(2:40-52) And the Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him. His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast. When they had finished the days, as they returned, the Boy Jesus lingered behind in Jerusalem. And Joseph and His mother did not know it; but supposing Him to have been in the company, they went a day's journey, and sought Him among their relatives and acquaintances. So when they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking Him. Now so it was that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers. So when they saw Him, they were amazed; and His mother said to Him, "Son, why have You done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously." And He said to them, "Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" But they did not understand the statement which He spoke to them. Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them, but His mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

Verse 40 speaks of Jesus' *physical* growth, His *mental* achievement, and His *spiritual* discernment. At age twelve, a Jewish boy was counted as a man. Verses 41-42 explain that Joseph and Mary attended the Feast of the Passover each year in Jerusalem, and when Jesus was twelve years old, He had accompanied them to the Passover event.

When the festival had ended, the caravan of family and neighbors started the return to Galilee (verse 43). They assumed that Jesus was with the other children, but when they camped in family groups, Jesus was missing (verses 44-45). Joseph and Mary returned to Jerusalem and found Him in the Temple, among the teachers of the Law who were amazed at His understanding and questions (verses 46-47).

When Jesus' mother wondered why He had stayed behind, He responded with two questions: "Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" (verse 49).²⁷ Even at age twelve, Jesus had an awareness of His role as Savior. Joseph and Mary at that time could not grasp the full import of Jesus' words (verse 50).

Jesus returned to Nazareth with Joseph and Mary and lived under their authority (verse 51) for another 18 years. The earlier statement given in verse 40 is basically repeated again in verse 52.²⁸ Jesus was unique, but He had a normal childhood and youth.

3. THE PREPARATION FOR JESUS' MINISTRY

Luke 3:1—4:13

Eighteen years have elapsed since the final words of Luke's second chapter. The curtain is lifted again and it rises on a stirring scene. A great prophet has appeared, and people from all over Judea had gone to the scene of his ministry.

1. The Ministry of John the Baptist (3:1-20)

Luke shows how John the Baptist preached with an urgent call to sincere conversion, as he prepared the nation for the coming of the Messiah.

a. The primary message of John the Baptist (3:1-6)

(3:1-6) Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, while Annas and Caiaphas were high priests, the word of God came to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. And he went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, saying: "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the LORD; make His paths straight. Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill brought low; the crooked places shall be made straight and the rough ways smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God."

God has been doing His work in the midst of human history. Luke dates the time of John's ministry by naming the political and religious leaders who were in power. Tiberias Caesar and Pontius Pilate were civil rulers, and Annas and Caiaphas were the Jewish high priests.

John's emphasis in preaching was on "a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins" (verse 3). Repentance today is commonly defined as simply "being sorry," but the Greek verb literally means "to change one's mind." Thus repentance means *knowing* one's sins, *mourning* over them, *abhorring* them, and *forsaking* them. Repentance is a genuine sorrow for sin, and an earnest resolution to break with the evil past. Repentance means a renunciation of sin and a firm commitment to follow Christ.

John proclaimed the truth that unless people repent and renounce their wicked ways, their sins will not be forgiven. If there are sins for which one refuses to repent—even less obvious sins like *unbelief*, *negative attitudes*, or *a self-centered spirit*—there is no promise of remission.

All believers need to examine their lives. Those who take a close look will likely find areas where repentance is needed, and where behavior needs to be changed. Repentance is not only for hardened sinners. Jesus said to *the church* at Ephesus that they need to repent (Revelation 2:5).

When John called people to repentance, he could well have been thinking of the words found in Isaiah 55:7, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his

thoughts; let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon."

In verses 4-6, John the Baptist quotes from Isaiah 40. Isaiah's language describes what happened when a king prepared for a journey. Workers in advance would make sure that the road on which the king would travel was smooth and safe. John saw himself as engaged in a similar task on behalf of the Messiah. John prepared the way for the coming of Jesus; he encouraged his hearers to clear away any obstacles in their thinking and living that could cause them to miss "the salvation of God" (verse 6).

b. The fearlessness of John's preaching (3:7-9)

(3:7-9) Then he said to the multitudes that came out to be baptized by him, "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."

John proclaimed his message with great courage. Genuine preaching is intended to be a *lively presentation* of truth. It is not to be a dry mouthing of words.

Calling people "a brood of vipers" seems like harsh language, but John knew that many of those who came for baptism were insincere. He knew the depravity and hypocrisy of human nature, and was quick to remind his listeners of "the wrath to come." Judgment is coming for those who die in their sins. This life is not all there is! The subject of judgment has always been offensive to the unsaved, but John did not remain silent.²⁹

We could use more plain-speaking preachers like John the Baptist in our day. We need preachers *who do not have a fear of giving offense*, but who, at the same time, *know how to guard against crude uncharitable language*.

John called upon people to "bear fruits worthy of repentance" (verse 8). Genuine repentance is always accompanied by fruit bearing. The mere desire to be baptized—as if baptism were some kind of wonder-working charm—will be of no lasting value unless there is an inward change that expresses itself outwardly in conduct that glorifies God.³⁰

John could sense the reaction of many who heard him speak. Some were (without doubt) saying, "We have Abraham as our father" (verse 8b). We don't need to repent. We are Abraham's children. We are the elect people of God. We are not Gentiles and sinners who need repentance.

John's answer to such thinking was brief and to the point. He said that our God (who made Adam out of the dust of the ground), could make children of Abraham *out of the stones lying on the desert sand*. The point is this: Any connections we have with other godly people in the past (or in the present) cannot save our souls.

When John says "the ax is laid to the root of the trees" (verse 9), he is saying that God's judgment is at hand; the ax is ready to hew down one tree after another. At any moment judgment may fall, and trees that are not producing fruit will be "cut down and thrown into

the fire." The word is "gehenna"—the fires of Hell. This is a picture of God's final outpouring of wrath upon the wicked.

c. Questions asked by specific groups (3:10-14)

(3:10-14) So the people asked him, saying, "What shall we do then?" He answered and said to them, "He who has two tunics, let him give to him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise." Then tax collectors also came to be baptized, and said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Collect no more than what is appointed for you." Likewise the soldiers asked him, saying, "And what shall we do?" So he said to them, "Do not intimidate anyone or accuse falsely, and be content with your wages."

The *common people* who had gathered to hear John preach asked what they needed to do in order to demonstrate the reality of their repentance (verse 10). John's answer (verse 11) was stated as a universal principle. They were to love their neighbors as themselves by sharing their clothing and food with the poor. Loving neighbors means having cordial words for them when we see them; it includes welcoming them into our homes, being willing to lend them a lawn mower or a pound of butter; and being available to lend them a hand when an emergency arises. We are to be charitable and to demonstrate brotherly love, especially toward those who are less fortunate in life.

The *tax collectors* (sometimes called "publicans") came to be baptized, and they likewise wondered what God required of *them* (verse 12). Tax collectors were generally disliked by the people for several reasons.³¹ John's response to the tax collectors (verse 13) was a call for personal honesty and common charity toward others. The publicans were to collect no more than the amount prescribed for them by the government (verse 13).

The *soldiers* also wanted to know what was required of *them*.³² These were the Roman troops sent to Palestine to keep the peace. They often oppressed the poor and used their power to take advantage of people. John's response to the soldiers was that they should do violence to no man nor accuse any falsely; also, they should be content with their wages. Those who repent and change their ways discover that contentment is one of the fruits of repentance.

God's purposes are accomplished in this world by transforming the hearts of individuals who make up society. There are sins, *other than* those mentioned in this passage with which we must sometimes deal. We must seek to be aware of our besetting sins, and wage war against them. One of the requirements for salvation is repentance, and true repentance is always accompanied by fruit-bearing.

d. The discussion about John's identity (3:15-20)

(3:15-20) Now as the people were in expectation, and all reasoned in their hearts about John, whether he was the Christ or not, John answered, saying to all, "I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather the wheat into His barn; but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire." And with many other exhortations he preached to the people. But Herod the tetrarch, being rebuked by him concerning Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done, also added this, above all, that he shut John up in prison.

In John's day there was a strange feeling of expectation throughout the land of Palestine. People sensed that some-thing momentous was about to happen. Some were "reasoning" (verse 15), debating in their minds about whether John the Baptist might be the Christ. When they questioned him, he told them that the Christ was indeed coming, but that he himself was not worthy to be compared to the Messiah.

John refused the honor that some of the people were about to give him, and pointed them to the Christ who was about to appear. A true preacher of the gospel (like John the Baptist) will seek to put Christ first, and like Paul, will say, "We do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake" (2 Corinthians 4:5). John's baptism "with water" (verse 16) was an outward ceremony symbolizing cleansing from sin; when the Messiah comes, His baptism will be "with the Holy Spirit and fire."

The baptism "*with the Holy Spirit*" is a quiet act of God by which the person who believes the gospel and repents of sin is mysteriously united into the one mystical body of Christ. Spirit baptism officially began on the Day of Pentecost and is repeated at the conversion of each new believer.

The baptism "*with fire*" may very well refer to the fires of final judgment, but it can also refer to the fire of the Holy Spirit which consumes more and more of that which is carnal within. The Spirit operates like fire to purge the chaff, to cleanse daily defilement, and to give the regenerated person new power to do God's will.

The picture of "the winnowing fan is in His hand" (verse 17), is that of the farmer who throws the threshed wheat into the air with a large wooden fork. The breeze blows the chaff away and the heavier grain falls on the ground. Just as the farmer gathers the wheat and stores it in his barn, so Jesus will someday come and "gather the wheat into His barn;" and just as the chaff was burned with "unquenchable fire," so those who die in their sins will suffer everlasting punishment.

The farmer has many disappointments. He plants the crops—but sometimes the summer is dry, the days are hot, the work is hard, and the bugs are plentiful—yet harvest time is always a time of rejoicing and gladness. Just so, the Christian life has its struggles, but at harvest time God's people will be gathered to a place of safety and eternal happiness. The Lord will "gather the wheat into His barn."

It is a beautiful thought (verse 17) that today we are together for a brief time; then death will come, and tomorrow we shall be separated for a brief time; but in the great eternity, we shall be reunited forever.

Verses 19-20 serve as a kind of summary of John's ministry, and of his destiny at the hands of Herod Antipas. Verse 19 is a preview of John's arrest, imprisonment, and execution. The details surrounding John's death are taken up in Luke 9:7-9 and Matthew 14:1-12.³³

2. The Baptism of Jesus (3:21-22)

Luke gives only a brief report on the baptism of Jesus; additional details are given in the other Gospel accounts.

(3:21-22) When all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also was baptized; and while He prayed, the heaven was opened. And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice...from heaven...said, "You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased."

When Jesus requested baptism,³⁴ John sensed his own sinfulness, and objected on the basis that it would be more fitting for Jesus to baptize *him* (Matthew 3:13-14).

There are at least three reasons why Jesus asked for baptism: a) His baptism gave approval to John's baptism; b) it identified Jesus with human beings; 3) it became an example for His followers to observe.

On the occasion of Christ's baptism, all three persons of the Holy Trinity manifested themselves. All four Gospels report that the Holy Spirit descended as a dove, but only Luke tells us that He came "in bodily form" (verse 22). This event marked the beginning of the public ministry of Jesus.

3. The Genealogy of Jesus (3:23-38)

At this point Luke speaks about Jesus' age, and then gives His genealogy, tracing it back through Mary and David to Adam. Christ *as man* is related through Adam to the entire human race. Matthew traces the lineage to Abraham through David's son (Solomon). Luke traces the lineage to Abraham through David's son (Nathan).

(3:23-38) Now Jesus Himself began His ministry at about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, the son of Heli, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Melchi, the son of Janna, the son of Joseph, the son of Mattathiah, the son of Amos, the son of Nahum, the son of Esli, the son of Naggai, the son of Maath, the son of Mattathiah, the son of Semei, the son of Joseph, the son of Judah, the son of Joannas, the son of Rhesa, the son of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, the son of Neri, the son of Melchi, the son of Addi, the son of Cosam, the son of Elmodam, the son of Er, the son of Jose, the son of Eliezer, the son of Jorim, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Simeon, the son of Judah, the son of Joseph, the son of Jonan, the son of Eliakim, the son of Melea, the son of Menan, the son of Mattathah, the son of Nathan, the son of David, the son of Jesse, the son of Obed, the son of Boaz, the son of Salmon, the son of Nahshon, the son of Amminadab, the son of Ram, the son of Hezron, the son of Perez, the son of Judah, the son of Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham, the son of Terah, the son of Nahor, the son of Serug, the son of Reu, the son of Peleg, the son of Eber, the son of Shelah, the son of Cainan, the son of Arphaxad, the son of Shem, the son of Noah, the son of Lamech, the son of Methuselah, the son of Enoch, the son of Jared, the son of Mahalalel, the son of Cainan, the son of Enos, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.

Matthew presents Jesus as the Jewish Messiah and traces His ancestry from Abraham and David. Luke traces His ancestry back to Adam, the common ancestor of the human race. Matthew traces the line through *Joseph*; Luke traces the heritage through *Mary*. The phrase "son of Heli" (verse 23b) may be translated from the Greek as "son" or "son-in-law" of Heli—and thus most Bible students believe that Heli was Mary's father, and Joseph's father-in-law.³⁵ This would mean that Luke's account gives *Mary's* ancestry.

For Luke to trace Mary's genealogy is appropriate, for he shows throughout his Gospel account, an interest in the women who followed Jesus.

4. The Wilderness Temptation of Jesus (4:1-13)

Soon after Jesus was baptized, and a voice from heaven said, "This is My beloved Son; in whom I am well pleased"—Satan came on the scene and tempted Jesus. Often our greatest hours of *triumph* are followed by our strongest times of *trial*. So it was with Jesus, and so it will be with us.

(Luke 4:1-13) Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being tempted for forty days by the devil. And in those days He ate nothing, and afterward, when they had ended, He was hungry. And the devil said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread." But Jesus answered him, saying, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.'" Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to Him, "All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours." And Jesus answered and said to him, "Get behind Me, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.'" Then he brought Him to Jerusalem, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here. For it is written: 'He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you,' and, 'In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone.'" And Jesus answered and said to him, "It has been said, 'You shall not tempt the LORD your God.'" Now when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time.

Jesus was led into the wilderness for testing. Just as God permitted the devil to test Job, so the Spirit allowed Satan to test Jesus and thus prove the strength of His character. Jesus was tempted so that every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth, would know that He is the victorious Conqueror.³⁶

Note that Satan tempted Jesus on three levels.

1. *Satan tempted Jesus at the physical level (verses 3-4).* Satan waited until Jesus was hungry, and then said, "Turn these stones into bread; use your powers to meet the material needs of people, and they will serve you." Jesus could have issued a single word and the stones of the desert would have turned into bread. But Jesus said, "Man shall not live by bread alone" (Deuteronomy 8:3). There are more important things in life than satisfying bodily appetites.
2. *Satan tempted Jesus at the power level (verses 5-8).* If Jesus would bow down and worship Satan, He could enjoy glory without enduring suffering. Satan *does hold* a limited sway over the kingdoms of this world. He is, for example, "the god of this age" (2 Corinthians 4:4), and the "prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2). The devil was saying, "Use your divine powers by worshiping me, and win the world by a method other than suffering on the Cross." But Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 6:13.
3. *Satan tempted Jesus at the spectacular level (verses 9-12).* Satan took Jesus to the pinnacle of the Temple (500 feet above the Kidron Valley) and said, "God promised to take care of you" (likely from Psalm 91:11-12). Satan was saying, "If you really believe the Scriptures, then jump!" Jesus could have dazzled the senses

of the crowd by descending through the air unharmed, and the people would have raved over Him. Satan was saying, "Use your divine powers to become a wonder worker, and in that way you can attract people to you." Jesus replied by quoting Deuteronomy 6:16, "You shall not tempt the Lord your God."

Jesus was victorious over the snares of the devil. The devil departed, but only "for a season" (verse 13, KJV). That is, Satan did not cease to tempt Jesus. Not too many months later, through the disciple Peter, *Satan again tempted Jesus* to abandon the cross (Matthew 16:21-23). One victory over the devil never guarantees freedom from further temptation. It seems that each victory one experiences makes Satan try harder to bring defeat into his life.

Luke interrupted the narrative (in 3:23-38) to give the genealogy of Jesus, reminding us that Jesus (the Son of God) was also the Son of Man, and thus He identifies with the temptations, needs, and problems of mankind.

4. THE EARLY GALILEAN MINISTRY

Luke 4:14-44

After Jesus defeated Satan, He was ready to begin His ministry. Jesus left Judea in the south, where He had been tempted by the devil, met some men who later became His disciples, and counseled with Nicodemus—and came north to His home region of Galilee. Jesus became well known in Galilee as He was teaching in the synagogues.

A number of months likely elapsed between verse 13 and verse 14 of Luke 4. Matthew, Mark, and Luke do not tell about the earlier public ministry of Jesus in the Jerusalem area. That information is found in the first chapters of the Gospel according to John.

1. The Beginning in Galilee (4:14-15)

After His ministry in Judea, Jesus returned to Galilee and was empowered by the Spirit as He went about teaching in the synagogues of the region.

(4:14-15) Then Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and news of Him went out through all the surrounding region. And He taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all.

The report of Jesus' work and teaching went out through the entire surrounding region. The ministry of Jesus was gaining the attention of people far and wide. The words "glorified by all" mean that everyone praised Him.

2. Jesus Rejected at Nazareth (4:16-30)

One of Jesus' first ministries in Galilee took place in His home town of Nazareth, where He had gone to worship in the synagogue. The people in Nazareth were curious about this hometown boy.³⁷

a. The scene in the synagogue (4:16-17)

(4:16-17) So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written:

Jesus had gone to the synagogue "as His custom was." Jesus attended worship services on a regular basis. Though He was the perfect Son of God, and the local synagogue was far from perfect—Jesus gathered with other people of faith. Our Lord's example underscores for us how important it is *to make regular worship* a part of our lives—even if we need to worship with imperfect people.

Jesus met with God's people, and was part of the worshiping assembly. Those who attended the synagogue were relatives, friends, and townspeople who knew Jesus. When the ruler of the synagogue invited Him to address the congregation, Jesus availed Himself of the opportunity.

b. The sermon that was proclaimed (4:18-24)

(4:18-24) "The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD." Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." So all bore witness to Him, and marveled at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth. And they said, "Is this not Joseph's son?" He said to them, "You will surely say this proverb to Me, 'Physician, heal yourself! Whatever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in Your country.'" Then He said, "Assuredly, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own country."

Each Sabbath a portion of Scripture was read from the law, and another portion from the prophets. On this day, the Lord Jesus took the scroll and read from the prophet Isaiah. He read verses 1 and 2 from Isaiah 61—but we notice that Jesus *did not read all of verse 2*. He stopped at a comma in the middle of the verse. Isaiah 61:2 says that the Messiah will "proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, *and the day of (the) vengeance of our God.*" Jesus concluded by saying, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing" (verse 21). Jesus was saying that He is the very Messiah foretold in the Isaiah 61 passage—but at His first coming the latter part of Isaiah 61:2 (about the vengeance of God) was not fulfilled, *and so that part of the text was not read.*

Verses 18-19 are a description of the mission of Jesus. The Jews had hoped that the major function of the Messiah would be to deliver the nation Israel from the hated Romans. But our Lord's purpose was not deliverance from the rule of Rome; He came rather to deliver from the power of the devil.

It is not certain whether the mission described in Isaiah's prophecy should be interpreted in *literal* terms, or in a *spiritual* sense. Surely, material poverty and physical blindness and unjust imprisonment—are conditions that should incite us to help bring relief for people who suffer in those ways—but deliverance from such circumstances is not the "salvation" for which Christ died and rose again.³⁸ The salvation that Jesus came to bring *is more than* deliverance from economic and political oppression. Verse 18 is God's assessment of human need. We are poor because sin *impoverishes* us; we cannot see because sin *blinds* us; and we are bound because sin *enslaves* us.

Jesus came "to preach the gospel to the poor" (verse 18a). We think of the "poor" as those who have little money and few possessions, but the primary reference is to being "poor in spirit." Sin makes us spiritually blind, so that we lose the power of clear judgment. The reference is not merely to those who have *little of this world's material goods*, but to those who sense *their utter helplessness without God*, and see themselves as sinners, not worthy of salvation. The "poor" are the spiritually desperate, not the economically deprived.

Jesus came "to heal the brokenhearted" (verse 18). The reference is to those who have experienced calamities and distressing circumstances—and are burdened by the heartbreak that results from a life of sinful living. Many hearts are broken by a sense of guilt, and by the misery which evil conduct has brought upon them.

Jesus came "to proclaim liberty to the captives" (verse 18). The gospel brings deliverance³⁹ to those who are captive to sin. There is no evidence that Jesus literally emptied the prisons in Palestine. Instead of literally emptying prisons, Jesus delivered people from spiritual bondage to sin.

Jesus came to provide *"recovery of sight to the blind and to set at liberty those who are oppressed" (verse 18).* Sin blinds and bruises those who choose to live on in unbelief and wickedness. Isaiah says that sin makes us a mass of *"wounds and bruises and putrefying sores"*—from the sole of the foot to the crown of the head (Isaiah 1:6). The message of the gospel calls individuals into a place of purpose in life, and thus gives hope to those who have been bruised by the effects of sin. Concerning spiritual blindness, the Lord told the Apostle Paul that he is being sent *"to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light"* (Acts 26:17-18). Jesus Christ is "the true Light," that is, He *makes clear* the meaning and destiny of human existence.

Once again, the text does not imply that *financial poverty, physical blindness, and unjust imprisonment* should be overlooked by Christians. These conditions should *provoke in us* genuine concern, and should stimulate attempts to help those who suffer in such unfair ways⁴⁰—but deliverance from these things is not the "salvation" which Christ came to bring to the human family.

Verse 19 says that Jesus came to "proclaim *the acceptable year* of the Lord." The words of verse 19 are a reminder of the Year of Jubilee—the fiftieth year, when debts were canceled, slaves gained freedom, and property reverted back to the original owners. The Jubilee Year was a call to joy and liberation—a new beginning for doing justice and loving mercy. Just so, Jesus brings the good news of salvation to bankrupt sinners, and He brings healing to broken-hearted and rejected people. John Wesley caught the essence of what Jesus came to do when he wrote the words of the hymn: *"He breaks the power of canceled sin, He sets the prisoner free; His blood can make the foulest clean; His blood availed for me."* That is what Luke 4:18-19 is all about.

After rolling up the scroll and handing it back to the attendant, Jesus sat down (verse 20). He told the audience that He himself fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah 61. At first they marveled at His words (verse 22), but some began to ask, "Is this not Joseph's son?"—that is, *"How is it possible for the son of an ordinary carpenter to be the Messiah?"*

Furthermore, verse 23 says that when they learned about some miracles which Jesus had done in Capernaum—and were later reminded about some Old Testament *Gentiles* who were blessed by God—they became furious. And when Jesus hinted (in verse 24) that the Gentiles had accepted Him more readily than His hometown people did, the mood turned ugly—and they tried to harm Him.

c. The response of the people (4:25-30)

(4:25-30) "But I tell you truly, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a great famine throughout all the land; but to none of them was Elijah sent except to Zarephath, in the region of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian." So all those in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up and thrust Him out of the

city; and they led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw Him down over the cliff. Then passing through the midst of them, He went His way.

The crowd at Nazareth was upset because Jesus referred to the fact that God sometimes had chosen to reach Gentiles rather than Jews. The widow of Zarephath and Naaman the Syrian were healed; there were widows and lepers in Israel too (verses 25-27). They rejected Jesus and dragged Him to the "brow of the hill," where they attempt-ed to throw Him over the cliff. But Jesus passed through in the midst of them and went on His way (verses 29-30).

3. Jesus Accepted at Capernaum (4:31-44)

Jesus left Nazareth and set up His headquarters in Capernaum (Matthew 4:13-16). He taught in the synagogues and there the people listened with astonishment.

(4:31-37) Then He went down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and was teaching them on the Sabbaths. And they were astonished at His teaching, for His word was with authority. Now in the synagogue there was a man who had a spirit of an unclean demon. And he cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are--the Holy One of God!" But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be quiet, and come out of him!" And when the demon had thrown him in their midst, it came out of him and did not hurt him. Then they were all amazed and spoke among themselves, saying, "What a word this is! For with authority and power He commands the unclean spirits, and they come out." The report about Him went out into every place in the surrounding region.

A man with an unclean spirit recognized Jesus as "the Holy One of God" (verse 34). After verbally abusing Jesus, the Son of God ordered the demon out of the man (verse 35). The demon-possessed man was thrown to the floor, and when he recovered with no evidence of physical harm, the people were amazed at the authority and the power of Jesus (verse 36).

(4:38-44) Now He arose from the synagogue and entered Simon's house. But Simon's wife's mother was sick with a high fever, and they made request of Him concerning her. So He stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. And immediately she arose and served them. When the sun was setting, all those who had any that were sick with various diseases brought them to Him; and He laid His hands on every one of them and healed them. And demons also came out of many, crying out and saying, "You are the Christ, the Son of God!" And He, rebuking them, did not allow them to speak, for they knew that He was the Christ. Now when it was day, He departed and went into a deserted place. And the crowd sought Him and came to Him, and tried to keep Him from leaving them; but He said to them, "I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent." And He was preaching in the synagogues of Galilee.

After the service, Jesus went to the home of Simon Peter. Peter's mother-in-law was sick "with a high fever" (verse 38). Jesus healed her and immediately (without any time for convalescence) she began to serve them (verse 39).

When the sun was setting (and the Sabbath was now over), many people brought their sick family members, and Jesus healed them with a touch of His hands (verse 40). Many

who were demon possessed were delivered (verse 41), and the people were convinced that Jesus was the Christ.

Early the next morning Jesus was up early to pray (Mark 1:35). He went to a deserted place to find rest and to hold communion with the heavenly Father.⁴¹

5. THE GATHERING OF DISCIPLES

Luke 5:1—6:16

A large section of the Gospel according to Luke describes Jesus' gathering of disciples whom He chose to give special training that they might continue the work of spreading the gospel message.

They came from various vocations in life—fishermen, tax collectors, political zealots, and other ordinary people. Jesus takes sinful humans and transforms them into useful vessels for God's service.

1. The Call to Four Fishermen (5:1-11)

Jesus had contact with Peter and Andrew, and James and John earlier in His ministry (John 1:35-42), but it is assumed that they returned to their business of fishing. Now, as Jesus was ministering by the *Lake of Gennesaret*,⁴² it was time for Him to begin training them to carry on His work.

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

The growing popularity of Jesus resulted in crowds following Him, so that it was more difficult for Him to work.

Jesus found it helpful to step into the boat that belonged to Peter (verse 3), and from the boat began teaching the Word of God. When He finished teaching, Jesus told Simon to push out into deeper water and cast his nets (verse 4). Peter responded by saying that they had toiled all through the previous night, and caught nothing. But at the word of Jesus he would try it once again.⁴³

The result of obeying the voice of Jesus was a catch so big that the nets were in danger of breaking! The huge haul of fish prompted Peter to call for James and John to come

and bring another boat. Both boats were loaded until they sank to about the level of the water (verses 6-7).

We are reminded in this miracle once again, of our Lord's complete dominion over the animal kingdom.

Simon Peter was so overwhelmed by the miracle (verse 9), that "he fell down at Jesus' knees" and said, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" (verse 8). Peter was convinced that One greater than man was in his boat!⁴⁴ He sensed that he was in the presence of deity, and so knelt in worship of Jesus, and in humility confessed his sin and his unworthiness to stand in the presence of the Lord.

In verses 9-11, Jesus issued the call to "catch men." Immediately they left everything and followed Jesus. This was a permanent commitment on their part, and whenever the twelve disciples are listed in the New Testament, Peter and Andrew, and James and John are named first.

There is no greater call than *to cast nets for Jesus* and minister the truth of Scripture to people who need to find the way to eternal salvation. One of Peter's first experiences of *catching men* came at Pentecost when "those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them" (Acts 2:41).

2. The Healing of a Leper and a Paralytic (5:12-26)

Immediately after the call of the four disciples, Luke records two of Jesus' miracles that must have greatly impressed His new followers.

a. Jesus heals a leper (5:12-16)

(5:12-16) And it happened when He was in a certain city, that behold, a man who was full of leprosy saw Jesus; and he fell on his face and implored Him, saying, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean." Then He put out His hand and touched him, saying, "I am willing; be cleansed." Immediately the leprosy left him. And He charged him to tell no one, "But go and show yourself to the priest, and make an offering for your cleansing, as a testimony to them, just as Moses commanded." However, the report went around concerning Him all the more; and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by Him of their infirmities. So He Himself often withdrew into the wilderness and prayed.

Leprosy was a greatly dreaded disease. The disease usually begins with a small spot on the skin, which grows worse until the entire body becomes repulsive. Lepers were compelled to live by themselves and to shout "unclean" as a warning when anyone approached.

Leprosy is a type of sin. Humanly speaking, sin is incurable, but God has a remedy—the cleansing blood of Jesus which saves and heals.

The man described by Luke had an advanced case of leprosy. He was "full of leprosy" (verse 12), but Jesus touched him and said, "Be cleansed"—and he was healed immediately (verse 13). Jesus told him to go and show himself to the priest (according to the requirement in Leviticus 14), that he might be pronounced clean (verse 14).

Great multitudes heard about the healing, and came to hear Jesus speak, and to be healed by Him, but Jesus still frequently took time for private prayer (verse 16).⁴⁵

b. Jesus heals a paralytic (5:17-26)

(5:17-26) Now it happened on a certain day, as He was teaching, that there were Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting by, who had come out of every town of Galilee, Judea, and Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was present to heal them. Then behold, men brought on a bed a man who was paralyzed, whom they sought to bring in and lay before Him. And when they could not find how they might bring him in, because of the crowd, they went up on the housetop and let him down with his bed through the tiling into the midst before Jesus. When He saw their faith, He said to him, "Man, your sins are forgiven you." And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, "Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, He answered and said to them, "Why are you reasoning in your hearts? Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Rise up and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins"—He said to the man who was paralyzed, "I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house." Immediately he rose up before them, took up what he had been lying on, and departed to his own house, glorifying God. And they were all amazed, and they glorified God and were filled with fear, saying, "We have seen strange things today!"

Verses 17-26 contain another miracle of healing. The paralyzed man's friends could not heal him, but they took him to Jesus—who forgave his sins as well as performed the healing of his body.

Luke is the only Gospel writer who mentions the presence of religious leaders from all parts of the land, men who listened critically to the claims of Jesus.

The friends of the paralytic allowed no obstacle to hold them back. When they could not enter the house where Jesus was (because of the crowds), they carried their friend up to the roof, made a hole in it, and let him down in front of Jesus (verse 19). *Their* faith (verse 20) undoubtedly refers to the faith of the paralytic, as well as to the faith of the four friends. Jesus began first with the man's greater problem (his spiritual need), rather than dealing with his physical need (verse 20).⁴⁶ The fact that Jesus forgave the man's sins was clearly understood as a claim to be equal with God, and thus the charge of blasphemy (verse 21).

The man who was healed picked up his mat and went home, praising God. Those who witnessed the event were gripped with great wonder and awe (verses 25-26).

3. The Call of Matthew to be a Disciple (5:27-32)

Levi⁴⁷ was called to be a follower of Jesus, along with the four fishermen who had previously been called.

(5:27-32) After these things He went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, "Follow Me." So he left all, rose up, and followed Him. Then Levi gave Him a great feast in his own house. And there were a great number of tax collectors and others who sat down with them. And their scribes and the Pharisees complained against His disciples, saying, "Why do You eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" Jesus answered and said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a

physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."

Levi was sitting at the tax office (his booth) collecting money for the support of the government at Rome.

Taxes were levied on merchandise that was being transported through the area. Taxes were oppressive for the people of Palestine in New Testament times. There were taxes on water and meat and salt. There were road taxes and city taxes and poll taxes. The tax *rates* were not clearly fixed, and so tax collectors often charged more than the government required, and kept the extra money and put it in their own pockets.⁴⁸ But even if the tax collector (the publican) did serve honestly, the religious Jews still despised him for defiling himself by working for Gentiles (the Romans, in this case), and looked upon tax collectors as corrupt sinners.

Levi left everything and joined Jesus as one of His disciples. He was so overjoyed about his new experience in agreeing to follow Jesus, that he put on a banquet at his own house (verse 29) to celebrate the event. Levi invited his friends, many of whom were tax collectors and sinners. We can guess that when Levi got his friends together for the meal, he gave his testimony⁴⁹ about what Jesus meant to him—and then invited his friends to follow Jesus too.

It was not only tax collectors and sinners who were at this feast. Some were there as guests by invitation; others were present at the feast, not as guests, but as observers.

The scribes and Pharisees were there (verse 30), and saw Jesus eating with the publicans and sinners. In their judgment, the entire invited group was looked upon as an assembly of reprobates and sinners—and thus, the religious leaders were upset with Jesus.⁵⁰

When the scribes and Pharisees raised the question about Jesus associating with sinners, Jesus heard it, and replied, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick" [need a doctor] (verse 31).

By this statement, Jesus quickly admitted *the spiritual condition* of those who were attending Levi's supper. They were sick and hurting; they were people in need—they needed help. And when Jesus said, that not the healthy but the sick, needed a physician—He was not implying that the scribes and Pharisees were spiritually healthy, nor that they were righteous—but simply meant to convey *that they assumed* that they were healthy, and that they were righteous. Actually, the Pharisees were just as needy as the publicans and sinners, but tragically they did not know it. In essence, Jesus was saying, "*To people* who think they are righteous, I have nothing to say; I have come to those who know they need help" (verse 32).

4. Teaching about Fasting and the Sabbath (5:33-6:11)

The Pharisees then questioned Jesus *about the custom of fasting*.

(5:33-39) Then they said to Him, "Why do the disciples of John fast often and make prayers, and likewise those of the Pharisees, but Yours eat and drink?" And He said to them, "Can you make the friends of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them? But the

days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them; then they will fast in those days." Then He spoke a parable to them: "No one puts a piece from a new garment on an old one; otherwise the new makes a tear, and also the piece that was taken out of the new does not match the old. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine will burst the wineskins and be spilled, and the wineskins will be ruined. But new wine must be put into new wineskins, and both are preserved. And no one, having drunk old wine, immediately desires new; for he says, 'The old is better.'"

John the Baptist's disciples fasted many times. The disciples of Jesus did not fast (verse 33)—Why not? Jesus responded by saying that there was no reason for His disciples to fast; He was still with them. Fasting is associated with sorrow and mourning. Jesus will be crucified, and later taken away from earth—then they will fast as an expression of their grief (verse 35).⁵¹ Fasting (for special matters of concern) is of value; fasting is not forbidden, but neither is it required.

Jesus took advantage of this occasion to tell two parables—one about the absurdity of mending an old garment with a piece of material torn out of a new garment that does not match the old one, and the other about the futility of putting new wine into old wineskins that would burst when the new wine begins to ferment.

Jesus meant by these illustrations that the old forms of the Jewish religion—fasting, empty prayers, ceremonial rituals, etc. were not adequate for the new content which He was offering. The illustration of the "garment" (verse 36) reminds us that Jesus came to bring *spiritual* wholeness. The *new teaching* about the grace of God cannot be contained within the *old forms* of the Law. Being a Christian under grace is far more than observing symbols, forms, and outward rituals; it is a personal life-changing experience of the power of God in one's inner life.

The illustration of the "wineskins" (verses 37-38) reminds believers that the Jewish religion was like a worn-out wineskin that was brittle and breaking, and would burst if filled with the new wine of the gospel.

Two incidents in the next section (Luke 6:1-11) have to do with the attitude Jesus showed *regarding the Sabbath*.

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

In the final verses of Luke 5, Jesus proclaimed that He is ushering in a new way of righteousness (illustrated by the old and new wineskins)—one that emphasizes *inward righteousness* as well as *outward rightness*. This will affect the way His followers observe the Sabbath. Jesus explains the spirit and manner of observing the Sabbath.⁵²

From the simple words of the Fourth Commandment, the Pharisees developed a complex set of dozens of rules and regulations to govern human conduct on the Sabbath.

The disciples of Jesus were walking along a public path through the grain fields. They plucked some heads of grain, rubbed them between their hands to separate the grain from the husk, and ate the grain. This was lawful according to Deuteronomy 23:25, but the Pharisees said that rubbing the grain was *harvesting* on the Sabbath.

The Pharisees objected to what the disciples did, but Jesus quoted an Old Testament example⁵³ which illustrated how *the spirit* of the Law took priority over *the letter* of the Law. Real love sees that human need is met even if some technicalities have to be laid aside in the process.

(6:6-11) Now it happened on another Sabbath, also, that He entered the synagogue and taught. And a man was there whose right hand was withered. So the scribes and Pharisees watched Him closely, whether He would heal on the Sabbath, that they might find an accusation against Him. But He knew their thoughts, and said to the man who had the withered hand, "Arise and stand here." And he arose and stood. Then Jesus said to them, "I will ask you one thing: Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy?" And when He had looked around at them all, He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And he did so, and his hand was restored as whole as the other. But they were filled with rage, and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus.

On another Sabbath, the Pharisees were watching to see if Jesus would heal a man's withered hand. When Jesus asked the question stated in verse 9, the Pharisees had to be limited to only one answer: It is obviously lawful to do good, not harm. Jesus commanded the man to stretch out his hand—and the withered hand was healed.

Jesus healed the man with the withered hand, but the Pharisees claimed that by doing so He was deliberately violating a law of God—and so they plotted to *destroy* Jesus (Matthew 12:14). Readers should note that the Pharisees thought it was wrong *to heal* on the Sabbath, but they did not think it was wrong *to plot murder* on the Sabbath.

5. Choosing the Twelve Apostles (6:12-16)

Jesus spent an entire night in prayer, and then chose the circle of disciples to whom He gave special training. Following this, He sent them out with His authority.

(6:12-16) Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, He called His disciples to Himself; and from them He chose twelve whom He also named apostles: Simon, whom He also named Peter, and Andrew his brother; James and John; Philip and Bartholomew; Matthew and Thomas; James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon called the Zealot; Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot who also became a traitor.

Jesus chose twelve men from among His disciples to become *apostles*. He had withdrawn into the hills to pray all night—certainly a perpetual lesson for believers, and a great example to show the importance of prayer and inter-cession when responsible decisions are to be made.

The twelve apostles were called for three specific purposes. They were to preach the gospel (Mark 3:14), and other duties were to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons (Mark 3:15). Their basic task was *preaching*—the primary method God uses to call people to faith in Christ. For more on the duties of the apostles, see Mark 3:14-15.

All twelve⁵⁴ of the chosen apostles⁵⁵ had contrasting personalities. *Simon Peter* was an optimist. *Thomas* was a pessimist. *James and John* were called "sons of thunder." *Andrew* was a quiet man. *Simon* was a Zealot who was dedicated to the overthrow of Rome. *Matthew* was a tax collector, gathering money for the government at Rome. Yet Jesus took these men, with all their faults, and with all their mixed temperaments and all their differing back-grounds—and welded them into a flaming body of witnesses for Him.

Peter is at the beginning of each list and Judas is listed last. *Bartholomew* is the Nathanael of John 1:45. In verse 16, *Judas (the son of James)*⁵⁶ is usually identified with Thaddaeus (Matthew 10:3 and Mark 3:18). The other *Judas* was called "Iscariot" because he was likely from the town of Kerioth, a town about 12 miles south of Hebron. Thus Judas was the only one of *the twelve* who came from Judea. The other disciples were from Galilee.

The disciples were not great men with lots of formal education; they were ordinary men of humble origin. They were first commissioned to go only to the Jews—sent out, two by two, to reach the "lost sheep" of the house of Israel (Matthew 10:5-6). But after the crucifixion and the resurrection of Jesus, their commission was extended to take the gospel out to the whole world (Matthew 28:19-20).

The apostles not only baptized people who repented and believed the gospel; they also taught obedience to those things which Jesus commanded. And obedience is to be without reservation. Followers of Christ are not to select from Jesus' teachings what pleases them and neglect the rest. As disciples of Jesus, we are to accept what He said about divorce, as well as what He said about love to others; what Jesus said about Hell, as well as what He said about Heaven; what He taught about carnal lusting, as well as what He said about genuine teaching. Obedience involves a lifetime of learning, so that we become more and more conformed to the image of Christ. Our Lord's commission to the disciples includes not only bringing people to Christ, but also teaching converts to follow Christ.

At the conclusion of each of the Gospel accounts, we are told to go and preach the gospel, teaching and baptizing those who give a favorable response to the message. That is why we support missions and seek to plant churches in other states and new places around the world. All of us are called to be evangelists for Jesus.

Being a disciple of Jesus is a demanding vocation. A true disciple of Christ believes His teachings, rests upon His sacrifice on the cross, manifests His spirit, and seeks day by day to imitate His example.

6. THE SERMON ON THE PLATEAU

Luke 6:17-49

The remaining portion of Luke 6 is similar to the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5,6, and 7. It is uncertain whether this is another account of the same Sermon, or whether it is a shorter version given on another occasion.

1. Blessings and Woes (6:17-26)

Jesus had gone up into the hills and called twelve disciples whom He called apostles. He then went down to a more level place where He taught and healed diseases.

(6:17-19) And He came down with them and stood on a level place with a crowd of His disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem, and from the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, who came to hear Him and be healed of their diseases, as well as those who were tormented with unclean spirits. And they were healed. And the whole multitude sought to touch Him, for power went out from Him and healed them all.

When Jesus came down from the mountain with the newly appointed apostles, they were met by a crowd of people from as far south as Jerusalem and as far northwest as Tyre and Sidon. They had come to be healed and to hear Him speak (verse 17). The crowds gathered just to touch Him as though He were some kind of lucky charm (verse 19). They primarily wanted physical healing (and Jesus healed *all* of them). After He had dealt with their physical needs He proceeded to teach them spiritual truth.

(6:20-26) Then He lifted up His eyes toward His disciples, and said: "Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be filled. Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh. Blessed are you when men hate you, and when they exclude you, and revile you, and cast out your name as evil, For the Son of Man's sake. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy! For indeed your reward is great in heaven, for in like manner their fathers did to the prophets. But woe to you who are rich, For you have received your consolation. Woe to you who are full, For you shall hunger. Woe to you who laugh now, For you shall mourn and weep. Woe to you when all men speak well of you, For so did their fathers to the false prophets."

Jesus said "*Blessed are you poor*" (verse 20)—that is, those who are the *pious* poor. Matthew's "poor in spirit" places the emphasis on spiritual poverty, but Luke's account refers more to the economically downtrodden.⁵⁷

The words, "*Blessed are you who hunger*" (verse 21), may refer to those who suffer physical hunger as a result of religious persecution. It may also refer to those who hunger for righteousness. It includes those who seek God's righteous-ness and long for inner holiness. They will be satisfied.

Those "*who weep now*" (verse 21) are persons who are sorry for their sins, and weep over the sad condition one finds in this world. Believers are called to weep over lost souls,

over child abuse, over battered women, over broken homes, and so forth. Those who "weep now" will "laugh"—that is, they will receive a happy reward in Heaven.

The sentence, "*Blessed are you when men hate you, and when they exclude you, and revile you, and cast out your name as evil*" refers to the persecution that comes to those who choose to follow Jesus. They are unpopular and rejected now, but will receive the same reward given to the persecuted prophets in the past (verse 23).

The woes that are spelled out in this passage are a reminder that *the rich* and *the well-fed* and *the laughing* and *the popular* now—will have major sorrows in the world to come (verses 24-26). Jesus *counts as blessed* those who experience poverty, hunger, sorrow, and persecution because of their loyalty to the Son of Man (verses 20-23). Yet these are the very things that many professing Christians labor hard to avoid! And Jesus *pronounces woes* on those whom we generally consider fortunate—those who are rich,⁵⁸ full, laughing, and well-thought-of.⁵⁹

Human values and the values of Jesus are often in conflict. Men and women often find consolation in material possessions, are satisfied with creature comforts, and tend to make mirth and pleasure their idols. At the same time it is easy to cringe at the thought of poverty and persecution.

2. Love Your Enemies (6:27-36)

The rest of chapter 6 may be summarized by the word "love." The Greek verb *agapao* (to love) is not a passive emotion; it shows itself by its actions toward others.

(6:27-31) "But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you. To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also. And from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either. Give to everyone who asks of you. And from him who takes away your goods do not ask them back. And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise."

If we are to love *even* our enemies, whom do we have left to hate? Christians are not to live on the level of getting even and striking back. We are to "bless" and to "pray for" those who misuse us (verse 28). The word "bless" is translated from the Greek word (*eulogeite*) which means "to speak well of" or "to confer a favor upon" another. The term "pray for" reminds us of Jesus praying for the soldiers who were crucifying Him (Luke 23:34).

None of us likes to be slapped by others, but when we are wronged, we are not to retaliate; instead, we are to turn the other cheek (verse 29). People sometimes do us wrong in *other* harmful ways. If co-workers at our place of employment want us to engage in an activity that we believe is wrong, and we refuse to join them, they might make derogatory remarks, and so *slapping on the cheek* can come in the form of slander, ridicule, and reproach.

Jesus says further that those who take one's "cloak," the outer garment (verse 29b), should also be allowed to have the short tunic (an undershirt).⁶⁰ Jesus is not forbidding the punishment of those who commit crimes. Romans 13:4 makes it clear that officers of the state do punish evil; they do not "bear the sword in vain"—but Christians are to be forbearing and longsuffering when harassed and insulted by others. In Romans 12:18 we are told, "If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men."

The instruction, "Give to everyone who asks of you" (verse 30), can be a bitter pill to take seriously—but our Lord Jesus expects us to be willing to endure inconvenience and loss, and even sacrifice some of our just rights, in order to be a blessing to our fellow human beings.⁶¹

Jesus says that instead of hiring a lawyer and trying to get justice, we are to take a trifling injury like the loss of a coat, and yield to our enemy, and go to bed and sleep in peace! Don't try and figure out ways to get even.

The Golden Rule (verse 31) expresses one of the great principles by which the disciples of Jesus are expected to live. What we ordinarily want others to do for us should be what we practice toward other people.

The rule in essence says, "Put yourself in another person's place, and then act toward that person as you would wish him to act toward you." The Brethren have applied this Bible truth to the concept of gambling. The latest Annual Conference statement on gambling (and the lottery) acknowledges that there is no direct commandment in the Bible against gambling, but "gambling tends to destroy the concern for others taught in the Golden Rule"⁶²

The world's version of the Golden Rule is: "Do to others as they do to you—only worse!" The worldly attitude is: "If you are mean to me, I'm going to be mean to you; if you are nice to me, I'll be nice to you." I saw a tee-shirt one time which read, "I don't get mad, I just get even."

Christians are not to treat others in the way they treat us; rather, we are to treat others like *we would wish them* to treat us. We are to treat others with goodness and kindness in the same way that God treats us.

(6:32-36) "But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back. But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful."

These words are a reminder that to love only those who love us, is a selfish love. Unsaved people will do that much. The words "love" (verse 32) and "do good" (verse 33) mean that we should treat all persons with the common marks of friendship. There is nothing *that will move a critic like love in return for an insult*.⁶³

In verses 27-31 we learn that it is *wrong* to return evil for evil, and that it is *right* to return good for evil. In verses 32-36 we are told that there is no special blessing in returning good for good. Even pagan people (including Hitler, Stalin, and Saddam Hussein) have acted decently toward others who have treated them kindly. The followers of Jesus demonstrate the higher way of life by returning good actions for the evil that may have been done to them.

Also, we are to "lend, hoping for nothing in return." Those who give without expecting anything in return, shall have a great reward, and "will be sons of the Most High" We do these actions, not so that we can be God's people, but because we are God's people

(verse 35).⁶⁴ We are to live by the principle of giving instead of grasping, and if we do that, our "reward will be great." There will be a sense of well-being for having done what we know is right. Such conduct is a mark of mercy and compassion (verse 36).⁶⁵

3. Do Not Judge Wrongly (6:37-45)

If we point out areas in need of improvement in the lives of others, we must examine our own lives and see where improvement needs to be made.

(6:37-42) "Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you." And He spoke a parable to them: "Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into the ditch? A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher. And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not perceive the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me remove the speck that is in your eye,' when you yourself do not see the plank that is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck that is in your brother's eye."

The "judging" that is condemned (verse 37), is the unkind, holier-than-thou attitude which sometimes is evident among people professing faith. To condemn others with a harsh, fault-finding spirit is a *destructive* kind of judging. Just as God will reward those who are merciful (verse 35), so the unmerciful will be appropriately punished.

The "giving" (verse 38) should be like a container that is filled to the brim and is running over. God will supply a generous giver with enough to meet his own needs, and enough to give to "every good work" (2 Corinthians 9:8).

The *blind leader* (verse 39) may be linked with the *false teacher* in Matthew 7:15-20. If one is blind to the great truths of God's Word, it will be impossible for that person to be of spiritual help to others. A teacher who does not know the way to heaven himself, will not be in a position to lead others to the point of salvation (verse 40).

For more on the little parable about obstructions in the human eye (verses 41-42), see pages 91-93 in the *BNTC Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*.

A tree is known by its fruit (6:43-45)

(6:43-45) "For a good tree does not bear bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. For every tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they gather grapes from a bramble bush. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks."

A disciple's fruit (verse 43) most likely refers to the life that he lives. Human beings, like trees, are known by the fruit which they bear (verse 44). Is the individual greedy for money? How does his family behave? Does he carefully guard the words which his mouth speaks (verse 45)? The mouth opens and words come out; those words reflect what is on the inside. The good or evil heart can be observed by noting whether or not the life is honest and clean.

We note that when a person's conversation is vulgar, his *heart* is unclean and unconverted.⁶⁶ People who speak of others that are living wicked lives—as having *good hearts*, are not taking seriously what Jesus says in verse 45.

4. Build Wisely on the Foundation (6:46-49)

The illustration of the two builders is the same as that found in Matthew 7:24-27,⁶⁷ but there are some finer details in each example that differ.

(6:46-49) "But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do the things which I say? Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like: He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock. But he who heard and did nothing is like a man who built a house on the earth with-out a foundation, against which the stream beat vehemently and immediately it fell. And the ruin of that house was great."

The illustration about building a house (given in verses 48-49) grew out of the teaching which Jesus gave (as recorded in verses 46-47). Jesus is looking for people who commit their lives to Him, and then are totally serious about following Him as their pattern for life.

The "house" represents our lives. Our lives will with-stand the storms and struggles of each day—but only if we live for God and seek to practice what our Lord Jesus commanded. We are expected to hear His words and seek to live by them (verse 46). Those who are genuine hearers and doers of the Word of God—have a solid "foundation" (verse 48) upon which to build their lives. Those who have itching ears and despise sound doctrine are headed for disaster.

We are *building* every day, all the time, by the things we do, by the thoughts we think, by the words we speak, and even by the pictures we hang on the walls of our imagination. The aim of each believer should center on being careful not to put any shoddy materials into our buildings.

Two kinds of persons hear Jesus' words. One group accepts His words and builds their lives upon them—even though "living the Jesus way" requires commitment and discipline. The other group rejects the words of Jesus and follows the less difficult way. But when hard times come, and the judgments of God are poured out—one group will stand; the other will fall. Every human being who hears the gospel message has the freedom to choose sides.

The Sermon on the Plateau places an emphasis upon the truth that disciples of Jesus should love with a special kind of love—an exceptional love that will make them stand out to the world round about. The essence of love includes sensitivity to the needs of others. It is compassionate and generous. It centers on giving instead of grasping. It is hesitant about harshly judging others. It is ready to forgive.

7. MOVEMENT TO FAITH IN CHRIST

Luke 7:1-8:3

In the first part of Luke 7, we are given an example of how our Savior, by means of His divine power, healed from a distance a young man who was at the point of death. And then, on another occasion He raised a young man from death and brought him back to life again.

1. The Faith of the Centurion (7:1-10)

A centurion (a Roman army officer) who lived at Capernaum on the northwest edge of the Sea of Galilee, had a servant who was sick. He sent a delegation of Jewish elders to ask Jesus to heal the man.

(7:1-10) Now when He concluded all His sayings in the hearing of the people, He entered Capernaum. And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear to him, was sick and ready to die. So when he heard about Jesus, he sent elders of the Jews to Him, pleading with Him to come and heal his servant. And when they came to Jesus, they begged Him earnestly, saying that the one for whom He should do this was deserving, "for he loves our nation, and has built us a synagogue." Then Jesus went with them. And when He was already not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to Him, saying to Him, "Lord, do not trouble Yourself, for I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof. Therefore I did not even think myself worthy to come to You. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man placed under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." When Jesus heard these things, He marveled at him, and turned around and said to the crowd that followed Him, "I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!" And those who were sent, returning to the house, found the servant well who had been sick.

The centurion was an army officer in charge of one hundred soldiers stationed in Capernaum to maintain law and order. He had a helper who was gravely ill and was at the point of death. Having heard of Jesus, he sent several older Jewish men to Jesus and requested that He heal the servant.

The Jewish leaders said "he loves our nation" and has "built us a synagogue" (verse 5). This Roman centurion looked upon the Jews with a spirit of good will, apparently respecting religion as being socially healthy.

Jesus responded to the call for help by going with them toward the centurion's house, but as He neared the man's home, the centurion sent another message (verses 6-8). He believed that Jesus could heal the servant without coming any farther. He declared his unworthiness to have Jesus enter his home, and also his belief⁶⁸ that Jesus could heal his servant from a distance. The army officer believed that all Jesus needed to do was "say the word, and my servant will be healed" (verse 7b).

The captain's faith was especially amazing because he was a Gentile who *had not been* brought up to know the true and living God—and Jesus "marveled at him."⁶⁹ The faith of a Roman soldier was stronger than that of the Jews. In fact, it was a *great* faith (verse 9).⁷⁰ Jesus was able to say things about this Gentile officer that He could not say about anyone in Israel. The healing of the servant (verse 10) shows that Jesus was reaching out to more than just the Jewish people.

2. The Raising of the Widow's Son (7:11-17)

Not only could Jesus *heal* a dying man from a distance, but He also had power to *raise from the dead* a young man who had died.

(7:11-17) Now it happened, the day after, that He went into a city called Nain; and many of His disciples went with Him, and a large crowd. And when He came near the gate of the city, behold, a dead man was being carried out, the only son of his mother; and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the city was with her. When the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her and said to her, "Do not weep." Then He came and touched the open coffin, and those who carried him stood still. And He said, "Young man, I say to you, arise." So he who was dead sat up and began to speak. And He presented him to his mother. Then fear came upon all, and they glorified God, saying, "A great prophet has risen up among us"; and, "God has visited His people." And this report about Him went throughout all Judea and all the surrounding region.

On three occasions Jesus brought a dead person back to life. One was the young son of the widow of Nain (Luke 7); another was the daughter of Jairus (Mark 5:41), and the third was Lazarus the brother of Mary and Martha (John 11:44).⁷¹

Nain was a town a few miles southeast of Nazareth. A great crowd was following Jesus, and as they approached the town they came upon a funeral procession. It was the funeral of a young boy, a widow's only son. It was a painful loss for the mother, because in that culture a widow without children was alone and in need of protection and help.⁷²

The body of the lad rested on a burial plank, and mourners followed as they shared the grief of the widow. Jesus was moved by compassion and told the mother not to weep (verse 13). He touched the open coffin, spoke a few simple words, and "he who was dead sat up and began to speak" (verse 15). No longer was the body a corpse; it was a living person who sat up and started talking. No wonder the spectators were stricken with awe, and word about this event spread far and wide.

This miracle reminds us of our frailty and mortality, but it also announces to us clear evidence of God's power to raise our bodies from death!

3. The Doubt of John the Baptist (7:18-35)

The healing of the centurion's servant and the raising of the widow's son reached the disciples of John the Baptist, and they reported the events to John in prison.

a. Answering messengers from John (7:18-23)

(7:18-23) Then the disciples of John reported to him concerning all these things. And John, calling two of his disciples to him, sent them to Jesus, saying, "Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?" When the men had come to Him, they said, "John the Baptist

has sent us to You, saying, 'Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?'" And that very hour He cured many of infirmities, afflictions, and evil spirits; and to many blind He gave sight. Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and tell John the things you have seen and heard: that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me."

John the Baptist sent his disciples to question Jesus because he had doubts—but that does not mean that John had lost faith in God.⁷³ John had proclaimed Jesus as the Messiah, but like other Jews of his day, he expected Jesus to crush the heathen Romans and make Israel once more a free nation. John had a faulty understanding of the kingdom that the Messiah would bring into being.

In the Old Testament, the Messiah was pictured as a suffering servant *and* as a reigning monarch. John saw that Jesus was a servant during His ministry—but He did not come as a reigning king who burned up His enemies. John was perhaps not so much *expressing doubt* as *requesting clarification*—because he had expected the Messiah to be a leader who would judge wickedness and set up a physical kingdom—and that was not happening.

John's messengers reached Jesus just as He was ministering to a crowd of people with a variety of needs. He was casting out demons, restoring sight, curing the sick, cleansing lepers, and preaching salvation to the poor. The work that Jesus was doing was that which Isaiah had said He would do (Isaiah 35:5-6). And so with a tender rebuke for John (verses 22-23), Jesus said to John's disciples, "Go and tell John the things you have seen and heard."

b. Jesus' appraisal of John (7:24-30)

(7:24-30) When the messengers of John had departed, He began to speak to the multitudes concerning John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Indeed those who are gorgeously appareled and live in luxury are in kings' courts. But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet. This is he of whom it is written: 'Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You.' For I say to you, among those born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he." And when all the people heard Him, even the tax collectors justified God, having been baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the will of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him.

Jesus sensed that the people might be tempted to blame John for lack of confidence, and accuse him of vacillating and cowardice. Jesus wisely attempted to remove such thoughts by giving a high appraisal of John.

John was not an unstable person, swayed by every wind of belief (verses 24-27). He was a man of conviction and courage and boldness. John was a sturdy oak, not a trembling reed, and not one wearing "soft garments."

The words "he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he" (verse 28b) allude to the fact that we have been able to learn about the inner and spiritual rather than the mere external and material kingdom. John the Baptist never lived to see the cross; he never saw

the full revelation of the love of God. Those of us who live in this age, and can look back and embrace the blood shed on Calvary—are much greater in privilege than John the Baptist and the others who lived in Old Testament times.⁷⁴

The common people and tax collectors accepted John's call to repentance and baptism, and welcomed Jesus' appraisal of John, but the Pharisees and teachers of the law rejected God's plan for redemption (verses 29-30).

c. The unreasonable critics (7:31-35)

(7:31-35) And the Lord said, "To what then shall I liken the men of this generation, and what are they like? They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling to one another, saying: 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we mourned to you, and you did not weep.' For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and you say, 'He has a demon.' The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, 'Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' But wisdom is justified by all her children."

There were opponents of Jesus who came with one criticism after another. Jesus compared His opponents to two groups of children playing in a town square. No matter what game the one group suggested, the other group objected.

This was the attitude that the religious leaders took toward the messages of John and Jesus. John was an ascetic who spent his time alone in the desert; Jesus was willing to mingle with people, even eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners. The Pharisees found fault with both.

The clause "wisdom is justified by all her children" (verse 35) is a proverb in which *wisdom* is personified as a mother, and what she produces is personified as her children (her deeds). Thus the people and the tax collectors (verse 29) were wise, and the Pharisees and teachers of the law (verse 30) were demonstrating foolishness by their rejection of Jesus.

4. Some Exemplary Women of Faith (7:36—8:3)

This section tells about a number of women who had come to serve the Lord Jesus. The scene at the house of Simon the Pharisee reveals our Lord dealing with two entirely different persons—one, a Pharisee who was satisfied with his own integrity; the other, was a woman conscious of her sinful past—rejoicing in her forgiveness, and pouring on Jesus the evidence of her love.

(7:36-40) Then one of the Pharisees asked Him to eat with him. And He went to the Pharisee's house, and sat down to eat. And behold, a woman in the city who was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at the table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil, and stood at His feet behind Him weeping; and she began to wash His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head; and she kissed His feet and anointed them with the fragrant oil. Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he spoke to himself, saying, "This Man, if He were a prophet, would know who and what manner of woman this is who is touching Him, for she is a sinner." And Jesus answered and said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." So he said, "Teacher, say it."

Simon apparently did not take the time to show Jesus the typical courtesies commonly practiced toward guests in the Middle East (verses 44-46).⁷⁵ It could even be that the Pharisee invited Jesus to his house in order to have a chance to trap Him at some point in the conversation.

Houses were open and casual acquaintances could drop in at any time. Guests at meals reclined at low tables, with the feet stretched away from the table. On this day, a woman stood at the feet of Jesus and wept, bathing His feet with her tears, wiping them with her hair,⁷⁶ and anointing them with the perfume which she had brought along with her.

Simon had a critical disposition. He thought (within his mind) that Jesus certainly could not be a prophet, for if He was a prophet, He would know what kind of woman this was that anointed His feet (verse 39).

(7:41-50 "There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more?" Simon answered and said, "I suppose the one whom he forgave more." And He said to him, "You have rightly judged." Then He turned to the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head. You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in. You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil. Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little." Then He said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." And those who sat at the table with Him began to say to themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" Then He said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you. Go in peace.")

Jesus is omniscient and can read human minds. He knew what Simon was thinking—and so He told the Pharisee a parable about a man who canceled the debts of two persons who had owed him money. The one owed fifty denarii⁷⁷ and the other owed five hundred denarii. Which of the two, Jesus asked, would love the creditor more? Simon rightly replied that the person who had been forgiven more, would likely love the creditor more (verse 43).

The *woman* had an awareness of great sin in her life, and showed much appreciation and love. The *Pharisee* (who also was a great sinner) had very little consciousness of sin, and thus showed little evidence of love for Christ.

Jesus was served by redeemed women (8:1-3)

(8:1-3) Now it came to pass, afterward, that He went through every city and village, preaching and bringing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with Him, and certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities—Mary called Magdalene, out of whom had come seven demons, and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others who provided for Him from their substance.

Jesus was rejected by His fellow Jews, and was eventually crucified by those who hated Him. But His message was received by a few who really loved Him to the very end—including the women mentioned in this passage.

Not much is known about Mary Magdalene.⁷⁸ She was likely from the town of Magdala (along the shores of the Sea of Galilee), and she was delivered from the influence of a number of demons. She was loyal to Jesus but she was not married to Jesus as *The Da Vinci Code* claims.

The other women included Joanna (mentioned also in Luke 24:10), and Susanna (not mentioned elsewhere in the New Testament). These were likely women of influence and of financial means who accompanied Jesus and the twelve apostles, and supplied necessary funds "from their substance" (verse 3). This is the beautiful picture of how women of wealth provided for Jesus on the material level.

8. FAITH AND QUESTIONS ABOUT JESUS

Luke 8:4-56

In Luke 8, Jesus teaches by word and action some of the facts related to the nature of the kingdom of God and the principles by which it operates.

1. The Parable of the Sower (8:4-15)

At this point Luke records the parable of the sower—a lesson which divides those who hear the proclamation of the Word of God into four groups.

(8:4-15) And when a great multitude had gathered, and they had come to Him from every city, He spoke by a parable: "A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trampled down, and the birds of the air devoured it. Some fell on rock; and as soon as it sprang up, it withered away because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up with it and choked it. But others fell on good ground, sprang up, and yielded a crop a hundredfold." When He had said these things He cried, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" Then His disciples asked Him, saying, "What does this parable mean?" And He said, "To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest it is given in parables, that 'Seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.' Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. Those by the wayside are the ones who hear; then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. But the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away. Now the ones that fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity. But the ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience."

The parable of the soils is the story about much seed that gets scattered—but only a portion of it bears fruit. Depending on the nature of the soil, the seed produces results that vary from no crop to an abundant crop. Just so, the gospel message meets with many different responses.⁷⁹

The *seed* is the Word of God (verse 11). The *sower* represents anyone who puts forth the Word. The *soil* stands for the various conditions of human hearts. The parable illustrates the variety of responses one can expect from the proclamation of the gospel message.

The *first kind* of soil signifies those who hear the Good News, but the devil prevents it from ever penetrating their hearts.⁸⁰ The *second kind* of soil represents those people who make an emotional commitment to the truth about Christ, but their pledge is insincere and does not last long. The *third kind* of soil illustrates people who embrace the gospel in a superficial way, and soon the grip of things causes them to return to the world. The *fourth kind* of soil depicts people who make a genuine and lasting commitment to Christ—resulting in spiritual abundance, devotion to the Lord, and eternal joy.

When the disciples asked Jesus what this parable meant (verse 9), He said that it was given so that the disciples could better understand the mysteries related to the kingdom of God, but also it was given so that others may hear, and "may not understand" (verse 10).

The *mysteries of the kingdom* relate to what constitutes the message of good news during this present age. It was a mystery, to the Jews who looked for a political kingdom under which the Messiah would rule, to then discover that Jesus came to establish a spiritual kingdom in which *the human heart* was the realm of His reign. One of the purposes for the parables is to reveal things in such a way that those who really want to know the truth can understand. Jesus used parables *to clarify the truth* for those whose hearts were open and receptive—and *to conceal truth* from those whose hearts were hardened (verse 10).

2. Various Sayings of Jesus (8:16-21)

Jesus declared that fertile hearts are to be like shining lamps, so that we might bear witness to the truth (verse 16).

a. A lamp under a vessel (8:16-18)

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

The *lamp* was a small clay vessel in which olive oil and a wick were placed. Like the farmer in the parable just given, the disciples of Jesus have the job of sowing the seed of the gospel in a largely hostile world.

A lamp is to be placed on a lampstand so that it can be seen, and not placed under a bed in order to hide the light. The message of salvation is not to be kept to ourselves, but is to be passed on to others (verse 16).

In verse 17 Luke explains that *God's plan for saving human beings* may be hidden for a while, but it will not always remain so! God's truth, which is now partially hidden from those who reject it, will someday be publicly vindicated—perhaps only at the second coming of Jesus.

In verse 18 Jesus says that His disciples are to take care to listen to God's Word with understanding, and then apply what Jesus says to their lives. Those who listen and understand the words of Jesus are *those who have*; to them more shall be given. Those who reject the words of Jesus are *those who do not have*; they will lose the opportunity of hearing more teaching. To refuse the light of God's truth is to end up in darkness.

b. The true family of Jesus (8:19-21)

Jesus spoke of *His family* as "these who hear the word of God and do it" (verse 21).

(8:19-21) Then His mother and brothers came to Him, and could not approach Him because of the crowd. And it was told Him by some, who said, "Your mother and Your brothers are

standing outside, desiring to see You." But He answered and said to them, "My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it."

The "brothers" (verse 20) are most likely the children of Joseph and Mary born after the birth of Jesus. Mary, along with our Lord's brothers, was not able to get close to Jesus because of the crowds—but they were able to get a message to Him, indicating that they wanted to see Him.

Jesus explained that all who are doing the will of the God the Father and are wholeheartedly committed to Him, are part of His family. Over and over again in the New Testament we are told that *seeking to live by the standards of the Word of God* is very important. Jesus' family consists of those who hear the Word of God and do it.

3. Jesus Calming a Storm (8:22-25)

Jesus was followed by great multitudes of people who were burdened with guilt and sin and needs of various kinds. In the verses that follow, we see Jesus as the Master of the winds and the seas. Jesus proved that He was God the Son by displaying His miraculous power.

(8:22-25) Now it happened, on a certain day, that He got into a boat with His disciples. And He said to them, "Let us cross over to the other side of the lake." And they launched out. But as they sailed He fell asleep. And a windstorm came down on the lake, and they were filling with water, and were in jeopardy. And they came to Him and awoke Him, saying, "Master, Master, we are perishing!" Then He arose and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water. And they ceased, and there was a calm. But He said to them, "Where is your faith?" And they were afraid, and marveled, saying to one another, "Who can this be? For He commands even the winds and water, and they obey Him!"

The Sea of Galilee is shaped like a pear; it is below sea level and surrounded on three sides by steep hills. It is not unusual for violent storms to suddenly sweep across the water. In this case, Jesus undoubtedly knew that the storm was coming, and certainly could have prevented it—but He permitted the storm to come as it did, in order to teach the disciples some needful lessons.

Jesus entered the boat with His disciples (verse 22), and while they were crossing the huge lake, the storm bore down upon them (verse 23). There may have been a supernatural element in this storm, because even the hearty fishermen (accustomed to sudden storms) were frightened when the boat began to sink (verse 24-25).

Jesus was asleep, but the terrified disciples awakened Him and said, "Master, Master, we are perishing!" Jesus spoke to the wind and the sea, and immediately these elements of nature obeyed His voice. The wild rage of the wind and the huge waves of the sea suddenly ground to a halt, and "there was a calm" (verse 24). Jesus has complete control over the forces of nature.

This account is a picture of all of us. Every one of us is journeying across the sea of life. On one side of the huge sea is the cradle; on the other side is the grave. We are all moving from the cradle to the grave. The journey is short—but during that journey, *storms* come our way. There are storms of affliction, temptation, and misfortune; there are storms of sickness, family problems, disappointments, and financial difficulties.

Who can help us when the storms come? The answer is: The same Jesus who calmed the sea! He says, in essence, to those who serve Him, "Fear not, for I am with you; I will never let the waves overcome you" (Isaiah 43:2). It is wonderful to know that in all the circumstances of life, including the difficult places, we are under the control of our powerful Savior—and we must learn to trust Him.

4. Jesus Healing the Gadarene Demoniac (8:26-39)

When Jesus reached the country of the Gadarenes He restored a demon-possessed man to a normal life. This was evidence of Jesus' power over the world of demons.

(8:26-33) Then they sailed to the country of the Gadarenes, which is opposite Galilee. And when He stepped out on the land, there met Him a certain man from the city who had demons for a long time. And he wore no clothes, nor did he live in a house but in the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he cried out, fell down before Him, and with a loud voice said, "What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You, do not torment me!" For He had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For it had often seized him, and he was kept under guard, bound with chains and shackles; and he broke the bonds and was driven by the demon into the wilderness. Jesus asked him, saying, "What is your name?" And he said, "Legion," because many demons had entered him. And they begged Him that He would not command them to go out into the abyss. Now a herd of many swine was feeding there on the mountain. So they begged Him that He would permit them to enter them. And He permitted them. Then the demons went out of the man and entered the swine, and the herd ran violently down the steep place into the lake and drowned.

The Gadarene lived among tombs hewn out of the side of the hills; he wore no clothes; he was bound with chains; he cried out to Jesus as if in torment. This shows what the devil can do to human beings. See the parallel accounts are found in Mark 5:1-20 and in Matthew 8:28-34.

The word *Legion* (verse 30) speaks of the number 6,000—perhaps the number of demons that inhabited this man. The word *abyss* (KJV, "the deep," verse 31) is the pit where all evil spirits will someday be consigned (Revelation 20:1,3). Satan has no final authority, but can only do what God permits (verse 32). Jesus valued one man more than a whole heard of pigs (verse 33).

The response of the town people (8:34-39)

(8:34-39) When those who fed them saw what had happened, they fled and told it in the city and in the country. Then they went out to see what had happened, and came to Jesus, and found the man from whom the demons had departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind. And they were afraid. They also who had seen it told them by what means he who had been demon-possessed was healed. Then the whole multitude....of the Gadarenes asked Him to depart from them, for they were seized with great fear. And He got into the boat and returned. Now the man from whom the demons had departed begged Him that he might be with Him. But Jesus sent him away, saying, "Return to your own house, and tell what great things God has done for you." And he went his way and proclaimed throughout the whole city what great things Jesus had done for him.

When the people in the nearby village learned that the pigs had perished, they were upset.⁸¹ Instead of rejoicing in the marvelous deed of mercy done in behalf of the hopeless man, the people asked Jesus to get out of their country. Many today also are more concerned about getting material possessions than about faithfully serving Christ. Gripped by the lure of material things, energy is put into grasping, buying, and exchanging goods that will someday be burned up (2 Peter 3:10-13).

5. Jesus Raising Jairus' Daughter (8:40-56)

Jesus was on His way to the home of Jairus when He healed a woman who for many years had suffered from an incurable disease. The healing of the woman and the raising of the child from death were further revelations of His power.

a. Jairus' request for healing his daughter (8:40-42)

(8:40-42) So it was, when Jesus returned, that the multitude welcomed Him, for they were all waiting for Him. And behold, there came a man named Jairus, and he was a ruler of the synagogue. And he fell down at Jesus' feet and begged Him to come to his house, for he had an only daughter about twelve years of age, and she was dying.

It must have been difficult for Jairus to come to Jesus. He was a leader in the synagogue, but love for his daughter compelled him to seek help from Jesus, even though most Jews questioned the validity of what Jesus was doing.

b. A bleeding woman's request for healing (8:43-48)

(8:43-48) But as He went, the multitudes thronged Him. Now a woman, having a flow of blood for twelve years, who had spent all her livelihood on physicians and could not be healed by any, came from behind and touched the border of His garment. And immediately her flow of blood stopped. And Jesus said, "Who touched Me?" When all denied it, Peter and those with him said, "Master, the multitudes throng and press You, and You say, 'Who touched Me?'" But Jesus said, "Somebody touched Me, for I perceived power going out from Me." Now when the woman saw that she was not hidden, she came trembling; and falling down before Him, she declared to Him in the presence of all the people the reason she had touched Him and how she was healed immediately. And He said to her, "Daughter, be of good cheer; your faith has made you well. Go in peace."

In verses 43-48, on the way to Jairus' house, Jesus was momentarily delayed by a woman who suffered an incurable disease. She had spent all her livelihood on physicians, but none could help her (verse 43). She had learned of Jesus, and believed that if she could just touch the border of His garment, she would be healed.

In the midst of the jostling crowd, she made her way to His side, reached out her hand, and was rewarded with instant healing (verse 44). Jesus knew that the woman had touched His garment. We do not know how, but Jesus knew the difference between the crush of that choking crowd, and the touch of faith in the heart of one desperate soul.

c. Jesus raised Jairus' daughter from death (8:49-56)

(8:49-56) While He was still speaking, someone came from the ruler of the synagogue's house, saying to him, "Your daughter is dead. Do not trouble the Teacher." But when Jesus heard it, He answered him, saying, "Do not be afraid; only believe, and she will be made well." When He came into the house, He permitted no one to go in except Peter, James,

and John, and the father and mother of the girl. Now all wept and mourned for her; but He said, "Do not weep; she is not dead, but sleeping." And they ridiculed Him, knowing that she was dead. But He put them all outside, took her by the hand and called, saying, "Little girl, arise." Then her spirit returned, and she arose immediately. And He commanded that she be given something to eat. And her parents were astonished, but He charged them to tell no one what had happened.

Jesus took Peter, James, and John with Him (verse 51)⁸² and when He arrived at the home of Jairus, He told the weeping family members that her death was only temporary (verse 52). It was like a sleep from which she would soon awake, and they ridiculed Him.

Jesus took the tender hand of this young girl and said, "Little girl, arise" (verse 54). Mark 5:42 says that she immediately got up and began walking! All knew that Jesus had performed a mighty miracle in raising the girl.

Luke explains that "her spirit returned" (verse 55). When a human being dies, the spirit (the soul) leaves the body—but when this girl was restored to life, her spirit (the real person) returned to again live in her body.

Jesus has complete sovereignty over every realm of life. There is no human need that He cannot meet. No circum-stance is too difficult for His power! Jesus is more than "the stranger of Galilee." Jesus is the powerful Son of God! Such power demands our respect, and it should inspire complete confidence in His ability to deal with any situation which may confront us.

9. SOME PRINCIPLES OF DISCIPLESHIP

Luke 9:1-62

Jesus sent the apostles out and gave them power and authority over demons, and the ability to heal the sick. They went without any material provisions for the journey.

1. The Mission of the Twelve (9:1-9)

Jesus was able to perform wonderful miracles, but now He began to equip His disciples with power to continue the work that He was doing.

(9:1-9) Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases. He sent them to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. And He said to them, "Take nothing for the journey, neither staffs nor bag nor bread nor money; and do not have two tunics apiece. Whatever house you enter, stay there, and from there depart. And whoever will not receive you, when you go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet as a testimony against them." So they departed and went through the towns, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere. Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was done by Him; and he was perplexed, because it was said by some that John had risen from the dead, and by some that Elijah had appeared, and by others that one of the old prophets had risen again. Herod said, "John I have beheaded, but who is this of whom I hear such things?" So he sought to see Him.

The apostles were given power to heal the sick and to cast out demons. Their main task was to "preach the kingdom of God" (verse 2)—defined as "preaching the gospel" (verse 6). The death of Jesus on the cross had not yet been completed, but God's ruling power to deliver human hearts from Satan's grip, was being initiated in the lives of those who responded to the call of the apostles for repentance.

The Lord's disciples were to travel lightly, taking no staffs, bag,⁸³ bread, or money (verse 3). They were to count on the hospitality of homes to provide for their basic needs. They were to take only one coat (or tunic).⁸⁴ The apostles were to trust in God's care for them while they were out ministering among the people.

If an individual (or a town or village) rejected the disciples and their message, they were not obligated to remain there. They were to leave and to shake the dust off their feet as a symbol of God's rejection of those who reject the Lord Jesus and His message (verse 5). They were to make *one* home in a village⁸⁵ their headquarters for the duration of their stay (verse 4).

In verses 7-9, Luke says that Herod (Antipas)⁸⁶ was troubled when he heard what Jesus was doing. John the Baptist had been preaching, and he told Herod that it was a sin against God to divorce his wife and marry Herodias. John called Herod to repentance, and as result, John was placed in prison. Herod wanted to kill John, but fearing the people, he decreed instead to simply put him in prison. But Herodias plotted to have John beheaded (Matthew 14:6-12).

When Herod heard about all that Jesus was doing, he was greatly distressed, and had a strange feeling that maybe John the Baptist had been raised from the dead, and had been endowed with some unusual powers. Herod's conscience was troubling him. The conscience acted as a "policeman" reminding Herod that he had killed John, and in his heart he knew there would be a day of reckoning.

As more people heard about all that Jesus was doing, some thought He was a resurrected prophet—perhaps Elijah or maybe some other prophet from former times.

2. The Feeding of the Five Thousand (9:10-17)

This miracle is recorded in all four Gospels. It has helped establish beyond all doubt that Jesus is the omnipotent Savior who is able to make provision for every human need.

(9:10-17) And the apostles, when they had returned, told Him all that they had done. Then He took them and went aside privately into a deserted place belonging to the city called Bethsaida. But when the multitudes knew it, they followed Him; and He received them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who had need of healing. When the day began to wear away, the twelve came and said to Him, "Send the multitude away, that they may go into the surrounding towns and country, and lodge and get provisions; for we are in a deserted place here." But He said to them, "You give them something to eat." And they said, "We have no more than five loaves and two fish, unless we go and buy food for all these people." For there were about five thousand men. Then He said to His disciples, "Make them sit down in groups of fifty." And they did so, and made them all sit down. Then He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke them, and gave them to the disciples to set before the multitude. So they all ate and were filled, and twelve baskets of the leftover fragments were taken up by them.

When the disciples returned from their tour, Jesus took them to a lonely place near Bethsaida to rest—but the crowds followed Him there. Jesus healed the sick and spoke to them about "the kingdom⁸⁷ of God" (verses 10-11).

As evening came the disciples were concerned about where the crowd would eat. Jesus told the disciples, "*You* give them something to eat" (verse 13). They said they had no food or money; Jesus told the disciples to ask the crowd to sit down in groups of fifty on the grass. And then Jesus took the few loaves and fish that were available, offered a prayer of thanks to God, and began multiplying the food.⁸⁸

We are not told how the food multiplied. Likely it happened continuously, as the disciples walked among the groups of people and distributed the food. They could hardly have carried containers large enough to hold all the food, if it had been multiplied *all at once* before it was distributed. The miracle was all but invisible, and the magnitude of it only became evident as the thousands of people were eating.

The event described is clear evidence that Jesus is concerned about the physical as well as the spiritual needs of human lives. This was a miracle, not a mere potluck supper.

3. Peter's Confession and a Passion Prediction (9:18-27)

Jesus sensed that it was time to be sure that His disciples realized His true identity, who He really was.

(9:18-20) And it happened, as He was alone praying, that His disciples joined Him, and He asked them, saying, "Who do the crowds say that I am?" So they answered..., "John the Baptist, but some say Elijah; and others say that one of the old prophets has risen again." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered and said, "The Christ of God."

The disciples were finally beginning to see Jesus as the Son of God, and so Jesus began to prepare their minds for what lay ahead—His rejection and suffering and resurrection.

Jesus asked His disciples the question, "*Who do the crowds say that I am?*" And the disciples responded by saying (in verse 19) that some thought Jesus was John the Baptist (because He preached repentance like John did). Some thought He was Elijah (because He performed miracles like Elijah did). And some thought Jesus was one of the prophets (Matthew 16:14 mentions Jeremiah).

Without responding, Jesus went on and asked the second question (recorded in verse 20): "But who do *you* say that I am?" Peter answered for the group; he said, "The Christ of God" (that is, "the Messiah"). Peter had the correct response. He often said the wrong things—but not this time! A right confession about Jesus is essential to eternal life. Romans 10:9 says that *if* we confess with our mouth *the Lord Jesus*, and believe in our hearts that God has raised Him from the dead—we shall be saved!

(9:21-27) And He strictly warned and commanded them to tell this to no one, saying, "The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day." Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels. But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the kingdom of God."

Jesus now began to show the disciples the necessity for the cross. One reason Jesus did not want the disciples to report that He was the Christ, was that the people would not have understood *what kind of Christ* He meant.

Very few Jews really expected a *suffering* Messiah. They looked for a victorious Conqueror who would get the shackles of Rome off their backs, and so Peter took Jesus aside and began to rebuke Him, urging Him not to go to Jerusalem and die (Mark 8:32). But Jesus would "be killed, and be raised the third day" (verse 22).⁸⁹

And then at this point Jesus inserted the statement about cross-bearing. In verse 23 Jesus reminds His disciples that His followers must be prepared to suffer. Jesus says, "*If anyone desires to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.*" These words are among the most important sayings that we have from the lips of Jesus. The word *daily* means that commitment to Christ is a constant ongoing activity.

Self-denial is a subject about which there is a lot of superficial thinking. Some people feel that they have made a great sacrifice when they give up eating a few chocolate bars, or deny themselves the pleasure of eating desserts during Lent. Jesus was talking about

something far deeper than that when He spoke of self-denial. To *deny ourselves* means *to obliterate self* as the dominant principle of life. It means to confess with the Apostle Paul, "*I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells*" (Romans 7:18). To *deny self* is to disown the rebellious self which lies at the center of each human heart. Those who grow in love for God form lower estimates of themselves. They have a deepening realization of their own nothingness. The world says, "*Love yourself; accept yourself; feel good about yourself.*" Jesus says, "Deny self; push away inclinations to exalt self."

To "*take up his cross*" means to accept the reproach disciples must bear because they have taken sides with Jesus. Taking up one's cross is willingness to endure embarrassment, shame, rejection, persecution, and even martyrdom if necessary, for the sake of our Lord Jesus. To take up one's cross is to be willing *to start out on a death march!* The extent of ridicule and suffering varies from time to time, and place to place, and century to century, but we must not be surprised at any "fiery trial" that may come upon us because of our stand for the Lord Jesus (1 Peter 4:12-14).

Caring for a sick child is not a cross; that is a responsibility. The "cross" is not a reference to common trials and hardships in life; it is not having an unsaved husband or a nagging wife. One's "cross" is not a physical handicap or an incurable disease. The "cross" represents *the suffering which is ours because of our relationship to Christ*. It is the reproach we experience because we are seeking to live for the Lord. Taking up one's cross speaks of *the stigma* we bear because we have taken sides with Jesus.

The words "*and follow Me*" mean that we are to practice attitudes and actions which reflect the ways of Christ. It means that we seek to render perfect obedience to Christ. The Christian life is a constant following of Jesus, copying the One who is our Leader.

In verse 24, the words "whoever desires to save his life will lose it" refer to *the reproach* that accompanies living for Christ. Those who are constantly searching for ease and comfort and material things, will in the end lose all that makes life worthwhile; those who *live* for self and the things of this world—in the end are losers. By way of contrast, those who *die* to self and live for the Lord—in the end are winners.⁹⁰

The Christian life is not a bed of roses! The Christian life is a constant battle. The *flesh* must be crucified, the *devil* must be resisted, and the *world* must be overcome daily. It is not an easy thing to live the Christian life. We cannot "lie down on the job" on the way to heaven.

In verse 25, Jesus says, "*For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost?*" Jesus reminds us of the worst bargain a person can ever make; in essence, He asks, "What profit is it to a person, if he gains the whole world, but at the same time loses his soul?" A person can gain lots of wealth, and can indulge in all the pleasures that the world has to offer—but *if* in doing so, he neglects his soul—he has made a bad bargain. Disciples of Jesus must never be ashamed to let others see that our aim is to live by the teachings of Christ (verse 26).

The words "There are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the kingdom of God" (verse 27), were fulfilled when the disciples witnessed the Transfiguration of Jesus.

4. The Transfiguration of Jesus (9:28-36)

The next scene describes three of the disciples taken to a mountain, and beholding Jesus in His transfigured glory.

(9:28-36) Now it came to pass, about eight days after these sayings, that He took Peter, John, and James and went up on the mountain to pray. As He prayed, the appearance of His face was altered, and His robe became white and glistening. And behold, two men talked with Him, who were Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. But Peter and those with him were heavy with sleep; and when they were fully awake, they saw His glory and the two men who stood with Him. Then...as they were parting from Him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah"—not knowing what he said. While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were fearful as they entered the cloud. And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!" When the voice had ceased, Jesus was found alone. But they kept quiet, and told no one in those days any of the things they had seen.

Jesus took Peter, James, and John with Him to the top of a mountain (most likely Mount Hermon) to show them additional evidence that He really was God's Messiah. Moses and Elijah, perhaps representing the Law and the Prophets, appeared with the Lord Jesus and discussed His coming *decease* (verse 31, Greek, *exodon*, "departure")—a reference to His death and resurrection and ascension into heaven.

The radiance of Jesus' face and the glistening of His robe were a foretaste of His coming glory. The voice of God said, "This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!" (verse 35).

Moses and Elijah disappeared from the scene, and left Jesus alone—likely a symbol that the Old Testament law and prophets were fulfilled. Peter, James, and John said nothing about what they had seen, but many years later, Peter still remembered the incident when he said that he had been an eyewitness of Christ's splendor and glory (2 Peter 1:16-18).

5. Healing an Epileptic and a Passion Prediction (9:37-45)

As Jesus and the disciples came down from the mountain, they came upon a boy who was critically ill.

a. A boy healed of epilepsy (9:37-42)

(9:37-42) Now it happened on the next day, when they had come down from the mountain, that a great multitude met Him. Suddenly a man from the multitude cried out, saying, "Teacher, I implore You, look on my son, for he is my only child. And behold, a spirit seizes him, and he suddenly cries out; it convulses him so that he foams at the mouth, and it departs from him with great difficulty, bruising him. So I implored Your disciples to cast it out, but they could not." Then Jesus answered and said, "O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you and bear with you? Bring your son here." And as he was still coming, the demon threw him down and convulsed him. Then Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, healed the child, and gave him back to his father.

Jesus had given His disciples the power and authority to cast out demons (9:1), but when He and the three disciples returned from the place of Transfiguration, He learned that the

other disciples had not been able to expel a demon from a young boy (verse 40). Mark says it was their lack of prayer and fasting that led to the failure to exorcise the demon (9:29).

Jesus rebuked the disciples for their lack of faith, and then healed the lad and "gave him back to his father" (verse 42). The boy was healed in a manner that left all astounded.

b. Jesus predicts His death a second time (9:43-45)

(9:43-45) And they were all amazed at the majesty of God. But while everyone marveled at all the things which Jesus did, He said to His disciples, "Let these words sink down into your ears, for the Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men." But they did not understand this saying, and it was hidden from them so that they did not perceive it; and they were afraid to ask Him about this saying.

The Lord's power over demons and disease caused amazement among the people. They found it hard to believe the prediction that Jesus was making about being "betrayed into the hands of men" (verse 44). The disciples still did not understand Jesus' words about His death. (See the discussion about Jesus' death on page 120 of this commentary.)

6. Teaching on True Greatness (9:46-50)

The Lord's little company of disciples was not beyond the plague of pride. By calling a young child to His side, Jesus gave them an object lesson, teaching that those who would be great must first learn to be least of all.

(9:46-50) Then a dispute arose among them as to which of them would be greatest. And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a little child and set him by Him, and said to them, "Whoever receives this little child in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me receives Him who sent Me. For he who is least among you all will be great." Now John answered and said, "Master, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name, and we forbade him because he does not follow with us." But Jesus said to him, "Do not forbid him, for he who is not against us is on our side."

While Jesus was talking about His coming suffering and death, two of His leading disciples wondered which of them would be the greatest in Christ's kingdom (verse 46).⁹¹

The world's philosophy is that *great* persons are those who have others working under them. Worldly minds see *greatness* as being able to earn a large salary, or to achieve academic degrees, or to hold a position of power over other people. *Greatness in God's kingdom*, by way of contrast, is not found in position or power, but in the demonstration of good character and simple service (Mark 10:44).

Then Jesus took a small child (likely in His arms) and taught the disciples a much needed lesson on humility (verse 48). What are some of the characteristics of little children?⁹² Children generally have *a trusting spirit, an eagerness to learn, and a quickness to forgive*. Jesus says that these childlike qualities constitute greatness. These attitudes are a pattern for us to follow in our walk with God.

The disciples were given another lesson in humility when John reported a man who had been casting out demons in Jesus name (verses 49-50). The disciples had ordered him to stop because he was not one of their number, but Jesus said, "Do not forbid him, for

he who is not against us is on our side."⁹³ The point is this: We must not condemn those who are doing the Lord's work, even though we may have some minor differences. The Lord's work is not limited to one group, one denomination, or one theological stripe.

7. The Journey into Samaria (9:51-56)

Luke devotes more than half of his Gospel to the events which begin with Jesus leaving Galilee and setting His face toward Jerusalem. The period ends with the cross and resurrection in Jerusalem.

(9:51-56) Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem, and sent messengers before His face. And as they went, they entered a village of the Samaritans, to prepare for Him. But they did not receive Him, because His face was set for the journey to Jerusalem. And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, "Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?" But He turned and rebuked them, and said, "You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives but to save them." And they went to another village.

The disciples had confessed that Jesus was the Messiah (9:20), and they witnessed His delivering a boy from an unclean spirit (9:42). Soon after that, Jesus started on the journey to Jerusalem where He would die. In verse 51, Jesus sent messengers on ahead, probably to arrange overnight accommodations in one of the Samaritan villages. But the Samaritans would not allow Jesus and His team to stay in one of their villages because He was set to go to Jerusalem.

The hostility between the Jews and Samaritans was long standing. James and John were zealous for their Master, and they asked whether the Lord would want them "to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them as Elijah did" (recorded in 2 Kings 1:9-12). Jesus rebuked them and reminded them that He came to save human beings not to destroy them (verse 56).

8. Some Would-Be Followers of Jesus (9:57-62)

The road Jesus was taking led to the cross. All those who choose to follow Him must pay a high price.

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

Here is an account of three men who wanted to follow Jesus, but with compromise and delay.

The first man *spoke with rashness*, saying, "Lord, I will follow You wherever You go" (verse 57). The second *spoke with insincerity* and used his aged father as an excuse for

delay (verse 59). To "let the dead bury their own dead" (verse 60) most likely means to let the spiritually dead bury the physically dead. The third would-be disciple *spoke with indecision*. One of the saddest statements found in the Bible is stated in verse 61: "*Lord, I will follow You, but...*"

Many really want to follow Jesus, but most want to follow their personal preferences as well. There is no greater *thrill* than that of following Jesus, and there is no greater *glory* than the reward that comes from following Him.

The man who puts his hand to a plow and starts plowing forward, but then continues to look back, cannot plow a straight furrow (verse 62). A disciple, who starts out and then looks back into the world, will have a divided heart and will not be "fit" (Greek, *euthetos*, more literally "useful") for the Master's service. Followers of Jesus need to press forward, as Paul did (Philippians 3:12-14).

10. DISCIPLESHIP TO NEIGHBOR AND TO THE LORD

Luke 10:1-42

In this section Luke describes the mission of the seventy (a ministry not mentioned in Matthew or Mark). This is followed by the parable of the Good Samaritan, and telling about a day in the home of Mary and Martha.

1. The Mission of the Seventy (10:1-24)

With only about six months left before His crucifixion, Jesus commissioned seventy of His followers to go ahead of Him into the towns and villages that He would visit.

a. The charge to the seventy (10:1-12)

(10:1-12) After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go. Then He said to them, "The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest. Go your way; behold, I send you out as lambs among wolves. Carry neither money bag, knapsack, nor sandals; and greet no one along the road. But whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this house.' And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest on it; if not, it will return to you. And remain in the same house, eating and drinking such things as they give, for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not go from house to house. Whatever city you enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you. And heal the sick there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' But whatever city you enter, and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say, 'The very dust of your city which clings to us we wipe off against you. Nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God has come near you.' But I say to you that it will be more tolerable in that Day for Sodom than for that city."

Jesus was grieved by the sore need which He beheld on every side, and so He sent laborers into the harvest, urging that prayers be made for other laborers to be sent (verse 2).

The task would not be easy because they would go "as lambs among wolves" (verse 3). These words describe the perilous nature of the work they were about to do. God's servants must make up their minds that persecution and ill-treatment may very well come to those who spread the message of salvation through faith in the crucified Christ.

They were to take nothing for their journey, and were to "greet no one along the road" (verse 4). Jesus did not mean that they were to be impolite to people whom they passed along the way, but rather that they were not to spend precious time on trifling conversation and meaningless social activities. They were to remain focused on their task.⁹⁴

When they arrived in a town they were to stay at one place (verses 5-8), showing a contented spirit, and avoiding the appearance of being fickle and hard to please about food and lodging. They were to be models of the simplicity that is to be a mark of pilgrims

and strangers. They were to pray God's peace upon the house which they entered (verse 5).

The statement in verse 6, "If a son of peace⁹⁵ is there, your peace will rest on it; if not, your peace will return to you"—means that no prayer for God's peace and blessing is wasted (or fails its purpose); if the one upon whom the blessing is pronounced rejects it, it will return to bless the one who sincerely offered it!

Their message (verses 9-11) was that the long promised Savior was about to be revealed. The *Desire of All Nations* (Haggai 2:7) would soon be appearing—and to reject Him was a very great sin (verse 12).

b. Woes to unrepentant cities (10:13-16)

(10:13-16) "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades. He who hears you hears Me, he who rejects you rejects Me, and he who rejects Me rejects Him who sent Me."

The cities of Palestine that had heard Jesus preach, and had seen the miracles He performed, would pay a high price for their rejection of the Messiah. Jesus said that if the pagan cities of Tyre and Sidon would have had the opportunities that Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum⁹⁶ had, they would have repented long ago (verse 13).

The lesson is this: Light brings responsibility—and the more light the greater the responsibility. The sin of the Galilean cities was the sin of prideful indifference. These people did not attack Jesus. They did not drive Him away from their gates. They did not seek to crucify Him. They were just cold, frozen, and indifferent. They saw lots of things happening, but they were unmoved.

The warning to the Galilean cities shows us the hardness and unbelief of the human heart. It is possible to hear Jesus preach, and to see Him perform many mighty miracles—and still remain unconverted.

c. The return of the seventy (10:17-24)

(10:17-24) Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name." And He said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven." In that hour Jesus rejoiced in the Spirit and said, "I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight. All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him." Then He turned to His disciples and said privately, "Blessed are the eyes which see the things you see; for I tell you that many prophets and kings have desired to see what you see, and have not seen it, and to hear what you hear, and have not heard it."

The seventy disciples returned from their mission rejoicing in the victories they had wrought in Christ's name. The power of Satan⁹⁷ was broken, and the success of the seventy over demons was proof of it (verse 17). Jesus declared that He had beheld "Satan fall like lightning from heaven" (verse 18). Whatever this may say about the origin, activity, and ultimate destiny of Satan—the key thought is that Satan is a defeated foe. The dreaded serpents and the scorpions of the desert can be dangerous, but in the sovereignty of God all the combined forces of evil cannot harm true ambassadors for Christ (verse 19).

We are to rejoice in the assurance of God's care for us, but there is something even more beautiful than that. Jesus encourages His followers to "rejoice because your names are written in heaven."⁹⁸ This means that those who have chosen salvation through Christ are pardoned and have the hope of heaven. Non-believers would not be happy in heaven. They do not appreciate the things of heaven now; without any inward change, they would hardly be comfortable in heaven.

The reason why some folks around us are converted and others remain dead in sins, is shrouded in mystery. The "wise and prudent" (verse 21) likely referred to the scribes, Pharisees, and elders of the Jews who were wise in their own eyes. The "babes" were the fishermen and publicans and other poor and unlearned people. The wisdom of this world often makes people proud, and seems to increase their tendency to reject the gospel message. The simple common people were more generally open to Jesus and His message.

We know that God's sovereignty does not destroy human responsibility because God addresses all human beings as creatures who are accountable, and whose blood will be on their own heads if they are lost. God offers salvation to all (Revelation 22:17). If truth is hidden from some and revealed to others, there must [in the mind of God] be a valid reason.

Jesus implied (verses 22-24) that He is distinct from the Father, yet entirely one with Him. We know more than saints under the old covenant did, yet none can ever know the fullness of the Godhead; it passes finite knowledge.

2. The Parable of the Good Samaritan (10:25-37)

In the midst of Jesus' teaching, a lawyer asked, "Who is my neighbor?" (10:29). Jesus replied in the form of a parable and answered in essence (verses 30-36) with another question, "Do I act *the neighbor* toward those who need my help?"

The Jews in New Testament times seemed to think that *loving one's neighbor* involved only members of one's own race—namely, Jews of unmixed origin, and therefore, not Samaritans or heathen people. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus clearly teaches the truth that nationality (or other considerations) must not limit helping one's neighbor.

(10:25-37) And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" He said to him, "What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?" So he answered and said, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor

as yourself." And He said to him, "You have answered rightly; do this and you will live." But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" Then Jesus answered and said: "A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.' So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?" And he said, "He who showed mercy on him." Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

Jesus had been praying and blessing His disciples, when an expert in the Jewish law (a lawyer) stood up in the crowd and tested Him by asking what he must do to inherit eternal life (verse 25). The lawyer was trying to discredit Jesus and perhaps thought he could outwit the Savior in a public debate. When Jesus asked the lawyer what *the law* said about it, he quoted Deuteronomy 6:5 (which says we are to love God), and he quoted Leviticus 19:18 (which says we are to love our neighbors). Jesus affirmed that response, and said, "Do this and you will live" (verse 28).

The lawyer asked an additional question by saying, "And who is my neighbor?" (verse 29). Jesus responded with a story about a man who traveled from Jerusalem to Jericho. Those who were listening to Jesus were familiar with that stretch of highway. It was a path that twisted and turned down hill for nearly twenty miles. It was a haunt for bandits who hid in nearby caves. They could easily rush out and ambush a traveler, and just as quickly vanish out of sight.

The man traveling on the Jericho road fell into the hands of robbers who stripped him and beat him, and went away leaving him half dead (verse 30). The victim lay on the ground fighting for his life. As the drama unfolds, a Jewish *priest* came along—perhaps on his way home, after serving a term at the Temple worship. But seeing the bloodied victim, the priest made a decision not to help him. Instead he walked to the other side of the road (verse 31), and passed by the injured man. Likely no one saw the priest slip away—that is, no one but God.

The next traveler was a *Levite*—an assistant to the priest at the Temple. He too came and looked at the badly wounded man, and then passed by on the other side (verse 32). He decided also not to get involved. The Levite had spent many hours listening to some of Israel's greatest teachers—but he turned his back on helping people with special needs.

Another person who was traveling toward Jericho that day was "a certain *Samaritan*." Samaritans were despised by full-blooded Jews. Bitterness between the two groups was so intense that Jews often prayed that Samaritans might not have part in the resurrection. Those who heard Jesus speak would not expect a *Samaritan* to bring aid to the wounded Jewish traveler—yet the Samaritan was the one individual who offered help.

The Samaritan was moved with compassion (verse 33), and took immediate action to help the wounded man. He bandaged the man's injuries, and poured oil on the wounds to ease the pain, and rubbed wine over the injuries to cleanse the raw areas. And then he put the man on his own donkey and transported him to an inn (verse 34). Furthermore, the Samaritan arranged to pay the man's expenses for his stay at the inn (verse 35).

In telling the story, Jesus did not directly answer the lawyer's question. Instead, Jesus presented him with another question: "*Which of these three (the priest, the Levite, the Samaritan)—which of these three do you think, was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?*" (verse 36). There is only one answer—and the lawyer was clever enough to truthfully give it. He said in essence: "*The one who showed mercy on the wounded man*" (verse 37a).

Jesus said, [You] "*go and do likewise.*" (The tense of the Greek word in verse 37 speaks of *habitual practice*. That is, "Make a habit of doing as the Samaritan did.")

It is not so much—*Which person is my neighbor?*—but rather, *Let the neighbor be you!* Instead of worrying about whether or not someone else is my neighbor, Jesus says, "*You be a neighbor to those who have need!*"

A *neighbor* is a person who stops and helps anyone, whenever and wherever there is a need. Real neighborliness begins with each of *us*. Disciples of Jesus are to be like the Samaritan, and not like the robbers, or like the priest and the Levite. To the thieves, the traveler on the road to Jericho was a *victim* to exploit. To the priest and the Levite, he was a *nuisance* to avoid; and to the Samaritan, he was a *neighbor* to help.

How can each of us be a Good Samaritan? Sometimes it is not easy. It was *risky* for the Samaritan in this parable. The victim's groans might have been a hoax, designed to catch the kind-hearted Samaritan off guard. Or, when the Samaritan offered first aid, the robbers might have been in hiding, waiting to spring on the person who would help the wounded man. Or, the Samaritan may have known that the priest and Levite passed by without helping, and he could have said, "Why should I get involved when those religious leaders were not willing to take the risk?"

Caring is not only *risky* business; it is also *costly* business. The Samaritan reached into his pocket to pay for the victim's room and board; he likely lost time and pay at his job because of the delay in his travel plans. The fact is, that in order to love people, we must be willing at times to reach into our pockets and help meet the financial needs of unfortunate persons, and sometimes we must be willing to have our schedules interrupted.

The Good Samaritan will always be remembered for his attentive look, his compassionate heart, and his helpful hand. The parable of the Good Samaritan reflects on our responsibility to care for others—whether they be friends or strangers. There are three attitudes we can take:

The attitude of the thief—"what is thine is mine if I can get it."

The attitude of the priest and Levite—"what is mine is mine if I can keep it."

The attitude of the Samaritan—"what is mine is thine if I can share it."

3. The Choices of Mary and Martha (10:38-42)

The home of Mary and Martha and Lazarus was a place Jesus often visited. It was one of those homes which honored the Lord, and was devoted to hospitality. The home was located in Bethany, on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives, only about two miles from Jerusalem. Bethany was the starting point for the Palm Sunday procession, and the place to which Jesus retired for the night when in Jerusalem.

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

The home of Mary and Martha was a home where love prevailed, but it was not without some quarrels and tensions. Luke tells us about a meal that was being prepared for Jesus. Martha and Mary are the principal characters.

Martha wanted everything just right—the living room must be dusted and the drapes must be just so. *Mary* seemed to care little about such details. She did not mind disarranged cushions and things not in their exact place. She would rather sit and interact with the company, than go to a lot of work to make a dainty meal. Both women were faithful disciples of Jesus, but their characters and temperaments differed. Verse 38 says that "Martha welcomed Him into her house." And after the initial greeting, she hurried off to the kitchen to continue the preparation of the meal. Verse 39 says that Mary "sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word."

Mary was drinking in Jesus' words of wisdom; she took advantage of this time to hear what Jesus had to say about the real issues of life here and hereafter. Serving Jesus a meal was not nearly as important to her as sitting at His feet and learning what He had to teach. Meal preparations can be simplified. One nourishing dish is often all that is necessary, rather than spending lots of time preparing elaborate dishes such as those which Martha likely was making.

In verse 40, we read that Martha wanted to give her guests the royal treatment, but she allowed her concern about getting the meal ready to become an irritation and a distraction.⁹⁹ And so she went to Jesus and said, "Don't you care that my sister has left me do all the work? Tell her to help me!" But Jesus responded by saying that she was troubled about many things, and that one thing is needed,¹⁰⁰ and Mary has chosen that good part. The longer we live in this life, and the closer we come to the grave—the more we realize the importance of that truth. The "many things" for which most people are striving, are not really *necessary* things. The point is that there must be a balance between the busyness of life, and the need for meditation at Jesus' feet.¹⁰¹

Unfortunately, when things get busy, usually the first thing to go *is time with the Lord*. The programs of the church and the unending needs of people around us are so pressing—that reading and hearing the Word of God is sometimes neglected. It is a sin to get caught

up with our busy schedules, and fail to take time daily to be alone with God and His Word. Most of us can use a little more Mary and a little less Martha in our lives.

The little home in Bethany did not escape from the trials and tragedies of life. Martha, Mary, and Lazarus dealt with normal anxieties. There was sickness and death and grief. The presence of Jesus in the home *did not exempt them* from these things. But there was also a deep faith as we can see in John 11:27. The presence of Jesus in our homes *will not remove* the realities of life, but His presence will help us to triumph over the crises that come!

11. TEACHINGS, CONTROVERSIES, CORRECTIONS

Luke 11:1-54

The disciples had observed Jesus in prayer, and now they requested that He teach them to pray. He responded by giving them a model prayer, and then contrasted the character of God with an unjust judge. Lastly He taught them to pray with firm assurance that their prayers would be answered.

1. Christ's Teaching on Prayer (11:1-13)

Jesus taught His disciples the so-called *Lord's Prayer*. This is a sample prayer that points out areas of life in which we may come to God for His help to face the issues of life.

(11:1-4) Now it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, that one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples." So He said to them, "When you pray, say: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

There are six petitions in the sample prayer—three relate to God's cause in the world, and the other three to our personal needs. Luke's version of the prayer is a bit shorter than the form given in Matthew's account.¹⁰²

The words "Hallowed be Your name" convey an attitude of *reverence* for the name of God. The phrase "Your kingdom come" calls for an attitude of *submission* to the reign of God. The expression "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" conveys the attitude of *obedience* to God's will as expressed in His Word.

The request, "Give us day by day our daily bread," shows an attitude of *dependence*. The words, "Forgive us our sins," convey an attitude of *penitence*. And the appeal, "Do not lead us into temptation"—is a recognition of our weak-ness in the face of temptation, and thus is a request that God will grant us the power to experience *deliverance* from evil.

The prayer which Jesus taught His disciples reflects our need to seek God's care and to rely on Him day after day.

A friend comes at midnight (11:5-8)

(11:5-8) And He said to them, "Which of you shall have a friend, and go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has come to me on his journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; and he will answer from within and say, 'Do not trouble me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you'? I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs."

Jesus told a parable about a man who received an unexpected guest late at night. The man went to one of his friends and asked to borrow some food for his visitor. The friend

was reluctant to get up at that hour and disturb his family, but because of the man's persistence, he yielded.

The man in bed did not want to incur shame on his community by refusing the needs of a visitor—and just so, our God will always do what is honorable and will hear our appeals. The word "persistence" (Greek, *anaideia*) carries with it the meaning of boldness as well as persistence. By being persistent¹⁰³ in prayer, we are not trying to get a reluctant God to answer our prayers, but we are showing how serious we are about the request. We are to ask and knock.

(11:9-13) "So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!"

God will answer believers who persistently ask, seek, and knock. These words speak of increasing intensity in prayer. "Asking" is *sincere* praying—ordinary conversation with God. "Seeking" is *earnest* praying—speaking to God with urgency. "Knocking" is *desperate* praying—crying out to God when we just don't know which way to turn.¹⁰⁴

In verses 11-13 believers are asked to put themselves in the place of a father. Just as imperfect ("evil") humans would not give a child harmful things, so our gracious God will give His children good things. Since Pentecost, the gift of the Spirit is given to all believers (Acts 10:45; Romans 8:9).

2. The Beelzebub Controversy (11:14-26)

Once again (verse 14) Jesus revealed His divine power by expelling a demon from a man who could not speak. This was a striking miracle and many were amazed.

(11:14-26) And He was casting out a demon, and it was mute. So it was, when the demon had gone out, that the mute spoke; and the multitudes marveled. But some of them said, "He casts out demons by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons." Others, testing Him, sought from Him a sign from heaven. But He, knowing their thoughts, said to them: "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and a house divided against a house falls. If Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? Because, you say I cast out demons by Beelzebub. And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges. But if I cast out demons with the finger of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are in peace. But when a stronger than he comes upon him and overcomes him, he takes from him all his armor in which he trusted, and divides his spoils. He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters. When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when he comes, he finds it swept and put in order. Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first."

Beginning at verse 15, we are told that the Pharisees were moved with jealous rage when they saw Jesus. They tried to diminish the work of Jesus by accusing Him of being in league with Satan, the prince of demons, and the leader of a kingdom of darkness.

The opposition was growing now. As a result of the spectacular healing, *the multitudes marveled* (verse 14). But the *religious leaders* were unwilling to give Jesus credit, and so they declared (verse 15) that Jesus had released the man from bondage by the power of Beelzebub (the prince of devils).¹⁰⁵ But in verses 18-22 Jesus pointed out that their accusation simply did not make sense. It is unreasonable to suppose that the devil would help to pull down his own kingdom, and that Satan would cast out Satan. Surely Satan will not be fighting against himself.

Jesus was casting out demons with the finger of God (verse 20), and not by the power of the evil one. When Satan ("the strong man" in verse 21) is to be restrained—he has to be confronted by One of greater power—One who can bind him. Christ is that superior Power. Jesus was not in league with Satan; He was Satan's Conqueror.

Those who are not with Christ in His warfare against evil are on Satan's side (verse 23). In verses 24-26 Jesus rebuked His faultfinding enemies with the parable of an unclean spirit. The individual who turns from sin, but fails to accept the lordship of Jesus (that is, merely tries to reform his life)—will find that his empty heart is in peril. The last state of that person is worse than the first (2 Peter 2:21-22). The house must *not only* be swept and cleaned; a new tenant must be introduced!

3. A Collection of Brief Teachings (11:27-36)

In this section the Lord Jesus was denouncing a generation that seeks a sign, those who were willfully blind, and those who practiced the mere outward religion of the scribes and Pharisees.

a. Jesus was looking for obedience (11:27-28)

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

At this point, a woman in the crowd interrupted Jesus with an expression of congratulation for the mother of Jesus. In His response, Jesus did not deny His mother a place of blessing, but stressed that *true blessedness* comes from hearing and obeying the Word of God!

b. A generation seeking a sign (11:29-32)

(11:29-32) And while the crowds were thickly gathered together, He began to say, "This is an evil generation. It seeks a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah the prophet. For as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so also the Son of Man will be to this generation. The queen of the South will rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed a greater than Solomon is here. The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here."

Some of the Lord's enemies were telling Him that if He would give them a sign from heaven, they would believe in Him. Jesus refused their demand, calling it an "evil generation" (verse 29), who *unlike* the warlike people of Nineveh, had already been given dozens of signs—but they turned their backs on the signs already given.

The "queen of the South" (verse 31) refers to the queen of Sheba, who praised the God of Israel when she heard of Solomon's wisdom. Nineveh (verse 32) repented at the preaching of Jonah. Now Christ, who is greater, has come, but the Jewish nation to whom He preached refused to repent.

Those who reject Jesus in this age will face a more severe judgment than those who lived in the days of Nineveh and had responded to evidence of God's power.

c. The lamp of the body (11:33-36)

(11:33-36) "No one, when he has lit a lamp, puts it in a secret place or under a basket, but on a lampstand, that those who come in may see the light. The lamp of the body is the eye. Therefore, when your eye is good, your whole body also is full of light. But when your eye is bad, your body also is full of darkness. Therefore take heed that the light which is in you is not darkness. If then your whole body is full of light, having no part dark, the whole body will be full of light, as when the bright shining of a lamp gives you light."

Jesus went on to point out that the inexcusable unbelief of His enemies was not due to shortage of evidence, but to their own indifference and lack of penitence.

A lamp is not lighted to be placed under a basket, but on a lampstand so that many will be benefited by it. In order to perceive God's truth, one must have a healthy eye (verse 34), free from disease. When the light of Christ dwells in the human heart, its influence affects the thoughts, words, and actions of the individual (verse 36).

4. Woe to Pharisees and Scribes (11:37-54)

Although Jesus gave clear evidence that He was the promised Messiah, the Pharisees persisted in their unbelief.

(11:37-44) And as He spoke, a certain Pharisee asked Him to dine with him. So He went in and sat down to eat. When the Pharisee saw it, he marveled that He had not first washed before dinner. Then the Lord said to him, "Now you Pharisees make the outside of the cup and dish clean, but your inward part is full of greed and wickedness. Foolish ones! Did not He who made the outside make the inside also? But rather give alms of such things as you have; then indeed all things are clean to you. But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe the mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass by justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the best seats in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like graves which are not seen, and the men who walk over them are not aware of them."

The religion of the scribes and Pharisees was a mere matter of fulfilling external duties. Their religious practice for the most part did not proceed from the heart¹⁰⁶ and was not an expression of their love for God or their fellow humans.

The Pharisee sect essentially died out in the first century A.D. with the destruction of Jerusalem and the scattering of the Jewish people, but unfortunately, the spirit of the Pharisee has continued throughout the church age.¹⁰⁷

There were several major sins of the Pharisees. One of their sins was *harboring hypocrisy* (verse 39). They pre-tended to be one thing on the outside, but were something different on the inside. Another sin was that of *majoring on minors* (verse 42). They gave attention to many minor details, but neglected the weightier matters of dealing justly with others and walking humbly with God. A third sin was related to their *self-centered attitudes* (verse 43). Their activities were motivated by a strong urge to be noticed by others.

(11:45-54) Then one of the lawyers answered and said to Him, "Teacher, by saying these things You reproach us also." And He said, "Woe to you also, lawyers! For you load men with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers. Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. In fact, you bear witness that you approve the deeds of your fathers; for they indeed killed them, and you build their tombs. Therefore the wisdom of God also said, 'I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will kill and persecute,' that the blood of all the prophets which was shed from the foundation of the world may be required of this generation, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah who perished between the altar and the temple. Yes, I say to you, it shall be required of this generation. Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not enter in yourselves, and those who were entering in you hindered." And as He said these things to them, the scribes and the Pharisees began to assail Him vehemently, and to cross-examine Him about many things, lying in wait for Him, and seeking to catch Him in something He might say, that they might accuse Him.

The term "lawyers" (Greek, *nomikos*) refers to a class of scholars who taught, copied, and interpreted the Jewish law for the people. They were commonly called "scribes." Throughout the Gospel accounts they nearly always appear as opponents of Jesus. In this passage, Jesus pronounced a woe upon the lawyers mostly because by their interpretation of the law, they heaped many man-made rules¹⁰⁸ on the people, which became burdens to keep. These were detailed outward regulations which the scribes themselves often chose not to keep (verse 46).

Jesus censured the scribes for honoring the memory of ancient prophets, but all the while they continued to persecute God's spokesmen in their own day (verses 47-49). The Jewish religious leaders were building tombs and decorating the graves of the Old Testament prophets—and they were quick to say that if they had lived in the time of the Old Testament saints, they would never have shed the blood of those righteous men, yet Jesus knew that while they were saying these very words, *they were plotting to kill Him*.

The expression, "from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah" (verses 51), means essentially, "from the first to the last murder in the Old Testament." The word "key" (verse 52) stood for the responsibility to interpret the law God's way. The Pharisees were to be concerned about the spiritual well-being of the people, but instead, they had rejected the voice of John the Baptist. They also refused to acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah. They were actually discouraging people from following Jesus. Their inconsistencies stood in the way of others who may otherwise have entered the fold and found salvation.

The woes which Jesus pronounced on the religious leaders angered them, and so they confronted Him with many difficult questions (verse 53). They attempted to defend their own reputation by discrediting His (verse 54).

12. TEACHING ABOUT PERSONAL INTEGRITY

Luke 12:1-59

In this chapter Jesus urged His disciples to be people of integrity, thus avoiding hypocrisy. The word "integrity" carries with it the concept of habitual honesty. A Christian marked by integrity is one who seeks to live by biblical truth. Multitudes in our communities long to see persons who are "honest clear through."

1. Fear Not Because God Cares for His Own (12:1-12)

Disciples of Christ are to testify for the Lord even though there are those who will ridicule and oppose the message. God will care for His servants and the Holy Spirit will give words to say when they are taken before the authorities because of their faith.

a. The danger of hypocrisy (12:1-5)

(12:1-5) In the meantime, when an innumerable multitude of people had gathered together, so that they trampled one another, He began to say to His disciples first of all, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known. Therefore whatever you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have spoken in the ear in inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops. And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him!"

Jesus taught that hypocrisy is a despicable sin. A hypocrite *is not* a person who in an unguarded moment occasionally falls short of reaching God's highest standard. A hypocrite *is one who* deliberately uses religion to cover up sin and to promote his own selfish gains. The word *hypocrite* comes from a word which means "an actor who wears a mask." Jesus warned His disciples against play-acting, pretending to be something that they were not. He called hypocrisy "the leaven of the Pharisees" (verse 1).

In verse 2 Jesus says, "There is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known"—that is, no matter how much the Lord's enemies try to defeat our efforts, the truths that are entrusted to God's people will eventually be made known. What the disciples had spoken "in the dark" (in private), will at some time be proclaimed boldly in public places; fear not the reactions of people.

In verses 4-5, Jesus told His disciples¹⁰⁹ not to be afraid, for the heavenly Father watches over those who carry His message. Then Jesus gave another reason why we are not to fear. He said that men can destroy the body, but the human soul they cannot touch. It is God who is able to cast into Hell, the place of eternal fire.¹¹⁰ We are to "fear Him," a term meaning to hold a healthy respect, not a cringing dread.

b. The Lord cares for His own (12:6-12)

(12:6-12) "Are not five sparrows sold for two copper coins? And not one of them is forgotten before God. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows. Also I say to you, whoever confesses Me before men, him the Son of Man also will confess before the angels of God. But he who denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God. And anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but to him who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven. Now when they bring you to the synagogues and magistrates and authorities, do not worry about how or what you should answer, or what you should say. For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say."

In verses 6-7 Jesus encouraged the disciples not to be afraid—because God *is* concerned about His disciples, and He is carefully watching. Sparrows were very common in New Testament Palestine; people ate them for food. It did not cost much to purchase sparrows in the market. Two of them could be bought for a penny, the smallest copper coin—and five sparrows could be bought for two pennies.¹¹¹

We can be sure that God is concerned about all the details of our lives, for He knows the number of the hairs on our heads (verse 7). Certainly there is no need to fear when God is exercising such wonderful care over us.

We are taught in verse 8 that we must confess Christ on earth if we expect Him *to own us* as His people at the last day. We must not be ashamed to let others see that we believe in Christ and love Him, and care more about pleasing Him than about getting the praise of our fellow human beings.

The very difficult warning about blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is given in verse 10. Dishonoring the Son of Man (verses 8-10a) is a serious matter, but to insult the Holy Spirit is even worse. Mark 3:30 makes it clear that to blaspheme the Holy Spirit is to ascribe to Satan what may indeed be of the Lord. Christians must be slow to attribute the work of other groups to the devil, when there is no clear evidence that Satan is at work.

The reminder in verses 11-12 (about *not* preparing ahead of time what to answer), is an instruction for the persecuted, not for preachers! When people are brought before authorities, the preparation of an adequate defense is hardly possible. The Spirit will give words to say.

2. The Parable of the Rich Farmer (12:13-21)

These verses contain a solemn warning against the sin of covetousness.

(12:13-21) Then one from the crowd said to Him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." But He said to him, "Man, who made Me a judge or an arbitrator over you?" And He said to them, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses." Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?' So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.' But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your

soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?' So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

Someone in the crowd asked Jesus to intervene in a family dispute over the sharing of an estate (verse 13). Jesus refused to be drawn into choosing sides (verse 14); instead, He issued a warning about the danger of greed for material things (verse 15), and told a parable about a farmer who became known as a rich fool (verses 16-20).

The issue in the parable is not so much about wealth, as it is about one's attitude toward obtaining it and using it. The man in the account had a bountiful harvest, and he decided to build larger barns to store what had been provided.

The wealthy farmer made three mistakes. The first mistake was that *he mistook himself to be God* (verse 18). The man did not say, "If God permits it, I will build larger barns." Instead, he said, "I will do this; I will pull down my barns and build greater."

The second mistake was that *he mistook his body for his soul* (verse 19). He said, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry." Eating and drinking and making mirth will satisfy the body, but they will never reach the soul.

The third serious mistake was that *he mistook time for eternity* (verse 20). God said to him, "Fool! This night your soul will be required of you." The farmer had been so busy with temporal and fleeting things, that he had no time for abiding and eternal things.

The pronouns "I" and "mine" are used eleven times in the parable. The man speaks of what "I will do" as if he owns it all. He seems to feel no concern for others. The essence of *greed* is to keep what resources God brings one's way almost totally for oneself. Greed piles up stuff simply for one's own use. But Jesus in essence says, "You can't take it with you."

Those who tend to hoard possessions, apparently thinking that this life is all there is—are *not wise*, and certainly are *not rich toward God* (verse 21). This very night life could be snatched from any of us.

3. Warning about Worldly Anxiety (12:22-34)

True trust in the heavenly Father's care is one of the best ways to be delivered from clinging feverishly to earthly possessions. In this passage, Jesus declares that ravens, lilies, and grass have much to teach us about trust.

(12:22-34) Then He said to His disciples, "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; nor about the body, what you will put on. Life is more than food, and the body is more than clothing. Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap, which have neither storehouse nor barn; and God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds? And which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? If you then are not able to do the least, why are you anxious for the rest? Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothes the grass, which today is in the field and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will He clothe you, O you of little faith? And do not seek what you should eat or what you should drink, nor have an anxious mind. For all these things the nations of the world seek after, and your Father knows that you

need these things. But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you. Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell what you have and give alms; provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches nor moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

A person who worries is usually anxious about the necessities of life. Worry is a sin because those who worry are not really trusting God to supply their needs.

Jesus had just warned His disciples against trusting in material goods; now He says we are to trust the heavenly Father for our daily needs. He provides for the wants of the birds, and surely He will order things so that our needs are provided. And so Jesus cautions against a worried fear which takes the joy out of life. To worry about what may happen is really a distrust of God (verse 28).

To provide for the future is not wrong, but to have a *tormenting anxiety* about it is sinful. When describing the nature of simple trust in the heavenly Father, Jesus says we are to consider the birds and the lilies (verses 24-27).¹¹²

To "seek the kingdom of God" (verse 31) means "to live as God's representatives." Followers of Christ are to conduct themselves in such a way that they reflect His righteousness in a world that has no concern about pleasing God.

Treasures *in heaven* (verse 33) include those things done on earth which have an eternal significance. They include such things as doing simple deeds of love for others and giving financially to help support the Lord's work. These activities are laying up treasures in heaven. The command to "sell what you have and give alms" (verse 33) is designed to free man from the grip of possessions. *The antidote for the sin of covetousness is the grace of giving.*

To heap up treasures on earth, and to look at material things *as ours* (verses 33-34), is to focus on the wrong world. Only a firm faith in *the God who cares for us* can free us from the anxiety that is caused by greed and covetousness. To "provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old" (verse 33) implies that in following this modest way of life, we are putting our wealth not in bags which grow old and wear out, but in heavenly purses which are indestructible.

Verse 34 basically says that where we put our time, money, and energy—reveals our true priorities.

4. Watching for the Second Advent (12:35-48)

Jesus repeatedly said that He will return to the earth at some future time. His disciples are to live in a way that honors Him. We are to have our waists girded and our lamps burning, serving while waiting eagerly for His coming.

a. Warnings of Christ's coming (12:35-40)

(12:35-40) "Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning; and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately. Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself

and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them. And if he should come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."

Because the time of the Lord's return is uncertain, the servants of Christ are to have the house lighted and their long robes tied up about their waists (verse 35), so that they might be ready to receive their Master at any hour of the day or night, no matter when He arrives.

In an ancient wedding celebration, the groom first had supper with friends, then went to the house of his bride to claim her, and then returned to his own house. Although it might be late (the second or third watch [9PM—3AM]), the servants were to be ready and waiting (verse 36).

For those who serve the Lord Jesus and await His coming now, there will be a great banquet in Heaven during which He will serve the faithful ones (verse 37). Jesus commends those who are alert and ready to open the door no matter when the bridegroom returns.

b.Parable of testing the servants (12:41-48)

(12:41-48) Then Peter said to Him, "Lord, do You speak this parable only to us, or to all people?" And the Lord said, "Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his master will make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. Truly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all that he has. But if that servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and be drunk, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more."

Jesus answered Peter's question by stating that the Christian life involves watching and waiting for the Lord's return. We are not merely *to wait eagerly* for the Lord's return *and do nothing*. We are to be faithful followers of Christ. There are duties to be discharged and there is work for us to do (verses 42-43). Those who serve well will be given leadership responsibilities (verse 44).

If the attitude of the manager of the household is such that he is unprepared for the master's return, there will be severe treatment.¹¹³

The lesson in verse 48 is this: When the day of reckoning arrives, not all persons will fare alike. There will be differences of reward in Heaven, and just so there will be differences of punishment for unbelievers. Those who know what God expected of them, but failed to obey His Word, will fare worse than those who did not have the advantage of hearing the gospel and knowing what the Lord expects from them. Ignorance of God's laws is not an

acceptable excuse, but ignorant sinners will not be as severely punished as sinners who disregarded the light which God gave them.

5. Jesus is the Cause of Division (12:49-59)

Jesus came "to send fire on the earth," which may refer to the coming of the Holy Spirit, indicated by the words "there appeared...divided tongues, as of fire" (Acts 2:3). Or, it may refer to judgment. While Jesus came primarily to bring salvation (John 3:17), the phrase might be a reference to judgment as noted in John 9:39.

The passage in verses 51-53 indicates that it was not the intention of Jesus to bring the fire of judgment on people who reject Him (He "came to give peace"), yet there will be some who reject Him—and this will lead to a variety of divisions, especially within members of families.

a. Christ brings division (12:49-53)

(12:49-53) "I came to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am till it is accomplished! Do you suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather division. For from now on five in one house will be divided: three against two, and two against three. Father will be divided against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law."

The reference to fire (verse 49) reminds us of the words of John the Baptist, when he said, "One mightier than I is coming...He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire" (Luke 3:16). The baptism *with fire* may refer to the fires of final judgment, or to the fire of the Holy Spirit which consumes more and more of the carnal within us. The Spirit operates like fire to purge the chaff, to cleanse daily defilement, and to *give* the regenerated person new power to do God's will. The reference to "fire" in verse 49 may refer to *purification* as well as to *judgment*.

Jesus refers to "fire" also in verse 50. The death of Jesus was like a baptism of fire. Jesus could not redeem sinful human beings without in some way entering into the fiery judgment of God upon human sin. When Jesus died, He bore the terrible consequences of man's sin, and He was *distressed* until it was all "accomplished" (verse 50b).

In verse 51, Jesus says that family divisions will occur because of differing responses to the salvation that He offers.¹¹⁴ In a family of five, three of the relatives will take one side and two of the family members will take the other side (verses 52-53). Jesus did not come to settle such disputes. Family ties are strong when members are *united* in Christ; family cleavage is sharp when *divided* over Christ.

b. Discern the time (12:54-56)

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

In Matthew 16:1-4, the parallel verses are addressed to the Pharisees and the Sadducees. Luke's account says that Jesus addressed this section to the multitudes. They could read the weather signs, but they were unable to read the spiritual signs to discern what lies ahead.

Jesus chastened them for not interpreting the spiritual signs of the times. The people knew about the weather, but they were totally ignorant about spiritual matters. They saw Him healing the sick and giving sight to the blind. They sensed that enmity against Him was growing. Their *unbelief* was not due to lack of evidence, but to deadness of heart.

c. Make peace with your adversary (12:57-59)

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

These words are a common-sense kind of suggestion, very similar to the account given in Matthew 5:25-26.

There are spiritual and practical reasons for settling differences quickly, and without the delay of going to court. If conflicts are not settled, they may lead to arrest and imprisonment—and in light of the crisis surrounding the trial and death of Jesus, it is wise to settle differences speedily.

Matters between brothers and sisters in Christ are to be settled as quickly and quietly as possible. There is no need to sue at the law and to go to court. God's people are to turn the other cheek, go the second mile, and be eager to become reconciled—rather than to hate, and curse, and resist, and resent, and grumble, and attack.

13. JESUS HEALS, INSTRUCTS, AND WEEPS

Luke 13: 1—14:6

In New Testament times *it was commonly believed* that people who were victims of some kind of disaster were especially great sinners, and for that reason God caused them to suffer immensely in some vast calamity. In Luke 13, Jesus asked questions regarding those who suffered in two recent disasters. He asked in essence, "Do you suppose that those who have suffered in disasters were worse sinners than all others who dwelled in Jerusalem?"

1. The Tower of Siloam (13:1-5)

Jesus rejected the view that victims of calamities were really bad sinners.¹¹⁵ He warned those that brought to Him the report of some Galileans who were brutally murdered by Pilate—that they themselves will perish unless they repent.

(13:1-5) There were present at that season some who told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answered and said to them, "Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish."

Jesus had warned His listeners that they should make things right with God and their fellowmen while there was still time to do it (in Luke 12:54-59). God will one day act in judgment, and Jesus' warning reminded some of His hearers of a recent incident that happened. Pilate, the Roman governor, had massacred a number of Galileans who were worshiping at the temple in Jerusalem.¹¹⁶ Jesus made it clear that just because a group of Galileans had been killed in the temple court by some Roman soldiers, does not mean that they had been more sinful than other people.

Jesus continued by reminding His complacent audience about another case—the tower in Siloam (verse 4) which had recently fallen and killed eighteen people. Jesus said that no one should conclude that those victims were especially sinful. The lesson to be learned from these examples is that someone's illness or accident, does not mean that those persons are sinful above other people, but that death is coming to all of us—and every person needs to repent and by simple faith trust in Jesus Christ as personal Savior.¹¹⁷

Jesus clearly asserts that tragedies are not the consequence of specific sins. Jesus did not give an explanation for the "why" of calamities. He only declared that our time might be short, and *we are to repent* while there is an opportunity. The word "repent" is used twice in this section of five verses, and is a key concept in the New Testament.¹¹⁸

2. The Parable of the Barren Fig Tree (13:6-9)

For three years the owner of a certain fig tree observed that the tree did not bear any fruit. He determined to pull it out and replace it, but the gardener urged giving it another chance. Jesus used this example to stress the point that God will not allow fruitlessness to continue indefinitely.

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

This parable should be understood as teaching that Israel's failure to carry out God's purpose, led to His decision to replace Israel with Gentiles in His work of redemption. As a fruitless fig tree, Israel was to be cut down and replaced by others who would bear fruit for Him (Matthew 21:41-45).

In the parable, Jesus teaches that God often gives humans another chance. But eventually the time of God's grace comes to a close; the hour of judgment arrives; the empty tree must be cut down and delivered to the flames. God's patience is great but His judgment is sure to come.

Luke includes this parable instead of *the cursing* of the fig tree found only in Matthew 21:18-21 and Mark 11:12-14.

3. Healing the Cripple on the Sabbath (13:10-17)

Jesus was teaching in a synagogue one day and saw a woman nearly doubled over, bent by a curvature of the spine, and healed her. The Sabbath issue was a major cause for discussion earlier in Luke 6:1-11.

(13:10-17) Now He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And behold, there was a woman who had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bent over and could in no way raise herself up. But when Jesus saw her, He called her to Him and said to her, "Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity." And He laid His hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God. But the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath; and he said to the crowd, "There are six days on which men ought to work; therefore come and be healed on them, and not on the Sabbath day." The Lord then answered him and said, "Hypocrite! Does not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or donkey from the stall, and lead it away to water it? So ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound—think of it—for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath?" And when He said these things, all His adversaries were put to shame; and all the multitude rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by Him.

Jesus healed the poor woman whose spine was so curved that she couldn't straighten up (verse 11b); she was set free from years of suffering. The healing brought great joy to the woman (verse 13b), but the ruler of the synagogue was upset and angered because the healing occurred on the Sabbath (verse 14). He said they should come and get healed

on any of the other six days, but not on the Sabbath. According to traditional laws of the Jews, the practice of medicine (or of any kind of healing) on the Sabbath was illegal. The many Sabbath laws were burdensome to the people.

Jesus called the leader of the synagogue a "hypocrite" (verse 15), and reminded him that the Jews typically take their animals out of the stable on the Sabbath and water them. They could "work" on the Sabbath by loosing an ox (or a donkey) and leading it to a watering place. By doing that they showed more concern for thirsty animals than they did for suffering people. *Is it unreasonable then*, for this woman who has been bound by Satan for all these years, to be released from her bonds of illness on the Sabbath (verse 16)?¹¹⁹ There was no answer for the clear logic which Jesus presented. The hypocrites were brought to shame, and the multitude rejoiced at all the glorious things which Jesus was doing (verse 17).

4. Parables of Mustard Seed and Leaven (13:18-21)

These verses begin a series of kingdom parables. They suggest that *while* the kingdom¹²⁰ begins in an insignificant fashion, it will expand to larger proportions. But the parables also remind readers that not all which seems a part of the growth is a true extension of the kingdom.

(13:18-21) Then He said, "What is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it? It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and put in his garden; and it grew and became a large tree, and the birds of the air nested in its branches." And again He said, "To what shall I liken the kingdom of God? It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened."

The *mustard seed* is a picture of the development of the professing church, from a small beginning into a giant ecclesiastical power. From a very humble beginning, centered on a despised and crucified Man from Nazareth, there has grown the tremendous organization known as Christendom, which is world-wide in its scope. From a handful of people in the first century, it has grown to include a great multitude of people from many nations.

The *leaven* (verse 21) is yeast. In Scripture and in secular literature, leaven is usually a symbol for evil. The parable (if it refers to evil) teaches that the visible church will become more and more corrupt as time goes on, until it is largely permeated with false teaching (compare Matthew 16:11-12). However, it is not necessary to hold that the leaven *always* represents evil.¹²¹ Some Bible teachers believe that the leaven represents the inward transformation, which the message of the gospel gradually produces in the hearts of men and women when the message of Christ crucified is proclaimed.¹²² Leaven works silently from the inside and wields amazing transforming power.

The two parables in verses 18-21 belong together. The object of the parables is that God's rule is like what happens when a man plants a small mustard seed in a garden, or a woman puts a bit of leaven in some flour. The seed becomes a tree-size plant, and the leaven in the flour produces a massive change either for good or for evil.

5. Enter in By the Narrow Door (13:22-30)

The most profound subject to enter the human mind, centers on the matter of eternal salvation. Multitudes today are *not* interested in the things of God. At some future time they will become keenly interested, but then it will be too late to come into a right relationship with God. The truth is that the door to heaven will not always remain open.

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

Jesus did not give a direct answer to the question about the number who would be saved (verses 23-24).¹²³ It is *not* important for any person to know how many people are going to be saved. It is important instead for all individuals to make certain that they have a right relationship with God.

Some expected to gain heaven because they were Jews (just as today there are those who base their hopes on church membership). Jesus illustrates the need for preparation to meet God by stating that the gate to eternal life is "narrow" (Greek, *stenes*)¹²⁴ and that we must "strive" to enter it (verse 24).¹²⁵ The word translated "strive" speaks of intense desire and effort.¹²⁶ The fact that some who were speaking to Jesus would be "thrust out" (verse 28b) indicates that not all in the crowd were saved.

In verses 25-27, Jesus abruptly moves from the image of a narrow gate to that of a great feast in the home of a householder, who at a given hour will close the door. Jesus, as the "Master of the house" lets an open door of invitation for all who wish to enter—but a time is set when the door will be closed (verse 25). Some will knock, and claim that because they had table fellowship with Him and heard Him teach in their towns (verse 26), they deserve entrance. The workers of "iniquity" [literally, "unrighteousness"] (verse 27) are not necessarily people who had been extremely wicked, but those who sought righteousness through conformity to the law. Exclusion from the kingdom leads to deep sorrow.

Verses 28-29 portray the messianic banquet¹²⁷ which will announce the joys of the age when the Messiah will rule on earth. Not only will great men from Israel's history (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the prophets) be present, but people from nations in all parts of the earth will be present. The "last who will be first" (verse 30a) likely refers to *Gentiles*, who in the opinion of the *Jews* would be at the bottom of any list. The "first who will be last" (verse 30b) would then refer to some of the *Jews*, who because of their rejection of the Messiah, will be of a lower rank than the despised *Gentiles*.

6. The Lament Over Jerusalem (13:31-35)

Herod was troubled by reports of the miracles which Jesus was performing. The Pharisees gave a warning to Jesus when He was on His way to Jerusalem that He had now entered Herod's territory

(13:31-33) On that very day some Pharisees came, saying to Him, "Get out and depart from here, for Herod wants to kill You." And He said to them, "Go, tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected.' Nevertheless I must journey today, tomorrow, and the day following; for it cannot be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem."

Some of the Pharisees warned Jesus to leave the region because of danger from Herod. The motives for this action are not clear.¹²⁸ Jesus used the term "fox" to point to Herod's cunning nature, but Herod could not keep Him from doing His work anymore than the Pharisees could. The "today and tomorrow, and the third day" may be taken literally. Jesus had been journeying toward Jerusalem and that goal may be "perfected" (verse 32)—completed in three days.

If the expression is a symbol, then it represents the time of present opportunity in Jesus' ministry, and includes a reminder that the opportunity will soon be over.

(13:34-35) "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate; and assuredly, I say to you, you shall not see Me until the time comes when you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!'"

The cry "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem" was a cry of anguish. These words reveal our Lord's compassion and love for the people of Israel. Like a mother hen which gathers her brood under her wings—Jesus would have gathered the people of Jerusalem under His care and protection, but they were not willing to accept the Savior's love. They rejected Him, and in doing that, their house was *left desolate* (verse 35).

The "house" may refer to the city of Jerusalem, or to the temple in Jerusalem. The house left "desolate" is likely referring to the time when the temple was destroyed in 70 A.D. The Jews were expelled when the Roman army officer Titus put down the Israeli rebellion against Rome.

Jerusalem was intended to be a city where God was worshiped and where peace prevailed, but it had become a city noted for killing the prophets, and would eventually be the place where Jesus was crucified. The people had more and more ignored God and became blind to Him. No wonder the Lord Jesus was grieved over the city and predicted the demise of the temple in Jerusalem.

7. Sabbath Healing in a Pharisee's House (14:1-6)

In Luke 7 the story of another dinner party at which Jesus was the guest of a Pharisee is found.

(14:1-6) Now it happened, as He went into the house of one of the rulers of the Pharisees to eat bread on the Sabbath, that they watched Him closely. And behold, there was a certain

man before Him who had dropsy. And Jesus, answering, spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?" But they kept silent. And He took him and healed him, and let him go. Then He answered them, saying, "Which of you, having a donkey or an ox that has fallen into a pit, will not immediately pull him out on the Sabbath day?" And they could not answer Him regarding these things.

Just before Jesus arrived in Jerusalem for the final time, He accepted the invitation to dinner at a Pharisee's house, the home of a "ruler"¹²⁹ of the Pharisees.

The opening verse of Luke 14 explains that Jesus was dining in the home of a highly respected Pharisee—on a Sabbath day. The occasion was rather tense because those who were attending were watching Jesus closely. They wanted to see how He would deal with a certain man who was present—a man who had a physical ailment known as *dropsy* (verse 2). Dropsy was a disease that led to the swelling of the body due to the retention of excessive liquids.

Jesus questioned those who were watching Him (the Pharisees and the students of the Mosaic Law)—and asked them: "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?" (verse 3). They were silent (verse 4), so Jesus healed the man.

The Pharisees were watchdogs who perhaps planted a sick man in the house to see whether Jesus would heal again on the Sabbath. And then Jesus asked the critics what they would do if an ox or a donkey fell into a pit on the Sabbath day? He said, "*Will [you] not immediately pull him out [of the pit] on the Sabbath day?*" (verse 5b). They continued to remain silent. Their silence indicated their *disapproval* of the Lord's action in healing on the Sabbath.

Jesus directed the question about healing on the Sabbath, to the lawyers¹³⁰ and to the Pharisees¹³¹ who were present at the meal. The religious leaders did not answer the question because they knew Jesus would heal the man, and they hoped to use that action against Jesus.

For more on the Sabbath healing, see the comments on Luke 6:6-9, Luke 13:10-17, and Matthew 12:9-13.¹³² The rabbis had 39 sets of 39 laws regarding the Sabbath. That is a reminder of the little boy whose mother had just put him to bed with strict orders to keep quiet and not beg for a single thing. However, he did have one question to ask: "Can I think?" Sometimes the smothering and stifling weight of the Pharisaic legislation must have tempted some Jews to inquire, "Can we breathe?"

14. PARABLES AND TEACHINGS

Luke 14:7-35

Jesus told several parables to teach a number of important lessons. The first parable (14:7-14) is a lesson on humility. The second parable (14:15-24) is an example of the compelling invitation to come to Christ for salvation.

1. The Parable on Reserved Seats (14:7-14)

In New Testament times, the guests at a formal dinner reclined on couches around a low table, leaning on their left elbows, and seated according to their status.

(14:7-11) So He told a parable to those who were invited, when He noted how they chose the best places, saying to them: "When you are invited by anyone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in the best place, lest one more honorable than you be invited by him; and he who invited you and him come and say to you, 'Give place to this man,' and then you begin with shame to take the lowest place. But when you are invited, go and sit down in the lowest place, so that when he who invited you comes he may say to you, 'Friend, go up higher.' Then you will have glory in the presence of those who sit at the table with you. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Jesus told a parable when He noticed how the dinner guests tried to sit in places of special honor (verse 7). He explained that *when invited to a banquet*, it is unwise to select places of honor, for somebody of greater social standing may come along and be ushered to one of the select seats (verse 8). Those who sat in places of importance might be asked to move to some other spot, and that could be very humiliating (verse 9). It is much wiser to take the lowest place, and then later, perhaps be invited to "go up higher" (verse 10). Usually the places immediately to the right and the left of the host were considered places of greatest importance. The most distinguished guests usually were seated close to the host.

Those who attended the wedding feast and scrambled for the best seats, showed a lack of humility. In verse 11, Jesus summarized the universal application: *"Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."* This parable exhibiting a unique example of humility is found only in the Gospel of Luke.

Jesus says that we should be satisfied with the most humble places in life. Those *who exalt themselves* are really arrogant people who would rather talk than listen to others. They often dominate the conversation when in a group of people, implying that others are less experienced than they are. Truly humble people understand their limitations and do not seek to become the center of attention.

The point of the lesson—is that, in God's kingdom, *humility* is the pathway to promotion. On the Day of Judgment, those who are proud in this life will be humbled; by way of contrast, those who are humble will be exalted.¹³³

(14:12-14) Then He also said to him who invited Him, "When you give a dinner or a supper, do not ask your friends, your brothers, your relatives, nor rich neighbors, lest they also invite you back, and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind. You will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just."

In verses 12-14 Jesus gave instructions about the classes of people who should be invited into our homes for meals. Jesus recommended to the host, that in giving a supper, he should *not* invite his friends, relatives, and rich neighbors (verse 12). Instead, he should invite the poor, maimed, lame, and blind (verse 13). The second group of people would be those who are often spurned by society, and are those who could not offer a return meal.

To invite the unfortunate people of verse 13 is to serve those who do not scramble for position. Indeed, many of them, because of their physical condition, will need help even to get to the table. Nor could they repay the host by a return invitation—but he will be repaid in at least two ways.

He will be blessed by a sense of gratification from having helped those who really need the food, and he will be blessed by the realization that he will be repaid at the time of the resurrection of the just (verse 14b).

To give a meal and receive a return invitation is to experience only a *temporal* reward. To help the needy (with no thought of a return benefit), is to experience an *eternal* reward. Luke concerned himself especially with people who were neglected by many in His day.

2. The Parable on the Rejected Invitation (14:15-24)

The parable about the wedding feast for the son of a king (in Matthew 22:1-14) is very similar to this one.

(14:15-24) Now when one of those who sat at the table with Him heard these things, he said to Him, "Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God!" Then He said to him, "A certain man gave a great supper and invited many, and sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited, 'Come, for all things are now ready.' But they all with one accord began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused.' And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused.' Still another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' So that servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind.' And the servant said, 'Master, it is done as you commanded, and still there is room.' Then the master said to the servant, 'Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. 'For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper.'"

This section begins when one of the guests at the meal declared to Jesus that those who get to "eat bread in the kingdom of God" shall be "blessed" (verse 15).

Then Jesus told a story illustrating how the guests who eventually will get to attend the heavenly banquet, are not necessarily the ones who were expected.

In the parable, a man plans "a great supper" (verse 16) and makes certain that his friends are notified beforehand. When the time comes for the actual meal, he sends a servant to alert the guests that the time has just about arrived (verse 17). It was customary in ancient times for a second invitation to go out once the meal was about ready.¹³⁴

Amazingly enough, *one invited guest* declined because he wanted to check out a new "piece of ground" that he had purchased (verse 18). It should have been checked before he bought it! Furthermore, this was an invitation *to an evening meal*; it would seem more reasonable to check the ground in daytime rather than at nighttime. This man is a picture of those people who have large possessions and whose belongings take nearly all their attention, and thus rob them of spiritual wealth.

The *second man* (when invited to the sumptuous supper) absented himself by saying that he wanted to test "five yoke of oxen" which he had recently bought (verse 19). The man bought ten oxen and he wanted to try them out.¹³⁵ This man's excuse represents those who are so absorbed in their businesses and/or occupations, that they allow very little time to care for the concerns of the soul.

The *third man's excuse* was the most asinine of all. He said, "I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come" (verse 20). Why didn't he take his wife with him? She would have enjoyed a pleasant night eating out! He could at least *have asked her to go*—but the fact is, he did not want to go, and so he manufactured an excuse.

Each of these men was immersed in worldly and selfish interests, and just did not want to be bothered. People have no better excuses *now* than they had *then*. The same invitation that was extended to the folks in this story from years ago—is extended to the human family today. The Lord says, "Come, for all things are now ready" (verse 17).

Jesus died—the Just One *dying for us the unjust ones that* He might bring us to God. He pleads with every lost soul—"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). But multitudes respond to the invitation in much the same way as *those did* who were invited to a meal in the parable recorded in Luke 14. They make excuses.

When the host learned from his servant that those who had been invited, were not coming, he became angry (verse 21) and opened his doors to those who would welcome his invitation. After all, the food was prepared and the table was set, and it should not go to waste. Thus, instead of hosting a supper party for well-to-do people, he called in "the poor and...the lame and the blind" (verse 21)—and there was still enough room for more.

Then the host *gave a second call*—inviting whomever he might be able to gather from "the highways and hedges." The words, "compel them to come in" (verse 23), do not imply the use of force, but are another way of saying, "Show them that it is necessary to come in." Those who were invited to come to the banquet, but made excuses and turned down the gracious invitation—now, by their own choice, are uninvited—and have lost a relationship with someone who really cared for them. Verse 24 says that "none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper." The application is obvious: *Every time individuals delay the matter of accepting Christ, they become more indifferent, and more unresponsive to the gospel message.*

3. The Cost of Kingdom Discipleship (14:25-35)

Many want to follow Jesus, but want to follow personal preferences as well. Jesus used the examples of a farmer who started out with the task of building a tower (a watch-tower in a vineyard), and also of a king going to fight a war without considering the cost—to awaken His disciples to sense the need for considering *the cost of following Him*.

(14:25-27) Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them, "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple."

Some who followed Jesus wanted to hear His teachings and see His miracles, but Jesus sensed that many followers were insincere and shallow, and so He spoke to the people about the demanding nature of discipleship.¹³⁶

The word "hate" (verse 26) is a strong word that can refer to a harsh hostile attitude toward others, but here it is used in a comparative sense—meaning that compared to devotion for Christ, every other devotion must become secondary. We are to love Jesus far more than our parents or anyone else. Jesus knows that those who claim loyalty to Him will find that conflict sometimes arises in the home, because those who will not follow Christ will sometimes feel threatened by those who do follow Him.¹³⁷

To bear one's "cross" (verse 27) speaks about the re-proach and the contempt that will be experienced when we decide to follow Jesus and live for Him. There is a stigma that goes along with being identified with Jesus.

(14:28-35) "For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it—lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace. So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple. Salt is good; but if the salt has lost its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land nor for the dunghill, but men throw it out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

The person who starts a project, and does not have the energy or finances to finish, becomes an object of ridicule (verses 28-30). The king planning a military campaign without much forethought (verses 31-32) is an example of a leader who underestimates the strength of his enemy, and must therefore submit to the enemy's terms of peace.

It is important before making significant decisions in life, to sit down first and count the cost, being certain that we are willing to abandon our lives wholeheartedly to Christ. If we start out, and then fizzle along the way—onlookers will tend to mock. To take a vow to follow Christ is an important step; we must not be flippant and insincere in our decision. We are to abandon our lives wholeheartedly to Christ.¹³⁸

Attending church services on Sunday morning is a cheap and easy work, but to sincerely follow Jesus day after day requires much self denial. True Christianity is an all-out

commitment to Jesus Christ. *The key concept of the passage is that it costs something to be a Christian.*

There is a genuine form of discipleship which is like "salt" (verses 34-35) that preserves and makes palatable. There is a false (insincere) form of discipleship that does nothing to flavor the message of the gospel.

15. THE CONCERN OF GOD FOR THE LOST

Luke 15:1-32

The fifteenth chapter of Luke is one of the best known and most dearly loved of all the chapters of the Bible. Jesus told three parables in response to a complaint by the scribes and Pharisees that He was too friendly to tax collectors and sinners. They said, "*This Man receives sinners and eats with them*" (15:2). They could not understand His concern and passion for lost and sinful human beings.

1. The Parable of the Lost Sheep (15:1-7)

The purpose of these parables is to teach the Lord's disciples about God's loving concern for all people. Every human being is a soul created in the image of God, and will be accountable to Him on the Judgment Day.

(15:1-7) Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him. And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, "This Man receives sinners and eats with them." So He spoke this parable to them, saying: "What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!' I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance."

The introductory question was addressed directly to the complaining Pharisees. Jesus said that if a shepherd has a hundred sheep and one of them is lost, the shepherd will leave the ninety-nine and search for the one that is missing (verse 4), and when the missing sheep is found, the shepherd will carry it home on his shoulders, and call upon his fellow shepherds to share in his joy (verses 5-6). In the same way, the eternal God rejoices over the recovery of (even one tax collector) who responds in faith to the message of Jesus.¹³⁹

Instead of criticizing Jesus, those who listened to Him and observed Him should have rejoiced, as the angels did, when a single lost sheep was brought into the fold.

2. The Parable of the Lost Coin (15:8-10)

Sometimes Jesus used duplicate stories to illustrate one common truth. The parables of the lost sheep and of the lost coin both represent the truth that the angels in heaven rejoice when one person is converted to Christ.

(15:8-10) "Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? And when she has found it, she calls her friends and neighbors together, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I lost!' Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

This parable teaches the same lesson as the one just before it—only the details are different. In this parable, the woman lost a coin which had some buying power, and was trying to find it. The houses had only a few small windows, and so she lighted a lamp, swept the floor, and looked carefully—seeking to find the coin.¹⁴⁰

3. The Parable of the Lost Son (15:11-32)

Jesus tells the story of a young man who was getting tired of home. He apparently did not appreciate all that his father and his mother were doing for him.

(15:11-19) Then He said: "A certain man had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.' So he divided to them his livelihood. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living. But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want. Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.'"

The parable of the prodigal son is perhaps the most tender and the most humanly touching story that has ever been told. The parable is found only in the book of Luke. The word "prodigal" means "wasteful."

In the parable, Jesus told about a man who "had two sons" (verse 11). The younger son told his father that he wants the portion of goods that will fall to him (verse 12). In other words, "I need my inheritance, and I need it now." The young boy was tired of staying at home; he hoped to be free from parental restraints. He was convinced that he knew more than his parents, and that the spiritual surroundings of his home were preventing him from having a good time, and were keeping him from becoming a real success in life.

The younger son knew that one-third of his parents' estate would be his when his father died (Deuteronomy 21:17), but he wanted his portion now. Surely the father was insulted by the attitude of the restless son. It likely meant selling some property and converting it into cash. The father would likely have done better by saying "No" to the request, but he was moved by kindness and grace—and so gave the money which the son requested.

The conceited young man took off toward a distant country; he wanted to "sow his wild oats," but had not yet learned that one of God's laws is that we reap what we sow! The "far country" (verse 13) was somewhere beyond Israel's borders. It may have been the city of Rome. The term, "wasted his possessions with prodigal living," means that he was attracted by the allurements of the world and misused his money. He had his fling, investing his life in sinful pleasures.

The young man spent his money, and very soon his inheritance was all gone. He was without money, without a job, and now without friends. After the prodigal's money ran out, a "severe famine" struck the area (verse 14). Famines were common in the semi-arid Mid-East, but the young man experienced a famine in his heart also.

The only job the young man could find was to help a farmer tend pigs. He was so desperately in need that he was at the point of eating with the pigs, even though the pods that they fed on did not have much food value.

When he left home he thought he was going to be free; instead, he found himself in the worst kind of bondage. He squandered his money; lost his fortune, dissipated his life—and now he was feeding pigs. (Imagine a Jewish boy, brought up to despise the hog, now landing a job tending pigs?) But that was not the worst. The text says that the young man almost starved to death ["I perish with hunger!"] (verse 17).

The young man's friends had forsaken him now. His reveling was over; his money was spent; his companions were gone. In the midst of his poverty, the prodigal began to think of the home he had left sometime earlier.¹⁴¹ His sense of values had been twisted, but now he was seeing life more clearly, and from a spiritual point of view. He saw that he was not only destitute, but that he had sinned against God and his family. He "came to himself"—that is, he reflected on what happened since he left home: he remembered the days of childhood when he used to play with his older brother; he remembered the bedtime prayers that his mother taught him when he was a little boy; he remembered the morning when he had left home. He did not stop with thinking, however. His thoughts brightened into a resolution. He said, "I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven¹⁴² and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'" (verses 18-19).

(15:20-24) "And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' And they began to be merry."

And so, the son, in a spirit of penitence, decided to make a journey back home. The young man turned back, but the journey homeward was not like the journey coming away *from* home. His pockets then were full of money; he was wearing good clothes; he was anticipating the good time he would have in the far country. Now he was tired, ragged, and dirty; there was only *a spark* of hope in his heart; he hoped his father would forgive him.

Then one day, he came to the top of the hill that overlooked his old home place—and he saw the farm-house lying peacefully in the valley below. His father may have been sitting on the front porch, resting after a day of hard work; we don't know the setting. His father saw him coming in the distance, and the text says the father *ran* toward the boy, and fell on his neck and kissed him (verse 20). The young man had completely underestimated his father's love!

The prodigal quickly made a sincere confession. He said, "I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son" (verse 21). And he was going to say still more; he was going to say, "Make me like one of your hired servants" (verse 19b), but the father did not let him finish the confession. Instead, the father called

his servants and said, "Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet, and bring the fatted calf...and let us eat and be merry" (verses 22-23).¹⁴³

This is a picture of what happens when sinners come home to God. When people repent, and turn from sin, and start toward Jesus—the heavenly Father rushes out, joyfully welcomes them, and fills their lives with good things!

The parable of the prodigal son pictures God as One who delights to forgive. He longs to see people lay aside sin and come to repentance. Those who were once dead receive new life in Christ and are changed persons (verse 24).

(15:25-32) "Now his older son was in the field. And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and because he has received him safe and sound, your father has killed the fatted calf.' But he was angry and would not go in. Therefore his father came out and pleaded with him. So he answered and said to his father, 'Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends. But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.' And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.'"

The older brother returned from working in the field, and when he learned what had happened, and sensed that music and dancing (verse 25)¹⁴⁴ was taking place because his prodigal brother had returned home, his heart was filled with jealousy and anger, and he refused to go in (verse 28).

The "older brother" in the family was critical and envious of the younger brother, and refused to join in the party which celebrated the prodigal's return (verse 28).¹⁴⁵ In essence, he said to his father, "I have worked hard all these years, and you have never made a party for me" (verse 29).

The older brother was just as much a prodigal as the young man. When the younger brother came back from *the far country of worldly pleasures*, the older brother went out into *the far country of bitter resentment*. Note, however, that the father treated both sons with tenderness and affection. The reaction of the older brother was like that of the scribes and Pharisees (see verses 1-2). Believers will seek to avoid the error of the younger brother, and also the displeasure and envy of the older brother.

The "elder brother attitude" is always wrong. The true Christian will always rejoice when a sinner repents; he will never look coldly on some poor sinner who staggers to the throne of God in order to find mercy. The conversion of one single soul is the raising of that soul from the dead (verse 32), and that pleases God. It should also please each member of the entire family of God.

God's love¹⁴⁶ for human beings is demonstrated not only in that He took the initiative in sending Jesus to die in our place as a Substitute, but He continues to show incredible love for each individual human being.

16. HANDLING MONEY AND POSSESSIONS

Luke 16:1-31

Jesus taught the disciples to be so free from greed, and so full of unselfish love, that they would readily share their material goods with those who were in need. The parable is about a *dishonest* steward who faced dismissal, and then engaged in fraud in order to guarantee his own financial future. The steward was charged with inefficiency, and with wasting the goods of the rich man whom he served.

1. The Dishonest Steward (16:1-13)

At first reading, the parable appears to hold up a *thorough scoundrel* as a model to be imitated, which of course completely misses the point. Jesus did not tell the story to encourage fraud or deceit, but rather, to urge disciples to be wise managers of their wealth and possessions.

(16:1-9) He also said to His disciples: "There was a certain rich man who had a steward, and an accusation was brought to him that this man was wasting his goods. So he called him and said to him, 'What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your stewardship, for you can no longer be steward.' Then the steward said within himself, 'What shall I do? For my master is taking the stewardship away from me. I cannot dig; I am ashamed to beg. I have resolved what to do, that when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.' So he called every one of his master's debtors to him, and said to the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' And he said, 'A hundred measures of oil.' So he said to him, 'Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.' Then he said to another, 'And how much do you owe?' So he said, 'A hundred measures of wheat.' And he said to him, 'Take your bill, and write eighty.' So the master commended the unjust steward because he had dealt shrewdly. For the sons of this world are more shrewd in their generation than the sons of light. And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home."

The word "disciples" (verse.1) is used in a broad sense, not merely of the Twelve, but of all sympathetic followers of Christ. The "rich man" (verse 1) was a wealthy landowner. He was likely one of the absentee landlords in Palestine who entrusted his land to stewards.

The "steward" (verse 1) was the manager of the rich man's property. He had administrative responsibility over the tenant farmers. He would receive from the tenant farmers an agreed-upon percentage of their crops as rent for the land. The steward in the story Jesus told was unfaithful, and was caught misusing the owner's funds. He was accused of "wasting his [master's] goods."

The steward's dishonesty was uncovered. He was called into the owner's presence (verse 2); an accounting was demanded and he was told that he could no longer be manager of the household.

As a result, the steward was in a terrible predicament. There was no severance pay, no unemployment check, and there were no food stamps. As he thought about his situation,

he said to himself, "What shall I do? For my master is taking the stewardship away from me" (verse 3). The present tense of the verb indicates that he was not fired on the spot, but he knew it would not be long until he lost his job.

The steward admitted that he was too lazy to dig, and he was ashamed to beg; so he decided to steal! He resolved to use what little time he had left to make sure that he would have friends *to take him in* when his job was ended (verse 4). He would win the friendship of the owner's debtors by reducing the amount they owed. In this way, they might provide favors for him at some future time, in return for his generosity in the past.

So the steward (the manager) called upon every one of the master's debtors, and decreased the amount of debt which each one owed his master. Since his signature was still good, the steward reduced the bill of each tenant farmer. The result would be that they looked upon him with favor. Most of us like a store clerk that gives us a discount!

In verses 5-6, he changed one bill from 100 measures of oil, to 50 measures. In verse 7, he reduced another bill from 100 measures of wheat to 80 measures.¹⁴⁷ The debtors likely assumed that the note-changing action was legitimate, and that the steward had talked to the owner, and that he was given permission to change the amounts.

The key to the parable is the master's statement in the first part of verse 8. He praised the steward, not for his theft, but for his foresight—not for his dishonesty, but for his shrewdness. The steward had used his present opportunity to provide for his future! Verse 8 says that "the master commended the unjust steward because he had dealt shrewdly." (KJV translates the text "he had done wisely.")

Some think that "the master" (verse 8) refers to the owner of the property (the "rich man" in the parable); others believe that the words symbolically refer to our Lord Jesus Christ. If the "rich man" (the "master") in the parable represents the Lord Jesus, it is proper to say *that Jesus* commended the steward for his foresight and his decisive action in preparing for his future.

Jesus took this man's foresight and shrewdness (wicked as it was)—as an illustration of an important quality that is needed in the Christian life. *It is our Lord's desire* that all true believers would be as clever and devoted *in spiritual matters* as this man was clever in making preparation for his future.

Jesus is not telling us to become worldly minded or crooked. He is stating an obvious fact: In worldly matters, worldly people are often more shrewd (and more forward-looking) than God's children are in matters affecting their everlasting salvation. We talk about heaven, and sing about streets of gold—but our building projects sometimes make it look like we are planning to stay here on earth forever.

Another statement in the text that is difficult to interpret is found in verse 9. Jesus says, "*Make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home.*" The NEB translation says, "*Use your worldly wealth to win friends for yourselves, so that when money is a thing of the past, you may be received into an eternal home.*" The phrase "unrighteous mammon" does not mean money gained in an unlawful way, but refers to money itself, the wrong use of which leads to much of the evil in the world.

The phrase "when *you* fail" (verse 9) is better translated "when *it* fails"—that is, it speaks of a time when money and material things will no longer be meaningful. Jesus says that we should use just as much diligence and wisdom in pre-paring for our eternal future, as the unjust steward did in preparing for his temporal affairs. And Jesus says further, that we should use our wealth and possessions to win eternal friends. If we give generously from the financial resources which God enables us to earn, in making a living, and if we give for the furtherance of the gospel—when we die, *those who have been benefitted* by the big-hearted kindness of our giving will welcome us as new arrivals into God's kingdom and we will be especially blessed.

Money (mammon) will one day fail, but those who were influenced for Christ will be waiting in heaven to receive *with a welcome* those who invested their funds in the Lord's work. The latter part of verse 9 says, "They (will) receive you (welcome you) into an everlasting home." The unjust steward, by his financial dealings, made friends for himself, so that he would be welcomed into their homes. God wants us, by our financial dealings, to make friends for ourselves, so that we will be welcomed into the heavenly home!¹⁴⁸

And so, when Jesus says (verse 9), "Make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon"—He is not telling us to make friends of wealth, or to fall in love with money, but we are to make friends by means of it. Friends for eternity will be ours because of the wise use of our temporal means, giving to worthy ministries in the spirit of Christian love and concern for lost souls. All believers will want to meet people in heaven, who came to Christ for salvation because we helped to pay the bill. Instead of hanging on to possessions that will soon disappear, it is wise to give possessions away, especially to those in need (Luke 12:33). Investments used in spreading the gospel will reap eternal dividends.

(16:10-13) "He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much. Therefore, if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if you have not been faithful in what is another man's, who will give you what is your own? No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."

Jesus continued to explain and apply the truth regarding money in verses 10-13. In verse 10, we are told, "He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much." If a person can be trusted in handling a matter of small importance, he can most likely also be trusted with important matters. One who is faithful in doing little things, will also do well with the larger tasks. Honesty must be practiced in the small routine matters of daily living, if it is to be manifested in the major affairs of life.

Someone says, "If I were paid \$15 an hour in this job, I would really put forth my best effort." But why not put forth your best effort even if you only get the minimum wage? Another says, "If I were a millionaire, I would give away a lot of money to Christian work." But how generous are you in giving sacrificially from your current income?

The little quip says, "It's not what you'd do, if a million were your lot; rather, it's what you do with the dollar that you've got!" A person's faithfulness or unfaithfulness in small

matters is an index to his true character. On the basis of this index, one can determine whether the individual is to be trusted in matters that are of major importance.

The meaning of the words in verses 11-12 is this: *If you have not been trustworthy in the use of material wealth—which after all is not yours, but belongs to someone else (namely, to God)—then who will entrust to you the true riches?* The "true riches" are clearly implied to be our possession of the heavenly kingdom—the "inheritance incorruptible and undefiled...reserved in heaven for you" (1 Peter 1:4). Jesus declares that money is not nearly as important as is concern about spiritual matters (preparation for the life to come). But if a person is not faithful in the use of lesser things (money), then God will not quickly commit to that individual the greater things (a spiritual inheritance).

Jesus states a third lesson in verse 13: He says, "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." It is impossible for humans to give whole-hearted devotion to two masters¹⁴⁹ The object of our devotion will either be God—or material goods. Jesus does not say, "You *must not* serve God and mammon." He says, "You *can not* serve God and mammon." To serve God is full-time employment. As disciples of Christ, all of our time and all of our energies, belong to the Lord Jesus.

All believers need to re-examine their lifestyles. The New Testament is beautifully balanced on the matter of using money properly. In 1 Timothy 6, Paul cautions against both extremes—asceticism and materialism. *Asceticism* is a *rejection* of the good gifts of the good Creator. *Materialism* is a *preoccupation with* material things. Between the two extremes, asceticism and materialism, lies simplicity, and contentment, and generosity. These three virtues should be evident in the lives of all loyal servants of Christ.

2. The Rebuke of the Pharisees (16:14-18)

The Pharisees heard the teachings on stewardship, but they loved money and devoured widows' houses (Mark 12:40), sometimes even robbing helpless people to support their greed. They spoke with scorn about Jesus (verse 14b).

(16:14-18) Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, also heard all these things, and they derided Him. And He said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God. The law and the prophets were until John. Since that time the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it. And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one tittle of the law to fail. Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced from her husband commits adultery."

The Pharisees were "lovers of money" (verse 14). They believed that riches were evidence of God's approval upon their lives. God had promised prosperity and long life to those who obeyed Him (Psalm 91:14-16), and thus many people regarded wealth as an indication of God's favor, and the lack of wealth as an indication of His disapproval.

Jesus' rebuke (in verse 15) was a general statement of concern about one's inner attitudes. God looks on the heart and knows what we are like on the inside. To have an

abundance of wealth is an acceptable thing in the eyes of man, but if it is used unwisely and for selfish purposes, it is an abomination in the eyes of God.

John the Baptist marked a point of transition in God's dealing with humans (verse 16). In the old order, the message proclaimed was that the messianic King was going to come; in the new order, the message proclaimed is that the Messiah *has* come, and His kingdom is present.¹⁵⁰ The clause "every-one is pressing into it" becomes more clear if one reads the parallel passage in Matthew's account.¹⁵¹

The thought (in verse 17) is that in spite of the fact that God's law is often ridiculed and ignored by mankind, every part of the law will eventually accomplish its purpose. The illustration about divorce and remarriage (verse 18) is likely used here as an example of the insincere way that many were treating the laws of God. God's law relating to the permanence of marriage is often treated insincerely, just as other laws in God's order of things are frequently ignored.¹⁵²

3. The Rich Man and Lazarus (16:19-31)

Jesus in this section reveals some information about the abode of lost souls. The account is sometimes called a par-able, but it is not called a parable in the New Testament. It does not have the form of a parable. The text does not say that He spoke to them a parable; instead, Jesus says "There was a certain rich man." Either *there was*, or *there was not*, a certain rich man."

The account is an actual historical record of two men who lived and died, and afterwards found themselves in a place, called on the one hand a "place of torment" (verse 28), and on the other hand, a place of comfort in the "bosom" of Abraham (verse 23).

(16:19-31) "There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate, desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. Then he cried and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.' But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.' Then he said, 'I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.' Abraham said to him, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.' And he said, 'No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' But he said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.'"

a. The two men contrasted in life (verses 19-21).

There was a rich man "clothed in purple and fine linen" (an indication of his status in society) who seemed to have little compassion for the starving man at his gate (verse 19).

The beggar who was laid at his gate (verse 20) was covered with sores. He begged even for the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table (verse 21). The wealthy man apparently took little notice to the wretched beggar at his gate.

The rich man is not said to have been a vicious person; he may not have been guilty of any glaring crime; he was not a tyrant, but neither was he prepared for eternity.

b. The two men contrasted in death (verse 22).

The rich man and the poor man were as opposite in death as they were in life.

The beggar died; nothing is said about his burial. He was so financially destitute that he had nothing to pay for a decent burial. Beggars of this type in Jesus' day were often not buried, but flung onto the city dump. But even though his *body* likely had a dishonorable end—Jesus says that an escort of angels came and carried Lazarus' spirit into paradise, symbolized by the term "Abraham's bosom."

Jesus said further, "The rich man also died and was buried." Even though he was a man of great wealth, his riches could not buy off death! Even the best doctors and the most costly medicines could not save his life. And although there was likely an elaborate funeral and his body was carried to a rich and costly tomb—his poor soul departed from earth in a lonely fashion. He went out alone into the great beyond.

c. The two men contrasted in eternity (verses 23-31)

Jesus described the contrast with the words, "[Lazarus] is comforted and you are tormented" (verse 25). Jesus, at His birth, had just come from the eternal world. Surely, no one was more qualified than He to draw aside the veil that separates this world from the unseen world—and speak with authority about the life to come.

Men and women have many theories and ideas about hell. The *sentimentalist* says that God is love and would never condemn a soul to punishment in hell. The *annihilationist* says that the human soul will be dissolved into nothingness, thus put out of existence. The *universalist* says that some day God will restore all persons to perfection, and that all will finally be saved.

Our Lord's description of "Hades"¹⁵³ (verse 23) makes several things clear: *Hell is a place of consciousness*. The rich man could see (he "saw Abraham afar off"). He could *feel* (he experienced torment in the flames). He could *talk* (he called for a bit of water to cool his tongue). *Hell is also a place of torment*. There were the burning flames. There was the torment of *thirst*. Jesus speaks of a "furnace of fire" (Matthew 13:42), and "everlasting fire" (Matthew 25:41), and a "fire that shall never be quenched" (Mark 9:43). God does not wish anyone to be in hell,¹⁵⁴ for "God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:9).

While it is not wise to use this passage to set a frame-work for end-time events, Jesus *does teach clearly* the reality of future judgment.¹⁵⁵ He also teaches that there are two destinies for humans, that memory persists in the eternal world, and that the dead cannot communicate with the living.

17. LAST EVENTS OF THE JOURNEY

Luke 17:1-37

The first part of Luke 17 contains some of the teachings of Jesus on faith, forgiveness, and service. They were given to the disciples when He was on the way to Jerusalem for the last time. Matthew 18:1-7 and 18:18-35 are parallel texts.

1. The Danger of Negative Attitudes (17:1-4)

Jesus taught that it is just as important for His disciples to *forgive* those who harm and abuse them, as it is to avoid causing offense to others.

(Luke 17:1-4) Then He said to the disciples, "It is impossible that no offenses should come, but woe to him through whom they do come! It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones. Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, 'I repent,' you shall forgive him."

In the past several chapters Jesus had been addressing the Pharisees. Now he speaks again to His disciples (verse 1). In this evil world there are always some teachers who will lead others astray, but Jesus says, "Woe to him through whom [offenses] come" (verse 1b).

The "little ones"¹⁵⁶ (verse 2b) were likely the children whom Jesus had used as examples of childlike character (Matthew 18:1-10). Some view the "little ones" as persons who are spiritually immature. Jesus says it is better to die than to be the cause of stumbling in the life of another.¹⁵⁷

As disciples of Jesus we are not only to guard against offending others, but also as disciples, we are to be quick to forgive¹⁵⁸ those who sin against us. We may "rebuke"¹⁵⁹ the person who offends us, but at the same time, we are to be willing to *forgive* even "seven times in a day" (verse 4a). It seems that the offending person is to *repent* and seek to be forgiven (verse 4b).

2. The Unprofitable Servant (17:5-10)

This section opens with the apostles (that is, the Twelve) asking Jesus to increase their faith.

(17:5-10) And the apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith." So the Lord said, "If you have faith as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be pulled up by the roots and be planted in the sea,' and it would obey you. And which of you, having a servant plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come at once and sit down to eat'? But will he not rather say to him, 'Prepare something for my supper, and gird yourself and serve me till I have eaten and drunk, and afterward you will eat and drink'? Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not. So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.'"

As the disciples pondered the danger of causing others to stumble, and the difficulty of forgiving those who had misused them, they felt the need for increased faith.¹⁶⁰ Jesus responded by using a metaphor (verse 6) which teaches that *even a small quantity of faith* (like a mustard seed), when put to proper use, can accomplish incredibly great things (like moving a mulberry tree)—even moving the deep-rooted tree from the ground and planting it in the sea!

Jesus explained also (verses 7-10) that if there were masters who had servants working in the fields—and they came into the house, the master would not say to the servant, "Sit down to eat" (verse 7b). Rather, the master would say to the servant, *it is your duty to prepare my supper, and then later you may sit down to eat* (verse 8). That is what one would expect in any master-servant relationship.

In verse 10, the disciples are put in the place of the servant (under Jesus, who is the Master). And those who serve under the authority of Jesus will do what is their duty to do, without expecting to be thanked. We who are disciples of Jesus are to be humble, doing what Jesus says, without expecting to be commended for every deed. As sinners who have been saved by the grace of God, we are in truth "unprofitable" ["unworthy" (NIV)]¹⁶¹ servants (verse 10).

3. The Healing of Ten Lepers (17:11-19)

On His final journey to Jerusalem, Jesus met ten lepers who cried out to Him for mercy.

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

Because of the dreadful nature of leprosy, lepers were in many ways rejected. Jesus did not ignore the lepers, but His words, on the surface, seem to be a refusal to help them. He said, "Go, show yourselves to the priests" (verse 14).¹⁶² As the men started out, they became aware of the fact that their leprosy had left them and they were clean (verse 14b).

One of the ten men returned to Jesus and openly expressed gratitude for the cleansing (verses 15-16). That man was a Samaritan,¹⁶³ one whom the Jews looked upon as a despised foreigner (verse 16b). One can almost sense the sadness in the words of Jesus, *"Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine?"* (verses 17-18). It was his inward eye of *faith* that made the Samaritan "well," referring not only to the healing of his body, but also his soul (verse 19).

As disciples of Jesus, we have all been blessed far above what we have deserved—and so our first waking moments each morning should find our spirits breathing out gratitude

to God. Our last duty at the close of the day should find us giving thanks¹⁶⁴ to the Lord for the blessings of that day.

4. Comments on the Coming Kingdom (17:20-37)

Luke includes two major discourses related to the Lord's return—this section in Luke 17, and also Luke 21:5-33.

(17:20-25) Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, "The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you." Then He said to the disciples, "The days will come when you will desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it. And they will say to you, 'Look here!' or 'Look there!' Do not go after them or follow them. For as the lightning that flashes out of one part under heaven shines to the other part under heaven, so also the Son of Man will be in His day. But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation."

A question posed by the Pharisees initiated a new set of teachings from Jesus. They wondered when "the kingdom of God would come" (verse 20). Jesus responded by saying that it will not come "with observation" (verse 20b), meaning that it is not a process that can be foreseen. The phrase "the kingdom of God¹⁶⁵ *is within you*" (verse 21b) is translated from "*entos auton*," and can easily be stated as "is among you."¹⁶⁶ Jesus was responding to the Pharisees; He would hardly tell *them* (most of whom were unbelievers)—that the kingdom of God was "*within*" them. The kingdom was "*among*" them because the King was in their midst.

Jesus indicated that there will be some difficult days ahead for the disciples (verse 22). There will be troublesome times, and the Lord's followers are not to follow all the rumors that will float around (verse 23). The return of Christ will be as evident as the flashes of lightning, which can be seen in many directions (verse 24), but before His return, the next immediate event will be His rejection and death in Jerusalem (verse 25).

(17:26-32) "And as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed. In that day, he who is on the housetop, and his goods are in the house, let him not come down to take them away. And likewise the one who is in the field, let him not turn back. Remember Lot's wife."

Jesus continued by teaching that His return will be sudden and it will come at a time when people are busy eating and drinking and getting married, seemingly unaware that life will not always continue as it has been for many centuries (verses 26-30). People in the days of Noah and in the days of Lot were engaged in normal activities, but were so engrossed in those ordinary things, that they gave little thought to the life to come. The judgment with water (in the days of Noah) and the judgment with fire (in the days of Lot) came with suddenness—on "the day that Noah entered the ark" (verse 27), and "the day that Lot went out of Sodom" (verse 29). It will be like that when Jesus comes (verse 30).¹⁶⁷

Jesus gave an added caution about the futility of being obsessed with material things, in light of the major changes that will take place when He returns (verse 31). And then there is the reminder of the example of Lot's wife (verse 32). Lot's wife looked back, not because she was merely curious to see what was happening in Sodom, but because she continued *to long for* the life she once experienced in the city where her husband had been a judge.¹⁶⁸

(17:33-37) "Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it. I tell you, in that night there will be two men in one bed: the one will be taken and the other will be left. Two women will be grinding together: the one will be taken and the other left. Two men will be in the field: the one will be taken and the other left." And they answered and said to Him, "Where, Lord?" So He said to them, "Wherever the body is, there the eagles will be gathered together."

Verse 33 is a general teaching (found also in Luke 9:24) that applies in many situations. The lesson refers to *the reproach* that accompanies living for Christ. Those who are constantly searching for ease and comfort and material things, will in the end lose all that makes life worthwhile; those who *live for self* and primarily for the things of this world—in the end are losers. By way of contrast, those who *die* to self and live *for the Lord*—in the end are winners.¹⁶⁹

The second coming of Jesus will divide people into two classes—those who have decided for Him and those who chose to reject Him. The two in one bed (verse 34)—one is taken and the other left; the two grinding together (verse 35), and the two working in the field (verse 36)—in each case, one is taken and the other left; these are examples of the separation that will take place when the time for judgment occurs. The same idea is seen in the parable of the ten virgins (Matthew 25:1-13), and in the story of the sheep and the goats (Matthew 25:31-46).

The word "body" (verse 37) refers to a corpse, and when carcasses are left for destruction, the eagles¹⁷⁰ will gather. The picture of flesh eaten by vultures may be a reference to the carnage at Armageddon.

The suddenness of Christ's Second Advent is a solemn thought. The desire of our hearts should be an endeavor to always be ready to meet the Lord. The Apostle John records the words of Jesus in Revelation 16:15: "Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame."

18. TURNING TOWARD JERUSALEM

Luke 18:1-43

In Luke 9:51, Jesus began His travels toward Jerusalem for the last time. He left Galilee and moved south, part of the time in Perea. The period between Luke 9:51 and 19:28 is often called His Perea and later Judean ministry. Perea was east of the Jordan River in Herod's territory. Luke 18 continues the record of Jesus' final journey to Jerusalem.

1. The Widow Who Persevered (18:1-8)

The parable of the persistent widow is not intended to teach that we are to pester God every time we sense a need in our lives. The key to the lesson is given in verse 1, which says that "men always ought to pray and not lose heart."

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

Jesus told the parable about an unprincipled judge who was unmoved by a widow's plea for justice. When seeking to interpret the parables, it is important to find their main point; it is not necessary to try and learn lessons from every detail of the story. The truth we are to learn in this parable is that if an earthly judge who has no conviction about justice, yields to the perseverance of a widow from sheer weariness, how much more will a loving God, who has our welfare at heart, come to our assistance "speedily" (verse 8)—that is, without the need for our repeated asking?

Neglect of prayer is a sign of spiritual danger. Most Christians have learned that it is easier to *begin* a habit of prayer than it is to keep it up. There are inclinations *to hurry* our praying, *to shorten* our prayers, and *to become careless* about praying. The parable should encourage believers to keep on praying without giving up.

The question in verse 8, "*When the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?*" is a sobering one. Jesus implies that true faith will be very scarce at the end of the age. Very few in our day seem to be living as if they believe that Christ died for them, and that a judgment lies ahead. This passage shows the uselessness of expecting that the entire world will be converted before Jesus returns.

2. The Pharisee and the Tax Collector (18:9-14)

Pharisees were generally haughty men who were known for their self-righteousness. Tax collectors (*publicans* in KJV) were known as "cheaters" and seen as dishonest persons.

This parable teaches that while prayer is important, one's attitude in prayer is even more important.

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

Jesus did not approve the sins of the tax collectors, but He utterly despised the hypocrisy of the Pharisees. In this parable, the Pharisee publicly announced his virtues, while the tax collector proclaimed his sins. The Pharisee's words were a monologue of self-praise. The tax collector merely cried out, "God, be merciful to me a sinner!" (verse 13).

The *Pharisee's* righteousness was outward; he trusted in himself and in his own good deeds. He was saying, "Look at me God; look at the good things that I have done." He hoped to win God's favor by his own good deeds. The *publican* was a member of the department of internal revenue. As a tax collector he turned in to the Roman government the fixed amount of tax money designated for his region, and all the surplus tax money he could get, was kept for himself. Both the Pharisee and the tax collector were sinners. One was a down-and-out sinner; the other was a pious, religious sinner.

The parable shows the difference between the self-righteous Pharisee who boasted of his good works, and the cheating tax collector who knew he was wicked and sought the mercy of God without works of righteousness. It was the tax collector who was "justified" before God. Eugene Peterson's *The Message* paraphrases verse 14 by saying that the "*tax man, not the other, went home made right with God.*" Jesus concluded the lesson by saying that those who are proud will be humbled, and those who humble them-selves will be "exalted."¹⁷¹

3. Jesus and the Children (18:15-17)

The simple faith of little children, their indifference to earthly treasures, their zeal for learning, and their absence of holier-than thou attitudes—are marks that please God.

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

The parallel accounts are in Matthew 19:13-15 and Mark 10:13-16.¹⁷² Mark says that Jesus "was greatly dis-pleased" (10:14) with the disciples for trying to keep the little children away from Him.¹⁷³

In order to enter the kingdom, we must come to God with a childlike faith. Heaven will be occupied by child-like people.¹⁷⁴ Little children are unsophisticated, teachable, trustful, and

have not lost their sense of wonder.¹⁷⁵ Mark adds the comment that Jesus "took them up in His arms, laid His hands on them, and blessed them" (10:16).

It is a rather interesting sidelight to note that the gender of the word "them" (verse 15b)¹⁷⁶ is masculine, meaning that fathers as well as mothers were bringing their children to Jesus for His blessing. Many times, husbands seem to imply that *the spiritual nurture* of children is primarily the duty of the mother. Yet, the New Testament clearly commands *fathers* to bring up children "in the training and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4).

4. The Rich Young Ruler (18:18-30)

This account is also told in Matthew 19:16-30,¹⁷⁷ and in Mark 10:17-31. Only Luke uses the word "ruler" (verse 18), and only Matthew says that he was "young" (19:20).

(18:18-30) Now a certain ruler asked Him, saying, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" So Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not bear false witness,' 'Honor your father and your mother.'" And he said, "All these things I have kept from my youth." So when Jesus heard these things, He said to him, "You still lack one thing. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." But when he heard this, he became very sorrowful, for he was very rich. And when Jesus saw that he became very sorrowful, He said, "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." And those who heard it said, "Who then can be saved?" But He said, "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God." Then Peter said, "See, we have left all and followed You." So He said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or parents or brothers or wife or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who shall not receive many times more in this present time, and in the age to come eternal life."

The question, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (verse 18) is important because it deals with the soul and with eternity. The young man had the idea, as many do today, that salvation comes as a result of our own efforts.

The word "good" (verse 19) can be used of human beings only in a relative sense, that is, when compared with others. Barnabas is said to have been "a good man" (Acts 11:24), but God alone is absolutely good (verse 19b).

When the rich ruler said he had kept the commandments, Jesus showed him what was lacking by touching the heart of his problem. He was to sell his possessions and distribute the proceeds to the poor (verse 22). The young ruler was "sorrowful" (verse 23)¹⁷⁸ for he was "very rich."

The "eye of a needle" (verse 25) is thought by some to be a small gate through which a camel could go with great difficulty, but generally it is better to view the expression as a figure of speech (a hyperbole) to describe an impossible thing—in this case, that of a rich person entering the kingdom of heaven. The statement is modified when Jesus says that all things "are possible with God" (verse 27).¹⁷⁹

The rich ruler had large possessions and was not ready to surrender them; the disciples had little and were ready to give it up gladly (verse 28). For such persons there are rich rewards in this life and in the next (verses 29-30).

It would be easy to think that this lesson applies only to the super-rich, but nearly all Americans today are wealthy. We have everything we need and more. Multitudes stand on half-inch deep carpet and are surrounded by a microwave, an internet computer, and a caller I.D. telephone—yet still feel that something is missing in their hearts.

5. The Healing of the Blind Man (18:31-43)

The healing of the blind beggar is one more example of Jesus' concern for the needy. The man's continued calling for Jesus to help him, was an evidence of his faith.

(18:31-34) Then He took the twelve aside and said to them, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man will be accomplished. For He will be delivered to the Gentiles and will be mocked and insulted and spit upon. They will scourge Him and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again." But they understood none of these things; this saying was hidden from them, and they did not know the things which were spoken.

Verse 31 begins a prediction which Jesus made for the third time, saying that He would be delivered to be mocked and scourged and killed (verses 32-33).

Jesus knew what lay ahead for Him in Jerusalem. The Man of Sorrows was aware that mockery and pain and shame would be His to bear. Yet, Jesus did not retreat from the cross. He went right on up to Jerusalem because He knew that His death was necessary in order that we human beings might be saved.

Verse 34 indicates that the disciples could not comprehend Jesus' announcement about what would take place in Jerusalem. The reason for their dullness was that they had wrong ideas about what the Messiah would be like. They assumed that the Messiah would be a conquering military hero, not one who would die at an early age.

(18:35-43) Then it happened, as He was coming near Jericho, that a certain blind man sat by the road begging. And hearing a multitude passing by, he asked what it meant. So they told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. And he cried out, saying, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Then those who went before warned him that he should be quiet; but he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" So Jesus stood still and commanded him to be brought to Him. And when he had come near, He asked him, saying, "What do you want Me to do for you?" He said, "Lord, that I may receive my sight." Then Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has made you well." And immediately he received his sight, and followed Him, glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God.

This account is given also in Matthew 20:29-34¹⁸⁰ and Mark 10:46-52. Matthew says there were two blind men. Mark and Luke mention only one. Luke says that Jesus was entering Jericho; Matthew and Mark say it was as He went out of Jericho.¹⁸¹ Mark calls the man "Bartimaeus" (10:46).

Jesus performed a miracle (verses 42-43). There was no surgery, no bandages, no gradual adjustment, just immediate sight. The incident demonstrated the power of Jesus, and once

more expressed our Savior's compassion and sympathy for those who suffer in various ways.

19. EARLY EVENTS LEADING TO PASSION WEEK

Luke 19:1-48

On the final journey to Jerusalem, Jesus came to the city of Jericho; it was a town where many tax collectors (called "publicans" in the KJV) lived. Zacchaeus was a man who was sought and saved by the Son of Man (see verse 10).

1. The Salvation of Zacchaeus (19:1-10)

Israel in New Testament times was under Roman control. In order to finance their world empire, the Romans levied heavy taxes upon the nations under their control. Zacchaeus was a chief tax collector, head of a large office of tax collectors.

(19:1-6) Then Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. Now behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus who was a chief tax collector, and he was rich. And he sought to see who Jesus was, but could not because of the crowd, for he was of short stature. So he ran ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Him, for He was going to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up and saw him, and said to him, "Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house." So he made haste and came down, and received Him joyfully.

The Jews opposed the taxes levied by the Romans because they supported a secular government and its pagan gods. Nevertheless, they had to pay the taxes. Zacchaeus, as a tax collector, was regarded as a "sinner" by the Pharisees. The salvation of Zacchaeus is a good example of how Jesus came to seek and to save the lost.

Jesus had just crossed the Jordan River. He came from Perea, and entered Jericho—on His way to Jerusalem for the last time. Verse 1 describes His entering and passing through the city. Jericho was a prosperous city on the road from Perea to Jerusalem.¹⁸² A considerable amount of traffic passed through Jericho because roads through the city connected Damascus on the north, Caesarea on the west, and Egypt to the south. One of the principal custom houses in the Roman Empire was located there, and a man named Zacchaeus was the "chief" (verse 2) of tax collectors in the city.

Under the Roman system, tax collecting jobs were farmed out to people who bought the right to collect taxes. Tax collectors paid a fixed amount of taxes to Rome. After they had paid that amount to the authorities at Rome, they were allowed to enrich themselves by forcing the public to pay far more than what Rome had required. As a result, Zacchaeus was a rich man, not liked by the community people.

On the day that Jesus passed through Jericho, the streets were crowded with throngs of people. Zacchaeus was small in stature,¹⁸³ and when Jesus passed through town, he was unable to see because of the press of the crowd (verse 3).

Zacchaeus most likely really did want to see Jesus—perhaps out of curiosity¹⁸⁴—or, perhaps he was not altogether happy with his practice of extorting undue tax money from people. Because he could not see over the heads of the people he ran ahead (verse 4)

and climbed into a sycamore tree.¹⁸⁵ Zacchaeus was so anxious to see Jesus that he literally "went out on a limb" to see Him. And as Jesus came by, He looked up into the tree, and said, "Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house" (verse 5).

Jesus did not say, "Zacchaeus, you're a sinner; you've been ripping people off." Jesus spoke to this chief of tax collectors with words of frankness, but surely with kindness. And verse 6 says that Zacchaeus quickly came down, and received Jesus "joyfully."¹⁸⁶

(19:7-10) But when they saw it, they all complained, saying, "He has gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner." Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold." And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham; for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

Zacchaeus responded to the call of Jesus, and he responded with an excellent spirit. Zacchaeus likely had a heavy heart, finding his wealth and his greedy lifestyle un-fulfilling and unsatisfying. Jesus (and this little man on his short legs) strode off to Zacchaeus' home. And sometime during that stay, certainly after much discussion and prayer, Zacchaeus was converted. Immediately there was a dramatic change in his life. Instead of the passion to get, he now had a passion to give. His grip on material things was loosened, and he was ready to give away much of his fortune.

Not everybody was joyful on this occasion. When the crowds saw what had happened, they complained and said, "He has gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner" (verse 7). Jesus shocked the people of Jericho by inviting Himself to be the guest of this notorious sinner. People in Palestine regarded tax collectors as extortioners, and traitors, and dishonest greedy persons. They could not understand how Jesus could associate with sinners like Zacchaeus.¹⁸⁷

Exactly what Jesus said to Zacchaeus when they arrived at his house is not given in the text. Zacchaeus was so deeply impressed by the words of Jesus, that he rose to his feet, and said, "*Here and now I am giving half of my possessions to the poor!*" He also promised to return whatever he had taken falsely from others, and he would give back 400% of the amount he had wrongly taken. These words indicate a generous spirit, and a genuine desire to make right any past wrongs. Both attitudes reflect a change of heart in the life of Zacchaeus. These actions were a spontaneous response from a heart made clean by the Spirit of God.

Zacchaeus undoubtedly was guilty of some injustices in his collection of customs. One Greek scholar notes that the construction of the sentence in the original language says: "*If, as I know is the case, I have taken anything from anybody falsely, I will pay back four times the amount.*" This was the basic repayment required in Exodus 22:1.

Jesus responded by saying, "Today salvation has come to this house" (verse 9). Zacchaeus became a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. He repented and made restitution for his wrong-doing.¹⁸⁸ His spiritual eyes were opened, and by faith, he recognized Jesus as the Messiah and his Savior.¹⁸⁹ A great spiritual miracle had taken place in the heart of Zacchaeus. The beautiful lesson is that Jesus will proclaim the same words to any human

being, anywhere on earth—when there is genuine faith and repentance.¹⁹⁰ Jesus came to earth to seek and to save those who are lost (verse 10). Luke 19:10 is often considered the key verse in the Gospel of Luke.

In our society, certain people (like the hated tax collectors of New Testament times) are considered sinners because of their political views, their moral behavior, or their lifestyles. We must not avoid these people—for indeed Jesus loves them, and they need to hear the Gospel message.

Many of us would be inclined to show little interest in a person like Zacchaeus—a dishonest tax collector, considered a great sinner by the community. God, however, had an interest in this man and wanted him to be saved.

It seemed to most people in Jericho that Zacchaeus was beyond redemption. We would likely have written him off too. But God's salvation is offered to all people, not just to the religious elite—and so we should never give up, even on people whom we may think are hopeless.

2. Rewarding Christ's Servants (19:11-27)

The parable of the pounds taught Jesus' disciples that He would not be immediately establishing His kingdom when they arrived in Jerusalem. Jesus would be going away, and the full expression of His kingdom will not happen until His return.¹⁹¹ Jesus explained that the disciples were to be faithful in their various responsibilities during His absence.

(19:11-14) Now as they heard these things, He spoke another parable, because He was near Jerusalem and because they thought the kingdom of God would appear immediately. Therefore He said: "A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. So he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas, and said to them, 'Do business till I come.' But his citizens hated him, and sent a delegation after him, saying, 'We will not have this man to reign over us.'"

The parable of the pounds¹⁹² and the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30) are similar in some ways, but they differ in many details.¹⁹³

In the parable, Jesus pictured Himself as the nobleman who went into a far country to receive a kingdom, and then *to return* (verse 12).¹⁹⁴ Before the nobleman went away, he left money with ten of his servants, who were told to *occupy* until he returned (KJV).¹⁹⁵ Many of the citizens of his country did not like the nobleman's decisions, nor were they willing to follow his demands—and so they declared, "We will not have this man to reign over us" (verse 14). Today multitudes will say, "We don't like what He demands," and so they choose to go their own way.

(19:15-27) "And so it was that when he returned, having received the kingdom, he then commanded these servants, to whom he had given the money, to be called to him, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. Then came the first, saying, 'Master, your mina has earned ten minas.' And he said to him, 'Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities.' And the second came, saying, 'Master, your mina has earned five minas.' Likewise he said to him, 'You also be over five cities.' Then another came, saying, 'Master, here is your mina, which I have kept put away in a handkerchief. For I feared you, because you are an austere man. You

collect what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow.' And he said to him, 'Out of your own mouth I will judge you, you wicked servant. You knew that I was an austere man, collecting what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow. Why then did you not put my money in the bank, that at my coming I might have collected it with interest?' And he said to those who stood by, 'Take the mina from him, and give it to him who has ten minas.' (But they said to him, 'Master, he has ten minas.') 'For I say to you, that to everyone who has will be given; and from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. But bring here those enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, and slay them before me.'"

In the parable, the nobleman returned and singled out three of the ten servants, each of whom was to give an account, and it was discovered that the first two did well (verses 16 and 18), but the third did nothing with his mina (verses 20-21). The whole section from verses 16-23 teaches that *diligence* receives its rich rewards, and *laziness* is punished. As God's servants we are accountable for the way we use our means, our time, and our opportunities. And in God's kingdom, a terrible destiny awaits those who are not truly the Lord's disciples, and choose not to let Him reign over them (verse 27).

One of the lessons we learn from this parable, is that there is a day coming when the Lord Jesus Christ will judge His people and give to everyone according to his works.

The principle of taking from the one who had done nothing with his mina, and giving it to the servant who had much, seems unfair to us (verses 24-26). The diligent servant had ten pounds (great responsibility), and to him was given more. In the mind of Jesus this was right and wise; the principle is confirmed by Jesus in Luke 8:18.

3. Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem (19:28-44)

We come now to the last week before the crucifixion. The triumphal entry into Jerusalem¹⁹⁶ is recorded in all four Gospel accounts. It is an event which fulfilled the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9. This was the last opportunity for the Jews to make their decision for Him or against Him.

(19:28-40) When He had said this, He went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. And it came to pass, when He came near to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mountain called Olivet, that He sent two of His disciples, saying, "Go into the village opposite you, where as you enter you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat. Loose it and bring it here. And if anyone asks you, 'Why are you loosing it?' thus you shall say to him, 'Because the Lord has need of it.'" So those who were sent went their way and found it just as He had said to them. But as they were loosing the colt, the owners of it said to them, "Why are you loosing the colt?" And they said, "The Lord has need of him." Then they brought him to Jesus. And they threw their own clothes on the colt, and they set Jesus on him. And as He went, many spread their clothes on the road. Then, as He was now drawing near the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works they had seen, saying: 'Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the LORD! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!' And some of the Pharisees called to Him from the crowd, "Teacher, rebuke Your disciples." But He answered and said to them, "I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out."

For three years Jesus had proclaimed Himself to the nation Israel through teaching and journeys and miracles. He knew the Jewish leaders had decided upon His death, but on

this day, He entered the Holy City one final time in the midst of the hallelujahs and hosannas of the multitudes.

As Jesus neared Jerusalem, He sent two of his disciples (not identified) to a nearby village to bring a colt on which He would ride into the city (verse 30). It seems that Jesus knew there would be such a colt and that the owners would respond with a question about the reason for wanting the animal (verses 31-34). When the colt was brought, they "set Jesus" on it and used their own robes to line the path on which He rode. Their excitement was caught by the entire multitude of pilgrims who were going to Jerusalem for the Passover. Some took branches of palm trees (John 12:13), and with a loud voice cried, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!" (verse 38).

Only Luke mentions that the Pharisees were displeased (verse 39) with all the enthusiasm, and told Jesus to rebuke His followers so that they would stop praising Him as the Messiah King. The Pharisees regarded Jesus as a lawbreaker. Jesus responded by saying that there must be a proclamation that He is the Messiah, and if the people did not recognize the importance of it, the hard rocks of God's creation would call out praises to Him! (verse 40).

(19:41-44) Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it, saying, "If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation."

Luke alone records the fact that at the time of His entry into Jerusalem, Jesus stopped briefly to weep over the city, and to lament the fact that the Jews would not accept His claims as the Messiah. Jesus said (verse 42), "If you had known...the things that make for your peace!" There is a higher peace than the political peace which Israel sought—a peace that comes only from God, as pictured in Isaiah 48:18.

From the summit of the Mount of Olives, it is possible to get a panoramic view of the city of Jerusalem. Today the most prominent building is the Muslim mosque called "The Dome of the Rock," which is built squarely on the location where the Jewish temple once stood.

Jesus made a prediction that was literally fulfilled by the Romans in A.D. 70. Jerusalem would be destroyed as a direct consequence of their rejection of Him as their Messiah. Josephus, the Jewish historian, gives a detailed account of the building of the embankment (verse 43) on every side of the city so that it was impossible for the people to escape, or to have supplies brought in.¹⁹⁷

Jesus wept aloud¹⁹⁸ over the city of Jerusalem. He knew the character of the inhabitants of Jerusalem—the pride, the self-righteousness, and the stubbornness of the people—and He knew what lay ahead for the city in the future.

4. The Cleansing of the Temple (19:45-48)

At the very beginning of His ministry, Jesus cleansed the temple (John 2:13-16). The Jewish religious teachers had turned His Father's house into "a house of merchandise!"

Now, near the end of His ministry, the temple is cleansed again. Jesus clearly disapproves of profaning holy things.

(19:45-48) Then He went into the temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold in it, saying to them, "It is written, 'My house is a house of prayer,' but you have made it a den of thieves." And He was teaching daily in the temple. But the chief priests, the scribes, and the leaders of the people sought to destroy Him, and were unable to do anything; for all the people were very attentive to hear Him.

It was not practical for pilgrims coming from far away, to bring their animals for sacrifice. Also, they were expected to change their foreign currency into proper coins (without the image of a person), in order to pay the temple tax. There is no indication that Jesus objected to the honest sale of animals and the exchange of coins—but the words "you have made it a den of thieves" (verse 46b) indicate that the merchants were charging *exorbitant prices* for the animals and *unreal rates of exchange* for the money.

Luke does not give the expressive detail about the incident that is found in the parallel passages in the other Gospel accounts,¹⁹⁹ but Luke says that he "began to drive out²⁰⁰ those who bought and sold" in the temple. The other Gospel accounts name what was being bought and sold. Matthew (21:12) and Mark (11:15) name doves. John (2:14) includes oxen and sheep. The animals had to be sold without sickness or any kind of blemish.

The Lord expects His house to be "a house of prayer" (verse 46a). When we go to the house of God for worship today, we must remember that it is a place where God's Word is read and Christ is present in a special way (Matthew 18:20). These facts should remind us to be reverent and solemn when we enter the house of God.

Verses 47-48 are not in Matthew's account, but they demonstrate that the Lord's house is not only to be a house of *prayer*, but a house of *teaching* also.

The religious leaders opposed Jesus because He was assuming authority over what they considered their special area—the temple in Jerusalem. As a result, they were determined "to destroy Him" (verse 47). The source of their envy was His popularity with the people who "were very attentive to hear Him" (verse 48).

20. CONTROVERSY IN JERUSALEM

Luke 20:1—21:4

Jesus faced much opposition, most of it coming from the religious leaders of the time. In this chapter, the chief priests and scribes and elders wanted to know who it was that gave Jesus the authority to do what He was doing.

1. Questions about Jesus' Authority (20:1-19)

Jesus was not stirring up rebellion nor was He inciting trouble; He was quietly teaching the people in the temple (verse 1), but while He was doing that He was confronted by the chief priests, scribes, and elders.

(20:1-8) Now it happened on one of those days, as He taught the people in the temple and preached the gospel, that the chief priests and the scribes, together with the elders, confronted Him and spoke to Him, saying, "Tell us, by what authority are You doing these things? Or who is he who gave You this authority?" But He answered and said to them, "I also will ask you one thing, and answer Me: The baptism of John—was it from heaven or from men?" And they reasoned among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' He will say, 'Why then did you not believe him?' But if we say, 'From men,' all the people will stone us, for they are persuaded that John was a prophet." So they answered that they did not know where it was from. And Jesus said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things."

The popularity of Jesus continued after He had arrived in Jerusalem. There were several major evidences of His authority. One was His triumphal entry, riding into the city in the midst of the praise of the crowds. Another was His cleansing the temple when He drove out the money changers. The Jewish leaders felt threatened by the enthusiasm the common people had shown for His teaching—and so they wanted to know where He received His authority (verse 2).

Jesus responded to their question by asking them a question (verse 4). Was the baptism of John from heaven or from men? If John's ministry was from heaven, they should have obeyed his call to repent (verse 5); on the other hand, if they said that his ministry was of men, they would risk the anger of the common people, for most were persuaded that John was a prophet (verse 6). The Jewish leaders were in a real dilemma, and said that they did not know where John's authority came from (verse 7).²⁰¹

(20:9-19) Then He began to tell the people this parable: "A certain man planted a vineyard, leased it to vinedressers, and went into a far country for a long time. Now at vintage-time he sent a servant to the vinedressers, that they might give him some of the fruit of the vineyard. But the vinedressers beat him and sent him away empty-handed. Again he sent another servant; and they beat him also, treated him shamefully, and sent him away empty-handed. And again he sent a third; and they wounded him also and cast him out. Then the owner of the vineyard said, 'What shall I do? I will send my beloved son. Probably they will respect him when they see him.' But when the vinedressers saw him, they reasoned among themselves, saying, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours.'

So they cast him out of the vineyard and killed him. Therefore what will the owner of the vineyard do to them? He will come and destroy those vinedressers and give the vineyard to others." And when they heard it they said, "Certainly not!" Then He looked at them and said, "What then is this that is written: 'The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone'? Whoever falls on that stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder." And the chief priests and the scribes that very hour sought to lay hands on Him, but they feared the people—they knew He had spoken this parable against them.

Jesus told a parable about the wicked tenants, based on the song of the vineyard found in Isaiah 5:1-7. The parable is found also in Matthew 21:33-46.²⁰²

In the parable, the owner of a vineyard went into a far country for a long time, and placed it into the care of tenant farmers (verse 9). When he sent servants to collect a portion of the crops (as rent), the tenants refused to cooperate and mistreated the servants (verses 10-12). Finally, the owner sent his son to collect a portion of the crop, but they murdered him and hoped to get the vineyard for themselves (verses 13-15). Jesus concluded the story by saying that the owner would take vengeance, putting the tenants to death and giving the vineyard to others (verse 16).

Those who heard Him speak understood the parable (verse 19). *God* was the owner; *Israel* was the vineyard; *the religious leaders* were the tenant farmers; the "beloved son" was *Jesus* (verse 13); the fruit for which God looked was *righteousness*; the servants sent by the owner were *the prophets* sent to Israel at different periods in their history.

The word "others" (verse 16) to whom God would give the vineyard most likely refers to *the church*, composed of both believing Jews and Gentiles. Those who "fall" on the stone (verse 18a), refusing to accept Him as the Messiah, will be ground "to powder" (verse 18b). The parable is a picture of God's merciful dealings with the Jewish people.

2. Questions about Tribute Money (20:20-26)

The question in this section was an effort to trap Jesus into making a statement that could be used as evidence of disloyalty to the Roman government, and in this way His opponents would have an excuse to hand Jesus over to Pilate.

(20:20-26) So they watched Him, and sent spies who pretended to be righteous, that they might seize on His words, in order to deliver Him to the power and the authority of the governor. Then they asked Him, saying, "Teacher, we know that You say and teach rightly, and You do not show personal favoritism, but teach the way of God in truth: Is it lawful for us to pay taxes to Caesar or not?" But He perceived their craftiness, and said to them, "Why do you test Me? Show Me a denarius. Whose image and inscription does it have?" They answered and said, "Caesar's." And He said to them, "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." But they could not catch Him in His words in the presence of the people. And they marveled at His answer and kept silent.

The religious leaders waited for an opportunity to trap Jesus, and hired spies (verse 20)²⁰³ to lie in wait, looking for a legitimate claim against Him so that He could be condemned to death.²⁰⁴ They spoke flattering words to Jesus, and then asked if it was lawful "to pay taxes to Caesar or not?" (verse 22).

The question was intended to trap Jesus. If He said it was right to pay the taxes, He would lose popularity with the people, for they hated the Roman yoke with its taxes. If He said they should not pay the taxes, He would be reported to the Roman authorities, and arrested as a traitor and rebel.

Jesus gave a classic answer to the question: "*Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's*" (verse 25). The coins minted by the Romans had the emperor's image on them, and by paying their taxes, citizens were paying what belonged to Caesar, an expression of appreciation for the roads, the water systems, the protection from robbers, etc. The Lord's followers are to render to God the things that are God's.

Christians are called to obey the government.²⁰⁵ They are to be law-abiding, including paying heed to traffic laws and paying taxes. On the other hand, believers must never go against a conscience guided by Holy Scripture in order to obey the state (Acts 5:29). This may include the requirement to participate in warfare, or to engage in questionable entertainment, or working in institutions that perform abortions. Human beings are made in God's image and so we belong to God. Because we are stamped with His likeness (Genesis 1:27), human life is to be governed by God's will, and we are to give to God what is His.²⁰⁶

3. Questions about the Resurrection (20:27-40)

Jesus had already been presented with two traps, and then the Sadducees tried another. They told a clever story about seven brothers who had been married in turn to the same woman, and still she was childless. According to the levirate marriage policy, described in Deuteronomy 25:5-10,²⁰⁷ if a man died without any children, his brother was to marry the widow and produce children by her. The first son born to them would be the son of the dead brother; any additional children would be their own.

(20:27-40) Then some of the Sadducees, who deny that there is a resurrection, came to Him and asked Him, saying: "Teacher, Moses wrote to us that if a man's brother dies, having a wife, and he dies without children, his brother should take his wife and raise up offspring for his brother. Now there were seven brothers. And the first took a wife, and died without children. And the second took her as wife, and he died childless. Then the third took her, and in like manner the seven also; and they left no children, and died. Last of all the woman died also. Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife does she become? For all seven had her as wife." And Jesus answered and said to them, "The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage. But those who are counted worthy to attain that age, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; nor can they die anymore, for they are equal to the angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection. But even Moses showed in the burning bush passage that the dead are raised, when he called the Lord 'the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' For He is not the God of the dead but of the living, for all live to Him." Then some of the scribes answered and said, "Teacher, You have spoken well." But after that they dared not question Him anymore.

The *Pharisees* believed in a resurrection, but one that continued the physical relationships that are experienced here in the present life. The *Sadducees* denied that a resurrection and a life after death would occur at all.²⁰⁸

The Sadducees accepted only the books of Moses²⁰⁹ as being authoritative. They were men of wealth and power who were skeptics, viewing those who believed in the afterlife as embracing a kind of *pie-in-the-sky* philosophy. But Christian belief in the world to come is not *an easy escapist notion*. Christians believe that after death each person will give an account of himself to God—a God who will judge with fairness, and thus the concept of an afterlife is not merely *pie-in-the-sky*.

Jesus says that those who by the grace of God "are counted worthy" (verse 35) to enter the heavenly portals, will not marry as humans do here on earth. He explained that the future age would be different from the present age. Death will not exist in the next world, and the inhabitants of heaven will be "equal to the angels" (verse 36). Since people will not die, marriage with a view to the perpetuation of the race will not be necessary.

We cannot learn much about the social relationships in Heaven from these statements by Jesus, but life for the saved ones in Heaven will be so rich and so intense, that earthly marital bliss will seem shallow by way of contrast.

Jesus then pointed out that there will certainly be a resurrection (verses 37-38). He cited the incident when the Lord told Moses that He *is* the God of Abraham (and of Isaac and Jacob), "for He is not the God of the dead but of *the living*." Jesus said that the patriarchs are still living!

The argument of the words in verses 37-38 is that, although men and women of faith have died on earth—God continues His relationship with them because in His eyes they are still alive. Some of the scribes had to admit that Jesus gave a good answer (verse 39)—and from that point, they no longer asked questions to embarrass Jesus (verse 40).

4. Questions about the Messiah (20:41-44)

It was time now for Jesus to ask His enemies a question.

(20:41-44) And He said to them, "How can they say that the Christ is the Son of David? Now David himself said in the Book of Psalms: 'The LORD said to my Lord, Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool.' Therefore David calls Him 'Lord'; how is He then his Son?"

Jesus quoted Psalm 110:1 and His question concerned the nature of the Messiah. David called the Messiah "my Lord" in that Psalm; how is it then that they call Christ "The Son of David"? The desire of the religious leaders was not to learn who Jesus is, but to silence Him as quickly as possible.

Jesus was David's offspring (Matthew 1:1); but Jesus was also David's Lord (Psalm 110:1). How can the Messiah be David's Lord and David's son? How could David refer to his own son as his Lord? The only answer to those questions is that the Messiah would be both human and divine. Jesus is more than a human being (Romans 1:2-4). David, by divine inspiration, declared that the Messiah would be God.

The passage parallel to this one is recorded in the Gospel according to Matthew (22:41-46)²¹⁰ and in the Gospel according to Mark (12:35-37).

5. Denunciation and Commendation (20:45—21:4)

In this final paragraph of chapter 20, Jesus speaks some strong words of denunciation against His opponents.

(20:45-47) Then, in the hearing of all the people, He said to His disciples, "Beware of the scribes, who desire to go around in long robes, love greetings in the marketplaces, the best seats in the synagogues, and the best places at feasts, who devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. These will receive greater condemnation."

These words contain the final warning Jesus gave to the Jewish religious leaders. He warns about their pride which was manifested by their long robes,²¹¹ their desire for special greetings in the marketplaces, and their seeking the chief seats in the synagogues²¹² and at dinner meals (verse 46).

Jesus condemned the cheating of widows²¹³ and their long prayers—lengthened in order to impress others with their piety. Hypocrisy will be severely punished (verse 47).

At the beginning of Luke 21, Jesus spoke some clear words of commendation.

(21:1-4) And He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury, and He saw also a certain poor widow putting in two mites. So He said, "Truly I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all; for all these out of their abundance have put in offerings for God, but she out of her poverty put in all the livelihood that she had."

In these verses Jesus highlighted two types of giving—*one*, out of abundance (appreciated, but cost little); and *the other*, out of poverty (given at great sacrifice). Jesus weighs the motive²¹⁴ more than the amount of the money given. The widow's "mites" amounted to very little; it was like today's pennies that many don't even bother to pick up.²¹⁵

Jesus judged the widow's gift, not by how much she gave, but by how much she had left after she had given. The rich people (verse 1) had given only a tiny part of their surplus. The woman (verse 2) gave "all the livelihood that she had" (verse 4). When she left the temple, there was nothing in her hands, but in her heart she had the joy that comes from giving instead of hoarding.

When it comes to giving in order to support the Lord's work, the attitude of the heart is what counts.²¹⁶ When we write a check to the IRS, that agency is not concerned about our heart attitude. The government doesn't care whether we give willingly or grudgingly—but it is not that way with the Lord. C. S. Lewis says that if our charitable gifts do not in some way "pinch or hamper us," those gifts are too small. There ought to be things that we would like to do and cannot do because our giving to charity has excluded the possibility of doing them.²¹⁷ Money does speak; it tells us where, and on what, our hearts are focused.

21. JUDGMENT ON JERUSALEM AND THE ENDTIMES

Luke 21:5-38

The teaching in this chapter has been the subject of more debate than most other passages in the Gospel accounts. The prophetic language of Jesus has some references to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., and also to events that will take place when Jesus returns. The message presented in this chapter is a description of some future events along with a strong admonition to persevere.

1. The Temple's Destruction Foretold (21:5-7)

As the Twelve went out of the temple they called Jesus' attention to its beauty. Jesus responded by saying that a time was coming when the temple would be destroyed.

(21:5-7) Then, as some spoke of the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and donations, He said, "These things which you see—the days will come in which not one stone shall be left upon another that shall not be thrown down." So they asked Him, saying, "Teacher, but when will these things be? And what sign will there be when these things are about to take place?"

The disciples spoke of the magnificence of the temple (verse 5). The temple in Jerusalem (which Herod had re-stored) was considered one of the great wonders of the Roman world. Solomon's Porch was 1,562 feet long. The royal porch was decorated with 160 columns. Those who viewed the temple gazed in wonder at the marble pillars each 40 feet high. Each pillar was carved from a single solid stone. For the temple to be totally destroyed, as Jesus said it would be, was unthinkable. The beautiful temple was a solid, well-built structure that glistened in the sun. It was a magnificent building covered with white marble.²¹⁸ But Jesus said to the disciples that the time will come when "not one stone shall be left upon another" (verse 6).

The disciples asked two separate questions (verse 7)—"when will these things be?" and, "what sign will there be when these things are about to take place?" The first question referred to the destruction of the temple buildings; the second question (when viewed in light of Matthew's parallel account in Matthew 24:3) related to the signs of the Lord's coming and the end of the age.

Jesus gave a response to the questions in the section that follows in Luke 21.

2. Discourse on the Second Coming (21:8-28)

It is very difficult to know *when* Jesus was speaking about the destruction of Jerusalem in the first century A.D., and *when* He was speaking about the times at the end of the age. Jesus warned that difficult times would be coming, and that many false rumors would be circulated.

(21:8-19) And He said: "Take heed that you not be deceived. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He,' and, 'The time has drawn near.' Therefore do not go after them.

But when you hear of wars and commotions, do not be terrified; for these things must come to pass first, but the end will not come immediately." Then He said to them, "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be great earthquakes in various places, and famines and pestilences; and there will be fearful sights and great signs from heaven. But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons. You will be brought before kings and rulers for My name's sake. But it will turn out for you as an occasion for testimony. Therefore settle it in your hearts not to meditate beforehand on what you will answer; for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries will not be able to contradict or resist. You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death. And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But not a hair of your head shall be lost. By your patience possess your souls."

The description in verses 8-19 is a discussion of the entire period from the time Jesus spoke these words, through the destruction of Jerusalem, and on into the time of the Lord's return. One thing is certain—before the end arrives, believers will go through some difficult times.

It seems that Jesus started out first by describing some conditions toward the time of the end (verses 8-11), and then went back to the days of the first century (verse 12). It is true that some natural catastrophes occurred in the first century, including the earthquake in Laodicea (60 A.D.) and the eruption of Mount Vesuvius which buried Pompeii (79 A.D.), but such events occurred throughout the centuries.

There will be those who claim to be the Messiah (verse 8). Jesus warned the disciples not to be deceived. Jesus also said that wars and a variety of "commotions"²¹⁹ would occur (verses 9-10), but the disciples were encouraged not to be frightened. Then Jesus said that there will be great earth-quakes in a variety of places (verse 11), along with famines and pestilences. There will also be "fearful sights and great signs from heaven" (verse 11b). Brethren writer, L. W. Teeter places the signs in the period prior to 70 A.D.²²⁰

In contrast to the words of L. W. Teeter, the strange *sights and great signs* may refer to the Great Tribulation²²¹ which will occur before the final return of the Lord Jesus at the end of the age. Jesus said, "*For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be*" (Matthew 24:21).

The references to persecution "for My name's sake" in verses 12-17, indicate that ridicule and harassment would not only be experienced by disciples in Jesus' day—but times of imprisonment (verses 12-15), betrayal (verse 16), and hatred (verse 17), will be the lot of the Lord's disciples until He returns. God in His sovereign power will provide special protection for His children (verse 18), and those who "endure to the end" will be saved (verse 19).²²²

a. The destruction of Jerusalem (21:20-24)

In the section which follows, Luke reviews some of the facts already given in Luke 19:43-44.

(21:20-24) "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her. For these are

the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! For there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people. And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled."

Jesus in this section returned to the original question that was asked by the disciples when they were leaving the temple area (Luke 21:7).

Jerusalem would be surrounded by armies (verse 20), and non-Jewish (Gentile) nations would destroy the city and gain control over it. Jesus gave a warning about the severity of the destruction to come, and urged citizens out in the country to flee to the mountains, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to depart from the city (verse 21). Everything written about Jerusalem's fall would be fulfilled (verse 22).²²³ Expectant mothers and mothers who are nursing babies will not be able to move very fast, and thus they will be at greater risk of being captured or killed (verses 23-24a).

Jesus said further (verse 24) that Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles "until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled" (verse 24b). The word "until" suggests that a time will again come when Israel will be prominent in God's plan.²²⁴ Gentile domination over Israel began *when* the Babylonians captured Jerusalem in 586 B.C. Then Israel briefly regained control, but the Jews lost their national identity in 70 A.D., and Gentile control continues today,²²⁵ but will come to an end at the return of Christ to set up His earthly kingdom.

b. The coming of the Son of Man (21:25-28)

Some Christians understand that both the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. *and* the coming of the Son of Man are included in the passage which follows.

(21:25-28) "And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of heaven will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near."

These verses describe the disturbances in nature which will precede the second advent of Christ. There will be signs in the sun and moon and stars that can be seen on earth. Great tidal waves (tsunamis) will sweep over land areas—and panic will grip the inhabitants of earth (verse 25). The upheavals of nature and the perplexity²²⁶ among nations will be so overwhelming that hearts will fail from fear (verse 26).

The great event will occur—the Son of Man will come in a cloud "with power and great glory" (verse 27). Daniel 7:13-14 describes His return as *"coming with the clouds of heaven!...[and] to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away."* When Jesus comes, God's full power and glory will be evident on earth.

With a word of encouragement, Jesus says that while fear will overwhelm people of the world, the coming of Christ is a signal that full redemption for believers is close at hand.

There will be rewards for God's people, and so, "When these things begin to happen lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near." Jesus says that we are to stand up straight; don't be discouraged; don't walk around with downcast heads—but instead, look up into the face of God and thank the Lord that our redemption is close at hand. Our salvation will soon be completed and our earthly journey is soon going to be over (verse 28).

3. Discourse on the Fig Tree (21:29-33)

Jesus continued to encourage His followers to look up by telling the parable of the fig tree.

(21:29-33) Then He spoke to them a parable: "Look at the fig tree, and all the trees. When they are already budding, you see and know for yourselves that summer is now near. So you also, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near. Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away."

The parable conveys the message that one can tell what is coming by watching the signs. The fig tree generally begins the process of budding and leafing out earlier than most of the other trees. Just as the inhabitants of Palestine knew when summer was coming by the appearance of leaves on the fig trees, so we can know that the Lord's coming is near by the evidences of stirrings in the land of Israel.

The "fig tree" is used frequently in the Scriptures as a symbol of the nation Israel, which, after having been dispersed among the nations for many centuries, has been reestablished as a nation again in 1948.²²⁷ The survival of the Jewish people is one of the great miracles of all times.

The term "this generation" (verse 32) has always been difficult to interpret.²²⁸ There are three primary views about the text here. *First*, it may refer to those alive at the time Jesus spoke, and who would still be alive at the destruction of Jerusalem. The problem with that view is that the generation is to survive until "all" the signs will occur.

The *second* view is that the "generation" refers to the generation present in verse 25, who see the beginning of the end, in the cosmic signs—those same persons will see the arrival of the Son of Man when He returns to earth.

The *third* view is that the word "generation" sometimes speaks of a race of people, in this case a reference to the Jewish people. Jesus then means that even though Jerusalem was destroyed and the nation was dispersed to many countries, there will still be Jews in the world when Jesus returns. "This generation will by no means pass away till all things take place" (verse 32).²²⁹

Jesus says that God's word is sure—even more certain and enduring than the heavens and the earth (verse 33).

4. The Exhortation to Watch (21:34-38)

Jesus spoke about "that Day" (a day of accountability) and called attention to the importance of proper conduct during the time of waiting for the Lord's return.

(21:34-38) "But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man." And in the daytime He was teaching in the temple, but at night He went out and stayed on the mountain called Olivet. Then early in the morning all the people came to Him in the temple to hear Him.

The "Day" about which Jesus spoke will come suddenly and without warning (verses 34-35). It will be a day of dread and of judgment for unbelievers, but it will be a day of hope and rejoicing for loyal disciples of Jesus.

We are to "watch" at all times for the appearing of the Lord Jesus (verse 36). As we go about our duties, we are to avoid worldly entanglements. Those things which ensnare include carousing,²³⁰ drunkenness, and the cares of life. The "cares of this life" refer to being overburdened by the things that pass and perish. Instead, we are to pray that by God's grace we will be worthy to escape the wrath of God.

The crowds were amazed at Jesus' teaching and came early in the morning to hear Him. Even though He was about to face the cross, Jesus spent the nights on the Mount of Olives, and returned to the temple the next morning to teach the people (verses 37-38).

One important observation about the Bible's prophetic teaching is this: the writers were *specific enough* to keep us watching; at the same time they were *general enough* in what they said, so that we should not try and predict the pre-cise time when Jesus will return to earth. When the disciples asked Jesus about the time of His coming (Acts 1:6), He told them that "it is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority (Acts 1:7).

The very thought that Jesus Christ will return to earth and set up a kingdom here, strikes many people as preposterous (2 Peter 3:3-4). They ignore the fact that God once judged the world with a flood (the days of Noah), and at another time with a supernatural fire (Sodom and Gomorrah). As we think about the end time events, we see how serious God is about sin and unfaithfulness. There was much suffering at the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., but it was nothing compared to the judgment yet to come.

We must *not listen* to the voices from the secular world, voices which imply that life will continue here on earth, and that those who look for the coming of Christ are mistaken. Life on earth as we know it is moving toward a climax. The world downplays the idea of accountability, as if no judgment will ever occur. Judgment will take place, but through the blood of Jesus, God has provided a means whereby we can find forgiveness, so that we can stand before our Creator in peace.

22. BETRAYAL, TRIALS, ARREST OF JESUS

Luke 22:1-71

Not long before the events described in this chapter, Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead. The Sanhedrin at that point decided that Jesus must be put to death (John 11:53). The popularity of Jesus made it difficult, but their opportunity finally came through the treachery of Judas. Luke recorded here in rapid succession the events that led up to the crucifixion.

1. The Betrayal of Jesus (22:1-6)

The death of Jesus occurred at the time of the Jewish Feast of Unleavened Bread,²³¹ an event that began with the Passover, and extended for seven more days.

(22:1-6) Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread drew near, which is called Passover. And the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might kill Him, for they feared the people. Then Satan entered Judas, surnamed Iscariot, who was numbered among the twelve. So he went his way and conferred with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray Him to them. And they were glad, and agreed to give him money. So he promised and sought opportunity to betray Him to them in the absence of the multitude.

It was the Passover season and great throngs of people were gathering to commemorate the deliverance of Israel from death down in Egypt (Exodus 12:1-28). The Passover meal was begun by eating roasted lamb, and was followed by a week-long Feast of Unleavened Bread (verse 1).

The chief religious leaders were working behind the scenes, trying to map out a strategy for arresting Jesus and putting Him to death (verse 2). They received help from an unexpected source—one of Jesus' own disciples, the one named Judas (verse 3). The words "Satan entered Judas" do not mean that he was demon possessed like some of the men possessed of devils in the Gospel accounts. The statement simply indicates that Judas became a tool of the devil to bring about the arrest and death of Jesus.

Judas went to the leaders and offered to betray Jesus (verse 4). They were delighted and agreed to pay him some money (verse 5). Judas promised that he would alert them to the proper place and time for arresting Jesus, hopefully in the absence of the crowds (verse 6).

2. Bread and Cup Communion Instituted (22:7-30)

Jesus was well aware of the murderous plans that His persecutors had to destroy Him. But there were a number of truths that He still wished to teach the disciples.

a. The preparation of the Passover (22:7-13)

(22:7-13) Then came the Day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover must be killed. And He sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat." So they said to Him, "Where do You want us to pre-prepare?" And He said to them, "Behold, when

you have entered the city, a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him into the house which he enters. Then you shall say to the master of the house, 'The Teacher says to you, Where is the guest room where I may eat the Passover with My disciples?' Then he will show you a large, furnished upper room; there make ready." So they went and found it just as He had said to them, and they prepared the Passover.

Verse 7 states that this was the day "when the Passover [lamb] must be killed."²³² Yet John's account says that the Last Supper occurred "before the feast of the Pass-over" (John 13:1), not on the day of the Passover.

Jesus told Peter and John to "prepare²³³ the Passover for us" (verse 8). When the disciples asked *where* the Passover would be held, Jesus did not give street directions, but said they would meet *a man*²³⁴ "carrying a pitcher of water" and he would show them which house to enter (verse 10). The description of a "large, furnished upper room" indicates that Jesus knew the nature of the room they would use (verse 12). They found the room "just as He had said"²³⁵ (verse 13).

b. Jesus instituted the bread and cup communion (22:14-23)

(22:14-23) When the hour had come, He sat down, and the twelve apostles with Him. Then He said to them, "With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I say to you, I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, "Take this and divide it among your-selves; for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me." Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you, but behold, the hand of My betrayer is with Me on the table. And truly the Son of Man goes as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom He is betrayed!" Then they began to question among themselves, which of them it was who would do this thing.

One of the last things that Jesus did with His disciples before His death was to institute the Lord's Supper²³⁶ and the Communion service.

The public ministry of Jesus was drawing to a close, and His saving work on the cross was about to be accomplished. The phrase, "when the hour had come" (verse 14) refers to the hour of eating the meal together. Jesus and His twelve apostles reclined around the table where the meal had been made ready, and He said to the disciples, "With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer" (verse 15). Jesus had a normal yearning to spend the last moments before His death with those whom He dearly loved. He loved the disciples in spite of their failures and imperfections, just as He loves you and me.

In verse 16, we have the words of Jesus, when He says, "I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." In the future, the Passover²³⁷ will have been replaced with a Supper²³⁸ which commemorates, not the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, but the deliverance of new-born people from the bondage of sin, through the blood shed on the cross. In connection with our Lord's coming (verse 18), there will be a great banquet in Heaven. Jesus spoke about it in passages like Luke 12:37 and Revelation 19:9. At the time of that Supper our redemption will be altogether complete.

Verse 19 says "He took bread, gave thanks, and broke it, and gave it to them saying, 'This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.'" The broken piece of bread was a visible symbol that represented Christ's body which would be bruised and broken for our sins. The cup (verse 20) "is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you." The cup (the sip of the fruit of the vine) was a visible symbol that represented the blood which on the cross would be poured out as an atonement for our sins.

We read in 1 Corinthians 10 and 11 that the communion service (along with a "supper") is to be observed until Jesus comes, that self-examination is to precede participation in the ordinance, and that failure to discern the significance of the communion elements will bring judgment.

Jesus made a startling announcement (verse 21) that one of the Twelve would betray Him.²³⁹ It seems that none of the disciples were able to immediately identify the betrayer (verse 23). The words, "*the Son of Man goes as it has been determined*" (verse 22) constitute a difficult statement which can puzzle the Bible reader. God sovereignly chose before-hand that Jesus should die and someone would have a part in arranging for that death, yet Judas made his own decision²⁴⁰ to betray the Lord to His enemies.

c. The disciples argued about greatness (22:24-30)

(22:24-30) Now there was also a dispute among them, as to which of them should be considered the greatest. And He said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called 'benefactors.' But not so among you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves. For who is greater, he who sits at the table, or he who serves? Is it not he who sits at the table? Yet I am among you as the One who serves. But you are those who have continued with Me in My trials. And I bestow upon you a kingdom, just as My Father bestowed one upon Me, that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

The disciples disputed among themselves about who should be considered the greatest among them. Almost three years of training under the teaching and example of Jesus, had not yet purified their hearts from self-seeking.

Jesus explained that their desire to be first was really a worldly and pagan characteristic. It reminded Him of the self-centeredness of "the kings of the Gentiles" (verse 25). Their habit was *to force* people into submission. And sometimes they would compliment themselves for their treatment of subjects, by referring to themselves as "benefactors" of the poor and underprivileged.

Sometimes pagan rulers deserved the title "benefactor," but often they measured greatness by the number of nations they conquered and the number of people they enslaved. The rulers were often insensitive, overbearing, and cruel in their treatment of people. In the world about us, *greatness* is attributed to those who wield the greatest authority. Jesus explained that a different measure of greatness applies in God's kingdom. The real measure of greatness is not how harsh and manipulative a person can be. In God's mind, the truly great are those who are devoted to "service" (serving others) in a selfless and sacrificial way.

In verse 26, Jesus explained that those who are greatest *are to be like "the younger,"*²⁴¹ and those who want to be leaders, *are to be like those who serve.* Jesus explained that instead of seeking to be regarded as great, we are to be like those who are least in honor. The Lord Jesus wants us to be humble, and to be satisfied with a less honorable place in life. Humility is one of the major qualities of true greatness.²⁴²

Jesus asked a question (verse 27): *Who is greater, the one who is dining at the table, or the waiter who serves the table?* The person who is dining at the table is generally regarded as the greater by the world's standards, but true greatness does not really require someone to wait on us!²⁴³

In verse 28, Jesus ignored the many character defects which His disciples manifested, and tenderly reminded them that they had been loyal to Him in His hours of trial. There were scores of other disciples who had deserted Him.

Jesus promised (in verses 29-30) that His true followers will share the rule of His kingdom—a reference to the kingdom in its final manifestation. The Apostle John says that His faithful followers will "live and reign with Christ for a thousand years" (Revelation 20:4). Even though Jesus was headed for death, His rule would never come to an end! In a future day, faithful disciples of Jesus will reign with Him as part of the reward for humble service.

3. Jesus Predicted Peter's Denial (22:31-38)

All four Gospel writers (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) tell about Peter's denials of the Lord Jesus, but only Luke describes *Satan's role* in the temptation which Peter faced.

a. The denial of Peter predicted (22:31-34)

(22:31-34) And the Lord said, "Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren." But he said to Him, "Lord, I am ready to go with You, both to prison and to death." Then He said, "I tell you, Peter, the rooster shall not crow this day before you will deny three times that you know Me."

Jesus said to Peter, "Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat" (verse 31). These words show us that the devil indeed desires our ruin. Because he is invisible, it is easy to be unaware of his influence in our lives.

The "sifting as wheat" means "to shake" and "to toss to and fro." Sifting was for the purpose of separating the desirable wheat from the undesirable chaff. Satan sifts us by means of temptation, hoping to remove us from the Lord's wheat. We know from experience that overcoming temptation is often difficult. Temptation is usually attractive, and giving in to tempting opportunities is sin. In fact, repeatedly giving in to sin's enticements can result in falling from God's way, and Hebrews 6:6-8 implies that sometimes it leads to a loss of interest even in returning to God.

The good news (in verse 32) is that Jesus assured Peter, that even though his faith would falter, it would not be completely destroyed; the Lord promised to pray that his faith should not fail. And what Jesus did for Peter, He does daily for all who believe in His name (Hebrews 7:25).

Jesus also said (verse 32b), "When you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren." The phrase "when you have returned to Me" ("when thou art converted" in KJV)²⁴⁴ does not so much speak of new birth conversion, as simply of turning back. The disciples' names were already written in heaven (Luke 10:20). Peter was already converted, but Jesus said that Peter would be wiser after turning back from this experience, and he was to use that wisdom to help his brethren avoid succumbing to the same pitfalls.

Peter responded to the Lord's warning about Satan's temptation by saying, "Lord, I am ready to go with You, both to prison, and to death" (verse 33).²⁴⁵ Jesus clearly predicted that Peter would not only desert Him, but that he would also deny three times that he even knew Jesus! (verse 34). Jesus said that before the night was over, within the space of a few hours, Peter would deny Him three times.

b. The supplies for the road (22:35-38)

(22:35-38) And He said to them, "When I sent you without money bag, knapsack, and sandals, did you lack anything?" So they said, "Nothing." Then He said to them, "But now, he who has a money bag, let him take it, and likewise a knapsack; and he who has no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one. For I say to you that this which is written must still be accomplished in Me: 'And He was numbered with the transgressors.' For the things concerning Me have an end." So they said, "Lord, look, here are two swords." And He said to them, "It is enough."

Jesus went on at this point to tell the disciples more about the future. When Jesus had sent out the disciples early in His ministry (Luke 9:1-5), they were enjoying the benefits of Jesus' popularity, and they lacked nothing (verse 35). "But now" (verse 36), the cross lies ahead, and the things that have been prophesied about Jesus²⁴⁶ (verse 37) will take place. He will no longer be with them in person—they will need to take along their own provisions (verse 36).²⁴⁷

When the disciples brought two swords to Jesus, apparently thinking they could prevent His enemies from slaying Him, He said "It is enough." Since Jesus was talking merely about a large knife²⁴⁸ used for killing animals and cutting up flesh, there was no need for additional knives.

4. The Gethsemane Prayer and Arrest (22:39-53)

The human race started in a garden. Jesus prayed in a garden and was crucified near a garden—and was buried in a garden. Jesus came into the world knowing that He would be the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world. Now He came to the point where that sacrificial death would occur.

a. Jesus' agony in the Garden of Gethsemane (22:29-46)

(22:39-46) Coming out, He went to the Mount of Olives, as He was accustomed, and His disciples also followed Him. When He came to the place, He said to them, "Pray that you may not enter into temptation." And He was withdrawn from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and prayed, saying, "Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done." Then an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him. And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground. When He rose up from prayer, and had

come to His disciples, He found them sleeping from sorrow. Then He said to them, "Why do you sleep? Rise and pray, lest you enter into temptation."

Jesus and the disciples came out from the room of the Last Supper (verse 39a), and they went out to the Garden of Gethsemane on the west side of the Mount of Olives.²⁴⁹ Jesus told the disciples to pray that they would not enter into temptation (verse 40).²⁵⁰ And then Jesus "knelt down" and prayed (verse 41b) that "the cup"²⁵¹ might be taken away from Him—"nevertheless not My will, but Yours be done" (verse 42).²⁵² That beautiful prayer should be the prayer of every honest and consecrated disciple of Christ.

The angel appeared to strengthen Him (verse 43). The fact that Jesus needed this special strengthening, testifies to the intensity of the struggle that went on in His soul. Our human minds cannot comprehend the immensity of the task Jesus was to undertake. Jesus prayed with such earnestness that the abundant sweat looked like blood dripping from a wound (verse 44).²⁵³ Jesus demonstrated that real prayer is not a purposeless exercise. He prayed with His entire being as He laid the burden before God.

When Jesus returned to His disciples, He found them exhausted and asleep (verse 45), and once again called them to pray that they will not enter into temptation (verse 46).

b. The betrayal and arrest of Jesus (22:47-53)

(22:47-53) And while He was still speaking, behold, a multitude; and he who was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them and drew near to Jesus to kiss Him. But Jesus said to him, "Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?" When those around Him saw what was going to happen, they said to Him, "Lord, shall we strike with the sword?" And one of them struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his right ear. But Jesus answered and said, "Permit even this." And He touched his ear and healed him. Then Jesus said to the chief priests, captains of the temple, and the elders who had come to Him, "Have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs? When I was with you daily in the temple, you did not try to seize Me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness."

While Jesus was still speaking—the group, along with Judas, came to seize Him. In the moonlit shadows of the evening Judas kissed Jesus so that the officers could know which was the one who was to be arrested (verses 47-48).²⁵⁴ The disciples who were close by wondered if they should fight to protect Jesus (verse 49). Peter²⁵⁵ did not wait for a reply; he struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his right ear (verse 50), but immediately Jesus picked up the ear and restored it (verse 51).²⁵⁶

Jesus addressed the arresting group and questioned why they arrested Him like they would a robber,²⁵⁷ when they could have easily arrested Him in the temple on any day of that week (verses 52-53). Jesus mentions the time of His arrest as a time when darkness reigns (verse 53b).

5. Peter's Denial of Jesus (22:54-62)

Most large homes in the Middle East have open court-yards. The servants were gathered there around a fire.

(22:54-62) Having arrested Him, they led Him and brought Him into the high priest's house. But Peter followed at a distance. Now when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat among them. And a certain servant girl, seeing

him as he sat by the fire, looked intently at him and said, "This man was also with Him." But he denied Him, saying, "Woman, I do not know Him." And after a little while another saw him and said, "You also are of them." But Peter said, "Man, I am not!" Then after about an hour had passed, another confidently affirmed, saying, "Surely this fellow also was with Him, for he is a Galilean." But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are saying!" Immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed. And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said to him, "Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times." So Peter went out and wept bitterly.

After the betrayal in Gethsemane, Jesus was led to the Jewish high priest's house for a hearing. Most of the disciples had fled; Peter followed the crowd who had come to arrest Jesus, but stayed at a distance (verse 54). Not long after, he found himself in the courtyard of the high priest's house, lingering with those who were warming themselves at a fire (verse 55).²⁵⁸ A certain servant girl earnestly looked at him as he sat by the fire, and said "This man was also with Him" (verse 56). But Peter responded by saying, "Woman, I do not know Him" (verse 57), flatly denying that he knew Jesus.

Shortly afterward, someone else pointed the accusing finger at Peter, and also said that he was one of Jesus' followers. And again, Peter denied the charge (verse 58). An hour later, still another person recognized Peter and said, "Surely this fellow also was with Him, for he is a Galilean" (verse 59).²⁵⁹ Verse 60 records Peter's answer this time: He said, "Man, I do not know what you are saying!"

Each time Peter was questioned, he made a strong denial of the Lord. *First* he denied being with Jesus (verse 57). *Then* he denied being one of Jesus' followers (verse 58). *And then* he fiercely denied even knowing Jesus (verse 60). At the very moment, when Peter had denied Jesus the third time—while he was still speaking, the rooster started crowing (verse 60b).

At that moment, verse 61 says, "the Lord turned and looked at Peter." Then Peter remembered how the Lord had told him that he would deny Jesus three times (Luke 22:34). At the moment of Peter's third denial, Jesus "turned and looked at Peter"—perhaps through an open doorway. It was *not* an "I-told-you-so" look, but a look of such love and such forgiveness that it broke Peter's heart!

Peter *withered* under the compassionate look²⁶⁰ of Jesus, and he remembered what Jesus had said. Peter was beginning now to realize the seriousness of what he had done, and he was overwhelmed with sorrow. This was 3-o'clock in the morning.²⁶¹ The good part about this sad story is that the account does not end with verse 61. Peter repented, was restored into God's favor, and did not live the rest of his life with the burden of regret.²⁶²

6. Jesus Mocked and Before the Sanhedrin (22:63-71)

The passage in this section describes the mean-spirited and definite rejection of Jesus by the Jewish leaders.

(22:63-65) Now the men who held Jesus mocked Him and beat Him. And having blindfolded Him, they struck Him on the face and asked Him, saying, "Prophecy! Who is the one who struck You?" And many other things they blasphemously spoke against Him.

The soldiers who arrested Jesus treated Him rudely. These rough and hardened men subjected Jesus to indignity. They scoffed at Him with a mocking ridicule and beat Him using physical violence (verse 63). They buffeted Him with their palms and fists, striking Him on the face (verse 64). They blindfolded Him and hit Him, and then for amusement challenged Him to prophesy and tell them who it was that hit Him (verse 64).

At sunrise on the following day the religious leaders led Jesus before the Sanhedrin²⁶³ and challenged Jesus to tell them whether or not He is the Christ (the Messiah).

(22:66-71) As soon as it was day, the elders of the people, both chief priests and scribes, came together and led Him into their council, saying, "If You are the Christ, tell us." But He said to them, "If I tell you, you will by no means believe. And if I also ask you, you will by no means answer Me or let Me go. Hereafter the Son of Man will sit on the right hand of the power of God." Then they all said, "Are You then the Son of God?" So He said to them, "You rightly say that I am." And they said, "What further testimony do we need? For we have heard it ourselves from His own mouth."

Mark 14:53-65 describes a preliminary hearing before Caiaphas (the high priest) and the Sanhedrin, held at night, but the Sanhedrin could not legally convene at night, so the verdict was made official as soon as it was day.

When morning broke the Jewish leaders tried to get Jesus to openly claim that He was the Messiah. They tried to get *a political claim against Jesus* so that they could charge Him with being a revolutionary—one who would oppose Caesar. The answer Jesus gave reflected the awkwardness of His position. If He answered that He was the Christ (verse 67), they would not believe Him. But, if He asked them about what qualifications they expected for being the Messiah, they would not answer (verse 68).

Following their questions, Jesus made one of the most momentous statements recorded in the book of Luke: *"Hereafter the Son of Man will sit on the right hand of the power of God"* (verse 69). Jesus would be exalted to a much higher state than their idea of the Messiah indicated. Jesus predicted that He would be seated at the right hand of the everlasting God. The statement obviously refers to His coming resurrection and ascension into Heaven.

They said, "Are You then the Son of God?" (verse 70), and the answer Jesus gave was clearly positive. To them, the answer was blasphemy, and that was the answer they wanted; there was no further need for any witness against Him (verse 71). The *official* reason for seeking the death penalty for Jesus was blasphemy. The *real* reason for seeking His death was envy (Matthew 27:18).

When we think about the details surrounding the week of our Lord's death, we must not spend a great deal of time focusing on *Judas* and *Pilate* and *Caiaphas*. It was *Jesus* who was handed over to His enemies. And He was not taken by surprise; He knew what was happening; it was all decreed beforehand. It all happened because God planned it that way—and He did it all for you and me.

23. THE CRUCIFIXION AND BURIAL OF JESUS

Luke 23:1-56

Near the close of His earthly ministry, Jesus was betrayed by one of His disciples, and was given into the hands of His most bitter enemies—religious leaders who were jealous of His power, and angered by the fact that He had criticized them. The first half of Luke 23 continues the record of the unjust trial and condemnation of Jesus. The last half of the chapter records His crucifixion and burial.

1. Jesus before Pilate and Herod (23:1-12)

Early in the morning the Sanhedrin had made an official pronouncement of Jesus' guilt, and then they led Him to Pilate, the Roman governor of Judea.

The Roman Emperor had appointed Pontius Pilate to be the governor over Judea (in the land of Palestine) in A.D. 26. He was responsible for administering the country, collecting the taxes, and sending revenues to Rome.

a. Jesus before Pilate (23:1-5)

(Luke 23:1-5) Then the whole multitude of them arose and led Him to Pilate. And they began to accuse Him, saying, "We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, saying that He Himself is Christ, a King." Then Pilate asked Him, saying, "Are You the King of the Jews?" He answered him and said, "It is as you say." So Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowd, "I find no fault in this Man." But they were the more fierce, saying, "He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee to this place."

The Jewish leaders had convinced themselves that Jesus was a blasphemer and that He deserved to die because He claimed to be the Son of God (Luke 22:66-71). Because the Jews were not allowed to carry out the death penalty without Roman approval, it was necessary for Pilate, the Roman governor, to condemn Jesus.

Early on Friday morning Jesus was hurried off to Pilate's judgment hall (verse 1). The Roman law did not consider *blasphemy* punishable by death, so Jesus' enemies accused Him of forbidding the payment of taxes to Rome, and they said that He was planning to be a King (verse 2). And even though Jesus acknowledged that He was "King of the Jews" (verse 3), those were false accusations and Pilate knew that there was nothing in Jesus that was a threat to Rome (verse 4).

The Jews became more desperate and leveled another charge (verse 5), saying that He was a dangerous man who has been stirring up people from Galilee to Judea.

b. Jesus before Herod (23:6-12)

(23:6-12) When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked if the Man were a Galilean. And as soon as he knew that He belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod, who was also in Jerusalem at that time. Now when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceedingly glad; for he

had desired for a long time to see Him, because he had heard many things about Him, and he hoped to see some miracle done by Him. Then he questioned Him with many words, but He answered him nothing. And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused Him. Then Herod, with his men of war, treated Him with contempt and mocked Him, arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him back to Pilate. That very day Pilate and Herod became friends with each other, for previously they had been at enmity with each other.

Only Luke tells about this interruption in the hearing before Pilate. When Pilate became aware of the fact that Jesus was a Galilean, he immediately sent Him to Herod, who was at Jerusalem during the Passover time (verse 7).

Herod had been hoping to see Jesus, not because he wanted to learn the truth about life and life hereafter, but he had hoped to see a miracle performed by Jesus (verse 8). Herod asked Jesus lots of questions, but Jesus gave no answer to him (verse 9).²⁶⁴ Herod then ordered his servants to dress Jesus in a brilliant robe, and treat Him with contempt. They mocked Him and sent Him back to Pilate (verse 11).

The cause of the enmity between Herod and Pilate is not known (verse 12b), but it may have been related to Pilate's massacre of some Galileans as mentioned in Luke 13:1.

2. The Second Hearing before Pilate (23:13-25)

Pilate called the Jewish leaders together once more, and tried a second time to avoid sentencing Jesus to death.

(23:13-25) Then Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests, the rulers, and the people, said to them, "You have brought this Man to me, as one who misleads the people. And indeed, having examined Him in your presence, I have found no fault in this Man concerning those things of which you accuse Him; no, neither did Herod, for I sent you back to him; and indeed nothing deserving of death has been done by Him. I will therefore chastise Him and release Him" (for it was necessary for him to release one to them at the feast). And they all cried out at once, saying, "Away with this Man, and release to us Barabbas"—who had been thrown into prison for a certain rebellion made in the city, and for murder. Pilate, therefore, wishing to release Jesus, again called out to them. But they shouted, saying, "Crucify Him, crucify Him!" Then he said to them the third time, "Why, what evil has He done? I have found no reason for death in Him. I will therefore chastise Him and let Him go." But they were insistent, demanding with loud voices that He be crucified. And the voices of these men and of the chief priests prevailed. So Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they requested. And he released to them the one they requested, who for rebellion and murder had been thrown into prison; but he delivered Jesus to their will.

Pilate told the Jewish leaders that both Herod and he had found that "nothing deserving of death has been done by Him" (verse 15).²⁶⁵ Then Pilate suggested a compromise by having the soldiers give Jesus a beating²⁶⁶ and afterward release Him (verse 16).

The Jews despised the Roman control over their land, and in order to at least partially appease the anger of the Jews—each year Pilate would release to them a prisoner of their choice (verse 17). Pilate now proposed, not to acquit Jesus, but to have Him whipped (treated as guilty by scourging Him), and then releasing Him. But the Jews cried out

saying, "Away with this Man, and release to us Barabbas"—who had been thrown into prison for a certain rebellion made in the city, and for murder (verses 18-19).

A blind and unreasonable hate had taken possession of the crowds and the mob was getting out of hand. For the third time (verse 22) Pilate called out, "Why, what evil has He done?" But they kept shouting, "Crucify Him, crucify Him!" (verse 21). The Jewish religious leaders had no real case against Jesus, but they kept insisting on calling for His death, and finally wore Pilate down to the point that he ordered the crucifixion of Jesus and agreed to release to them Barabbas the murderer (verses 24-25).²⁶⁷

Bible readers will remember that Pilate had still found it difficult to condemn Jesus. After offering Barabbas, Pilate several times wanted to release Jesus because he found no fault in Him worthy of death (John 19:4; John 19:12). However, it was only the death of Jesus that would satisfy the religious leaders. Pilate was convinced that Jesus had not done anything that was a danger to the nation—yet he finally caved in to the bloody demands of the Jewish leaders because he wanted others to have a good opinion of him—and so Barabbas was released and Jesus was surrendered to the will of the people.

3. Jesus Suffered on the Cross (23:26-43)

Luke's account of the suffering leading up to the actual crucifixion of Jesus is the shortest and most simple of all the accounts. Luke has given us some meaningful details that are not in the other accounts.

a. Jesus on the way to the cross (23:26-32)

(23:26-32) Now as they led Him away, they laid hold of a certain man, Simon a Cyrenian, who was coming from the country, and on him they laid the cross that he might bear it after Jesus. And a great multitude of the people followed Him, and women who also mourned and lamented Him. But Jesus, turning to them, said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For indeed the days are coming in which they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, wombs that never bore, and breasts which never nursed!' Then they will begin 'to say to the mountains, Fall on us! and to the hills, Cover us!' For if they do these things in the green wood, what will be done in the dry?" There were also two others, criminals, led with Him to be put to death.

Jesus was weary and weakened by the tortures that were inflicted upon Him, and so Simon from Cyrene (in North Africa) was drafted to carry His cross (verse 26).

In verses 27-31, Luke tells about an incident that is not given in Matthew or Mark. A crowd of people, including some women who were weeping as they walked, followed Jesus (verse 27). Jesus urged them not to weep for Him but for themselves and their children (verse 28). Hard days were lying ahead for this nation that was rejecting the Messiah, including the destruction of Jerusalem and all the miseries that accompanied it. The judgment will be so harsh that it will be a blessing not to have children (who would likely suffer the most), and times will be so painful that people will cry for the mountains and hills to fall on them (verses 29-30).

The thought in verse 31 is this: If the *innocent* Jesus (symbolized by a green, healthy tree) is to suffer a cruel death—how much worse will be the fate of *guilty* Jerusalem (symbolized by dry wood ready to be burned), which is ripe for the judgment of God?

Jesus was not executed alone. Two others (described as "criminals") were crucified at the same time. The prophet had said that He would be "numbered with the transgressors" (Isaiah 53:12).

b. The crucifixion of Jesus (23:33-38)

(23:33-38) And when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left. Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." And they divided His garments and cast lots. And the people stood looking on. But even the rulers with them sneered, saying, "He saved others; let Him save Himself if He is the Christ, the chosen of God." The soldiers also mocked Him, coming and offering Him sour wine, and saying, "If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself." And an inscription also was written over Him in letters of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

Verse 33 says, "When they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left." The place where Jesus was crucified looked like a skull.²⁶⁸

Luke uses only a few words to describe this enormously significant event. He says, "There they crucified Him." There is no mention of the gory details—the nails, and blood running down His arms and dripping off to the ground below. The word "they" refers to the soldiers. Mark's account (in 15:16,24) makes that clear.

Jesus could have called ten thousand angels; He easily could have come down from the cross. *The greatest miracle that Jesus ever did was the miracle He didn't do; He did not come down from the cross—even though the Roman soldiers, the Jewish elders, and the thieves challenged Him to do that. Those who mocked also called for Him to come down. Yet it is precisely because He would not come down, that we believe on Him and have salvation through Him!*

The prayer recorded in verse 34 is the first of the seven sayings of Jesus from the cross. The prayer seems to have been for the soldiers, and it may have been uttered even while they were nailing Him to the cross. The tense of the verb indicates that Jesus "kept on" saying, "Father forgive them."

In the soul of Jesus, there was no animosity toward those who crucified Him—no anger, no resentment, no desire for retaliation. Jesus asked God to forgive His enemies because, while they knew they were putting Him to death, they did not know the enormity of their crime. Jesus, who insisted that we are to love our enemies, now exemplified that same virtue Himself. The Apostle Peter says that Jesus "suffered for us, leaving us an example, that [we] should follow His steps" (First Peter 2:21).

In verse 34b Luke continues by stating that the soldiers divided out His garments by casting lots.²⁶⁹ Those poor soldiers took home with them only a few pieces of clothing—no changed hearts, no renewed spirits, and no Savior from sin. And just so, it is easy for us to leave church services, Bible studies, and hymn-sings in much the same way.

Public executions always drew the stares of curious people, who stood by and watched. Verse 35 says, "The people stood looking on." Thousands of people had come to

Jerusalem to observe the Passover, and now multitudes stood around, looking on at the scene of the execution.

Verse 35 says that the Jewish leaders ("the rulers") derided Jesus, saying, "He saved others; let him save Himself if He is the Christ." Verses 36 and 37 tell us that the soldiers also mocked Him, offering Him vinegar, and challenging Him to save Himself. And then Pilate ordered that a label be attached to the cross, above Jesus' head. The full title (taking into consideration the wording found in all four Gospel accounts)—was, "*THIS IS JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS.*" When some suggested that the title be changed to read that He *claimed to be* the King of the Jews, Pilate refused, because he knew that Jesus was innocent of the charge that the Jews had brought against Him (John 19:19-22).

Jesus, the innocent One, died on the cross to pay the price for those of us who are guilty of offending God.

c. The request of one of the criminals (23:39-43)

(23:39-43) Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, "If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us." But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, "Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong." Then he said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom." And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise."

The incident described in these verses is told only by Luke. Jesus was crucified between two criminals. He hung on the cross in the middle; the other two were placed, one on each side of Him. Verse 39 says that one of the criminals "blasphemed"²⁷⁰ Him, saying, "If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us." The account in Matthew and Mark says that both robbers hurled abuse at Jesus.

At last, one of the two criminals grew silent, and repented. Verses 40-41 tell us that this criminal admitted his own guilt, and even acknowledged that both he and his partner *deserved death* by crucifixion. The penitent criminal rebuked the other, and said, "*Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds, but this Man has done nothing wrong.*"²⁷¹

The penitent "thief" was beginning to see something about Jesus that was different. By this time, he had seen how Jesus reacted to suffering and reproach. He had heard Jesus pray that God would forgive His executioners. Undoubtedly the Holy Spirit was working in his heart. He reminded the other criminal that this was no time to be engaging in blasphemy. These men were in a situation where it was time to start thinking seriously about their relationship with God. The penitent thief feared falling unprepared into the hands of the living God!

The criminal requested that when Jesus comes into His future kingdom (verse 42), that then He would remember the penitent one who died by His side on the cross. This man's knowledge of the gospel was undoubtedly incomplete, but somehow he knew that the messianic claims of Jesus were true—and Jesus responded to his request by saying, "I

say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise." The criminal made a plea for mercy, and Jesus granted his request, by promising him a place in Paradise.

Paradise refers to the intermediate resting place of the souls of the righteous. The word "Paradise" is used as a synonym for the heavenly home (2 Corinthians 12:2). It is not some mystical region, not purgatory, not a land of make-believe—but a reference to the home Jesus is preparing for His followers. Jesus gave the penitent man instant salvation and the promise of a home with Him in Heaven.²⁷²

The account of the dying thief illustrates that deathbed conversions are possible for any who turn to Christ in faith—but why wait? Why miss out on a life of assurance and forgiveness through the redeeming blood of Jesus? Why not experience God's best here in this life, and receive the eternal home in Heaven in the world to come?

There is beauty and comfort in the answer that Jesus gave to the thief on the cross. Sinners who cast themselves into the arms of Christ can look forward to an eternal home with Him in Heaven.

4. Jesus Died on the Cross (23:44-49)

In this section Luke relates two incidents that are not given in Matthew and Mark, including the last of the seven sayings Jesus gave from the cross (verse 46), and the mention of those who smote their breasts and returned (verse 48).

(23:44-49) Now it was about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. Then the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was torn in two. And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit." Having said this, He breathed His last. So when the centurion saw what had happened, he glorified God, saying, "Certainly this was a righteous Man!" And the whole crowd who came together to that sight, seeing what had been done, beat their breasts and returned. But all His acquaintances, and the women who followed Him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.

The crucifixion and death of Jesus was an extraordinary event, and God used some physical signs to indicate this fact. Suddenly something very dramatic had taken place. The land became dark (verse 44). It was an intense and unforgettable darkness. Thirty-three years earlier, a dazzling light (at night) marked *the birth* of Jesus. Now—an eerie darkness (at noon) marked *the death* of Jesus. The darkness lasted for three hours and was a symbol of God's judgment.

Verse 45 says further that "the veil of the temple was torn in two." The curtain which blocked the view into the Most Holy Place of the temple was torn from top to bottom. That curtain *was as thick as* a human hand, and was woven from expensive yarns.²⁷³ The rending of the curtain signified that free access to the throne of God was now available to all who would come through faith in Jesus Christ.

Verse 46 describes the final moments when Jesus died. He cried with a loud voice, "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit," and then He breathed His last breath. Normally, one who was crucified died slowly, and became unconscious before breathing his last breath—but Jesus was alert and in control of His senses and His reason until the very last. He gave up His life because He chose to do so! He voluntarily gave His life to

save sinful humanity. Jesus had now accomplished the work which the Father had given Him to do (John 17:4); a calm peace marked the final moments.

When the Roman army officer saw what was done (verse 47), he declared that Jesus was a righteous Man. In contrast to the mocking crowds, the centurion's cry reflected deep spiritual insight and a sense of reverence.²⁷⁴

The multitude who had gathered at the place of execution was now returning to the city (verse 48). The people smote their breasts as a sign of anguish and grief.²⁷⁵ Peter, on the Day of Pentecost, told the gathered crowd, "God has made this Jesus whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). Jesus was now glorified and at the right hand of the Father—but *you* took Him and crucified Him!

Three persons died on that dark day outside the walls of Jerusalem: One (the impenitent thief) died *in* sin—without a Savior. One (the penitent thief) died *to* sin—he received the Savior. One (Jesus) died *for* sin—He provided atonement for all who trust Him.

Verse 49 says that His acquaintances, including the women from Galilee, were "watching these things." With the exception of John, none of the "Twelve" is reported to have been present at Calvary!²⁷⁶ Surely the acquaintances of Jesus were saddened by the fact that their Friend Jesus was unjustly accused, subjected to mockery, and finally died at the hands of cruel men. They had seen Him as a compassionate man, and now He was dead. But three days later, the gloom of the cross would be erased by the glory of the empty tomb!

5. Jesus Buried in Joseph's Tomb (23:50-56)

The body of Jesus was not given the treatment that was used customarily for executed criminals.

(23:50-56) Now behold, there was a man named Joseph, a council member, a good and just man. He had not consented to their decision and deed. He was from Arimathea, a city of the Jews, who himself was also waiting for the kingdom of God. This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a tomb that was hewn out of the rock, where no one had ever lain before. That day was the Preparation, and the Sabbath drew near. And the women who had come with Him from Galilee followed after, and they observed the tomb and how His body was laid. Then they returned and prepared spices and fragrant oils. And they rested on the Sabbath according to the commandment.

There were some people who remained concerned about Jesus after His death. Joseph of Arimathea²⁷⁷ was a member of the Sanhedrin who had enough courage to ask Pilate for the body of Jesus (verse 52). Joseph carefully took the body down from the cross, wrapped it in fine cloth, and placed it in an unused tomb (verse 53). It was about sunset on Friday, for the Sabbath *was drawing near* (verse 54).

The women mentioned earlier had been observing from a distance and noticed where the body was placed. They pre-*pared* spices and perfumes and then rested on the Sabbath Day (verses 55-56).

24. THE RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION OF JESUS

Luke 24:1-43

The cross is not the end of the great truth about Jesus. He not only died, but was raised again on the third day.

The bodily resurrection of Jesus from the tomb is one of the central teachings of the Christian faith. The "holy books" of the world's great religions all have strong ethical systems of conduct, and most refer to the after-life, but none of the world religions has a *living Savior*.

The actual step-by-step resurrection of Jesus is nowhere described in the Gospel accounts. We are not told precisely *when* His body left the tomb, nor is the mystery of *how* His body was resurrected—explained for us. We do know that an angel moved the circular stone at the time of a night-time earthquake (Matthew 28:2).

1. Visits to the Tomb of Jesus (24:1-12)

Very early on the morning of the first day of the week, a group of women came to the tomb where Jesus had been laid, and planned to anoint the body of Jesus.

(24:1-12) Now on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they, and certain other women with them, came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared. But they found the stone rolled away from the tomb. Then they went in and did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. And it happened, as they were greatly perplexed about this, that behold, two men stood by them in shining garments. Then, as they were afraid and bowed their faces to the earth, they said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen! Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee, saying, 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.'" And they remembered His words. Then they returned from the tomb and told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them, who told these things to the apostles. And their words seemed to them like idle tales, and they did not believe them. But Peter arose and ran to the tomb; and stooping down, he saw the linen cloths lying by themselves; and he departed, marveling to himself at what had happened.

Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea had hastily pre-pared the body of Jesus for burial before it was laid in the tomb (John 19:38-40).

Some women, who had been helpers of Jesus, bought additional spices and came to the tomb on the morning after the Sabbath to finish the preparation²⁷⁸ of Jesus' body for the burial (verse 1). They had come to the tomb, not to seek a risen Lord, but to anoint the dead body of One whom they had respected and loved. The women sensed that something was unusual when they found the stone rolled away (verse 2) and the tomb empty (verse 3).

The women were baffled by all that they had observed, and suddenly two "men" appeared clad in brilliant garments and asked a simple question: "Why do you seek the living among the dead?" (verses 4-5). In other words, He is not here; He is risen (verse 6). And when the women were reminded of what Jesus had earlier said, they remembered how He had told about the crucifixion and the rising on the third day (verses 7-8).

When the women told the apostles (and other disciples of Jesus) about their experience that morning, those disciples seemed to have a hard time believing what they heard (verses 9-11). Impulsive Peter "ran to the tomb" (verse 12) and saw that the body of Jesus was not there, and he was perplexed.

2. Disciples on the Road to Emmaus (24:13-35)

During the late afternoon on the day of the Resurrection, two disciples were walking the seven-mile distance from Jerusalem, northwest to Emmaus, traveling to their home. One was a man named Cleopas, and the other person may have been another man (or perhaps the wife of Cleopas).

a. Jesus walked with the disciples (24:13-16)

(24:13-16) Now behold, two of them were traveling that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was seven miles from Jerusalem. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. So it was, while they conversed and reasoned, that Jesus Himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were restrained, so that they did not know Him.

The two who were walking along the road to Emmaus were discussing what had recently taken place in Jerusalem (verse 14). They had heavy hearts and confused minds as they discussed the events connected with the death of Christ. They were trying to make sense out of the reports that they had heard, and while they were conversing with each other Jesus joined them, appearing from behind (verse 15).

The two disciples did not recognize Him because some-thing held their eyes so that their vision was restrained (verse 16). The beauty of the whole experience is that Jesus was following two of His bewildered sheep, and was about to strengthen them, and bring them back into the fold. They had been doubting, thinking that their hopes for what He might accomplish was all over.

b. Jesus was discussed by the disciples (24:17-24)

(24:17-24) And He said to them, "What kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad?" Then the one whose name was Cleopas answered and said to Him, "Are You the only stranger in Jerusalem, and have You not known the things which happened there in these days?" And He said to them, "What things?" So they said to Him, "The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and crucified Him. But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, today is the third day since these things happened. Yes, and certain women of our company, who arrived at the tomb early, astonished us. When they did not find His body, they came saying that they had also seen

a vision of angels who said He was alive. And certain of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but Him they did not see."

Jesus asked *what it was* that they were discussing (verse 17), not that He had to be told the subject of their conversation, but it was His way of joining in the discussion. The man named Cleopas in essence asked, "Are you a stranger in Jerusalem, and have you not heard about the terrible things that happened there last week?" (verse 18).

Jesus responded with the words, "What things?" (verse 19) only to give them an opportunity to open their hearts to Him. And then in verse 20 they related briefly, but with deep emotion, the story of Jesus and how He was crucified. They explained (verse 21) that they had hoped that Jesus would set up His kingdom in Jerusalem and drive out the Romans, and make Israel a great nation again. But instead, Jesus was condemned and crucified. And furthermore, "Today is the third day since these things happened" (verse 21b). These words argue for a Friday crucifixion.²⁷⁹ Later in this chapter (verse 46) Jesus says that it was prophesied that He would rise from the dead on the third day.

The report by the women who had gone to the tomb early that morning seemed to confuse the two disciples more than it encouraged them (verses 22-23). They did not seem to remember Jesus' three-fold prediction that He would be crucified and then rise again on the third day. But the women had seen Jesus (Matthew 28:9-10), and two of the apostles had gone to the tomb to check on the women's report (John 20:18). Either the two Emmaus disciples had not heard their report or they simply would not believe it (verse 24).

c. Jesus was revealed to the disciples (24:25-31)

(24:25-31) Then He said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. Then they drew near to the village where they were going, and He indicated that He would have gone farther. But they constrained Him, saying, "Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent." And He went in to stay with them. Now it came to pass, as He sat at the table with them, that He took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight.

There was distress in the heart of Jesus as He listened to this sad account. He sensed the unbelief that was apparent in the minds of these two disciples. The term, "foolish ones,"²⁸⁰ (verse 25) does not have the evil connotation that our English term has. The words simply imply that the person is "dull of understanding."

Jesus tenderly chided the two disciples *for not believing* "all" that the prophets had spoken (verse 25b). They believed part²⁸¹ of the prophet's promise about a coming Redeemer for Israel—that part which spoke of setting up a kingdom, but not the part about the necessity that Christ should suffer. In verse 26 Jesus mentioned that His suffering was something which they had ignored. And verse 27 says that Jesus began His exposition with the books of Moses. There was a promise, for example, that God would raise up a prophet (Deuteronomy 18:15).²⁸² Then He expounded from the Prophets, who spoke of the

suffering servant (Isaiah 53). Jesus had just declared that indeed *the suffering*²⁸³ of Christ was an absolute necessity for the redemption of mankind.

It would be interesting to have a tape-recording of all that Jesus said. He started with the Pentateuch and continued on in all the Scriptures, giving a survey of those passages that refer to His sacrificial death. Surely He included such passages as Genesis 3:15, Psalm 22, Isaiah 53, and Zechariah 13:6-7. Jesus is the central focus of the entire Bible, the key to a clear knowledge of the message of God's truth.

The two disciples may very well have been a man and his wife, who lived at Emmaus and had now reached their home (verse 28). Jesus would have gone on, had they not invited Him to stay (verse 29). This testifies to His courtesy, but it also tells something else about Him—Jesus *does not press Himself* upon anybody. He waits for an invitation. He does not enter uninvited.²⁸⁴ God has given human beings the amazing *gift of free will*. We can use that power²⁸⁵ to invite Christ to enter our hearts, or we can allow Him to pass on.

Jesus accepted the invitation to abide at the home of the two disciples, and He "sat at the table with them" (verse 30). This was an ordinary meal in an ordinary home. Jesus apparently was invited to offer the prayer of blessing on the meal, and as He "blessed and broke" (verse 30)²⁸⁶ it dawned on them who their Companion²⁸⁷ was! Perhaps the marks in His hands were visible for the first time—when He reached for the bread. Their eyes were opened, and they knew Him—but just as they recognized Him, He was gone from them, having vanished²⁸⁸ out of their sight (verse 31).

d. Jesus was proclaimed by the disciples (24:32-35)

(24:32-35) And they said to one another, "Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?" So they rose up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, saying, "The Lord is risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!" And they told about the things that had happened on the road, and how He was known to them in the breaking of bread.

The reader can easily detect that these disciples were thrilled at the discovery that Jesus was not dead, but alive. Now they understood why their hearts burned (verse 32)²⁸⁹ as He taught them by the way. The words "*burn within us*" speak of the warmth and delight of their feelings²⁹⁰ while they listened to our Lord's exposition of the Scriptures.

The two disciples had a new and exciting joy²⁹¹ to share with their brethren in Jerusalem, and they wasted no time in returning to the city to give their report (verse 33). They went hurrying back to Jerusalem with news that was too good to keep until the next day! They seemed unafraid²⁹² of the danger that lurked along the semi-wilderness road at night.

When the two disciples arrived in Jerusalem they found "the eleven"²⁹³ and others who were meeting with them (verse 33b). Before the two could report their good news, they were greeted by good news from the gathered group: "The Lord is risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon [Peter]!" (verse 34). Then the two disciples related their whole experience along the road to Emmaus,²⁹⁴ and were overjoyed to learn that the Lord was alive and had appeared to others (verse 35).

3. Jesus Appeared to the Disciples (24:36-49)

Even while He was the subject of the conversation among the disciples, the Lord Jesus appeared in the midst of His followers.

a. The risen Lord visited His disciples (24:36-45)

(24:36-45) Now as they said these things, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and said to them, "Peace to you." But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed they had seen a spirit. And He said to them, "Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts? "Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have." When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet. But while they still did not believe for joy, and marveled, He said to them, "Have you any food here?" So they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish and some honeycomb. And He took it and ate in their presence. Then He said to them, "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me." And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.

It was Easter Sunday, late in the evening. Ten of the disciples, along with the two from Emmaus (and some others) were gathered in a house somewhere in Jerusalem. They had just heard the fascinating story that Jesus was alive. For fear of the Jews, John's account says that the doors were locked (John 20:19). And then, with beautiful simplicity, the Bible says that "as they said these things, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them" (verse 36). The text indicates that Jesus suddenly²⁹⁵ appeared in the room.

Jesus' words, "Peace to you"—were a message of comfort and courage and hope—yet His sudden appearance when all the doors were shut, terrified them. Verse 37 says that they were terrified and frightened, and "supposed they had seen a spirit." After all, Jesus had been dead. They had seen Him die. They had watched as His body was carried²⁹⁶ to Joseph's tomb—and now, here He was, alive and in their midst!

When Jesus noticed that the disciples were filled with fear (verse 38), He directed their attention to His hands and His feet. Jesus proceeded to show them that their fears were unwarranted, and their notion that He was a disembodied spirit was not correct. Jesus told the disciples to examine Him closely (verse 39), and to note the wounds in His hands and feet—and John's account says that He even invited them to look at the wound which the spear had made in His side (John 20:20). The goal of Jesus was to replace the disciples' uncertainty with simple faith.

In the section from verse 41b through verse 43, Jesus gave another demonstration of the fact that He had a real body. He asked the disciples if they had any food. In response, they gave Him a piece of broiled fish and some honey—and Jesus ate the food²⁹⁷ in their presence. Since a spirit does not eat fish and honey, they had some additional evidences that Jesus possessed a real body.

The words "they still did not believe for joy" (verse 41a) seem a bit difficult to understand. The expression is just another way of saying that they thought His presence with them was just too good to be true! When Jesus breathed His last breath on the cross, the disciples were pierced with a sense of hopelessness. It was the end. Jesus was gone. He

was dead. And now He stood there—alive and well—in their very midst. That was too good to be true!

Jesus made it clear in verses 44-45, that He wants everyone to know, that what had happened to Him was the necessary fulfillment of the plan of God. God's plan had already been revealed in the sacred Scriptures. The entire Old Testament (the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms) had pointed to the Messiah's death and resurrection.

Verse 45 in the text says that Jesus "opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures." Jesus likely pointed them to the call of Abraham, the exodus from Egypt, the years of living in Canaan, the Babylonian exile, and finally the way one Person out of the tribe of Judah bore the sin of the world. Just how²⁹⁸ Jesus opened their minds to understand the Scriptures is not stated. If the disciples had truly known and accepted what the Old Testament revealed, they would have anticipated the death and the resurrection of Jesus.

b. The risen Lord commissioned His followers (24:46-49)

(24:46-49) Then He said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things. Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high." The message of the death and resurrection of Christ are key factors that make up the good news which is to be proclaimed to all the world.

In verse 46, Jesus emphasized the necessity of the atonement, how He suffered and died as a payment for the debt incurred by our sins. He spoke also of the importance of the resurrection, how His cold body was brought back to life by the power of God.

And so the resurrection of Jesus is a great historical fact. Jesus lives! Therefore life is worth living, and therefore this life is not all there is. We too shall live in the world to come!

Verse 47 is an urgent call from Jesus, declaring that the good news of forgiveness and salvation is to be proclaimed to the entire world—beginning at Jerusalem. The key message which needs to be proclaimed is one of repentance and the remission of sins. It is the task of the church to spread the good news and to seek to bring the lost to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ who is the only Savior.

In verse 48, Jesus told His disciples that they were witnesses of these things. They had seen the work and ministry of Jesus. They heard His words. They had seen Jesus command the forces of nature. They had watched Him heal lepers and restore sight to the blind. They had seen Him bring the dead back to life. Jesus was depending on them to carry His message to all the earth.

But how could such ordinary individuals take on such a massive responsibility? How could they hope to accomplish the task? Jesus promised to send the power they would need (verse 49).²⁹⁹ Jesus knew that He would be leaving the disciples and would ascend to the Father, and so they were told that while He would be leaving, they would not be alone. They were to remain quietly in Jerusalem, and there they would be empowered by the

Holy Spirit. The fulfillment of this promise came on the Day of Pentecost, when the 120 disciples who had gathered and waited—were endued with power by the Holy Spirit.³⁰⁰

And then sometime later Jesus led them to the village of Bethany, located on the east side of the Mount of Olives. There He gave them a parting blessing, and was carried up³⁰¹ into heaven. The disciples saw Him ascend until a cloud hid Him from their sight (Acts 1:9).

Luke's Gospel does not end in sadness. It concludes with the thrilling account of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead! Jesus, who was arrested and crucified and buried—is alive again. The message of the resurrection had filled the hearts of the disciples in the early church. It was the theme in all their preaching. They did not wait until Easter Sunday to preach a sermon on the resurrection. Every sermon they preached made mention of the resurrection. For example, when Paul went to Athens, the philosophers quipped, "What does this babbling man want to say (Acts 17:18)?" Paul responded by preaching to them "Jesus and the resurrection." He told them that God has appointed a day in which Christ will judge the world, and he said in essence, "We can be sure this will happen because God raised him from the dead" (Acts 17:31).

Without the resurrection, the *life* of Jesus would be meaningless, His *death* would be useless, and His *second coming* would be impossible. Jesus could never come back for His own if His body were still in a Palestinian tomb. If the body of Jesus still lies in a Syrian grave, believers may as well tear up their Bibles, and forget the hope of redemption—for then there is no bridge across the gulf of death.³⁰²

The Epicureans of Paul's day taught that humans should get all the pleasure out of life that they can, for they are going to be dead a long time. They did not accept the concept of a resurrection. We can see an echo of this same philosophy in our own day.³⁰³ There are those who say, "We had nothing to say about our coming into the world, and there's no telling what will happen when we leave it—so grit your teeth, make the best of your problems, and have a good time!"

The Christian, by way of contrast believes in the immortality of the soul, and also in the resurrection of the body. When Jesus returns, there will be a resurrection of the dead. He will lead His people through the gates of glory—into an eternal world of great and glorious things. It will be a land where the sun never sets, and roses never fade, and the young will never grow old.

When you visit Jerusalem today, you can see a skull-shaped hill, a garden adjacent to the hill, and a tomb at one end of the garden. Some years ago, a tourist was heard to say (when stepping out from the Garden Tomb), "I don't know what I was expecting, but there was nothing to see!" Indeed, the tomb is empty. The last enemy, death, has been conquered. Praise God!

4. The Ascension of Jesus (24:50-53)

During the 40-day period following the resurrection, Jesus appeared on numerous occasions to His disciples, teaching them about the nature of the kingdom and their responsibilities related to living under His Lordship.

At least eleven appearances of Jesus during the interval between His resurrection and His ascension are recorded, not only to individuals, but also to groups of people. He appeared first to Mary Magdalene (Mark 16:9), and then to Peter alone (Luke 24:34). Later, He appeared to two who walked toward Emmaus (Luke 24:13-15), and to ten apostles in Jerusalem (John 20:19). After that He appeared to several other groups.

(24:50-53) And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. Now it came to pass, while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried up into heaven. And they worshiped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God. Amen.

Jesus had finished the ministry assigned by the Father. The work of atonement had been completed. Jesus led the disciples to the Mount of Olives, near Bethany, where He lifted up His hands and blessed them (verse 50). While blessing His disciples, He was carried from them into heaven (verse 51). A more detailed account of the event known as His ascension is given in Acts 1:9-11.

The disciples worshiped Him and returned to Jerusalem just as He had told them to do in verse 49. Their return was marked with indescribable joy (verse 52). The disciples chose to remain continually in the temple "praising and blessing God" (verse 53). Luke opened his Gospel with a scene in the temple at Jerusalem; he closed the account with the disciples jubilantly praising God in the same temple.

With the exposition of chapter 24, the message of the Gospel according to Luke comes to a close. As a child, Jesus lived in obedience to Joseph and Mary. As an adult, He served God and others through His healing and teaching and example. In chapter 23 He dies for the sins of the human family. Yet the repeated message of the New Testament is that the dead body of Jesus was raised to life again (Luke 24:1-12), and now He is seated in the presence of the Father, interceding for His people (Hebrews 7:25).

Jesus is no longer a local Christ confined to the city of Jerusalem and the regions of Palestine. Jesus had told His disciples that He would be taken from them, and they were thinking that when He was gone, He would no longer be with them—but among His last words are these, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20).

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Gospel of Luke

1. State the purpose for Luke's writing the Gospel account which we know as the book of Luke (1:1-4).
2. Name some reasons how or why Mary (the mother of Jesus) found "favor with God" (1:30).
3. Spell out the difference between Mary's attitude toward Gabriel (1:34-38) and the attitude which Zacharias had shown (1:18).
4. In light of what we read in Micah 5:2, why do you think Luke gives us the historical information recorded in Luke 2:1-5?
5. Why do you think that Joseph and Mary did not understand what Jesus told them (2:49-50)?
6. Discuss some things that parents can do to help their children develop meaningfully in the intellectual, physical, social, and spiritual areas (2:52).
7. What do you think of the frankness that marked the preaching of John the Baptist (3:7)? How would preachers fare today if they called individuals "sons of snakes"? What is the difference between being *bold* in witnessing, and being *rude*?
8. Why did Herod imprison John the Baptist (3:19-20)? What happens today when one preaches clear messages on subjects that are not popular in the culture?
9. Who was it that led Jesus into the wilderness where He was tempted by the devil (4:1)? What are some of the functions of the Holy Spirit?
10. How did the fact that the people of Nazareth were familiar with Jesus, hinder the reception of His message (4:22)? How did Jesus respond to the opposition of His home town people (4:30)?
11. What important tool did Jesus use to deal with the opposition against Him (4:42)? See also Mark 1:35. What are some hindrances Christians may experience today—from the world? from Satan? from their old lives? from their families? from people employed at the place where they work?
12. What did the miracle described in Luke 5:1-11 teach Peter about Jesus? What did it teach Peter about himself?
13. What does Luke 5:39 teach us about some of the Jews of New Testament times? What does it teach about some people today?
14. How does Jesus want us to treat our enemies (6:27-36)? What will be the reward for treating enemies properly?
15. There was a widow from the village of Nain whose son had died? Why do you think that Jesus raised the widow's son? How did the people react when the widow's son was raised (7:11-17)?
16. To whom did Jesus speak the parable of the Sower (8:4)? To whom did He explain the parable (8:9)? Why did Jesus speak frequently in parables (8:10)?
17. Describe what you think should be our attitude toward professing Christians who are not in our own church or denomination (9:49-50).

18. In light of Jesus' words in Luke 10:20, what is it that should be the Christian's greatest joy?
19. In light of the story in Luke 10:25-37, who is your neighbor? Make a list of some people you could help, and name some ways by which they can be helped.
20. In your judgment, what was the "good part" that Mary had chosen (10:42)? Why is it even better than preparing a meal for Jesus?
21. Jesus spoke about a friend who came to a householder at midnight and made a request (11:5-8). How is God *like* the householder? How is He *unlike* the householder?
22. Why do you think that many people seem to be more interested in observing the weather, than in checking the signs related to the Lord's return (12:54-56)?
23. Luke mentions some Galileans who were sacrificing to God (13:1-3). Read the article on "Pilate" in a good Bible dictionary (*Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary*) and note the background that led to the slaughter of some Galileans. What warning in these verses does Jesus give to people who think victims of disasters must be worse than others?
24. Why do you think Jesus gave no direct answer to the question that was asked Him in Luke 13:23? How does one "strive to enter through the narrow gate" (13:24)?
25. In what sense are Christians expected to "hate" their family members (14:26)?
26. What is the purpose of sitting down first and "counting the cost" of dedicated discipleship in the kingdom of God (14:28)? How is that like building a new house?
27. In the story of the prodigal son, what do we learn about the character of the father (15:11-24)? What do we sense about the attitude of the discontented son? What can we sense about the attitude of the older brother (15:25-32)?
28. When Jesus says that those things "highly esteemed among men" (16:15) are an abomination to God—what is the lesson that Jesus is teaching?
29. Give your evaluation of the statement in Luke 16:16 which says that "the law and the prophets" were until John. What is "the kingdom of God" that has been preached since that time?
30. In the account Jesus gave (16:19-31) about the rich man and Lazarus, we are sure that the rich man did not go to hell because he was rich, nor did the beggar go to paradise because he was poor. How do we know?
31. Discuss the statement: "It is bad when anyone sins; it is worse when one causes another to sin" (17:1-2). Is it true that some sins are worse than others? Explain.
32. What are some of the reasons why ingratitude is often manifest even among God's people (17:11-17)?
33. What were the common activities in Noah's day, and in Lot's day, that are prevalent today (17:26-27)? Comment on the *intensity* with which the activities are occurring.
34. Write to Bible Helps, P. O. Box 391, Hanover, PA 17331, and ask for tract number 10, entitled "Remember Lot's Wife." What are some lessons to be learned from this statement which is mentioned in Luke 17:32?
35. Jesus told a parable about a tax collector and a Pharisee (18:9-14). To whom is the parable addressed? How does the pride of the Pharisee become obvious in the parable?

36. In the parable of the rich young ruler (18:18-23), why did the man's obedience to the Law not gain eternal life for him?
37. Look in a good Bible dictionary for the word tax collector and try to discover why they were such a despised group of people (19:1-10). What can you find about the "chief" of tax collectors in the town of Jericho?
38. How did the enemies of Jesus expect to get Him into trouble by asking their question about paying taxes to the representatives of the Roman government (20:20-26)?
39. Compare the method by which we tend to measure our giving to the Lord's work, and the method which God uses to determine the value of our giving (21:1-4).
40. Do some background reading on the teaching in Luke 21:24, seeking to discover when "the times of the Gentiles" began, and how they will be "fulfilled."
41. What is your understanding of the term "this generation" found in Luke 21:32? List some of the major views that are generally set forth to explain the term.
42. Discuss those qualities that should be manifest in order to qualify a person to be among those who exhibit true greatness (22:24-30).
43. Both Judas (22:1-6) and Peter (22:54-62) in an unguarded moment failed bitterly. Compare the two men with regard to the reasons that led to their failure, and with regard to how they responded when they realized what they had done.
44. Discuss the statement, "*The greatest miracle that Jesus ever did, was the miracle He did not do*" (23:32-35).
45. Explain how the words found in Luke 24:44-47 clearly imply that the Old Testament Scriptures contain many references to Jesus the Messiah.
46. As you reflect on the teachings in the entire Gospel according to Luke, what characteristics of the book of Luke impress you the most? Name a few of the lessons which are especially rich with meaning for you.

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FOOTNOTES

¹ L. W. Teeter says, "This seems to have been a man of some note, and who was much interested in the 'new doctrine of salvation.' He likely became acquainted with Paul and Luke in some of their missionary tours. But of his position as a citizen, and of his dwelling-place at the time of this writing we know nothing" (*New Testament Commentary*, The Brethren's Publishing Company, 1891, page 190).

² See pages 8 and 93 in the commentary on *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus* in this *Brethren New Testament Commentary* series. The reasons why most Bible students are convinced that Paul was imprisoned twice are stated in more detail on those pages.

³ Zecharias and Elizabeth were *both* righteous. It is a wonderful thing to have a father and a mother who are both dedicated followers of the Lord God.

⁴ Zacharias had in essence asked for a sign when he asked, "How shall I know this?" In verse 20 we learn that he received a sign he had not expected.

⁵ Elizabeth gave all the honor and glory to God for this blessing. It was only natural that the husband desired an heir, the mother desired a child, and the Jewish people desired a Messiah. She joined Sarah and Hannah in giving birth long after hope for childbearing had vanished.

⁶ When the poet Southey was telling an older Quaker lady about his harried schedule—how he learned Portuguese grammar while he washed and dressed in the morning, and planned his day while he ate breakfast—filling up each minute of the day, the older lady said quietly, "And when does thee think?" That's a good question for all of us. When do we take time to contemplate the condition of our lives? When do we quietly meditate on God's Word? When do we focus on the course and destiny of where we're headed? Christmas time, when we consider opening the first chapters of the book of Luke—is a good time to sit down, and like Mary, ponder the things which really count in life.

⁷ In Matthew 9:26, His fame "went abroad into all the land" (KJV). In Luke 4:36 the people at Capernaum said, "With authority and power He commands the unclean spirits, and they come out." In Luke 8:25 the disciples said "For He commands even the winds and water, and they obey Him!" In Acts 4:12 (of Jesus it is said), "For there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." And in Revelation 19:16 (of Jesus it is said) "He has on His robe...a name written: KINGS OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS."

⁸ Some believe the reference to David's throne is a reference to a Millennial Kingdom, while others believe the reference is to the rule of grace and truth established in the hearts and lives of those who have the God of Jacob as their refuge (Psalm 46:7). The Apostle Paul speaks of a kingdom of "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Romans 14:17). Regardless of how one views the *present* form of it, the *final* form of its outward manifestation will be the new heaven and new earth described in Revelation 21. It is a kingdom that will never end. John Newton's hymn says it well: "When we've been there ten thousand years, bright, shining as the sun, we've no less days to sing God's praise than when we've first begun." It is the author's belief that even though Jesus reigns always, the ultimate fulfillment of the prophecy in verse 33 will culminate in the Millennial kingdom. Daniel 2:44 is related to this promise.

The Mennonite writer, Daniel Kauffman, says, "There is a sense in which Jesus is with us now...but there is another sense in which we speak of His kingdom as being yet future" (*Doctrines of the Bible*, Mennonite Publishing House, 1952, pages 584-585).

⁹ A veil of privacy hides *the mechanics* of how God accomplished the virgin's conception. Certainly this was not a sexual union. It was not the mating of a woman with deity (as some cynics have said). Nothing so crude is suggested here. The incarnation was accomplished by a creative act of the Holy Spirit.

¹⁰ This time of fellowship between Mary and Elizabeth reminds us of our need to be an active part of a local body of believers. There is the encouragement that comes from fellowship with persons of mutual faith. God's people pray together and sing together and work together. When we see the zeal of our fellow Christians and share in their trials and rejoice in their joys, it gives us new courage and new devotion for the Lord.

¹¹ Mary, the mother of Jesus, was blessed among women. We need to be reminded that while we oppose Mary-worship, we must guard against falling into the opposite extreme of not giving her any commendation at all. Sometimes it is healthy to be reminded about the virtues manifested in the life of the Virgin Mary.

¹² Mary's song of praise models the way all believers should respond to God's work. Our lives should be marked by gratitude and praise, instead of murmuring and complaining. Praise to God is an acknowledgement that His virtues and

deeds are to be extolled. Mary's song of praise refers to a number of passages from several Old Testament books, portions of which she must have memorized.

¹³ Memorizing portions of Scripture is a wonderful aid to our spiritual growth. Mary's song of praise indicates that she was deeply taught in the things of God. Like Mary, we should search the Scriptures, and dig into them, and meditate on them—until they "dwell in [us] richly" (Colossians 3:16).

¹⁴ In ancient Israel, children were looked upon as a special blessing from God. Psalm 127:3 says that "the fruit of the womb is a reward." Children are not a curse, not an accident, not little spoiled, bad-mannered offspring. Children are born with tendencies toward doing wrong, but they are expressions of God's favor. Children are "a heritage from the Lord; the fruit of the womb is [His] reward."

¹⁵ The song is sometimes called the "Benedictus"—named for its first word in the Latin Vulgate translation. It begins, "Benedictus esto Dominus Deus Israelis," meaning "Blessed be the Lord, God of Israel."

¹⁶ The horn denotes power, and is borrowed from animals whose horns are for power and defense.

¹⁷ The secular news magazines sometimes rehearse the biblical account surrounding the birth of Jesus, and *then seek to invalidate* the message by quoting "scholars" who claim that the Christmas stories "owe as much to the pagan culture of the Roman Empire as they do to apostolic revelation." The writer of a major article in *Newsweek* (December 13, 2004) says, "There is no way to know whether Luke's story of the heavenly host announcing Jesus' arrival to the shepherds really happened" (page 56).

¹⁸ An interesting story comes out of World War I. A day was dawning on the battlefield in northern France. It was a dismal, foggy morning. During the night, the German armies had receded a short way, and the French army had advanced a bit. Between the two positions, a lonely farmhouse was still standing. As the day grew brighter the guns began to boom—but suddenly on both sides, there was a strange dead silence. Midway between the trenches, near the shattered farmhouse, there was crawling on its hands and knees, a little baby. Not a shot was fired. The spot, which moments before had been an inferno of flying shells, was now something like a peaceful island. Suddenly a soldier jumped out of a trench, and ran to where the small child was crawling. He tenderly picked up the child and carried it to shelter—and out from the trenches on both sides, came a loud cheer. The appearing of a little baby brought a temporary peace. Just so, the coming of Jesus into the world is intended to bring "peace, goodwill toward men!"

¹⁹ Conditions in Israel at the time of Jesus' birth were very dismal. Israel was occupied by Roman armies. There was the cruel King Herod. The scribes and Pharisees had externalized religion. The Sadducees were worldly-minded leaders. It is encouraging to note that even in the midst of all the darkness and despair, God has always had some who were devout followers.

²⁰ Some of the many promises were found in Isaiah 49:13, Isaiah 52:9, and Isaiah 66:13. For example, Isaiah 52:9 says, "Break forth into joy, sing together you waste places of Jerusalem! For the Lord has comforted His people."

²¹ The average Jew was looking for a political Messiah, who would bring independence (and greatness) to Israel, but this devout older man saw the Messiah as a Savior—one who would deliver people in all nations from the bondage of sin.

²² Those who reject the Christ will "fall"—that is, will be excluded from the kingdom. Those who accept Him will "rise" and be welcomed into the kingdom. The words of Simeon have been an accurate prophecy; over the years Christ has been the occasion for a sifting of people. The most important decision any person can make, centers on what he or she will do with Jesus Christ.

²³ Even a casual reading of the Gospel accounts will illustrate how Jesus was slandered by His own people. There is something unique about the Person of Christ. His very presence on earth proved to be a tremendous rebuke to sin and wickedness—and even today His name brings out the bitter animosity of some human hearts. You can talk about "God" to most people, but the moment you seriously mention receiving Jesus Christ—the countenance of many will freeze, the eyes will stare, and there is sometimes a stony silence.

²⁴ Being of the tribe of Asher (one of the ten northern tribes), and living in Jerusalem, shows that the so-called "lost tribes of Israel" were not completely lost.

²⁵ William Barclay calls Anna "one of the Quiet of the land" (*Gospel of Luke*, page 22). She loved the house of God. She had known sorrow, but she had not grown bitter. She was at least 84 years old, but she never ceased to hope.

²⁶ See the notes on Matthew 2:13-23 in the BNTC commentary on the *Gospel of Matthew*, pages 31-36.

²⁷ The Greek construction is such that it literally anticipated the answer Yes: "You were aware, were you not, that I must be in the things (or, in the places) of my Father?" (*Commentary on Luke*, Ray Summers, page 43).

²⁸ Jesus was well-balanced in all areas: *wisdom* (mentally), *stature* (physically), *favor with God* (spiritually), *favor with man* (socially). It is one of the duties of parents to help children develop these needful qualities. Every child should be developing harmoniously in each of the four areas.

²⁹ Too many spokesmen for God today are proclaiming a message of "sweetness"—a message *that glosses over* human faults and *convinces people that* they are really good at heart. Preachers need to remember that there is no virtue in seeking to flatter people by refraining from the mention of their vices. The preacher is to "convince, rebuke, and exhort" with longsuffering (2 Timothy 4:2).

³⁰ In verses 10-14, we will see that fruit-bearing includes such specific qualities as generosity, fairness, thoughtfulness, and contentment.

³¹ First, they collected taxes for an unwelcome foreign government (the Romans). Second they were often dishonest, *collecting more* than the government demanded, *and pocketing* the extra cash for their own use. Third, the publicans who came to John knew that they had been fleecing the people.

³² John does not say to these soldiers that doing military service is wrong—but we must not come to doctrinal conclusions by basing our logic on *the silence of the Scriptures*. John may very well have given the soldiers further instruction and counsel at a later date. G.H.C. Macgregor says, "The 'argument from silence' is always precarious," and then explains that later in Luke's Gospel, Jesus commends a woman in the city, who was a sinner, but we must not suppose that "He condones her prostitution because He is silent about it" (*The New Testament Basis of Pacifism*, pages 18-19).

³³ See pages 177-181 in the *BNTC Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*.

³⁴ See Matthew 3:13-17 (pages 42-43 in the *BNTC Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*) for additional details surrounding the baptism of Jesus.

³⁵ Brethren commentator, L. W. Teeter, says, "Joseph is admitted as the son of Heli, when in fact he is only his son-in-law, but he is the real son of Jacob" [as noted in Matthew's account] (*New Testament Commentary*, 1896, page 206). Since a woman had no right to the throne, the genealogy through *Mary* alone would be incomplete for Jesus to reign as King. But in Matthew's account, Jesus is shown to be the legal descendant and heir of *Joseph*. The most simple explanation is that in Luke, we have our Lord's *natural* descent (through *Mary*), and in Matthew, we have His *legal* descent through *Joseph*.

³⁶ Readers may want to check comments on Matthew 4:1-11 in the *BNTC commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, pages 43-47, for additional exposition.

³⁷ Nazareth is a small town in Galilee that overlooks the north side of the Valley of Armageddon. It was located close to some important trade routes through Palestine. Merchants from Europe (and from the Far East) passed through the area—and somewhat like Corinth (in southern Greece), it developed a bad reputation in morals and religion. Along with that, there was a kind of crudeness in their local dialect. As a result, Nazareth was not a respected town. One of the early disciples of Jesus had asked the question, "*Can anything good come out of Nazareth?*" (John 1:46).

³⁸ Many modern churchmen are interpreting biblical salvation in terms of the liberation of people who are *politically* oppressed. They assume that the "poor," the "captives," and the "blind"—were those who had been materially and literally poor, and blind, and bound in prison.

³⁹ The main prisoner we hear about in the New Testament is John the Baptist; he was left in prison and was executed. It would have been an act of courage on the part of Jesus to deliver John the Baptist, but the Messiah's purpose was to deliver people from the *spiritual bondage* of sin, not to release prisoners from jails.

⁴⁰ All of us should do what we can to improve the lot of others who are suffering a variety of injustices. Nursing homes, hospitals, and prisons provide many opportunities for ministries of help and visitation. But as faithful followers of the Lord Jesus, our primary task is to foster hope and peace and joy through sharing the liberating message of the gospel.

⁴¹ Bishop J. C. Ryle says, "We must take time for private meditation, and for being alone with God. It must not content us to pray daily and read the Scriptures...and receive the Lord's Supper. All this is well. But something more is needed. We should set apart special seasons for solitary self-examination and meditation on the things of God" (*Ryle's Expository Thoughts on the Gospels [Luke]*, page 127). If Jesus found it necessary to retire from the bustle of daily activity from time to time, so much more important it must be for us.

⁴² The *Lake of Gennesaret* was also known as the "Sea of Galilee" or the "Sea of Tiberias"—named for the city of Tiberias built by Herod along the shore. *Gennesaret* is named after the fertile plain that lies on the northwest. The Old Testament name used sometimes was the "Sea of Chinnereth"—from a Hebrew word meaning *harp shaped* (the shape of the general outline of the lake).

⁴³ Verse 5 contains a great practical lesson: There is a blessing for those who unhesitatingly obey every plain command of Christ. Peter was a seasoned fisherman; he knew the art of fishing—but he did not say, "It seems to me that launching out into the deep will not work." Instead, he said "*nevertheless, at Your word, I will let down the net.*" True disciples give a positive response to the words of Jesus—whether they understand them or not, whether they like them or not, and whether they agree with them or not.

⁴⁴ Warren Wiersbe says, "It was a well-known fact that, in the Sea of Galilee, you caught fish at night in the shallow water, not in the daytime in the deep water" (*Be Compassionate: Luke 1-13*, page 49).

⁴⁵ Bishop J. C. Ryle comments: "There are few professing Christians...who strive to imitate Christ in this matter of private devotion. There is an abundance of hearing and reading and talking and visiting and almsgiving and subscribing and teaching..., but is there a due proportion of private prayer?" (*Expository Thoughts on the Gospels: Luke*, page 139).

⁴⁶ Jesus used the occasion to stress the significance of the more important and eternal kind of healing He had come to do. People are prone to consider physical ills of greater concern than the sinfulness of the heart—and so, frequently people stress the preservation of bodily health more than the matter of being absolutely right with God. Listen to the requests for prayer at a Sunday morning church service. Jesus knew that it was more important for the sick man to have his sins forgiven than it was to have his body healed.

⁴⁷ Both Mark and Luke call the tax collector *Levi*. In Matthew 9, however, this same person is identified as *Matthew*. Also, in Mark's list of the twelve disciples (in chapter 3, verses 16-19), Mark mentions a Matthew, but not a Levi. And so, it is almost certain that *Levi* was his given name—but later as an apostle, he was called *Matthew*, which means "gift of God." In the lists of the twelve apostles, Matthew is usually listed sometime after the four fishermen.

⁴⁸ Many tax collectors were dishonest. The government "farmed out" the collection of revenue to wealthy citizens, who were responsible to pay a specified amount to the authorities. Whatever they were able to acquire *above that amount* was kept by the tax collectors as a profit. William Lane (*Gospel of Mark*, page 102) says that tax collectors were considered so *despicable* that their testimony was not valid in court. See *Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, pages 1032-1033, and *Baker's Encyclopedia of the Bible (Volume 2)*, pages 2038-2039, for more information on tax collectors.

⁴⁹ One of the important times to seek to win others to Christ is when converts to Christ first become Christians. After they come to know the Lord, there is a tendency to become more isolated from former friends, and then it seems that they come in contact with *those who do not know Jesus* less often. So it is wise to start testifying for Jesus immediately after accepting Him.

⁵⁰ The "sinners" with whom Jesus ate, were not necessarily people from the very lowest stratum of society—prostitutes, alcoholics, and sodomites. The term *sinners* was used by the Pharisees to describe common people of the land—those who did not observe the Mosaic Law in every detail, and those whose daily occupations rendered them ceremonially unclean—for example, people who worked on pig farms. And so, while Jesus spoke *with anyone*, and met the needs of all who welcomed Him—He did not choose as His intimate associates, those who were *the vile and immoral dregs* of society.

⁵¹ For more on fasting, see pages 82-83 in the *BNTC Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*. Jesus *assumes* (in Matthew 6:16-18) that the people of God will fast, but He does not *command* fasting like He does praying.

⁵² See pages 54-64 in the *BNTC Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (chapter 5:1-20) for an explanation of the true righteousness that Jesus was proclaiming.

⁵³ See the comments on Matthew 12:1-14 in the *BNTC commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, pages 145-148. See also footnote number 56 on page 146 in the commentary on *Matthew*.

⁵⁴ The *names* of the twelve apostles are given in four places in the New Testament: Matthew 10:1-4, Mark 3:16-19, Luke 6:13-16, and in Acts 1:13.

⁵⁵ The word *apostles* means "sent ones" or "missionaries"—and was the term used as an official name for the 12 disciples whom Jesus chose to be with Him during the course of His ministry. In a broader, non-official sense, the term designates those who are Christian messengers sent by a community (for example, Barnabas and Paul) sent by the church at Antioch (Acts 13:2-3).

⁵⁶ The Greek literally says, "Judas of James"—which may be a reference either to a *brother* of James or a *son* of James.

⁵⁷ For much more material on the beatitudes as found in the Sermon on the Mount, see the section on them in the *BNTC Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, pages 54-61, and covering Matthew 5:1-12. Matthew places much emphasis on the *beatitudes*, but does not deal with the more negative *woes* that are mentioned in Luke's account.

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- ⁵⁸ Jesus does not pronounce a woe upon the "rich" because they are wealthy, but because they tend to *trust in riches* rather than trusting in God. See the BNTC commentary on *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*, pages 87-89.
- ⁵⁹ Bishop J. C. Ryle says, "What is more common...in the church (than) to hear it said in commendation of a minister that 'everybody likes him!'" But to be liked and approved by everybody is to be among those of whom Jesus says, "Woe unto you" (*Expository Thoughts on the Gospels: Luke*, page 182).
- ⁶⁰ The Greek word is *chiton*, meaning "an inner garment which fit close to the body" (*The Analytical Greek Lexicon*, page 436).
- ⁶¹ We must reconcile this command with the words of 2 Thessalonians 3:10, "If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat." The Apostle Paul was an ardent advocate of *charity* toward those really in need; he spent a good bit of time gathering offerings for the poor; but he spared no words in condemning able-bodied persons who could work, but would not. There is nothing in the teaching of the New Testament that would encourage charity to able-bodied lazy persons whose profession is begging. We are not to support such people.
- ⁶² *Minutes of the Annual Conference of the Church of the Brethren, 1985-89*, pages 310-317. Brethren in 1841 also declared lottery tickets "not allowable" because it is "a species of gambling for gain's sake, whereby others must necessarily lose" and is therefore wrong (*Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Church of the Brethren: 1778-1909*, page 71.)
- ⁶³ Kent Hughes tells about some friends who anticipated moving to a new community in a quiet location, but soon after moving, some uncouth neighbors moved in. They played loud music and used obscene language; the children sprayed paint over their patio and totally disrupted their peace. At first the couple tended to be angry, but they knew that the Lord would have them return love for all the crude behavior of their new neighbors. They decided to return the lack of kindness with acts of kindness—including baking cookies for the new neighbors, offering to baby-sit for free, and inviting the mother over to their house for coffee. There were beautiful results. The entire account can be found in *Preaching the Word Series: Luke (Volume 1)*, page 229.
- ⁶⁴ The Anabaptist view of this passage is found in the *Conrad Grebel Circle*. Peter Pietersz says, "Those who are hungry, naked, or burdened with serious other needs, or seek to borrow something, these (we) should not deny help even if they (are) our enemies, for God's word is thereby fulfilled when it says "what you wish other people to do to you, do also to them" (*Spiritual Life in Anabaptism*, Cornelius Dyck, page 118).
- ⁶⁵ The Greek word translated "merciful" is *oiktirmones*, which means to refuse to inflict vengeance, as well as to be compassionate and merciful, and to show a kindness (*The Analytical Greek Lexicon*, page 285).
- ⁶⁶ Knowing a tree by its fruit is not meant to examine carefully every little failure in an individual's life. The evaluation of one's life must result from viewing the pattern of life over the long haul.
- ⁶⁷ See pages 101-102 in the BNTC commentary on the *Gospel of Matthew*.
- ⁶⁸ Faith is not "believing what you know isn't so!" Faith is a rational exercise of the mind, reaching a conclusion based on the reports of credible witnesses. The centurion had undoubtedly heard of the mighty works of Jesus.
- ⁶⁹ There are only two occasions where the Scripture says that Jesus "marveled." The other occasion is described in Mark 6:6. It is significant that in one case Jesus marveled at *faith*, and in the other He marveled at *unbelief*.
- ⁷⁰ Only two times did Jesus speak of *the greatness* of one's faith—here, and in Matthew 15:28 where He commended the faith of the Gentile woman of Canaan.
- ⁷¹ Why did Jesus not raise more persons from the dead? Could it be that Jesus knew that once someone is on the other side of death, the last place they want to return to is here in this life? Thus it could be that Jesus knew that He would not be doing people a favor by raising them from the dead.
- ⁷² The death of a child is one of the most difficult and hardest to bear. Carl Jung says that "it is like a period placed *before* the end of a sentence." Joseph Bayly says "a child is bone of his parents' bone, flesh of their flesh. When a child dies, part of the parent is buried" (*The View from a Hearse*, pages 50-51).
- ⁷³ "Doubt can become agnosticism if the mind is unable to embrace hope...God does not arbitrarily demand 'blind obedience,' but He does expect response to adequate evidence" (article on *doubt* in the *Beacon Dictionary of Theology*, Richard Taylor, editor).
- ⁷⁴ For more on this passage in Luke, see the *BNTC Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, pages 137-142. Matthew adds some information that is not included in Luke's account.

⁷⁵ Simon the Pharisee apparently did not appreciate Jesus enough to plant the customary kiss on his forehead or cheek, nor did he have a servant wash Jesus' feet upon His arrival.

⁷⁶ It was not uncommon for the Anabaptist teachers to mention that the New Testament teaches the propriety of long hair for women (1 Corinthians 11:15).

⁷⁷ A denarius (KJV, *pence*) was the amount the average worker earned for a day's labor. The 50 denarii were what a man earned in about two months; the 500 denarii would have taken more than 1½ years to earn.

⁷⁸ Other Marys include the mother of Jesus (Luke 1:27); the sister of Martha and Lazarus (Luke 10:39); the mother of John Mark (Acts 12:12); Mary, the mother of James and Joses [Joseph] (Matthew 27:56); and a Christian woman in Rome (Romans 16:6).

⁷⁹ See a longer discussion of the parable of the sower in the BNTC commentary on the *Gospel of Matthew*, pages 158-162.

⁸⁰ Jesus interprets the first kind of soil (the hard pathway) by saying that "the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts" (verse 12). The failure of the Word of God to penetrate the hearts of people is part of the work of an unseen, but nevertheless very real, enemy of God known as Satan.

⁸¹ Myron Augsburg speaks of their angst in light of their loss of business, and says, "This is human selfishness in its most blatant expression. [Today]...the plight of the hungry and starving do not appear as high on our agenda as safeguarding our own economic privileges" (*Communicator's Commentary: Matthew*, page 119).

⁸² Peter, James, and John had been with Jesus on three special occasions: a) They were at the raising of this 12-year-old daughter of Jairus (they saw His *greatness*). b) They were with Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane (they saw His *grief*). c) They were present when Jesus revealed His resurrection body on the Mount of Transfiguration (they saw His *glory*).

⁸³ The "scrip" (KJV) was a "case" (or bag) which was used by the disciples to carry small provisions.

⁸⁴ The customary second tunic was used for sleeping outside on the ground, but the disciples were to lodge in people's homes, and so there was no need for the second coat in the Mediterranean climate.

⁸⁵ This was likely for their comfort; I once preached a week-long revival se-ies in a church where the preacher was to stay in a different home each night. It was in late winter, and required much adjustment to get accustomed to homes where the bedroom was very hot, and the next night it was very cold.

⁸⁶ There are four Herods in the New Testament: *Herod the Great* (slaughter of the infants/Matthew 2); *Herod Antipas* (killing John the Baptist/Matthew 14); *Herod Agrippa I* (eaten by worms/Acts 12); *Herod Agrippa II* (heard Paul's defense at Caesarea/Acts 26). Herod Antipas (sometime before the events described here) had made a visit to Rome, and while there, stayed in the home of his brother Philip. During that brief visit, Herod seduced Philip's wife, took her back to Galilee, divorced his own wife, and married Philip's wife, Herodias.

⁸⁷ For more on the "kingdom of God" see the explanation of the passage in Luke 17:21 on page 208 of this commentary. The phrase "the kingdom of God" is used in a number of different ways in the New Testament.

⁸⁸ For more on the "Feeding of the 5000," see pages 181-185 in the *BNTC Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*. Check the parallel accounts describing this miracle in the four Gospel accounts.

⁸⁹ But why does Jesus say that He *must die*? The answer is related to the fact that God is love, and that God is holy and just. How can a holy God who hates sin, still be a loving God who forgives sinners? The solution lies in *the cross*. In ages past, God decided that *Jesus* (God, the Son) would suffer and die—*taking the place of* human beings who really deserved to die! Jesus must die—in order that God can *justly* deal with sin.

⁹⁰ Thomas Reeves, in *The Empty Church*, says that "Christianity in modern America tends to be easy, upbeat, convenient...it does not require self-sacrifice, discipline, humility, an otherworldly outlook, a zeal for souls, a fear as well as love for God. There is little guilt and no punishment, and the payoff in heaven is virtually certain...the cost is low and customer satisfaction seems guaranteed. (Quoted in the *Our Daily Bread*, January 27, 2005, RBC Ministries).

⁹¹ The disciples repeated this performance (Matthew 18:1-5), but even more disappointing, again as they approached the crucifixion (Matthew 20-20-28).

⁹² The Brethren writer, L. W. Teeter, says that small children "are humble, unselfish, free of self-exaltation, and simple in their thoughts" (*New Testament Commentary*, page 76).

⁹³ The response of Jesus seems to be a reversal of Luke 11:23, where Jesus said, "He who is not with Me is against Me." There is no contradiction if we remember that Luke 9:50 is the test by which others are tried, and Luke 11:23 is a test by which one tries himself.

⁹⁴ They were not to encumber themselves with unnecessary baggage, and were not to waste their time on trifles. Bishop J. C. Ryle says that "ministers and teachers of the Gospel should beware of allowing the world to eat up their time...and hinder them in their spiritual work." Giving "excessive attention," he says, "to what are called 'the courtesies of life' are mighty snares in the way of Christ's labourers." Ryle says further, "Let us strive to show the men of the world that we have no time for their mode of living...life is too precious to be spent in perpetual feasting, and visiting, and calling, and the like—as if there were no death, or judgment, or life to come. Let us declare plainly that...we have no time for that incessant round of eating, and drinking, and dressing, and civility, and exchange of compliments, in which so many try to find their happiness" (*Expository Thoughts on the Gospels: Luke*, pages 347-348).

⁹⁵ The phrase "son of peace" is an idiom meaning "a peaceful man."

⁹⁶ See the comments on the parallel passage in Matthew 11:20-24 in the *BNTC Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, pages 142-143.

⁹⁷ Early Brethren had no problem believing that Satan is a very real enemy of God. L. W. Teeter says, "Satan is the chief adversary," and then goes on to say that Jesus gave the disciples a gentle rebuke, saying that they were rejoicing that only ordinary demons were subject to them, but Jesus declares that He "had seen the *chief devil* fall" (*New Testament Commentary*, page 233).

⁹⁸ The Anabaptist leader, Jan Willemsz (1583-1660) spoke of the simplicity of his Anabaptist brothers and sisters by saying that "the perishable goods will not soil their hearts nor draw [them] to [earthly] treasures as though that was their wealth; rather, their riches and treasure are in heaven where they are registered in the book of life" (Dyck, *Spiritual Life in Anabaptism*, page 242). The Bible speaks of a roster of names of those who will inhabit heaven—for example, Philippians 4:3 and Revelation 3:5.

⁹⁹ The verb "was distracted" is *periespato*, and implies that her attention was drawn away from the more important things by the concern for getting a meal and for her household duties.

¹⁰⁰ The *one thing needed* is the grace of God that brings salvation. When we come to the end of life's journey, the one thing that will count is whether or not we have accepted God's offer of salvation through Jesus Christ. Other things may be convenient and helpful and desirable and useful. But there is one thing we cannot do without—and that is saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

¹⁰¹ Jesus did not *condemn* Martha for attempting to provide a good meal for her company, and neither did He *praise* Mary for her indifference toward the meal preparation. Warren Wiersbe says, "The Lord wants all of us to imitate Mary in our *worship*, and Martha in our *work*. Blessed are those who achieve the balance!" (*Be Compassionate*, page 119).

¹⁰² Most Christians have used Matthew's more complete version of the prayer. The Brethren, already in 1805, considered a query asking what to do about those who do not use the exact wording of the prayer found in the New Testament. The answer: Believers "should use the expressions according to the pattern...of Jesus...that we may pray with the spirit and understanding of the heart" (*Minutes of the Annual Meetings of the Brethren: 1778-1909*, page 29).

¹⁰³ The words "because of his importunity" in the KJV means "to make continual and insistent requests."

¹⁰⁴ For additional comments on prayer, see the parallel passage in the *BNTC Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, pages 94-96. It will be helpful to check all the Gospel accounts on prayers that Jesus prayed.

¹⁰⁵ Beelzebub was a Philistine deity associated with demonic rituals and pagan idolatry (2 Kings 1:2). Over the years the name *Beelzebub* came to be used for Satan, the prince of demons.

¹⁰⁶ The laws and rules of the Pharisees were not all bad. Many of the rules were beneficial. For the Pharisees, right living meant outward conformity to the rules. Not much attention was given to the inward condition of the heart. They did not care so much about *being* holy, but they tried awfully hard to *look* holy. One of the facts of life is that there is a little bit of the Pharisee in all of us.

¹⁰⁷ See a major discussion of the woes pronounced on the Pharisees in the *BNTC Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, pages 268-276.

¹⁰⁸ Our Anabaptist forefathers interpreted the Scriptures at face value (when the context and laws of grammar permitted), and as a result they made specific applications on such things as modesty, feet-washing, the permanence of marriage, and the like. They observed modest and simple dress patterns and carefully regulated the conduct of the members. Today, things are different. Many, even from the Anabaptist heritage, have scarcely any standards at all. They are often content to label as *legalists* those who *do* maintain standards. However, many who use the term legalism are unclear about what legalism really is. *Legalism is a carnal attitude that conforms to a code for the purpose of exalting self*. A football player who keeps the rigid rules of training for sheer love of the sport is not a legalist. But keeping the rules to show off and get the attention of others is legalism. Observing a rule is not legalism, but conforming

to a standard, while at the same time neglecting the weightier matters of justice and mercy, is hypocrisy—and God hates hypocrisy.

¹⁰⁹ Jesus called His disciples "My friends" (verse 4), a translation of the Greek word *philois*, which is an expression of confidence. As friends of Jesus, there is no need to fear what man can do to His followers.

¹¹⁰ The word *gehenna* is used only here in the Gospel of Luke. There is no way to escape the fact that the true and living God is a just God who will cast into Hell those who are obstinate, rebellious, and unbelieving.

¹¹¹ If we compare Matthew 10:29 with Luke 12:6—we learn that sparrows were so cheap, that if a person bought four of them (and paid two pennies), the merchant would throw in an extra sparrow for free! And yet God *cares for, and notices, that one extra tiny sparrow!* Our heavenly Father is the God who is concerned even about the fifth sparrow. That shows the extent of His providential care. A God who cares for sparrows will surely provide for saints.

¹¹² For a more careful and comprehensive discussion of this passage on trusting God as a way of life, see pages 86-90 in the *BNTC Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*.

¹¹³ The statement that the master "will cut him in two" (verse 46) literally means "cut him in pieces" (Greek, *dichotomesei*). This may be a figure of speech known as a hyperbole, but regardless of how one views the phrase, the punishment for living sinfully will be very serious indeed. See also page 291 in the *BNTC Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, footnote number 109.

¹¹⁴ Rick Warren, in *The Purpose-Driven Life*, says that "*Relationships must have priority in your life above everything else...relationships are what life is all about*" (pages 124-125). Jesus, in Luke 12:51-53, differs from that view.

¹¹⁵ For a complete and practical printed sermon on the Luke 13:1-5 passage, see chapter eleven in Clovis Chappell's book entitled "Questions Jesus Asked." The book was published in 1948 and is likely no longer in print.

¹¹⁶ One time Pilate had earlier angered the Jews when he took funds from the Temple treasury (money designated for God's work) and used it to build an aqueduct to supply water to the city of Jerusalem. Some of the Jews became violent in their objections, and Pilate's soldiers killed many of those who rebelled. The Pharisees likely refer to this incident when they speak of certain "Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices" (13:1). Some Jews were slain by Pilate's soldiers while they were offering sacrifices at the Temple, *and their human blood* was mixed with *the blood of the animal sacrifices* which they were offering on the altar to God.

¹¹⁷ In 2004, it was the tsunamis in Indonesia and India that led to the death of thousands. During 2005, Hurricane Katrina killed many in the Gulf Coast region of the United States. Marvin Olasky summarized the "storm-wracked year" by saying, "We don't know why disasters hit particular people, but we do know that they should push all of us toward repentance and toward doing the works that God commends" (*World* magazine, 12-31-2005, page 80).

¹¹⁸ Darrell Bock says, "Repentance...is a re-orientation to a new life. To repent is not merely *to regret* things we have done or *to apologize* for them or *to recognize* [that] a wrong has been committed. To repent is to agree that a change of direction is required, and then to respond accordingly" (*The NIV Application Commentary*, page 371).

¹¹⁹ Paul Enns refers to this 18-year bondage by Satan, and says, "Sometimes there is a correlation between mental illness, sickness, and demonic activity; however it is not always possible to identify the distinction, and anyone attempting such a diagnosis should be cautious. Affliction by Satan or demons can only come as God permits [Job 1:12; 2:6; cf. 2 Cor.12:7-10]" (*The Moody Handbook of Theology*, page 297).

¹²⁰ As explained on page 158 of the *BNTC Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, the kingdom is that outward form of God's rule which includes all professing Christians—the true and the false, and the real and unreal.

¹²¹ The "leaven" in Scripture usually represents evil, and that position is described in much more detail on pages 167-170 in the *BNTC Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*. Yet, in the New Testament *the lion* is used as a symbol both for the devil (1 Peter 5:8), and for the Lord Jesus Christ (Revelation 5:5). The parable does not teach that the leaven of the gospel will cause the whole bad world to become good, as some modern interpreters have concluded. It is interesting to note that Brethren writer, L. W. Teeter, saw the parable as illustrating the *good* changes which God works in the lives of individuals who choose to follow Jesus (*The New Testament Commentary*, page 60).

¹²² In *Ryle's Expository Thoughts on the Gospels*, Bishop J. C. Ryle has a helpful section giving some details on this thought in the commentary on Luke, see pages 120-128 in the Anniversary edition published by Zondervan.

¹²³ Ray Summers observes that "Jesus' answer reflected his policy of not arguing on speculative religious questions" (*Commentary on Luke*, page 170).

¹²⁴ The word *stenes* means "confined; limited in area or scope," and thus implies that there are not a multitude of ways to get in. The Bible teaches that there is one specific way, and that one way is through faith in Jesus, who alone is the door (John 10:9).

¹²⁵ The Greek word is *agonizesthe*, a word taken from the Greek games, in which various athletes would put forth all their powers to gain the victory. The word means "to make every effort" (to agonize), making salvation a priority. It is true that one cannot "work" his way into God's favor, but the "striving" named here means to earnestly desire to know Christ, and to diligently follow Him no matter what the cost.

¹²⁶ For a much more complete exposition of the two gates and the two roads, see pages 96-99 in the *BNTC Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*.

¹²⁷ The banquet will occur in connection with the return of Jesus (Luke 12:37), when those who have trusted Him will be gathered together to celebrate the wondrous salvation which He purchased with His own blood. Revelation 19:9 calls it "the marriage supper of the Lamb."

¹²⁸ The Jews were displeased because Jesus taught that some of them would not be saved, and that some Gentiles would be among the redeemed. Thus the Jews may have simply wanted to get Him out of the region.

¹²⁹ This Pharisee was a "prominent" man (NIV), literally one of the ruling (Greek, *archonton*) Pharisees. He was probably a member of the Sanhedrin, the highest ruling body and court of justice among the Jewish people in New Testament times. The body was made up of both Pharisees and Sadducees, and the Jewish high priest was the president of the Sanhedrin.

¹³⁰ New Testament "lawyers" were experts in the study of the Law of Moses and the many commentaries and applications that were prepared by the rabbis. They are sometimes referred to as "teachers of the law" and/or "scribes." They spent their time studying, interpreting, and expounding the law.

¹³¹ The "Pharisees" were a religious and political party in New Testament times that was strongly committed to observing the law of God as it was interpreted and applied by the scribes. They opposed the inroads of Greek culture and believed that it was important to observe all the laws of God.

¹³² For brief comments on the Sabbath healing mentioned in Matthew 12, see pages 147-148 in the *BNTC Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*.

¹³³ There are a number of *marks of humility*. Humble persons keep on working even when nobody praises them. Humble persons remain calm even when they are falsely accused. Humble persons are not envious of those who surpass them in ability and achievement. Humble persons are teachable, ready to do small things, unruffled by slights.

¹³⁴ Many doctors and dentists today have a secretary give a phone call about 24 hours ahead of an appointment—to serve as a reminder. And so, in the parable, the guests who were invited were reminded of their earlier commitment.

¹³⁵ We must keep in mind that Oriental folks ate supper after dark. It is true that one can plow with a tractor *at night*, but oxen don't come equipped with lights, and so the excuse was indeed a very weak one.

¹³⁶ William Willoughby describes the first official forming of the Brethren in Schwarzenau, Germany in August, 1708—and says that after singing several hymns "and reading the portion from Luke 14 about 'counting the cost'...the anonymous officiant waded into the clear cold water of the Eder with Mack" (*Counting the Cost: The Life of Alexander Mack*, page 58).

¹³⁷ See further comments on the matter of hating parents and conflict in the home, in the exposition of Matthew 10:37-38, found on pages 133-135 in the *BNTC Commentary on Matthew*.

¹³⁸ The early Brethren (and other Anabaptist groups) sacrificed greatly when the first members were illegally baptized. For some, it involved giving up wealth. When coming to America and migrating westward in the new nation, they were often separated from family and friends. *Counting the cost* was important to them and it should be to us.

¹³⁹ See a similar account in Matthew 18:12-14, and check the comments in the *BNTC Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, page 222.

¹⁴⁰ The exact nature of the ten coins is uncertain. They may have been her entire budget for a certain period of time. They may have been part of a dowry given to her at the time of her wedding, and therefore the coin had symbolic value beyond its cash value.

¹⁴¹ When one thinks about it, there is a blessing sometimes in an empty pocketbook! The feeling of helplessness and desperation has a tendency to cause people to seek help from above.

¹⁴² The Jews, because of their reverence for God's name, often substituted the word "heaven" for "God."

¹⁴³ The robe for his body, the ring for his hand, and the shoes for his feet—were just three different ways of saying, "You are my son; you are my son; you are my son." It was only members of the household who wore shoes; the servants went bare-footed. The ring was not an ornament for the finger, but a stamp of ownership which was a brand-mark placed on his hand (as in Genesis 41:42). The robe was a sign of acceptance and status.

¹⁴⁴ Herbert Lockyer says that dancing was a mere symbol of joy. "Men and women never danced together...dancing for sensual entertainment was unheard of among the Hebrews" (*Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, page 276).

¹⁴⁵ Walter Liefeld notes that "the son became angry, but the father 'went out'—as he had for the younger brother, and 'pleaded' rather than scolded" (*The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Volume 8, page 985).

¹⁴⁶ Millard Erickson observes: "The three parables in Luke 15 emphasize this [on-going love] strongly. The shepherd leaves the ninety-nine sheep which are safe in the fold and goes to seek the missing one, even though nothing in the description indicates that there is anything especially attractive or desirable about [the sheep]. Yet the shepherd goes looking for that one. The woman who had lost one coin searched diligently for it. And although the father of the prodigal son did not go into the far country to look for him, he kept constant watch for the son's return. He took the initiative in welcoming him back as his son, giving him the best of care and even ordering a celebration" (*Christian Theology*, page 293).

¹⁴⁷ Walter Liefeld quotes Joachim Jeremias as saying that the hundred measures of wheat is equal to a yield of about one hundred acres (*The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Volume 8, page 988).

¹⁴⁸ The lesson in verse 9 is intended to teach us "how to apply earthly possessions to secure 'the true riches'—a heavenly home, [which will] be occupied when earthly riches and homes fail." These words, along with a fuller exposition of the parable, are found in *The New Testament Commentary*, L. W. Teeter, Brethren Publishing House, 1894.

¹⁴⁹ There are some practical applications that can be gleaned from this passage:

1) How the followers of Christ handle the stewardship of money, reveals whether in their hearts, they serve God or material possessions. Christians need to give sacrificially to the Lord's work; it seems that the only thing some of us in western nations know about "sacrifice" is how to spell the word.

2) There are many people in the world lacking the basic necessities for survival. It is good for every younger person to have an exposure to life in a Third World country. Many people in our churches do not have a sensitive conscience about the hardship and difficulties that people in such countries have, because they have not traveled to these countries, and have not lived among the native people, and thus have not seen with their own eyes the oppressive poverty.

3) While we search the refrigerator for an extra serving of dessert, many search daily to find just a bit of food. While we complain about the cost of medical care and insurance, many suffer and die because they don't have access to any health care at all. While we search for an unneeded Christmas gift for a friend, many search for the bare necessities for their family. While we feel handicapped without electricity for two hours, many people in the world will never have access to it for even five minutes.

¹⁵⁰ God's kingdom is being progressively developed: it was *nonexistent* in the Old Testament (Luke 16:16); it is *spiritually existent* now (Luke 17:20-21); it will be *physically existent* in the future (Zechariah 14:9).

¹⁵¹ See Matthew 11:12-13 and the comments on that passage, which can be found on pages 140-141 in the *BNTC Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*.

¹⁵² For more on divorce and remarriage, see the comments and the footnotes in the *BNTC Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, pages 66-70 and pages 229-234. See also the book *Divorce & Remarriage* by Carol Nendel.

¹⁵³ Daniel Kauffman says, "The word 'hades' is used frequently in the RV where the word 'hell' is used in the KJV. It is sometimes used to designate the grave, as in Acts 2:31, 1 Cor. 15:55, but more frequently refers to the place of torment, as in Matt. 23:33, Luke 16:23, etc. The word 'gehenna,' used twelve times in the Greek New Testament, means the place of future punishment. One of the important things to remember is that hell is a 'place'" (*Doctrines of the Bible*, Mennonite Publishing House, pages 608-609).

¹⁵⁴ William M. Beahm makes an important and balanced observation when he speaks about the idea of universal salvation, and the destiny of an evil person, by saying, "Always think of yourself as capable of falling into alienation from God, no matter how firm you feel in the faith; think of your neighbor as capable of eternal blessedness, no matter how depraved or indifferent he may seem" (*Studies in Christian Belief*, The Brethren Press, pages 154-155).

¹⁵⁵ The Old Order Brethren objected to the revival meetings because, among other factors, revival preachers often had a "preoccupation with hell" and emotional death-bed scenes (*Brethren Doctrines*, page 138 Dale Stoffer).

¹⁵⁶ For more explanation of this section, see pages 218-221 of the *BNTC Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*.

¹⁵⁷ The "millstone" (verse 2a) was a heavy round stone, usually about 18 inches in diameter. Two stones were used for grinding grain. A millstone around a person's neck and thrown into the sea was a guarantee of a sure death.

¹⁵⁸ It happened in Philadelphia in April, 1958. A young Korean college student left his room to go only a short distance to mail a letter at a mailbox along the street. He was attacked by a gang of local boys who were looking for excitement. The young man (In Ho Oh) was badly hurt and died shortly after being taken to the hospital. Police apprehended the boys who had committed the senseless act; they were charged with murder and placed on trial. When the boy's parents heard about In Ho's death, the family met together and agreed to petition that lenient treatment be given to those who had committed the crime. The family, in fact, started a fund to be used for the religious and vocational guidance of the boys when they would be released from prison—hoping, they said, that we can do something to help minimize such brutal crimes in the future. Ho's father was an elder in the Korean Presbyterian church, and though the family was in deep sorrow over the loss of their son—they, in the maturity of their Christian faith, were willing to forgive those who committed the crime (Recorded in the *Gospel Messenger*, 9-22-1962, pages 18-20).

¹⁵⁹ The word "rebuke" (Greek, *epitimeson*), means "to reprove, to chide, to censure another" (*Analytical Greek Lexicon*, page 162).

¹⁶⁰ Brethren writer, L. W. Teeter, says that seven times a day means without limit—and so the disciples asked Jesus to increase their faith "because to forgive the same brother so often requires the greatest faith" (*New Testament Commentary*, Volume 1, page 262).

¹⁶¹ The word "unprofitable" is *achreioi*, which is often translated "unworthy."

¹⁶² Jesus told the men to go to the nearest priests to be declared clean, and to offer the sacrifices described in Leviticus 14. There was an elaborate ritual of cleansing for a leper. It first involved two birds—one killed as a symbol of purification, and the other released as a symbol of the man's new freedom.

¹⁶³ For more on the Samaritan, see page 136 in this commentary. Also, see pages 942-943 in *Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, Herbert Lockyer, ed.

¹⁶⁴ Thanksgiving is mandated and encouraged all through the Bible. See Psalm 100:4, Philippians 4:6, Colossians 2:7, Ephesians 5:20, etc.

¹⁶⁵ The *kingdom* may refer to the general reign of Jesus Himself living within the individual (Luke 17:21); it also refers to the general reign of righteousness (Matthew 6:33); to the church (Colossians 1:13); to Christendom (Matthew 13:47-48); to the Millennial reign (Matthew 19:28); to Heaven (2 Peter 1:11).

¹⁶⁶ The Greek word "entos" can be translated "within," but when used with "auton" (you), it refers especially to "in the midst of you" (*Thayer's Greek Lexicon of the New Testament*, page 218).

¹⁶⁷ See pages 287-289 in the *BNTC Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* for more on this passage.

¹⁶⁸ Jesus had just directed His disciples, when they saw calamity coming, to be in haste and not turn back (verse 31). They are to remember that by delay, Lot's wife lost her life and became a monument of God's displeasure.

¹⁶⁹ See footnote number 90 on page 122 of this commentary.

¹⁷⁰ Revelation 19:17-18 describes a scene where great flocks of vultures (some from great distances) will come to feed on the flesh of men and beasts in that great day when He who is called "Faithful and True" comes to "strike the nations" and "rule them with a rod of iron" (Revelation 19:11-15).

¹⁷¹ The Greek word translated "exalted" is *upsotthesetai*, which means "honored and lifted up." It was not the Pharisee, but the publican, who was honored.

¹⁷² See also the *BNTC Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, where the parallel passage in Matthew is discussed on pages 234-235.

¹⁷³ The word "infants" (Greek, *brephe*) shows that Jesus had compassion even on babies too young to distinguish between right and wrong. The "little children" (Greek, *paidia*) were specifically invited to come to Jesus.

¹⁷⁴ Menno Simons commented: "Although infants have neither faith nor baptism, do not think that they are therefore lost. Oh, no! They are saved, for they have the Lord's own promise of the kingdom of God; not through any elements, ceremonies, and external rites, but alone by grace through Christ Jesus (Luke 18:16). And therefore we truly believe they are in a state of grace, pleasing to God" (*Spiritual Life in Anabaptism*, Cornelius Dyke, page 57).

¹⁷⁵ William Barclay quotes Tennyson as going into his grandson's bedroom one morning and seeing the child "worshiping the sunbeam playing on the bedpost" (*Daily Bible Study Series: The Gospel of Luke*, page 235). The child is often fascinated by gifts from God that older persons tend to take for granted.

¹⁷⁶ The pronoun in Greek is *autois*, dative, plural, masculine.

¹⁷⁷ See the comments on Matthew's account of this incident in the *BNTC Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, pages 235-238.

¹⁷⁸ The Greek word *perilypos* means to be overwhelmed with grief—"to be very sad, exceedingly sorrowful" (*Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, page 503).

¹⁷⁹ Jesus is not asking that all of us sell our belongings, and become wandering beggars. Peter was not told to sell his fishing equipment and give the proceeds to the poor. Erastus was among the faithful followers of Jesus, and at the same time was the treasurer of the city of Corinth (Romans 16:23). The Apostle Paul kept a tent-making business going on the side. Not everyone was asked to give up all possessions in order to follow Jesus, but Jesus does ask His followers *to surrender anything* that would hinder a more complete dedication to Him.

¹⁸⁰ Be careful not to miss the comments on page 244 of the *BNTC Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*.

¹⁸¹ One possible explanation for the seeming discrepancy is that one of the men was healed as Jesus entered the city, and the other was healed as He left.

¹⁸² Jericho was located in the Jordan Valley, a few miles west of the Jordan River, and north of the Dead Sea. The city is an oasis, a little paradise with palm trees and rose gardens and orange trees. It has a delightful climate. Jericho lies 800 feet below sea level, and more than 3,000 feet lower than the city of Jerusalem. The Jericho Road descends downward from Jerusalem.

¹⁸³ Luke gives a physical description of Zacchaeus—a small man. But at no place in the Gospels do we have a physical description of Jesus. This may be purposely planned by the grace of God. For if Jesus was said to be tall, dark, and handsome—those who are short, skinny, and homely looking, would feel they are unchristlike. If Jesus was said to be blue-eyed and blonde—then those who are dark-haired and ruddy-faced would think there is something wrong with them.

¹⁸⁴ Maybe Zacchaeus was longing for something higher and nobler. There are some folks who have tried dope and alcohol and marital infidelity—and are finding that life is hollow. They sense that there must be more to life than what they are experiencing—and deep down within they want some answers.

¹⁸⁵ The sycamore has low horizontal branches, and so it was a tree that was relatively easy to climb.

¹⁸⁶ Zacchaeus quickly descended from the tree. One can almost hear the leaves breaking off, and the branches creaking—as he lets himself down out of the tree. Zacchaeus came down "joyfully"—absolutely thrilled that Jesus was coming to his house. Alexander Maclaren says that "Perhaps it was the first time since he had been a little child at his mother's knee, that he had heard his name pronounced in tones of kindness."

¹⁸⁷ This was almost like Billy Graham coming to town and staying with the owner of a booze joint! The people of Jericho failed to sense that Jesus had a soft spot in his heart for people like Zacchaeus. God's salvation is offered to all people, not just to those who may be considered the religious elite.

¹⁸⁸ Converted persons are changed persons. People who are genuinely converted will always give *outward* evidence of their *inward* conversion.

¹⁸⁹ In addition, Zacchaeus became a spiritual son of Abraham (verse 9b). Abraham's true sons are those who share in the faith by which Abraham was declared righteous (Romans 4:11-12).

¹⁹⁰ We see here a picture of Christ's compassion toward sinners, and His power to change human hearts. No one is too bad to be saved, and no one is beyond the reach of God's grace.

¹⁹¹ Walter Liefeld says, "Obviously this parable teaches that Jesus predicted an interval of time between his ascension and return" (*The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Frank Gaebelin, ed., Volume 8, page 1,009).

¹⁹² The "mina" (a Greek monetary unit sometimes translated "pounds") was a small weight used to measure precious metals as well as other substances. Each mina was equivalent to what an average laborer could earn in three months.

¹⁹³ The major difference centers on the fact that in Matthew the servants receive different sums (talents), and in Luke they all receive the same amounts of money (pounds). The "pounds" represent the equal opportunity life itself affords us. The "talents" represent the different gifts God gives to each individual.

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- ¹⁹⁴ Jesus is now sitting at the right hand of God doing the work of a High Priest for believers, but He will not be there always. *He will come again* with power and great glory, and will put down every enemy, and set up His kingdom.
- ¹⁹⁵ The word "occupy" is *pragmateusasthe*, meaning "to do, to perform, to trade with"—hence, usually translated "to do business as usual." Servants of Christ are to plunge into the Lord's work with all the diligence they can muster.
- ¹⁹⁶ See the account also in Matthew 21:1-11 and note the comments in the *BNTC Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, pages 245-247.
- ¹⁹⁷ Josephus describes the razing of the city in *History of the Jewish War*, in William Hendriksen on *Luke*, page 878. The city was so completely destroyed that future visitors to the spot would not believe it was once inhabited.
- ¹⁹⁸ The Greek word translated "wept" is the word *eklausen* which means "a loud crying," not the mere shedding of a tear as in John 11:35 when He "wept."
- ¹⁹⁹ See the *BNTC Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, pages 247-249.
- ²⁰⁰ The words "to drive out" (verse 45)—for the casual reader imply that Jesus used force to cleanse the temple. Noted Christian historian, Roland Bainton gives a list of Bible texts that militarists give to support the Christian's participation in national warfare, and says that the "most congenial passage" they use is the account of "Jesus' cleansing of the temple" (*Christian Attitudes Toward War and Peace*, page 56). It is important, however, to note that the Greek word translated "drive out" is *ekballo*, the same word used by Luke in chapter 10:2 when he records the words of Jesus: "Pray the Lord of the harvest *to send out* laborers into His harvest" (*Greek-English Concordance*, J. B. Smith, page 114).
- ²⁰¹ See the parallel passage discussed in the *BNTC Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, page 252.
- ²⁰² Matthew's parallel account is treated in the *BNTC Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, pages 254-256.
- ²⁰³ The Greek word is *enkathetous*, a word which means "secret agents"—in this case, they were Pharisees and Herodians (Mark 12:13) who hoped "to catch Him in His words."
- ²⁰⁴ Only the Roman governor was permitted to condemn a criminal to death.
- ²⁰⁵ We are to be obedient to the laws of the land, but those laws do have some limitations. Guy Hershberger gives the Anabaptist view on church and state which is implied by the statement that Jesus made: "The Christian must never forget that there are some things which do not belong to Caesar. The state may legitimately increase its functions [for the] general welfare [of its citizens]. But this extension of function has a definite limit. When the state reaches into the realm of religion, conscience, and the home—and attempts to control these, it is demanding what does not belong to it. Modern totalitarian states attempt to dominate the whole of life" (*War, Peace, and Nonresistance*, page 163).
- ²⁰⁶ See the practical comments on the parallel passage in the *BNTC Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, pages 259-261.
- ²⁰⁷ The levirate practice was initiated in order to preserve the family name and the inheritance. Raymond Brown explains "that in the Near Eastern world it was a social stigma for a woman not to give a son to her husband...the practice of 'Levirate marriage' had a long tradition which reached back to the patriarchal period...[and was practiced by] the Hittites and the Assyrians" (*The Message of Deuteronomy*, pages 242-243).
- ²⁰⁸ Read the comments on the parallel passage in Matthew by checking the *BNTC Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, pages 261-263.
- ²⁰⁹ A reference to the first five books of the Bible. The Sadducees honored only Genesis through Deuteronomy as Scripture. They did not believe in the resurrection of the dead because it is not specifically mentioned in those books.
- ²¹⁰ See page 265 in the *BNTC Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* for a further exposition of this passage.
- ²¹¹ The "long robes" indicated that these were men of importance, and not persons who were engaged in menial tasks that required physical labor. Matthew says that some made their robes longer by enlarging the borders (23:5).
- ²¹² The "best seats" in the synagogue were the seats near the one who was leading the service. The "best places" at feasts were places at the table near the person who was the host.
- ²¹³ The writer in the *Life Application Commentary* says, "As the nation's lawyers, scribes were often employed in handling the money a widow received from her father's dowry. Some abused their trusted positions by supposedly obtaining the dowry for the temple, and then keeping it themselves" (*Life Application Commentary: Luke*, Grant Osborne, ed. page 467).

²¹⁴ What would happen to many charities—if there were no bronze plaques or pictures of donors holding 36-inch-long checks, etc.?

²¹⁵ The widow's "mites" (Greek, *lepta*) was of very small value. The woman's gift was about one-fourth of a cent in value.

²¹⁶ C. C. Ellis comments, "God expects us to be stewards, not owners of our wealth. When we have provided food, shelter, and clothing with a fair degree of comfort...we should think of the starving poor, the many who have no food or shelter...the millions who have never heard of our Christ and are dying without knowing him" (*Studies in Doctrine and Devotion*, Part III, page 76).

²¹⁷ *Mere Christianity*, C. S. Lewis, page 67.

²¹⁸ In the morning sunlight, from afar, it looked like a mountain of snow. Over the entrance to the temple was a carving with a huge gold grape vine and large bunches of grapes. The stones which formed the temple platform are part of the Western Wall in the temple area of Jerusalem today. For more, see page 279 in the *BNTC Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*.

²¹⁹ The NIV translates the word "commotions" (verse 9) with the term "revolutions." The Greek word is *akatastasias*—which literally refers to instability, "a state of disorder, confusion" (*Thayer's Greek Lexicon*, page 21).

²²⁰ Lewis Teeter refers readers to the writings of the Jewish historian, Josephus (Book VI, chapter 5, section 3) in "Wars of the Jews," and concludes by saying that "such fearful sights and signs were seen previous to the destruction of Jerusalem" (*New Testament Commentary*, page 170).

²²¹ All human beings have "trials and tribulations" in this life, but the term "Great Tribulation" is used in a technical sense to refer to the wrath which is going to be poured out from God himself in a series of end-time judgments upon His enemies. Those judgments are described in Revelation 6—16. See especially pages 71, 107-109 in the *BNTC Commentary on The Revelation*.

²²² Matthew 24:13 says that "he who endures to the end shall be saved." Only by such perseverance (patience) can we experience eternal life in the heavenly city. We are to keep on trusting God thus staying under His protection.

²²³ Josephus says that a million Jews were killed and nearly one hundred thousand were taken captive. Titus ordered the city to be razed to the ground and soldiers who were driven by greed pulled the stones of the temple apart to get the gold that had melted between the cracks (*Luke*, Kent Hughes, page 296).

²²⁴ Louis Bowman refers to this verse in his book on Brethren beliefs and practice: "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles UNTIL the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. 'Trodden down?' Yes! But not forever! Only 'until'!" (*The Faith Once for All Delivered Unto the Saints*, Louis S. Bauman, published by The Brethren Missionary Herald Co., page 105).

²²⁵ While Israel is an established nation with its own government, the nations of the world have still not recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital city. The writer in *World* magazine says that today Jerusalem is not officially in Israeli hands because it is "designated as occupied territory under international law" ("The People Have Spoken," *World* magazine, February 4, 2006, page 18).

²²⁶ The Greek word translated "perplexity" is *aporia* (to be uncertain; embarrassed, not knowing which way to turn), and the word "distress" is *sunoche* (to be in distress, fear, and anguish). The words indicate troublesome times.

²²⁷ Elder Peter Nead commented already in 1833: "That the Jews will be brought into their country before the appearance of Christ, is a truth plainly revealed in the book of God" (*Nead's Theological Works*, page 208).

²²⁸ The word "generation" means the sum total of persons born and living at about the same time. The question is: does the word refer to the people living at the time when Jesus spoke the words, or does it refer to a generation living at the time when the signs of Christ's coming are more and more pronounced?

²²⁹ William Hendriksen says that the probable meaning of the statement in verse 32 is: "This generation, namely, the Jewish people...will not cease to exist until all those things which I [Jesus] predicted have happened" (*New Testament Commentary, Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke*, page 943).

²³⁰ The word translated "carousing" [surfeiting in KJV] is the Greek word *kraipale* which refers to "the pain or sickness which follows excessive indulgence" (L. W. Teeter, *New Testament Commentary*, 1894, page 281).

²³¹ The "Feast of Unleavened Bread" was the first of three annual festivals observed by the people of Israel. The festival started with the Passover, which was held on the fourteenth day of the first month of the Jewish calendar. The Hebrews smeared the blood of a lamb on their doorposts as a signal to God that He should "pass over" their houses

when He destroyed all the firstborn of Egypt...It was on the evening of the 14th day that Israel left Egypt *in haste*. Unleavened bread was used in the celebration because this showed that the people had no time to put leaven in their bread, as they ate their final meal as slaves in Egypt (adapted from *Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, page 380).

²³² J. H. Moore explains: "Among the Jews, the day began at sundown, and ended at sundown. It was probably not far from sundown, or Thursday afternoon...when the disciples asked Jesus, 'Where wilt thou that we prepare...the passover?' He told them what to do...and 'they made ready the passover' (Matthew 26:17-19). Luke says it was 'the day of unleavened bread, when the passover must be killed' (Luke 22:7). Remember that the day did not end until the next evening, hence it could well be said that it was the day on which 'the passover must be killed.' It was killed on that very day, that is, about twenty-one hours after Jesus told his disciples to prepare the Passover" (*New Testament Doctrines*, J. H. Moore, pages 115-116). See pages 102-126 in the Moore book for further discussion of the three-part lovefeast and communion service.

²³³ Preparing the Passover would include roasting the lamb, preparing the room, and providing the other foods served at the Passover meal.

²³⁴ This was an unusual sight in an eastern city because ordinarily it was the women who carried pitchers of water.

²³⁵ Here, as in many other places in the New Testament, we see the evidence of our Lord's perfect knowledge.

²³⁶ While Matthew, Mark, and Luke all speak of this upper room incident as "the Passover," John places the event *before* the Passover. Compare John 13:29 and John 18:28 with Luke 22:14-20. Even *the events early the next morning* (John 18:28) were said to be on the day of the preparation of the Passover meal. The Supper described in this passage was observed one full day before the normal observance of the Passover meal. *The Brethren Encyclopedia* writer says that "Brethren...have rather consistently refused to identify the Last Supper with the Passover" (page 763).

²³⁷ It is likely that the disciples shared together a Passover meal *which then merged* with the institution of the bread and cup communion observance. The noted historian, Dr. Philip Schaff says, "*In the apostolic period, the eucharist (the communion bread and cup) was observed in connection with a simple meal of brotherly love.*" Darrell Bock, in his commentary on Luke 22, says that "the background of *the meal* in this chapter is likely a Passover meal, though others express uncertainty about this conclusion." It is also good to note that the word "supper" (verse 20) refers to more than a 1-inch piece of unleavened bread.

²³⁸ There are *two cups* mentioned in this section—one in verse 17 and another in verse 20. In verse 17 it is the last cup of the Passover meal and in verse 20 it is the cup of the Christian communion.

²³⁹ All four of the Gospels record this announcement, although some of the details vary. John 13:21 says that Jesus was in a deeply troubled state of mind when He made the announcement about a betrayer.

²⁴⁰ Verse 22 explains that it had been determined in the eternal councils of God that Jesus should die, and it was further decreed that the death of Christ should be accompanied by a betrayal. *Jesus was saying that God's plan was simply being worked out.* And the traitor (the one who betrayed Jesus) faced an appalling future. Jesus pronounced "woe" (verse 22b) on the man who would betray Him into the hands of His enemies. J. I. Packer says: "*God's sovereignty and man's responsibility* are taught [to] us side by side in the same Bible; sometimes, indeed in the same text [e.g. Luke 22:22]. Both are thus guaranteed to us by the same divine authority; both, therefore, are true. It follows that they must be held together, and not played off against each other. Man is a responsible moral agent, though he is also divinely controlled; man is divinely controlled, though he is also a responsible moral agent" (*Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, pages 22-23).

²⁴¹ In Jewish culture, the youngest received the least honor, while the eldest was held in high honor. The oldest son inherited a larger portion of the father's estate than any of the younger children. In some societies today, older persons are regarded as being wise and honorable—and those who are younger are considered less experienced and least in honor.

²⁴² In verse 27, Jesus explained further that those who are greatest, are to be like "One who serves," *not like* the one who dines at a table and is being served. A "servant" performs duties (often of a lowly nature) for another. "Service" means assisting, caring for, showing compassion, and reaching out to help others. Jesus himself came among us as One who serves (verse 27b). He is not asking His disciples to do something that He himself was not willing to do. Jesus served tables, washed dusty feet, touched lepers, ate with outcasts, and healed the sick. Matthew 20:28 says that the Son of Man "did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

²⁴³ Two young men became friends in medical school, but they had quite different ambitions. One chose to establish a very profitable medical practice in his home town. The other chose to bury his life in service to God and others on the mission field. Years later, the doctor who stayed home planned an around-the-world trip. He stopped off to see his friend from medical school. As they talked, the doctor from America was appalled at the primitive conditions and equipment the missionary doctor had to work with. Their conversation was interrupted when the missionary doctor was called to perform

surgery. When he returned—the American doctor said, "Do you know how much you could have made from that surgery in the States?" The missionary doctor did not know, but the other doctor assured him that the surgery would have brought him \$10,000. The American doctor said, "And how much did you get here?" The missionary doctor said, "A few pennies—and the smile of God!"

²⁴⁴ The Greek word for the entire phrase is *epistrephas*, which literally means "to turn around; to turn back" (*Analytical Greek Lexicon*, page 161). There is a sense in which the early disciples were "saved" before Pentecost.

²⁴⁵ Mark's account says (Mark 14:29) that Peter declared that even if the other disciples are offended because of Him, still he would be loyal to Christ. Those are words of a self-confident, inexperienced disciple, who had not yet found out the weakness of his faith, and the deceitfulness of his own heart.

²⁴⁶ Jesus quoted Isaiah 53:12.

²⁴⁷ The provisions included a "money bag," a "knapsack" (a lunch box), and a "sword." The sword was undoubtedly a small dagger used to kill animals and prepare them for food, and to cut sticks for starting fires. It is clear that Jesus was not telling His disciples to defend themselves with the sword, for that would contradict His teaching in John 18:36 and Matthew 26:52.

²⁴⁸ Archie Penner quotes James Wallace as saying that the "swords" were *tools* carried to serve several purposes. The "sword" was used by travelers (and by the Essenes) as a jackknife, hunting knife, butcher knife, and pruning knife. He also quotes the European scholar, F. F. Bruce, as saying that the two swords were enough for "one who did not mean to fight" (*The Christian, the State, and the New Testament*, pages 53-54). On page 53 of the same book, Penner lists seven reasons why the sword was not at all intended to be used as a weapon to harm others or to defend Jesus.

²⁴⁹ He took Peter James, and John with Him inside the gate and told them to stay and to watch with Him (Matthew 26:37-38).

²⁵⁰ The "temptation" was likely the tendency to lose faith in the fact that Jesus was the Messiah whom they had confessed before they started out on the journey with Him (Luke 9:20).

²⁵¹ The phrase "the cup" is used metaphorically to represent the whole experience of bearing the sins of the world, and the death which lay before Him.

²⁵² See pages 308-310 in the *BNTC Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* for more on the parallel passage in Matthew.

²⁵³ Charles Childers says that "the meaning seems to be that the sweat was mingled with blood, thus giving the impression of pure blood coming through the pores of Jesus' skin. Many authorities testify that great suffering or mental agony can cause blood to mingle with the perspiration of the human body" (*Beacon Bible Commentary*, Volume 6, page 610).

²⁵⁴ See the comments on the parallel passage in the *BNTC Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, page 310.

²⁵⁵ John mentions that it was Peter who cut off the ear (John 18:10). The meaning of the phrase "Permit even this" (verse 51) is uncertain.

²⁵⁶ All four Gospels report the incident about the servant's ear, but only Luke mentions that Jesus healed the man with the touch of His hand. As a doctor it was natural that Luke would take note of this special miracle.

²⁵⁷ The Greek word *lestes* speaks of a bandit or thief (used also in Luke 10:30).

²⁵⁸ Huddled around a fire late at night, and surrounded by people who are in-different to the gospel and at worst hostile to the Christian faith—is not an easy setting in which to take a bold stand for the Lord.

²⁵⁹ Galileans spoke an Aramaic dialect with noticeable differences in pronunciation. In the United States, people from the South reveal the area where they live.

²⁶⁰ The Bible makes no effort to hide the weak side of Peter's character. Here Peter denied the Lord Jesus, and yet two months later, he preached the sermon on the Day of Pentecost and 3,000 people were saved! This is a powerful testimony to the transforming grace of God in his life.

²⁶¹ The "rooster-crowing" was a Roman term for the end of the third watch. The first watch lasted from 6 PM-9PM, the second watch from 9 PM-12 M, and the third watch lasted from 12 M-3 AM.

²⁶² Peter had staggered out into the night and "wept bitterly" (verse 62). His bitter weeping showed that he was heart-broken over the fact that he had denied Jesus. We need *more* conscience-stricken, heart-broken repentance over sin in our day.

²⁶³ The chief priests, elders, and scribes are a likely reference to the Jewish Sanhedrin. The word "council" is used here as a synonym for the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin was the highest ruling body and court of justice among the Jewish people in the time of Jesus. The high priest was always the president of the Sanhedrin. There were 71 members of the body, with a balance between Sadducees (chief priests) and Pharisees (elders). The Romans who were ruling over Palestine in Jesus' day, denied the power of capital punishment to the Sanhedrin. The death penalty had to be approved by Rome.

²⁶⁴ Jesus held conversations with many people, but He had nothing to say to Herod, who was a shallow impenitent political leader. This Herod was the man who had ordered the murder of John the Baptist, and he was the man who lived in an adulterous relationship with Herodias who was his brother Philip's wife.

²⁶⁵ Pilate was not saying that Jesus was totally right; neither did he agree that Jesus had done things worthy of death. Charles Childers says that even though Jesus "had been tried twice by the Jews, once by Herod, and now twice by Pilate, no charge had been proved" (*Beacon Bible Commentary: Luke*, page 605).

²⁶⁶ The "chastisement" involved a whipping with a leather strap embedded with pieces of lead. Pilate was hoping that the whipping (which nearly always brought a laceration of the skin and some bleeding) would satisfy the leaders.

²⁶⁷ One of the most beautiful doctrines in Scripture is *the doctrine of substitution*. Just as Jesus was crucified instead of Barabbas, so He was crucified in our place on the cross. Barabbas was a member of a revolutionary group in Israel—that was hoping to overthrow the Roman power. He was committed to using terror to get the Romans off their backs, and in a sense was a hero among some of the Jewish people. Because of his terrorist acts, however, Barabbas was already condemned to die. He had been found guilty of murder. He was to be crucified on that Friday long ago. Can you imagine his dread as he counted the hours and minutes until he would be executed? I can imagine that it was hard for Barabbas to sleep the night before. Every time he heard movement in the jail, he wondered if they were coming for him. And then the hour arrived for his execution. He heard the tramp of the soldiers. He heard the key as it was placed in the lock. The key turned. The door opened. He was headed for death. As he stood there, his heart was leaping in his throat—when the guards said, "*Barabbas...there's a man named Jesus. They have put Him in your place. He is going to die. You're free. You can go home!*"

²⁶⁸ The Greek word for the place is "*kranion*" which means skull. The Latin word is "*Calvary*," and the Hebrew word is "*Golgotha*." It is possible that the "skull rock" still visible today (in Gordon's Calvary just outside the Damascus Gate in Jerusalem) is the place where Jesus died on the cross.

²⁶⁹ They threw dice to decide who would get His sandals, His headgear, His belt, and His outer garment.

²⁷⁰ The word "blasphemed" (Greek, *eblasphemei*) refers to injurious and insulting language. It means "to revile" and "to hurl abuse."

²⁷¹ The thief who was speaking confessed *the innocence* of Jesus, and *the injustice* of His suffering. The thief was also aware of his own sin, and the justice of the punishment he was receiving. And then he did one more thing—something for which he will always be remembered. He said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom" (verse 42).

²⁷² Normally Jesus expects us to receive Him in early years—and live for Him, and obey Him as we mature in the faith. But the words of Jesus to the thief should bring encouragement to all persons who think they have gone too deeply into sin, or have waited too long to turn to Christ in faith. It is dangerous to wait until the eleventh hour of life to turn to Christ. Most people who wait for the eleventh hour, die at 10:30—and never get right with God.

²⁷³ The tear was not from natural wear, for then it would have begun to tear from the bottom where it received much use (Matthew 27:51).

²⁷⁴ The centurion had observed how Jesus conducted Himself in the midst of all the sneering taunts. He noticed how Jesus had asked the Father to forgive those who nailed Him to the cross. He had sensed the darkness, experienced the earthquake described in Matthew's account, and knew that this was an unusual event.

²⁷⁵ What they had witnessed that day was unlike anything they had ever seen before. They must have had feelings of guilt. Many of them were among the crowds who earlier cried "Crucify him!" They must have said to themselves, "We did this." And they were right.

²⁷⁶ John was close enough to hear Jesus speak, for in John 19:26-27, Jesus commended his mother into John's care. A careful reading of the four Gospel accounts reveals that likely all of the following were there: Mary, the mother of Jesus, Mary the wife of Clopas, Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Salome, and Susanna.

²⁷⁷ Joseph of Arimathea was a man of wealth (Matthew 27:57), a man of noble character (Luke 23:50), and a secret disciple of Jesus (John 19:38).

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- ²⁷⁸ The warm climate in Palestine meant that dead bodies decayed quickly, so burial usually took place within a few hours after death. If someone died late in the day, burial took place the next day, but always within 24 hours after death. The Jews did not embalm bodies and so they used spices and perfumes to help alleviate the odor (adapted from *Nelson's Bible Dictionary*, page 195).
- ²⁷⁹ It is true that Matthew 12:40 says that Jesus would be in the grave "three days and three nights," but in Matthew 16:21 Jesus says that He would be "raised again the third day." The "three days and three nights" are a figure of speech; parts of a day were counted as a whole day. Jesus was in the tomb part of Friday, all of Saturday, and part of Sunday. The Jews had no clocks (only a sun-dial), and thus they were not as meticulous about time as we are. Whole books have attempted to establish a Thursday crucifixion, but without success.
- ²⁸⁰ The word "fools" (KJV) is *not* translated from the same word as the one used in Matthew 5:22, where we are forbidden to call a brother "You fool!" The word in Matthew 5:22 is *moros* (a senseless wicked person) and the word in Luke 24:25 is *anoetos* (one who is unwise).
- ²⁸¹ It is quite common today to accept just as much of the Scriptures as suits our prejudices and our own ideas. The Anabaptists believed both the first half of 1 Corinthians 11, and the last half, should be practiced. One of the distinguishing marks of our forebears was that they honestly were seeking to practice *all* that the New Testament says, and not just those parts that seem palatable to the human mind.
- ²⁸² The New Testament clearly says that Jesus was the prophet which Moses had declared would come (Acts 3:22-23; Acts 7:37).
- ²⁸³ The followers of Jesus expected Him to bring about His temporal kingdom here on earth, but they had overlooked other parts of what the Old Testament prophets had said. They spoke clearly about the fact that the Messiah would suffer and be rejected before He entered into His glory. Thus they failed to believe "all that the prophets have spoken" (verse 25b).
- ²⁸⁴ Demons will enter human lives even when uninvited (Luke 11:24-26), but Jesus does not do that.
- ²⁸⁵ Another lesson gleaned from this action of Jesus, is that He sees it is good for us *to prove our love* by withholding mercies until we ask for them. The Lord Jesus longs to be entreated; He likes importunity.
- ²⁸⁶ The words "blessed and broke" were the same words used in Luke 9:16 at the time of the feeding of the five thousand.
- ²⁸⁷ Today Jesus is a wonderful Companion, just as He was to the two disciples, and as He was to our Anabaptist forefathers. Two of the early Anabaptists shared a long conversation, and concluded with a reference to the walk on the road to Emmaus in Luke 24. Pieter Pietersz (from Alkmaar, Netherlands) was part of a major group (in the 1550s) led by Menno Simons and Dirk Philips. Pieter said to his friend, Jan Willemez, "How precious was our pilgrimage, as though we had walked to Emmaus with the two disciples, and our Lord in our midst" (*Spiritual Life in Anabaptism*, Cornelius Dyck, page 279).
- ²⁸⁸ We don't understand the nature of the resurrected body which permits such unhampered movement. Our Lord's *body* was real, yet it was exempt from the limitations of our *earthly* bodies—and in the eternal world we will be like Him.
- ²⁸⁹ The word "burn" (Greek, *kaiomene*) means "to be kindled into emotion" (*Analytical Greek Lexicon*, page 209).
- ²⁹⁰ That is the way believers should feel when they hear a good expository message preached from the Bible text today.
- ²⁹¹ Imagine your own feelings of excitement if you had been at a friend's funeral on Friday, and then found that person a few days later in your own living room, alive and well.
- ²⁹² The distance of nearly seven miles involved a good two-hour walk.
- ²⁹³ Thomas was not there (John 20:24), but just as Paul calls the company of the apostles "the twelve" (1 Corinthians 15:5), even though Judas was dead, so Luke calls this gathering "the eleven" even though Thomas was absent.
- ²⁹⁴ Just as Jesus joined the two who were walking on the road to Emmaus, so the Savior walks beside *us* all through our earthly journey (Matthew 28:20b), and on through the valley of death—yet sometimes it seems our eyes are dimmed by doubt (or plain unbelief), and we fail to realize His presence.
- ²⁹⁵ How Jesus entered into the room we do not know, except that the resurrection body has certain properties that our lowly material bodies do not have.
- ²⁹⁶ The disciples were not expecting to see Jesus alive in bodily form.

²⁹⁷ It was not that Jesus had to eat to sustain His body, as was the case before His death. Nor was His eating a trick to make the disciples believe He had a body when He did not. He ate because He had a real body that could eat.

²⁹⁸ This act could be related to the statement in John 20:22, which says that Jesus "breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'"

²⁹⁹ The phrase, "the Promise of My Father upon you," is mentioned again in Acts 1:4—a reference to the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. See John 14:16,17,26 and Acts 1:8.

³⁰⁰ One evidence of this increased power can be observed by reading Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:14-36).

³⁰¹ It is good to remember that while Jesus was taken out of their *sight*, He was not taken out of their *reach*. Jesus will not forsake His followers (Matthew 28:20).

³⁰² Leslie Flynn tells of a funeral he preached for a certain family in the city of Chicago some years ago. At least some members of the family had no church affiliation. A 24-year-old mother died, leaving four children too young to understand and a husband in deep sorrow. The preacher says that the young wife's mother (the grandmother of the children) was stricken with almost uncontrollable grief. At the funeral, the grandmother leaned over the daughter's corpse, and cried with a loud piercing voice (over and over), "I'll never see her again; I'll never see her again" (*The Sustaining Power of Hope*, page 83).

³⁰³ Note the definitions of "life" that appeared in a college newspaper: One student says, "Life is a bad joke that isn't even funny." Another says, "Life is a disease for which the only cure is death." A third student writes, "Life is a jail sentence—a sentence we get for the crime of being born" (source not remembered).