

THE BIBLE NOTEBOOK

Verse By Verse Bible Studies

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IT'S THE GOSPEL

According to Luke

by

Johnny L. Sanders, D. Min.

DEDICATION

To

John and Mark

I love you, my sons

(I never get tired of saying it)

INTRODUCTION TO THE THIRD GOSPEL

GOSPEL. The word “Gospel” is commonly defined today as “good news” - and that it is! However, according to some accounts, in pre-New Testament times it was used to denote the reward given to the bearer of good news. In the New Testament it denotes the announcement of, and the recording of good news. There is a difference between an event and the account of the event. To Luke, the Gospel is, first and foremost, what God did through Jesus Christ, and then the continuation of what He did through His church (see the Book of Acts). The Gospel According to Luke and the Book of Acts form a unit and need to be studied together for maximum benefit. It should be remembered that this is not the Gospel of Luke - it is the Gospel of Jesus Christ, according to Luke.

AUTHORSHIP. All evidence points to the fact that Luke, the Gentile physician and trusted friend and co-worker of Paul, was the author of both the Gospel According to Luke and the Book of Acts. Scholarship and tradition both support this claim.

Luke wrote about one-fourth of all the Scripture in the New Testament, and the book that bears his name has been ranked by many among the most beautiful books ever written. The Gospel According to Luke and The Book of Acts compliment each other, each providing information that will help us in our study of the other. In the preface to Luke, he addresses his work to Theophilus:

In as much as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order, ***most excellent Theophilus***; so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught (Luke 1:1-4, emphasis added).

In the preface to Acts, he writes,

“The first account I composed, ***Theophilus***, about all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when He was taken up to heaven, after He had by the Holy Spirit given orders to the apostles whom He had chosen” (Acts 1:1-2, emphasis added).

It is not stated that Luke is the author of either work, but he vocabulary is similar, the internal evidence is compelling, and external evidence supportive. We know that the same person wrote both books, and based on the “we” sections of Acts, it may be reasonably inferred that Luke is the author of Acts. If that is true, then he is the author of the Gospel identified with his name. In a study of authorship, both internal and external evidence considered.

INTERNAL EVIDENCE.

1. Medical terminology (Luke’s interest in sickness, suffering, disease).
2. The author was not a personal witness.
3. The author used other sources (vs. 2) - may have known Mary and some of the apostles.

4. He relied upon oral tradition (common Christian tradition).
5. He knew the work of other authors - inspired (Matthew, Mark) and others (Q, L).

EXTERNAL EVIDENCE.

1. Early tradition - second century scholars stated that Luke wrote the third Gospel.
 - a. Irenaeus, A.D. 185, named Luke as the author.
 - b. Tertullian, A.D. 200, mentioned Luke as the author of the Acts of the Apostles (remember that the same man wrote both this Gospel and Acts).
 - c. Eusibius, A.D. 325, says that Luke of Antioch, a physician and companion of Paul wrote the Gospel.
2. The “we” sections in Acts provide evidence that Luke was the author of Acts (and, consequently, of Luke as well).

a. Acts 16:10-17.	b. 20:5-15.
c. 21:1-8.	d. 27:1-28.
3. The Pauline Epistles support the claim.
 - a. In Philemon 24, Luke is included in the salutation.
 - b. In Colossians 4:14, reference is made to “Luke the beloved physician.”
 - c. In 2 Timothy 4:11 Paul says, “Only Luke is with me.”
4. Eusebius (A.D.300) claimed that Luke’s contact with Christianity Antioch (c. 46), but it is possible that became a part of the missionary team in Troas since the first “we” section places him first with Paul, Silas, and Timothy at Troas (Acts. 16:10ff).

Luke was Paul’s companion and physician during the latter’s two year imprisonment in Caesarea and it seems logical that this afforded him an opportunity to thoroughly research the life of Christ. He could have interviewed family members, Apostles and other disciples, and studied written accounts of the life and teachings of the Savior during this time. He was familiar with Mark and other sources. Some scholars believe Luke actually wrote the Gospel in Antioch. Some think he concluded it in Greece.

ILLUSTRATION. A number of years ago I stopped by a health club in Greenville, Mississippi that I had often visited on my way from Louisiana to visit my parents in Sledge, Mississippi. On this particular day, as I walked into the work-out area on my way to the dressing room, I discovered that a very heated argument was going on ahead of me - between me and the door to the dressing room. One contestant in the debate, a head of the history department at a state university, was standing there with a rather smug expression on his face. There was no missing the fact that the spokesman for the opposing group was very agitated. This man, an acquaintance of a number of years, was a muscular young man with an outstanding personality and a lot of friends and

it seemed obvious that these friends were looking to him to defend their position. He had done some lay-preaching and they deferred to him in this debate. As I approached, mildly curious but thankful that I was only a spectator and not a participant in the “discussion,” my friend glanced my way, and without a break in his argument, said, “Here’s a preacher. Let’s ask him.” I love to hear that!

It was during the hostage crisis in Iran, and the professor had made the statement, “You can’t blame the Muslims for their attitude toward Christianity, there is no way they can know Jesus ever lived. Can you name any historian from the period who ever mentioned Christ?” The response I had heard threw more heat on the subject than light - “I had rather take the Word of God for it than a bunch of (expletive) heathens!” With “Ask him! Ask him!” still ringing in my ears the history professor turned to me and with all the gloating enthusiasm he could muster demanded, “Can you name any ancient historian who ever mentioned the name of Christ?” I said, “Yes.” “Name them!,” he demanded.

“Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.”

“They were not historians. They were gospel writers. Can you name any historians who ever mentioned Christ?” I said, “Yes.” “Name them!,” he demanded. He was enjoying it. I said, “Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.” Again he emphasized, “They were not historians, they were gospel writers. Can you name any historians?” Again I said, “Yes - Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.” He continued to argue that they were not historians, they were gospel writers, and I stressed that I was not about to compromise on that issue. But to give him something to think about, I did mention either Suetonius (c. 69-140) or Tacitus (55?-after 117), both of whom mentioned trouble in Rome involving the followers of one Christus. At the time, there is little doubt that the kind of trouble they described had to do with followers of Christ. I might have also mentioned Josephus as well.

The point I was stressing, however, was that I refuse to give one inch of ground on my position that the Gospel writers did, in fact, provide credible evidence that Jesus Christ was a real Person, and that the accounts should be accepted as historical accounts. What I should have said - I thought of it after I left - was that no true Muslim really doubts that Jesus lived. In fact, they accept Him as a great prophet - like their prophet Mohammed!

Following that discussion, I spent months studying the Book of Acts and as I studied the Scripture and read commentaries, I became more convinced than ever of the credibility of Luke as a historian. His account of the fateful voyage from Caesarea to Rome is still the best description available to us about shipping on the Mediterranean Sea in that period. Modern research has proved the integrity of Luke as a historian. But the Christian begins a study of something the lost person does not possess - a spiritual discernment that makes us aware of the fact that Luke was only the human instrument, the Holy Spirit the divine Author of this Gospel account.

DESTINATION. The Gospel is addressed to the “most excellent Theophilus” (1:3); Acts simply to Theophilus. The word means “God lover” or lover of God. And for that reason many have

held that it is simply addressed to all lovers of God. The address (most excellent), however, implies a literal person - a person of position and honor. Tradition has connected Theophilus with T. Flavius Clemons, a cousin of Domitian, who may have been prime minister. Tradition says that he may have become a Christian and was put to death for his faith, but history reports that he was put to death for superstition. He was obviously a man of high rank and dignity.

It is important to remember that Luke, a Gentile writer is writing to Theophilus, a Gentile believer. While Luke is one of the three synoptic Gospels (meaning seeing alike), as compared to John, which is the more evangelistic Gospel, it has a distinctive Gentile flavor, as compared to Matthew and Mark. It might appeal more to the Gentile reader, whereas the material in Matthew and Mark were written more to the Jewish reader in mind.

PURPOSE. In 1:1-4, the Book is addressed to Theophilus, but it was obviously intended for others. Such a dedication was common in those days (possibly more so among Gentiles). There had been many accounts, but Luke wrote to give an orderly account - literally, an organic account, or an organic development of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It sets forth the Gospel and the Christian movement as it developed.

On July 18, A.D. 64, a fire was ignited in Rome which burned for six days and seven nights. Nero was blamed by his foes for the fire, but he blamed Christians for the fire and used them as a scapegoat. People believed him because Christians were already being accused of being arsonists as a result of their preaching about judgment by fire. A limited, but very intense persecution was launched against Christians, during which time Christianity was for the first time officially distinguished from Judaism. Judaism was declared a "legal religion," but Christianity was labeled an "illegal religion." Luke was inspired to write a declaration of the Gospel of Jesus Christ which would show the authenticity of Christianity - and affirm that it was more than a Jewish heresy. Christianity, born in the cradle of Judaism, is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy and Messianic hope.

AUTHORSHIP SUMMARY

PLACE - probably Antioch of Syria.

OCCASION - To confirm Theophilus in the Christian faith (and later readers).

THEME - The progressive self-revelation of Jesus Christ as the Savior of the world.

DESTINATION - It is not addressed to certain place (but to Theophilus, then to others).

DATE - A. D. 70 - 80 has been suggested (after Mark, before Acts).

PURPOSE - To accurately trace the beginning of the Christian movement. Luke is

better

Organized and follows a narrative form better than other accounts.

SPECIAL

- Luke was a literary artist. He used excellent Greek, good arrangement and syntax. He had a strong sense of the dramatic, as seen in his use of brief character sketches. His writing is marked by tenderness and compassion.

It is possible that Theophilus has heard objections to the Gospel from both Jews and Gentiles. The common reaction of the pagan Gentile would be to scoff at the story of the birth and ministry as ridiculous. The reaction of Judaism was to reject Christianity as a heresy and to view Jesus as a false Messiah. Luke, writing to this prominent Gentile under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, says that he has made a thorough investigation of records and testimonies, and interviews those closest to Jesus, and based on his findings, the account is accurate and the claims of the Gospel authentic. Christianity, far from being a Jewish heresy, is the fulfillment of all the hopes of the Law and the prophets, and as such, the fulfillment of Judaism. While Judaism may have been declared a legal religion and Christianity an illegal religion by Rome, Christianity is the real religion of the God who is revealed throughout the Scriptures.

METHOD. Luke does chronological order. Clarke says he classified his material as follows:

CLASS I. Comprehends all the details relative to the birth of Christ; with the preceding, concomitant, and immediately succeeding circumstances. Luke 1:1ff, and 2:1-40.

CLASS II. Contains a description of our Lord's infancy and bringing up; his visit to the temple when twelve years of age; and his going down to Nazareth and continuing under the government of his parents; Luke 2:41-52.

CLASS III. Contains the account of the preaching of John Baptist, and his success; the baptism of Christ, and his genealogy. Luke 3:1ff.

CLASS IV. Comprehends the account of all our Lord's transactions in Galilee, for the whole three years of his ministry, from Luke 4:1ff to Luke 9:1-50...

CLASS V. and last, commences at Luke 9:51, where the evangelist gives an account of our Lord's last journey to Jerusalem: therefore this class contains, not only all the transactions of our Lord from that time to his crucifixion, but also, the account of his resurrection, his commission to his apostles, and his ascension to heaven. 9:51- 24:53 [CLARKE: MCS].

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

PROLOGUE, Luke 1:1-4.

The prologue to the Gospel According to Luke (1:1-4) is remarkable for a number of reasons, the least of which is the fact that the entire prologue (all four verses) is only one sentence in Greek. This one sentence is viewed as one of the most remarkable sentences in all literature, both from a literary and a theological perspective. “Theologically, the affirmations of Luke provide a profound discourse supporting the accuracy of other N.T. authors and of his own writing as well [BSB].

In v. 1 Luke notes the efforts of others. Whether Matthew and/or Mark are here intended, or whether Luke refers to other sources, cannot be known for sure. Obviously others preceded him in the task of producing a "narrative" (*diegesin*, Gk.) of the things believed in the early Christian community. These authors are more precisely identified in v. 2 [QV: BSB].

1:3 - HAVING HAD PERFECT UNDERSTANDING. The word *parakoloutheo* means "to follow along beside" or "to trace carefully."

Galen, the famous physician, used the word for describing symptoms in a patient. Luke further qualifies this research with the strong Greek word *akribos*, meaning "accurately," which is translated as "perfect" in v. 3. Luke contemplates the anticipated result of his project for Theophilus. Theophilus will "know" (*epignos*, Gk., "to know fully") the certainty of those things in which he has been instructed. Luke desires full knowledge of Christian truths and events [QV: BSB].

1:4 - SO THAT YOU MAY KNOW THE EXACT TRUTH. The NKJV has "certainty." The word is derived from the Greek *sphallo*, to totter or to fall. Here the verb has the prefix *a* which negates the action of the word. Perfect understanding (vs. 3) and exact truth (vs. 4) will keep Theophilus from tottering (stumbling) in his comprehension of the Gospel.

I. THE BIRTH OF JESUS WAS SHROUDED IN THE MIRACULOUS, 1:5-2:52.

A. God Sent His Angel to Announce the Births of John and Jesus, 1:5-1:56.

Gabriel Announced the Birth of John to Zacharias in the Temple, 1:5-25.

1:5 - HEROD. Herod the Great is the one intended here. His greatness is linked primarily to the building of the temple which bears his name. He was tyrannical despot who even killed his own sons if they seemed politically ambitious.

ABIJAH. The Abijah to whom Luke refers was a "leading priest in the days of the return from Exile (Neh. 12:4), and then a priestly house (Neh. 12:17) to which Zechariah, father of John the Baptist, belonged" [QV: HBD]. There were 2 4 courses of priests who served in the temple.

Zacharias belonged to the Abijah course. There were too many priests for all to be used regularly, so to be chosen to burn incense was an honor.

Both Zacharias and his wife, Elizabeth, lived godly lives in a very ungodly age. Yet, they were without one of the faithful servants of YAHWEH expected from their LORD - children.

1:9 - CHOSEN BY LOT. Because of the great number of priests at the time, the privilege of burning incense would happen only once in the lifetime of any priest [RSB].

1:10 - THE TIME. Jewish worship had set times. Christian worship follows the same principle. The community needs set times for public worship

PRAYER. Only the priest could enter the sanctuary to keep the incense burning, but “the entire congregation was praying outside when Zechariah's vision occurred. Prayer is every believer's responsibility, not just a preacher's” [DSB].

1:11 - AN ANGEL. The angel is identified in 1:19 as Gabriel. The meaning of his name is “mighty man of God” or “God is my Hero.”

1:15 - GREAT IN THE SIGHT OF THE LORD. John's life would reflect the Nazarite vow of Num. 6:1-4 (cf. also Judg. 13:2-5, note).

FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT. The angel promised that John would be “filled with the Holy Spirit while yet in his mother's womb.” From conception John's life would be under the control of the Holy Spirit.

1:16, 17 - BACK TO THE LORD. “And he will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God.”

The coming of Christ was God's provision of salvation. That divine act included the coming of the forerunner of our Lord, John the Baptist. In the spirit of Elijah, John came to call people to repentance to prepare them for Jesus' coming. Thus in that sense he becomes something of the pattern of how we are to evangelize today [DSB].

IN THE SPIRIT AND POWER OF ELIJAH. Elijah was the prophet who rebuked King Ahab for his idolatry (1 Kings 21:17-24). Though John was of priestly descent, his ministry would be that of a prophet.

TO TURN THE HEARTS OF THE FATHERS BACK TO THE CHILDREN. This may refers to the “peace between fathers and children that would follow their response to John's ministry. One of the initial results of a new commitment to God should be the renewing of family life” [BSB].

1:19 - I AM GABRIEL. The angel identifies himself as Gabriel, “who stands in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news.” Gabriel's ministry

involves making special announcements concerning God's plans (Dan. 8:16; 9:21). He and Michael, the archangel, are the only angels named in the Bible - unless Lucifer was originally an archangel (he is also called by name).

1:20 - YOU WILL BE SILENT. Zechariah was punished for doubting God - under the circumstances the conception of John the Baptist was more than he could believe. "Appropriately, his punishment made him unable to share his once-in-a-life experience of serving at God's incense altar and to share the experience he had had with God's messenger" [DSB].

1:21 - WONDERING AT HIS DELAY. The delay had been so long that the people were beginning to wonder if something had happened to Zacharias, possibly even wondering if he had died.

1:23 - HE WENT BACK HOME. After serving the tour of duty for which he was chosen for this limited time, Zacharias was free to return to his home, probably near Jerusalem.

1:25 - THUS THE LORD HAS DEALT WITH ME. "Thus the Lord has dealt with me, in the days when He looked on me, to take away my reproach among people." In the Jewish mind, to be childless was like a curse. Children were believed to be a blessing from the Lord, thus denial of children was viewed as the opposite - a curse.

Gabriel Announced the Birth of Jesus to Mary, 1:26-38.

1:26 - IN THE SIXTH MONTH. Six months had elapsed since the vision of Zacharias in the temple (v. 11). The announcement of the birth of Jesus is commonly called the Annunciation.

1:27 - A VIRGIN ENGAGED. According to Jewish law, engagement (espoused, KJV; betrothed, NKJV) was as binding as marriage. The virgin birth has been the subject of debate for two thousand years. Many Old Testament scholars dogmatically insist that the Hebrew word *almah* in Isaiah 7:14 should be translated maiden and not virgin. Others are just as convinced that it should be translated virgin. Why not let the inspired Scripture settle it?

"Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel" (Is. 7:14).

The Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. "She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: "BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD AND SHALL BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL," which translated means, "GOD WITH US" Matt. 1:20b-23.

1:30 - FOR YOU HAVE FOUND FAVOR WITH GOD. God chose Mary as He chose Israel - and as He chooses individuals today - by His grace. It was by the grace of God that Mary was chosen to become the mother of Jesus. God's grace is unmerited favor, and it is not predicated upon the individual's worth or merit. Grace is always the basis of a relationship with God. Luke emphasized the grace of God throughout this chapter (see vv. 50,54,58,72,78).

1:31 - YOU SHALL NAME HIM JESUS. The Lord named Him. His name is Jesus. The name means "Jehovah is salvation." The OT. Equivalent is Joshua. The promise of a successor God made to Moses pointed initially to Joshua, his companion and assistant, and ultimately to the second Joshua, Jesus.

1:32 - THE SON OF THE MOST HIGH. This is an affirmation of the deity of Jesus Christ, because "son of" in the Bible means, "the same as," or "in the likeness of." Most High or "Highest" is a familiar title for God (1:35, 76; 6:35; Mark 5:7; Acts 7:48; Heb. 7:1).

HIS FATHER DAVID. This seems to indicate that Mary, as well as Joseph, was descended from David. Legally, however, the right to rule would have passed through Joseph on to Jesus.

1:33 - HE WILL REIGN. "He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end." He was never crowned King in any but a mocking ceremony at His trial and crucifixion (Mk 15:16-20,26,32). God, however, pronounced Him King at His birth and when He returns He will return in His royal splendor as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

HIS KINGDOM WILL HAVE NO END. This promise will fulfill the Davidic Covenant of II Samuel 7. God's eternal purpose was to establish His eternal kingdom with Jesus as King for ever..

1:34 - MARY SAID to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" There could be no more logical or natural question, but that which was about to happen was not natural, it was supernatural.

1:35 - THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL COME UPON YOU. The Incarnation was accomplished by the creative act of the Holy Spirit inside the body of the Virgin Mary.

The Virgin Birth was a special miracle performed by the Third Person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, whereby the Second Person of the Trinity, the eternal Son of God, took to Himself a genuine, though sinless, human nature and was born as a man, without surrendering in any aspect His deity [RSB].

Luke, the observant physician, supports the doctrine of the virgin conception of Jesus. He records Mary's testimony that she had never known a man sexually (v. 34). Luke also calls her a "virgin" (parthenon, Gk.), in v. 27. Furthermore, in v. 35 he describes the process through which the conception of Jesus was to be accomplished. The Holy Spirit would come upon Mary, and the power of the Highest would

overshadow her. The consequence of this act of God is that the Child born of Mary would be called the Son of God. The virgin conception of Christ guarantees the perfect union of two natures in one Person. He is Jesus, the God-Man (cf. Isa. 7:14; 9:6, 7) [BSB].

1:38 - MARY SAID. Mary's response was, "Behold, the bondslave of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word." The godly young virgin yielded herself completely to God for Him to do as he pleased with her - exactly what He expects of all of us.

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Mary Visits Elizabeth, 1:39-45.

This passage is often called the Visitation, which refers to the visit of Mary to Elizabeth to share each other's joy. During this visit, the babe in Elizabeth's womb acknowledged the Messiah to be born of Mary.

1:42 - BLESSED ARE YOU. Elizabeth was moved by the Holy Spirit to pronounce Mary and her child as blessed. She declared, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!" No woman has ever been so blessed by a child to whom she has given birth. Blessed among women, but never Co-Redeemer with Jesus Christ! No claim is made here for an immaculate conception, or for perpetual virginity. The Catholic pope is receiving a reported one hundred thousand letters each month urging him to proclaim Mary Co-Redemptrix with Jesus Christ, thus replacing the Holy Trinity with a holy Quartet. Some five hundred bishops and priests have signed the petition. The late Mother Theresa was among those making this request. Mary is "mother of my Lord," not mother of God.

1:43 - THAT THE MOTHER OF MY LORD. Ryrie (RSB) says that the term, "mother of my Lord" means mother "of my Messiah. The phrase 'Mother of God' is nowhere in Scripture.

Mary Sings a Hymn of Praise to God, 1:46-55.

The term the "Magnificat" is from the first word of the Latin translation. There are 15 discernible quotations from the Old Testament in the hymn. The OT was well known and loved in the home in

which Jesus grew up. Compare this with the Song of Hannah (1 Sam. 2:1-10). This is the first of four hymns recorded in Luke 1; 2 (cf. 1:68-79; 2:14; 2:29-32).

1:47 - GOD MY SAVIOR. Mary sang, “my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.”

She recognized the redemptive nature of God Himself. He not only will send a Savior--Jesus, who would be born of her in the miracle of the virgin birth--but God Himself is Savior. She praised God for His faithfulness to His covenant with Abraham and Israel (vv 54,55,72). This Old Testament theme of the faithfulness of God to His covenant is carried over into the New Testament. God is basically seen as a God of redemptive love. He even named His Son, sent into our world to save lost sinners, Jesus, which means the Lord saves, or Yahweh saves (Mt 1:21). God as Savior is at the very heart of our understanding of God [DSB].

1:50 - HIS MERCY. "AND HIS MERCY IS UPON GENERATION AFTER GENERATION TOWARD THOSE WHO FEAR HIM" (all caps. In NAS). Holy awe and reverence surrounded the birth of Jesus as well as that of John the Baptist, His forerunner.

1:53 - HE HAS FILLED THE HUNGRY. Jesus filled the hungry with “good things,” His disciples followed His example, and He expects us to meet the needs of the hungry today.

1:54, 55 - HELP TO ISRAEL. Mary praised God because through Jesus Israel would be blessed and the promises God had made to Abraham (Gen. 12:1-7) would be fulfilled. Jesus is truly the hope around which Old Testament hope revolves. “In Christ, God fulfilled the promises of salvation first given Abraham (Ge 12:1-7). Salvation in Christ thus stands in continuity with God's history of salvation rather than being radically new and different” [DSB].

Mary returns to Galilee, 1:56.

“And Mary stayed with her about three months, and then returned to her home.”

B. The Birth and Early Life of John Is given, 1:57-80.

Birth of John the Baptist, 1:57-66.

1:57 - A SON. “Now the time had come for Elizabeth to give birth, and she gave birth to a son.”

1:58 - REJOICING. Elizabeth’s neighbors and relatives “heard that the Lord had displayed His great mercy toward her; and they were rejoicing with her.” God’s salvation brings joy to the hearts of believers.

1: 59 - CIRCUMCISE THE CHILD. According to the Abrahamic covenant (Ge 12:1-3; 17:1-8)

males babies were to be circumcised eight days after birth as the seal of the covenant (Ge 17:9-14). The child received his name at the circumcision ceremony. The name traditionally followed the family lineage. That is the reason people were surprised when the son of Zechariah and Elizabeth was named John rather than Zacharias after his father. Mary and Joseph honor the same law in the circumcision of Jesus (Lk 2:21).

1:60 - JOHN. Elizabeth responded, "No indeed; but he shall be called John." John means "God has been gracious."

1:63 - HIS NAME IS JOHN. Zacharias affirmed his name.

1:64 - IMMEDIATELY HIS MOUTH WAS OPENED. He had been silent for nine months and eight days, but as soon as he affirmed his name he was given back his speech. After the long period of imposed silence he began to praise God.

Zacharias Sings a Prophetic Hymn, 1:67-79.

1:67 - PROPHESIED. "Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied." "Zacharias' song, called the Benedictus ("Praise be"), shows that this godly priest is acquainted with an ancient prayer known as 'The Eighteen Benedictions" [BSB].

1:69 - HORN OF SALVATION. "And has raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of David His servant." Horn is often used in the OT as a metaphor for power (2 Sam. 22:3). The idea here is that He is a powerful Savior - He has the power to save. Observe that while Jesus is the descendant of David, David is called His servant.

1:72 - HIS HOLY COVENANT. The reference is probably to Gen. 22:16ff., even though God's words are not specifically called a covenant in genesis.

1:73 - HE OATH. This is the covenant God made with Abraham (Gen. 22:16-18).

1:77 - SALVATION. "To give to His people the knowledge of salvation By the forgiveness of their sins."

God expresses salvation in many ways in individual lives--deliverance, refuge, rest, hope, blessing. The basic expression of salvation brought through Jesus is forgiveness, the taking away of our load of guilt and giving us freedom to reach the potential God created in us [DSB].

1:78, 79 - SUNRISE. "Because of the tender mercy of our God, With which the Sunrise from on high will visit us." Those familiar with the King James Version of the Bible may recall that the word translated "Sunrise" is rendered "Dayspring" in the Authorized Version. "The Dayspring from on high" indicates that the Messiah's coming would be like the coming of dawn, in which the

morning light drives away the darkness. It is interesting that Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, “connected the coming of Jesus Christ with the prophecies of Isa 9:2; 11:1. Christ is the Light of the world who delivers His people from the darkness of sin and evil [DSB].

The Early Life of the Baptist Summarized, 1:80.

And the child continued to grow and to become strong in spirit, and he lived in the deserts until the day of his public appearance to Israel.

C. The Miraculous Birth of Jesus Is Surrounded by Phenomenal Events, 2:1-38.

Jesus Is Born in Bethlehem, 2:1-7.

2:1 - A DECREE. Caesar Augustus, who reigned from 27 B.C. to A.D. 14, send out a decree that “a census be taken of all the inhabited earth.”

2:2 - QUIRINIUS. Quirinius is Publius Sulpicius Quirinius, the Roman governor of Syria (A.D. 6-4 B.C. - Ryrie suggests 4-1 B.C.). He would have directed the census.

Recent archaeological discovery indicates that Quirinius may have been twice governor of Syria, the earlier date being about 6-4 B.C. and the second A.D. 6-9. The first term of Quirinius would fit Luke's account well at this point. Luke is a careful historian as well as an accomplished theologian [QV: BSB].

2:3 - THE CENSUS. everyone was on his way to register for the census, each to his own city. Each person was required register for the census in his native town, the town of his birth.

2:4 - JOSEPH ALSO WENT. Joseph took Mary and went “from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem.” This fulfilled the prophecy of Micah 5:2.

2:5 - IN ORDER TO REGISTER. The KJV says they went “To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.” The NAS and NKJV, NIV all agree with the NRSV, “He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. They were complying with the decree which required them to go to the city of Joseph's birth to register (or enroll) for taxation.

ENGAGED. Joseph had with him “Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child.” Here “engaged” (betrothed wife, NKJV) “refers to the contractual but unconsummated marriage. This type of betrothal (kiddushin, Heb.) was as binding as marriage and could be broken only by divorce” [BSB].

2:6 - SHE GAVE BIRTH. After she arrived in Bethlehem ("House of Bread") Mary gave birth to her first born child (it had to be her first because she was a virgin).

2:7 - WRAPPED HIM IN CLOTHS. While reading, or listening to the Christmas story we must never think that Joseph and Mary were taken by surprise by the birth of Jesus. As caring parents they had prepared well for the birth of Jesus. For instance, they did place Him in an animal trough (manger), but they did not have to cover Him with straw or dirty rags from the stable. They had with them soft clean strips of cloth (swaddling cloths) in which they wrapped the baby Jesus.

LAID HIM IN A MANGER. The fact that Christ was placed "in a manger" after His birth led to the tradition that He was born in a stable. Early tradition indicates that He was born in a cave on the edge of the village of Bethlehem, which may have been used as a stable. It may have been a natural cave or a cave hewn out of a rock wall.

Announcement of the Birth of Jesus, 2:8-14.

2:8 - SHEPHERDS STAYING OUT IN THE FIELDS. These shepherds were "staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night." The flock may well have been the temple flock - the flock that provided lambs for Passover. There is one paradox after another here. The angels appeared to the shepherds who were tending the lambs, not to the priests who would offer them. If the shepherds went directly from their flock to the temple to worship, these same priests would have declared them unclean, thus unfit for the Passover.

Christmas pageants and nativity scenes usually show a very few shepherds (and three wise men!), but if this was the temple flock it was a very large flock and it would have required a large number of shepherds. However, only a small number might have been necessary for the night watch.

To answer another question, there is no way of knowing the time of year, since animals used for sacrifices were kept in the fields all year. The actual date of the birth of Christ is unknown, December 25 being first mentioned in the fourth century.

2:9 - AN ANGEL OF THE LORD. "And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened." The Lord sent His angel to announce the birth of the Savior to the shepherd. This visitation was accompanied by a visible manifestation of the glory of the Lord. It will be worth the time and effort to study and prayerfully reflect upon the glory of the Lord. Only the Holy Spirit is able to teach some lessons. As a pastor, I am not ashamed to admit that I feel very inadequate to elucidate the richness and the fullness of the glory of the Lord. There is, however, much to be gained from the study of God's Word.

The glory of God is a visible, concentrated manifestation of the nature or person of

God. Often the glory of God is associated with "shining." The emphasis is not upon the "shining," or how the manifestation occurs, but on the sense of awe that it produces in those who perceive it. When people "see" the glory of God, they have a heightened, acute awareness of the presence and power, the majesty and authority of the holy God. See notes on Ex 16:7,10; 40:34-38. The cry of "glory to God" is the equivalent of praying that nothing will stand in the way of all people seeing how great God is DSSB].

2:10 - DO NOT BE AFRAID. Man (humankind) is often preoccupied with fear and libraries have been published to help us deal with it. I cannot think of anything that would cause greater fear than a visitation by the angel of the Lord. Nor can I think of anything which would eliminate fear more completely than a comforting word from the Lord "Do not be afraid."

GOOD NEWS OF GREAT JOY. This is the Gospel! This is the very heart of the Gospel - "*good news of great joy* which will be *for all the people*" (emphasis added).

2:11 - A SAVIOR. "for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." Observe that Jesus is given three titles in the angel's announcement. He is (1) Savior, (2) Christ (Messiah, anointed One), and (3) Lord (Yahweh, or God). He was both God and man. "Savior" (Greek soter) applied to Jesus is an extension of the Old Testament idea of God saving and delivering His people. Salvation applies to all areas of life--physical, psychic, and spiritual" DSB].

The verb "save" is often used in conjunction with Jesus' acts on behalf of humankind. God is acknowledged as Savior often in the New Testament. Compare 1:47. To call Jesus Savior is to relate Him to God. Jesus is called Savior only here in the Synoptic Gospels, once in John (4:42), once in 1 John (4:14), twice in Acts (5:31; 13:23). The other references are in the Pauline works and 2 Peter. See note on Mt 1:18-25. As Savior, Jesus is the Christ or Messiah. See note on Mt 16:16. He is the Lord. See note on Lk 1:5-23 [DSB].

2:13 - HEAVENLY HOST. A multitude of the heavenly host appeared with the angel "praising God." "Many of the appearances of angels describe them praising God (Isa 6:3; Rev 5:11-12). The praise here contains a benediction for God's people. Prayer is a heavenly occupation as well as an earthly one" [DSB].

2:14 - GLORY TO GOD. The heavenly host praised God saying, "glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased."

ON EARTH PEACE. The KJV renders it, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." A better translation is "peace toward men of goodwill" (or as the NAS has it, "on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased"). This brief hymn is often called the Gloria in

Excelsis Deo (Latin for "glory to God in the highest").

Shepherds Visit Baby Jesus, 2:15-20.

2:15 - LET US GO STRAIGHT TO BETHLEHEM. As soon as the angelic choir left the shepherds went to Bethlehem to see the baby Jesus.

2:16 - THEY...FOUND...THE BABY. "So they came in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as He lay in the manger." Without the reference to the manger (and stable) this would have been no small challenge because there were so many people in Bethlehem for the registration.

2:17 - THEY MADE KNOWN. As soon as the shepherds had seen the baby in the manger they left and made known what they had seen and heard. When we see Jesus today we should make known what we have seen and heard.

When the shepherds saw the Christ child, they went away sharing the grand event. It should be no different with Christians today. The natural reaction to Christ is to tell all we have seen and heard. The gospel is available to all people--even the poorest people, like the shepherds [DSB].

2:18 - ALL WHO HEARD IT WONDERED. Vance Havner, whom I heard in person in Port Arthur, Texas in 1974, preached and wrote that one problem with the church in America is that "we have lost the wonder of it all." He said, "We sing 'I Stand Amazed,' but we had rather sit amused." He had a point.

2:19 - BUT MARY. After the shepherds told Mary and Joseph what they had seen and heard they went on their way, "glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen" (vs. 20), and young mother treasured all the things they told her and "pondering them in her heart."

Jesus Presented at the Temple, 2:21-38.

2:21 - CIRCUMCISION. This passage, in which Joseph and Mary present the eight day old infant at the temple (in fulfillment of Levitical Law, Lev. 12:3), is called the Presentation. "This was an important event for firstborn sons (Ex 13:2). The circumcision marked Him as a Jewish male and sealed Him by the sign of the covenant of God with Israel. The pair of birds represented the traditional gift of poor families (Lev 12:8)" [DSB].

EIGHTH DAY. "God's law ever precedes man's finest medical discoveries. Normally, in the blood of infants, the coagulants reach their maximum effectiveness on the eighth day after birth" [BSB].

2:22 - THE DAYS FOR THEIR PURIFICATION. According to the Mosaic Law, the mother

of a male child was unclean seven days. On the eighth day the boy was circumcised but she remained unclean for 32 more days (or 33 following the seven days already mentioned, for a total of 40 days , Lev. 12:2-8 - not 33 days after the circumcision). After that she presented a burnt offering and a sin offering for her cleansing (Lev. 12:4-6).

2:23 - IN THE LAW OF THE LORD. "EVERY firstborn MALE THAT OPENS THE WOMB SHALL BE CALLED HOLY TO THE LORD" (caps in NAS).

2:24 - OF TURTLEDOVES. "A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons" is the sin offering the poor must present to the priest in connection with the religious purification of a new mother (Lev. 12:1-8).

2:25 - SIMEON. All we know of Simeon is what Luke tells us in this passage -"He was devout," and he was "looking for the consolation of Israel." The "Consolation of Israel" is a rabbinic term for the Messiah or for the messianic age (cf. Isa. 40-55). God had promised Simeon he would see the Messiah, and Simeon recognized Jesus as the child Who fulfilled God's promise.

2:26 - THE LORD'S CHRIST. "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."

2:29 - "NOW LORD. Simeon's song (2:29-32), is called Nunc Dimittis. That is Latin for "now you let depart," after the first two words (Now Lord) of the Latin translation of Simeon's song . His song exhibits his knowledge of Isa. 40-55 [BSB].

Simeon's song, the Nunc Dimittis (vv 29-32), is the fourth and final of Luke's Christmas songs. This song, like Zechariah's and Mary's, is flavored with Old Testament references (Ps 119:116; Isa 9:2; 42:6; 49:6; 52:10). The birth of Jesus was bound up with expectations and fulfillment [DSB].

2:30 - SALVATION. "For my eyes have seen Your salvation." The Gospel According to John is the evangelistic Gospel, but Luke (one of the three Synoptic Gospels) maintains a constant focus on the saving grace of God through Jesus Christ. Many modern cameras are called "point and shoot" cameras because both exposure and focus are automatic. Luke automatically focuses our attention on the salvation made possible through the Savior.

2:32 - A LIGHT OF REVELATION TO THE GENTILES. Through Christ God offers salvation to Gentile and Jew alike - a shock to the Jew, but the hope of every Jew and every Gentile.

2:34 - SIMEON BLESSED THEM. He blessed them and said to Mary His mother, "Behold, this Child is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and for a sign to be opposed." "The fall and rising of many' indicates that those who reject the Messiah will be cast down, while those who accept Him will rise through salvation" [BSB].

2:35 - A SWORD. Simeon continued, “and a sword will pierce even your own soul.” This refers to the agony Mary would have to bear before Jesus fulfilled His ministry.

THE THOUGHTS. Simeon’s statement, “that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed,” refers apparently “to those who speak against Him and thus reveal their true character” [BSB].

2:36 - THERE WAS A PROPHETESS, ANNA. Anna was an aged prophetess who also testified to Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah.

At Christmas all orders of God's creation were involved: the **star**; foreign folk (**Magi**) representing all of the ethnic groups; **the great of earth** (Herod the King); **the wealth of earth** (the Magi's gifts); **the law** (both Roman and Jewish); **the prophets** (John and Anna); **the priesthood** (Zechariah); **the poor** of the earth (shepherds); **the angels**; and even the **animals** (by implication from the manger). Jesus' birth is for all the world (emphasis added) [DSB].

2:37 - FASTINGS AND PRAYERS. Anna was an eighty-four widow who “never left the temple, serving night and day with fastings and prayers.” “Anna's recognition and thanksgiving grew out of a life of worship, prayer, and fasting. God calls some people to a special dedication to the life of prayer. He calls all to the ministry of daily prayer (1 Th 5:17)” [DSB].

2:38 - SHE...BEGAN GIVING THANKS TO GOD. Anna “continued to speak of Him to all those who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.”

D. Jesus Sends His Early Life in Nazareth, 2:39-52.

He Is Returned to Nazareth, 2:39-40.

2:39 - NAZARETH. It is significant that the Scripture states that “*When they had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord,*” they then “returned to Galilee, to their own city of Nazareth.”

2:40 - THE CHILD CONTINUED TO GROW. His birth was surrounded by the supernatural, from the virgin birth to the phenomenal manifestation of the glory of God, but his growth and development as an infant, toddler, and child was altogether human in nature. He “became strong, increasing in wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him.” His physical growth was normal, but we must never forget that the grace of God was upon Him. All we are and ever hope to be we owe to the grace of God.

Jesus Visits the Temple for Passover, 2:41-51.

2:41 - THE FEAST OF THE PASSOVER. Here we have some insight into the home in which Jesus grew up. His parents were devout: They “went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover.” Families need the Lord. They need to worship Him obey Him. Parents must rear their children in the fear and admonition of the Lord. Each year Mary and Joseph traveled to Jerusalem to observe the Passover, a worship experience required of all faithful Jews within a certain distance of Jerusalem. For the background, see Ex. 12:3-4.

Families need good traditions, and the most important tradition they can develop is the tradition to worship the Lord. When He is given first place in the family it will shape or influence all other traditions.

2:42 - THE BOY JESUS STAYED BEHIND IN JERUSALEM His staying behind, rather than showing disrespect for His earthly parents, illustrates the interest He has in His Heavenly Father.

HIS PARENTS WERE UNAWARE. What kind of parents did God entrust with His only begotten Son?!!! Can you imagine what some child welfare workers would do with them? Were they negligent parents? The answer is No.

Galileans on the pilgrimage to Jerusalem crossed over the Jordan and walked in groups south through Perea until they reached a suitable crossing place not too far from Jericho, where they crossed back over to the west side, thus avoiding travel through Samaria. Any contact with a Samaritan would have left the worshiper unclean, or unfit for the Passover, until they went through a ceremonial cleansing. Returning they reversed this route, men walking in groups with other men, women with women, and children running ahead or lagging behind to play together. At the end of the day families would come together. Joseph and Mary “supposed Him to be in the caravan, and went a day's journey; and they began looking for Him among their relatives and acquaintances” (vs. 44). “When they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem looking for Him” (vs. 45).

2:46 - IN THE TEMPLE. They searched for the twelve year old Jesus for three days before they found Him in the temple, “sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions.” “Those who were interpreters of the Scriptures practiced within the covered porches around the inside walls of the temple” [BSB].

2:47 - ALL WHO HEARD HIM WERE AMAZED. All the teachers of the Law “who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers.” To what do we attribute this? The quality of the lessons from the Old Testament Scriptures in Galilee? To the home environment in which he was taught the Word of God by godly parents? Or was it because the grace of God was upon Him (vs. 40)? None of the above? Or all of the above? I would infer that all three influences were factors.

2:48 - YOUR FATHER. Joseph was Jesus' legal father, though not His biological father.

2:49 - HE SAID TO THEM. His response to the anxious questions of His parents was simply,

"Why is it that you were looking for Me? Did you not know that I had to be in My Father's house?" "Jesus' first question means, 'Why didn't you know where to look?' 'My Father's business' can mean either 'My Father's places,' a reference to the temple precincts, or 'My Father's affairs,' a reference to the work He had come to do" [BSB]. They did not understand (vs. 50). This is amazing, considering all those things Mary had kept and pondered in her heart (2:19).

2:51 - HE WENT DOWN WITH THEM. Jesus did not try to answer their questions. He obediently went with his parents back to Nazareth.

HE CONTINUED IN SUBJECTION TO THEM. At age twelve He had certainly reached what we often call the age of accountability. To refuse to be in subjection to his parents would have been a sin, and Jesus, though tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin (Heb. 4:15). "His mother treasured all these things in her heart." Was Mary one of the sources Luke used in researching the life of Jesus Christ before writing this Gospel account under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit? That is a strong possibility.

Jesus' life, from age twelve until the beginning of His public ministry 18 years later remains a mystery. God did not choose to reveal it and for us to spent too much time in speculation would be an exercise in futility - notwithstanding the wild speculations that have been offered up through the centuries. That includes the ridiculous claims for the New Age Jesus who supposedly traveled to Tibet to be taught by Tibetan monks before He began His public ministry.

Growth and Development of Jesus, 2:52.

2:52 - JESUS KEPT INCREASING. Luke writes that "Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men." This denotes a healthy, normal development: he grew mentally, physically, spiritually, and socially.

II. JESUS BEGINS HIS PUBLIC MINISTRY, 3:1-4:13.

A. John, the Forerunner, Heralds the Coming of the Messiah, 3:1-22.

John the Baptist Begins His Ministry, 3:1-2.

3:1- TIBERIUS CAESAR. Luke was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write this Gospel account. That, however, did not prevent careful research. The third Gospel not primarily history, but Luke's credentials as an historian leave little room for doubt. Here he provides valuable historical background:

Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip was tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was tetrarch of

Abilene (NAS).

Tiberius Caesar was the adopted son of Augustus Caesar (2:1) and reigned A.D. 14-37. This would make the fifteenth year A.D. 29. However, Tiberius was coregent with Augustus from A.D. 12, making the fifteenth year A.D. 27. For more on the “fifteenth year,” see notes in the BSB.

PILATE. Pilate was the Roman prefect, or governor, of Judea (usually referred to as procurator), to which position he was appointed by Tiberius in A.D. 26.

He was in charge of the army of occupation, kept the taxes flowing to Rome, had power of life and death over his subjects, appointed the high priests, and decided cases involving capital punishment. He was a capricious, weak governor who let personal and political considerations outweigh his awareness that justice was not being done in Jesus' case. He did not want another report to get to Rome that he had offended Jewish customs or could not control a situation--charges against him made to Tiberius earlier [RSB].

HEROD. This is Herod Antipas, the son of Herod the Great (Matt. 2:1) ruled over Galilee (tetrarch = ruler of one-quarter of a given territory).

PHILIP. Another son of Herod the Great, Philip ruled over Ituraea, NE of Galilee and E of Mount Hermon.

ABILENE. A small kingdom on the East slope of the Lebanon mountains, NE of Damascus. The ruler at the time was Lysanias

3:2 - OF ANNAS AND CAIAPHAS. Annas had been high priest from A.D. 6-15. Caiaphas, his son-in-law was high priest (A.D. 18-36). Rome appointed the high priest at this time, but Annas had enough influence to have his sons and son-in-law appointed to control the office for many years. Annas (cf. John 18:13; Acts 4:6).

THE WILDERNESS. The wilderness was the uninhabited territory just north of the Dead Sea, and E/NE of Jerusalem.

The Messenger and His Message, 3:3-9.

3:3 - BAPTISM OF REPENTANCE. John preached repentance for the forgiveness of sin. “The remission of sins, having already been accomplished in repentance, is symbolized in baptism” [BSB].

3:4 - THE WORDS OF ISAIAH. John the Baptist understood both his role and his message.

As to his role and ministry, he found them in the words of Isaiah:

"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'" (Lk. 3:4-6), NKJV).

'PREPARE THE WAY. Before a king visited a province a servant, taking the route the king would travel, would go through the province announcing his visit, and ordering that the people along the route repair the road. This might include filling potholes, removing rocks and debris, and straightening the road where people had detoured around obstacles or holes. The individual sent to announce the coming of the king was simply a servant, never to be confused with the king himself. John the Baptist saw himself in this role.

3:6 - THE SALVATION OF GOD. The King was coming very soon and the people prepared for His coming, "ALL FLESH WILL SEE THE SALVATION OF GOD" (Caps in NAS).

3:7 - HE BEGAN SAYING TO THE CROWDS. When John preached large crowds began coming out to hear him and many were baptized. John the Baptist was not interested in just counting nickels and noses, he was interested in genuine repentance. His message was direct, blunt, and not particularly sophisticated , but it was grandly eloquent. He cried out to the, "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" Were some people coming to be baptized for wrong reason? Were they not sincere?

3:8 - FRUITS IN KEEPING WITH REPENTANCE. His primary interest is not in numbers, but in genuine repentance - repentance accompanied by the fruits consistent with repentance (fruits worthy of repentance, NKJV). He continued, "and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father,' for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham." God has a lot of children, but he does not have any grandchildren! Ancestry, even if it goes back to Abraham, is of no value. Personal repentance is required.

3:9 - THE AXE. The axe, he said, "is already laid at the root of the trees; so every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire." And just as these unproductive trees are cut down and thrown into the fire, so must the unfruitful nation, Israel, expect the judgment of God..

John Preaches Repentance, 3:10-18.

3:10 - THEN WHAT SHALL WE DO? Does this show conviction of sin? Curiosity? A sincere desire to know God's will? All of the above? There is one thing for sure - when people hear the Gospel, this is a question which must be answered. Any time you hear the Gospel you should ask that question, and you must have an answer. For us today the answer will be found in the Word of God and the Holy Spirit, Who inspired the writing of the Scripture, will illuminate your mind and

heart to enable you to understand it. The lost must know how to be saved and the saved need to know how to live.

3:11 - SHARE WITH HIM WHO HAS NONE. John the Baptist had already called on the people to produce “fruits in keeping with repentance” (evidence that repentance is genuine) before he baptized them. Now he gives them some practical applications - they should share food and clothing with the poor.

3:12 - SOME TAX COLLECTORS. These tax collectors were collecting taxes for the hated Romans, for which they were held in contempt. Some, no doubt would have said they were beyond redemption. As in Matthew 9:10, “tax collectors and sinners” were often grouped together. Those who collected taxes for the Romans had a reputation for exploitation and cheating. “Sinners” were those whose daily work or associations rendered them ceremonially unclean and they were not to be associated with, according to the Pharisees. By asking, “Teacher, what shall we do?” they were saying, “You have told ordinary people what they must do. Now tell us what we tax collectors (contemptible sinners) must do.”

J. C. was a vile sinner, a criminal charged with contemptible behavior, yet I saw J. C. receive Jesus Christ as his Savior. Tommy had committed one of the most brutal murders in the state’s history, yet I saw him receive Jesus Christ as his Savior in the Hinds County jail in Jackson, Mississippi and a few months later preached to him at the Mississippi State Penitentiary at Parchman. That day he said to me, “Johnny, when I get out of here I want to serve the Lord.” I assured him that he did not have to wait until he got out to begin serving the Lord.

Another man had married a woman, taken out a life insurance policy on her and murdered her ten days later. I talked with this man through a tiny window covered with woven wire cover so that I could see him but he could not see me. He was saved and I gave him a New Testament. Months later I preached in Camp 4 at Parchman and following the service a man came by me and asked, “Were you in Jackson last May.” I said, “Yes, I was.” He then asked, did you go to the Hinds County jail?” I assured him that I did. He held up a New Testament and showed me what I had written in the front of it. He said, “I couldn’t see you but I recognized your voice.” I will not use his name (again) because once when I was preaching I did so and at the end of the service a man came forward and said, “That’s my brother.” The only thing I could think to say was, “Really? Uh, How is he?” He said, “He is doing great. They are letting him out for a ten day furlough each Christmas and he spends it with me. He is a new man.”

Yes, even tax collectors can be saved. And they are saved the same way anyone else is saved. God’s grace really is greater than our sins. They must be honest in collecting taxes (vs. 13), not in order to be saved, but because that is in keeping with repentance.

3:14 - SOME SOLDIERS WERE QUESTIONING HIM. They wanted to know what they must do. Salvation might be available to ordinary people, or even to these contemptible tax collectors, but what about soldiers? Roman soldiers were often brutal to civilians in occupied territories. Extortion was very common. They were asking, "And what about us, what shall we do?"

John replied, "Do not take money from anyone by force, or accuse anyone falsely, and be content with your wages." That is work consistent with repentance.

It has often disturbed me that some people will come down the aisle and "make a rededication," but you never see a change in their daily life. I have seen people drop of church for months - or miss for weeks - and come back and take up where they left off, and show no sign of repentance. At least they do not demonstrate any "fruits in keeping with repentance." We do not see tears in service today as we did a generation ago, and many do not produce fruit worthy of their profession. There is a whole lot of "easy-believism" going on in our churches.

3:15 - THE PEOPLE WERE IN A STATE OF EXPECTATION. They were wondering if John was the Christ.

3:16 - JOHN ANSWERED. John the Baptist answered, "As for me, I baptize you with water; but One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to untie the thong of His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire." The baptism of John was unique both in method (immersion) and meaning (baptism of repentance).

The Jewish leaders asked the Baptist why he introduced the new rite if he were not the Christ or Elijah or his prophet to come (John 1:25). John's response was that he was sent from God to baptize in water (John 1:33). Thus, Baptism is of God and not man. Jesus, in John 21:25, says that John's baptism came from heaven.

After the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, baptism, is seen as a picture of His death, burial, and resurrection (Rom. 6:3-5; Col. 2:12). It also portrays the believer's death (of the old sin-nature) his being raised to "walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4).

John's baptism was required for both Jews and Gentiles as a sign of a repentance that results in the forgiveness of sins (Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3). Although John's baptism may have its background in the O.T. (Lev. 15:13; Num. 19; Isa. 1:16; 44:3; Jer. 4:14; Ezek. 36:25; Zech. 13:1), John is, nevertheless, unique in that he administered the baptism himself and called for repentance before the coming of the messianic kingdom [BSB].

3:17 - HIS WINNOWING FORK IS IN HIS HAND. According to the Holman Bible Dictionary, the fan was a: KJV term for a long wooden fork used to toss grain into the air so that the chaff is blown away. Shovels were also used for this purpose (Isa. 30:24). "Modern translations render the underlying Hebrew and Greek terms shovel, winnowing fork, or winnowing shovel" [HBD].

The Messiah will "thoroughly clear His threshing floor, and to gather the wheat into His barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." Judgment is in His hand - and their will be no miscarriage of justice with Him.

3:18 - WITH MANY OTHER EXHORTATIONS. Yes, exhortations means that he pleaded with the people to repent - he begged them to repent. A dear friend, a deacon who had never been taught to visit and witness for he Lord, once explained to me, “Everybody in town knows where this church is and they know we will be glad to have them. I just don’t think you ought to have to beg them to come to church.” John was not above begging people to come to Jesus.

John’s Condemnation of Herod Lands Him in Prison, 3:19-20.

3:19,20 - HEROD. Herod Antipas had met Herodias, the wife of his half brother Philip on a visit to Rome. Philip was a hostage there. Herod Antipas persuaded Phillip to divorce Herodias so that he might marry her (he was already married to the daughter of the king of Nabatea). This was a clear case of adultery. Luke gives the reason for John's imprisonment (3:20) even though the arrest comes later (cf. Mark 6:14-29).

Jesus Baptized By John (affirmed by the Father, Spirit), 3:21-22.

3:21 - JESUS WAS ALSO BAPTIZED. The forerunner had been announcing the coming of the Messiah. Now Jesus shows up where John is baptizing and presents Himself to John for Baptism.

“Jesus is not baptized as a sinner, but as an obedient Son. Jesus on His part acknowledges John's ministry, and in turn is acknowledged” [BSB].

WHILE HE WAS PRAYING. “ Each occurrence of God speaking from heaven to Christ or about Christ occurred while Jesus was praying (9:29; Jn 12:27-29). Prayer marked every part of Christ's ministry” [DSB].

3:22 - THE HOLY SPIRIT DESCENDED. It was while Jesus was praying that “heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove.” Only Luke records that Jesus was praying when the Holy Spirit descended.

The association of the Spirit with prayer is surprisingly rare in the Old Testament. In Nu 25:15-18; Jdg 3:8-10; 1 Sa 16:1-2,12-13, God gave His Spirit to individuals after other people prayed. In Ps 51:10-11 David prayed that the Spirit would not be taken away from him. In the New Testament, a closer association is made between prayer and the Spirit... Prayer concerning the Spirit is opening ourselves to His work in our lives. In this, Jesus set the perfect example at His baptism. [DSB:].

We do not pray to receive the Spirit, God gives His Spirit freely to every new born believer - at the point of salvation. Christians, however, must pray for the leadership of the Holy Spirit and for power to live the Christian life.

A VOICE CAME OUT OF HEAVEN. As the Spirit descended the Father declared, "You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased." The Second Person of the Trinity was baptized, the Third Person of the Trinity descended, and the First Person of the Trinity declared His approval. Praise God! The great Three in One God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

A lot of people have adopted a unitary theory of God, that there is one personality playing three different roles. They use a simple illustration to explain their view. They may say, "I am the husband of my wife, the son of my father, and the father of my children - one person playing with roles. It is a good simple illustration, but it fails to answer all my questions. The trinitarian view of God is not as easy to explain. In fact, no one can comprehend it, let alone explain it. But I believe it is Scriptural - the fact that the word Trinity does not appear in the Bible does not negate that fact. I have never seen such words as Computer, Software, WordPerfect for Windows '95, Internet, or for that matter, professor of theology in the Bible.

Jesus often withdrew to be alone with the Father, and often called on the Father or referred to Him as though He is a distinct personality. He promised the Holy Spirit and from the things He had to say about the Holy Spirit, one might reasonably assume He was talking about a real person. Or was the prayer life of Jesus a hoax? Francis Schaeffer said at one point that it was because of the doctrine of the Trinity that he was a believer and no longer an agnostic. What he meant was that God did not have to create man out of some need that mankind could meet. There was fellowship in the Godhead. In the triune God there is horizontal fellowship. The unitary view allows only vertical fellowship (a condescending fellowship) which demanded that God create a lesser being with whom He might have fellowship (assuming there is a need for fellowship).

How then do we explain the Trinity? He is one in essence, but three in personality - one God in Three Persons. How can finite mind comprehend it? If God declares it, how can we reject it?

B. The Genealogy of Jesus Christ, 3:23-38.

3:23 - WHEN HE BEGAN HIS MINISTRY. "Jesus Himself was about thirty years of age, being, *as was supposed*, the son of Joseph, the son of Eli" (italics added). Luke, by saying, "as was supposed," affirms the virgin birth. The Scripture is very clear and we had better be very clear about this point - Jesus was born of the virgin Mary, conceived of the Holy Spirit. The Mormons are dead wrong - again. They teach that He was conceived through a union between Mary and God the Father in a human body, a direct contradiction of Scripture with reference both to The Father and the Spirit, in ultimately, to the Son.

For further study, see the more structured genealogy in the Gospel According to Matthew where the genealogy is given through Joseph. Luke provides the genealogy of Jesus through His mother, Mary.

C. Jesus Is Tempted by Satan, 4:1-13.

4:1 - THE WILDERNESS. Matthew begins with the genealogy and gives the account of temptations immediately after the baptism of Jesus. Luke puts the genealogy between the baptism and the temptations. "Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led around by the Spirit in the wilderness." The traditional site of the temptation is NW of the Dead Sea, near Jericho and not too far from where John was baptizing.

4:2 - TEMPTED BY THE DEVIL. "For forty days," as Matthew and Luke both tell us Jesus, having been filled with the Holy Spirit at His baptism, was led by the Spirit through the wilderness "being tempted by the devil." There are three temptations which come at the end of the forty day period, but we must observe that Satan focused the full force of his deceptive power and demonic cunning upon Jesus during the entire forty day period. Is it possible that these three specific temptations are mentioned at the end because all the temptations Jesus faced in the wilderness were related to one of the three areas or another.

FORTY DAYS. Jesus fasted for forty days, just as Moses had upon Mount Sinai. He was sustained by the same God and there is no hint of hunger or weakness until the end of the forty days. However, when the forty days were up, "He became hungry."

4:3 - THE DEVIL SAID. THIS THE FIRST TEMPTATION. Satan said, "If You are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread." Satan knew Jesus - and he knew Him well enough to know that He was the Son of God and that He could turn stones to bread if He chose to do so. Therefore, there must be more to this temptation than it might appear on the surface. We can be sure of one thing - Jesus was not deceived.

4:4 - JESUS ANSWERED. Jesus' answer was brief and to the point, "It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE.'" He was quoting Deut. 8:3. He was acknowledging His dependency His Father.

4:5 - SHOWED HIM ALL THE KINGDOMS OF THE WORLD. THIS IS THE SECOND TEMPTATION. Satan is trying to focus Jesus attention upon His mission field - the world.

Luke's order of Jesus' temptations differs from Matthew's (Matt. 4:1-11) by reversing the second and third temptation (cf. Matt. 4:1-3, notes). Luke apparently arranges his material topically or even geographically, moving from place to place to give a particular emphasis. It is noteworthy that he concludes the account in Jerusalem and at the temple. This is in keeping with the fact that Luke's Gospel places greater emphasis on the temple than the other Gospels do. Luke begins and ends in the temple [BSB].

4:6 - THE DEVIL SAID. Satan said, "I will give You all this domain and its glory." How could Satan promise the kingdoms of the world to the One Who had created the world? How did he have

the gall? He answers that question for us: "for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish." Had it been "handed over" to him, or had he assumed it? He is the acknowledged prince of the world.

4:7 - IF YOU WORSHIP BEFORE ME. Satan challenged, "Therefore if You worship before me, it shall all be Yours." Satan made this offer on the basis of his position in the world - he is the prince of this world. If Jesus had yielded to this temptation He could have bypassed the Cross - and we would have no Savior.

4:8 - JESUS ANSWERED. Jesus answered him by quoting from the Torah ("It is written, 'YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD AND SERVE HIM ONLY.'"

4:9 - THE PINNACLE OF THE TEMPLE. THIS IS THE THIRD TEMPTATION. "He led Him to Jerusalem and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple." How could Satan lead Jesus anywhere He did not want to go? He could not. But this was obviously a test Jesus must face. The pinnacle of the temple may have been one of the battlements or towers (or a balcony) overlooking the courtyard of the Temple. If Jesus had cast Himself off and landed unharmed before the people, He could, especially with Satan's assistance, convince them that He was the Messiah.

Another possibility is that the pinnacle was the highest point of the temple (the Royal Porch) overlooking a sheer drop of some 450 feet to the Kidron Valley. "From this vantage point a priest watched for the breaking of each new day and the possible appearance of the Messiah" [BSB].

IF YOU ARE THE SON OF GOD. The devil challenged Jesus, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here."

4:10 - IT IS WRITTEN. Satan quotes Ps. 91:11-12, omitting the phrase, "in all your ways." Why did he leave it out? Satan obviously knew the Scripture - and he knew how to use it to serve his purpose. Here he is using it to try to persuade Jesus to do something contrary to the nature and will of God.

4:12 - JESUS ANSWERED. Jesus answered again by quoting Scripture (Deut. 6:16): "It is said, 'YOU SHALL NOT PUT THE LORD YOUR GOD TO THE TEST.'" The temptation to major in the spectacular was designed to try to show Jesus how He could attract the masses and experience the glory of ruling the world, without suffering and dying for sin.

Each of the temptations dealt with the ministry upon which Jesus was thinking, planning, and meditating, the work about which He was praying. Never has there been such critical issues facing any other human being. Each temptation was a temptation to undertake this ministry in some way that was less than the perfect will of God, something that fell short of the glory of God, something that compromised the nature of God. Satan was too cunning to tempt Jesus with greed, popularity, drugs, or immorality. Each temptation was directed at the ministry upon which He was about embark.

SUMMARY POINTS

1. The first temptation - to change stones into bread - was a temptation to let good take the place of the best.
2. The second temptation - to worship Satan in exchange for power and glory - was a temptation to seek God's purpose by means foreign to His character and nature.
3. The third temptation - to leap from the pinnacle of the temple - was a temptation to force God's hand and impress people by using the sensational and the miraculous.

III. JESUS LAUNCHES HIS GREAT GALILEAN MINISTRY, 4:14-9:50.

A. First Stage Is His Public Ministry Before He Calls His Disciples, 4:14-44.

Jesus Begins His Work in Galilee, 4:14-15.

4:14 - JESUS RETURNED TO GALILEE. Jesus had left Galilee and gone to Judea where He was baptized by John the Baptist and where He was forty days in the wilderness facing temptation. Now He returns to the northern province of Galilee to begin His great Galilean ministry. From John we learn that He miraculously declared His Messiahship by turning the water to wine at the wedding feast in Cana of Galilee.

IN THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT. There is no way to overstate the significance of this fact. The Holy Spirit had been with Him from birth, and now He returns to Galilee in the power of the Spirit to begin His public ministry.

This is the most general statement in the Gospels concerning the work of the Spirit in the life and ministry of Jesus. Jesus' work in Galilee was empowered by the Spirit. This is similar to the work of the Spirit in the lives of ancient Israel's leaders, especially Saul and David, with whom the Spirit apparently worked over a number of years. Major aspects of Jesus' ministry were preaching, teaching, healing, and exorcism; in the Gospels all of these forms of ministry are attributed at one point or another to the Spirit. Each step of Christ's ministry was led by the Spirit [DSB].

4:15 - TEACHING. Luke tells us that as soon as Jesus returned to Galilee "He began teaching in their synagogues and was praised by all." His popularity would be short-lived, but at first He found and enthusiastic audience in the synagogues in Galilee.

His Claim of Messiahship Met with Rage and Attempted Murder, 16-30.

NOTE 1. Jesus went to the synagogue on the Sabbath - *as was His custom!*

NOTE 2. Jesus preached from God's Word - and *he preached Jesus.*

NOTE 3. Jesus preached a gospel many did not want to hear it - *even from Jesus!*

4:16 - NAZARETH. After teaching in other synagogues in Galilee He finally came to His Own home town of "Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read." It was His custom to go to the synagogue on the Lord's Day - that is the way He had been brought up, it was His custom as an adult, and it was a custom He continued. Worship should be such a custom with God's people that they should never have to decide on Saturday night whether or not they are going to church Sunday. They should never have to decide on Sunday if they are going back Sunday night. That is a decision that should be made once for all time - so that it becomes their custom.

Luke gives this sermon prominence as an introduction to the ministry of Jesus in his Gospel, though the actual inauguration of His ministry probably occurred almost a year earlier. Mark records this rejection of Jesus by the people of Nazareth about the end of the first year of His ministry (Mark 6:1-6). There could have been two such rejections, one at the beginning of His ministry and one later, but as v. 23 indicates, there has been a ministry at Capernaum already [BSB].

4:17 - THE BOOK. It would be more accurate to say the scroll, for it was the scroll of Isaiah from which Jesus read. The lesson that day was not at all what they expected - nor was His ministry what they anticipated - but it was what God wanted.

4:18 - THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME. Jesus took His text was taken from Isaiah 61:1-2, where the prophet of old had been inspired to write that the Spirit of the Lord would be upon the Lord's Anointed (Messiah). The Spirit directed Jesus' ministry and fulfilled Old Testament expectations of the Messiah. See Isa 61:1-2. Jesus affirmed the Spirit's role in His life by quoting Isaiah.

HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL. There was a balance between the preaching and the teaching ministry of Christ. The modern day preacher could find no better example. The Baptist Book Store in Shreveport, LA has a whole section of merchandise (bracelets, necklaces, tee-shirts, sweatshirts, mugs) with the initials, WWJD - What Would Jesus Do? (From Charles Sheldon's book, *In His Steps*). The modern day preacher and teacher will be wise to ask that question every week as he prepares to preach or teach a lesson. How would Jesus prepare? How would He use the Scripture. What would be His message and His purpose? And when the preacher goes into the pulpit and is tempted to entertain the sheep, psycho-analyze them, or traumatize them, He should think WWJD. What would Jesus do?

1. Jesus preached in the power of the Spirit.
2. He preached from the Scripture.
3. He preached Jesus.
4. He sought to persuade people to receive Him as Savior.

PROCLAIM. Still reading from Isaiah, Jesus read to them, “HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED.”

Jesus illustrated the simplicity of proclamation. He made His meaning clear so all people could understand. He tied His own ministry to the prophecy of Isa 61:1-3. The proclamation of the gospel should never be obscure. It must always ring with a clear and simple message of eternal truth. Jesus beautifully combined preaching and teaching. Proclamation includes content that teaches. Proclamation explains the meaning of God's Word for the present audience. Proclamation leads to understanding, decision, and commitment [DSB].

4:19 - THE FAVORABLE YEAR OF THE LORD. The NKJV renders it, “To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD.” It has been observed that the accuracy of Jesus, and subsequently, the accuracy of Luke is demonstrated here in an interesting omission in Jesus' quotation of Isaiah. 61:1, 2. When Jesus quoted this passage, he omitted the phrase, “the day of vengeance of our God.” The Isaiah passage is messianic; but during the earthly ministry of Jesus this part of the prophecy was not fulfilled. It will not be fulfilled until Jesus returns. For that reason Jesus omitted this phrase in His concluding remark, “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing” (v. 21).

4:20 - TO THE ATTENDANT. This denotes the synagogue attendant who had charge of the scrolls of Scripture. It is interesting that Jesus stood to read and then sat down to preach/teach. I have heard many preachers ask the congregation to stand to show reverence for the reading of the Scripture - with the possible implication that this is a Scriptural pattern. I do not recall seeing many who then sat down to preach!

4:21 - HE BEGAN TO SAY. After handing the scroll of Isaiah back to the attendant, Jesus sat down and immediately “and He began to say to them, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” This is the proclamation for the Jews had waited for centuries. Now, how will they respond to it? At first they were “speaking well of Him, and wondering at the gracious words which were falling from His lips, but then they began saying, “Is this not Joseph's son?” (Vs. 22). Doubt is beginning to creep into their minds, and that doubt will soon turn to cynicism, and the cynicism to rejection.

Jesus knew they wanted to see Him perform miracles, but doubt and cynical unbelief will stifle miracles. Seeing their rejection, Jesus declared, “Truly I say to you, no prophet is welcome in his hometown” (vs. 24).

4:25 - BUT I SAY TO YOU. In response to their cynicism and rejection, Jesus goes on to mention the names of two Gentiles who believed God and were blessed (The accounts are found in 1 Kings 17:8-24 and 2 Kings 5:1-14). There was certainly the implication that God might again bless Gentiles if the Jews rejected God's Anointed. This very thought infuriated the people and moved them to a decisive rejection of Him as Messiah.

4:28 - RAGE. Luke records that "all the people in the synagogue were filled with rage as they heard these things." From approval to cynicism, to rejection, and now to rage! And in their rage, "they got up and drove Him out of the city, and led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city had been built, in order to throw Him down the cliff" (vs. 29).

4:30 - PASSING THROUGH. This was a mob scene. They were going to kill Him, "But passing through their midst, He went His way." This does not mean that Jesus de-materialized. "These words do not necessarily imply a miraculous deliverance. Rather, His commanding presence and righteousness had power to thwart the crowd's plan" [RSB].

Jesus Ministers on a Sabbath in Capernaum, 4:31-39.

4:31 - CAPERNAUM. After being forced to leave Nazareth, Jesus went to Capernaum and as was His custom, He went to the synagogue and "was teaching them on the Sabbath."

Capernaum appears in the biblical record only in the Gospels where it is mentioned 16 times. As an economic center in Galilee it was more significant than tradition has often allowed. The designation "city" distinguishes it from the "fishing village" category. Perhaps the proximity to a major east-west trade route explains the need for a customs station there. The importance of the city is further demonstrated by the location of a military installation there under the command of a centurion. Fishing and farming were important to the economy and archaeological evidence suggests that there were other light industries contributing to the local prosperity [HBD].

In the New Testament Capernaum was chosen as the base of operations by Jesus when He began His ministry. Teaching in the synagogue (Mark 1:21) and private homes (Mark 2:1) was basic to His work there, but the miracles performed there appear to have precipitated the controversy and opposition. The religious leadership challenged the direction of Jesus' ministry (Mark 2:24, 7:5) and the popular following attempted to take over and force Him into a political position (John 6:15). Mark (2:1) referred to Capernaum as Jesus' home and Matthew (9:1) described it as "his own city." It appears that several of the disciples also lived in that town including Peter, Andrew, Matthew, and perhaps John and James. The populace apparently did not accept His messianic role because they fell under the same condemnation as Chorazin and Bethsaida for failing to repent (Matt. 11:20-24) [HBD].

4:32 - THEY WERE AMAZED AT HIS TEACHING. They had never heard anyone teach like Jesus, “for His message was with authority.” When they heard Jesus they heard the “thus saith the word of the Lord,” rather than the “thus saith the mind of man.”

4:33 - A MAN POSSESSED. In the synagogue, on the Sabbath, “there was a man possessed by the spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out with a loud voice.” Jesus often found demon possessed people wherever He went. Where did all the demons go? He did not destroy them - their doom is set for the future. Why do we not see demon possessed people in our churches, or in the community today as Jesus did. Some of the possibilities are logical, others disturbing.

1. Jesus was wiser than we are.
2. He had greater spiritual power than we.
3. Demons were much more disturbed by His presence than by ours.

Let us take them in order. First, Jesus was wiser than we are, but did He not give us the spirit of discernment to detect the demonic? Second, While He had greater power than we do, does the Bible not teach “greater is He that is in you greater than he that is in the world?” Third, demons were always very disturbed by the presence of Jesus, but when you became a Christian, did not Jesus move into your life, and did He not send the Holy Spirit to indwell your heart? Wherever you are, there Christ is also! Therefore, “Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you” (James 4:7-8a).

An “unclean demon” is primarily a spiritual diagnosis, not a medical one. Illness is to be viewed as a manifestation of evil afflicting mankind (13:16); possession by a demon, on the other hand, is a most serious spiritual state from which men can be rescued only by the superior power of God (cf. Mark 5:2, note) [BSB].

4:34 - LET US ALONE! This was no psychological problem. The demons knew Him and they knew Him well. They screamed out, “Let us alone! What business do we have with each other, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are--the Holy One of God!”

4:35 - BE QUIET AND COME OUT OF HIM! The demons had recognized Jesus, called Him by name, and identified Him as the “Holy One of God,” but they really did not know Him in His holiness. Jesus not only knew them for what they were, He exercised absolute power over them - He silenced them and He cast them out of the man. Why did He command them to be quiet? Perhaps the answer to that question is found in the three temptations Jesus faced in the wilderness. He did not want to base His ministry on the spectacular, but secondary aspects of His ministry. To attract people in this way would have caused people to follow Him for the wrong reason. Furthermore, Jesus did not need the testimony of demons.

4:36 - WITH AUTHORITY AND POWER. What two words could better characterize the ministry of Jesus? Is there any wonder that the people were amazed at one who taught with authority, assumed authority over diseases, over the Sabbath, and exercised power even over demons.

4:38 - SIMON'S HOME. Following the miraculous experience in the synagogue, Jesus left and “entered Simon's home,” which seems to have been his headquarters while he was in Capernaum. Luke, always interested in sickness and disease, tells us that “Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked Him to help her.”

4:39 - HE REBUKED THE FEVER. Not only did He have authority over demons, He also had authority over diseases. Unlike some modern day “faith-healers,” when Jesus healed people the results are never in doubt. Peter's mother-in-law “immediately got up and waited on them.”

Acts of Mercy Affirm His Authority, 4:40-41.

While the sun was setting, all those who had any who were sick with various diseases brought them to Him; and laying His hands on each one of them, He was healing them. Demons also were coming out of many, shouting, "You are the Son of God!" But rebuking them, He would not allow them to speak, because they knew Him to be the Christ.

He Prepares for a Preaching Tour of Galilee, 4:42-43.

4:42 - A SECLUDED PLACE. After the long Sabbath, filled with teaching, healing the sick and casting out demons, Jesus sensed a need to be alone with the Father. “When day came, Jesus left and went to a secluded place.” Jesus wanted to pray. The Greek text emphasizes solitariness by the use of the phrase, He “withdrew by Himself alone.” Jesus, at this point sensed a greater need to be alone with the Father than with other people. The crowds, however, sought Him out “and tried to keep Him from going away from them.” But He responded, “I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, for I was sent for this purpose.”

He Continues to Preach in Synagogues, 4:44.

4:44 - JUDEA. The NKJV has Galilee, but the NAS is correct, “He kept on preaching in the synagogues of Judea.” His preaching tour had taken Him from Galilee into Judea.

B. The Second Stage of His Galilean Ministry Runs From the Call of the First Disciples to the Call of the Twelve Apostles, 5:1-611.

Jesus Calls Four Fishermen, 5:1-11.

5:1 - THE LAKE OF GENNESARET. This is the Lake, or Sea, of Galilee - Jewish writers call it the Sea of Galilee, but Luke, who is familiar with the Mediterranean Sea, the Aegean, or the Adriatic, calls it a lake.

5:2 - FISHERMEN. Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee with a crowd that accompanied Him when He saw “two boats lying at the edge of the lake; but the fishermen had gotten out of them and were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little way from the land.” Then He sat down on the deck of the boat “and began teaching the people from the boat.” Jesus came to Proclaim the Word of God (4:43).

5:4 - DEEP WATER. When He had finished speaking, He said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch." When they obeyed Him, they caught “a great quantity of fish, and their nets began to break” (vs. 6).

Miracles occurred in the context of His preaching ministry. "Master" (v 5) is used only by Luke in the New Testament, always as an address to Jesus. The miracle showed Peter that Jesus was holy. Encounter with Jesus led not to death (Ex 33:20) but to mission service. Miracles drew crowds to whom Jesus could preach (v 15). God's power was the necessary ingredient for miracles (v 17). Miracles led the audience to praise and reverence. See note on Mk 2:1-5 [DSB].

This is what Francis Shaeffer or Norman Geissler might call a class B miracle (raising the widow's son at Nain was a first class miracle) In a second class miracle the natural elements (times, or forces of nature) are brought together in a supernatural and unexpected way for a spiritual purpose. The fish, lake, boats, and nets were all there. The miracle involved the timing - the fish were at the right place at the right time - or did Jesus cause the concentration?). We are not told that Jesus created a lot of new fish on the spot. Peter, James, and John were amazed at what Jesus could accomplish after the fishermen had failed.

5:8 - SIMON PETER. The miracle had the effect of convincing Peter of his own sinfulness and of the deity of Jesus Christ.

5:10 - YOU WILL BE CATCHING MEN. When Jesus observed the astonishment of Peter, James, and John (sons of Zebedee and partners with Simon Peter), He said to Simon, "Do not fear, from now on you will be catching men."

Jesus Heals a Leper, 5:12-16.

5:12 - LEPROSY. In Leviticus, chapter 13, seven forms or stages of this skin disease are given. A leper was declared ceremonially unclean by a priest and he/she had to live outside of the town or village. He had to cry "unclean" when other people came near. There is little wonder that in the Bible leprosy is a symbol or illustration of sin.

Why did Jesus perform so many miracles? Was He showing off, or did He have a deeper purpose? Miracles had a spiritual purpose that went beyond the physical needs of the individuals who benefited from them.

Christ's miracles taught a great deal about who He is. Leprosy was greatly feared in the ancient world, and authorities had carefully outlined conditions for testing its healing. The leper had no question about the ability of Jesus to heal him--only as to His willingness. He did not know Jesus! Jesus was willing to accept the scandal of being ritually unclean. Helping people came before pleasing public piety. Jesus was not willing to let the public raise false expectations of Him in the use of His power. Thus, He did not let popularity as a healer interfere with His teaching ministry [DSB].

I have often said that I believe in divine healing, but I have a problem with divine healers. By that, I mean the preoccupation with physical healing one often sees on television and some local ministries. The healing process is in God's hand. Heals some people instantly, but most through a process built into the human body. If that is the way he chooses to heal us, we should pray that He will control that process and bring about the healing in the way that best serves His purpose, that brings the greater glory to Him. And sometimes one grows more through this method than when the healing is instantaneous.

Suppose our unsaved neighbors never saw a Christian suffer, deal with grief, or cope with a disability. Suppose the doctors, nurses, and others in the healing profession never saw a Christian dealing with pain, a terminal disease, or a handicap. Think what they would be missing if the only persons they serve have no faith in Jesus Christ, no sense of dependence upon God, no hope. With some people the only time God has an opportunity to reach them is when they are flat on their backs in the hospital, or at home. And the most effective witness some unsaved family members, neighbors, and people in the medical profession ever see and hear are those of us who share our testimony from the sick bed. We must not feel that God has forsaken us, or turned a deaf ear to us if we pray for healing and the healing does not come instantaneously. He knows what He is doing. Let us pray that He will reveal to us what He is doing and how we should cooperate with Him in what He is doing.

The following is a wonderful prayer by Norwegian Theologian Ole Hallesby:

"Lord, if it will be to Your glory, heal suddenly. If it will glorify You more, heal gradually; if it will glorify You even more, may your servant remain sick awhile; and if it will glorify Your name still more, take him to Yourself in heaven."

5:13 - BE CLEANSED. The leper had cried out, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean" (vs. 13). In responded Jesus "stretched out His hand and touched him, saying, 'I am willing; be cleansed.' And immediately the leprosy left him." Jesus had authority to cleanse one of leprosy - and of sin.

5:14 - HE ORDERED. Jesus ordered the man whose leprosy had been cleansed not to tell anyone, "But go and show yourself to the priest and make an offering for your cleansing, just as

Moses commanded, as a testimony to them." This would fulfill the Levitical Law (In Lev. 14 we find the ritual for cleansing a leper, or having him declared clean). Jesus sent him to the priests who believed that only God could heal leprosy. Now they had to deal with the fact that Jesus had just healed a leper. Would they accept Him as God?

5:16 - BUT JESUS. Luke adds information that helps with our insight into the mind and heart of the human Jesus: "But Jesus Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray." Jesus needed to spend time with the Father. Why? If He is divine, why does he need supernatural strength or guidance? For one thing, He is also human. He had emptied Himself of something He had in heaven when became man. It was in this area that He obviously had a need to be with the Father. Certainly, fellowship was also a major factor in His withdrawals.

Jesus Heals a Paralytic, 5:17-26.

5:17 - PHARISEES AND TEACHERS OF THE LAW. His increasing popularity with the masses is matched only by the increasing opposition the religious leaders:

One day He was teaching; and there were some Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting there, who had come *from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem*; and the power of the Lord was present for Him to perform healing (italics added).

Only Luke tells us that these religious leaders had come from all towns and villages from Galilee, Judea, and from Jerusalem in order to hear critically any claim Jesus might make that He was the Messiah. This is an organized, concerted effort on their part. Is this an effort on their part to get to the truth, or have they already made up their minds? If they had not already made them up, it was coming soon.

5:18 - CARRYING ON A BED A MAN. While Jesus was teaching, and in the presence of Pharisees and other religious leaders form all over the region, some men brought a paralytic, using his bed as a stretcher. They were bringing him to Jesus but could not get to Him because of the crowd.

5:19 - NOT FINDING ANY WAY. "But not finding any way to bring him in because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down through the tiles with his stretcher, into the middle of the crowd, in front of Jesus." Unable to get into the house because of the crowd, the climbed onto the flat roof of the house by an outside stair or ladder. Then they dug through the clay tiles and branches which lay across wooden beams.

5:20 - YOUR SINS ARE FORGIVEN YOU. "The Lord began with the man's greater problem, his spiritual need, rather than his physical one. Jesus' statement was considered blasphemy, since it was clearly understood to be a claim of being equal with God" [RSB].

5:21 - WHO IS THIS MAN. “The scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, “Who is this man who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?” If there was ever any doubt about the scribes and Pharisees, they clear it up now, by accusing Jesus of blasphemy. There is one thing we must remember - if anyone else who ever lived had said, “Your sins are forgiven you,” it would indeed have been blasphemy. They were right when they asked, “Who can forgive sins, but God alone?” Only God can forgive sin. So, Jesus has declared Himself to be God! This they would not accept.

These Jewish scholars were very perceptive: only God can forgive sin. Jesus had declared Himself to be God. What they failed to understand, at this point, was the doctrine, or the Trinitarian nature of God. What they did not understand that Jesus really is the Son of God, the second Person of the Trinity. What one Person of the Trinity does involves the other members of the Trinity. God is one in essence, three in personality. Each member of the Trinity is distinct from each other member of the Trinity. For that reason it is appropriate to say that one Person of the Trinity does a certain thing. But the three Persons of the Trinity are so united in one, and as one God that whatever one does necessarily involves the other two Persons. For instance, Genesis 1:1,2 reveals both God the Father and the Holy Spirit were involved in creation. In the Prologue to John (1:3) we find that the world was created by Jesus, the Word of God.

These are not contradictory statements. They are simply statements made from different Trinitarian vantage points. Thus when Jesus spoke the word of forgiveness here to the paralytic, He did it in the power of God the Father, not in distinction from Him. Jesus was fully divine while He was here on earth, but His divine nature was working within the limits of the human nature He had voluntarily entered (Jn 1:14; Php 2:5-8; 1 Jn 4:2-3). The mighty works Jesus did while on this earth He did by the power of God the Father working through Him [DSB].

5:22 - BUT JESUS. Jesus was fully aware of what they were thinking, and the conclusions they were drawing. He “answered and said to them, “Why are you reasoning in your hearts? ‘Which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins have been forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Get up and walk?’” (22b:-23).

5:24 - THE SON OF MAN. Jesus offered an explanation: “But, so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins, “He said to the paralytic, “I say to you, get up, and pick up your stretcher and go home.”

“Son of Man” has a variety of meanings in Jewish literature: (1) simply a human being (Ps. 8), (2) sometimes Israel (Ps. 80), (3) the figure to whom God is about to entrust His judgment and His kingdom (Dan. 7:13). It is Jesus’ favorite self-designation. He identifies Himself with mankind, and also as the One to whom God entrusts the judgment and the kingdom. It may be that “Son of Man” emphasizes the humanity of Christ, an emphasis generally found in Luke’s Gospel [BSB: QV].

5:25 - HE GOT UP BEFORE THEM. Dr. Luke, who had done careful research writes under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, “Immediately he got up before them, and picked up what he had

been lying on, and went home glorifying God." How often Dr. Luke reveals that those whom Jesus heals are healed "immediately!" He also reveals the response to the miracle - the man left glorifying God. When we see the hand of God in anything, we should also glorify the Lord.

5:26 - GLORIFYING GOD. The people (the common people) were all struck with astonishment and began glorifying God; and they were filled with fear, saying, "We have seen remarkable things today." From this we need not infer that the scribes and Pharisees were astonished at the miracle or the claims of Jesus - but they were probably astonished. They had to be astonished that these people would respond so favorably to Jesus rather than let them put all this into perspective for them. These people were supposed to listen to them!

In this post-modern, post-Christian era in which we live, millions of people are exploring alternatives to traditional "Western Medicine." We are witnessing what has been called an "holistic health explosion. While Christians realize that traditional medicine, and medical facilities are very important, and when we get sick, it is the first place we go for help. Medical science is a gift from God, and we must thank God for all those dedicated persons who serve their fellow human beings through the practice of traditional medicine. But, today, millions and millions of people are exploring a growing list of alternative healing methods:

Bio Feedback, Autogenics Training, Kenesiology, Acupuncture, Guided Imagery, Bio Energetics, Reflexology, Stress Management, Gestalt Therapy, Therapeutic Touch, Homeopathy, Naturopathy, Macrobiotics (and that's just a partial list.). Many people are finding help in some of these alternative healing methods. But the remarkable thing about them is that people are discerning, more and more, that the actual healing is in none of them. They can remove some of the obstacles to healing.

They can help to evoke it, but the healing itself is in the power of God [BI: QV].

I have seen too many examples and heard too many testimonies of divine healing not to believe that there are cases miraculous healing going on all around us all the time. I have also read and heard of many cases of fraud and seen enough deception to make me look very critically at some of them. Some of the fraud has been documented by electronics and by the television camera. There can be no question that there has been deception and abuse in this area. When I see someone on television receive "a word of knowledge" about someone who has a lower back problem or a headache, I wonder how many among their millions of potential viewers who say, "That's me!"

I believe in prayer. But more to the point, I pray because I believe in God. We must be careful at this point. I recently read the following illustration:

Significant news may be this -- the healing power of prayer. USA Today gives page one prominence to medical scientists and to a new book including 130 separate studies affirming that prayer is a scientifically verifiable factor in healing, that it benefits those who pray and those for whom they pray.

-- Associated Press, 12-21-93 [BI: QV].

This is supposed to encourage us. But observe that God is not mentioned at all in this illustration. Are they giving God the credit for the healing, or is the practice of praying that they find to be beneficial? Without a doubt, many older American Christians would say that I am making much to do about nothing. But most of them do not understand New Age (post-modern) spirituality. They do not understand the pantheistic (or monistic) nature of some of the post-modern alternative healing methods. If, as they believe, you are a god, then all you have to do is to get in touch with the god within you and command him to heal you.

Recent surveys report a revival of belief in God while at the same time reporting a moral decline in America. How do you account for that? It is very simple. Now the surveys are asking, "Do you believe in God or a god-like force?"

Jesus Christ healed many people while He was on earth. He is still the Great Physician. Before I had by-pass surgery, I prayed, asking my heavenly Father to see me through it, to guide my surgeon and his team and to return me to my family and to my church, if that was His will. Above all, I submitted to Him and to His will. While I am grateful to my surgeon and all the others who served His purpose, I give the Lord full credit for seeing me through the entire ordeal. He has affirmed in numerous ways that He is the One Who saved my life. I believe in prayer, but first, and foremost, I believe in God. That is why I prayed as I did, and that is why I pray as I do.

Jesus Calls Levi, 5:27-32.

5:27 - FOLLOW ME. After healing the paralytic, Jesus continued on His way, and as walked, along He "noticed a tax collector named Levi sitting in the tax booth, and He said to him, "Follow Me." Tax collectors were despised by the people because they collected taxes for the Romans and with the authority of Rome behind them, many cheated the people. To the average Jew they were worse than traitors. This did not seem like a good PR move on Jesus' part! But Jesus knew what He was doing, and so did Matthew: "he left everything behind, and got up and began to follow Him" (vs. 28).

5:29 - LEVI GAVE A BIG RECEPTION FOR HIM. Levi (Matthew) obviously understood his calling and in response to it he gave a special reception for Jesus in his own house; "and there was *a great crowd of tax collectors and other people* who were reclining at the table with them" (italics added). This was a crowd only another tax collector could love - or Jesus. "Levi apparently sensed the intense evangelistic nature of his calling, and responded by inviting his friends to a banquet in order to introduce them to Jesus. This methodology remains an excellent evangelistic approach" [BSB].

5:30 - THE PHARISEES AND THEIR SCRIBES. These religious leaders followed Jesus to Levi's home and watched as He ate with those whom they considered undesirables. They were probably dining in an outdoor courtyard where anyone could observe them. They "began grumbling at His disciples, saying, "Why do you eat and drink with the tax collectors and sinners?"

5:31 - JESUS ANSWERED. In His answer there was an eternal truth: "It is not those who are well who need a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance" (31b-32). Only the sick need a physician, but only those who admit that they are sick are likely to seek a physician. The Pharisees were also spiritually sick, but they were so self-righteous then would never admit their need for Jesus.

He Teaches About Fasting, 5:33-39.

5:33 - THE DISCIPLES OF JOHN. Controversy was not new to these Pharisees and their scribes - they thrived on it. It was a way of life to them. They loved debate, and they were not about to be silenced by the truth now. They argued, "The disciples of John often fast and offer prayers, the disciples of the Pharisees also do the same, but Yours eat and drink."

5:34 - JESUS SAID. Jesus had a parable, a metaphor, or illustration for almost every situation. His response is one everyone would understand: "You cannot make the attendants of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them, can you?" See also, Mark 2:19-20.

5:35 - THE DAYS WILL COME. Guests celebrate with the bridegroom, but "when the bridegroom is taken away from them, then they will fast in those days." They understood the custom of the day.

5:36 - A PARABLE. As He did on so many occasions, Jesus used a parable to teach them: "No one tears a piece of cloth from a new garment and puts it on an old garment; otherwise he will both tear the new, and the piece from the new will not match the old."

5:37 - NEW WINE INTO OLD WINESKINS. Continuing in the same vein Jesus added, "And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the new wine will burst the skins and it will be spilled out, and the skins will be ruined." He adds (vs. 36), "But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins." Wineskins were used as containers for wine and other liquids. If old wineskins were filled with new wine, they would burst when the wine fermented because the old skins had lost their elasticity. The message is clear: the new teaching of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ cannot be contained within the old forms of the law (see John 1:17).

5:39 - THE OLD. "And no one, after drinking old wine wishes for new; for he says, 'The old is good enough.' Old wine is one thing, but we often run into problems when people look at the church building, a program or a ministry and say, 'The old is good enough.' In many cases it is good enough - but in so many cases, 'the way we have all ways done it' never worked in the past and it will not work in the future. We must be able to determine what is good enough and what is not. Change that will honor the Lord should be desired, but change for the sake of change may not be worth the effort.

Jesus Teaches About Sabbath Observance, 6:1-11.

6:1 - PICKING THE HEADS OF GRAIN. The circumstances are important: Jesus and His disciples were walking through “some grainfields *on a Sabbath*; and His disciples were picking the heads of grain, rubbing them in their hands, and eating the grain” (italics added). Our concern today might be with their plucking grain without the farmer’s permission, but plucking the grain was perfectly within the provisions of the Mosaic Law: “When you come into your neighbor’s standing grain, you may pluck the heads with your hand, but you shall not use a sickle on your neighbor’s standing grain” (Deut. 23:25). The problem was that this was the Sabbath, and Sabbath laws were very strict. Plucking a few heads of grain to eat might not have constituted work according to the Mosaic Law, but it was harvesting in the eyes of the Pharisees. To the more strict Pharisees plucking a gray hair from your head might be considered harvesting, and if done on the Sabbath it would be a sin. This was all the hypocritical Pharisees needed to condemn Jesus and they were not about to miss the opportunity.

6:2 - PHARISEES. There were a number of sect, or parties, who sought to influence the life of the Jews in First Century Palestine. Some were primarily religious while others were more secular and therefore more political. The most influential of these sects were the Sadducees, Pharisees, Essenes, Herodians and Zealots.

(1). The Sadducees were the landed gentry, the aristocracy. They were the political party mot in favor with Rome at this time. They were secular, more concerned with philosophy than theology - they did not believe in the supernatural, the resurrection, or angels. The Sadducees were the most influential members of the Sanhedrin, and managed to secure the appointment of one their number as high priest from year to year, so they were powerful - as long as they controlled the people and prevented problems for the Roman officials. They rejected the oral law in favor of the Pentateuch.

(2). The Pharisees were separatists, despising Rome and clinging to the oral traditions as well as the Mosaic Law, and in tie had them codified in the Mishnah. “Consequently they became legalistic and severe in their insistence on ceremonial and ethical conformity. Their belief in an elaborate hierarchy of angels and their confidence in the hope of resurrection were especially repulsive to the learned Sadducees” [BSB].

(3). The Essenes, isolationists who demanded strict adherence to the Mosaic Laws. “Communal ownership of property was a general rule. Marriage was allowed by some and prohibited by others. Because of their isolationism and lack of political involvement, the Essenes are not prominent in the N.T.; indeed, they are never mentioned. The Dead Sea Scrolls, discovered in the Qumran caves, owe their existence and preservation to the Essenes and their concealed libraries” [BSB].

(4). The Herodian sect was primarily concerned with political issues. We know very little about the Herodians, they apparently simply Jews were connected with the Herods and benefited from their connections with them. possibly thinking that political and economic interests were best served thereby.

(5). The Zealot were basically what the name implies - a zealous sect of the Jews who were militant revolutionaries, committed to breaking the Roman yoke. All we need to do to understand how intense and militant they were is to look at some of the militant groups operating in the Middle-East today.

Here, as one would expect, they were the Pharisees who accused Jesus of Sabbath breaking: "Why do you do what is not lawful on the Sabbath?"

6:3 - JESUS ANSWERING. Jesus had to cope with the Pharisees and Sadducees, but He was never intimidated by them. He answered them with an Old Testament illustration: "Have you not even read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him, how he entered the house of God, and took and ate the consecrated bread which is not lawful for any to eat except the priests alone, and gave it to his companions?" (6:3-4). "Jesus did not submit to human legalism. He knew all creation and religion was to help and serve people, whom God gave authority over creation (Ge 1:26-28). He assumed God's power in giving authoritative interpretation of Scripture and in asserting His authority over divinely appointed institutions" [BSB].

6:5 - LORD OF THE SABBATH. He has already upset the Pharisees with His claim of deity (5:20). Now He claimed sovereignty over the Sabbath Day! He also "asserted His right to interpret its laws without reference to the traditions of the Pharisees" [RSB]. Wow! Jesus, as the source of the Sabbath Law, is Lord of the Sabbath. That does not justify the Christian who would violate the Sabbath.

6:6 - ON ANOTHER SABBATH. Sabbath observance would continue to be heatedly contested between Jesus and the Pharisees. On this occasion, Jesus had "entered the synagogue and was teaching; and there was a man there whose right hand was withered."

6:7 - REASON TO ACCUSE HIM. They were watching to see if Jesus would violate oral tradition by healing the man with the withered hand. "To heal on the Sabbath would have been a violation, according to the traditions of the Pharisees, of the prohibition against work on that day; but not to heal, as Christ tried to point out, would have been to do evil and to destroy life (v. 9). To heal, and therefore to do a good work, would be no violation of Sabbath laws" [RSB].

6:8 - GET UP AND COME FORWARD! Jesus did not hesitate to accept their challenge - and note that He knew exactly what He was doing, and what they were thinking. In fact, He seems to have been challenging their authority to interpret the Law by going out of His way to break the oral traditions concerning the Sabbath.

6:9 - JESUS SAID. After calling the man to the front He turned to the scribes and Pharisees and said, "I ask you, is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save a life or to destroy it?" He often asked some very difficult questions - if they are not careful they will condemn themselves.

They imposed their rigid interpretation on everyone else, but Jesus would not submit to their

authority. Is Jesus teaching that it is always right to do good? Or Is He teaching that He has authority over the Sabbath? There are things that should, or must be done on the Lord's Day, but we should be careful not to use doing good deeds as an excuse to violate the Lord's Day. We should never let good things usurp the place of the best and highest things.

6:10 - STRETCH OUT YOUR HAND! After they forfeited their opportunity to respond, Jesus healed the withered hand. Technically, He did not do any work - He just spoke the words and the hand was healed.

6:11 - FILLED WITH RAGE. Amazingly, these religious leaders were neither impressed with the power and authority of Jesus, nor moved by the recovery of the man. Luke tells us that "they themselves were filled with rage, and discussed together what they might do to Jesus." Some of the most vicious things in the world are done in the name of religion. It is often precipitated by this kind of rage.

C. The Third Stage of His Galilean Ministry Runs from the Choice of the Twelve Apostles to their First Mission Trip, 6:12-8:56.

Jesus Appoints Twelve Apostles, Heals Multitudes, 6:12-19.

6:12 - PRAYER. This verse gives valuable insight into the prayer life of our Lord, as well incentive for our prayer life. Luke writes, "It was at this time that He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God."

6:13 - HIS DISCIPLES. Jesus chose twelve disciples (apostles) to assist in His ministry, and to train to carry on the work after He left them.

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| (1). Simon, whom He also named Peter | (2). Andrew his brother |
| (3). James | (4). John |
| (5). Philip | (6). Bartholomew |
| (7). Matthew | (8). Thomas |
| (9). James the son of Alphaeus | (10). and Simon who was called the Zealot |
| (11). Judas the son of James | (12). Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor |

NOTE: Bartholomew is called Nathanael in John 1:45.

A disciple is a learner (literally, one who follows after to learn from) and is distinguished from an apostle in the Bible. An apostle (one sent out) was one who had seen Jesus face to face, received a personal call from Him, and was also given apostolic authority. There were twelve Apostles and

large numbers of disciples.

6:17 - A LEVEL PLACE. This was probably the same place where He preached the Sermon on the Mount - a level place on the side of the mount.

Jesus came down with them and stood on a level place; and there was *a large crowd of His disciples*, and *a great throng of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon*, who had come to hear Him and to be *healed of their diseases*; and those who were troubled with *unclean spirits* were being cured. And all the *people were trying to touch Him*, for *power was coming from Him* and healing them all (17-19, emphasis added).

Jesus Delivered the Sermon on the Plain (Beatitudes), 6:20-49.

The Sermon on the Plain, 20-26.

6:20 - ON A LEVEL PLACE. This sermon parallels the Sermon on the Mount of Matthew 5-7, and it is possible that this is the Sermon on the Mount in a condensed form. It is possible, however, that this may be similar teaching given on a different occasion, or even a collection of His teachings. Jesus called the twelve and taught them daily, but He often taught others.

Luke's account of the Beatitudes is in the second person--you. Matthew's account is in the third person plural (Mt 5:3-10). Luke gives a corresponding list of woes for those who do not do the requirements of God (vv 24-26; Mt 23). Luke's account does not spiritualize the poor and the hungry (Mt 5:3,6). God's kingdom includes people who depend on God rather than on personal power, talents, and resources [DSB].

POOR. "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God." The kingdom of God belongs to the poor, the weak, and the downtrodden of the world rather than to the wealthy and the powerful, but not because they are poor. The Kingdom of God belongs to all who humble their spirits before God.

6:21 - HUNGER. Luke uses the second person (Matthew, the third person). "Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be satisfied." Matthew has, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled" (NKJV).

WEEP. "Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh." In Matthew it is, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."

6:22,23 - WHEN MEN HATE YOU. "Blessed are you when men hate you, and ostracize you, and insult you, and scorn your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of Man. Be glad in that day and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven. For in the same way their fathers used to

treat the prophets. Matthew reads:

"Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. "Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you" (NKJV).

6:24 - WOE. Luke follows the abbreviated list of Beatitudes with a series of woes.

- (1). But woe to you who are rich, for you are receiving your comfort in full .
- (2). Woe to you who are well-fed now, for you shall be hungry (25a).
- (3). Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep (25b).
- (4). Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for their fathers used to treat the false prophets in the same way (26).

Love Is the Guiding Principle of His Kingdom, 27-45.

6:27,28 - LOVE YOUR ENEMIES. In Luke we find, "But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you." Compare this with Matthew 5:44:

"But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you" (NKJV).

Agape (the Greek word here for love) is a mental attitude love (not simply an emotional feeling). It is the guiding principle of the Kingdom of God. There has never been any code of law or conduct, any standard of behavior that compares with this. This is what immediately raises the ethics of the New Covenant above any and all others. Modern man argues today that Moses copied the Mosaic Law from the Code of Hammurabi, but the Pentateuch is by far the superior of the two. The Sermon on the Mount (level place) transcends even the Mosaic Law because it begins at the source of the problem in all human conflicts, the heart. What man does grows out of what he is, so the only way you can change what he does is to change what he is. When you love God above all else, and when you love your neighbor as you love yourself (THE TWO GREAT COMMANDMENTS), that love is reflected in your behavior.

It is the nature of fallen man to be envious or jealous of others, to seek one's own interests above those of others. You will never find anything in human nature, or in the world, that will either motivate you empower you to love God and those created in His image to the point that you will meet hate, manipulation, prejudice, and scorn with love and compassion. We only do that in Jesus Christ.

Russell Kirk was only twenty-nine when he wrote that most remarkable book, *The Conservative Mind*. Less well known is another work of Kirk, *The Roots of American Order*, in which he shows

how law is based on order. When we speak of law and order, they are not one and the same. Law depends upon order, and that which brought order to a young America, as the Founding Fathers clearly understood, was the principles of New Testament Christianity. Our constitution was written with that in mind, as witnessed by the writings of the Founding Fathers.

If we would see America become the moral and spiritual leader of the world, we must understand that it can only be achieved in a great spiritual awakening. We cannot elect a revival and Congress cannot enact a spiritual awakening. When most of the elected officials reflect a need to be awakened themselves, we would be foolish to think that we can sit back and hope they "do something about it." We can forget about getting sin out of the world until we get it out of the church. I would like to see the Bible and prayer back in our schools, but it is far more imperative that we get both back into our homes. I thank God for the American judicial system, as imperfect as it is, but a firm commitment to the principles set forth in this sermon would put a lot of lawyers and judges out of business. Furthermore, it would put a lot of psychologists out of business.

6:29 - WHOEVER HITS YOU. The beauty of the teaching and preaching of Jesus Christ is seen in its simplicity and its application to real life. He said, "Whoever hits you on the cheek, offer him the other also; and whoever takes away your coat, do not withhold your shirt from him either." In a nation in subjection to a mighty empire, whose laws are enforced by soldiers who have absolute power over the citizens, and the right to force them to perform whatever task the desire, these abuses were common. In any society, however, since the Fall has been filed with people who will abuse and mistreat others, so the principles set forth here are applicable in any age to any society.

6:30 - GIVE. Generosity born of love for God and others is the only thing that will motivate you to "Give to everyone who asks of you, and whoever takes away what is yours, do not demand it back."

6:31 - TREAT OTHERS. "Treat others the same way you want them to treat you." This deserves the designation, THE GOLDEN RULE! Many learned it in the King James, "And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise." But The Golden Rule is more than a motto or something to put on a plaque.

The Golden Rule is almost always quoted out of context and left to stand on its own. That, however, is not how we find it in the Gospel According to Luke. The following is a condensed version of a sermon outline this writer recently preached the Golden Rule.

BRIEF SERMON OUTLINE

SUBJECT: THE GOLDEN RULE IN REAL LIFE

LUKE 6:27-36

INTRODUCTION. Look with me at the Golden Rule, in its practical application in every day life.

I. FIRST, LET US LOOK AT THE GOLDEN RULE ITSELF, 6:31.

- A. The Golden Rule Should Govern All Relationships.
- B. The Golden Rule Was not Given in a Vacuum, and Is not Lived in a Vacuum.
- C. The Golden Rule Is, Simply Stated, a Practical Application of Christianity.

II. JESUS SHOWS US HOW TO APPLY THE GOLDEN RULE IN EVERY DAY LIFE, 27-38.

- A. In These Verses Our Savior Explains and Illustrates the Golden Rule, 26-38.
 - 1. Love your enemies, 27-29.
 - 2. Be generous with others, 30.
 - 3. Christian love must be distinguished from worldly love, 32-34.
 - 4. Love even your enemies unselfishly, 35.
 - 5. “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful,” 36, NAS.
 - 6. We may judge the world, but we must not be judgmental, 37.

B. The Golden Rule Has Its Own Rewards, 38.

CONCLUSION: In the OT reveals what He expects of us (Micah 6:8). Here, Jesus tells us what He expects of us: “And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise.”

6:32 - IF YOU LOVE. It is natural for you to love your family - failure to love your child or parent is not natural (see Romans 1). It is natural for you to love those who love you. That is natural - to fallen human nature. The love that characterizes the citizen of the Kingdom of God is not natural, it is supernatural. Agape type love is a mental attitude kind of love, a love that can be commanded because it can be controlled and directed by the mind. It is not primarily emotional, yet it involves intellect, emotions, and volition. You must know what you should do, feel that you should do it, and then be willing to do it. Jesus states the principle and explains why it must be so:

If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same.

If your love does not surpass the love of a hardened sinner, what credit is it to you? If you decide who you will serve the same way ungodly people do, what credit is that to you. A self-centered, self-serving Christian who will only help those who can, or will help them is a disgrace to his Lord and to His church, almost as much as the one who will only “help those who help themselves.” Agape love motivates us to help people who can neither help us or themselves. This does not justify programs to help those who could help themselves but will not, but it would be better to help a few who do not deserve it than to neglect those who really need it.

6:35 - LOVE YOUR ENEMIES. It is natural to love your friends, but Jesus commands us to love our enemies and to translate that love into realistic action. Not only is that unnatural, it is not easy! “Love your enemies,” He says, “and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return.”

YOUR REWARD. You do not have to keep score, or concern yourself with the balance sheet.

Leave that to the Lord and “your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men.” The highest motivation is God’s love for us, and the second is our love for Him. But we do not have to be ashamed to consider the reward. Both in the here and now and in the “sweet by and by,” there are rewards available to God’s faithful that the world cannot even comprehend. “Sons of the Most High must follow in the steps of the Most High, obeying His commands and showing kindness to friends and enemies alike” [DSB].

6:36 - MERCIFUL. "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful." One of the Beatitudes in Matthew 5 is, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy." Here we see that when we show mercy we are acting in a manner consistent with the character and nature of our heavenly Father.

God is a merciful God, motivated to deal kindly with us out of His deep love. God's fundamental stance towards us is that of mercy, but that mercy makes a stringent demand upon us. If we receive His mercy, He expects us to reproduce that kind of mercy in all our human relationships [DSB].

6:37 - JUDGE. The principles of Christ are intensely practical: "Do not judge, and you will not be judged; and do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; pardon, and you will be pardoned." It is natural to fallen man to be judgmental and critical, to attribute the worst motives to others, to twist an interpretation of action by others to conform to our own envy or jealousy. But it is not the nature of our God. A mature Christian, one who is filled with the Holy Spirit is the one who is being conformed to the image of Jesus (Rom. 8:29).

6:38 - GIVE. It is interesting to note how much emphasis God places on giving. Here it is, "Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure--pressed down, shaken together, and running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return." This is a principle only believers can appreciate, and only those who walk by faith will ever apply this principle.

LAP. The Greek word, *kolpos*, may be translated bosom (NKJV), breast, or lap (NAS). The "bosom" was a fold of the robe pulled out above the girdle, or belt, to form a sort of pocket, much like women in the early part of the Twentieth Century used to turn up their apron to carry eggs, peas, or fruit.

PRESSED DOWN. The imagery (pressed down, shaken together, and running over) is of a container of grain filled to the brim, or piled above the rim, even running over the edge. Our giving should be like that.

MEASURE. "For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return." From this verse we can learn a lot about giving as well God's principle in rewarding us for giving.

Our motives for giving usually determine the rewards we expect. Like a generous

merchant who dispenses a heaping measure of grain, God pours out love and blessings to those who exhibit love for others by gracious giving. The greatest reward to the faithful giver is the joy of participating in Christ's ministry and seeing the results. Christ taught that rewards are gifts from God. They cannot be earned and are primarily spiritual rather than material [DSB].

6:39 - A PARABLE. This parable is not a story, but a statement of proverbial truths and questions and answers. The meaning of the first obvious, "A blind man cannot guide a blind man, can he? Will they not both fall into a pit?"

6:40 - PUPIL...TEACHER. "A pupil is not above his teacher; but everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher." Every Christian should seek to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18). The Lord does not expect every member of the church to be a teacher, but each one can grow to maturity, and each one can teach some one.

For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil (Hebrews 5:12-14; see also Heb. 6:1-3).

6:41 - WHY DO YOU LOOK. We can over analyze an issue. I recently read a book in which the author stopped often to let a psycho-historian tell us why some historical figure did what he, or she did. Some of the speculations seemed rather absurd to me. But this is a question we need to answer. "Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?" Continue:

Or how can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,' when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother's eye (vs. 42).

6:43, 44 - NO GOOD TREE. Jesus continues His parabolic teaching with another proverb: "For there is no good tree which produces bad fruit, nor, on the other hand, a bad tree which produces good fruit. For *each tree is known by its own fruit*. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they pick grapes from a briar bush" (emphasis added).

6:45 - THE GOOD MAN. What can we conclude from all these truths in our Lord's parable? It is simply this: "*The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good*; and *the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil*; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart" (emphasis added).

Those Who Hear and Obey Are Wise, 46-49.

6:46 - LORD, LORD. "Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?" That is a good question. Does not the word carry the idea of sovereignty? Does He not have a right to reign in the hearts of His subjects? Lordship demands obedience, and you have no more sacred obligation to anyone or anything than obedience to God.

6:48 - IS LIKE A MAN BUILDING A HOUSE. Jesus said, ""Everyone who comes to Me and hears My words and acts on them" is like "*like a man building a house*, who dug deep and laid *a foundation on the rock*; and when a flood occurred, the *torrent burst against that house and could not shake it*, because *it had been well built* (emphasis added). As children sing in Vacation Bible School, "the wise man built his house upon the rock."

6:49 - HEARD...NOT ACTED. The wise man was obedient - he heard with a mind to obey. The foolish man does not obey, either because he did not listen well - did not listen with a mind to obey - or he heard and elected not to obey. The reason (rebellion or apathy) does not matter, the results are the same. As Jesus pointed out, "But the one who has *heard and has not acted accordingly*, is like a man who *built a house* on the ground *without any foundation*; and the torrent burst against it and immediately *it collapsed*, and the ruin of that house was great." In the physical realm one would mark one who builds his house on a faulty foundation as a foolish person, but this happens in the spiritual realm all the time. Are you building your life upon the rock or upon the sand? Do you hear God with a mind to obey Him?

The background here is interesting. Jesus might well have pointed out a wadi as he used this illustration. A wadi was a stream bed which was dry during the dry season but when the rain came all its tributaries filled back up in the mountain and as they emptied into the wadi and before too long there would be a rolling torrent of water, cascading down the side of the mountain, or hill, filling the wadi with a raging wall of water tumbling logs, limbs, boulders, and trash. It would sweep away everything in its path. If one was foolish enough to build a house on the level sand in the mouth of a wadi, it would be swept away, too.

The wise man sought a place on higher ground where he might dig down and find a rock ledge and there he would lay his foundation. When the rains came his house stood because it was built upon a solid foundation - and possible because it was also built on higher ground.

Jesus Returns to Capernaum (heals Centurion's servant), 7:1-10.

7:1 - DISCOURSES. When Jesus had completed His sermon on the plain, He went to Capernaum, his headquarters during His Galilean ministry.

7:2 - CENTURION. The centurion was "an atypical Roman officer who loved his servant and the

Jewish people" [RSB]. The centurion's slave, "who was highly regarded by him, was sick and about to die."

7:3 - HE HEARD ABOUT JESUS. When this centurion heard about Jesus, "he sent some Jewish elders asking Him to come and save the life of his slave." The elders would have been men of maturity, leaders who were leaders in the Jewish community, and respected in the synagogue. Since Jesus was Jewish, he might have thought they would have more influence with Him. Was he not thinking as the world thinks - it's not what you know, but who you know?

7:4 - WORTHY. When the Jewish elders came to Jesus, "they earnestly implored Him, saying, "He is worthy for You to grant this to him." In their eyes the man was worthy of help because he had treated them fairly and justly. Unfortunately, many think one may become worthy of God's grace in spiritual matters. God's children must never go to the Lord in any matter thinking they are worthy. However, this centurion had established a reputation among the people as a man who was worthy of their help, and since he was concerned for his slave they felt that he was worthy of any favor Jesus might grant in helping the servant.

7:5 - HE LOVES OUR NATION. They gave Jesus two reasons they considered him worthy of help: (1) "he loves our nation" and (2) "it was he who built us our synagogue." Other Roman officials may have loathed the Jews and despised the nation, but this centurion loved the nation. The Roman centurion is often held in high regard in the New Testament. The Romans had selected them well, but this one not only served Rome, he loved Israel.

7:6 - I AM NOT WORTHY. It is to their credit that the elders thought this man was worthy, and it is to his credit that he says that he was not. As Jesus approached his house, "the centurion sent friends, saying to Him, "Lord, do not trouble Yourself further, for I am not worthy for You to come under my roof."

7:7 - JUST SAY THE WORD. In genuine humility he sent word by friends, "...I did not even consider myself worthy to come to You, but just say the word, and my servant will be healed." He must have learned something about Jesus. Whatever he knew he had absolute faith that Jesus could help the servant.

7:8 - AUTHORITY. Observe that the centurion says, "For I also am *a man placed under authority, with soldiers under me.*" He goes on, "and I say to this one, 'Go!' and he goes, and to another, 'Come!' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this!' and he does it." Is he trying to impress Jesus with his power, position, and authority? No. He knows authority from both directions; he is an authority under authority. He has authorities over him and he is obedient to them. He has soldiers under him and they are obedient to him. He knows authority when he sees it, and Jesus has the authority to "just say the word" and heal his slave.

7:9 - SUCH GREAT FAITH. The masses were often amazed at the things Jesus said and did. Now Jesus is amazed! "He marveled at him, and turned and said to the crowd that was following

Him, "I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such great faith." I once heard Stephen Olford say, "Faith is not believing God can do it. Faith is believing God will do it." This man believed and Jesus marveled at his faith. His faith was rewarded and his servant healed (vs. 19). Faith in the only thing man has that is compatible with the grace of God - and the only kind of faith that is compatible with God's grace is the faith God supplies (Eph, 2:8-9).

Jesus Raises the Widow's Son at Nain, 7:11-17.

7:11 - NAIN. Nain was about ten miles southeast of Nazareth. Jesus has left Capernaum and is now traveling through other towns and villages in Galilee again. He is accompanied by His disciples by a large crowd.

7:12 - A DEAD MAN. As Jesus approached the gate of the city He met a funeral procession, "a dead man was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow; and a sizeable crowd from the city was with her." We must remember the plight of a widow in ancient times without a close male relative. She was at the mercy of the world (see the story of Ruth). Jesus understood her circumstances and had compassion on her (vs. 13).

7:14 - ARISE. When the funeral procession reached Jesus, he stopped them, "And He came up and touched the coffin; and the bearers came to a halt. And He said, "Young man, I say to you, arise!" Jesus actually touched the coffin, even though Judaism held that to touch something "associated with death brought ceremonial defilement which had to be removed by purification before entrance into a synagogue. By this means Jesus again displays His disregard for valueless ceremonial laws [BSB: QV]. Jesus not only touched the coffin, He commanded the dead to rise! And immediately (7:15) the man sat up. Apparently, there was no question in anyone's mind that the young man was dead. We can imagine the shock when "the dead man sat up and began to speak. And Jesus gave him back to his mother."

7:16 - FEAR GRIPPED THEM ALL. This is the response we might expect from people who had just seen Jesus raise one from the dead. Luke tells us that "they began glorifying God, saying, "A great prophet has arisen among us!" and, "God has visited His people!"

It is interesting that these people could see Jesus heal the lame, cast out demons, walk on water, and still the storm, and now raise one from the dead, and even give God credit for it, yet go away and follow Him no more. Possibly some readers will ask how they could do that. There is a more profitable way of looking at this issue. This fact reveals both an unfortunate trait of human character and why Jesus ordered His disciples not to tell people about some of His signs and miracles. He wanted to reach them on a different level, and the signs and wonders had a way of getting in the way.

People love the new, the novel, and the sensational. The love to tell people they saw and spoke with a celebrity. Jesus was the talk of the land and everybody wanted to see Him. So, they came to see Him perform some supernatural deed. They were in awe of Him - for a while. Jesus

understood this trait and refused to entertain them with His power. He did raise the widow's son at Nain, but He obviously did it for her, not to put on a show for the crowd.

Jesus Responds to Messengers From John the Baptist, 7:18-35.

7:18 - DISCIPLES OF JOHN. Some of John's disciples reported all the things that had seen Jesus do and say. Some of John's disciples had left him to follow Jesus, but he still had some followers.

7:19 - THE EXPECTED ONE. John the Baptist sent two of his disciples to Jesus to ask Him, "Are You the Expected One, or do we look for someone else?" "The Expected One" is denotes the long awaited Messiah.

Some, e.g., Luther, Calvin, and Beza, suggest that John asks this question because his disciples need strengthening; others believe that John's faith is being tested because Jesus does not correspond to his expectation of the Messiah. It is even possible that John is asking if more than one figure is anticipated to fulfill the total messianic expectation, one to be lowly and to suffer and the other to rule and to reign [BSB].

The disciples of John who came to see Jesus were able to observe as "He cured many people of diseases and afflictions and evil spirits; and He gave sight to many who were blind (20-21).

7:22 - REPORT TO JOHN. Jesus sent them back to John with to tell him all they had seen and heard: "the BLIND RECEIVE SIGHT, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the POOR HAVE THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO THEM." These were things the OT Scriptures prophesied that the Messiah would do. John would understand the significance of this.

7:23 - OFFENSE. "Blessed is he who does not take offense at Me" (vs. 23). "If this verse applies to John rather than someone else, it supports the view that John is being tested himself" (BSB).

7:24 - ABOUT JOHN. After the disciples of John the Baptist left Jesus asked, "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind?" John certainly was not like a reed that bends this way and that, depending upon which way the wind is blowing. Every preacher of the Gospel should consider this question. God did not call the preacher to stand in the sacred pulpit and wave back and forth like a reed shaken in the wind.

Jesus continues to talk about John (25-26). He asked "But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and one who is ***more than a prophet***" (emphasis added).

7:27 - MY MESSENGER. "This is the one about whom it is written, 'BEHOLD, I SEND MY

MESSENGER AHEAD OF YOU, WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY BEFORE YOU." If there was ever any doubt, and there was (see John 1), Jesus settles it. John is the forerunner of the Messiah.

Jesus commands John with words of highest praise, "'I say to you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John;" yet, He says, "he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he" (vs. 28).

7:29 - THE PEOPLE. When the ordinary people and tax collectors (called sinners by the Pharisees) heard this, "they acknowledged God's justice, having been baptized with the baptism of John."

7:30 - PHARISEES. The people may have accepted Jesus' word for it, but "the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected God's purpose for themselves, not having been baptized by John." The Scribes, most of whom belonged to the sect of the Pharisees, "functioned as members of a highly honored profession. They were professional students and defenders of the law (scriptural and traditional), gathering around them pupils who they instructed in the law. They were also referred to as lawyers because they were entrusted with the administration of the law as judges in the Sanhedrin" [RSB].

7:32 - LIKE CHILDREN. Jesus asked, "To what then shall I compare the men of this generation, and what are they like?" (Vs. 31). He continued, "***They are like children*** who sit in the market place and call to one another, and they say, 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not weep'" (bold italics added).

7:34 - THE SON OF MAN. They rejected John the Baptist for his aesthetic life-style (vs. 33) and Jesus for the opposite life-style. Both, however, were doing what the Father sent them to do.

7:35 - VINDICATED. "Yet wisdom is vindicated by all her children." They rejected both, Jesus and John, but both were serving the purpose for which God sent them. Wisdom, personified as having sent out messengers of God only to have them rejected, is vindicated (justified).

Jesus Forgives a Sinful Woman in the Home of a Pharisee, 7:36-50.

7:36 - THE PHARISEE'S HOUSE. In this passage "one of the Pharisees was requesting Him to dine with him, and He entered the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table." He was reclining at the table, as was the custom, and not sitting up-right as in the famous Last Supper painting. While He was reclining at the table, propped on an elbow with His feet angled away from the table, He was anointed by a sinful woman who was deeply burdened with guilt. We must not confuse this incident with a similar one that occurred in Bethany of Judea during the last week of Jesus' life (Matt. 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9; John 12:1-8).

7:37 - A SINNER. This woman probably was, or had been a prostitute (that she had repented may be inferred). The woman is not identified by name, and there is no reason to identify her with either

Mary Magdalene or Mary of Bethany (8:2; Mark 14:3-9; John 12:1-8). Although a feast was held in an open area and, in many instances open to the public, it was unusual for a woman of this character to be allowed near the house of a Pharisee - or to want to go near his house. Simon, to say the least, was shocked.

ALABASTER VIAL. This was a long-necked bottle, or flask, of fine translucent material, used for storing perfume. A study of articles in Bible dictionaries and encyclopedias reveals the progress made by mankind in making various containers during the Bronze Age (3100-1200 B.C.), the Late Bronze Age (1550-1200 B.C.), and Iron Age (1200-586 B.C.).

7:38 - KISSING HIS FEET. The scene must have been nothing less than shocking to those present at the meal. Luke writes, "and standing behind Him at His feet, weeping, she began to wet His feet with her tears, and kept wiping them with the hair of her head, and kissing His feet and anointing them with the perfume" (NAS). Jesus, His host and other guests were reclining at the table, when this sinful woman came and stood behind Him near His feet, weeping. With a heart broken by sin, she must have been leaning over His feet because her tears began to wet His feet and as the tears began to fall on His feet she falls at His feet and begins to wipe the tears away with her hair. Then she began kissing His feet and anointing them with her precious perfume.

7:39 - IF THIS MAN WERE A PROPHET. If there had been any doubt the Pharisee now betrays his motive in inviting Jesus into his home for the meal. When he saw this, he reasoned to himself, "If this man were a prophet He would know who and what sort of person this woman is who is touching Him, that she is a sinner." Since it was highly unusual for a woman like this to come to the home of a Pharisee, one might speculate as to whether or not she was a plant, there by prior arrangement with the host to trap Jesus. After all, they continually tried to trap Him, and her presence played his hands of this Pharisee. Yet, it is doubtful that he could have staged the guilt-ridden behavior, or the act of repentance and expression of adoration the woman displayed. It is, however. Possible that she was there by arrangement, but when she came into the presence of Jesus, she came under conviction of sin and repented with bitter tears. One thing is for sure - her tears were real.

SINNER. Who is a sinner? The scribes and Pharisees had a ready answer. Anyone who refused to keep the law as they interpreted it - that is, to do religion their way, was a sinner. The average person had neither the time nor inclination to learn the Pharisees' system or follow their demanding, legalistic rules. They would not only have to observe all their rituals, they would also have to avoid fellowship with others who did not keep the Pharisaic rituals and laws. The average person did not follow the very narrow interpretation of Scripture with which the Pharisees were so obsessed. The Pharisees condemned all those failed to keep all the laws and rituals they kept. They also excluded those who had fellowship with other who did not keep them. These religious leaders would label Jesus as a sinner because He associated with people who were sinners.

The hottest arguments between Jesus and His opponents centered on the definition of sin. They would not let Jesus be Messiah because He was a "sinner" according to their definition. Jesus defined sin differently. He freely associated with the common people who did not have time or interest in escaping the Pharisaic category of

sinners. He condemned the hypocrisy of the religious leaders saying they were blind to God's actions through His ministry and blind to the needs of people. Sin was refusing to love God and other people more than a religious system [DSB: QV].

7:40 - I HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY TO YOU. Jesus, knowing Simon's mind, addressed Him.

"A moneylender had *two debtors*: one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty.

"When they were unable to repay, he graciously *forgave them both*. So 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 judged correctly*" (41-43, italics added).

7:44 - HE SAID TO SIMON. Jesus, continuing to address Simon, said, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has wet My feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You gave Me no kiss; but she, since the time I came in, has not ceased to kiss My feet. You did not anoint My head with oil, but she anointed My feet with perfume" (44-46).

Custom decrees the removing of the sandals at the door. Courtesy would provide water and washing for the feet of an honored guest, all of which are omitted in this instance. Jesus' feet are accessible to her; for He reclines at the table, His feet stretching back from it. A kiss would indicate special affection. Anointing would be reserved only for the most significant and special guests [BSB]

Simon was so preoccupied with his effort to find fault with Jesus that he was guilty of a serious breach of etiquette. Such a breach of etiquette would never have been made if he had considered Jesus and equal, let alone his superior.

7:47 - FOR THIS REASON. For what reason? Because of her repentance and faith. Jesus said, "I say to you, her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little."

7:48 - HE SAID TO HER. Jesus turned to the woman and said, "Your sins have been forgiven." "If her sins are forgiven to her already, these are words of assurance. If she has not previously known such forgiveness, she receives it now, for Jesus knows that her action springs from faith" [BSB].

7:49 - WHO IS THIS MAN. The other guests "who were reclining at the table with Him began to say to themselves, "Who is this man who even forgives sins?" A good question, but who asked it? We are told that they were other guests at the table of the Pharisee, but who were they? Would His disciples have asked this question? They might have, especially during the early days of their travel with Him. But we are not told that His disciples were at the feast. But, if the other guests were Pharisees, that would be a logical question from this self-righteous bunch of religious snobs. There

can be no worse snobs than religious snobs!

7:50 - YOUR FAITH HAS SAVED YOU. There is absolutely nothing this woman had ever heard that was so precious to her than these words as Jesus repeated His previous announcement to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace." She may have herd people say, "You are beautiful," or, "You are talented," or "You are brilliant," but nothing so dear as "Your sins are forgiven"(vs. 48). The forgiven may "go in peace."

Jesus Goes on a Second Preaching Circuit Through Galilee, 8:1-56.

Various Women Minister to Jesus, 8:1-3.

8:1 - FROM ONE CITY AND VILLAGE TO ANOTHER. Soon after Jesus had forgiven the sins of the immoral woman in the home of a Pharisee, "He began going around from one city and village to another, proclaiming and preaching the kingdom of God." Luke records that He was accompanied by the twelve apostle.

8:2 - WOMEN. On this tour of Galilee Jesus was also accompanied by "some women who had been healed of evil spirits and sicknesses," among whom was "Mary who was called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out." It is interesting that Jesus, from the beginning of His ministry to the end, opens the door for women to worship Him and serve Him.

Only among the vile and promiscuous would a question arise as to the morality of these women who were traveling with Jesus and His company. Such charges have been made by the enemies of the Cross. How can we prove that there was no impropriety, let alone immorality involved here? It is very simple. He had scribes and Pharisees, not only following Him, but hounding His every step, looking for anything they could use against Him. A hint of scandal would have served them well, but they could find none. These people were skilled at exposing frauds and heretics. If they had found any smoke they would have assumed there was a fire. But they found no evidence they could use against Him.

MARY...MAGDALENE. This Mary is distinguished from other of the same name by the identification with her hometown of Magdala, a small town between Capernaum and Tiberius. A number of others with the same name appear in the NT:

- (1) The mother of Jesus (1:27).
- (2) The mother of James and wife of Alphaeus, or Clopas (Luke 6:15; John 19:25), apparently a cousin of Mary, the mother of Jesus.
- (3) The sister of Martha and Lazarus (Luke 10:39).
- (4) The mother of John Mark (Acts 12:12).
- (5) A Christian woman in Rome (Rom. 16:6).

Luke tells us that Jesus had cast seven demons out of Mary of Magdala. What has happened to all the demons the Lord encountered in first century Palestine? Were they real, or simply people who were emotionally challenged?" Jesus identified them as demons and they recognized Him as the Son of God, and even called Him by the name "Jesus."

8:3 -JOANNA. We learn a lot about the role of women in the ministry of Jesus from this passage. Luke records that Jesus' entourage included "Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others who were contributing to their support out of their private means." Joanna is mentioned again in 24:10, but all we know about her is that she was the wife of Herod's steward (meaning Herod Antipas, the tetrarch of Galilee).

Susanna and many other women traveled with the group, providing financial help from their own private funds. These women may well have helped with meals or performed other tasks, but their primary concern was to simple sit at His feet and hear the Gospel. As already mentioned, the presence of these women has led enemies of the Cross to charge Jesus and His apostles with immorality. One would have to be an enemy of the Cross to entertain such a thought. If there had been any room for doubt, even he hint of scandal, the Pharisees would have pounced on it in order to discredit Jesus.

Jesus did not accumulate material possessions (Mt 8:20), He owned no home, He did not beg for money, He made no show of wealth, but endured the life of poverty supported only by some of His faithful followers. He Who created the material universe understands it better than any creature ever has, and His attitude toward the resources of the world is a model for us today.

There is nothing wrong with accumulating wealth, if that is your gift and if you use it to glorify the Lord. In fact, if God has given you that gift, it would be a sin not to use it. But the real danger comes when the individual is possessed by his possessions, when he loves them so much that they distract Him from loving and serving the Lord. It is possible for a poor person to have a greater problem with money than some wealthy persons. Politicians are extorting covetousness today for political purposes as they actively promote class envy.

William Colgate, J. C. Penney, and R. G. LeTourneau were wealthy men who tithed ninety percent of everything they earned. Stanley Tam was a pioneer in the plastics industry. He wrote in his book, *God Owns My Business*, about how he set up his business in God's name and drew a salary for his work. All profits went to God. He had a lot of trouble finding an attorney who would draw up the papers for the business. They could hardly believe he was serious - or rational!

The Parable of the Sower, 8:4-15.

PARABLES IN LUKE. A parable is a story set along side truth for the purpose of interpreting, explaining, or amplifying it. In the New Testament Jesus often used parables as stories to provide deeper insight into the Christian life or the Kingdom of God.

A parable is not the same thing as an allegory. In His parables, Jesus utilized word pictures,

metaphors, and similes, and at times short stories to make a point.

The difference between a parable and an allegory turns on the number of comparisons. A parable may convey other images and implications, but it has only one main point established by a basic comparison or internal juxtaposition. For example, the parable of the mustard seed (Mark 4:30-32; Matt. 13:31-32; Luke 13:18-19) compares or juxtaposes a microscopically small seed initially with a large bush eventually.

An allegory makes many comparisons through a kind of coded message. It correlates two areas of discourse, providing a series of pictures symbolizing a series of truths in another sphere. Each detail is a separate metaphor or what some call a cryptogram. If you are an insider who knows, you receive the second or intended message. Otherwise, you can follow only the surface story. Jonathan Swift's Gulliver's Travels is an allegory as is John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress. In the Old Testament, Ezekiel recounts an incident in nature about great eagles and vines (17:3-8) and then assigns a very allegorical application to each of the details (17:9-18) [HBD].

The word allegory never appears in the Gospels, but parables are often used by Jesus. There is no passage in the Gospels that we should interpret as a pure allegory in the classic sense. However,

some parables contain subordinated allegorical aspects, such as the parable of the wicked tenants (Mark 12:1-12; Matt 21:36-46; Luke 20:9-19). Even in the parable of the Mustard Seed the passing reference to the birds of heaven nesting in the branches (Mark 4:32) may be an allegorical detail, but the distinction of the parable establishing a basic, single comparison remains and aids interpretation [HBD].

8:4 - A PARABLE. Jesus employed many effective tools and various methods in His teaching ministry, none of which seemed more popular and effective than the parable. This is not the first time He used a parable. Earlier parables are recorded in 5:36-39; 6:39, 44, 45, 47-49; 7:41, 42. Those parables, however are brief and almost incidental when compared to this one and some that follow. His parables now become more frequent, more elaborate and generally longer from this point on, "probably due to the opposition building against Him. Some parables have a dual purpose. They reveal truth to the disciples and conceal it from the enemies (v. 10; cf. Matt. 13:3, 13-15; Mark 4:2-12 [BSB].

8:5 THE SOWER WENT OUT TO SOW. One can almost picture the scene as Jesus walked through Galilee that day with His disciples and a large and growing crowd of followers. In our thoughts we can almost visualize His gesturing toward a field off somewhere on a nearby hillside where a man is broadcasting (sowing) seed grain. With that gesture He begins the Parable of the Sower.

AS HE SOWED. As the sower sowed his seed, “*some fell beside the road*, and it was trampled under foot and the birds of the air ate it up” (italics added). This man was sowing seed by scattering them with a swing of his arm, first to the one side and then to the other, trying to cover every square foot of cultivatable soil, even if it meant throwing some seed beyond the soil that was fit for production. This method was used for the next nineteen hundred years, or until machines were invented with which the farmer could place most of his seeds where he wanted the with a planter (or grain drill). They called it broadcasting.

There were no modern super highways, but there were major roads, side-roads, and trails running through the country, some possibly adjacent to the farmer’s field and maybe a path dissecting it. There were also ditches along side fields and in Galilee there would be rocky ledges where no grain could grow. It would have been all but impossible for some of the seed not to fall in the road or a path beaten hard by foot traffic.

When I was in college and seminary and for a few years after graduating, I worked some surveys for the Department of Agriculture. I was reminded of this parable one day as I stood watching a pilot seeding a rice field by plane, He stayed low over the field, with his golden seeds glistening in the sunlight as they fell upon the disced field, across a ditch, across a canal, and across a wide levy and road. In order to be sure he seeded the entire field, he could not turn it off too soon, but as he pulled up at the road rice drifted across the canal and road. My first thought was, “what a waste.” But immediately I understood why some seed was wasted in the ditch and some on the hard dirt road (turn row). Then I realized that this was what was happening in this parable. In seeding the field by broadcasting the sower would see seed land on the road, and in the thin soil in his field, and in the thorns along side the field.

8:6 ROCKY SOIL. Some of the seed “*fell on rocky soil*, and as soon as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture.” This denotes a rocky surface with a thin layer of soil covering it; in some cases just dust deposited by the wind. Palestine has a lot of stones (they are still throwing them today), and there were rock layers (the wise man built his house upon a rock). This denotes a rock layer rather than stones which the farmer might remove form the field.

8:7 - THORNS. “Other seed fell *among the thorns*; and the thorns grew up with it and choked it out.” When I was growing up in the Mississippi delta before farmers began using herbicides, it was not uncommon to see cotton chocked out be weeds, vines, and grass. Under those conditions the plant will bear little or no fruit, and if it does bear fruit it will not be worth the effort to harvest it.

8:8 - GOOD SOIL. Fortunately, most of the “seed fell into the *good soil*, and grew up, and produced a crop a hundred times as great.” Luke adds that “as He said these things, He would call out, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.” This must have been very dramatic as well as a great method of instructing the people.

8:10 THE MYSTERIES. When Jesus finished the parable disciples asked Him what it meant (vs. 9). Jesus said, “To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest it is in parables, so that SEEING THEY MAY NOT SEE, AND HEARING THEY MAY NOT UNDERSTAND.” The parable was given to reveal truth to those He wanted to understand and

to conceal it from those who were not enlightened. Apocalyptic literature was written both to reveal and to conceal. While all mysteries are not apocalyptic, most both reveal certain things to the initiated and conceal them from the uninitiated.

MYSTERIES. “Mysteries,” as used here, denote “Truths not revealed in the OT (in this case the characteristics of the time between the first and second comings of Christ, the church age), but revealed to those rightly related to Him. Others would not understand” [RSB].

8:11 - THE SEED IS THE WORD OF GOD. "Now the parable is this: the seed is the word of God," the Gospel of he Lord Jesus Christ. This parable teaches us that there are four different responses to the Word of God: (1) no response, (2) an emotional response, (3) the worldly response, and (4) a fruitful response.

8:12 - THE ROAD. The seed that fell on the road represent “those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their heart, so that they will not believe and be saved.” These are the ones who seemingly are “almost persuaded,” but in the end do not receive Jesus as Lord and Savior. These are not people were once saved but fell from grace because of sin or shallow commitment. They heard the gospel, considered it, were almost convinced, but then rejected Jesus. Any other view here would contradict the doctrine set down in numerous Scripture passages, when taken in their context (John 10:28-30; 1 Peter 1:3-5), as well as the Greek construction which holds that Justification is once for all (Romans 5:1).

8:13 - ROCKY SOIL. The seed fell on the rocky soil represent “those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no firm root; they believe for a while, and in time of temptation fall away” (NAS). The condition of the heart was somewhat different from those represented by the hard path or road, but the end results are the same. They came, they heard, they were under conviction, but in the end they turned away.

8:14 - THE THORNS. The seed which fell among the thorns along side the field represent “the ones who have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with worries and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to maturity.” Love of money, worldly philosophies, false religions, and envy, jealousy, immorality, and other sins will rob an individual of spiritual growth and vitality, and even of eternal salvation.

8:15 - GOOD SOIL. the seed that fell on the good soil represents those “who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance.” Every farmer and gardener can appreciate this. The soil must be prepared for the seed, it must be improved with fertilizers, cultivated, and irrigated if it is to produce a bountiful harvest. The same applies in the spiritual realm.

The Parable of the Revealed Light, 8:16-18.

8:16 - LIGHTING A LAMP. The Parable of the Revealed Light is another of the Lord's brief parables: "Now no one after lighting a lamp covers it over with a container, or puts it under a bed; but he puts it on a lamp stand, so that those who come in may see the light." The lamp was a small clay vessel with a simple wick into which they poured olive oil. It gave off very little light, even when it was placed on a lamp stand.

8:17 - NOTHING IS HIDDEN. The meaning of the Parable of the Revealed Light is that there is nothing hidden "that will not become evident, nor anything secret that will not be known and come to light." While it is true that the Bible does not say "be sure your sins will be found out, but "be sure your sins will find you out," all things, both good and bad are known to God.

8:18 - TAKE CARE HOW YOU LISTEN. Jesus cautioned His disciples to listen carefully, "for whoever has, to him more shall be given; and whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has shall be taken away from him."

Spiritual Relationships Supersede Biological Relationships, 8:19-21.

8:19 - HIS MOTHER AND BROTHERS. According to Mark, Jesus had four brothers and a number of sisters (Mark 6:3). There is no evidence that these were children of Joseph by a previous marriage or that they were Jesus' cousins, as some have claimed. They were the biological children of Joseph and Mary (born after Jesus, cf. Matt. 1:25). They came to see Jesus but could not get close to Him because of the crowd. Someone told Jesus they had come to see Him (vs. 20).

8:21- MY MOTHER AND MY BROTHERS. Jesus makes a profound statement here which defines the true relationship each believer has to Him. He said, "My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it." Spiritual relationships take precedence over human relationships.

Even Winds and Waves Obey Jesus, 8:22-25.

8:22 - THE OTHER SIDE OF THE LAKE. Jesus took His disciples across the Lake of Galilee (Jewish writers call it the Sea of Galilee - Luke calls it a lake) on one of His retreats with the twelve. Jesus made Capernaum, on the northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee, His headquarters for His Galilean Ministry.

8:23 - WIND. As Jesus and His disciples "were sailing along He fell asleep," the ship being in capable hands, "and a fierce gale of wind descended on the lake, and they began to be swamped and to be in danger." Those who are familiar with the Sea of Galilee tell us that valleys descending from

the mountains to the lake surface acted like wind tunnels, often giving birth to sudden, violent storms.

8:24 - HE...REBUKED THE WIND. This must have been an especially violent storm, because Peter, Andrew, James, and John made their living fishing on this lake. Terrified, the disciples came to Jesus and “woke Him up, saying, ‘Master, Master, we are perishing!’ And He got up and rebuked the wind and the surging waves, and they stopped, and it became calm.”

8:25 - WHERE IS YOUR FAITH? Even though they had traveled with Him and heard Him teach and work miracles, they were still “fearful and amazed, saying to one another, “Who then is this, that He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey Him?” The miracles of Jesus are “miracles of the kingdom. God's authority is in control. The only possible answer to the question of the disciples is that this is the One to whom God has given the authority of the kingdom” [BSB].

Jesus Delivers the Gadarene Demoniac, 8:26-39.

8:26 - GERASENES. Gerasenes (Gadarene in NKJV) lived on the eastern shore of the Lake of Galilee. The country of the Gerasenes has been identified with the small village of Khersa on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. A Geresene was “A resident of Gadara, one of the cities of Decapolis (Mark 5:1). In the New Testament, it is mentioned only in the Gospel accounts of the healing of the Gadarene man who was afflicted by demons” [HBD].

8:27 - POSSESSED WITH DEMONS. When Jesus and His disciples left their boat and “came out onto the land, He was met by *a man from the city who was possessed with demons*; and who had not put on any clothing for a long time, and was not living in a house, but in the tombs.” Matthew mentions two men (Matt. 8:28), but Mark and Luke apparently are mentioning only the more prominent one.

8:28 - JESUS, SON OF THE MOST HIGH GOD? When the demon possessed man saw Jesus, “he cried out and fell before Him, and said in a loud voice, ‘What business do we have with each other, *Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You, do not torment me.*’ These demons, just as others before this, recognized Jesus and trembled before Him.

8:29 - COMMANDED THE UNCLEAN SPIRIT. Their cry was in response to Jesus’ command to the “unclean spirit to come out of the man.” This man was so violent when the demons “seized him” that he had to be “bound with chains and shackles and kept under guard, and yet he would break his bonds and be driven by the demon into the desert.”

8:30 - LEGION. When Jesus asked him his name, “he said, ‘Legion’; for many demons had entered him.” A legion was 3,000-6,000 men - “many demons” indeed!

8:31 - THE ABYSS. The demons “were imploring Him not to command them to go away into the abyss.” The abyss is a transliteration of Greek word *abussos*, which means “without bottom.” KJV

translates, "the deep," or bottomless pit. The "NASB, NIV, RSV use abyss to refer to the dark abode of the dead (Rom. 10:7). Abaddon rules the Abyss (Rev. 9:11), from which will come the beast of the end time of Revelation (11:7). The beast of the Abyss faces ultimate destruction (Rev. 17:8). Satan will be bound there during the millennium (Rev. 20:1-3)" [HBD].

8:32 - THE DEMONS IMPLORIED. This is one of the most astounding statements ever made about demons: "Now there was a herd of many swine feeding there on the mountain; and the demons implored Him to permit them to enter the swine. And He gave them permission." Swine as food are forbidden to the Jews as unclean (Lev. 11:7, 8), but "in the predominantly Gentile territory of the Decapolis, a market for hogs apparently brings Jews into that business (cf. Mark 5:14-17)" [BSB].

8:33 - THE DEMONS CAME OUT OF THE MAN AND ENTERED THE SWINE. When the demons entered the swine, "the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned." News spread quickly and residents came out to see the man who had been delivered, and "they came to Jesus, and found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting down at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind; and they became frightened" (vs. 35).

8:37 - ASKED HIM TO LEAVE. Luke says the "people of the country of the Gerasenes and the surrounding district asked Him to leave them, for they were gripped with great fear; and He got into a boat and returned."

Jesus Christ used His healing powers to declare God's good news of freedom from all kinds of oppression, including the demonic forces at work in people's bodies. He was careful not to use healing as a main way of attracting believers, for He knew that belief based on supernatural acts holds little faith for the trials and tests of human life. His power revealed brought both awe and fear to the people. They did not know how to respond to His revelation, particularly when it threatened their economic life [DSB].

8:39 - GREAT THINGS GOD HAS DONE. The man wanted to follow Jesus, but the Lord told him to "Return to your house and describe what great things God has done for you." It is interesting that Jesus did not take this man around and exhibit him to other crowds. One wonders if every evangelist could overcome the obvious temptation.

Jesus Returns to West Side of the lake, 8:40-56.

8:40 - JESUS RETURNED. Returning from the land of the Gerasenes, Jesus found a crowd waiting for Him of the west side of the lake.

8:41 - AN OFFICIAL OF THE SYNAGOGUE. A man named Jairus, an official of the

synagogue came to Jesus "and he fell at Jesus' feet, and began to implore Him to come to his house." Jairus was an official who was responsible for the maintenance of the synagogue. Falling at His feet was a symbol of humility.

8:42 - AN ONLY DAUGHTER. Jairus had only one daughter who was "about twelve years old, and she was dying. But as He went, the crowds were pressing against Him."

8:43 - A WOMAN. Dr. Luke, always keenly interested in sick people, tells us about "a woman who had a hemorrhage for twelve years, and could not be healed by anyone." The NKJV renders it a "Flow of blood" which means that she was suffering from hemorrhages, which was a chronic, and incurable condition. "In Jewish society this illness would render her permanently unclean and unfit for any human contact (Lev. 15:19-30). By touching another, she renders that one unclean. However, in this instance, the One she touches reverses the process and makes her clean!" [BSB].

8:44 - TOUCHED THE FRINGE OF HIS CLOAK. No one had been able to help her, but as an act of faith, when she saw Jesus passing by, she reached out and touched the fringe of His cloak and, Luke tells us, "immediately her hemorrhage stopped."

8:45 - WHO IS THE ONE WHO TOUCHED ME? Jesus was immediately aware of the fact that someone had touched Him and asked, "Who is the one who touched Me?" And while they were all denying it, Peter said, "Master, the people are crowding and pressing in on You."

8:46 - JESUS SAID. "Someone did touch Me," He responded to Peter, "for I was aware that power had gone out of Me."

Jesus revealed Himself as God's sensitive Son, who moved in a crowd but immediately detected the touch of despair and pain. Healing could go out from Jesus to a person of faith even when He did not take the initiative. Such healing became a mode of revealing who Jesus is and of showing God's power and compassion [DSB].

8:48 - YOUR FAITH. The woman came forward and acknowledge that she had touched His cloak, and Jesus said, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace."

8:49 - YOUR DAUGHTER HAS DIED. While Jesus was speaking to the woman, someone came from the home of Jairus and said, "Your daughter has died; do not trouble the Teacher anymore."

8:50 - JESUS HEARD. When Jesus heard of the child's death, He spoke to Jairus, "Do not be afraid any longer; only believe, and she will be made well." Jesus was not only sensitive to the power going out from Him at the touch of the woman; He was also sensitive to the faith of Jairus (and to the centurion).

8:51- WHEN HE CAME TO THE HOUSE. Jesus went with the grieving synagogue official to his home and when He arrived, “He did not allow anyone to enter with Him, except Peter and John and James, and the girl's father and mother.” Why? For one thing, Jesus never sought to make a show of His miracles - He had resisted the temptation to major in the spectacular back in the wilderness right after His baptism.

8:52 - SHE HAS NOT DIED. Family and friends were “all weeping and lamenting for her; but He said, ‘Stop weeping, for she has not died, but is asleep.’” “The mourners looked on death as irreversible, so Christ called it sleep, since (though the girl was actually dead) she would be awakened to life once again” [RSB]. “She is not dead, but sleeping” is metaphorical language describing both her peaceful state and Jesus' intention to restore her to life” [BSB].

8:54 - CHILD, ARISE! They laughed scornfully at Jesus when He told them the girl was only asleep. Who is intended by “they?” Only Peter, James, and John, Jesus and the girl's parents had entered her room, and it is doubtful that the three apostles would laugh at their Lord, and the parents probably did not understand the circumstances. But the people crowding around the house and near the room may have heard and then repeated what He had said. Jesus took the child by her hand and said, “child, arise!”

8:55 - HER SPIRIT RETURNED. At the command of Jesus, her spirit returned to her and “she got up immediately; and He gave orders for something to be given her to eat.” He not only had the power to raise the child, He knew that a twelve year old would be hungry!

8:56 - HE INSTRUCTED THEM TO TELL NO ONE. Jesus knew you could not keep something like this a secret, but He responded to her parents' amazement by instructing them to “tell no one what had happened.” He was determined that He would not trade on the spectacular. He would declare His messiahship in His Own way and in His Own time.

D. The Fourth Stage of Jesus Galilean Ministry Runs From the Mission Tour of the Twelve to His Departure From Galilee, 9:1-50.

Jesus Sends out the Twelve, 9:1-6.

9:1 - GAVE THEM POWER. The twelve apostles have been following Jesus, listening to Him and observing Him for some time. Now He moves the discipleship of the twelve to a new level: “And He called the twelve together, and gave them power and authority over all the demons and to heal diseases.” In any field of work, one needs instructions, but at some point he needs some hands-on experience. Jesus has taught them and set the pattern for them, now He gives them power and authority over demons and diseases.

The diseases are still with us today, and we have the most sophisticated treatments, the most

advanced techniques and equipment, and the greatest number of thoroughly tested medications in history. The medical field is doing a phenomena job in treating various diseases, and they have all but eliminated a few of them. We have the most beautiful churches buildings, the best trained staffs, unsurpassed transportation and communication capabilities, but what power and authority do we have over diseases? The real healing process is in God's hand. The doctor can diagnose, prescribe, and perform surgery, but he cannot heal.

What power do we have over diseases? What power do we have over demons? If we do not have power over demons, why not? The arm of he Lord has not been shortened, nor His power diminished. Victory equips the saints for their battle against Stan (Ephesians 6) and assures us that if we will draw near to Him and resist the devil he will flee from us (James 4).

Some of the tel-evangelists specialize in healing - to the point of making a show of it. Some of them have also been exposed as frauds. But, is there any healing going on today? If not, why not? The answer is, "yes," God is still healing people. Countless numbers have experienced His healing power. I believe very strongly in divine healing - but I am leery of divine healers, in particular the kind who make a show of it. Jesus gave His apostles power and authority over both diseases and demons, and He has given His church the privilege of calling upon Him when there is a need. He does not equivocate: "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you" (John 15:7).

What about demons? Is it possible that the answer is that the church is operating with greatly diminished power and authority today because we are (1) so preoccupied with self and the things of the world that we are insensitive to the needs of others; (2) we have insufficient faith to ask believing; (3) we have abandoned the sick to the medical establishment? And what about demons? Is it possible that we do not see them because we have not exercised sufficient authority over them to provoke them? Or, have we drawn so close to God that all the demons have fled from our us? (Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you, James 4:7). Have we done that and moved on beyond the need to be concerned with demons?

The Interfaith Witness Department of the Southern Baptist North American Mission Board provides help and material is dealing with the occult, as well as evidence that the occult problem is very real today. My brother-in-law, Jimmy Furr, Regional Director for the Interfaith Witness Department of the Southern Baptist Convention, has been called to assist the police department in Pearl, Mississippi since a high school student killed his mother and then opened fire on other students in what was discovered to be a satanic pact. My son, Johnny L. Sanders II, is an Assistant District Attorney, who has had to interview people involved in the occult. And I have seen evidence of the presence of something demonic in the face, particularly the eyes of a few church members. The interesting thing was that before it really registered on me that was what I was witnessing, a number of others came to me and assured me that what we were witnessing was satanic.

We are engaged in the Battle of the Ages, whether we have engaged the enemy or not. In this great battle we need to understand our enemy and we need to be both equipped and empowered to do battle with a powerful foe. In the first place God will equip His saints for the battle and provide the

victory (Ephesians 6). In the second place, we must prayerfully walk with the Lord in holiness and faith. Then, we can prepare by familiarizing ourselves with the way Satan operates and how he may be defeated. An older series of books by Kurt Koch would still be of great value. I would recommend two books by Mark I. Bubek, *The Adversary* and *Overcoming the Adversary*. The New Age novels by Frank Peretti, *This Present Darkness*, and *Piercing the Darkness* may be of interest. To illustrate the subtlety of Satan, there are a lot of people who think New Age was a fad of the eighties that simply ran its course. I can assure you, the philosophy behind it is as old as Hinduism, as old as Babylon, and as current as Postmodernism (the current term for it).

9:2 - HE SENT THEM OUT. Jesus sent out the twelve “to proclaim the kingdom of God and to perform healing.” He gave them authority over diseases, but their primary purpose was the “proclaim the kingdom of God.” That is the first thing God wants and the last thing Satan wants. **9:3 - HE SAID TO THEM.** Jesus gave them their instructions and their marching orders: “Take nothing for your journey, neither a staff, nor a bag, nor bread, nor money; and do not even have two tunics apiece.” This was serious business, not a pleasure trip.

Matthew and Luke indicate that even a staff is forbidden; Mark 6:8 allows a staff and further provides for sandals (Mark 6:9), while in Matthew sandals are prohibited (Matt. 10:10). These minor differences are explained in that Jesus forbids the acquiring of a new staff or sandals as extra provisions or "insurance" for the trip, but allows what they already have, the prohibition being against extra baggage [BSB].

9:4 - WHATEVER HOUSE. Jesus instructed them, “Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that city.” In other words, establish a headquarters for your work and do the work I have sent you to do. Your mission is not social, so do not spend your time being entertained in various homes, but stay in one place and remained focused on your work.

9:5 - SHAKE THE DUST OFF YOUR FEET. This verse has often been taken out of context, let us see what Jesus actually says to them: “And as for those who do not receive you, as you go out from that city, shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.” This was a familiar practice among the more pious Jews of the day, and the significance of it would not be wasted on the first century Israelite. .

Strict Jews, in order to avoid contaminating God's holy land with the dust of profane places, performed the same symbolic actions of shaking the dust from their feet when they reentered their homeland after traveling abroad. The disciples are thus to disassociate themselves completely from those who reject them, thereby branding these as no better than heathens [BSB].

If you practice this literally in modern day America, and the effect might be the opposite. To the average person in our culture, this would be a joke. You can, however, apply the principle. In your mind and in your heart you can apply it, and you might be able to articulate to an individual the significance of your decision to “leave them alone.”

Herod Perplexed Over Jesus, 9:7-9.

9:7 - HEROD. Luke records that, "...Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was happening; and he was greatly perplexed, because it was said by some that John had risen from the dead."

This Herod is a son of Herod the Great, born c. 20 B.C. He ruled the tetrarchy (a political division) of Galilee and Perea from 4 B.C. to A.D. 39, when the Emperor Caligula banished him because of his ambition to become king (cf. Matt. 2:3, note). Mark, following local custom, calls him "king" [BSB].

9:8 - ELIJAH. Many people were still trying to decide who Jesus was. Some said "that Elijah had appeared, and by others that one of the prophets of old had risen again."

9:9 - I MYSELF HAD JOHN BEHEADED. Herod himself had commanded his soldiers to beheaded John the Baptist, but now he wanted to know who Jesus was. He had heard many things about Him "and he kept trying to see Him."

The Twelve Apostles Return From Their Mission, 9:10a.

9:10a - AN ACCOUNT. Luke the scientist likes progress reports (numerous progress reports are given in Acts). When the apostles returned from their mission trip, "they gave an account to Him of all that they had done." Many have discovered that such reports are highly beneficial in their outreach programs. When members go out to visit they are asked to return to the church to give a report on their visits. This gives them an opportunity to rejoice in decisions that are made, to share prayer requests, to seek help for individuals in need, to find support and guidance in dealing with certain people, and to help motivate them to continue to participate in the church outreach ministry.

Jesus Feeds Five Thousand, 9:10b-17.

9:10b - HE WITHDREW BY HIMSELF. After the twelve returned and gave their report Jesus took them and "withdrew by Himself to a city called Bethsaida." Bethsaida is a town on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, just to the east of where the Jordan River enters the lake. According to John it was originally the home of Peter, Andrew, and Philip (John 1:44) At the time of the ministry of Jesus, however, Peter lived in Capernaum (Andrew may have lived with them). The town was also called Bethsaida Julia, because it was named by Herod Philip in honor of Julia, the daughter of Augustus Caesar.

9:11 - THE CROWDS. Jesus had withdrawn from the crowds but they figured out where He was going and followed Him. Jesus did not turn them away, but "welcoming them, He began speaking to them about the kingdom of God and curing those who had need of healing." "Jesus gladly taught crowds even when they interrupted His quiet times with His disciples. The theme of His preaching

was the kingdom of God, God's righteous rule in human hearts" DSB].

9:12 - SEND THE CROWD AWAY. Jesus had taught the people for hours and as the day was ending, the twelve apostles came to Him and suggested that He "Send the crowd away, that they may go into the surrounding villages and countryside and find lodging and get something to eat; for here we are in a desolate place."

9:13 - YOU GIVE THEM SOMETHING TO EAT. Instead of sending the people away Jesus said to them, "You give them something to eat!" That they were shocked by the magnitude of the order is seen in their response: "We have no more than five loaves and two fish, unless perhaps we go and buy food for all these people." The loaves were round cakes, sort of like large biscuits. The fish were small smoked or pickled fish, typical food of poor people in Palestine.

9:14 - HAVE THEM SIT DOWN. There were about five thousand men plus women and children. Jesus told the twelve to have the people to sit "in groups of about fifty each," that is, in orderly groups (like a grid) with aisles between them so the apostles could pass between them and serve the bread and fish.

9:16 - THE FIVE LOAVES AND THE TWO FISH. When they were seated (vs. 15), Jesus "took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed them, and broke them, and kept giving them to the disciples to set before the people."

9:17 - ALL ATE AND WERE SATISFIED. It is significant that the Bible tells us that the great multitude "all ate and were satisfied." When we receive the bread Jesus serves we will always be satisfied. And there is always more: "the broken pieces which they had left over were picked up, twelve baskets full." His grace is always sufficient, His power more than adequate.

Peter confesses Jesus as the Christ (Messiah), 9:18-27.

Peter calls Jesus, "The Christ of God," 18-20.

9:18 - HE WAS PRAYING ALONE. "Praying alone" means that He had withdrawn from the crowd to pray and Luke tells us that the disciples were with Him.

WHO DO THE PEOPLE SAY THAT I AM? That was a good question because a lot of people were wondering just who He was and apparently there had been a lot of speculation. According to Matthew (16:14), the speculations included John the Baptist, Elijah, and Jeremiah, probably on the basis of similarities between His teachings and those of those great prophets. Here Luke says that they mention John, Elijah and adds that "but others, that one of the prophets of old has risen again."

9:19 - BUT WHO DO YOU SAY THAT I AM? First He asks "who do the people say that I

am." Now "He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' And Peter answered and said, 'The Christ of God.' This is commonly referred to as Peter's Confession, or Peter's Great Confession. Comments on Peter's Confession will be based on Matthew 16:16ff.

Here is a strategic passage that ties together the person and work of both God the Father and God the Son. Jesus was keenly conscious of His unique relationship to God, His Father. At a strategic turning point in Jesus' teaching ministry, Peter declared that Jesus is the Christ (Messiah) and the Son of the living God. Peter did not yet understand all that that means (vv 22-23). He could not accept the way of suffering Jesus charted out for His ministry, a way that will result in His final appearance in His Father's glory when Jesus Himself will act as Judge of all men. What Jesus did in His ministry of suffering and death and what Jesus did in establishing His church are not something separate and apart from the work of God. These are very much the will of God, the work of God. When Jesus climaxes His work, coming again, it will be in the glory of God His Father, showing that the work of one is virtually the work of the other. These verses suggest that the Persons of the Trinity do not function independently of each other. Even though it is not always apparent, what one does the others are also involved in. We must draw that conclusion if we want to avoid tritheism, the error of separating the three Persons of the Trinity into three separate Gods. Jesus' earthly life developed as a result of the unseen work of God through Him. When Jesus' ministry climaxes at His second coming, we will see His triumph as the full manifestation of God, the glory of God, not just of Jesus Himself. Jesus will then act as Judge, a prerogative of God Himself. There is a distinction between Jesus and God, but there is also an identification between them. That is part of the mystery of the Trinity [DSB].

JESUS CHRIST, Christ--Peter confessed Jesus as "the Anointed One" (Greek christos; Hebrew meshiach). The title originally applied to the king as anointed by God (1 Sa 10:1; 16:13; Ps 2:2) and was connected to the understanding that the king was God's son (2 Sa 7:14; Ps 2:7). Jesus applauded Peter's insight but did not want the news spread because of the possibility of being misunderstood as a political messiah rather than a Suffering Servant (Mt 16:20-25). Compare 26:63-64; Mk 14:61; Lk 22:67; Gal 3:1) [DSB].

In Matthew 16, we see that Jesus comes to the heart of the Gospel: "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven." He says, "Blessed are you," because he had received this insight through divine revelation and not through human intuition or human influences. When I was a student at Mississippi College I led our Baptist Student Union (BSU) mission trip to the Hinds County Jail for two and one-half years. One of my early experiences with a violent criminal came when I visited a man in the maximum security area who was receiving a lot coverage in the Jackson Clarion Ledger following an especially horrifying murder. I Still have the letter I received after my first visit. In it Tommy said, "Johnny, I am trying to find God." I wrote back and assured him the before he ever gave God a thought God was trying to reach him.

No one seeks God on his own, and no one finds God through his search. The only way anyone ever comes to know he even needs God is through divine revelation. A lost person may read about Jesus and he may be able to recite stories about Him, but he will never know Him as the Son of God, as Savior, except through divine revelation (the Father reveals the Son through creation, through His word, and by means of the Holy Spirit).

Looking again at Matthew 16, we should observe what Jesus says, and what He does not say. He said, "I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it." The name Peter (Gk., *Petros*) means "rock." In the next phrase Jesus used the word *petra* (upon this rock), which is a feminine form for "rock," not a name. He was using a play on words, which He often did. He was not saying "upon you, Peter, I will build my church." Nor did He say that of Peter's successors. He says, "upon this rock"--upon this divine revelation and a profession of faith in Christ as Savior and a Lord He will build His church. "I will build shows that the formation of the church was still in the future. It began on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2). The word church appears in the Gospels only here and in Matt 18:17 [RSB].

Historic interpretations include the following:

(1) Peter is the rock upon which the church is to be constructed, since Jesus was probably speaking Aramaic, in which language the word simply would have been Cephas in both instances. (2) Peter is addressed, but Jesus indicates, possibly by means of gesture, that the Christ is the *petra* upon which the church will be built (cf. 1 Cor. 3:11). (3) Peter is addressed and told that his confession (v. 16) is the *petra* upon which Jesus will build His church. Either of the latter two positions is plausible; both of these take into account the word changes written by Matthew. A promise of perpetuity is given even in the face of the devastating ravages of death, whose gates seemingly enclose all things. "Hades" cannot destroy or "hold down" the church [BSB].

The gates of hades will not be able to stand against this profession of faith in Jesus Christ. Hades is the realm of the departed dead. "The entrance into Hades, which is physical death; i.e., the physical death of Christ (mentioned immediately in v. 21) will not impede the progress of the church simply because He would be raised from the dead" [RSB].

It is imperative that we understand what Jesus means when He says, "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven." To some, this means that authority was given to Peter to open the doors of the church and that he used that authority for Jews on the Day of Pentecost and for Gentiles in the house of Cornelius (Acts 10). Some see this as authority bestowed upon Peter as the first Pope, and passed down from one pope to another. "However, nothing in either verse suggests the possibility that Peter was given authority to forgive men of their sins" [BSB]. What is far more reasonable is that what He means is that the key to the kingdom of God is found in the confession of faith in Jesus as the Son of God and redeemer of the world, a confession

based upon the revelation of the Father.

It is also important to understand what Jesus meant by the word “bound.” It is crucial that we see what Jesus says - and what He does not say. According to the Believer’s Study Bible Notes:

The words "bind" and "loose" are rabbinic terms meaning "to forbid" and "to permit." "Keys" were the symbol of knowledge or the fruit of the scribal or teaching office (cf. Luke 11:52 in which "key" refers to knowledge). Peter and those with him are given the "keys of the kingdom," i.e., the gospel of Christ. The use of those keys will build the church. Peter did precisely this at Pentecost (Acts 2:14), at Samaria (Acts 8:14), and for Cornelius the Gentile (Acts 10). The expressions "will be bound in heaven" and "will be loosed in heaven" are examples in Greek of the periphrastic future perfect passive construction and should, therefore, be translated "will have been bound already" and "will have been loosed already" in heaven. In other words, Peter's pronouncement of "binding" or "loosing" is dependent upon what heaven has already willed, rather than earth's giving direction to heaven.

Jesus Predicts His Death and Resurrection, 21-22.

9:21 - TELL NO ONE. Is this not contradicted by the Great Commission? Why would He warn His disciples “that they should tell no one that He was the Christ?” If Jesus said it there was a reason for it. There are several possibilities. First, there had already been more than enough speculation because of all the publicity, and any more fanfare would only increase opposition and possibly accelerate His steps to the Cross. Second, the people were still looking for a political Messiah and they might follow Him for the wrong reason. Third, during the last phase of His ministry He would be spending less time teaching publicly and more time privately instructing His disciples. The time would come later for His messiahship to be proclaimed publicly.

9:22 - THE SON OF MAN MUST SUFFER. Jesus faces the Cross and seeks to prepare His disciples for it, He taught them that He “must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed and be raised up on the third day.” He stressed the Resurrection enough times that they should have been expecting it, but they would not understand until it appeared to them as the risen Lord.

Jesus Sets Down the Conditions of Discipleship, 23-27.

9:23 - TAKE UP HIS CROSS. "If anyone desires to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." This is the first mention of a cross in Luke. "The cross was well known as an instrument of death, so it represents here the death or separation from the old life that must mark a disciple (Rom. 8:13)" [RSB]. The Romans required a condemned criminal to carry the crossbeam to his place of execution. Luke adds the word "daily" to the accounts found in

Matthew and Mark. "Jesus' statement is a caution to those who might think that there is little cost involved to one who would follow Christ. Jesus affirms that one must be prepared even to die if he would be a follower of Christ" [BSB].

9:25 - WHAT PROFIT. "For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost?" (NKJV). Jesus asked exactly what He wanted to ask. But since some may dismiss His question on the grounds that they never expect to gain the whole world. In which case, we may bring it down to anyone's expectations. "What profit is it to a person if he gains any, or all the wealth he can imagine, and loses his own soul?"

9:26 - ASHAMED OF ME. "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in His glory, and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels."

The Transfiguration, 9:28-36.

- a. "And while He was praying, the appearance of His face became different, and His clothing became white and gleaming" (v. 29).
- b. "Behold, two men were talking with Him; and they were Moses and Elijah" (v. 30).

Jesus Heals a Boy With an Evil Spirit After His Apostles Failed, 9:37-42.

9:37 - A LARGE CROWD. The day after the Transfiguration Jesus came down from the mountain to find a large crowd waiting for Him. They are still anxiously awaiting a political messiah, and if Jesus declares Himself that messiah they want to be on hand for the proclamation.

9:38 - LOOK AT MY SON. From the crowd a frantic father cries out to Jesus, "Teacher, I beg You to look at my son, for he is my only boy," He explained, "and a spirit seizes him, and he suddenly screams, and it throws him into a convulsion with foaming at the mouth; and only with difficulty does it leave him, mauling him as it leaves" (vs. 39). A distinction can be made between demonic possession and psychological problems or emotional illness. Jesus certainly knew the difference! And so did the demons.

9:40 - I BEGGED YOUR DISCIPLES. He had begged the disciples to cast out the evil spirit, "and they could not." The reason the disciples could not cast it out was that they failed to pray (Mark 9:29). This is a good place to remind ourselves of the shocking defeat of the Israelites at Ai, after the supernatural and spectacular victory at Jericho. Why did they fail at Ai? For the same reason these disciples failed here. A lack of prayer, which denotes a lack of faith. They were working in the flesh rather than in the spirit.

9:41 - AND JESUS ANSWERED. If any human being has all the answers you had better

avoid him. But when Jesus supplies the answer you had better listen. He said, "You unbelieving and perverted generation, how long shall I be with you and put up with you? Bring your son here."

9:42 - JESUS REBUKED THE UNCLEAN SPIRIT. As the man approached Jesus, "the demon slammed him to the ground and threw him into a convulsion." Unintimidated, Jesus "rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the boy and gave him back to his father." He was immediately cleansed.

You do not exorcise demons with therapy, and you do not heal the mentally ill with exorcism. Jesus understood both problems and He knew what to do in either case.

Jesus Predicts His Death Again, 9:43-45.

9:44 - LET THESE WORDS SINK INTO YOUR EARS. Jesus might have yielded to the same temptation other preachers have faced - to exploit the sensational (milk it for all they could get out of it), but He did not even respond to the people who were all marveling at what they had seen Him do (vs. 43). He simply demanded the undivided attention of the disciples and announced, "the Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men."

9:45 - THEY DID NOT UNDERSTAND. Luke tells us that the disciples did not understand this statement, "and *it was concealed from them* so that they would not perceive it; and they were afraid to ask Him about this statement." Why was it concealed from them? Did Jesus deliberately conceal it from them? If so, why bring it up at all? Or, is it possible that they permitted either the flesh, the world, or Satan to conceal the deeper meaning from them? Or, was it that they had not received the Holy Spirit to enlighten them?

Jesus Rebukes Them for Arguing About Who Would Be the Greatest, 9:46-50.

He Used a Child for an Example, 46-48.

9:46 - WHICH OF THEM MIGHT BE THE GREATEST. After following Jesus, for many months, after the Transfiguration, even after His announcement about His death, His closest disciples are more concerned about "which of them might be the greatest" in His kingdom. We can thank God that we do not have a problem with this kind of attitude in the church today! Or, do we?

9:47 - A CHILD. They were obviously arguing out of the hearing of Jesus, but He knew what they were thinking in their heart." If the human Jesus knew what His disciples were thinking, surely nothing gets by the risen Christ! To deal with their selfish ambition, He "took a child and stood him by His side."

9:48 - WHOEVER RECEIVES THIS CHILD. With the child by His side, Jesus said, "Whoever receives this child in My name receives Me, and whoever receives Me receives Him who sent Me; for the one who is least among all of you, this is the one who is great."

Jesus Reproves the Selfishness of His Disciples, 49-50.

9:49 - CASTING OUT DEMONS IN YOUR NAME. At first look, it would seem that John was not paying attention to Jesus, or that he rudely changed the subject. It is possible that there was a break between the two conversations. John, speaking to Jesus, said, "Master, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name; and we tried to prevent him because he does not follow along with us."

9:50 - DO NOT HINDER HIM. Jesus' answer provides a guideline for His saints in any age. He said, "Do not hinder him; for he who is not against you is for you." Jesus knew exactly what He was saying and it is important for us to understand what He was saying - and what He was not saying.

When I was a student at Mississippi College, I was a student pastor during my Junior and Senior years. I led a group to the Hinds County Jail every Thursday afternoon and I left my home at 6:00 A.M. every Sunday morning to go to the Mississippi State Penitentiary where I preached at 8:00 before going to the Dockery Baptist church, Cleveland, Mississippi.

That ministry began with a visit with the chaplain, R. B. Hicks, who happened to be from my hometown, Sledge, Mississippi. His nieces had taught me in high school. On that visit Chaplain Hicks asked me if I would like to meet Kenny Wagner, the most notorious criminal in the history of the state. He had escaped years before and had remained free until he developed serious health problems and turned himself in so that he could receive medical care. I was surprised when he pointed out the door to the infirmary and left me to visit someone else. I had a very cordial visit with one of the most friendly men I have ever met. When I had the opportunity, I asked Kenny Wagner if he had a personal relationship with the Lord. He responded, "I heard a preacher say one time that if you are not for god you are against Him. I don't have anything against Him, so I must be for Him." When I rejoined the chaplain he asked me, "Do you think he will ever be saved?" I said, "No, I don't believe he will. He has too much pride." Brother Hicks agreed. Kenny Wagner went out into eternity without the Lord just eight days later. His was a spurious exegesis of this verse.

IV. JESUS GOES TO JERUSALEM, 9:51-19:28.

A. On the First Stage of the Journey Jesus Is Rejected by Various Groups, 9:51-19 28.

He Is Rejected By a Samaritan Village, 9:51-56.

9:51 - TO JERUSALEM. “When the days were approaching for His ascension, He was determined to go to Jerusalem.” Jesus had an appointment to keep and He is very much aware of it. He has His eyes focused on the Cross - and the ascension. “The material from 9:51-18:14 is exclusive to Luke, though similar teachings on different occasions appear in the other Gospels” [RSB]. Many Galileans traveling to Jerusalem crossed over the Jordan and traveled south through Perea on the eastern side of the river, and then crossed over the river, passing through Jericho, where they began their ascent to Bethany and Jerusalem (some 1280 ft. Above seal level). Because of the contact with Samaritans some believe Jesus and His followers traveled through Samaria directly to Jerusalem.

"The time had come for Him to be received up" is referring to His ascension (cf. 24:49-53; Acts 1:1-11). In the LXX the same word which appears here describes Elijah's translation into heaven, but Luke refers to the entire passion experience, including Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension. At this place Luke begins a new section of his Gospel: the journey to Jerusalem, sometimes referred to as the "travel narrative" (9:51-19:27) [BSB].

Jesus had set His mind on Jerusalem, but arrival in that city was not His ultimate goal. His face was set on the death, burial, resurrection, and ascension, which had been in God's plan from the beginning.

9:52 - A VILLAGE OF THE SAMARITANS. Jesus sent “messengers on ahead of Him, and they went and entered a village of the Samaritans to make arrangements for Him.” Jesus had saved the woman at the well and ministered in the village of Sychar, but this time the Samaritans “did not receive Him, because He was traveling toward Jerusalem” (vs. 53). We hear a lot about the animosity of the Jews toward the Samaritans. The animosity was reciprocal.

9:54 - FIRE....FROM HEAVEN. James and John were not called the “the sons of thunder” for no reason. “They said, “Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?”

9:55, 56 - REBUKED THEM. Jesus was appalled by the audacity of the two sons of Zebedee. He said, “You do not know what kind of spirit you are of; for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.” Jesus came to seek and to save, not to destroy lives, so they went on to another village.. James and John were not the last to wish God would send fire down from heaven to consume some enemy.

Jesus Stresses the High Cost of Discipleship, 9:57-62.

9:58 - THE FOXES HAVE HOLES. And Jesus said to him, “The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.” He is not complaining

about His financial situation, but responding to "someone said to Him, 'I will follow You wherever You go" (vs. 57).

9:59 - FOLLOW ME. Jesus invited another, "Follow Me." But he said, 'Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father.' This does not mean that the father had died, but that he was obligated to take care of him until he died - which could have been man years later. Jesus, not willing to be put off by such a flimsy excuse him, said, "Allow the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim everywhere the kingdom of God (vs. 60)."

"Let the dead bury their own dead" acknowledges that the proper duty of the son to bury the father must be made secondary to the claims of Christ. "The dead" who are to do the necessary duties are obviously those who do not respond to Jesus' call [BSB].

The New King James Version renders it, "Let the dead bury their own dead..." This verse might be paraphrased, "Let those who are spiritually dead bury those who die physically." The point is that the claims and demands of the kingdom of God are paramount.

9:61, 62 - FIT FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD. Luke records another of Jesus' responses to a feeble excuse. This person said, "I will follow You, Lord; but first permit me to say good-bye to those at home." Jesus responded, "No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (vs. 62). There is no one who has not looked back, so there is no one who is fit for the Kingdom of God. Membership in the Kingdom of God is a matter of grace, not merit.

He Commissions Seventy and Sends Them Out, 10:1-24.

He Sets Down the Conditions of the Mission Trip, 10:1-12.

10:1 - THE LORD APPOINTED SEVENTY. Only Luke records this mission tour. "Crowds" followed Jesus wherever He went. The fact that He could commission 70 and sent them on this missions would suggest a large following. The editors of the Discipleship Bible were conscious of the importance of evangelism in God's plan for the church and the individual. This passage presents us with some of the basic principles in Christ's call to evangelize the world:

- (1) there is an open field of great need;
- (2) prayer for God-called workers is vital;
- (3) Christ's witnesses will experience persecution and pressure;
- (4) God will provide all of one's needs;
- (5) Christian service attempts to meet all manner of needs;
- (6) an evangelistic partner gives strength to witnessing;
- (7) judgment is certain to those who reject the message of salvation;
- (8) the Lord identifies with and gives His power to His faithful witnesses;
- (9) Satan and opposition will be routed before the power of Christ;

- (10) enlisting people as citizens of heaven is the most important task;
- (11) effective witnessing brings joy to our Lord; and
- (12) taking part in God's great work of world evangelization is a privilege [DSB].

The mission of the seventy was similar to the mission of the twelve, though not as broad in scope as that of the twelve (9:1-7). Jesus gave some missionary principles for His saints and for His church in any age:

- (1) effective witnesses go in obedience to their Lord;
- (2) God has people willing to respond if His people will go;
- (3) fellowship in witness gained by going with a partner strengthens the witness;
- (4) an adequate supply of evangelists, pastors, and missionaries comes in response to prayer;
- (5) Christian witnesses are often at risk as "lambs among wolves;"
- (6) God can and will provide for His messengers' needs;
- (7) God's business is urgent;
- (8) the impact of our witness can be enhanced by receiving hospitality graciously (v 7);
- (9) messengers of the gospel deserve support;
- (10) God's missionaries or "sent ones" represent Him; and
- (11) following Christ's instructions will bring harvest and joy.

10:2 - THE HARVEST IS PLENTIFUL. Jesus stressed fact and we need to recognize the importance of it today. The harvest is still plentiful and the laborers are still few; "therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest." This stresses the urgency of praying that God will send more laborers into the field, and importance of praying for those laborers who are sent out: pastors, missionaries, evangelists, denominational workers, writers, and lay persons who are involved in this ministry.

10:3 - GO. Jesus, in commissioning the seventy, said, "behold, I send you out as lambs in the midst of wolves." His servants are still as lambs in the midst of wolves. The methods, manners, and nature of the lamb is quite different from that of the wolf. One of the most disturbing thing one will ever see in the church is a wolf preying on innocent lambs. It is even more disturbing when the wolf is a member of the church, especially if he thinks of himself as a pillar of the church (or, the pillar). There are individuals who have made a career of making life miserable for God's called out servants.

Those who are sent out by the Lord face enough of a threat from the world, without having to endure harassment from those who profess to be fellow servants. If you never face opposition, you are not doing anything to disturb the wolves. Satan is getting a lot of mileage out of apathy within the church without open persecution in America, but we can be sure of this one thing - if we honor the Lord's Great Commission, we are going to get the devil's attention. If he is leaving you alone, you are not doing anything to disturb him. Satan and those who serve him every day become absolutely concerned about moral absolutes. The frenzied opposition to the Promise Keepers' rally in Washington, D.C. in the summer of 1997 is a good example. The National Organization for Women (NOW) went ballistic, and the national media gave this group ample opportunity to express their hostility.

When you go out from your church into the community to talk with people about Jesus Christ, you recognize that you have gone out as a lamb among wolves. Most of them do not attack you, verbally or otherwise, but the look you get at the door lets you know that the world is still at enmity against God and His people.

10:4 - CARRY NO MONEY BELT. Jesus wanted His followers to remain focused. "Carry no money belt," He told them, and "no bag, no shoes; and greet no one on the way." Is it not discourteous not to speak to people? Does He want His children to go out as beggars? This was a brief mission trip, and they were not going out to impress people with their dress, they were not going to garage sales, and they were not going to have time for socializing. "Greet no one along the road" is not an encouragement to be rude or inconsiderate. "Such Jewish greetings were long and involved, an unnecessary delay which the urgency of their commission would not permit" [BSB].

10:5,6 - A MAN OF PEACE. This is simply a Hebrew idiom which we may paraphrase, "a peaceful man."

10:7 - STAY IN THAT HOUSE. If you go to a house where there is "a man of peace" who invites you to stay in his home, stay there, "eating and drinking what they give you; for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not keep moving from house to house" (as a social gadfly).

10:9 - THE KINGDOM OF GOD. Jesus gave the power to "heal those in it who are sick," and He told them to warn people that "The kingdom of God has come near to you." Luke does not record that he gave them power over demons here as He had the twelve, but if they had power over diseases, they probably did have authority over demons.

10:10, 11 - NOT RECEIVE YOU. As with the twelve, Jesus said, "But whatever city you enter and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say, 'Even the dust of your city which clings to our feet we wipe off in protest against you; yet be sure of this, that the kingdom of God has come near.'"

10:12 - I SAY TO YOU. Jesus makes a profound statement about those who reject the Gospel: "it will be more tolerable in that day for Sodom than for that city." "In that day" is the Day of Judgment. The account of judgment on Sodom is found in Gen. 19. People may, either casually or with hostility, reject the Gospel today, but those who reject Jesus Christ will be judged by Him. His judgment will be final and their condition desperate and horrifying.

He Announces the Doom of Unrepentant Cities, 10:13-16.

10:13 - WOE TO YOU. Jesus had toured the land and had been rejected in various places. Now He warns, "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had been performed in

Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes." Chorazin was located in Galilee, about two miles north of the site of Capernaum.

It has been identified with modern khirbet Kerazeh, ruins located. Chorazin is mentioned in the Talmud as a place famous for its wheat. In the time of Jesus it must have been an important place, but by the second half of the third century A.D. it had ceased to be inhabited [HBD].

Bethsaida ("house of fish"), the home of Andrew, Peter, and Philip (John 1:44; 12:21), was located on the northeast side of the Sea of Galilee.

This town was rebuilt under Philip the tetrarch, one of Herod the Great's sons, who named it Julius in honor of the Emperor Augustus' daughter. Near here Jesus fed the 5,000 (Luke 9:10) and healed a blind man (Mark 8:22). Jesus pronounced judgment upon Bethsaida for its lack of response to His message and miracles (Matt. 11:21; Luke 10:13). The site of Bethsaida has yet to be identified archaeologically [HBD].

10:14 - MORE TOLERABLE. Jesus declared, "...It will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the judgment than for you." From the words "more tolerable," are we to infer that there will be degrees of punishment in Hell?

10:15 - AND YOU, CAPERNAUM. Of Capernaum, the city Jesus made His headquarters during His Galilean ministry - the city that witnessed some of His most remarkable miracles and heard the Gospel proclaimed by His tongue - Jesus said, "And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You will be brought down to Hades!" If Jesus had been pastor of the First Baptist Church, Capernaum in the Bible Belt in modern times he would be in danger of forced termination for His lack of success! No doubt, some one would begin a whisper campaign behind His back, accusing Him of "killing our church." It would be interesting to watch a Pastor Search Committee read His resume.

10:16 - THE ONE WHO LISTENS TO YOU. Concluding His warning to those who reject the Gospel, Jesus says, "The one who listens to you listens to Me, and the one who rejects you rejects Me; and he who rejects Me rejects the One who sent Me." To reject the testimony of the child of God is to reject God. "Those who receive God's sent ones also receive the Son and the Father who sends them. We manifest our acceptance of God's Son by our acceptance of His children" [DSB]. this is serious business - more serious than cancer or a heart attack. I ought to know - I have had a heart attack!

The Seventy Report on Their Mission, 10:17-20.

10:17 - THE SEVENTY RETURNED. An excited company of Christian soldiers return to their commander with their joyful report, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name."

Satan is the accuser who brings charges against people, even before the throne of God (Job 1:6-12; Zec 3:1; also, John 12:31; Rev 12:7-9).

His defeat and ouster from heaven became sure when Christ gave His power over satanic forces to His church (Mk 3:15). The church must be intent on defeating Satan and participating in the heavenly kingdom, not on proudly exhibiting its power on earth. The verse is not a call to Christians to test God by opening themselves to danger. It is a call to confess God's power and certain victory over all that opposes Him [DSB].

10:18 - I WAS WATCHING SATAN FALL. In response to their report that demons were subject to them, He said something very amazing: "I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning." What exactly does Jesus mean? Well, He means what He says. But is He saying and the success of the 70 (v. 17) over demons was proof that Satan had fallen, or that the power of Satan was broken? Or does He mean that in a revelation from the Father he had seen Satan fall while the 70 were on their mission trip?

10:19 - I HAVE GIVEN YOU AUTHORITY. The authority to defeat demons is From Jesus - of that we are sure. He adds, here that He has given them authority "to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing will injure you." The first and greatest example of this is the Apostle Paul.

10:20 - REJOICE. Jesus follows His spectacular promise with a very important warning: "Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven." We must always keep the first thing the first thing! Victory over demons is a reason to praise the Lord, but we must remember that the most important thing is that we are saved. We must also remember that the greatest need of any lost person is his salvation, by grace, through faith in Jesus Christ. The lost person's health, education, clothing, and diet are important, but more important by far is the salvation of his soul. Human good is far more desirable than human evil, but doing good (i.e., a Social Gospel) can, and will kill a church or denomination.

Furthermore, the church must understand that it is involved in a supernatural spiritual warfare, a fact that many seem to have forgotten. Jesus, in this passage, stresses the nature of the warfare and at the same time provides a definitive word of our adversary. In other words, we have the truth, divinely revealed about Satan. Thomas C. Reeves, *The Empty Church*, laments the erosion of the strength of what he identifies as the mainline churches ("seven sisters" of American Protestantism) which has been going on for a century.

We learn much about what has been called the "culture war" by studying the deterioration of the religious bodies that once established our spiritual and moral standards.

But there is more to this than cultural events. The critical issue, in my judgment, has

deep roots in Christian history, so deep that it was addressed by St. Paul. Is there truth, supernaturally revealed in Christianity, that lies beyond our present understanding of things, truth that is unchanging and absolutely vital to our present and future?

This is not about the acceptance or rejection of fundamentalism; for most Christians, certainly in the mainline churches, that struggle ended long ago. The issue involves the line that must be drawn, by all thinking Christians, between certain knowledge and revelation. What, in short, are the essentials of the religion without which it loses its authenticity and power? And what are the implications for personal conduct? [REEVES: 2,3].

Jesus Praises the Father Following Their Report, 10:21-24.

10:21 - HE REJOICED GREATLY. “At that very time” means the time immediately the report of the seventy and after His seeing the power of Satan broken. Jesus “*rejoiced greatly in the Holy Spirit*, and said, “I praise You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants.” Carnal men and women do not understand spiritual truths. “Yes, Father, for this way (entrusting the saints with the mission to take the Gospel to the world) was well-pleasing in Your sight.”

Once again we see the work of the Trinity, and the relationship between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in this great ministry. Jesus, the Son, is moved by the Holy Spirit to uttered praise to the Father.

The Holy Spirit is evidently the common bond that united God in heaven and Jesus on earth. The diversity here is easier to perceive than is the unity, but do not forget the underlying monotheism--the fact that there is only one God--which must always be considered as the background to every verse of the Bible. Jesus praised the sovereignty of God the Father. Jesus called Him Lord of both heaven and earth. Because part of the world is in rebellion against God, some people fail to see that God is Lord of the earth--the world. He always has been and always will be. One day that lordship will be acknowledged by all, even those who now rebel against God [DSB].

The Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Trinity, exercises tremendous power in the lives of God's people.

Only occasionally does the Old Testament specifically suggest the Spirit gives great joy. David prayed that the Spirit would not be taken from him and that the joy of his salvation would be restored (Ps 51:11-12). The Spirit helped Jesus experience great joy. Jesus' disciples were filled with the joy of the Spirit. See note on Ac 13:52. The fruit of the Spirit is joy (Gal 5:22) [DSB].

The Spirit ministered to Jesus in His prayer - He helped Him to pray, as He assists us in prayer. We should follow Jesus' example and praise the Father in the Holy Spirit. Paul wrote, "for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father" (Eph. 2:18). He also wrote, "With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints..." (Eph. 6:18). The Scripture says, "But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit..." (Jude 20).

10:22 - MY FATHER. The only way to know the Father is through the Son, and the only way to know he Son is through divine revelation (Remember Jesus response to Peter's confession). In His prayer, Jesus expressed it this way: "All things have been handed over 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 anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him." Jesus, and Jesus alone can introduce people to the Father, for He alone shared His nature and He alone enjoyed an intimate relationship with the Father.

10:23 - BLESSED. Following His great exclamation of praise, Jesus turned to His disciples and "He said privately, 'Blessed are the eyes which see the things you see.'" Those first century saints were blessed indeed! They saw Jesus in the flesh. But is that really what He had in mind? Is He talking about their seeing and hearing Him praise the Father, or great victory of the Gospel on their mission trip? I cannot think of any greater blessing than to witness a revival in America today. By that, I mean a real awakening - the like of which this nation has not seen in well over a century. I would like to see that kind of revival in our time. In verse 24 the Lord went on to assure them "that many prophets and kings wished to see the things which you see, and did not see them, and to hear the things which you hear, and did not hear them."

The Story of the Good Samaritan, 10:25-37.

The Parable Is Given in Response to a Question By a Lawyer, 10:25-29.

10:25 - LAWYER. A "lawyer" was an expert in the Mosaic Law. The Greek term Luke used is probably a synonym for "scribe." This lawyer "stood up and put Him to the test. They were stepping up their efforts to trap Him. He asked a reasonable question, but one to which he already knew the answer: "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

10:26 - WHAT IS WRITTEN . As He did so often, Jesus answered a question with a question: "What is written in the Law? How does it read to you?" The questioner must now answer his own question.

10:27 - LOVE. Every person present knew how he must answer: "YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND; AND YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF" (caps in NAS). The lawyer quote the Old Testament Scriptures (see Deut. 6:5 and Lev. 19:18).

10:28 - DO THIS. Jesus said, "You have answered correctly; DO THIS AND YOU WILL LIVE." The lawyer who sought to trap Jesus is now being led into a trap. How so? Jesus told the lawyer that he had answered correctly. Had he? You can be saved by keeping these laws? As J. Vernon McGee (*Luke, in the Thru the Bible Commentary Series*, Thomas Nelson, 1991, pp.304) points out, "This took place before Christ died on the cross. Does it mean a man can be saved by keeping the Law? Yes, but let's follow through on this. It is not the hearers of the Law, but the doers of the Law that are justified" [McGee: 137]. But we must not stop there, because the only way to be saved by keeping the Law is to keep it perfectly and the Bible tells us that nobody can keep the Law.

...A man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified (Gal. 2:16).

For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit (Rom. 8:3-4).

10:29 - WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR? The lawyer is not being honest with Jesus. Rather than confess that he had not kept all the Law he changed the subject "wishing to justify himself." Evading the issue, he asked, "And who is my neighbor?" Jesus answered him with the story of the Good Samaritan.

The Story of the Good Samaritan, 10:30-37.

10:30 - FROM JERUSALEM TO JERICHO. Jesus, responding to the question, "Who is my neighbor?", said, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among robbers, and they stripped him and beat him, and went away leaving him half dead." The road from Jerusalem descends rapidly, winding its way through rocky places that provided easy concealment for such robbers.

10:31- A PRIEST. "And by chance a priest was going down on that road, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side." One would expect the priest to stop and help. In case you are thinking that the priest might have refused to help because he was on the way to serve in the temple and to touch this man would have left him ceremonially unclean, let me point out that he was not going to Jerusalem, but from Jerusalem to Jericho.

10:32 - A LEVITE. Jesus continued, "Likewise a Levite also, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side." "The Levites are a lesser order serving the temple. Whereas the

priests make the sacrifices, the Levites take care of the provisions, the cleaning of the area, and other practical matters related to the services” [BSB]. If, as has been suggested, the lawyer was a Levite, this part of the parable must have stung him a little.

10:33, 34 - A SAMARITAN. "But a Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon him; and when he saw him, he felt compassion, and came to him and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them; and he put him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn and took care of him." There is a misconception about the Samaritans that needs to be addressed. The typical view is expressed in a popular Study Bible:

The Samaritans were descendants of colonists whom the Assyrian kings planted in Palestine after the fall of the Northern Kingdom in 722 B.C. They were despised by the Jews because of their mixed Gentile blood and their different worship, which centered at Mount Gerizim (John 4:20-22) [RSB].

Since this is the usual conception, few seem to challenge one aspect of this, probably because it is mostly true.

In 722 B. C when Sargon II of Assyria defeated Israel, the Northern Kingdom, he did export citizens from Israel for settlement in other countries, and he did import foreigners for settlement in Israel. In time there was an amalgamation as the Israelites who had not been exported intermarried with these new residents. Did this intermarriage make them half-breeds as some claim?

One commentary on the Book of Acts, written after the landmark 1954 Supreme Court decision which legally ended racial segregation, pointedly stressed how the Gospel overcame barriers (and it does). He pointed to the spread of the Gospel to the Samaritans as proof that it overcame racial barriers. Several years later, while the late Dr. H. Leo Eddleman was writing a commentary on Acts, I spent quite a bit of time talking with him, both in person and on the phone, about his commentary. He was trying to finish it while preaching a revival in the church I served as pastor.

I asked specifically about the Samaritans, and mentioned the other commentary. He said, “Johnny, one thing I want to do in writing this commentary is to clear up that misconception. It is true that the Gospel does overcome racial barriers, but you are going to have to look elsewhere for proof. The people of Israel did intermarry with those foreigners who had been relocated to Israel, but those foreigners were also Semitic people. If you dressed a Jew and a Samaritan alike and stood them side by side you couldn’t tell them apart. The hatred was based on religion and not race.”

The situation in the Middle East today can appropriately be called explosive - no pun intended. Palestinians and Israelis often clash. Fanatical Muslims even resort to suicide bombs in order to kill Jews. Various Muslim nations would pay most any price to destroy Israel. Yet they are all Semitic people. The hatred and animosity is generated, not by race, but by religion. There can be no more bloody conflict than that generated by religious bias, as the history of the Twentieth Century will verify.

OIL AND WINE. The Samaritan applied oil and wine standard medications in Jesus' day, to the man's wounds and bandaged them. The oil was soothing, the wine served as an antiseptic. But he did not stop there. "On the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper and said, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I return I will repay you'" (vs. 35). Note that Luke tells us that the Samaritan "on the next day" took him to the inn. He took care of him all through the night!

10:36 - PROVED TO BE A NEIGHBOR. Jesus puts the ball back in the lawyer's court: "Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the robbers' hands?" Of course, there was but one reasonable answer: "The one who showed mercy toward him." Jesus, not forgetting what He had told him earlier, said, "Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do the same" (vs. 37).

WHY WE CALL THE SAMARITAN GOOD

The Samaritan, by ministering to the needs of the wounded man, put to shame the priest and Levite who "passed by on the other side" (10:31-32). The Samaritans were universally despised by the Jews, even more so than the pagan Greeks and Romans and the barbarians. The Samaritans "were singled out by the Jews as a perfect example of despicable depravity. They were close enough geographically and culturally to know of the truth, yet they refused" [GRANT: 244].

By making the Samaritan, the hero of this story, an example of a good neighbor, Jesus is elevating him to a position of respect and honor no Jew would acknowledged. As George Grant and Mark Horne (*Legislating Immorality*, Moody, Chicago, 1993, pp. 291) point out,

It was as though Jesus had slapped the religious leaders of Israel in their collective face.

After demanding an expansion of Christ's textbook answer, the Pharisee might have expected a parable that encouraged him to show love to all men, even to Samaritans.

But never in a thousand years would he have guessed that Christ would show how such a despised one could be nearer to the kingdom than a pious but compassionateless Jew GRANT: 244].

The Samaritan followed only the Torah, whereas the priest and Levite professed to observe all the Old Testament Scripture, yet this despicable foreigner who corrupted worship by rejecting much of their Scripture, fulfilled the demands of the Scripture while they fell far short. Grant and Horne illustrate:

He paid attention to the needs of others (Deuteronomy 22:4) and showed concern for the poor (Psalm 41:1). He showed pity toward the weak (Psalm 72:13) and rescued them from violence (Psalm 61:14). Knowing the case of the helpless Proverbs 29:7),

he gave of his wealth (Deuteronomy 26:12-13), and shared his food (Proverbs 22:9) [GRANT: 244, 245].

The Samaritan was not simply following these rules (he had probably never read Psalms and Proverbs). He was moved by compassion to help the needy man.

He has “put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience” (Colossians 3:12). He “became a father to the needy, and took up the case of the stranger (Job 29:16). He loved his neighbor as himself (Mark 12:31), thus fulfilling the law (Romans 13:10).

The Samaritan fulfilled the demands of both law and love. He demonstrated both obedience and mercy. He heeded both the spirit and the letter. He combined faithfulness and compassion. He had wed word and deed [GRANT: 245].

The Samaritan proved to be a better neighbor than the priest and Levite. He did through compassion what they were not moved to do by law. Is it any wonder he is called good by human beings (we are not forgetting that before God, none is good).

BASIC PHILOSOPHIES IN THE STORY OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN

1. The Philosophy of the thieves was, “What’s thine is mine if I can get it.”
2. The philosophy of the Priest and Levite was, “What’s mine is mine and I’ll keep it.”
3. The philosophy of the Good Samaritan was, “What’s mine is thine if you need it.”
4. The philosophy of the inn keeper was, “What’s mine is thine if you can afford it.”

ALLEGORIZING THE STORY

J. Vernon McGee has an interesting interpretation of the story of the Good Samaritan. As I read it, I agreed that Jesus was trying to “bring this parable right down to where we live” [McGee: 138f]. Something else became obvious - he was allegorizing a parable! Let us look at the actors in this drama, and see how it might be allegorized.

First, Jesus tells us that there was a man who was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell among thieves. “That is a picture of humanity,” according to McGee.

That is the race that has come from Adam. Mankind came from Jerusalem, the place where they approached God, to Jericho, the accursed city. Humanity, you see, fell. Humanity found itself helpless, hopeless, and unable to save itself. Mankind was dead in trespasses and sin - this man who had fallen among thieves was half dead [McGee: 139].

The thieves represent the devil who was a murderer from the very beginning (John 8:44). When the crowd came to the arrest Jesus He asked, "Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest Me as you would against a robber?" (Matt. 26:55). "The Devil is a thief, and our Lord was crucified between two thieves - this is quite interesting, is it not?" [Ibid: 139].

Next we come to the priest who, Jesus says, passed by on the other side of the road. "He represents ritualism and ceremonialism which cannot save a person. Someone has said that the reason the priest passed by on the other side was that the man had already been robbed!" [Ibid: 139].

After that a Levite came by and saw the man and he also passed by on the other side of the road. The Levite represents legalism. Neither legalism, ceremonialism, nor ritualism can save.

Finally, a certain Samaritan passed by. Whom did the he represent? "He is the One who told the parable. When ritualism, ceremonialism, legalism, and religion could not do anything to help the man, Christ came. He is able to bind the brokenhearted. He is able to take the lost sinner, half-dead, lost in trespasses and sins, and help him" [Ibid: 139].

Whether or not this is the appropriate method of interpretation aside, the application is obvious. Any person who needs you help, more to the point, any person who needs Jesus is your neighbor. The do not have to live next door.

Jesus Visits the Home of Martha and Mary in Bethany, 10:38-42.

10:38 - WOMAN NAMED MARTHA. As Jesus and His disciples "were traveling along, He entered a village; and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home." Bethany was the home of Mary, Martha, and their brother, Lazarus (John 12:1).

10:39 - MARY. Martha had "a sister called Mary, who was seated at the Lord's feet, listening to His word."

10:40 - MARTHA WAS DISTRACTED. Martha was "distracted (stressed out?) with all her preparations; and she came up to Him and said, 'Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Then tell her to help me.'"

Jesus did not follow His culture, which limited the role of women. He encouraged women to use their interests and skills for spiritual growth. Several principles emerge from Jesus' relationships with Mary, Martha, and Lazarus (Jn 11:1-44; 12:1-3): (1)

contrary to Jewish practice, Jesus taught and accepted a woman as one able to understand the meaning of His message; (2) even though food is necessary to physical life, excessive attention to housework may keep a person from experiencing even more important spiritual food; (3) Jesus found refuge in a home even though conflicting feelings divided the family members; (4) Jesus taught some of His most powerful truths in a family grief experience; and (5) Jesus experienced human sorrow even though He planned to use this experience to teach others about the power of God [DSB].

10:42 - ONLY ONE THING IS NECESSARY. What one thing does Jesus say is necessary? Did He mean that only one dish was necessary for their meal, rather than the elaborate preparations Martha was making? Or did He mean that devotion to Him is the one necessary thing and everything else is secondary? Possibly both thoughts are contained here. They could have prepared a simple meal and both sisters could have enjoyed being in His presence and hearing Him teach. Mary chose to do that, but Martha was so concerned about all the little things associated with a large meal that she did not avail herself of the rare opportunity to sit at the feet of Jesus Christ.

I knew a lady whose family attended Sunday School and worship services every Sunday, but she stayed home and cleaned the house. She explained that she couldn't enjoy being in church knowing that her house was not clean, the beds made, and dinner prepared. I also remember the time when it was common for someone to invite the pastor to their home after the morning worship service for Sunday dinner. Some of these ladies would not be at church that Sunday morning and when you asked about her a family member would explain, "She had to stay at home and prepare the meal." It was the fellowship in the home to which the pastor looked, not an elaborate meal - as nice as that was. I had rather eat a bologna sandwich and have the family in church than sit down to an elaborate meal if any member of the family had to stay home to prepare it.

Jesus Uses the Model Prayer to Teach Believers to Pray, II:1-13.

11:1 - LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY. It was a common practice for great rabbis to compose special prayers. It is interesting that the disciples did not ask Jesus to teach them how to pray - but "teach us to pray." They often observed Jesus in prayer and it was on one of these occasions that, as He finished praying, "one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray just as John also taught his disciples."

The Old Testament had been full of examples of prayer and teaching on prayer and the people were taught to pray in the synagogue. Children were taught to pray in the home. John the Baptist had taught his disciples to pray. There were many lessons on prayer for those who wanted to pray, but there must have been something unique in the prayers of Jesus - something unique, not only in the prayers, but also in the praying life of Jesus. In other words, another person might have used the same, or similar words, but there was something about the attitude and practice of prayer in Jesus that distinguished Him for anyone else they had ever known. This is what inspired the disciples to ask Him to teach them to pray as He prayed.

The Model Prayer as given here is slightly shortened from the version in Mt 6:9-13. The Model Prayer provides a form for unison prayer in public worship but is much more. It illustrates the relationships and subjects of prayer. It encourages us to learn through practice and imitation how to pray openly to the Father for His kingdom purposes [DSB].

11:2 - AND HE SAID TO THEM. Jesus then taught them by giving them the Model Prayer, commonly called the Lord's Prayer. It is important that we understand that Jesus is responding to the request, "Lord, teach us to pray," by giving them a model prayer. Memorizing and quoting the Model Prayer is commendable, but one could spend a lifetime doing that without ever really learning to pray. Jesus is not giving them a prayer as many parents teach their small children a bedtime prayer which they will say every night. This is not a "Now I lay me down to sleep" prayer, not a "God is good, God is great" prayer to be repeated at each meal.

My wife, Becky, and I never taught our sons "a prayer." We encouraged them to simply talk to God. That led to some interesting experiences, like times when they wanted to pray for a guest and forgot his name. Or the time Geoelli Setimbrini was a guest in our home and I asked six year old John to lead in our prayer of thanksgiving to God for our meal. As soon as he began I realized that he would surely pray for our guest and either forget his name or mispronounce it. But he said, "God bless Geoelli Setimbrini. It was not long before Dr. Leo Eddleman, former president of New Orleans Baptist theological Seminary was in our home and we sat at the table through a very long silence before John recalled Dr. Eddleman's name.

Our concern was not in giving our children a prayer, but in teaching them to pray. Jesus was asked, "Lord, teach us to pray." You never have to teach people how to pray, or what to pray. If you teach them to pray, they will pray, and the more they pray the Holy Spirit will teach them how to pray, what to pray, and when to pray.

When I was in college and seminary I had a lot of classes in homiletics, counseling, systematic theology, church history, pastoral ministries, and intensives in books of the Bible, but I never had one class in "how to pray." Prayer seminars, and books of prayer may be very helpful, but you can learn a lot about prayer without learning to pray. Without a doubt, some of the most powerful prayer warriors in the history would have been at a loss if they had been asked to hold a seminar on "How to Pray. Jesus is not trying to teach what they already knew. He is giving us a model for prayer:

"When you pray, say: 'Father, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. 'Give us each day our daily bread. 'And forgive us our sins, For we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation."

We are more familiar with the Authorized Version:

After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead

us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen (Matt. 6:9-13, KJV).

OUR FATHER. We are encouraged to pray to God as Father. “Out of His fatherly concern for us He hears our prayers and cares for us in our needs. Jesus used the analogy of human parents, imperfect and sinful, who have the best interests of their children at heart, to show that God, who is perfect, certainly has our best interests in His heart and will respond to us in terms of our needs” [DSB]. Jesus invites us to pray, not to some distant and remote deity, but to a personal, intimate, loving Heavenly Father; not to an uncaring, unfeeling, and powerless “force,” but to a compassionate God Who is able to deliver us, protect us, bless us, and have fellowship with us.

HALLOWED. God is holy! We must approach God in full awareness of His holiness. Holiness is the unique and distinguishing nature and character of God. It involves His moral purity but it is more than that. It involves everything God is and everything He does.

Holiness is the boundary that marks off God from all else. It speaks of His transcendence, His being high and lifted over us. It is the constant reminder that God is God and humans are but His creatures. When we come before God in prayer, we should be in an attitude of reverence, respect, and awe. God is not unapproachable; but He must be approached in the proper manner [DSB].

YOUR NAME. In the Bible one’s name denoted more than one’s identity. It represented one’s nature and character. “In the name of” means “in the nature of.” So, in this prayer we recognize the holy Person to whom we are praying. We acknowledge His holiness along with all His other attributes. He is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent, He is love, He is just, He is faithful, He is immutable, and He is approachable, through Jesus.

YOUR KINGDOM COME. God does not save us just to get us into heaven when we die. If that was His only purpose He could take us on to Heaven the moment we are saved and save Himself a lot of aggravation in watching us continually fall short of His glory (Romans 3:23). He saved us to get something of the life of heaven into us here and now. The kingdom of God is the reign of God in the hearts of His children. Christianity is not pie in the sky, bye and byre. If it is anything, it is practical.

I get a little tired of comments about living in the real world. We live in an abnormal world, an it has been an abnormal world since the Fall. God is concerned with establishing His Sovereignty in the hearts and lives of His saints here and now, and for all eternity. In the Matthew’s account (KJV) we find a fitting commentary on the words “Thy kingdom come .” It means, “Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.”

GIVE US EACH DAY OUR DAILY BREAD. The child of God looks to his/her heavenly Father to provide the necessities of life. “Daily bread” was the concern of everyone in First Century Palestine. It is hard to appreciate the significance of that when we have a freezer filled with food, a pantry filled with can goods, and cabinets filled with Hamburger-Helper. Nevertheless, we are just

as dependant upon the grace of God for our daily bread as any other generation in history. If He should withdraw His grace, we would all perish.

FORGIVE US OUR SINS. Petitions for our daily bread and for forgiveness of sins should come

after the address of praise for the holiness of God and the coming of the kingdom. The order is proper: first, a vertical relationship is established from individual below to God above; then, one's relationship to others on a horizontal plane as equals in God's sight builds out of that. Both relationships depend upon our own sense of forgiveness which we receive and extend [DSB].

WE OURSELVES ALSO FORGIVE. In Matthew 6:14-15, we read: "For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions." Sin destroys fellowship with other people. The forgiveness of the Father depends on "forgiveness among the members of the family of God. This is the forgiveness that affects fellowship within the family of God, not the forgiveness that leads to salvation" [RSB].

11:5 - THEN HE SAID. Jesus has more to say on prayer. After giving them a model prayer, He goes on with His effort to teach them to pray. He said,

"Suppose one of you has a friend, and **goes to him at midnight** and says to him, '**Friend, lend me three loaves;** for a friend of mine has come to me from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; and from inside he answers and says, '**Do not bother me; the door has already been shut and my children and I are in bed;** I cannot get up and give you anything.' "I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, **yet because of his persistence** he will get up and give him as much as he needs (5-8).

PERSISTENCE. The main point here is the importance of persistence in prayer. It was because of the man's boldness (v 8, literally "shamelessness"), that his friend finally got up and gave him what he wanted. This teaches that our petitions may well be denied by timidity, fear, pride, or embarrassment. We may approach God with boldness - that is, with confidence, certainly not arrogance or familiarity. As noted above, the word translated "boldness" might be rendered "shamelessness." If that is the case it would refer to the man inside - if so it means that the man being asked for the bread will get up and give it to avoid the shame of refusing to help a friend.

11:9 "SO I SAY. He continues on the subject of prayer:

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 (9-10).

11:11 - A FISH. Jesus, as He so frequently did, provided an application: "Now suppose one of you fathers is asked by his son for a fish; he will not give him a snake instead of a fish, will he? "Or if he is asked for an egg, he will not give him a scorpion, will he?" (11-12). There are eels that resemble fish, but as one who has a fear of snakes, I have made such a study of them that I have never confused a snake with a fish. However, in low light situations a snake may look like a some type of fish , and it is possible that a large scorpion like an egg (vs. 12), as unlikely as that seems to us. In either case the substitutions would be deceitful - and they could be harmful.

11:13 - HOW MUCH MORE. Jesus brings His lesson on prayer to a conclusion with this profound statement: "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?" In Matthew, the Father is giving "good things" (Matt. 7:7-11); whereas Luke has the Heavenly Father giving "the Holy Spirit" to His people. "Luke considers all the good gifts of God to men to be caught up in the matchless gift of the Holy Spirit, an attitude which is further reflected in the Book of Acts" [BSB].

The Old Testament promised God would someday give His Spirit to His people... Jesus announced that the promised gift was available for His followers. All they need to do is ask. For Christ's original disciples to ask for the Spirit was to ask for God's promised age of salvation, thus equivalent to asking for the Kingdom to come (11:2). This prayer found rich answer at Pentecost (Ac 2). Christ's followers are unique because the Spirit indwells us [DSB].

He is rejected by religious leaders, 11:14-36.

He cast a demon out of a mute man, 11:14.

11:14 - THE CROWDS WERE AMAZED. The crowds were amazed because Jesus "was casting out a demon, and it was mute; when the demon had gone out, the mute man spoke."

Some (Scribes and Pharisees) Blaspheme, 11:15-16.

11:15 - BUT SOME. Not everybody was amazed at the miracles of Jesus. Some of them, including religious leaders, said, "He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons."

11:16 - OTHERS. Some were amazed, some blasphemed, and others "to test Him, were demanding of Him a sign from heaven." A fitting testimony to fallen human nature

Sound Doctrine Given About Demons, 17-26.

11:7 - BUT HE KNEW THEIR THOUGHTS. And knowing what was in their thoughts, Jesus said, "Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and a house divided against itself falls.

18 - IF SATAN IS... DIVIDED AGAINST HIMSELF. Jesus asks, “if Satan is also divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? For you say that I cast out demons by Beelzebul. Beelzebul?” Continuing:

"And if I by Beelzebul cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out? So they will be your judges. *"But if I cast out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you."* "When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are undisturbed. But when someone stronger than he attacks him and overpowers him, he takes away from him all his armor on which he had relied and distributes his plunder (19-22).

11:23 - HE WHO IS NOT WITH ME. There is no neutral ground with Jesus, If you are not with Him you are against Him, and He says, “and he who does not gather with Me, scatters.” That is one way you can identify the work of Satan - he is divisive.

11:24 - THE UNCLEAN SPIRIT. A lot of claims are made by those involved in the occult. Another set of claims are made by Christians who study the occult. But if you want to go to the definitive work on Satan, then turn to Jesus. Here, He says: "When the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and not finding any, it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.'"

I well remember as a younger teenager going with a group to her Oral Roberts in Memphis. He held services in a huge tent for weeks, as I recall. Several things disturbed me about the services. First, there was the show of healing. Second, there was the deception associated with it. There may well have been some people healed, and there probably was some psychosomatic healing. Third, It bothered me when I was interviewed in front of the tent by someone who asked, “Isn’t he the greatest preacher you have ever heard?” I said, “No, I had rather hear Brother M. C. Waldrup who preaches in our mission every Sunday.” I also listened by television to R. G. Lee and Billy Graham every Sunday. But when Oral Roberts’ magazine came out the next month we were all quoted as having said that he was the greatest preacher I had ever heard. Fourth, I was disturbed the method of casting out demons. We were told, “When the demons come out of this man they will be looking for a place to go, and if hold onto the back of the chair in front of you they cannot go into you, but if you do not have a point of contact, when they come out of him they will go into you.” Did I believe it? No. Did I grab the chair in front of me? Are you kidding! I was a younger teenager! You could probably still find the indentations made by my fingers if you could locate the chairs.

We must be very careful in our study of Satan - never take him lightly. We should go to the Bible to study Satanism, not to satanic material. Do not open your heart to the influence of the devil. The Bible reveals what we need to know about our greatest enemy. There is satanic influence (temptation), satanic oppression, satanic obsession, and satanic possession.

The warnings of Jesus must be taken seriously: If demons are cast out and have no other place to go they will return to the one from whom they were cast out (vs. 25), if that person’s heart is not filled

with Jesus, it will "then it goes and takes along seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they go in and live there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first" (vs. 26). "Seven other spirits" can only denote utter possession by demons, for "seven" is a number symbolic of completeness. This person is then open to every conceivable type of evil. It is also noteworthy that some demons are more wicked than others!

The True Ground of Happiness, 27-28.

11:27 - BLESSED IS THE WOMB THAT BORE YOU. One of the women in His audience "raised her voice and said to Him, "Blessed is the womb that bore You and the breasts at which You nursed." Compare this with 1:42, where Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, pronounced the virgin Mary and her child blessed. Obeying God and letting Him accomplish His plans through us brings blessing. This woman's statement seems a logical and appropriate, and one wonders how many "Amens" she got. But, let us hold our judgment until we hear Jesus' response.

11:28 - ON THE CONTRARY. The women meant well, let's give her that. But with Jesus it was more important to teach the truth than protect the feelings of this woman. He said, "On the contrary, blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it." Hearing and obeying the Word of God is more blessed than giving birth to and nursing the Messiah. That is absolutely amazing! But we have Jesus' word for it, so it must be true.

Jesus Returns to the Discourse Interrupted By the Woman (vs. 26), 11:29-36.

11:29 - WICKED GENERATION. The crowds were increasing, as Jesus taught the people, and now after a brief interruption, He declared, "This generation is a wicked generation; it seeks for a sign, and yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah." In Matthew's account (Matt. 12:39, 40) the comparison between Jonah's three days and nights in the belly of the great fish, and the similar three-day period that Jesus was in the grave. Here, in Luke, the emphasis is on Jonah's preaching. "The only sign to be given is the call to repentance in which the people should recognize the voice of God. Both emphases are true to the experience of Jesus" [BSB].

11:30 - AS JONAH BECAME A SIGN. Jesus explains His reference to Jonah, "For just as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so will the Son of Man be to this generation."

11:31 - THE QUEEN OF THE SOUTH. "The Queen of the South will rise up with the men of this generation at the judgment and condemn them, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, something greater than Solomon is here." The Queen of the South was the famous queen of Sheba, and the point is that through her visit to see the wealth and to hear the wisdom of Solomon (1 Kin. 10:1-13), this pagan queen was moved to confess the superiority of Solomon's God (1 Kin. 10:9). This generation will stand condemned in judgment by the Queen of the South because they refused to see in Jesus what she saw on Solomon.

11:32 - THE MEN OF NINEVEH. First, Jesus alludes to the sign of Jonah; then He says that generation will stand condemned in the judgment by the Queen of the South. And now He says they stand condemned by the men of Nineveh, who “will stand up with this generation at the judgment and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.”

11:33 - AFTER LIGHTING A LAMP. “No one, after lighting a lamp, puts it away in a cellar nor under a basket, but on the lampstand, so that those who enter may see the light.” It is easy for a modern day American to miss the significance of this. We cannot imagine having to light a lamp for use in the home, except when the power goes out, and then we may light a Coleman lantern which gives off a lot of light. But suppose we had only a candle. When night time comes it would not make much sense to light the candle and place it in the cellar and then try to prepare your meal, read, or visit in the den where there is no light. The Word of God is the light which should not be concealed.

11: 34 - THE EYE. In the previous verse, the Word of God is the lamp which should not be concealed. Here, the eye is “the lamp of your body; when your eye is clear, your whole body also is full of light; but when it is bad, your body also is full of darkness.” The lamp is the eye, and it is either the eye of faith (if it is clear), or it is full of darkness if it is defective (by unbelief).

11:35 - WATCH. “Then watch out, Jesus said, “that the light in you is not darkness.” Light cannot be darkness - the two terms are mutually exclusive. But you can let the light go out and you will be in darkness. One can go blind spiritually, as he can go blind physically.

11:36 - FULL OF LIGHT. The “therefore” lets us know He is drawing a conclusion: “If therefore your whole body is full of light, with no dark part in it, it will be wholly illumined, as when the lamp illumines you with its rays.”

Jesus Is Rejected By Pharisees, Lawyers, and Scribes, 11:37-54.

A Pharisee Criticized Him for Not Observing Ceremonial Law, 37-38.

11:37 - A PHARISEE ASKED HIM TO...LUNCH. Immediately after Jesus’ discourse on Satan and the evil generation that rejected Him, “a Pharisee asked Him to have lunch with him; and He went in, and reclined at the table.” At this point why would a Pharisee invite Him to lunch if not to try to trap Him? It is interesting that, as noted earlier, they reclined at the table, rather than sitting at the table as Americans do - or as Americans did before TV!

11:38 - CEREMONIALLY WASHED. “When the Pharisee saw it, he was surprised that He had not first ceremonially washed before the meal.” The washing is the ceremonial and not hygienic. Ceremonial cleansing was for the purpose of restoring religious purity after one had

touched anything that was religiously defiled or unclean, - even the shadow of a Gentile would defile one.

Jesus Responds to the Hypocritical Criticism, 39-41.

11:39 - YOU PHARISEES CLEAN THE OUTSIDE. Jesus responded to the criticism by the Pharisee for not washing: "...You Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and of the platter; but inside of you, you are full of robbery and wickedness." The Pharisee had apparently sought to put Jesus on the defensive, but He took the offense. Mincing no words, He went the heart of the issue - and the heart of this Pharisee. He drove the point home: "You foolish ones, did not He who made the outside make the inside also?" (Vs. 40).

11:41 - THAT WHICH IS WITHIN. Jesus said, "But give that which is within as charity, and then all things are clean for you." We are either cleansed or defiled, not by outward ceremonies, but by what is inside the individual. If you are clean (spiritually undefiled) within, you will not be contaminated by trivial things like touching a Gentile.

Jesus Denounces the Pharisees and Lawyers, 42-52.

11:42 - WOE TO YOU PHARISEES! The one Person Who was qualified by His Own holiness to judge was the only One Who fully understood the real depravity of these religious leaders. He said, "You pay tithe of mint and rue and every kind of garden herb, and yet disregard justice and the love of God." He did not say that it was wrong for them to such a stickler for tithing - "but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others." There neglect of justice outweighed their commitment to the letter of the law. We must avoid sins of omissions as well as sins of commission.

The principle of tithing predates the Mosaic Law. Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek long before the Law was given to Moses (Gen. 14:20). Jacob (Israel) also practiced tithing long before the Law (Gen. 28:22).

Jesus challenges the Pharisees' failure to observe judgment and love in the law; whereas, on the other hand, He affirms their practice of tithing even insignificant garden vegetables. The full revelation of God in the N.T. reveals that we are to practice one hundred percent stewardship (cf. 2 Cor. 8; 9). All we have belongs to God and should be used for His glory and according to His dictates. Tithing is only the beginning place of Christian stewardship, not the end. God does not want you to give less than a tithe, but He may want you to give so much more through His enabling grace [BSB].

11:43 - WOE TO YOU PHARISEES! Jesus again rebukes these Pharisees, who are seeking to find grounds to condemn Him. "Woe to you" He says, "for you love the chief seats in the

synagogues and the respectful greetings in the market places."

THE CHIEF SEATS. The chief seats were normally reserved for the most important members of the Council.

11:44 - WOE TO YOU! This is the third "woe" uttered against the Pharisees: "Woe to you! For you are like concealed tombs, and the people who walk over them are unaware of it." By "concealed tombs that "tombs were whitewashed to make them very visible, because to step on a grave, even unknowingly, defiled a man (Num. 19:16). Jesus says that the Pharisees cause men to break the law and defile themselves" [RSB].

11:46 - WOE TO YOU LAWYERS AS WELL! The lawyers (specialists in the Law) rightly deduced that whatever Jesus had said about the Pharisees applied them. If they thought they were going put Him on the defensive, they were in for a surprise. "Woe to you lawyers as well!" He continued, "For you weigh men down with burdens hard to bear, while you yourselves will not even touch the burdens with one of your fingers." He continued His indictment against them: "Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets, and it was your fathers who killed them."

"For this reason also the wisdom of God said, 'I will send to them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will kill and some they will persecute, so that the blood of all the prophets, shed since the foundation of the world, may be charged against this generation (49-50).

11:51 - THE BLOOD OF ZECHARIAH. Jesus in indicting them for the blood of the prophets declared, "from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the house of God; yes, I tell you, it shall be charged against this generation." The murder of Zechariah is recorded in 2 Chronicles (24:20-22), the last book in the Hebrew Bible. Abel was the first to be martyred (Gen. 4:8) not just murdered, martyred. From the beginning to the end of the Old Testament, the blood of the prophets had been slain (from Abel to Zechariah spans all the record of the Hebrew Bible).

11:52 - THE KEY OF KNOWLEDGE. He rebukes the Lawyers again: "Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge; you yourselves did not enter, and you hindered those who were entering." What is the "key" of knowledge. This denotes the correct interpretation of God's word. The lawyers have thrown away the key - to interpretation of Old Testament law and prophecy.

Increasing Hostility of The Scribes and Pharisees, 53-54.

11:53, 54 - VERY HOSTILE. "When He left there, the scribes and the Pharisees began to be very hostile and to question Him closely on many subjects, plotting against Him to catch Him in something He might say. When the righteous rebuke the unrighteous, they will either repent or persecute the accuser. From this point on, the entrapment, condemnation, and death of Jesus will be

an obsession with them.

Jesus Warns Against the Hypocrisy of the Pharisees, 12:1-3.

12:1 - LEAVEN OF THE PHARISEES. The crowds, by his time were growing to the point that Luke says, “so many thousands of people had gathered together that they were stepping on one another.” As they walked along Jesus continued to instruct His disciples. In a literal sense a disciple was one who followed after to learn from another. “First of all,” Jesus said, “Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.”

LEAVEN. Leaven was yeast. It was old dough that was stored so that a small amount of it could be added to used in new dough as a rising agent.

HYPOCRISY. The hypocrisy of the Pharisees is spreading like yeast in dough. We might say today that it is spreading like cancer. Hypocrisy is play-acting. It is being “religiously two-faced, claiming to be righteous while ignoring the attitudes and relationships God expects from us” [DSB].

12:2 - NOTHING COVERED. Let the hypocrite beware - "...There is nothing covered up that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known." You may deceive your fellow man but you will never deceive God. God sees through hypocrisy, and all hypocrisy will ultimately be exposed to the hypocrite's eternal shame (vs. 3).

He Taught Followers to Fear God, Not Man, 12:4-7.

12:4 - DO NOT BE AFRAID. Jesus went on to say, “My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that have no more that they can do.” Psychology has been dealing with fear for the last century, but while we may understand fear a little better than we did before, psychologists are not close to eradicating it (as medical science has all but eradicated polio). Jesus' immediate followers were going to need this lesson, for many of them would become martyrs for their faith. Paul is perhaps our greatest example of this lesson. He said, “For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Phil. 1:21). How do you intimidate a person who is not afraid to die - who, in fact, looks forward to going on to be with his Lord? James, the brother of John, would be the first martyr (44 A.D.), but countless numbers would follow him, including nearly all the apostles, save Judas.

12:5 - FEAR THE ONE. "But," Jesus adds, "I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who, after He has killed, has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear Him!" Believers are encouraged not to fear anyone who can only destroy the body. However, every person should fear God. This is a reverential fear of God (a holy awe), not terror of the unknown. God, alone has the power to cast into hell (Rev. 20:10).

HELL. The word for "Hell" in the Greek is *geenna*, the word used for the place of eternal punishment (5:29, 30; 10:28; Mark 9:43, 45, 47; Luke 12:5). The word is transliterated Gehenna from the Hebrew *ge-hinnom*, "Valley of Hinnom," valley, or deep depression south of Jerusalem where Kings Ahaz (2 Chr. 28:3) and Manasseh (2 Chr. 33:6) offered child sacrifices to the pagan god Molech.

Declared unclean by Josiah (2 Kin. 23:10), it became the place to burn refuse and to dispose of corpses (Isa. 66:24; Jer. 31:40). O.T. prophets proclaimed oracles of doom on it, and *ge-hinnom* became a symbol of final judgment (Isa. 31:9; Jer. 7:31, 32; 19:6). It is a place of eternal and unquenchable fire (3:12; Mark 9:43), a lake of fire and brimstone (Rev. 20:10, 14, 15), an eternal fire (18:8, 9; 25:41), a furnace of fire (13:42), an outer darkness (8:12; 22:13; 25:30), and an eternal punishment (25:46). God has power to cast both body and soul into hell (cf. also Luke 12:5) [BSB].

12:6 - FIVE SPARROWS. Sparrows were so cheap that, though they sold two for two pennies (Matt. 10:29), a fifth one was thrown in for the price of four. If God is concerned for each sparrow, surely He is concerned for each believer. People and animals are related, but God places far more value on people than on animal life. "Knowing God places such worth on us, we need not fear the physical or psychological attacks of other people. We need fear only God and be about His business" [DSB]. "Indeed, Jesus said, "the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows" (vs. 7).

Believers Must Confess Christ Before Men, 12:8-12.

- a. "Also I say to you, whoever confesses Me before men, him the Son of Man also will confess before the angels of God" (vs. 8, NKJV).
- b. "But he who denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God" (vs. 9, NKJV).
- c. "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" (vs. 10).

The sin which has no forgiveness is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (cf. Matt. 12:31, note). This consists of attributing to Satan the work of the Holy Spirit, who alone is able to bring men to salvation. Not ignorance, but a fixed character that is hostile to the Spirit, is indicated. Some believe that such sin is confined to the days of Jesus' presence on the earth, and applies to the assigning of His work to Satan (11:14-20). The early church condemned the denial of the Lord as that sin which drives away forever the Holy Spirit, thus the sin without forgiveness [BSB].

- d. Do not worry about how to answer authorities, the Holy Spirit will teach you what to say (11ff).

The Parable of the Rich Fool Teaches About Covetousness, 12:13-21.

The occasion was a request one made of Jesus, 12:13-15.

12:13 - THE FAMILY INHERITANCE. A request from the crowd prompted a discourse on covetousness from Jesus. Some unknown person in the crowd said to Him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me."

12:14 - WHO APPOINTED ME A JUDGE. But He said to him, "Man, who appointed Me a judge or arbitrator over you?" Such an appeal as this to religious authorities to settle inheritance disputes were apparently common in that day, but Jesus refused to arbitrate because He has not come to divide material possessions, but to minister to spiritual needs. His purpose on earth was not to become a secular judge in such matters. This does not mean that He was not concerned for justice, it simply means that He recognized the authority of those who did deal in such matters.

12:15 - GREED. The One Who is the source of all material things also understands what drives fallen man. He warned them to "Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions."

Placing material things over personal relationships has disastrous results. One can become consumed by the bigger is better syndrome. Greed gradually gains control. All energy is expended on material security so that a vision of wealth guides character formation. Life is too short to be centered on the material....Serving God silences our greed and leads to satisfaction with what He supplies. Concern for the need of others replaces worry over personal desires [DSB].

Jesus Responds with the Parable of the Rich Fool, 12:16-21.

12:16 - A PARABLE. To illustrate His lesson, Jesus told them a parable about a rich man whose land was very productive.

12:17 - HE BEGAN REASONING TO HIMSELF. "What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?" This seems perfectly reasonable for those who reason the themselves! Herein is the key to the man's problem - humanistic thinking rather than theistic thinking, thinking as the world thinks and not as the spiritual believer should think.

12:18 - I WILL STORE ALL MY GRAIN. The man in the parable said, "...I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods." We must distinguish between frugality and greed, between saving and hoarding. This may was hoarding all he accumulated.

12:19 - EAT, DRINK AND BE MERRY. He adopts the life-style of the rich and famous: "I

will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry.’ It has been said that man proposes; God disposes. “The present is not permanent. People make plans for the future based on present achievements. Such plans should not be totally self-centered. We need to remember God controls the future. Our plans must include Him, His will, and His work on earth. Our largest building project is His kingdom” [DSB].

12:20 - YOU FOOL! Greedy man does not have the last word. "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?" "Fool" means "senseless one" and refers to someone without reason, and in the Bible it often has a moral and spiritual connotation. Jesus shows the folly of his reasoning: "So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God" (vs. 21).

Jesus Gives Instructions About Material Things, 12:22-34.

Do Not Worry About Your Life, 2.

12:22 - DO NOT WORRY. Jesus said to His disciples, "...do not worry about your life," including, He says, "what you will eat," nor what you will wear.

God Will Take Care of You, 23-24.

"For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. "Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap; they have no storeroom nor barn, and yet God feeds them; how much more valuable you are than the birds!"

Jesus Shows the Folly of Worry, 25-30.

12:25, 26 - BY WORRYING. Jesus illustrates the absurdity of worrying: "And which of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life's span? "If then you cannot do even a very little thing, why do you worry about other matters?" If by worrying you cannot change small things, it is ridiculous to think you can change bigger things by worrying about them.

12:27 - CONSIDER THE LILIES. Again Jesus illustrates the folly of worrying, this time by pointing to the lilies (to which He might have pointed as He spoke). Consider, Said Jesus, "how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; but I tell you, not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these." If God provides for them, and the grass of the field (vs. 28), will He not care for you?

12:29 - DO NOT KEEP WORRYING. "And do not seek what you will eat and what you will drink, and do not keep worrying." That does not mean that you should not work for your food, for

since the Fall man has had to earn his living by the sweat of his brow. But persistent worry and anxiety over food, drink, and shelter denotes a lack of faith in God. Faith and worry are incompatible, mutually exclusive. Neither can coexist with the other. The Bible teaches that the saints shall live by faith, not worry. Worry over food and drink characterizes the “nations of the world” (vs. 30), but not the children of God. “Your Father knows that you need these things” (vs 30a). Paul wrote to Timothy:

Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Everyone who names the name of the Lord is to abstain from wickedness" (Tim. 2:19).

Seek His kingdom, 31.

12:31 - SEEK HIS KINGDOM. Jesus said, "But seek His kingdom, and food, drink, and shelter "will be added to you." The kingdom of God is at once the greatest gift anyone can receive, and the highest priority one can adopt for his life. One of the great challenges for any Christian is the matter of assigning priorities in his daily life. We must follow the example of Jesus and never settle for good when God demands our best, our all. In setting priorities we must remember the importance of giving the Lord His proper place in our daily life, in the family, in the church, on the job, or at school.

Store up Treasures in Heaven, 32-34.

12:32 - DO NOT BE AFRAID. Why should you live with a paralyzing fear in your heart when “your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom?”

12:33 - SELL YOUR POSSESSIONS AND GIVE TO CHARITY. Is it a sin to make money? Is it a sin to possess wealth? No. Is that not what Jesus is saying here? No. There is a difference in working to make a profit and hoarding possessions to the point that the possess us.

New Age (postmodern) media mogul, Ted Turner, who recently pledged one billion dollars to the United Nations to help promote their agenda (which is his passion), chided fellow billionaire Warren Buffett for trying to accumulate as much money as Bill Gates (Microsoft head) rather than giving more to charity (according to the weekly magazine in the November 30, Monroe, News Star, Monroe, LA). Buffett has pledged his entire fortune to charity when he dies, however. Turner is right in that one should share with others, but the Christian’s motives may lead him to set different priorities from Turner in giving to those in need. For one thing, I am more concerned about post-world burning than is global warming!

Some fans of Rush Limbaugh sport “Rush Is Right” bumper stickers and other paraphernalia. I find it interest that some Christian leaders attack Rush in print, but many church leaders are faithful listeners to his talk radio show, the most spectacularly successful radio show in history. I confess - I

am not a die-hard “ditto-head,” but quite often Rush really is right. Prior to Thanksgiving (1997), Limbaugh reviewed something he had written in one of his books (*The Way Things Ought to Be*). The Pilgrims landed in the new world and experimented with socialism for a brief period of time and it was a dismal failure. So they tried a (Christian) capitalism and it was a spectacular success. People were assigned plots of land and whatever it made, they could keep, sell, or trade. People became much more productive. The Pilgrims held that first Thanksgiving to thank God for all He had done to preserve them and to bless them - not to thank the Indians for saving them as some now claim.

It is not a sin to work hard to make a profit. But Jesus states that it is a sin to hoard material possessions and not use what we accumulate to serve Him by helping others. I have observed that many poor people have a more unhealthy attitude toward money than some wealthy people. Greed is sinful, but so is envy, and today many politicians have been trading on class envy to such a degree that millions of people have become enslaved by welfare programs that stifle the incentive to set goals and strive for success. In doing so, those politicians have permitted themselves to become slaves to a group who will not vote for them if they do not continue to fund more and more programs to take from producers and give to non-producers.

Every believer, regardless of where he stands on the socioeconomic ladder, must prayerfully seek the Lord’s will with reference to money, and material possessions. Each believer must determine in his/her own heart just how much they can give Him beyond the tithe, and how much they can do for others. A lot of Christian leaders have spent decades trying to figure out why America has not seen revivals in the last fifty years like some of those the Lord sent a century ago, or two centuries ago. It would be interesting if we discovered that some of the missing elements are poverty, persecution. We are so preoccupied with our possessions, small or great, that we have no concept of sacrificial giving. Our faith is so weak and our witness so anemic that we are disturbing neither Satan, nor the world. For decades the world ignored the church, but that seems to be changing now. We have paid little attention to the suffering of the saints around the world, but with mounting opposition from Hollywood, the music industry, the ACLU, various and sundry social movements, and with the increase of Islam, cults, and the occult persecution is a distinct possibility in America’s future. But that might be what it will take to bring genuine revival.

TREASURE IN HEAVEN. It is far more important to store up “an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near nor moth destroys,” than hoard it - or to take unnecessary risks through reckless speculations because of an unquenchable thirst for more. There is a very good reason for what Jesus is teaching: “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (vs. 34).

Be Watchful, 12:35-13:9.

Believers Must “Be Ready,” 12:35-48.

12:35 - BE DRESSED IN READINESS. The long, flowing outer robe had to be tucked into a man’s belt before he began certain kinds of work, or before any activity requiring any athleticism. The idea is “Be ready.”

12:36 - WHEN HE RETURNS FROM THE WEDDING FEAST. First the groom would have supper with his friends, then would go to the house of his bride to claim her, and then he would return to his own house. By the time he arrived at his own home it might be late but he would expect his servants to be waiting and ready to serve him and his new bride. Jesus taught His disciples that His servants should watch for His return like those servants waited for their master to return from the wedding feast. If there was one night in their entire life when they would not want to be caught napping, it was that night. They would be in a state of constant readiness.

21:37 - BLESSED. "Those slaves whom the master will find on the alert when he comes" will indeed be blessed for their readiness. Jesus said, "he will gird himself to serve, and have them recline at the table, and will come up and wait on them."

12:38 - THE SECOND WATCH. Those servants did not know what hour their master would come - but they knew he was coming. "Whether he comes in the second watch, or even in the third, and finds them so, blessed are those slaves." The second watch was from 9 P.M. to midnight and the third from midnight to 3 A.M. There was no place for slothfulness among those servants, and there is no place for slothfulness in the life of a believer while he is waiting for the Master's return.

12:39 - AT WHAT HOUR. Jesus pointed out "that if the head of the house" knows at what hour the thief is coming, he can take steps to keep him from breaking into his house.

12:40 - YOU TOO, BE READY. This is the point of this lesson: Be ready "for the Son of Man is coming at an hour that you do not expect." Perhaps you have heard a minister explain that the Greek language has a tense that we do not have in English (the Aorist). The Lord takes full advantage of that tense to communicate certain truths to us. For example, the Holy Spirit inspired Paul and others to employ the Aorist tense to show that we are Justification is a once-for-all experience. I can cite no grammatical rule for it, but it seems to me that there is also a spiritual tense (not really, but metaphorically?) implied in eschatological prophecy that should cause each generation to anticipate the return of the Lord at any moment. In fact, I believe His return may be at hand, and I reject any system of thought that would delay His return "as a thief in the night."

12:41 - PETER SAID. Peter asked Jesus, "Lord, are You addressing this parable to us, or to everyone else as well?" As He so often did, Jesus answered him with a question, "And the Lord said, "Who then is the faithful and sensible steward, whom his master will put in charge of his servants, to give them their rations at the proper time?" (Vs. 42).

12:43 - BLESSED IS THAT SLAVE. The slave who will be rewarded is the one whom his master finds working and ready to serve him when he returned. That servant will be put in charge of all the master possesses. And so it is with the Lord - those who are expecting His return and working for Him in anticipation of His return will be blessed (vs. 44). If the master comes and finds a servant not working and unprepared for his return, that servant will be dealt with promptly and decisively (vv.45-46). So it will be when Jesus returns.

12:48 - THE ONE WHO DID NOT KNOW. The just master would take circumstances into

consideration: "The one who did not know it, and committed deeds worthy of a flogging, will receive but few. From everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more." Those who sin with their eyes wide open are going to face a more severe punishment in the judgment of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Will Bring Divisions, 12:49-53.

12:49 - TO CAST FIRE UPON THE EARTH. If His disciples had not understood the gravity of this new movement, His next statement should have had a sobering effect upon them. Jesus said, "I have come to cast fire upon the earth; and how I wish it were already kindled! Fire means judgment.

12:50 - I HAVE A BAPTISM TO UNDERGO. Jesus, knowing what awaited Him in Jerusalem, declared, "how distressed I am until it is accomplished!" The "baptism" to which He referred was His death.

12:51 - DIVISION. Perhaps some recalled the testimony of the shepherds who had spread abroad the message they had heard from the angelic choir: "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased" (Luke 2:14). But here Jesus says, "Do you suppose that I came to grant peace on earth? I tell you, no, but rather division." What did He mean by division?

For from now on five members in one household will be divided, three against two and two against three. "They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law" (vv. 52, 53).

Believers Must Discern the Times, 12:54-56.

12:54 - WHEN YOU SEE. There are many things we can discern in the natural world: "When you see a cloud rising in the west, immediately you say, 'A shower is coming,' and so it turns out." Furthermore, "And when you see a south wind blowing, you say, 'It will be a hot day,' and it turns out that way" (vs. 55).

12:56 - ANALYZE THIS PRESENT TIME . Uncompromisingly, Jesus challenges, "You hypocrites! You know how to analyze the appearance of the earth and the sky, but why do you not analyze this present time?" Though the people could interpret signs in nature, "they could not discern spiritual matters, particularly that their Messiah was present, offering His kingdom to them" [RSB].

Believers Should Make Peace With Adversaries, 12:57-59.

12:57 - JUDGE WHAT IS RIGHT. "And why do you not even on your own initiative judge what is right?, He asks.

"For while you are going with your opponent to appear before the magistrate, on your way there make an effort to settle with him, so that he may not drag you before the judge, and the judge turn you over to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison. "I say to you, you will not get out of there until you have paid the very last cent" (vv. 58-59).

CENT. The NKJV renders it, "the very last mite;" the NIV, "the last penny." This denotes the smallest of copper coins, the least valuable of coins.

Jesus is dealing with common sense issues concerning things they were familiar with in this world. How hypocritical it is for people to claim to be able to judge eternal truths when they cannot settle issues like this.

People Must Repent or Perish, 13:1-5.

13:1 - WHOSE BLOOD PILATE HAD MIXED. "Now on the same occasion (of the above discourse) there were some present who reported to Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices." There is no other account of this shockingly murderous act outside of Luke. Josephus portrays Pilate as a cruel official who was given to such violence. The victims were obviously Galileans who had journeyed to Jerusalem for one of the major feasts where they had been attacked by Pilate's soldiers and killed while they were engaging in sacrifice. The location of the event was probably the court of the priests in the temple at Jerusalem" [BSB].

The Scribes and Pharisees taught that good people are prosperous and successful in life, but the wicked suffered for their sins. Therefore, when they saw one suffer they interpreted it as just punishment for sin. When good things came to a person (wealth, health, success, children) it was because they were righteousness (some still seem to believe that). Any catastrophe like the one mentioned here was an indication that the victims were wicked. Jesus, however, refuses buy into this interpretation. He condemns judging other people and warns the self-righteous to repent because they face judgment themselves.

Rabbi Kushner, in his popular book, *Why Bad Things Happen to Good People*, rejects this false conclusion in favor of another false conclusion. He explains that the reason bad things happen to good people is that, while there is a God, He cannot do everything. Let us be sure Jesus rejects that position as well as the one expressed here.

In 3:1-5, Jesus provides some answers for us on the subject of sin, suffering, and death.

Humans judge one another. People who suffer extraordinarily tend to be ranked as

extraordinary sinners. See the Book of Job. We conclude suffering and persecution is the consequence of intense sin. Jesus refused to grade sinners. He placed all of us in one category. We all deserve death. We will get it if we do not repent and trust Him for salvation. Some sins do have worse consequences in this world than others, but the wages of any sin is death [DSB].

In 13:1-5 we see that all are commanded to repent. No one will be excused. The Lord does not categorize sinners, or demand a greater payment through suffering and sacrifice from some sinners than from others. “All have sinned...” (Ro 3:23) and all must repentance.

13:2 - DO YOU SUPPOSE. Jesus understood where they were coming from . He asked them, "Do you suppose that these Galileans were greater sinners than all other Galileans because they suffered this fate?" Obviously they did.

13: 3 - REPENT. Jesus, speaking with authority, and not as the scribes and Pharisees, asserted, “I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. Paul was inspired to write, “All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

13: 4 - THOSE EIGHTEEN. Jesus’ teaching is method is remarkably consistent, always marked by the element of authority, but easy to follow by those who are spiritual, yet incomprehensible to those who reject Him as Savior. And His use of parables, illustrations and applications leave the listener (and reader) something to think about in the future. Here He asks, “Or do you suppose that *those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell* and killed them were worse culprits than all the men who live in Jerusalem?”

Only Luke records this. The tower of Siloam was (probably) part of “an aqueduct which Pilate constructed with money from the temple treasury” [BSB]. If that is the case, the eighteen people who were killed were “workers who had wrongly accepted such wages. Others think the tower is part of the city wall. The Lord says that those casualties are not due to the unusual wickedness of those people. His warning is to the whole nation, who are as guilty as the few’ [BSB].

13:5 - UNLESS YOU REPENT. Repetition was a basic tenant of rabbinical teaching and Jesus employs it to its greatest advantage: “I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.” There is no universalism in the preaching of Jesus Christ all must repent!

The Parable of the Barren Fig Tree, 13:6-9.

13:6 - A FIG TREE. Jesus “began telling this parable:”

A man had *a fig tree* which had been planted in his vineyard; and *he came looking for fruit on it and did not find any*. “And he said to the vineyard-keeper, ‘Behold, for three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree without finding any. *Cut it down!* Why does it even use up the ground? (vv. 6,7).

This parable should not be confused with the “parabolic miracle of the fig tree which Jesus cursed (Matthew 21:18-22; Mark 11:12-25)” [LOCKYER: 270]. The only thing the two have in common is that fact that there were no figs on either tree. The purpose of this parable (found only in Luke) was to amplify the Lord’s declaration in the verses preceding verses. Someone brought to Jesus attention the account of some zealous Galileans who had been slain by Pilate who mingled their blood with the sacrifices (Josephus provides more information on the incident).

Jesus obviously detected a self-complacent, pharisaic spirit in the attitude of those who brought the incident to His attention. “If those guilty Galileans had been removed by a sudden death, surely the escape of those who deemed themselves worthy of God’s favor could take their preservation from death as an indication of God’s special approbation. They were blind to the fact that a particular calamity does not measure or prove the particular guilt of those who suffer in it” [LOCKYER: 270].

The fig tree is understood as a symbol of Israel. Jesus often made use of the fig tree as an illustration (Matthew 24:32-33; Mark 13:28,29; Luke 21:29-30). The fruitless fig tree symbolizes Israel’s failure to bear fruit for God, even though more than enough time had been given her. There was no excuse for her fruitlessness. So the order is given (vs. 7) to cut down the tree (Israel) and replace it with others who would bear fruit (Matt. 21:18-20). Four other parables of Jesus emphasize the same truth (see Matt. 20:1-15; 21:28-32, 33-46; John 15:1-11).

13:8, 9 - LET IT ALONE, SIR. The vineyard keeper protested, "...Let it alone, sir, for this year too, until I dig around it and put in fertilizer; and if it bears fruit next year, fine; but if not, cut it down." The judgment of God is certain, but the grace and patience of God are immeasurable.

Jesus calls synagogue officials hypocrites after they condemned Him for healing a woman on the Sabbath, 13:10-17.

13:10 - ONE OF THE SYNAGOGUES. It is interesting that Jesus is still receiving invitations to teach in the synagogues. Even though curiosity had turned to opposition, and opposition had turned to hostility, and hostility had bred conspiracy to destroy Him, “He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath.” As a pastor, if I suspect someone of heresy he is not about to get an invitation to speak in our church - not from me, anyway! But by this time the religious leaders were just trying to give Him enough rope to hang Himself. The masses wanted to hear Him, but these leaders obviously thought they could expose Him as a heretic, or a worst undo whatever damage He might have done with His teaching after they had eliminated Him.

13:11- A SICKNESS CAUSED BY A SPIRIT. As Jesus was teaching, “there was a woman who for eighteen years had had a sickness caused by a spirit; and she was bent double, and could not straighten up at all.” Luke, physician that he was, says two things about this woman: (1) her illness was caused by a spirit (demon); and (2) because of the illness she was bent double (a severe curvature of the spine).

13:12 - YOU ARE FREED. When Jesus saw her, "He called her over and said to her, "Woman, you are freed from your sickness." Was He simply moved with compassion? Was He trying once again to prove how much power He had? Was He seeking another conflict with the Pharisees and other officials? All of the above? Or, none of the above?

It is safe to assume that Jesus made an accurate diagnosis of the woman's two problems, and it is safe to assume that He had compassion for her. It is just as safe to assume that He knew that if He healed her on the Sabbath the hatred of the religious leaders would be fanned and that the inevitable eruption move Him more conclusively toward the Cross.

13:13 - AND HE LAID HIS HANDS. Jesus, though it was the Sabbath and though their religious leaders would have been incensed, laid His hands on the woman; "and *immediately* she was made erect again and began glorifying God." The healing was unquestionable and undeniable.

13:14 - THE SYNAGOGUE OFFICIAL. The religious leaders had their case! The official in charge of this synagogue was "indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath." Had the woman been planted there to see what Jesus would do? Not necessarily. But it could not have served their purpose any better. An official in this small synagogue presumed to lecture the Lord of the Sabbath on Sabbath keeping. How utterly amazing! He interrupted Jesus and "began saying to the crowd in response, 'There are six days in which work should be done; so come during them and get healed, and not on the Sabbath day.'"

13:15 - YOU HYPOCRITES. If he had thought to put Jesus on the defensive, or to show Him up as a heretic and turn the people away from Him, this official was in for a surprise. "...the Lord answered him and said, 'You hypocrites, does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the stall and lead him away to water him?'" Jesus taught the teacher the proper application of the Law.

Where have all the hypocrites gone? Has hypocrisy been reduced, like smallpox, malaria, and polio to the ash heap of human history - or at least to a manageable problem? Should there be more preaching on hypocrisy today? It has been my conviction for some time that hypocrisy is a major problem in the church. But it is a problem we do not want to talk about. To be more exact, we may call someone else a hypocrite, but we would never accept the label if applied to us.

We do well to remember the old adage, "There is so much bad in the best of us, and so much good in the worst of us that it hardly behooves any of us to talk about the rest of us." Of course, that has never stopped anybody yet. But when it comes to hypocrisy, we tend to think of *the* hypocrite, rather than thinking of a certain degree of hypocrisy that is in many, or the potential for hypocrisy that is in every one of us. In order to get the hypocrisy out of the church we should stop thinking of the hypocrite we would like to see removed (or converted!), and start thinking of the hypocrisy (or the temptation) in our members. But do not expect people to line up during the invitation to confess that they are hypocrites.

In evangelistic crusades and on popular television ministry programs people stand up and confess

sins of immorality, alcoholism, drug addiction, violence, gambling, or robbery. But I have never heard one of them stand up and say, "I am a hypocrite." Where have all the hypocrites gone? Are they non-existent today - have we gotten beyond that? No, the answer is that hypocrisy is such an ugly sin that we do not want to believe that there is even the tiniest speck of it in our own lives. But until we confess it we will never be forgiven.

3:16 - SHOULD SHE NOT HAVE BEEN RELEASED. If they would release a donkey so that it could drink on the Sabbath, should this "woman...not have been released from this bond on the Sabbath day?" The Jews would attribute all sickness, disease, and evil in the world to Satan. In this case they would be right, for Jesus identifies her affliction as a bond of Satan.

13:17 - ALL THE GLORIOUS THINGS. The Pharisees had baited Him, and thought He had taken the bait. The synagogue official "set the hook." But it had backfired on them. "As He said this, all His opponents were being humiliated; and the entire crowd was rejoicing over all the glorious things being done by Him."

Two Parables Teach About the Kingdom of God, 13:18-21.

Luke follows the first section of his travel narrative with two parables, The Parable of the Mustard Seed and The Parable of the Leaven. Just "how these parables relate to the preceding material is unclear" [NAC: 375].

The Parable of the Mustard Seed, 18-19.

13:18 - THE KINGDOM. Jesus began with a question:

"...*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 threw into his own garden; and it grew and became a tree, and **THE BIRDS OF THE AIR NESTED IN ITS BRANCHES.**"

13:19 - MUSTARD SEED. The mustard seed was the smallest of seeds, but from the Palestinian mustard plant grows in one season to the size of a small tree, or shrub.

The Parable of the Leaven, 20-21.

13:20 - THE KINGDOM. To what shall I compare the kingdom of god?" Jesus answered His own question: "It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three pecks of flour until it was all leavened." Like the parable of the mustard seed, the parable of the leaven denotes the growth of the kingdom of God. "The great tree is filled with every unclean bird, and leaven (a symbol for evil) is found working its way through every part. This is historically true in the worldwide organization of Christian work" [BSB].

Luke's purpose in including these two parables at this point is unclear, as he NAC notes, but since the Holy Spirit is the divine Author of this material, we do not have to speculate about Luke's motives. The purpose seems to be that since the kingdom has already come (13:18-210,

the call to repentance (13:3, 5) should be heeded, for both Jesus' hearers and his readers were living in the last period of God's grace (13:6-9). Although the present realization of the kingdom may seem insignificant (like a mustard seed or a little yeast), its power is already manifest (13:10-13), and its consummation will be immeasurable. The contrast between the size of the mustard and the leaven at the start compared to their final state illustrates this point" NAC: 375, 376].

B. On the Second Stage of the Journey to Jerusalem Both the Teaching of Jesus and the Opposition of Religious Leaders Are Intensified, 13:22-17:10.

The Way to Heaven Is a Narrow Way, 13:22-35.

How Many Are Saved, 22-23.

13:22 - PASSING THROUGH. Jesus and His disciples were "passing through from one city and village to another, teaching, and proceeding on His way to Jerusalem" and He continued teaching them as they walked along. The time was running out and He sought to teach them at every opportunity.

13:23 - SAVED. Someone asked Jesus, "Lord, are there just a few who are being saved?" The Jews, as children of Abraham, saw themselves as the "saved." The question here seems to be either (1) whether *all* Jews would be saved, or (2) whether a few Gentiles would be saved. The most conservative Jews could not conceive of any Gentile being saved, and might well question whether all Jews would be saved. The most liberal among them might entertain the thought of a few Gentiles being saved. Of course, they did accept proselytes, so some think of the few Gentiles who become Jews (Frank Sinatra, Sammy Davis, Jr. were proselytes).

The Narrow Door. 24-27.

13:24 - NARROW DOOR. Jesus answering the question, "How many are being saved," said, "Strive to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able." Jesus Christ is Himself, "the narrow door" through which each person must enter into the Kingdom of God. This is a very narrow view, but it is God's way and there is no other. Apart from Jesus Christ there is no other way to heaven or the Kingdom of God. 6 Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me" (John 14:6).

Former President, Jimmy Carter, in November, 1997 made the statement that Mormons were simply another Christian denomination. Someone wrote in a letter to the editor of the Monroe, Louisiana, *NewsStar*, December 3, 1997, that President Carter does not either the Bible or Mormonism. She is

right, for Mormonism is a cult that peaches a Jesus that is totally alien to the New Testament. Jesus is the narrow door (He said, "I am the door," John 10:7, 9), and Peter said, "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Paradoxically, the Mormons seek openly to identify themselves as another Christian denomination, and at the same time they are teaching their members that they are the only true church. Furthermore, according to them, Christina pastors are labeled as demons. No one seems more adamant in insisting that Mormonism is simply another Christian denomination than members of Christian churches who have friends or relatives who are caught up in the Mormon cult.

13:27 - DEPART FROM ME, ALL YOU EVILDOERS. The lost will plead and protest, but Jesus says that once the door is closed it is too late. No more will be permitted to enter, regardless of their appeals to their merit, or to their religion.

Weeping and Gnashing of Teeth," vs. 28- 30.

13:28 - ABRAHAM AND ISAAC AND JACOB. Being Jewish would not guarantee them a place in heaven: "In that place 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, but yourselves being thrown out."

13:29 - THEY WILL COME. Who will come? Gentiles will come "from east and west and from north and south, and will recline at the table in the kingdom of God." This was shocking news to the Orthodox Jew.

13:30 - SOME ARE LAST WHO WILL. Here is another shocker: Some will be placed last who thought they were first - and were first in the eyes of others on earth. He also said that "some are first who will be last." Are there degrees of rewards in heaven? If in doubt, please read it again.

Jesus Responds to a Threat from Herod, 31-33.

13:31 - HEROD WANTS TO KILL YOU. As Jesus taught the people, some of the Pharisees approached, saying to Him, "Go away, leave here, for Herod wants to kill You." Are these sympathetic Pharisees (like Nichodemus)? Or was there some other reason for the warning? It would be only a short time before many of the Pharisees would be joining the Sadducees the plot to have Jesus killed.

13:32 - THE THIRD DAY I REACH MY GOAL. God is still in control, and Jesus will die at the right time and in the right way. No power on earth could change that. With this knowledge, there was no way they were going to frighten Him. "...He said to them, "Go and tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I reach My

goal." Herod Antipas is the one Jesus calls a fox, probably because of his cunning and deceitfulness.

...Rabbinic literature uses "fox" to describe a man as "meaningless" or "insignificant." "Today and tomorrow and the third day" means that God's timetable is unfolding for Jesus, and no king like Herod could shorten the time. When His work is accomplished, His death and resurrection will be its perfection [BSB].

Jesus Weeps over Jerusalem, 33-35.

13:33 - A PROPHET WOULD PERISH OUTSIDE OF JERUSALEM. Jesus would follow His Own schedule in order to fulfill His mission, and there was nothing Herod or anyone else could do to stop Him.

13:34 - O JERUSALEM, JERUSALEM. Jesus lamented, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, just as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not have it!"

13:35 - YOUR HOUSE IS LEFT TO YOU DESOLATE. This prophecy was fulfilled when the Temple was destroyed by Titus in A.D. 70; and when the Jews were expelled from Jerusalem under Hadrian in A.D. 135.

Some think the "house" is the temple which is to be destroyed. Some think it to be the city of Jerusalem which likewise will be destroyed. Still others think the reference is to the entire nation that is to be decimated. This nation that is unwilling to accept His salvation will not see Him until it welcomes His return as its true Savior and Lord [BSB].

BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD! This seems to fulfill the blessing promised in Psalm 118:26: "Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the LORD; We have blessed you from the house of the LORD." The fulfillment of this will be at the second coming of Christ when times are so bad people will be praying for the return of the Lord.

Guidelines for Citizens of the Kingdom of God, 14:1-14.

Jesus Rebukes Pharisees Who Condemn Him for Healing on the Sabbath, 1-6.

14:1 - THEY WERE WATCHING HIM CLOSELY. It is interesting that, though the Pharisees are becoming increasingly more antagonistic toward Him, Jesus makes no effort to avoid them. "It happened that when He went into the house of one of the leaders of the Pharisees on the Sabbath to eat bread, they were watching Him closely." The Greek word translated "happened" is *ginomai*, which is from a root word meaning "to come into being," "to happen," or "to become."

Sometimes someone today is asked to explain why they did a certain thing and they answer, "It just happened." Jesus' going to the home of one of the leaders of the Pharisees was not something that just happened. They were watching Him like a hawk in order to find something they could use to discredit Him, or failing in that, to destroy Him. Jesus makes no effort to avoid the inevitable conflict. He was fearless in face of the mounting hostility and developing conspiracy.

14:2 - DROPSY. There in front of Jesus, in the home of this Pharisee, "was a man suffering from dropsy." Dropsy was a swelling of the body caused by the retention of excessive fluid. Remember that they may have reclined at a table in a courtyard where people could gather.

14:3 - IS IT LAWFUL. Jesus has often confounded them by answering a question with a question, but here He disarms them by asking their opinion before He acts. He asked the lawyers and Pharisees, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?"

14:4 - THEY KEPT SILENT. His question effectively silenced them. Under the circumstances they could not have been more pressed for an answer. He could not have silenced them any more if He had asked, "Have you stopped beating your wife?" If you answer that question with a "Yes," it means that you used to beat her but you have stopped. If you say, No," it means that you still beat your wife. These Pharisees want to discredit Jesus in the eyes of the people, but they were in danger of repeating an earlier fiasco when, to their chagrin, the people cheered Jesus and disregarded them. When there was no response, Jesus "took hold of him and healed him, and sent him away."

14:5 - WHICH ONE OF YOU. Now He asks another question of them - the best defense is a good offense. "...Which one of you will have a son or an ox fall into a well, and will not immediately pull him out on a Sabbath day?"

According to the Damascus Document (a treatise related to the Qumran community, but discovered earlier in Cairo in 1896), it is specifically forbidden to raise an animal out of a pit or ditch on the Sabbath. The rabbis seem to have a more humane view of such a situation. Some manuscript evidence favors the reading "son" instead of "donkey" (NU, M son) [BSB].

I grew up on a farm in the Mississippi delta, near Sledge. My father, Joe B. Sanders, never worked on Sunday. In fact, he shut everything down early on Wednesdays so we could go to prayer meeting. Two other farmers in the church would state that they didn't believe in working on Sunday, but each fall they would watch a non-member begin picking cotton on Sunday, and invariably one of them would send his hands to the field on Sunday, and the next Sunday the other one would send his to the field. One of them would say to my Father, "Joe, I know it's wrong, but you know what the Bible says - the ox is in the ditch."

Several years later our neighbor said the same thing to me, explaining why he had run his tractor the previous Sunday." I said, "My friend, God's concern was for the suffering ox, not the farmer's profit."

14:6 - THEY COULD MAKE NO REPLY. That is, they could make no reply that would not entrap themselves - and their purpose was to trap Him. If there had been no audience it might have been different, but these religious leaders might have easily discredited themselves.

A Lesson on Humility, 7-11.

14:7 - THE PLACES OF HONOR. When Jesus "noticed how they had been picking out the places of honor at the table," He told the invited guests a parable.

14:8, 9 - DO NOT TAKE THE PLACE OF HONOR. "When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor,"

for someone more distinguished than you may have been invited by him, and he who invited you both will come and say to you, 'Give your place to this man,' and then in disgrace you proceed to occupy the last place (8b-9).

The "place of honor" was "likely the center place of three on a couch, that in turn was one of three couches arranged in a group, like the letter 'u'" [BSB].

14:10 : FRIEND, MOVE UP HIGHER. "But when you are invited, go and recline at the last place, so that when the one who has invited you comes, he may say to you, 'Friend, move up higher'; then you will have honor in the sight of all who are at the table with you." This is just plain common sense and if people stopped to think about it they would see it. But if you have an inflated sense of your own importance, you feel you deserve the place of honor.

A PRACTICAL EXERCISE: Paraphrase this parable, or put it in a modern setting so that it has an application today.

14:11 - EXALTS HIMSELF. Jesus points out the great lesson of the parable: "For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." God is not impressed by your sense of self-esteem. Humanism (Modernism) and New Age (Postmodernism) advocate high self-esteem, self-worth, and self-love. Genuine Theism follows the Scripture which reveals the mind of God: "But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble," (James 4:6).

Advice Concerning Inviting Guests, 12-14.

14:12 - DO NOT INVITE YOUR FRIENDS. Jesus proceeded to lecture His host, a leading Pharisee, "When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, otherwise they may also invite you in return and that will be your repayment." Is He teaching that it is wrong to invite friends and family to a meal. No, but one

should never feel that he is spiritually superior to others because he invites those who can, and probably will reciprocate. So this is not a prohibition against showing hospitality to friends or relatives, but it is a warning against showing hospitality only to those who will reciprocate.

14:13, 14 - INVITE THE POOR. "But when you give a reception, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, since they do not have the means to repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous." Again, this is not a prohibition against inviting family and friends, but one should never think that he has done that is spiritually significant when he only invites those who can return the favor. When he invites those who cannot return the favor, he is acting unselfishly.

There are people who enjoy giving gifts to people who can, and probably will reciprocate in the future. When you go to a restaurant with a friend, you may pick up the check, assuming that on another occasion he will return the favor. It is a different matter to take someone out to eat and pay for the meal when you know they cannot afford to reciprocate.

The Parable of the Great Supper, 14:15-24.

14:15 - BLESSED. Jesus had just rebuked the Pharisees and given them instructions in inviting guests to a banquet. When "one of those who were reclining at the table with Him heard this, he said to Him, 'Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!' Note that Jesus was not the one who uttered this benediction, but one of the guests. "Blessed is everyone" seems like a reasonable enough comment, but we should not miss the point it made for the express purpose of dismissing what Jesus had said. What a presumption! What pious hypocrisy!

14:16 - A MAN WAS GIVING A BIG DINNER. Jesus proceeds with The Parable of the Great Banquet:

But He said to him, "A man was giving a big dinner, and he invited many; and at the dinner hour he sent his slave to say to those who had been invited, 'Come; for everything is ready now.' But they all alike began to make excuses. The first one said to him, '*I have bought a piece of land* and I need to go out and look at it; please consider me excused.' "Another one said, '*I have bought five yoke of oxen*, and I am going to try them out; please consider me excused.' Another one said, '*I have married a wife*, and for that reason I cannot come' (16-20).

14:21 - BRING IN HERE THE POOR. Angered at the excuses of his peers, the man ordered his servant, "Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the city and bring in here the poor and crippled and blind and lame."

14:23 - GO OUT INTO THE HIGHWAYS. When the poor, crippled, blind and lame had been invited there was still room for more so "...the master said to the slave, 'Go out into the

highways and along the hedges, and compel them to come in, so that my house may be filled."

14:24 - NONE OF THOSE MEN. The man said, "None of those men who were invited (and made excuses) shall taste of my dinner." Preachers have often warned that "the road to hell is paved with good intentions." It is also paved with excuses. These excuses were rather flimsy, but whether the excuse is weak or strong, those who make excuses to justify rejection of the invitation of the Lord face grave consequences.

The Conditions of Discipleship, 14:25-35.

Jesus Reiterates the Conditions, 25-26.

14:25 - LARGE CROWDS. The preceding parable (16-24) deals with the open, compelling invitation to come to Jesus Christ for His great salvation. In 25-33 He cautions people of all ages to consider very carefully the high cost of commitment to Christ. Salvation is free, but it is never cheap. Every believer must count the cost of discipleship. Periodically, every Christian should take an inventory to see what price he, or she, is paying for their commitment to Christ. If there is no cost, there is something missing in the commitment.

14:26 - DOES NOT HATE HIS OWN. Jesus now makes a shocking statement: "If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple." But we are commanded to love, not hate others! This neither encourages, nor justify malice toward one's family and friends. Rabbis often used extreme opposites to teach people, and Jesus is doing just that. What He is saying that our devotion and commitment to Jesus Christ and our devotion to our family should be poles apart - as we would say today, it should be as far apart as east is from west. Devotion to family is very important, but it must take second place to your devotion to the Lord.

Taking up the Cross, vs. 27.

14:27 - HIS OWN CROSS. Jesus declared, "Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple." The expression to "bear the cross" was used metaphorically in Jesus' day, meaning "to be put to death." "Even before His passion, His disciples would understand the requirement that they must be willing to suffer martyrdom. "And come after" also acknowledges a commitment of life itself" [BSB].

Jesus Illustrates His Point, 28-33.

14:28 - CALCULATE THE COST. Jesus now makes a practical application of the principle of taking up the cross and following Jesus. "For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower,

does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it?" Just as a builder must calculate the costs required to finish his project (vv. 29-30), the one who follows Jesus must calculate the cost. There is not easy believism here!

14:31 - WHAT KING. To reinforce His argument, Jesus uses another example: "What king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not first sit down and consider whether he is strong enough" to win the battle, and if not he will seek peace (vs. 32).

14:33 - GIVE UP ALL HIS OWN POSSESSIONS. Jesus is making one bold requirement of discipleship after another. Here He says, "...none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions." In other places the New Testament us to make wise investments and to be good stewards of all we possess. Is He now contradicting that. The principle is positive, not negative. When you become a Christian you and all you have belongs to the Lord. He may lead one to sell all he has and give it to the poor, another to invest wisely and help support his church provide for missionaries, and still another to build a business in order to provide jobs for a community. When you accept Jesus as Lord - and that is the only way you can accept Him - you give up all your possessions to Him. Your possessions become His possessions when He possesses you. You will be held accountable for the way you use them. You must use them for His glory. With that in mind, it is inconceivable that a Christian would take that which belongs to Jesus and stick it into a slot machine or a video poker machine, buy a lottery ticket with it, buy alcohol or drugs with it, use it to purchase pornography, or "go to the boat" with it. It is His money! You are the steward, and you will give an account for the way you use it.

Unseasoned Salt Is Useless," 34-35.

14:34, 35 - SALT. Jesus said, "Therefore, salt is good; but if even salt has become tasteless, with what will it be seasoned? It is useless either for the soil or for the manure pile; it is thrown out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear." Salt was highly valued in Jesus' time, and He often uses it as an illustration (Matt. 5:13; Mark 9:50).

Salt was formed by evaporation of water from the Dead Sea. It sometimes lost its characteristic saltiness through exposure to the air and to other chemicals. Some interpreters feel that because salt was very valuable, it was sometimes intentionally adulterated with inferior substances to give it more volume. Jesus is emphasizing the importance of the influence of Christians on those about them, and warning against the loss of that influence [BSB].

Disciples are the salt of the earth. The life of a true disciple flavors and preserves the society. Such saltiness is an essential part of a disciple's character which will endure to the end. For Christian influence to permeate and preserve society, disciples must get involved in the lives and social affairs of our day. Disciples do not withdraw from society to preserve our holiness. Disciples involve themselves in all parts of society to give it a righteous flavor [DSB].

Jesus Receives (and seeks) Sinners, 15:1-2.

Sinners Listen to Jesus, vs. 1.

15:1 - TAX COLLECTORS AND THE SINNERS. Scribes and Pharisees were continually trying to trap Jesus, but the crowds of people the Pharisees dismissed as worthless, tax collectors and other sinners, “were coming near Him to listen to Him.” Those filled with their own sense of self-esteem and importance often reject Jesus, especially those Thomas Sowell (*Vision of the Anointed*) calls the “Anointed.” These people seem to have a sense of destiny, and purpose (as though anointed for it), and that purpose if life it to do what is best for the “benighted” - whether they want it or not. You see the “Anointed” know what is best for them. The Pharisees and Scribes had this sense of an anointing up to a point. They knew what was best for all these people, and could condemn them for their sins, but they did not get involved with them to try to help them personally.

The Pharisees and Scribes Condemned Him, vs. 2.

15:2 - THIS MAN RECEIVES SINNERS. “Both the Pharisees and the scribes began to grumble, saying, ‘This man receives sinners and eats with them.’ *Christ Receiveth Sinful Men!* This is what was so disturbing to the religious leaders. To them, condemnation of “sinners” saw a part of their righteousness. They hated what God hates without loving what God loves - they hated the sin and the sinner. God hates the sin but loves the sinner.

Three Parables Show God’s Love for Sinners, 15:3-32.

NOTE: The point of the three parables which follow is the joy God experiences when a lost soul is saved (recovered).

God's joy is to forgive and restore. The trilogy exhibits an increasing preciousness in value: a sheep, a coin lost from the headdress (a portion of the dowry) of a married woman, and a son. The vivid concept of the tragedy of lostness recurs throughout the parables, but is ultimately overshadowed by the heavenly joy which follows the finding of the precious object of devotion. Again the focus of heaven is depicted as resting upon the question of salvation above all else [BSB].

The Parable of the Lost Sheep, 3-7.

15:3 - HE TOLD THEM THIS PARABLE. This is the first of three parables Jesus tells in response to the disdain of the Pharisees and scribes for tax collectors (publicans) and sinners. Jesus

is very much interested in those the Pharisees reject.

15:4 - A HUNDRED SHEEP. This is the parable:

"What man among you, *if he has a hundred sheep and has lost one* of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open pasture and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, '*Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!*' (5-6).

15:4 - LOST. In this one chapter the lostness of man is emphasized eight times (4, 6, 8, 9, 17, 24, 32). All those without Jesus Christ are lost. Jesus came to seek and save lost people. Those who believe in Him are saved.

15:6 - REJOICE. There is rejoicing in heaven when one sinner is saved, and here on earth Christians should rejoice when one lost person turns to Christ.

15:7 - WHO NEED NO REPENTANCE. By this He means the scribes and Pharisees, who thought they needed no repentance.

The Parable of the Lost Coin, 8-10.

15:8 - TEN SILVER COINS. Jesus follows the Parable of the Lost Sheep with the Parable of the Lost Coin:

Or what woman, if she has ten silver coins and loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, "Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin which I had lost!" (8-9).

15:8 - WHAT WOMAN. "The second parable using a woman suggests that many women followed Christ and heard Him teach. silver coins. Drachmas, Greek coins, each equivalent to a Roman denarius, a day's wage" [RSB]. The lighting of a lamp would have been necessary because the house in which she lived would have no windows, and even today we have to turn on lights because most windows are covered by drapes or blinds.

15:10 - THERE IS JOY. "In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents." This is a statement that may be a difficult for us to appreciate at this point in our experience, but it is a fact that Heaven rejoices in the salvation of every sinner. Christians who know what it means to be lost, and know what it means to be saved, should also rejoice in the salvation of lost souls.

The Parable of the Lost Son, 11-32.

15:11 - A MAN HAD TWO SONS. Thus begins the Parable of the Lost Son (The Prodigal Son)- or is the Parable of Two Sons, or even the Parable of the Older Son?

15:12 - GIVE ME THE SHARE OF THE ESTATE. “The younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of the estate that falls to me.’ So he divided his wealth between them.” This would have been an unusual request, and though it is not unusual for a man to divide his property between his sons before his death. In this case it proved to be unwise. According to the O.T. where there were two brothers, the elder should receive two-thirds and the younger one-third of their father's estate (Deut. 21:17).

15:13 - A DISTANT COUNTRY. “And not many days later, the younger son gathered everything together and went on a journey into a distant country, and there he squandered his estate with loose living.” I used to hear the expression, “From shirt sleeves to shirt sleeves in three generations,” obviously based upon observations that what one man accumulates, his son might keep and even expand, but often times by the next generation the wealth is squandered.

This young man's first decision, to gather all his inheritance together and go on “a journey into a distant country,” was foolish, inconsiderate of his father's work of a lifetime and his generous gift, and very poor stewardship of his possessions.

“He squandered his estate with loose living.” It does not take long to go through a fortune in pursuit of earth's pleasures - cars, travel, alcohol, drugs, immorality, and gambling (calling it “gaming” makes it no less foolish and risky). It is a shame and an insult to the memory of one's parents when the last pieces of jewelry are pawned for enough money to go back to the casino or “the boat.”

15:14 - A SEVERE FAMINE. “Now when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred in that country, and he began to be impoverished.” When one is young and having fun, he never expects a famine, but one does not have to be young to be unprepared for a famine. Abraham was a mature man, and a good business man, but when God called him and ordered him to leave Ur of the Chaldees and go to distant (promised) land, we read that as he traveled, he often stopped to build an altar and call on the name of the Lord. But when he came into the Promised Land and found that a famine had hit the land, instead of building an altar and calling on the name of the Lord, he fled to Egypt, where he committed a detestable sin. Rebuked by a pagan Pharaoh, he returned to the place of the last altar (Bethel). Abraham's behavior is shocking, and there is no justifying it. But there is one explanation: He never expected to find a famine in the Land of Promise. That is the last place one anticipates a famine, and when he discovers a famine in his land of promise, there is always the temptation to flee, maybe not to Egypt, but away from the Lord, or the place to which the Lord has called him.

15:15 - FEED SWINE. "So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine." He had been reduced, not only to working for a despised Gentile, but to feeding loathsome swine. It got worse: "And he would have gladly filled his stomach with the pods that the swine were eating, and no one was giving anything to him" (vs. 16). He had hit rock bottom.

15:17 - HE CAME TO HIS SENSES. "But when he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger!'" In the age of psychology, it is perhaps only natural that some will see this as the key to the whole parable, but let me caution against such conclusion. Let me urgently caution against it.

I do not recall whether I heard Dr. C. Roy Angell tell of his experience or read it in one of his books, but it reveals an important truth. Dr. Angell, one of Southern Baptists' greatest story tellers, said that when he was a young seminary student, he went to visit his uncle, who was pastor of a large church. When his uncle invited him to preach that Sunday, he selected this passage and when he came to this verse, he really emphasized this point - "When he came to himself" (KJV). He spent most of his time developing the point and stressing how important it is to come to yourself. At the close of the service there was an incredible response from the congregation as they praised him for such a simple and wonderful message. He was elated as he stepped into the buggy with his uncle. Anxious for his approval, he asked what he thought of the sermon.

His uncle said, "Roy, it was important for the young man come to himself, but nothing happened because he came to himself. His circumstances were the same - he was still in the pig pen feeding swine. Nothing changed until he went to his father!" His uncle was right. When he came to his senses, that was conviction. When he went to his father and confessed, that was repentance.

15:18 - FATHER, I HAVE SINNED. "I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight.'" This was the decision that brought redemption and restoration - this is repentance. "I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight" is a confession of sin, not an excuse about ignorance, inexperience, or bad luck. Today, Gen-Xers are quick to say, "I was stupid." They do not really mean they were stupid, but "I made a bad decision." You will never receive the forgiveness of the Heavenly Father until you confess that you are a sinner.

One other point should be stressed, and this is a good place for it. Salvation involves intellect (mind), volition (will), and emotions (feelings). Too often, people maximize feelings and minimize the mind "I just don't feel anything." Emotions are involved in the conviction, but a conscious decision must be made in mind and then the person must be willing to go to the father. If you act on what God reveals that you must do (in His word and through the Holy Spirit), He will take care of your feelings. Repentance is a change of mind that is reflected in changed behavior.

15:19 - WORTHY. This young man confessed, "I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men." God redeems us by His grace - never on the base of our worth. Grace Greater Than Our Sins!

15:20 - HIS FATHER SAW HIM AND FELT COMPASSION FOR HIM. "So he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him." This is grace. One wonders how much time his father spent watching the road looking for his son. God, through His infinite grace, not only watches for us - He send Jesus to seek and save the lost.

15:21 - I AM NO LONGER WORTHY TO BE CALLED YOUR SON. "And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' " He has squandered his birthright and wasted his inheritance. He confessed his unworthiness and placed himself at the mercy of his father.

15:22, 23 - BUT THE FATHER. His father did not say, "See, I told you son!" Rather than berate his humbled son, he said to his slaves, "Quickly 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 fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate." This was an occasion for celebration. Even the angels in heaven celebrate when one lost person is saved.

15:24 - THIS SON OF MINE WAS DEAD. The excited father rejoiced: "This son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found." And they began to celebrate, just as we should celebrate when a lost person is saved.

15:25 - HIS OLDER SON. "Now his older son was in the field, and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing." The older son has taken his two-thirds share of the father's inheritance and stayed home and worked to manage the estate and to increase his possessions. There is nothing wrong with that. He would be commended by the world. But when he heard the celebration "he summoned one of the servants and began inquiring what these things could be."

15:27 - YOUR BROTHER HAS COME. "And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has received him back safe and sound.' "

15:28 - HE BECAME ANGRY. Rather than join the celebration, "...he became angry and was not willing to go in; and his father came out and began pleading with him."

15:29 - I HAVE BEEN SERVING YOU. The pharisaic older brother answered his father, "Look! For so many years I have been serving you and I have never neglected a command of yours; and yet you have never given me a young goat, so that I might celebrate with my friends." He said, "I have served," and "I have never neglected a command of yours," but "you have never given me a young goat, so that I might celebrate with my friends." We find part of his problem in the personal pronouns: "I" and "me." He loved only himself and he had no compassion for his won brother.

15:30 - THIS SON OF YOURS. "But when *this son of yours*," he sneered, "came, who has

devoured your wealth with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him.” Jesus is painting a word picture of the attitude of the scribes and Pharisees.

15:31, 32 - YOU HAVE ALWAYS BEEN WITH ME. “And he said to him, ‘Son, you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours.’” The older brother hated his brother and resented him for squandering his inheritance. I have heard preachers charge that the older brother’s problem was that he had wanted to live the lifestyle had younger had lived (to be worldly) but had piously stayed home and worked, and that was why he resented his brother. There is no basis for that conclusion, however. He is a legalist, and to such a person legalism has its own rewards.

15:32 - WAS LOST AND HAS BEEN FOUND. The father, who loved both sons and wanted them to love each other, said, “But we had to celebrate and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead and has begun to live, and was lost and has been found.” This is a reason to rejoice.

This parable illustrates the attitude of the Pharisees perfectly. They are proud of their rules, their laws, their superior religious life. And they hold those whom they sinners in contempt. There is no mercy in them, no compassion for the lost, and no joy when they are saved.

Where have all the Pharisees gone. Is it not wonderful that we have no Pharisees around today? But what about Pharisaism?

Jesus Reveals the Godly Attitude Toward Wealth, 16:1-31.

The Parable of the Unjust Steward, 1-13.

16:1- A RICH MAN WHO HAD A MANAGER. Jesus followed the parables of the Lost Coin, the Lost Sheep, and the Lost Son with yet another parable - The Parable of the Unjust Steward (or the Shrewd Manager.) “There was a rich man who had a manager a, and this manager was reported to him as squandering his possessions.”

MANAGER. One who handled the business of the owner. The NKJV has steward. A steward, or manager had to be responsible with another’s money.

Money is a means to other ends and not an end in itself. It should be used to establish relationships with people rather than for the accumulation of things. Its use must display our honesty and trustworthiness. Serving the Master, not money, is the central value of life. Such values go directly opposite to normal human, worldly values, but they win God’s approval [DSB].

16:2 - AN ACCOUNTING. When the owner heard received some bad reports about the manager, he demanded an accounting of his management, and announced, “you can no longer be manager.”

16:3 - WHAT SHALL I DO. The manager, upon hearing that he had been terminated, said to himself, "What shall I do, since my master is taking the management away from me? I am not strong enough to dig; I am ashamed to beg." "I cannot dig" indicates either that the manager felt that he was physically unable to do manual work, or that having been manager, he was not willing to do manual work.

16:4 - I KNOW WHAT I SHALL DO. The man, not willing to face his termination with dignity and integrity, devised a scheme: "...when I am removed from the management people will welcome me into their homes."

16:5 - HE SUMMONED EACH ONE OF HIS MASTER'S DEBTORS. This unjust steward called in his master's debtors and "began saying to the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' The first one said, 'A hundred measures of oil.' The steward told him to 'Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.'" He made a similar deal with another debtor. The reduction of the debt had not been authorized by his master. What this manager was doing was ingratiating himself to the debtors at the expense of his master.

16:8 - THE SONS OF THIS AGE. At first we may be surprised by the owners reaction: "And his master praised the unrighteous manager because he had acted shrewdly; for the sons of this age are more shrewd in relation to their own kind than the sons of light."

This manager made a profound statement that answers an age old question: Why is it that many worldly people experience greater succeeds in this world than their Christian neighbors? Thanks to modern computer jargon, there is a simple explanation: The world is user-friendly to those of the world! They have different ethical parameters. The lost person is also more likely to have the cooperation of Satan in their exploits.

ACTED SHREWDLY. The owner commended the steward for his ingenuity - not the dishonesty. The steward was cunningly taking advantage of his present position to prepare for some the future position - like a fired person today who goes behind the scenes and steals some accounts from his firm and begins his own business with pirated accounts. The point he that we must use what we resources and opportunities we have in this life in the service of our Master in order to assure rewards in heaven.

Jesus said, "And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by means of the wealth of unrighteousness, so that when it fails, they will receive you into the eternal dwellings" (v. 9). What is the Lord's point? "We should use money (wisely, never dishonestly) to help win people so that they will welcome us in heaven" [RSB].

Unrighteous mammon" (wealth) to the Pharisees is money acquired legally, but tainted in the sight of God. Jesus, however, uses the term to refer to all material resources not used according to the will of God. "They" is a circumlocution for "God" and does not refer to the "friends." "Everlasting home" is a circumlocution for "heaven." "Mammon" is an Anglicized form of an Aramaic word that signifies "that

in which one trusts"; hence, frequently in the Targums (early Aramaic translations of portions of the O.T.) it is a term for "money" [BSB].

16:10 FAITHFUL. Jesus states a fundamental principle of all people of all ages: "He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much." Every believer can call stories that illustrate this principle. We see in the church all the time. That explains why about ten percent of our members do about ninety of the work and account for about ninety percent (my estimate) of the receipts of the church.

16:11 - IF YOU HAVE NOT BEEN FAITHFUL. Jesus went on, "...if you have not been faithful in the use of unrighteous wealth, who will entrust the true riches to you?" Contrariwise, "if you have not been faithful in the use of that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own?" (Vs. 12). True riches denotes spiritual responsibilities and opportunities. If you are faithfulness in managing someone else's things, you prove yourself unworthy to be given much for yourself.

Jesus Corrects the Pharisees (with a proclamation about the Law and the Prophets), 14-18.

16:14 - PHARISEES...WERE SCOFFING AT HIM. The had begun by listening to Jesus, then questioning Him, and before long they were trying to expose Him as a fraud. Now they are openly scoffing at Him. Luke tells us that the Pharisees were lovers of money and that they were scoffing at His teaching on money.

16:15 - DETESTABLE IN THE SIGHT OF GOD. Jesus, not at all intimidated by their scoffing, makes a proclamation that must have staggered the Pharisees and shocked others who heard it. He said, "You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men, ***but God knows your hearts;*** for that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God." It would be interesting today to know how many people in our churches boast of things which God detests. There is the lady I heard say, "I'll tell you what I think and I don't care what anybody says about it." Then there is the man who said to friend, "This is my church and I'm not going to leave it. I have put a lot of money into it!"

16:16 - THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS WERE PROCLAIMED UNTIL JOHN. This is a very important truth - an eternal truth. This answers the claim made by some that Jesus could save people while He was on earth He could save people (the thief on the cross) without their having to be baptized, but after His death we are under His covenant. A covenant, they say, goes into effect at one's death, so from the death of Christ onward every person must be saved by faith and baptism (grace plus works). But Jesus tells us that the ""The law and the prophets were until John" (NKJV). Thus, John the Baptist begins the new era.

The Law and the Prophets were "until" (mechri, Gk.) John. The original meaning of

mechri as an adverb was "as far as"; it should be so understood here. Beginning with John, the kingdom of God is preached -- a fact which is verified not only by John's message, but also by Luke, in Acts 1:3; 1:22; 10:36-43; 13:23-25; and 28:31. Luke's assertion that all men are pressing into the kingdom may help in interpreting the meaning of the parallel passage in Matt. 11:12 [BSB].

EVERYONE IS FORCING HIS WAY INTO IT. That is, people were crowding to enter the kingdom. The NKJV renders it, "everyone is pressing into it."

16:17 - LETTER OF THE LAW. Jesus fulfilled the Law and the Prophets (vs. 16). Jesus said, "It is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one stroke of a letter of the Law to fail." "The smallest letter" in the Hebrew alphabet is yodh. It looks something like an apostrophe ('). A "stroke" is a very small extension on some Hebrew letters. These extensions distinguish these letters from similar ones (like, in English, an R from a P). The point is that every letter of every word of the Old Testament is inspired of God and it will be fulfilled.

16:18 - DIVORCES HIS WIFE. This is an example from the Old Testament Law (vs. 17). "Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries one who is divorced from a husband commits adultery." To some, this passage is in conflict with Matthew 5:32 and 19:9, where adultery on the part of the wife is recognized as legitimate grounds for divorce. The solution to this problem is probably that Jesus here is stating the general principle (cf. Mark 10:11, 12) without bringing up any exceptions.

The Story of the Rich Man and Lazarus, 19-31.

In the Parable of the Shrewd Manager Jesus stressed still another difference between Himself and the Pharisees. They loved money and what it could buy - what it could do for them. Jesus loved the Father and He loved people and saw money as a tool to be used in ministering to others. In the story of the Prodigal Son, Jesus will continue to highlight the contrast between one who trusts in Money and one who trusts in God. Note that neither Jesus nor Luke ever calls this a parable. If it was a parable it is the only one in which Jesus called an individual by name. If He used it as a parable it teaches a basic lesson, but it is also possible - I think probable - that Jesus is relating a story about which He has specific knowledge.

16:19 - LIVING IN SPLENDOR. Jesus began his story by introducing us to a very rich man: "Now there was a rich man, and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, joyously living in splendor every day." This man lived "The Life-style of the Rich and Famous" (a television series by that title is very popular). His name is not given for the man, but tradition has assigned him the name "Dives" (Latin word for "rich man"). Life was just one big party for him. A generation or two ago he would have been called "filthy rich" - whatever that term might have implied.

16:20 - LAZARUS. Lazarus was beggar who "laid at his gate" of the rich man "covered with

sores.” The name, “Lazarus” means ‘God supplies help’; the name may be intended to identify the beggar as a child of God” [BSB].

16:21 - LONGING TO BE FED WITH THE CRUMBS. Lazarus lay at the gate of the which were falling from the rich man's table; besides, even the dogs were coming and licking his sores. This is not a young healthy man standing at an intersection with a “I will work for food” sign in his hand. Either because of an infirmity or age, he has been reduced to lying at the gate of a rich man's house begging for crumbs that fell from his table, crumbs that otherwise would have been thrown out to the dogs. These dogs were like the domesticated dogs people keep as pets today, but near wild scavengers that roamed packs looking for food. When there was no food for them to fight over they came and licked the sores which covered Lazarus.

16:22 - NOW THE POOR MAN DIED. In the Old Testament we often read of a king who “died and was buried in the tomb of...” At times the Scripture records that he followed the Lord all the days of his life. Here Jesus says that Lazarus died “and was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried.” Man, regardless of what the New Agers say, is more than an animal. He is a living soul and when he dies there must always be an “and” attached to it. “And” Lazarus “was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom.” The rich man died “and” he was buried, but that is not the end of it.

“Abraham's bosom” is a Jewish figurative expression denoting paradise, or the presence of God. It is used as a synonym for “Paradise” (23:43; 2 Cor. 12:4) and “heaven.” How will people appear in Heaven? What kind of body will we have? Here, both Abraham and Lazarus are recognized and identifiable, both by name and apparently by appearance.

16:23 - IN HADES. The rich man died and was thrown into hell, where, being in torment,” he looked and “saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom.” Not a lot of given about how aware those in hell are of those in heaven, and there is no reason to believe that those in heaven will spend eternity staring into hell and mocking those suffering souls there because they getting what they deserve. However, from Revelation 14:10 it might be inferred that those in hell are aware of the fact that their torment is witnessed by Jesus and by angels.

IN HADES. “Hades” is literally the place of the departed spirit, synonymous here with hell, but in some places it refers to the realm beyond death. “Hades” denotes the unseen world in general, but here it specifically means hell. What do we learn about hell here?

- (1) There is a conscious existence after death.
- (2) There is continuous torment of hell.
- (3) There is no second chance and no escape from hell.
- (4) There is no communication from hell.

In summary, there are three specific things we know about hell, regardless of whether one accepts what he scripture says about its being a lake of fire. It is conscious, it is eternal, and it is torment. The individual is forever conscious, forever in torment.

16:24 - HE CRIED OUT. The lost soul - no longer a rich man - cried out and said, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame." He is conscious, he is in torment, and it will never end. The days of mercy are gone, all that he will ever know is agony. Furthermore, that is all any person deserves (Ezekiel 18:20; Romans 3:10, 23; 6:23). We may deduce that there four aspects of the torment in hell. Repetition here is merited:

- (1) There is torment in the flames of hell (vv. 23-25).
- (2) There is perpetual memory of opportunities forfeited in hell (v. 25).
- (3) There is an awareness of lost blessings in hell (v. 23).
- (4) There is eternal separation from God in hell (v. 26).
- (5) There is no escape form hell.

16:25 - REMEMBER. To his cry for mercy, Abraham responded, "Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony." Abraham was known as the friend of God, and the father of the faithful, as well as the father of the Hebrew race. Does this mean that Abraham saw one of his children in torment and had no mercy in his heart? No, it means that the man had had a life time to repent and had chosen to reject God - that is the reason he is in hell, and the only reason anyone ever goes to hell. Money has never sent anyone to hell, but the love of money has sent countless numbers of people, poor and wealthy, to there hellish reward.

The rich man may have been generous and charitable with his wealth - if he had not given him bread, or if he had abused him, Lazarus would have gone to someone else's gate. This man may have seemed like a really good man to his neighbors, but he had trusted in his money and loved his possessions while rejecting the salvation of the Lord.

16:26 - A GREAT CHASM. Between heaven and hell "there is a great chasm fixed, so that those who wish to come over from here to you will not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us." In the first place, the man had rejected God's grace and received justice - forever. In the second place, there is a great gulf separating heaven and hell and there will never be a transfer form one to the other.

16:27, 28 - BEG YOU, FATHER. His appeal to Abraham for relief has been refused. Now he pleads with him, "Then I beg you, father, that you send him to my father's house--for I have five brothers--in order that he may warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment."

Psycho-historians are trying to reinterpret history and tell us why George Washington cut down the cherry tree. We should not be surprised when modern psycho-theologians try to tell us Dives was thinking. Some say that he simply had compassion for his brothers. Others reject that on the basis that there is no compassion in hell. They reason that this spiritually bankrupt man was just trying to trap Abraham. If Abraham had granted his request he would have then said, "This is not fair, You sent someone from the dead to warn them and you did not send someone from the dead to warn me.

It is not fait, god is not just, and I deserve another chance.” All we know for sure is what the Bible tells us, and for the purpose of this story that is all we need.

16:29 - BUT ABRAHAM SAID. Abraham replied, and there is every reason to believe this reflects the mind of God, “They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.” The ministry of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God are sufficient for any person to come to a personal knowledge of the Lord.

16:30 - IF SOMEONE GOES TO THEM FROM THE DEAD. The condemned man continues to plead, “No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!”

16:31 - IF THEY DO NOT LISTEN TO MOSES AND THE PROPHETS. Abraham answered, “If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.”

“Moses and the prophets” is the customary way of referring to the O.T. Scriptures. Clearly Jesus recognized the Scriptures as a wholly sufficient guide for anyone legitimately seeking the truth. In reply to the rich man’s argument that a resurrection from the dead would be convincing to his brethren, Abraham notes that the problem is attitude, not evidence. If they have not believed the Scriptures, then they will not believe even one raised from the dead [BSB].

They had the Word of God and that was sufficient. The idea of one from the dead going to the to warn them might appeal to the mind of man, but those who reject or ignore the written Word will not be convinced even if someone rose from the dead to warn them. Jesus rose form the dead and millions still reject Him. “Those who refuse to repent upon hearing God’s Law and His prophets would not repent if one from the dead went to them. People do not need more evidence to repent. They need faith in God” [DSB].

Bob Marcaurelle, *Parables in Luke’s Gospel* (The pastor’s Pulpit, Anderson, SC, p. 34), uses the title, “A SERMON FROM HELL” for this story. It sounds good, but the more I reflect on it, the more I am convinced that the real sermon is the SERMON FORM HEAVEN! The occasion for each major point of the great sermon is a question of request from hell, but the great truths are form Heaven.

Another point must be stressed, the story does not go into the conversion of Lazarus or the rejection of God by the rich man, but we know that the reason Lazarus was in heaven was that his faith was in God, and the reason the rich man was in hell was that his faith was in money (material things). Rich people do not go to hell because they are rich, as much as that idea might appeal to some poor people. Poor people do not go to heaven because they are poor - as much as that idea appeals to some. The class envy that one often sees in our society cannot be justified by this story. The late Marty Robbins recorded a song (*My Woman, my Woman, My Wife*) in which he sang, “Lord, please grant her my share of heaven if I have earned any hear below.” No one earns any measure of

heaven. That is a gift by the grace of god.

Jesus Teaches About Sin, Forgiveness, Faith, and Duty, 17:1-10.

It Is a Sin to Cause Others to Sin, 1-2.

17:1 - STUMBLING BLOCKS. "It is inevitable that stumbling blocks come," Jesus taught, "but woe to him through whom they come!" The term "stumbling blocks" ("offenses, NKJV; "Things that cause people to sin," NIV) refers to traps used to catch animals. In the New Testament it is used to denote attitudes and activities induce others into sin. Each person must face temptation. We are taught to expect it and told how to resist it. We are to pray for deliverance from temptation. But we must never cause temptation - in any way. To tempt others to sin is a grave. We should be very careful, even to the point of being extreme and narrow to avoid becoming a stumbling block before others into harm's way - especially new Christians or immature believers.

17:2 - A MILLSTONE. The moral and spiritual gravity of causing others to stumble is seen in the Lord's solemn warning: "It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea, than that he would cause one of these little ones to stumble." "The milling of grain was done by grinding it between two stones, each about 18 in (46 cm) in diameter and 3-4 in...thick. The upper millstone was turned by a donkey walking in a circle" [RSB]. It seems that some thought that if a person was lost at sea and his body could not be recovered, he would have no part in the resurrection - in other words, it would be better if he had never been born.

A man ranted and raved for a half an hour about those who led in the fight to prevent the sale of alcoholic beverages in their county. He was a church member who was especially angered by other church members who voted against beverage alcohol sales because they wanted to remove a stumbling block from the path of youth and the weak in society. He argued that his county was losing taxes to surrounding counties, and his neighbors said explained that even if some of his points seemed reasonable they could never stand for something that might cause others to stumble.

There are people who stay out of certain places because they do not want to cause others to stumble. There are parents who may not think they would be harmed by certain television programs, do not watch them because the fear that it might cause their children to be tempted. We must be very careful in the area of entertainment, alcohol, gambling, speech, dress, and business.

I have often wondered how many people there are in the average community who will not go to a particular church because of some careless remarks church member has made about the pastor, some other staff member, a deacon, or Sunday School teacher. Grumbling in the home can have a devastating effect on the home. I have spent years talking with teachers and it is becoming abundantly clear that children in school today are have been seriously effected by the behavior of their parents - and the damaged will be passed on to the third and fourth generation. When some young mother takes her children from their home and moves in with another man (and then the father moves in with his girl friend), they may shower them with toys, trips, and entertainment, but

they have determined the attitude their children will have toward marriage and home for the rest of their life, and that will effect generations to come.

It Is Essential for Christians to Forgive Others, 3-4.

17:3 - REBUKE HIM. Jesus said, "Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him." He tells us to rebuke a fellow believer who sins, but He never tells us to adopt the judgmental attitude of the Pharisees who were always very generous with their condemnation of others but very stingy in offering forgiveness.

17:4 - FORGIVE HIM. Our Lord is a forgiving God - not naive, but forgiving. He said, "And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying, 'I repent,' forgive him." To forgive is not the same as forgetting. Only God can willfully forget when He forgives. But we have not forgiven if we recall the offense in order to penalize the offender, to embarrass him, or to make ourselves feel superior. You may forgive one who borrows money to buy food for his children, but buys drugs with it, but you must not forget what he has done. If you refuse to help his children when he asks again you probably have not forgiven, but if you forget and give him cash he may well do the same thing again. It would be better to buy the groceries and deliver them to his home.

When you forgive you are acting as your Lord acts. He is not commanding us to do something He does not do for us. He forgives us, even when we come to Him repeatedly confessing the same sin.

Jesus Illustrates the Power of Faith, 5-6.

17:5 - INCREASE OUR FAITH! Can we miss the point that Jesus commands us to increase our faith? But how do we do that? Faith cannot be produced by human activity, it is the gift of God (Eph. 2), and it is a gift He wants to give His children if they humble themselves before Him. Faith can be commanded, however, because when the believer humbly submits himself to every impulse of the Holy Spirit, and studies the Scripture, his faith will increase. Paul wrote, "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (Rom. 10:17). When I checked that reference I typed "faith," and clicked on "New Testament," and found that the word occurs 7957 times in the New Testament. God places a lot of emphasis on it - and so should we.

17:6 - FAITH LIKE A MUSTARD SEED. This is one of the most familiar sayings of Jesus: "If you had faith like a mustard seed, you would say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and be planted in the sea'; and it would obey you." The mulberry tree had a very strong root system, which made it very hard to uproot. Figuratively speaking, this verse teaches that the power of faith is as unlimited as the power of God.

Jesus Stresses the Insufficiency of Works, 17:7-10.

17:7, 8 - A SLAVE. Jesus continues to use parables to teach His disciples:

But which of you, having a slave plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come immediately and sit down to eat'? But will he not say to him, 'Prepare something for me to eat, and properly clothe yourself and serve me while I eat and drink; and afterward you may eat and drink'?

The servant waits on the master, the master does not wait on the servant. So it is in the Kingdom of God. "The disciple is a servant at the Master's call. Our service is to be done from gratitude for what Christ did, not in expectation of rewards" [DSB]. Jesus continued in verse 9, "He does not thank the slave because he did the things which were commanded, does he?"

17:10 - SO YOU TOO. Jesus explains the proper attitude of servants of God: "When you do all the things which are commanded you, say, 'We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done.' James Garner starred in *Castaway Cowboy*. At one point a young boy who was excited by something he had accomplished, ran to the cowboy seeking his approval. The James Garner character said, "Don't ever expect praise for doing what you are supposed to do." Appropriate recognition and appreciation can mean a lot, but in the service of our Lord we should do our duty and leave the rewards to Him.

The point of the parable is that the nature of a master-servant relationship allows the master to make such demands on his servant. Since this is the case, how much more can God expect of His servants in His kingdom. God's servant must recognize that whatever he does in God's service is still inadequate [BSB].

C. On the Third Stage of His Journey to Jerusalem Jesus Continues to Teach Those Who Follow Him, 17:11-19:28.

He Heals Ten Lepers (lesson on gratitude), 17:11-19.

17:11 - PASSING BETWEEN SAMARIA AND GALILEE. Luke gives us the historical and geographical setting: "While He was on the way to Jerusalem, He was passing between Samaria and Galilee." He was on His way from Galilee to Jerusalem - and had been for some time. At first you may be surprised to find Him on the border of Samaria at this point, however we must remember that He is ministering in towns and villages and along the road as He travels along.

17:12 - TEN LEPROUS MEN. Luke records that "As He entered a village, ten leprous men who stood at a distance met Him." They "stood at a distance" from other people, as was specified in the law (Lev. 13:46; Num. 5:2, 3).

LEPROSY (Leprosy) A generic term applied to a variety of skin disorders from psoriasis to true leprosy. Its symptoms ranged from white patches on the skin to running sores to the loss of digits on the fingers and toes.

For the Hebrews it was a dreaded malady which rendered its victims ceremonially unclean--that is, unfit to worship God (Lev. 13:3). Anyone who came in contact with a leper was also considered unclean [HBD].

In Leviticus 13, seven forms of this skin disease are mentioned. These are not generally regarded as the leprosy we know today [RSB]. A leper was ceremonially unclean, and as such he had to live outside of the towns, and when anyone approached he had to cry "unclean." Leprosy served as an illustration of sin in bible times, much as cancer might today.

17:13 - HAVE MERCY ON US! The ten lepers cried out to Jesus saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" If theirs was true leprosy they need mercy, for theirs was a pitiful plight. Since leprosy serves as an illustration of sin in the Bible we must understand that the person whose heart is filled with this kind of corruption is greatly in need of mercy - and grace..

17:14 - THEY WERE CLEANSED. Jesus made no show of the healing of the ten lepers (like we may see on TV!). When He saw them, He simply said, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they were going, they were cleansed." These men had demonstrated a measure of faith by calling on Jesus for help and they showed it again by starting on their way to the priest before being cleansed. The priests had to certify the cleansing of a leper (Lev. 14:1-32). When they (still in a leprous condition) started to see the priest to be declared clean they were exhibiting a great deal of faith.

17:15, 16 - ONE OF THEM. Of the ten, one of them, "when he saw that he had been healed, turned back, glorifying God with a loud voice, and he fell on his face at His feet, giving thanks to Him. And he was a Samaritan." The Samaritans were descendants of colonists whom the Assyrian kings transplanted in Palestine after the fall of the Northern Kingdom in 722 B.C. In time there was an amalgamation (intermarriage) between some Israelites and these colonists. They were despised by the Jews, many seem to think because they were mixed with Gentile blood. However, the colonists were also Semitic people. They were despised because they had mixed true worship with false, and because of their different worship, which centered at Mount Gerizim (John 4:20-22).

Of the ten, the only one who fell on his face before the Lord and thanked Him was a Samaritan. Jesus called attention to this fact: "Were there not ten cleansed? But the nine--where are they? Was no one found who returned to give glory to God, except this foreigner?" (vv. 17-18).

17:19 - YOUR FAITH. He had sent ten to the priest and all were healed, but only the Samaritan had shown gratitude to God for his miraculous deliverance from this horrible affliction. There is little doubt that the other nine were elated with their renewed health, but they did not return to thank Him. Jesus said to the Samaritan, "Stand up and go; your faith has made you well."

There is a lesson here for all of us. In the first place, when we pray for physical healing, we may (like the nine) rejoice in our renewed health, or we may (like the Samaritan) return and thank God Who heard our prayers and provided the healing. We are very quick to pay for healing, but it is so easy to forget to thank Him, or even to recognize His healing. Forgetting God, we think "the doctor made the right diagnosis and the medication healed me." Ingratitude is not only a sin, it is the source of a lot of other sins.

He Teaches Concerning the Kingdom, 17:20-37.

Jesus Lectures Pharisees on the Coming Kingdom, 20-21.

17:20 - THE KINGDOM OF GOD. "Now having been questioned by the Pharisees as to when the kingdom of God was coming, He answered them and said, "The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed..." The Kingdom of God is not "pie in the sky bye and bye." It does not mean Heaven when I die - though it certainly includes Heaven. The Kingdom of God refers to the reign of God as Sovereign over all who are His. "The reign and control of God in our lives does not appear from without. It cannot be forced on us" [DSB]. We enter the Kingdom of God when we receive Jesus Christ as Savior, receive the Holy Spirit in our lives, and submit to the sovereign reign of God in our lives.

17:21 - THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS IN YOUR MIDST. Jesus has just said that the Kingdom of God is not coming from without (and accompanied by signs). He goes on, "nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or, 'There it is!' For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst." The necessary elements of the kingdom are present and we need only to recognize them. "In your midst" cannot mean within the Pharisees, because the ones to whom Jesus addressed this were not a part of the kingdom of God, and did not recognize the presence of the kingdom in others (v. 20)."

In Jesus Christ, the kingdom of God is a present reality. Speculation about the coming kingdom may blind us to reality of the kingdom here and now. Only those who let Jesus control their lives, those who submit to the Sovereignty of God in their hearts, here and now are going to be a part of the kingdom in its fulfillment in the future.

Jesus Teaches His Disciples about His Kingdom, 22-37.

17:22 - THE DAYS WILL COME. Questions about the Kingdom of God prompt Jesus to go on to deal with the future: "And He said to the disciples, "The days will come when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it."

17:23 - THEY WILL SAY. There will, in every generation, be alarmists who will say, "Look there! Look here!" Do not go away, and do not run after them." We have seen an abundance of them

in this generation, some with simple prophecies, others with elaborate calendars.

17:24 - SO WILL THE SON OF MAN BE. "For just like the lightning, when it flashes out of one part of the sky, shines to the other part of the sky, so will the Son of Man be in His day." The Second Coming of Jesus Christ at the end of time will be self-evident. There will be no need to broadcast the news. "Like the lightning" that flashes in one area but lights up the entire sky for miles around the place it strikes, the whole world will see Jesus and His coming kingdom.

17:25 - HE MUST SUFFER. "But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation." The Second Coming was not the next thing on God's calendar. Jesus is reminding His disciples here that the next event is not the day of His return and consummation of the ages, but His suffering, rejection, and death in Jerusalem.

17:26 - IN THE DAYS OF NOAH. "And just as it happened in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man..." His Second Coming and the judgment will be just as unexpected as was the judgment that came by flood in the days of Noah, and in the days of Lot (vs.29). Just how was it in the days of Noah and Lot?

They were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. "It was the same as happened in the days of Lot: they were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, they were building; but on the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all (27-29).

17:30 - IT WILL BE JUST THE SAME. "On the day that the Son of Man is revealed," it will be just the same as it was in the days of Lot and Noah. People will be going about their daily business when suddenly He will appear. "Until the time of Christ's return, many people will be prosperous, feel secure, and be unprepared for His return (as in the days of Noah and Lot)" [RSB].

17:31 - MUST NOT TURN BACK. "On that day, the one who is on the housetop and whose goods are in the house must not go down to take them out; and likewise the one who is in the field must not turn back." In Matthew, chapter 24, Jesus was asked two questions and He responded to both of them. The questions concerned the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple and the end of time. The only problem is that in His answer he deals with one question, then the other, and then He comes back to the other - which means that we have to be very careful to determine which answer fits which question. In Matthew 24:16-19 He is dealing with the coming destruction of Jerusalem and that reference He warns:

Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains; Whoever is on the housetop must not go down to get the things out that are in his house. Whoever is in the field must not turn back to get his cloak. "But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days!

Those who saw the legions of Rome coming must flee at once - they must not return to their houses

for their possessions, but flee. When Jesus returns people are not going to have that option.

17:32 - REMEMBER LOT'S WIFE. He did not have to explain what He meant when he said "Remember Lot's wife." They all remembered that Lot's wife, in their flight from Sodom, defied God and back at the burning city and for her rebellion she was turned into a pillar of salt. The sin and its consequences were proverbial throughout the history of ancient Israel. But what does Jesus mean here? Verse 33 provides an answer: "Whoever seeks to keep his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it."

17:34 - ON THAT NIGHT. "On that night" (and it will be night for those on the opposite side of the planet), Jesus said, "I tell you, on that night there will be two in one bed; one will be taken and the other will be left." He amplifies that in verses 35 and 36.

17:37 - WHERE, LORD? The audience, upon hearing that when Jesus returns some member of a family will be taken and others left, asked Him, "Where, Lord?" To which Jesus answered, "Where the body is, there also the vultures will be gathered." Vultures (eagles, NKJV) will feed on the carnage when God sends His judgment.

The Parable of the Persistent Widow to "show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart, 18:1-14.

The Persistent The Parable of Widow, 1-8.

18:1 - THEY OUGHT TO PRAY. Jesus began telling His disciples "a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart." We should be grateful when the purpose of the parable is spelled out so clearly - we should persist in prayer and not lose heart." That is, we should not be discouraged when prayers are not answered immediately.

18:2 - A JUDGE WHO DID NOT FEAR GOD. Jesus began the parable: "In a certain city there was a judge who did not fear God and did not respect man." "Did not fear God" is another way of saying that he did not know God - he was a godless man. Furthermore, this judge did not care for man. God, the eternal Judge, stands in sharp contrast to this judge because He does care for man. The judge, being unrighteous, lacked an adequate sense of justice. God, the righteous Judge, has no such deficiency. Being righteous, He loves justice. This judge's attitude toward God effected his attitude toward other people.

18:3 - SHE KEPT COMING TO HIM. Jesus introduces us to the other character in the parable by just saying "There was a widow in that city" with a legal problem and "she kept coming to him, saying, 'Give me legal protection from my opponent.'" Widows had few rights in those days, and if she had no son to protect her, or act for, she was at the mercy of the judge. We may infer that she had no one because she is acting for herself. In this case the judge was not concerned about her problems: "For a while he was unwilling; but afterward he said to himself, 'Even though I do not fear God nor respect man...'" There was neither compassion nor a sense of justice in him.

18:5 - YET. He clearly did not want to be bothered, "Yet," he reasoned, "because this widow bothers me, I will give her legal protection, otherwise by continually coming she will wear me out." "Wear me out" is literally, "keep hitting me with blows." We would say today that she kept hammering away at it - she would not be denied.

18:6 - HEAR WHAT THE UNRIGHTEOUS JUDGE SAID. The unrighteous judge is, literally, a judge of injustice! An experienced attorney once told me that it can be a shock for some people who have always believed that if they ever have a legal problem all they want is their day in court, but when the day comes, in some cases, they do not get justice, possibly because of some ruling of a judge who is trying to clear the docket.

18:7 - WILL NOT GOD BRING ABOUT JUSTICE. Now Jesus comes to the point of his parable: "Will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them?" We have been given an earthly hypothesis, now we must relate it to a heavenly truth. God is both compassionate and just. We are invited to call upon Him, and He expects us to persist in prayer - not because He needs it, but because for one reason or another we need it.

God is a God of justice. He hears the prayers of the elect who cry day and night. When the Son of man returns, the suffering elect will be present with faith that relies upon the God of justice. Election to the kingdom is one way God provides justice in an unjust society. The elect have faith in God's justice [DSB].

18:8 - HE WILL BRING ABOUT JUSTICE. "I tell you that He will bring about justice for them quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?" Quickly does not necessarily mean immediately, but quickly (as in Rev. 1:1). When the answer begins to come it will come quickly.

WILL HE FIND FAITH ON THE EARTH? Does this mean that spiritual conditions in the world will get better and better before Christ's return. The opposite should be anticipated, but when He does return there will be many believers on the earth.

The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector, 9-14.

18:9 - THIS PARABLE. Jesus told another parable "to some people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt." This is a good description of the Pharisees. Isn't it wonderful that this was only a First Century problem?

18:10 - A PHARISEE AND...A TAX COLLECTOR. "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector." No more opposite people could have gone to the temple, a super-saint and a depraved sinner (as the Pharisees saw them). The masses joined the religious leaders in loathing the tax collectors, despised as traitors to Israel and servants of the

detestable Romans.

18:11 - THE PHARISEE STOOD...PRAYING. The hypocritical Pharisee “stood and was praying this to himself: 'God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector.'” The Pharisees' morning prayer included the sentence, “Lord, I thank you that I was not created a woman or an Gentile.” Jesus captured their attitude perfectly in this parable. “Praying this to himself” may denote silent prayer, but the expression is may have been appropriate, in that he seems more concerned with himself than God.

18:12 - I FAST TWICE A WEEK. He prayed, “I pay tithes of all that I get.” He kept all the fast days and paid “tithes of all that I get,” and he meant all. Nothing was too small.

I fast twice a week” refers to the belief of the Pharisees that Moses went up on Mount Sinai to receive the Law on a Thursday, and returned with it on a Monday. Thus, to the Pharisees, fasting on those two days is considered to be a special mark of holiness [RSB].

18:13 - MERCIFUL TO ME, THE SINNER. In sharp contrast to the Pharisee, the tax collector, “standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!'” “God, be merciful” is, literally, “God be propitiated or satisfied” (*laskomai*, to be propitious, make propitiation for). This is theologically correct because Jesus Christ is the propitiation or satisfaction for our sins (1 John 2:1).

Confession is simply asking for God's mercy. “Both the actions and words of the publican demonstrated his sense of unworthiness and his total dependence on God. Salvation comes to such humble confessors no matter how sinful their past lives” [DSB].

18:14 - HE WHO HUMBLES HIMSELF WILL BE EXALTED. Jesus affirms what we suspect from the story: “I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

The Pharisee thought salvation (Justification) came through good works (a merit system). The absurdity of this is seen in the conclusion one may draw from it - that good works places God in man's debt through his good works. The tax collector, on the other hand, appealed to God's mercy and was justified (by grace through faith).

Jesus Receives the Little Children, 18:15-18.

18:15 - BRINGING EVEN THEIR BABIES. Luke records that as Jesus passed through the country on the way to Jerusalem, people “were bringing even their babies to Him so that He would touch them, but when the disciples saw it, they began rebuking them.”

18:16 - PERMIT THE CHILDREN TO COME TO ME. His disciples were trying to

protect Jesus from the crowds, and to these young men (the Apostles) what these people were doing was an imposition on His time and energy. "But Jesus called for them, saying, 'Permit the children to come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these."

18:17 - LIKE A CHILD. Jesus continued, "Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it at all." This is one of the most loved passages in the Bible for pre-school children in Sunday School and Vacation Bible School. But it is also relevant to adults - if you want to be saved you must humble yourself and come to Him as a little child. A little child has the capacity believe. He requires a simple faith from us. Those who do not come to Jesus as a little child will not be received into His kingdom.

NOTE: for more on entrance into the kingdom, study Luke 18:15-19:1; cf. Matt. 19:13-20:34; Mark 10:13-52.

Jesus and the Rich Young Ruler, 18:18-27.

The Man Asked How Find Eternal life, 18.

18:18 - WHAT SHALL I DO. A ruler, that is a "certain ruler" (NKJV), questioned Jesus, saying, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" This ruler obviously recognized the "unique moral quality of Jesus' life. Jesus reminded him that 'good' in the absolute sense describes God and no one else. Unconsciously the ruler had correctly seen that Jesus' pure life identified Him as divine" [DSB].

Jesus Answered Him, 19-20.

18:19 - ONE IS GOOD EXCEPT GOD. Jesus answers another questioner with a question: "And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone." God is absolutely good - the ultimate good. Fallen man is depraved.

The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it? (Jer. 17:9).

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, (Rom. 3:23).

18:20 - YOU KNOW THE COMMANDMENTS. Jesus reminded the ruler of the commandments: "DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, DO NOT MURDER, DO NOT STEAL, DO NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS, HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER."

The Man Professed a Works-Righteousness, 21.

18:21 - ALL THESE THINGS I HAVE KEPT. He was not only aware of the commandments, he insisted that he had kept all of them from his youth. Of course, he had not kept all these commandments all his life (Romans 3:23), but he claimed that he had. He refused to confess his sins. If he could have kept all the Law, the Law could save, but man cannot keep the Law. “Jesus probably quotes these commandments because they are the easiest to measure. Although the young man has a sense of security in his conduct, he still has a void in his life” [BSB].

Jesus Showed Him There Was More, 22.

18:22 - ONE THING YOU STILL LACK. When Jesus heard the man say he had kept all the commandments, He did not argue with him, He simply said to him, "One thing you still lack; sell all that you possess and distribute it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." Even if the man had kept all the laws in verse 20, Jesus was aware of the man's attachment to his wealth - to material things.

The Rich Young Ruler, 23.

18:23 - HE BECAME VERY SAD. Luke tells us, “But when he had heard these things, he became very sad, for he was extremely rich.” The man claimed to have kept all the commandments of verse 20 - I think he was claiming to keep all of them and that those listed in verse 20 were representative of all the commandments. But even if he had kept those in verse 20, he stumbles over another one, “You shall not covet” (Ex. 20:17).

Jesus Makes a Profound Statement on Riches, 24-27.

18:24 - HOW HARD IT. Jesus must have had great compassion for the rich young ruler as He “looked at him and said, him and said, ‘How hard it is for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!’” It is still hard to persuade the rich and powerful that they need Jesus. I have observed that it is especially hard to persuade certain people that they need to humble themselves before God and ask for His mercy - Some professional people, decision makers, those who command others, those who make their living in hard sales, some in law enforcement who have seen too many church members break the law.

18:25 - THE EYE OF A NEEDLE. Jesus responds with an answer that has often been quoted by preacher and teachers of the Scripture: "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." The interpretations are interesting. To some, this denotes a narrow gate in the wall of Jerusalem through which a camel loaded with a pack could not

pass.

Others hold that by changing one letter of the word "camel," the Aramaic word for "rope" appears. Most likely this is simply a proverbial saying underscoring the impossibility of putting something large through the eye of a needle, and thus illustrating the impossibility of entry into the kingdom for a man who worships wealth (cf. Matt. 19:24, note) [BSB].

Jesus does not say that a rich man could not be saved (v. 26). What He says it is more difficult for a rich a person to acknowledge his need for the Savior than for a poorer person. And it is impossible for one who places his faith in his wealth.

18:26 - THEN WHO CAN BE SAVED? If the rich young ruler could not be saved with his high moral code, his good works, and his great wealth (which was seen as a blessing for his righteousness), then who could be saved?

18:27 - POSSIBLE WITH GOD. Jesus had the answer: "The things that are impossible with people are possible with God." Salvation is all of God, by God's grace, and not by man's works, by the Law, by ritual or ceremony - lest anyone should boast (Eph. 2:9).

18:28 - PETER. Simon Peter speaks for himself and the other Apostles: "Behold, we have left our own homes and followed You." They had left all to follow Him, and they wonder what is going to happen to them.

18:29, 30 - HE SAID TO THEM. Jesus responds to Peter: "Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who will not receive many times as much at this time and in the age to come, eternal life." "Eternal life is here identified with the world to come. It is both a present (Jn 5:24) and future reality for those who follow Jesus" [DSB].

For the Third Time Jesus Predicts His Death and Resurrection, 18:31-34.

18:31 - WE ARE GOING UP TO JERUSALEM. Jesus has had His eyes on the cross all along. On this journey he had been working His way through towns, and villages on His way to Jerusalem, but seemingly in no hurry. But the time has come to prepare His Apostles for what lay ahead. So "...He took the twelve aside and said to them, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things which are written through the prophets about the Son of Man will be accomplished.

Jesus understood Isa 53 and other Old Testament passages to point to the necessity of Messiah's death and resurrection. His disciples read the Old Testament in a more traditional way and could not understand the expected King's talk about death rather than victory [DSB].

Even the closest disciples of the Lord looked for an earthly kingdom (Mark 10:35-37). They expected a political Messiah who, like David, would rule Israel from Jerusalem, reestablish a great army, and take back all the land that made up the Davidic Kingdom. But Jesus came, and tried to show His followers that He was the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53. He stressed that He would be tortured and killed, but that he would rise again the third day. His followers obviously listened Him without understanding what He meant. It was not until the resurrection that they were able to comprehend Christ's what He had taught them.

18:32, 33 - HANDED OVER TO THE GENTILES. Jesus prophesies His death and resurrection: "For He will be handed over to the Gentiles, and will be mocked and mistreated and spit upon, and after they have scourged Him, they will kill Him; and the third day He will rise again."

He knew that He would be abused, mocked, scourged, and crucified. He faced a horrifying experience, but He did not shirk His responsibility.

THE THIRD DAY HE WILL RISE AGAIN. He sought to prepare them for the trials, the physical torture, and the cross, and He never failed to assure them of the resurrection on the third day.

18:34 - THE DISCIPLES UNDERSTOOD NONE OF THESE THINGS. That is rather incredible. It is amazing that when the time came they were totally unprepared.

Jesus Heals a Blind Man near Jericho, 18:35-43.

18:35 - JERICHO. Jesus is now moving more purposefully toward Jerusalem, "and as he was approaching Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the road begging." There are differences in this account and the one in Matt. 20:29-34. In Matthew there are two blind men and of the miracle was done as Jesus left Jericho, not as he approached it. In the accounts in Mark 10:46-52 there is only one blind man and the miracle performed as they left Jericho. How are the differences explained?

- (1) There were actually two men involved, but Bartimaeus is given the place of prominence, because he shows more initiative.
- (2) It is possible that the men asked Jesus to help them as He entered Jericho but were not actually healed until He was leaving.
- (3) It has also been the healing occurred after Jesus left old Jericho and was nearing new Jericho.

18:38 - JESUS, SON OF DAVID, HAVE MERCY ON ME! When they learned that Jesus was approaching Jericho (vs. 37), they cried out to Him, asking for mercy. It is significant that they called Jesus "Son of David," which was a messianic title. That He is the Son of David is established in the first chapter of Matthew. Those who were leading the way through Jericho tried to dissuade them, but they persisted in crying out to Him for Mercy (vs. 39).

18:41 - WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO DO FOR YOU? When they got his attention, Jesus commanded someone to bring the blind beggar to Him. Jesus then asked what they desired of Him. The man said, "Lord, I want to regain my sight!"

18:42 - YOUR FAITH. "Jesus said to him, 'Receive your sight; your faith has made you well.' Luke says, 'Immediately he regained his sight and began following Him, glorifying God; and when all the people saw it, they gave praise to God.'

Jesus Continues to Teach and Minister as He Passes Through Jericho, 19-1-28.

Zaccheus Is Saved, 1-10.

19:1, 2 - ZACCHEUS. Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through the city. The commotion caught the attention of a man "called by the name of Zaccheus; he was a chief tax collector and he was rich. As a tax collector for the despised Romans, every tax collector loathsome to the Jews. This was because the Roman tax system was so open to abuse. Roman appointed a tax collector, assessed a certain amount for the region, Whatever the tax collector collected beyond that amount he could keep, and he had the Roman army to back him up. Extortion was common as these traitorous (so they were viewed) tax collectors stuffed their own pockets. By "chief tax collector" in may be inferred Zaccheus was responsible for collecting all the taxes in Jericho, and possibly the region, and that had other collectors under him.

19:3 - TRYING TO SEE WHO JESUS. Zaccheus, attracted by the crowd noise, learned that Jesus was passing through Jericho and "was trying to see who Jesus was, and was unable because of the crowd, for he was small in stature." Apparently he was trying diligently to get into position to see Jesus.

19:4 - CLIMBED UP INTO A SYCAMORE TREE. Because he was small of stature he could not see Jesus over the crowd and he could not force his way through the crowd, "so he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree in order to see Him, for He was about to pass through that way." Sunday School and Vacation Bible School preschoolers and younger children learn about Zaccheus, both through the Bible story and the familiar little chorus: "Zaccheus was a wee little man, and a wee little man was he. He climbed up in the sycamore tree, for the Lord He wanted to see." This type of sycamore tree grows to a height of 30-40 ft. From the Holman Bible Dictionary we read:

SYCAMORE (sihk' uh mohre) A combination "fig" and "mulberry" tree (*Ficus sycomorus*) indicating the fig tree in the Jordan valley that had leaves like our mulberry tree. Its fruit was inferior to the fig tree and had to be punctured to make the fruit edible. Amos was employed as "one who took care of sycamore-fig trees" (7:14 NIV; compare Ps. 78:47). This tree has no relation to the American sycamore tree. It was used as food for the poor and bore fruit several times a year. See 1 Kings

10:27; 2 Chronicles 1:15; 9:27. It was often planted along roadways for its shade (see Luke 19:4). Poor people used its wood rather than expensive cedar (Isa. 9:10) [HBD].

19:5 - ZACCHEUS, ...COME DOWN. Zaccheus had run ahead of the crowd and climbed up into the sycamore tree beside the road. "When Jesus came to the place, He looked up and said to him, "Zaccheus, hurry and come down, for today I must stay at your house." Possibly the only person more shocked than the Pharisees by such a statement was Zaccheus himself. How did Jesus know this man? Was this supernatural? It must have been because the kind of crowd surrounding Jesus would have made it difficult for someone to point him out to Jesus - not impossible, but difficult.

19:6 - RECEIVED HIM GLADLY. Quickly, Zaccheus obeyed Jesus "and he hurried and came down and received Him gladly." Does this mean that he received Jesus as Messiah - that he was "saved" at that point? Or does it simply mean that he received Jesus as a guest in his home? The latter we know to be true; the former may have occurred then or later in his home.

19:7 - WHEN THEY SAW IT. "They" were the Pharisees and scribes who were following Jesus to the Temple for Passover. They were gathering evidence against Jesus in order to condemn Him. Surely, they knew that they would be in the limelight when they began to report to religious leaders in Jerusalem. "They all began to grumble, saying, "He has gone to be the guest of a man who is a sinner." By contrast, they were keeping themselves pure and clean, and part of that effort was avoiding contact with Gentiles and sinners like these.

19:8 - HALF OF MY POSSESSIONS. At this point we know that Zaccheus had a new Master - no longer was wealth his primary interest. Whether this was all of his public profession of faith or not, this is a marvelous confession of his acceptance of the lordship of Christ. Zaccheus "stopped" (the meal? And the discussions at mealtime). The NIV renders it, "Zacchaeus stood up." When he had everyone's attention, he said to Jesus, "Behold, Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much."

As already noted, the office of the "tax collector" under the Roman system is conducive to extortion and fraud (v. 2). Zacchaeus is, in essence, acknowledging that.

Zacchaeus is going beyond the requirement of the Law, which, in the case of fraud, requires the return of that which is illegally acquired plus one-fifth (cf. Lev. 6:5; Num. 5:6). In the case of theft the requirement in the Law was a payment of at least four times the amount stolen (cf. Ex. 22:1). Zacchaeus regards his actions as the equivalent of theft [BSB].

It may be inferred by some readers that Zaccheus is confessing that he has cheated his own people, but he does not say that. He says two things. First, he says, "Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor." He was a very wealthy man and he was in a position to know that there were a lot of poor people in his community. Now that he has accepted Jesus as his Lord, he has a desire to

honor Him by serving others. It is interesting that he has spent a lifetime accumulating wealthy, but now his greatest joy will come in giving it away.

The second thing Zaccheus says is, "If I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much." He did not say that he had defrauded anyone, and he may not have deliberately cheated anyone. He might, however, have systematically assessed a higher rate of taxes than he should have. If he had defrauded anyone he would go beyond the requirements set by the Law in making restitution. After being saved Zaccheus immediately applied two Christian principles in his life - serving others and making restitution.

19:9 - SALVATION. "And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham." What did Jesus say? He said, "Today salvation has come to this house." What did He not say? He did not say that the Zaccheus was saved by anything he did, including giving away half of all he possessed. What may we deduce from this? Zaccheus' generosity and compassion for the poor, as well as his desire to make restitution are the fruit of Justification, not the root. The righteousness of Jesus Christ had been imputed unto him and he now desires to do that which is righteous and holy. That should be the desire of every genuine believer.

SON OF ABRAHAM. Paul uses "son of Abraham" to refer to those who share the faith of Abraham. The Jews used the term to denote a descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Israel). But here, Jesus may well have meant that Zacchaeus, even though he was a tax collector, is among those to whom the Messiah comes first to seek and save. "But He answered and said, "I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. 15:24).

Obedience to Pharisaic laws did not determine the elect remnant of Israel. Salvation came to even a sinner like Zacchaeus, when he repented and committed himself to God. Election does not point to people who have achieved righteousness. In love and through Jesus Christ God elects sinners and saves them from a life-style of sin and alienation [DSB].

19:10 - TO SEEK AND TO SAVE. "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." The Pharisees avoided tax collectors and "sinners," but Jesus came to seek them and to save them. Jesus' mission in coming to earth was to seek and save lost people, to bring them into saving relationship with God. This relationship not only delivers the individual from sin (including greed and materialism), it also leads them into the service of God and other people.

With the Parable of the Minas, 11-27.

19:11 - A PARABLE. Jesus has left Jericho and is now approaching Jerusalem with his disciples and the crowds in the procession. "While they were listening to these things, Jesus went on to tell a parable, ***because*** He was near Jerusalem, and ***they supposed that the kingdom of God was going to appear immediately***" (Bold italics denote the purpose of the parable).

19:12, 13 - A NOBLEMAN. Jesus began the parable: "A nobleman went to a distant country to receive a kingdom for himself, and then return. The nobleman called ten of his slaves "and gave them ten minas and said to them, 'Do business with this until I come back.' A mina was a Greek monetary unit worth 100 drachmas, or denarii (about three months' wages). Observe that in this parable each servant received the same amount (in contrast to the parable of the talents in which each received according to his ability, Matt. 25:15). The minas represent the equal opportunity of life itself; the talents, the different gifts God gives each individual."

19:14, 15 - CITIZENS HATED HIM. "But his citizens hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, 'We do not want this man to reign over us.' When he returned, after receiving the kingdom, he ordered that these slaves, to whom he had given the money, be called to him so that he might know what business they had done."

19:16 - THE FIRST APPEARED. The nobleman called in his slaves and told them to give an account. The first one said, "Master, your mina has made ten minas more." To which report the nobleman said, "And he said to him, 'Well done, good slave, because you have been faithful in a very little thing, you are to be in authority over ten cities'" (vs. 17).

19:18, 19 - THE SECOND CAME. The second slave reported, "Your mina, master, has made five minas." "And he said to him also, 'And you are to be over five cities.'

19:20, 21 - ANOTHER CAME. A third slave reported, "Master, here is your mina, which I kept put away in a handkerchief; for I was afraid of you, because you are an exacting man; you take up what you did not lay down and reap what you did not sow."

19:22, 23 - BY YOUR OWN WORDS. "By your own words," responded the nobleman, "I will judge you, you worthless slave. Did you know that I am an exacting man, taking up what I did not lay down and reaping what I did not sow? Then why did you not put my money in the bank, and having come, I would have collected it with interest?"

19:24 - TAKE THE MINA AWAY. In replying to the unfaithful slave, the nobleman said to the bystanders, "Take the mina away from him and give it to the one who has the ten minas."

19:25 - HE HAS TEN MINAS ALREADY. They (the other slaves) protest, "Master, he has ten minas already."

19:26 - EVERYONE WHO HAS. Jesus states the principle He is seeking to convey: "I tell you that to everyone who has, more shall be given, but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away."

19:27 - THESE ENEMIES. Jesus continued, "But these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slay them in my presence."

Jesus Continued Toward Jerusalem, 28.

19:28 - TO JERUSALEM. "After He had said these things, He was going on ahead, going up to Jerusalem." He is about to enter Jerusalem, ready to face rejection, abuse, mockery, torture and death.

V. JESUS ENTERS JERUSALEM WITH HIS EYES ON THE CROSS, 19:29-24:53.

A. His Jerusalem Ministry Is Both Dramatic and Climactic, 19:29-21:38.

The Royal Entry, 19:29-44.

19:29 - OLIVET. As Jesus and His followers

approached Bethphage and Bethany, near the mount that is called Olivet, He sent two of the disciples, saying, "Go into the village ahead of you; there, as you enter, you will find a colt tied on which no one yet has ever sat; untie it and bring it here."

BETHPHAGE (Behth' fuhghee) Place name meaning, "house of unripe figs." A small village located on the Mount of Olives near Bethany on or near the road between Jerusalem and Jericho. Reference is made to the village in each of the Synoptic Gospels (Matt. 21:1; Mark 11:1; Luke 19:29). In each account Bethphage was where Jesus gave instruction to two disciples to find the colt on which he would ride into Jerusalem for His triumphal entry. This may also be the place where the fig tree was cursed (Matt. 21:18-22; Mark 11:12-14, 20-26) [HBD].

Bethany is known to primarily as the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. This is where Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead after four days. Jesus often stayed in the home of these saints when He ministered in Jerusalem. The city was located on the eastern slope of the Mt. of Olives, "about two miles" (John 11:18, NIV) southeast of Jerusalem. Bethany was the final stop before Jerusalem just off the main east-west road coming from Jericho. Located at the foot of the mountain, people there could not see Jerusalem from the town, giving Bethany a sense of peace and seclusion. One could walk on the road from Bethany, across Olivet, to Jerusalem in a little under an hour. Jesus may have made His headquarters in the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus when He was in Jerusalem, but during Passion week, Luke tells us that Jesus nights on the Mount of Olives.

19:30 - YOU WILL FIND A COLT. The Lord instructed the two disciples, "Go into the village ahead of you; there, as you enter, you will find a colt tied on which no one yet has ever sat; untie it and bring it here."

19:31 - IF ANYONE ASKS. It was reasonable to assume that someone might ask why they were taking the colt, so He said, if anyone asks "Why are you untying it?" you shall say, 'The Lord has need of it.' The Lord knew this answer would satisfy anyone who would ask. In 32-24 we read:

So those who were sent went away and found it just as He had told them. As they were untying the colt, its owners said to them, "Why are you untying the colt?" They said, "The Lord has need of it."

19:35 - THEY BROUGHT IT TO JESUS. When they brought the colt to Jesus, they "threw their coats on the colt and put Jesus on it" for His Triumphant (Royal) Entry into Jerusalem..

19:36 - AS HE WAS GOING. As the procession made its way into Jerusalem, the people "were spreading their coats on the road." They were bestowing a royal honor on Jesus (see, 2 Kin. 9:13).

19:37 - THE DISCIPLES BEGAN TO PRAISE GOD. Luke says that, "As soon as He was approaching, near the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the miracles which they had seen..."

19:38 - SHOUTING: The crowd was shouting in unison, "BLESSED IS THE KING WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD; Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" This was a familiar quotation from Ps. 118:26. It was sung as the pilgrims made their way into Jerusalem.

19:39 - REBUKE YOUR DISCIPLES. Some of the Pharisees were in the crowd that followed Jesus and they said to Him, "Teacher, rebuke Your disciples."

19:40 - BUT JESUS ANSWERED. Instead of rebuking His followers, He said, "I tell you, if these become silent, the stones will cry out!" Amazing!

19:41 - HE...WEPT. "When He approached Jerusalem, He saw the city and wept over it..." There was much to weep over, just as there is much to weep over in America today. When former President Jimmy Carter, a Southern Baptist who once had America running around in circles trying to figure out what he meant by being born-again, made the statement that Mormonism was just another Christian denomination, I felt like weeping. When I read of those who would "demythologize" Scripture, I feel like weeping. When I see the Mormons on TV offering to send a free copy of the New Testament to anyone who will call and 800 number, I feel like weeping. I wish all 15.6 million Southern Baptists would call for a free New Testament and then use it to lead a lost person to Jesus Christ. If enough people would study the New Testament it would put Mormonism out of business!

When I see what has happened to sit-coms since Andy Griffith, I feel like weeping. I have the same feeling when I see what has happened to the movie and music industries. My wife has taught for nearly thirty years and she feels like weeping when she sees what is happening to children by the time many of the reach school. Is this what Jesus meant when He said, "Blessed are they that

mourn...?" I mourn when I think if evolution taught as fact in our schools, abortion on demand, partial birth abortion for convenience sake, declining morals, socialism, homosexuality, and crime in our society.

Unfortunately, I understand where Charlie Reese is coming from in his January 5, 1998 column (Conservative Chronicle, Vol. 13, No. 2, p. 9) he mentions current events and concludes: "In short, the world is excessively normal - normal being defined these days as decadent, dissolute, and incompetent. If you really want to know the one significant change in America today - that's it. There are more people who are immoral than there used to be" [CC: 9]. He explains:

When I was 10 years old, I often walked 20-25 blocks into the city (Beaumont, Texas) to go to the library. Lumber yards and railroad switching yards were favorite places to play... By the time my youngest was 10 years old, however, I would park at his bus stop until the bus came rather than leave him to wait alone in a city where children frankly aren't safe. So what has changed? Morality.

If someone had assaulted a woman or a child in my hometown in Georgia, the sheriff would have been the least of the person's worries. In fact, getting arrested would have been his only hope of survival, and even that would have been a slim one.

Tolerance for the kind of criminal who preyed on the innocent was well below zero [CC: 9].

19:42 - IF YOU HAD KNOWN. A weeping Jesus exclaimed, "If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes." If they had known they would have wept too.

19:43, 44 - THE DAYS WILL COME. The day will come upon you, Jesus said, when your enemies will throw up a barricade against you, and surround you and hem you in on every side, and they will level you to the ground and your children within you, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation."

YOUR ENEMIES. That would be the Romans under Titus in A.D. 70, when Jerusalem would rebel against Rome and pay a high price for it. The wall around the city would be breached, the city destroyed and the Temple looted and destroyed.

THE TIME OF YOUR VISITATION. This denotes the time when God would bring salvation and blessing. Jerusalem, however, does not recognize the hour of grace.

Jesus cleanses the temple, 19:45-46.

NOTE: This is MONDAY.

19:45, 46 - MY HOUSE. “Jesus entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling, saying to them, ‘It is written, ‘AND MY HOUSE SHALL BE A HOUSE OF PRAYER,’ but you have made it a ROBBERS’ DEN.’” This cleansing of the temple occurred on Monday of Holy Week. He had also cleansed the temple at the beginning of His public ministry (John 2:12-16). Animals guaranteed to be without spot or blemish were sold to worshipers for sacrifices, and Greek and Roman coinage was changed into the standard half-shekel required for the Temple tax, all for a fee.

These merchants were profaning the Temple and taking unfair advantage on circumstances to sell the animals and exchange the coins for an excessive price. If the worshiper had to travel a great distance (i.e., from a foreign country) it would be next to impossible to care for a lamb so that it would be declared “without spot or blemish.” Since there was a possibility that their animal would be rejected, they would wait to buy one when they arrived at the Temple. After taking days, or even weeks for the journey, a once in a lifetime journey for some, they would have to pay whatever price the merchants asked.

19:47, 48 - TEACHING DAILY IN THE TEMPLE. Luke tells us that Jesus was teaching every day in the Temple court, “... but the chief priests and the scribes and the leading men among the people were trying to destroy Him, and they could not find anything that they might do, for all the people were hanging on to every word He said.” The people accepted the authority of Jesus to teach them, just as they accepted His authority to cleanse the Temple. This infuriated the authorities, but they did not act because they feared the people. Jesus demonstrated by the cleansing of the Temple that He has authority even over the Temple exercised His authority even over the Temple. Furthermore, He taught with authority, as Mark points tells us.

Jesus Is Opposed By Chief Priests and Scribes, 19:47-48.

19:47 - TRYING TO DESTROY HIM. Luke records here that “The chief priests and the scribes and the leading men among the people” were the ones who were trying to destroy Jesus. The Pharisees and scribes had been trying to expose Jesus as a false teacher for months, but they are beyond that at this point in time. Now “the chief priests and the scribes and the leading men among the people were trying to destroy Him.” Nothing else would serve their purpose. The Sadducees would become leaders in the murderous plot that would soon develop. They are represented in this group by the chief priests. They had a lot to lose if this movement surrounding Jesus caused any trouble in Jerusalem. They were given a lot of authority over Jewish issues, but it could be quickly and unceremoniously taken away if they did not maintain control of the people.

19:48 - THE PEOPLE. The chief priests and scribes “could not find anything that they might do” to stop Jesus or to refute what He was teaching because “all the people were hanging onto every word He said.” If they had tried to take Him by force the crowd might have revolted, in which case

the Roman soldiers would have been sent in to deal with the mob. If that had happened these chief priests and scribes might be among the first to face the wrath of the Roman government.

Jesus Taught Daily in the Temple, 20:1-21:4.

Temple Authorities Challenge His Authority, 1-8.

NOTE: this is TUESDAY.

20:1 - TEACHING THE PEOPLE IN THE TEMPLE. Jesus spent each night on the Mount of Olives and each day He and His Apostles would walk into Jerusalem and go to the Temple where He found large crowds waiting for Him. “On one of the days while He was teaching the people in the temple and preaching the gospel, the chief priests and the scribes with the elders confronted Him...”

Jesus preached and taught. Some people accentuate preaching and de-emphasize teaching, while others love teaching but disdain preaching. J. D. Grey was pastor of the First Baptist Church, New Orleans, when I was in New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and I heard him often - Becky and I moved our letter to his church for a brief time. He said, “Paul wrote that the preacher is apt to teach - but he is more apt to preach!” Strong emphasis is placed on both the preaching of the Word and the teaching of the Word in the New Testament. It is by the foolish of preaching that people are saved, but it by wise and persistent teaching of the Word that people grow to maturity.

It has been through preaching that I have experienced the power of the Holy spirit working in the hearts of people in miraculous ways to accomplish God’s purpose. It is the preaching that is more likely to get the complement - or the complaint. There are people who almost apologetically explain that their pastor “is a good teacher.” In some cases the pastor may be a good teacher, but a poor preacher. But, generally speaking, if your minister is a good preacher it is going to make thirty minute sermon pass a little faster, because you are mentally, emotionally, and spiritually stimulated. If he is a good teacher, too, it can make the rest of your life more fruitful.

I know the kind of preaching the masses want. All you have to do is look at the popularity of some of the tel-evangelists over the past fifty years. When I see some of the entertainment, dramatic gyrations, ranting and raving, fantastic claims of supernatural experiences, I recall the little bracelets I see some children. Stamped on the bracelets are the letters WWJD - What Would Jesus Do? I cannot imagine Jesus prancing like a peacock, going through mood swings like a pendulum, back and forth, from ecstasy to agony, from shouts of joy to tears of anguish. Let me stress that there is a time for tears and a time to shout, but it scares me when I sense that it is being turned on and off like a light switch. Perhaps this is why I have such great appreciation for Billy Graham, James Kennedy, Charles Stanley, and all those pastors whose churches but the time and have their services televised. When is the last time you have heard Charles Stanley beg people for money?

I know the kind of preaching that is popular, but I also know what God called me to do - and not to

do. He did not call me to intimidate His sheep; He did not call me to psychoanalyze His sheep; He did not call me to entertain His sheep; He did not call me to traumatize His sheep. He did call me to feed His sheep. I love preaching and sense the power of the Holy Spirit in my preaching, but if I do not teach people something while I am preaching, the benefits of that sermon may be short-lived. Jesus taught and Jesus preached - someday I am going to hear Him in Person!

20: 2 - BY WHAT AUTHORITY? The religious authorities demanded, "Tell us by what authority You are doing these things, or who is the one who gave You this authority?" He has demonstrated His authority over demons, over diseases, blindness, the natural elements, and even death. He had also declared His authority over the Sabbath, and He had taught with authority, both in Judea and Galilee. But now He is in the Temple and it is the Passover season, and they were the recognized authorities. They asked the right question but they, with very few exceptions, would never accept His answer.

20:3, 4 - I WILL ALSO ASK YOU A QUESTION. Once again, Jesus answered a question with a question: "You tell Me: Was the baptism of John from heaven or from men?" This would have been a simple question had it not been for the fact that the crowd standing there listening were convinced that the baptism of John was from God. They were the authorities, but they could not afford to run the risk of losing control of this situation. They wanted to expose Jesus as a fraud, but were in danger of having their hypocrisy exposed before the crowd.

Judge Robert Bork (*Slouching Toward Gomorrah*), writes about what it was like when the sixties radicals took over many of the more elite universities. Presidents, boards of trustees, and professors were intimidated by these radical students. The inmates were running the institutions. By the way, if you wonder where all the radical students have gone, Judge Bork says that they have not gone away. They do not have to make the noise and stage sit-ins in the president's office any more because they are the presidents and the administrators. If you doubt that, take a careful look at the curriculum offered in many of these schools. The average person would be shocked to discover that you can get academic credit for immorality!

20:5, 6 - THEY REASONED AMONG THEMSELVES. The religious leaders held a quick conference to try to decide how to answer Him. "If," they reasoned, "we say, 'From heaven,' He will say, 'Why did you not believe him? 'But if we say, 'From men,' all the people will stone us to death, for they are convinced that John was a prophet."

The dilemma with which Jesus' question confronted the religious leaders was indeed a painful one - was John's baptism from heaven or from men? It is interesting that these people who did not follow John the Baptist when he was alive are, now that he was dead, willing to acknowledge him as a prophet to try to win the people over to their side. They had refused the baptism of John, "which was the heavenly sign of the dawning Messianic Age that Jesus was fulfilling. By the very witness of John they should have accepted Jesus. They were rejecting Jesus as they had rejected John. This blatant contradiction exposed their hypocrisy [DSB].

20:7 - THEY ANSWERED. They answered, in essence, "We don't have an answer." Actually

they said, "that they did not know where it came from." In the classic movie, "Miracle on 34th Street," there is a sanity trial in which the prosecution was trying to prove that Kris Kringle was insane because he claimed to be Santa Claus. Witnesses would pause to consider what the wrong answer would do to their business, or their image. The judge was warned that if he did not handle the case just right it would destroy him politically. But this was no drama the authorities had to deal with. The wrong answer could cost them not only their own authority in Israel, but their very lives.

20:8 - JESUS SAID. The Lord said, "Nor will I tell you by what authority I do these things." It was not that He was afraid to answer them, but the cross was still a few days away, and He maintained control of His schedule and His destiny. He is not afraid of them but He does not want a riot at this time. When the time came for Him to die, He would die by giving up His life, nobody was going to take it away from Him.

The Parable of the Wicked Vinedressers, 9-19.

20:9 - PARABLE: Jesus had not answered the question asked by the Temple authorities (Where did you get Your authority?), but now He tells a parable that will reveal His authority.

"A man planted a vineyard and rented it out to vine-growers, and went on a journey for a long time." "At the harvest time he sent a slave to the vine-growers, so that they would give him some of the produce of the vineyard; but the vine-growers beat him and sent him away empty-handed. "And he proceeded to send another slave; and they beat him also and treated him shamefully and sent him away empty-handed. And he proceeded to send a third; and this one also they wounded and cast out" (9-12).

The owner of the vineyard said, 'What shall I do? I will send my beloved son; perhaps they will respect him.' But when the vine-growers saw him, they reasoned with one another, saying, 'This is the heir; let us kill him so that the inheritance will be ours.' So they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. What, then, will the owner of the vineyard do to them? (13-15).

With this parable Jesus explains God's dealings with Israel (Isa. 5:1-7 has a similar story). The Old Testament prophets are intended in verses 10-12; and Jesus Himself is the "beloved son" of verse 13; God's only Son, whom He loved dearly. He was God's final hope to bring Israel back to a covenant relationship with Him, His final provision for their return to obedience and service, and His ultimate plan to bring them back into His will. But Israel rejected Him as they had the prophets.

20:16 - MAY IT NEVER BE! "He will come and destroy these vine-growers and will give the vineyard to others." The religious leaders understood the meaning of the parable, even though they did not believe Jesus. Their response? "When they heard it, they said, "May it never be!" We have their words but we do not see their faces or hear the tone of their voices. Were they credulous, or cynical, mocking, or sincere?

20:17 - CHIEF CORNER STONE. Jesus looked at them, knowing what they really think, and said, "What then is this that is written: 'THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER stone'?" (Italics in NAS). The quotation (Ps. 118:22) is a messianic prophecy which would find fulfillment in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the stone upon which the kingdom is built, but he did not fit the preconceived theology of the Messiah.

20:18 - THAT STONE. To reject that stone is suicidal (eternally suicidal): "Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust." In Isaiah 8:14, 15, God is the stone over which both Israel and Judah would stumble, fall and be broken. The idea is found in Dan. 2:34-45. Those who stumble over Jesus will do so to their own eternal destruction.

20:19 - THEY UNDERSTOOD. "The scribes and the chief priests tried to lay hands on Him that very hour, and they feared the people; for they understood that He spoke this parable against them.

By this time the religious authorities were like circling sharks, relishing the kill, but cautious because the crowd was behind Jesus, not them.

Pharisees and Herodians Try to trap Jesus over Tribute to Caesar, 20-26.

20:20 - SO THEY WATCHED HIM. Opposition is escalating now. Temple officials "sent spies who pretended to be righteous, in order that they might catch Him in some statement, so that they could deliver Him to the rule and the authority of the governor."

20:21 - THEY QUESTIONED HIM. "They" refers to the spies sent by the authorities. These spies said, "Teacher, we know that You speak and teach correctly, and You are not partial to any, but teach the way of God in truth." They do not mean it! They are setting Him up.

20:22 - TAXES. Their question is a good one: "Is it lawful for us to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?" Of course, they were not seeking His help with this controversial issue, they were trying to trap Him. However, "He detected their trickery" (vs. 23) and once again answered them with a question which put them on the defensive. When self-righteous religious people like these people, with a sense of their own rightness and self-importance, try to expose a servant of God and fail, their hatred can become increasingly more intense, and that is what happened here.

20:24 - SHOW ME A DENARIUS. Jesus asked for a coin and when they produced one He asked, "Whose likeness and inscription does it have?" They said, "Caesar's." The denarius was a silver Roman coin, with Caesar's image on it. In addition to the image of Caesar, the coin had the name and title of the ruling emperor.

20:25 - RENDER TO CAESAR. Jesus responded, "Then render to Caesar the things that are

Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." This is the classic statement on civic and Christian responsibility. Christians have a dual citizenship and responsibility - to God and country - and in that order. In making this statement, Jesus set forth a timeless principle for dealing with the claims God and the claims of the state over our lives. The Founding Fathers of the United States were careful to respect the rights of citizens to worship and serve God. They also recognized the fact that because of man's depravity, government needed the influence of Christianity.

The passage does not provide a final, clear resolution to all our questions, whether theological or political. Three things are clear: this is a beginning place to inform our Christian consciences in citizenship matters; it is a reminder that the extension of governmental authority misses no one; and no matter what one's income or social position, paying taxes is a part of the submission to the state [DSB].

Sadducees Try to Trap Him With a Question about the Resurrection, 27-40.

20:27 - SADDUCEES. "Now there came to Him some of the Sadducees (who say that there is no resurrection)" to try their hand. According to Holman the Sadducees were a religious group which formed during the period between the Testaments when the Maccabees ruled Judah. "They took their name from one of David's co priests, Zadok, and claimed descent from him. Their name meant "righteous ones" [HBD].

20:28 - MOSES WROTE. The Sadducees questioned Jesus: "...Teacher, Moses wrote for us that IF A MAN'S BROTHER DIES, having a wife, AND HE IS CHILDLESS, HIS BROTHER SHOULD MARRY THE WIFE AND RAISE UP CHILDREN TO HIS BROTHER. According to the law (Deut. 25:5-10), if a man died without an heir, any unmarried brother was obliged to marry his widow.

The Sadducees now present a hypothetical case for Him. No doubt, this was a favorite trick of theirs which had probably stumped a lot of people. They must have loved using this on the Pharisees.

"Now there were seven brothers; and the first took a wife and died childless; and the second and the third married her; and in the same way all seven died, leaving no children. 'Finally the woman died also' (29-32).

20:33 - IN THE RESURRECTION. The Sadducees were both arrogant and sanctimonious. They do not even believe in the resurrection! Yet, they asked, "therefore, which one's wife will she be? For all seven had married her." The Pharisees not only believed in the resurrection of the dead, they believed that marriage continues in the resurrection. They also believed they would have children in were also begotten in that state (cf. Matt. 22:29-30, note).

20:34, 35 - THE SONS OF THIS AGE. And Jesus said, "The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage, but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage."

20:36 - SONS OF THE RESURRECTION. In Heaven people “cannot even die anymore, because they are like angels, and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection.” This is the definitive statement on the subject. Note that Jesus did not say Christians become angels when they die. He said we will be “like angels” in that in the resurrection state there is no marriage or procreation. Angels do not function in physical bodies and they do not do physical things, and neither will the saints in Heaven.

The Mormons are offering free New Testaments to anyone who calls them. It would be interesting to see them explain this passage. Of course, they believe in it as long as it is correctly interpreted - which means their interpretation.

20:37 - MOSES SHOWED. "But that the dead are raised, even Moses showed, in the passage about the burning bush, where he calls the Lord THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, AND THE GOD OF ISAAC, AND THE GOD OF JACOB." The Lord claimed a continuing relationship with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, though they had died long before.

“He said also, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” Then Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God” (Exodus 3:6).

20:38 - GOD OF ...THE LIVING. Jesus continued, "Now He is not the God of the dead but of the living; for all live to Him." How did they react to Jesus answer (remember that the Sadducees totally rejected the resurrection of the dead)?

Some of the scribes answered and said, "Teacher, You have spoken well.' For they did not have courage to question Him any longer about anything" (vv. 39-40).

The Messiah Called LORD by David, 41-44.

20:41 - CHRIST IS DAVID'S SON. Jesus reiterates His authority here: “Then He said to them, “How is it that they say the Christ is David's son?” He is not denying that He was descended from David, but that the identification of the Messiah as David's Son does not tell the complete story. The Messiah is a far more exalted King than his forefather, David . And the throne He occupies is far greater than the throne of David. It is the very throne of God.

20:42, 43 - DAVID HIMSELF SAYS. David had written “in the book of Psalms, 'THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES A FOOTSTOOL FOR YOUR FEET.'” David uses the name God gave Moses - YAHWEH (YHWH). It is rendered “LORD” in various translations, all capital letters, show that this is the covenant name for God), literally, I AM WHO I AM. The deeper meaning of Yahweh is "I am the One who is" (emphasizing God's self-existence). In the fullest sense, a Hebrew scholar once told me, it also means “I am the cause of your existence.” Yahweh is the uncaused Cause of all that exists.

20:44 - THEREFORE. For that reason, "David calls Him 'Lord,' and how is He his son?"

The Jews recognize the humanity of the Messiah, descended from David, but not His divinity. To answer this question correctly would be to grant Jesus' claim to be the Son of God. The cleverness of the Lord's question concerning David's affirmation in Ps. 110 was designed not only to silence His adversaries, but also to assert anew the full deity of Christ David called Jesus, his Son (descendant), "Lord" because while Jesus was the offspring of David in His incarnation, He was also David's "Lord" in that this Son, as the eternal God of the ages, existed before David and, in fact, gave life to David [BSB].

True Religion Is Contrasted with False, 20:45-21:4.

20:45 - WHILE ALL THE PEOPLE WERE LISTENING. Jesus was constantly surrounded by crowds at this point, but He still had some urgent lessons to communicate to His disciples.

"Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and love respectful greetings in the market places, and chief seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets, who devour widows' houses, and for appearance's sake offer long prayers. These will receive greater condemnation" (vv. 46-47).

LONG ROBES. The long robes denote men of importance and rank. The "chief seats" in the synagogues were those closest to the speaker.

DEVOUR WIDOWS' HOUSES. This possibly referred "to foreclosing on mortgages, to excessive charges for services rendered, to eating with widows as a forced hospitality, or, most likely, to insisting that widows make generous contributions to the religious causes advocated by the scribes" [BSB].

21:1- THE TREASURY . Some rich worshipers make His point for Him: "And He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury." The "treasury," according to the Talmud, is a reference to 13 trumpet-shaped treasure boxes into which the worshipers dropped their money. They were located in the Court of the Women in the Temple.

21:2 - A WIDOW POOR. In marked contrast to the rich who threw in their coins with great fanfare, Jesus saw "a poor widow putting in two small copper coins." The small copper coin was the smallest and the least valued of coins. The NKJV follows the Authorized Version - "two mites," thence, the "widow's mite."

21:3, 4 - MORE THAN ALL. Jesus said, "Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all of them; for they all out of their surplus put into the offering; but she out of her poverty put in all that she had to live on." They impressed the crowds with their large gifts, but those gifts were never

missed by the donor. Charities need large donors, but some donors need the charities. Almost every major Hollywood star has a cause today. Its the best publicity out there, and it is tax deductible. There are some wealthy individuals, however, who help a lot of people without seeking glory.

The widow must have been a pitiful sight to the person of the world, dropping in the two tiny, almost worthless coins. But Jesus knew that she had given all she had. She had sacrificed something when she gave her two mites. God still honors those who give from the heart, those whose gift manifests the value they place on God and His work. Jesus knows the heart and He judges according to what he knows is in the heart. You may deceive the world but you will never deceive Him.

Jesus Delivers the Apocalyptic Discourse, 21:5-38.

He Predicts the Destruction of the Temple, 5-6.

21:5 - TALKING ABOUT THE TEMPLE. Luke tells, "And while some were talking about the temple, that it was adorned with beautiful stones and votive gifts, He said, 'As for these things which you are looking at, the days will come in which there will not be left one stone upon another which will not be torn down.'"

ADORNED WITH BEAUTIFUL STONES. Herod's Temple had been under construction for 46 years and they were not through with it yet. Some Roman said, "You have not seen beauty until you see the temple of the Jews that is in Jerusalem." Herod the Great began the building of this Temple in 20 B.C., and it was finished in A.D. 64. Many stones visible to the disciples were 10-12 feet in length. Foundation stones were much larger, we are told, were 12 X 20 X 40.

VOTIVE GIFTS. These were decorative items that had been given to adorn the Temple. These gifts included Herod's golden vine which had bunches of grapes as tall as a man.

TORN DOWN. This prophecy was fulfilled in A.D. 70, when the Roman general Titus breached the walls of the city, captured Jerusalem, and destroyed the Temple. The destruction of the Temple was utter and complete.

His Disciples Ask for a Sign, 21:7.

21:7 - THESE THINGS. The people found this prophecy incredulous. "They questioned Him, saying, "Teacher, when therefore will these things happen? And what will be the sign when these things are about to take place?" There is a dual perspective in the Lord's answer--the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and the tribulation associated with His second coming. Verses 8-19 and 25-28 relate particularly to the latter time, whereas verses 20-24 refer to the former.

Jesus Cautions Them Against Being Deceived, 21:8.

21:8 - MISLED. Jesus, with His perfect understanding of the human mind, and with His perfect understanding of fallen human nature, begins with some good advice: "See to it that you are not misled." The same warning is recorded in Matthew 24:4. This is the first step in dealing with prophecy.

Early in my ministry there was a church member who had recently come under spell of a charismatic (in the original sense of the word) preacher from another state. His primary focus was Eschatology, and his view was very narrow. He invited this pastor to come to hear me preach and the man shouted "Amen" to everything I said, and then went home with the church member and (according to the man's wife) "cut me to pieces." The church member began talking with others about my theology and when he could not convince them I was a heretic, he left the church. A year or two later he came back to visit and showed an interest in coming back into the church. He explained to me, "I had to change my mind about some things because some countries in the Middle East didn't do what I thought they would."

It was not too long before he left again, and even though I saw him from time to time, my next real conversation with him came years later when I was pastor of another church. My mother, one of the most godly people I have ever known, was slowly losing a battle to cancer. Twelve years after her death, and some fifteen or sixteen years after she had gone into a nursing home, I preached a revival at the Sledge Baptist Church, Sledge, Mississippi. People from several different churches talked with me about their love for her and their respect for her Christian testimony, and praised her for the life she lived. Yet, this former church member, by this time involved in the Charismatic movement, assured me that if my mother had faith, she didn't have to be sick.

My mother's faith was manifested through her suffering. At her funeral I discovered that people had often driven to visit with her in the nursing home without our knowledge. Before too long I learned that my friend's wife had cancer. Within a few years he and his wife had both died of a disease that, according to him, faith would prevent.

This was a good man and I really loved him. It hurt me to see him struggle with these theological issues. It also hurt to know that he was attacking me, but mostly it bothered me to see him misled.

MANY WILL COME IN MY NAME. Jesus warned that false prophets would come in His name saying, "I am He,' and, 'The time is near'. Do not go after them." That is a good starting place. Study the Scripture, and trust the Holy spirit to guide you and nurture your understanding of sound doctrine.

Jesus Deals With End-Time Events, 9-19.

21:9 - WHEN YOU HEAR OF WARS. I don't know how many times I have heard Eschatological predictions prefaced with "the Bible says there will be wars and rumors of wars before the end of time." Specifically, Jesus says. "When you hear of wars and disturbances, do not be terrified; for these things must take place first, but the end does not follow immediately." There

are at the present time some forty hot spots in the world today where there are “wars or disturbances.”

Continuing in the same vein, Jesus said, “Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom” (vs. 10).

21:11 - GREAT EARTHQUAKES. “...There will be great earthquakes, and in various places plagues and famines; and there will be terrors and great signs from heaven.” These are going on all the time, and have been ever since the Flood.

21:12 - ALL THESE THINGS. That is, before, end time events (vs. 7). “But before all these things (end-time events), they will lay their hands on you and will persecute you, delivering you to the synagogues and prisons, bringing you before kings and governors for My name's sake.” There is no way they could imagine the things some of these disciples would face before very long. Persecution of Christians as gone one through the centuries. No century, however has seen the carnage of the Twentieth Century, with millions of Christians included in the number slain by Hitler, Stalin, and others of their kind.

Many Christians in America find it hard to believe that Christians are being persecuted in many places in the world at this very time. Christians are being oppressed, harassed, imprisoned, tortured, and killed for the Gospel right now. How does this relate to Jesus’ prophecy? Well, we know (1) He is coming gain and (2) Christians are being persecuted. That is what we know to this point. I personally believe His return is near and I believe it for many reasons. But when I think of predicting an exact sequence of events, I remember what happened to all those gloom and doom prophecies immediately preceding Desert Storm. Saddam Hussein was just about to reestablish the Babylonian Empire. And today if you listen to the goofy predictions coming from post-modern pop-science, global warming is going to drown all it does not roast. Chicken Little’s “The sky is falling” has yielded to “There is a hole in the ozone layer.” The sun, incidentally, will continually replace the ozone.

21:13 - OPPORTUNITY. It is not God’s purpose to deliver all Christians from all oppression, because “It will lead to an opportunity for your testimony.” You name them: Peter, James, John, Paul, John Bunyan, Deitrich Bonnhoffer, Corre Ten Boom.

21:14 - MAKE UP YOUR MINDS. Rather than rehearse your defense before you are forced to stand before authorities offer a defense of the Gospel, trust the Lord to guide you. “Make up your minds,” Jesus said, “not to prepare beforehand to defend yourselves.” He is not calling for an apathetic or lackadaisical attitude, but encouraging us not to fret over what might happen. We must not be anxious about what may happen, but trust Him to guide and protect us.

21:15 - I WILL GIVE YOU UTTERANCE. Jesus promises His servants “utterance and wisdom which none of your opponents will be able to resist or refute. See Paul’s defense before Felix (Acts 24) for an example. Please observe that Jesus did not say this is the way to prepare (or not prepare!) A sermon or Sunday School lesson.

21:16 - BETRAYED. "But you will be betrayed even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death." According to reports from the period, this happened repeatedly in Nazi Germany and in the Soviet Union. The godless state had brainwashed children who turned in parents, relatives and friends.

21:17 - YOU WILL BE HATED BY ALL BECAUSE OF MY NAME. So it has been throughout Christianity, in the early centuries in Rome, Middle Age inquisitions, Reformation era persecutions, and modern persecution of Christians around the world. Today, in the United States Christians are being systematically opposed, denied rights, and pushed from public places. It began during the Humanistic period (1935-1985, my dates) and it continues during the post-modern era (1980 - present, some overlapping).

21:18 - YET NOT A HAIR OF YOUR HEAD WILL PERISH. This might seem strange in light of the fact that millions have died for the cause of Christ. There really is no contradiction between this statement and that of verse 16). "Jesus is not promising escape from death to the disciples or anyone else. The proverbial statement means that they will be in the care of God until their last hour. Their destiny is in God's hands, not men's" [BSB].

21:19 -BY YOUR ENDURANCE YOU WILL GAIN YOUR LIVES. "Enduring persecution will prove the reality of their salvation (and may also include the idea of surviving to the end of the Tribulation, as in Matt. 24:13)" [RSB]. Jesus promises to protect those who obey Him. Of course this includes His protection from eternal damnation.

Jesus Answers Question About the Destruction of Jerusalem, 20-24.

21:20 - JERUSALEM SURROUNDED. Jesus is dealing with two questions, the Second Coming and the destruction of Jerusalem. This obviously pertains to the latter. Jesus says, "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near." The Romans under Titus held Jerusalem under a long siege before he breached the walls and captured the city in A. D. 70.

21:21 - FLEE TO THE MOUNTAINS. When they saw the Roman army approaching the city, "Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those who are in the midst of the city must leave, and those who are in the country must not enter the city." According to Eusebius, Christians apparently following this warning and left the city, taking refuge at Pella, a small town east of the Jordan near the Sea of Galilee.

21:22 - ALL THINGS...WILL BE FULFILLED. Jesus explains, "because these are days of vengeance, so that all things which are written will be fulfilled."

21:23, 24 - WOE. The coming catastrophic nature and exhaustive scope of the coming disaster would be merit the warning to flee Jerusalem.

Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days; for there will be great distress upon the land and wrath to this people; and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

TIME OF THE GENTILES. The expression, “The time of the Gentiles,” means that Jerusalem would be in the hands of the Gentiles until the time when God determines it shall end. Some of the interpretations are interesting. Other commentaries are interesting in that they have very little to say on the subject. J. Vernon McGee said at the time he was writing the *Through the Bible Series*, observed that Jerusalem has been in the hands of Gentiles since the day of Titus and that “Holy places’ in Jerusalem are held by Gentiles” [McGee: 257]. He lamented that Jerusalem had been trodden down by Gentiles for some 1900 years. Of Course, we recognized that his statement is no longer valid. Because of some amazing victories the Jews since the Jews returned to Israel in 1946, especially the Seven Day War of 1963, Gentiles do not control all the holy places in Jerusalem.

Consider two different notes on this phrase. First, there is The Believer’s Study Bible:

This phrase is a reference to the Gentile domination of Jerusalem and Palestine up to and including the Great Tribulation, particularly the latter three and one-half years of that period. The revived Roman Empire and its leader, the Antichrist, will annul a covenant made with Israel at the outset of the Tribulation. Jerusalem and the temple will be trodden underfoot by these Gentiles until Christ intervenes at His return to establish the earthly kingdom [BSB].

Ryrie simply notes that:

The period of Gentile domination of Jerusalem, which probably began under Nebuchadnezzar (587 B.C.), was certainly in effect in A.D. 70 and continues into the Tribulation [RSB].

Once Again He Returns to End-Time Events, 25-28.

21:25, 26 - SIGNS. Jesus has been talking about the destruction of Jerusalem (which occurred in A.D. 70). Using the expression “The time of the Gentiles,” as a transitional phrase, He now returns the eschatological emphasis He interrupted parenthetically in order to issue a warning about the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple.

There will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth dismay among nations, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves, men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

It does not take more than a brief look at this to realize that the devastation He mentions here had been greatly expanded over the destruction of Jerusalem. The destruction of Jerusalem could be accomplished without such cosmic upheaval.

21:27 - THEN. "Then they will see THE SON OF MAN COMING IN A CLOUD with power and great glory." Wonderful! Glorious! Regardless, of one's eschatological position, this is a precious promise.

The coming of Christ with power and great glory will signal the approaching completion of redemption. Included are the consummation of personal salvation, as well as creation's redemption, the church's honor as Christ's bride, and the end of evil. Premillennialists believe Christ's earthly millennial kingdom will be established at the second coming, while amillennialists believe the event will usher in the new heavens and new earth [DSB].

21:28 - YOUR REDEMPTION. Jesus said, "But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near." Once again, we must be careful to understand what He is saying and what He is not. He is not saying that Justification is a process. He is saying that our redemption is more than a new birth experience. "Redemption" is a broad concept in the Bible, ranging from the personal to the cosmic, from the physical to the spiritual, and from the temporal to the eternal. It is associated in all its fullness with the future coming of Christ" DSB].

Our salvation is accomplished, once for all time, by God's all-sufficient grace, through the faith He gives us. There is a process, however, which is not complete and that is Sanctification. Sanctification is the process of spiritual growth and development which ideally begins at the point of Justification and continues until the consummation of our redemption. There remains only one aspect of our redemption which not yet been completed, and that is Glorification. Glorification, the term Christians use to denote the ultimate completion of our redemption, is related here to the second coming of Jesus Christ.

I found a note in one of the Disciple's Study Bible that "This is the only place the word redemption occurs in the Gospels." I checked with QuickVerse and found that the word appears 23 times in the Bible (NAS), ten of which are in the New Testament. Two of them are in the Gospel According to Luke. The other, Luke 2:38, refers to the redemption of Jerusalem.

The Parable of the Fig Tree, 29-33.

21:29 - A PARABLE. Jesus told the Parable of the Fig Tree"

As soon as they put forth leaves, you see it and know for yourselves that summer is now near. So you also, when you see these things happening, recognize that the

kingdom of God is near (vv. 30-31).

The fig tree is a symbol for Israel (see Jer. 24:1-5; Hosea 9:10). Just as we may know that summer with its delicious figs is near when the tree leafs out, we will know that the end is near by the signs.

21:32 - THIS GENERATION. Jesus prompted centuries of debate when He said, "Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all things take place." The question is, What generation? What does He mean by generation? Is He using it figuratively or literally? One thing is obvious: "All these things" in this verse refers to "all these things" in the following passage (v. 36)

Just as obvious is the fact that no one in His audience when Jesus spoke these words lived to see "all these things" come to pass.

There is another possibility, as various commentators point out. The Greek word (*genea*) can be translated race, family, or generation. There are those who interpret this to mean that the Jewish race will be preserved, in spite of persecution and genocidal efforts to exterminate them, until the Lord comes. Not even the Holocaust destroy the race. If this is the right interpretation, it points to the indestructibility of the race.

Others see that as meaning a literal generation (life-span). If this is the right view, it would mean that those who saw the beginning of these events would see the conclusion of them also [McGee: 259]. Some people began their count-down when Jews returned to Palestine found (or reestablish) the state of Israel in 1946. As we moved into the eighties and nineties, many revised this to begin with the Seven Day War in 1963. If that is the case, we are again placing a time limit on this prophecy. However, the solution may well be that Jesus meant that the generation that saw the beginning of these events would see the culmination of them - without imposing a date on either. If that is the case, the emphasis may be upon the rapidity with which these events would unfold, rather than the permanence of Israel, or the reestablishment of the state of Israel in 1946, or the great victory of 1963.

Early in my ministry I was frequently asked, if I thought the Second Coming was near because "The Jews are returning to the Holy Land." I tried to explain that while many Jews had returned, all Jews had no thought of moving to Israel. Furthermore, I discovered that within two decades of the return of many Jews to Palestine, a significant percentage of Jews who are born in Israel migrate to other countries. Don Feder, a conservative Jew and one of my favorite columnists, laments that Judaism is in a state of decline. Record numbers of Jews are leaving Judaism, embracing other religions, or simply becoming secular. I do not know what it all means, but I am watching with a great deal of interest.

21:33 - MY WORDS WILL NOT PASS AWAY. Jesus stressed the importance of His prophecy: "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away." We know the written Word will not pass away: "The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever" (Is. 40:8). Now, Jesus says that His verbal prophecy is permanent, eternal,

unchangeable.

Human words come and go, making their impact for a moment and then dying in the mists of history. God's Word never dies. It has eternal authority. The comfort He offers His people is sure. We can count on Scripture when all else seems to fail [DSB].

Jesus Counsels Them to Watch and Pray, 34-36.

21:34 - BE ON GUARD. If Jesus said, it must be so. But what should we do? He answer that, too: "Be on guard," He said, "so that your hearts will not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day will not come on you suddenly like a trap..."

THAT DAY. "That Day" must be the either the Second Coming or the Day of Judgment. Throughout this message Jesus has been alternating between the destruction of Jerusalem as a type of the judgment to come, and the actual consummation of all things in the final judgment.

21:35 - UPON ALL. Final judgment will "come upon all those who dwell on the face of all the earth." Final judgment will be universal. Those who have mocked and scorned will be on their face before Him.

2:36 - ON THE ALERT. How should we react to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ and the coming Day of Judgment? Jesus provides the answer, "Keep on the alert at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man." Christians should be especially alert for the signs that these events are about to take place and pray fervently for faith an courage to "escape all these things." Believers must watch and pray. The return of my Savior is more precious to me every day. I agree with the one person who was privileged to see more of Heaven than any other human being, and though he could neither understand nor explain it all, he longed for it. John said, "He who testifies to these things says, 'Yes, I am coming quickly.' John's response? "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus." Amen!

Jesus Continued to Teach in the Temple Each Day, 37-38.

21:37, 38 - TEACHING IN THE TEMPLE. "Now during the day He was teaching in the temple, but at evening He would go out and spend the night on the mount that is called Olivet." Modern man, those living in the space age, would say, "The countdown is on." Time is running out. The teaching moments are precious and Jesus is taking advantage of every opportunity to teach His disciples. There is no sense of panic, and not so much the sense of urgency as there is the fact that Jesus is taking advantage of every bit of time He has left to prepare His disciples for His arrest and crucifixion. The must not be defeated by temporal circumstances, but look at the broader picture and be encouraged by the fact that God is still in control.

Jesus went to the temple early each morning during this final week “And all the people would get up early in the morning to come to Him in the temple to listen to Him.” He was taking advantage of the brief time He had left and they were there early so they would not miss anything He had to say.

B. In the Final Stage of His Ministry Jesus Celebrates the Passover with His Disciples and Faces Betrayal, Trials, and the Crucifixion, 22:1-23:49.

Judas Agrees to Betray Jesus, 22:1-6.

NOTE: This is WEDNESDAY.

22:1 - FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD. The Feast of Unleavened Bread was seven days long, beginning on the fifteenth of Nisan and continuing through the twenty-first. Its name comes from the fact that unleavened bread is eaten for seven days (Lev. 23:6; Num. 28:17).

“In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at twilight is the LORD'S Passover. ‘Then on the fifteenth day of the same month there is the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the LORD; for seven days you shall eat unleavened bread’” (Lev. 23:5-6).

WHICH IS CALLED THE PASSOVER. The term “Passover,” is used for the entire eight days of celebration (Lev. 23:6; Num. 28:17). However, Passover is actually a separate festival, observed on the fourteenth of Nisan, though the meal was eaten after sundown on the fifteenth of Nisan.

22:2 - PUT HIM TO DEATH. “The chief priests and the scribes were seeking how they might put Him to death; for they were afraid of the people.” They are increasing their efforts to find a way to put Jesus to death, but they still have not figured out how to overcome their major obstacle - fear of the people.

22:3 - SATAN ENTERED INTO JUDAS. Judas, “called Iscariot,” one of the twelve apostles, had become disillusioned with Jesus. He was also dishonest, and loved money. Satan used took advantage of all his weaknesses to inspire Him to betray is Lord. Judas willingly became an instrument Satan used to bring about the arrest and death of Jesus.

22:4 - HOW HE MIGHT BETRAY HIM. For anyone who might try to defend Judas, Luke tells us that Judas took the initiative and “went away and discussed with the chief priests and officers how he might betray Him to them.” Of course, Judas was just what they were looking for: “They were glad and agreed to give him money” (vs. 5).

22:6 - HE CONSENTED. They came to an agreement and from that moment Judas “began

seeking a good opportunity to betray Him to them apart from the crowd.”

Jesus and His Disciples Prepare the Passover, 22:7-13.

NOTE: this is THURSDAY.

22:7 - FIRST DAY. This was the first day of Unleavened Bread (the first of seven) “on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed.” Compare This passage with Mark 14:12-25 and 1 Co 11:23-26).

Jesus prepared His disciples for His death through the Passover and Lord's Supper, which would help them realize His death was not an accident but God's appointed will. Jesus looked beyond His death to renewed fellowship in the eternal kingdom [DSB].

22:8 - PREPARE THE PASSOVER. “And Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and prepare the Passover for us, so that we may eat it." Jesus sent Peter and John (possibly the oldest and the youngest Apostles) to prepare for the Last Supper. Peter and John were two of the three who seemed to make up the inner circle (James, the brother of John was the other) to prepare for the meal.

22:10 - A MAN... CARRYING A PITCHER OF WATER. Peter and John asked, "Where do You want us to prepare it?" (Vs, 9). Jesus answered them, "...When you have entered the city, a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him into the house that he enters." A man carrying water in those days in Israel would be easily identifiable, since women, almost without exception, performed this chore. A man carrying a pitcher of water would get their attention.

22:11, 12 - THE TEACHER SAYS. Jesus not only knew the man would be carrying water, He knew he would be carrying it at the exact time Peter and John were walking down the street - and that the man would be obedient to “the Teacher.” Jesus said, “...you shall say to the owner of the house, 'The Teacher says to you, ‘Where is the guest room in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples? And he will show you a large, furnished upper room; prepare it there.'” It is worth noting that “The most convincing evidence in the Gospels that Jesus functioned primarily as a teacher is the fact that He referred to Himself as The Teacher” [DSB].

Luke records that “...they left and found everything just as He had told them; and they prepared the Passover” (vs. 13). This is absolutely amazing - everything was exactly as He said it would be.

One of the satellite channels has run a documentary on Edgar Cayce, “the sleeping prophet.” Edgar Cayce would go in to a hypnotic trance (New Agers would call it an altered state of consciousness) and reveal mysteries to people. He did this twice a day (forty-five minutes each session), usually offering a diagnoses of some mysterious illness along with a prescription. His success rate was very high and doctors could never prove that he was a fake. Cayce credited God

with his visions. He reportedly read the Bible through sixty-seven times and taught Sunday School for a long time.

However, Edgar Cayce was far from perfect. His grandson son and grand son pointed out that a some of the people were not healed outright - they gradually improved over a period of time. In other cases, he was a complete failure (i.e., spending three years trying to find oil to finance a hospital). In time, the occult nature of Cayce's work should have become more apparent - when he began to teach reincarnation. He was betrayed by his occult beliefs.

Jesus might have been discredited the day He sent Peter and John to prepare for the Passover they had met no man carrying a pitcher of water, or if he had not granted their request. What if he had only been assisting a woman with a pitcher (for whatever reason). Or suppose he had said, "I really would like to help, but you know, Jesus is not too popular in Jerusalem right now and I am going to have to live with these people after He is gone. I do business with some of them and if they knew I was helping Jesus I would lose their business."

Jesus healed people and they got up and ate or walked immediately. He delivered people from demons immediately. And His prophecy/fulfillment rate was 100 percent. The Prophet, Priest, King met the rigid requirements of a true prophet - there was no margin of error for a true Old Testament prophet. Anything less than one-hundred percent could get you stoned - in the Old testament sense of the word!

The Passover and the Lord's Supper, 22:14-23.

22:14 - WHEN THE HOUR HAD COME. When the time came for the meal, Jesus "reclined at the table, and the apostles with Him." Then He proceeded to address them:

And He said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I say to you, I shall never again eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God (vv. 15-16).

22:17,18 - CUP. When Jesus and His disciples had reclined at the table, He took a cup, gave thanks, and said, "Take this and share it among yourselves; for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until the kingdom of God comes."

22:19 - BREAD. After they drank the wine (usually mixed 3 parts water to 1 part wine), Jesus had "taken some bread and given thanks, He broke it and gave it to them, saying, 'This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me."

MY BODY. Jesus said, "This is My body." The bread remained bread but represented His body. It is a metaphor, an illustration, such as "I am the door" (John 10:7). The bread did not literally, become the actual body of Jesus, either Physically or spiritually (Trans-substantiation, or Con-

substantiation). It is symbolic.

Jesus gave the bread and cup to His disciples while they were celebrating the Passover. This makes it clear that He intended this Supper to be a sign of the new covenant as the Passover had been the sign of the old covenant. When He took the bread, He was taking the most basic necessity of daily nourishment for our bodies. His body, offered for us on the cross, symbolized the absolute necessity for our spiritual nourishment as Christian disciples [DSB].

GAVE THANKS. The Greek word is *eucharisto*, from which we get "Eucharist, the name used by many Christians to designate the Lord's Supper.

22:20 - THIS CUP. "And in the same way He took the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood." The cup, or the fruit of the vine, represents the blood shed by Jesus Christ on the Cross for our sins.

THE NEW COVENANT IN MY BLOOD. This is a reference to the death of Jesus by which the new covenant was established. "Until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom" serves to direct the thoughts of Christians away from the Passover, so that they might focus upon death, resurrection, and return of Christ. Passover observance had focused the attention upon the Anointed One Who would come to pay the price for the sins of the world. After the death of Christ there would be no real need for the Passover. In its place, believers would observe the ordinance of the Lord's Supper in remembrance to the broken body and shed blood of our Savior. Furthermore, observance of the Lord's Supper focuses our attention on the future when we will celebrate the victory of Jesus Christ over sin, death, hell, and the grave with Him in the Father's kingdom.

The covenant is called a "new covenant" because it is a covenant of grace and forgiveness based on the shed blood of Jesus Christ (Jer. 31:31). It differs from the old covenant under which Israel had lived for centuries. All the Law, the Prophets, and the sacrificial system of the old covenant had pointed to the Cross. Now, both ordinances, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, are memorials to what Jesus did for us at Calvary.

22:22, 23 - THE ONE BETRAYING ME. Just as Jesus knew about the man carrying the picture of water, He knew Judas. He said, "But behold, the hand of the one betraying Me is with Mine on the table. For indeed, the Son of Man is going as it has been determined; but woe to that man by whom He is betrayed!" Judas is suffering, and will suffer for all eternity, and he if fully conscious of his betrayal of Jesus Christ every second. There can hardly be a more miserable soul in hell.

Jesus Deals with the Ambition of His Disciples, 22:24-30.

22:24 - A DISPUTE. "And there arose also a dispute among them as to which one of them was

regarded to be greatest.” Wow! They had disputes in the church back in those primitive times. That is incredible! Is it not fortunate that all of that was purged from the church two thousand years ago?

If it were not so, we would still be having disputes in the church today! And if there were disputes in the church, think what a devastating effect it would have upon our fellowship. It could destroy the church’s witness to the community and rob it of vitality by hindering prayer, Bible Study, and worship.

22:25 - HE SAID TO THEM. “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who have authority over them are called ‘Benefactors.’” In other words, He said, “You are acting like a bunch of pagans!” Is it not interesting how many times disputes follow a really great time in the Lord? How many times does some modern day Diotrophes say or do something to create a disturbance. The Sunday after a really outstanding revival meeting seems to be a favorite time for this kind of person. Or the evening business meeting right after a particularly outstanding worship service. How often the valley (ditch) follows a mountain peak experience. But our enemy, the devil, never sleeps.

BENEFACTORS. This was apparently a favorite title used by the Greek kings of Egypt and Syria. This was a title of honor they bestowed upon themselves for their service to the people. But the greatest position in the kingdom of God is that of servant. Jesus took advantage of this dispute to teach His disciples a special lesson. Not even His apostles were seek positions of honor over others believers. They were not to seek money, power, or prestige.

Pastors and evangelists today must be careful to not to take advantage of their position to lord it over others, to promote themselves at the expense of others, or to profit from their position of leadership beyond reasonable compensation. They must not confuse leadership with authority. Jesus made humility and an attitude of serving others a prerequisite of leadership. True leaders should seek to imitate the humility of Christ, and pattern their lives after political rulers or pagan religious leaders. The greed of some religious leaders has held the name of Jesus Christ up to ridicule throughout the history of the church. Today, however, with modern travel and communication, this problem is especially acute, with a few tel-evangelists and charismatic personalities using their position to manipulate people for prestige and honors, as well as satisfying their own greed.

A Pensacola newspaper is following a well known church and its leaders at present, probably because of some extraordinary claims made by the leadership as to the number of people saved, the effect it is having on the crime rate in the area, and personal claims made by the evangelist. They report that three ministers who are leaders of this movement are profiting handsomely from it. They have run reports on false claims made by the primary evangelist and the expensive homes and other property they are buying.

Every minister of the Gospel must be careful with his finances. He should also guard his word. Integrity in the ministry is very important. But one may be very careful in these matters and still have an attitude toward other members, and other pastors, that falls far below the example set by our Savior. Those who attend large state conventions, or evangelism conference, have witnessed some dear brother “work the crowd.” It seems that a few people place their own ambition above humility and service.

It is hard to be humble when you are preparing your resume, and today it is the most impressive resume that attracts the Pastor Search Committee. Here is a tip for any committee that begins looking at a stack of resumes. Some of the things that make for an impressive resume may well be some of the very things Jesus was trying to prevent, and the very things that He encouraged are the last things you will detect from the resume. The average resume does not necessarily reflect humility and a servant attitude.

I have had people to suggest that minister of the Gospel will have a higher reward in heaven because of their “full-time” service to the Lord. I have also observed that some of us (ministers) seem to think more highly of ourselves than we do of others of us. I grew up in Mississippi and after four years at Mississippi College and three in New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary visited (I took a long break before going back for another degree) I served as a pastor in Mississippi before moving to Louisiana. For several years I went back to a few sessions of the Mississippi Baptist Convention and to the State Evangelism Conference. I knew a lot more pastors in Mississippi than in Louisiana and enjoyed the fellowship with them.

In those first years, there was one thing that really bothered me. That was when I would see an old friend and he would ask, “Johnny, where are you now?” Are you trying to move back to Mississippi? How big is your church. How big is your staff? - I have seven on my staff. How much do they pay you?” There were times when I was really disappointed in an old friend. It concerned me that he did not ask, “Johnny, are you where the Lord wants you?” Are you faithful to the Lord in serving His church? Do you love the Lord? Do you love your people?

22:26 - LIKE THE SERVANT. The unsaved seek positions of prominence and power, "But it is not this way with you, but the one who is the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like the servant." Paul did not hesitate to call himself a bond servant or a slave of Jesus Christ. By example Jesus taught humility and service:

"For who is greater, the one who reclines at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at the table? But I am among you as the one who serves.

Jesus served them and He taught them to serve one another and to serve God in love and humility. Preachers are going to have to go elsewhere to find a text for the post-modern emphasis on self-worth, self-love, self-esteem gospel so popular with Robert Schuler and other liberal messengers today.

22:28, 29, 30 -MY KINGDOM. Concluding His comments serving others, Jesus makes a transitional statement:

You are those who have stood by Me in My trials; and just as My Father has granted Me a kingdom, I grant you that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

YOU...HAVE STOOD BY ME. They may have had their disputes but they had stood by Jesus through poverty, hardships, storms, opposition, and threats.

I GRANT YOU. Two things - the Father had granted Him the kingdom, and He grants the Kingdom to those who trust in Him. The kingdom is the Kingdom of God, and only God can give it to another, and He gives it to His Son. We receive citizenship in the Kingdom of God in the same way - that is, as a gift. We call it grace, the unmerited love and favor of God. The only anyone ever receives citizenship in His kingdom is as a grace gift from Jesus.

EAT AND DRINK AT MY TABLE. The Jews had looked ahead to the coming of the Messiah and it was believed that the most honored people would be guests at a great Messianic banquet. It would be a very a high honor to sit at His table. This is an honor to which they look, He says, for they will be given places of honor and share in His eternal rule.

Jesus Warns Peter of Satan's Plans for Him, 22:31-34.

22:31 - SATAN HAS DEMANDED PERMISSION. Jesus, changing the subject, now says, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat." In a statement reminiscent of Job's experiences, Satan had demanded permission to "sift you like wheat." The "you" is plural, so Satan is interested in more than Simon Peter. He wants to "sift" all the Apostles. The metaphor is of a farmer sifting wheat to get rid of the chaff (husks and foreign matter). Before I finished seminary, I worked one Fall at a grain elevator, where one of my duties was to take soybean samples and test them for moisture and "foreign material." I used the probe to take the samples from deep inside the trailer load. Then I poured the contents into stacked trays. Cockleburs and large pieces of vegetation stayed in the top tray, the soybeans remained in the second tray and small seeds like careless weed seeds and coffee bean seeds fell through the smaller screen into the bottom tray. If there had been no third tray, all the chaff and tine seeds would have fallen to the ground. Satan wanted to see them fall.

There is grave danger in giving Satan an opportunity to use our words or actions to his advantage. Satan has power over us, but only when we are walking in the flesh. If you draw near to God, god will draw near to you and then you can resist the devil and he will flee from you (James 4). Jesus warns us here and in the next verse He says He prays for us and seeks to restore us.

22:32 - I HAVE PRAYED FOR YOU. Jesus has prayed "that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers."

As we have seen, the "you" in vs. 31 is plural - Satan want to see them all fall. The "you" in vs. 32 is singular, which means that Jesus is taking a special interest in Simon, as He often did (See Matt. 16:17-18; John 1:42).

Simon's impulsive character required special prayer to keep his faith from failing.

Jesus' prayers had purpose. He expected His prayer to be answered, and He gave Peter instructions for the time after his strengthening. The courageous stand of Peter before the Sanhedrin (Ac 4:8-13,18-20) was part of the answer to this prayer. Jesus continues to intercede for us (Heb 7:25) [DSB].

22:33 - PETER PROTESTED. Peter (speaking in the flesh) said, "Lord, with You I am ready to go both to prison and to death!" I tell my family the reason I like "The Born Loser" in the comics is that I can identify with him. You have to love Simon Peter because we can see ourselves in him. How easy it is to say that we will do something special for the Lord, and then back away from it when the going gets rough, of even a little inconvenient.

22:34 - DENIED THREE TIMES. Jesus, both unmoved and undeceived by Simon's boast, responded, "I say to you, Peter, the rooster will not crow today until you have denied three times that you know Me." It is worth noting that this is a specific prophecy and it was fulfilled perfectly, quite unlike modern day astrologers, who boast of the percentage of their prophecies that come true.

Jesus Warns Them of Impending Danger, 22:35-38.

22:35 - WHEN I SENT YOU OUT. Moving on to another subject, Jesus addressed the Disciples, "When I sent you out without money belt and bag and sandals, you did not lack anything, did you?" They said, "No, nothing." Jesus had sent them on an earlier mission trip, instructing them to travel light and depend on hospitality of people wherever they went.(9:3).

22:36 - WHOEVER HAS A MONEY BELT. "And He said to them, 'But now, whoever has a money belt is to take it along, likewise also a bag, and whoever has no sword is to sell his coat and buy one. Earlier He had told them to take no provisions, but now they would need to provide for themselves and be prepared to protect themselves. Peter obviously took Him seriously, because before too long he would cut off the ear of Malchus' ear.

This phrase is understood in various ways: (1) Jesus is indicating that His former way has failed and now the disciples must become revolutionists; (2) Jesus is speaking in irony: previously the disciples found His way adequate, but now they are ready to abandon it; (3) the disciples are heading toward a time of persecution different from anything they have known and for which they are to make prudent preparation. The first view is impossible. The second or third interpretation best fits the passage [BSB].

22:37 - THIS WHICH IS WRITTEN. Jesus stressed here that the Old Testament Scriptures must be fulfilled: "For I tell you that this which is written must be fulfilled in Me, 'AND HE WAS NUMBERED WITH TRANSGRESSORS'; for that which refers to Me has its fulfillment." Jesus is citing the Suffering Servant passage in Isaiah 53. A friend, Jim White, was on a tour of the Holy Land a number of years ago. A lady in his group who was Jewish asked him if he did not think the Suffering Servant passage referred to Israel and not to a person. He explained that this passage could only find fulfillment in Jesus. That is certainly the way Jesus interpreted the Old Testament

Scripture.

22:38 - TWO SWORDS. Jesus is teaching eternal truths and they are stuck in a temporal mode. "They said, 'Lord, look, here are two swords.' And He said to them, 'It is enough.'" They completely miss His point about the sword. "It is enough" is His way of closing the subject, not an assessment of their preparation for armed conflict.

Jesus Prays in the Mount of Olives, 22:39-46.

22:39 - TO THE MOUNT OF OLIVES. At the end of the day, Jesus "...came out and proceeded as was His custom to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples also followed Him." Jesus' Farewell Discourse and final teachings in the upper room were given before they left for the Mount of Olives (see John 14).

22:40 - PRAY. "When He arrived at the place (The Garden of Gethsemane), He said to them, "Pray that you may not enter into temptation." Just as He knew that He needed to spend time with the Father in preparation for what He was about to face, He knew they needed to pray before they faced the temptations that were just ahead of them. Their deliverance from temptation was of utmost important to Jesus (6:13; Jn 17:15). As Peter had demonstrated, at the moment they were determined to be faithful to him, but they were going to need more than a willing spirit. They were going to need spiritual strength. They must pray daily for that strength.

22:41 - BEGAN TO PRAY. "And He withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and began to pray. Here Jesus would agonize in prayer as no one else ever has, or ever will.

22:42 - REMOVE THIS CUP. Jesus prayed, "Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done." Jesus was human as if he had never divine at all; and He was divine as if He had never been human at all. The human Jesus is anticipating physical torture and a horrifying death. He is also facing excruciating mental pain and unimaginable spiritual agony. This was not something to relish - nor was it something He would shun, if it was the Father's will.

Jesus used the expression, "This cup" figuratively to denote that which is allotted to a person. He had used it in a similar way earlier when the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to Him with her sons (James and John), to request that her sons be given the highest positions in His kingdom. Jesus answered her,

You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?" They said to Him, "We are able." He said to them, "My cup you shall drink; but to sit on My right and on My left, this is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by My Father (Matt. 20:21-23).

These words remind us of the reference to the cup at Passover Supper. They can be understood only

in light of the qualification, "not My will, but Yours, be done."

22:43 - AN ANGEL. Luke records that "... angel from heaven appeared to Him, strengthening Him." The Father sent His angels to minister to His Son on the eve of His great appointment with the Cross.

22:44 - PRAYING VERY FERVENTLY. Dr. Luke says, "And being in agony He was praying very fervently; and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground." Dr. Luke did not say that Jesus sweat drops of blood, but that sweat dropped from Him to the ground like drops of blood. He sweated profusely and large drops fell the ground.

22:45, 46 - GET UP AND PRAY. When Jesus rose from prayer in the Garden, "He came to the disciples and found them sleeping from sorrow, and said to them, "Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray that you may not enter into temptation." As soon as they arrived at the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus had told them to pray that they would not fall into temptation (vs. 40). Now they were about to face a greater temptation than they could have anticipated.

Jesus Is Arrested, 22:47-53.

He Is Betrayed By Judas, 47-48.

22:47 - JUDAS. "While He was still speaking, behold, a crowd came, and the one called Judas, one of the twelve, was preceding them; and he approached Jesus to kiss Him." In the Middle East it was the custom for friends to kiss when they met. It still is a custom in many places. In this case it was a prearranged signal between Judas and those who wanted to arrest Jesus (Matt. 26:48). If was bad enough to betray a friend, but is worse to betray a friend with a kiss of friendship.

22:48 - A KISS. "...Jesus said to him, 'Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?' The irony of the kiss was something Jesus would never miss. His sharp wit is amazing under the circumstances. We cannot chalk it up to incredulity, because Jesus had known for some time that Judas was conspiring to betray Him.

He Prevents His disciples from Defending Him, 49-51.

22:49 - THE SWORD. "When those who were around Him saw what was going to happen, they said, 'Lord, shall we strike with the sword?' Remember that Jesus had mentioned a sword earlier and they had misunderstood Him. Compare this with Matt. 26:51 and John 18:10.

Luke emphasized here Jesus' compassionate healing. Even in the midst of His own great dilemma, Jesus thought of others. His mighty works of healing were for all--friend or foe. They were not for selfish gain but to meet human need. They served others, not Himself [DSB].

22:50 - ONE OF THEM. Simon Peter (John 18:10) struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his right ear.

22:51 - HE TOUCHED HIS EAR. Jesus, refusing to let His disciples fight for Him, “answered and said, ‘Stop! No more of this.’ And He touched his ear and healed him.”

Jesus Questions the Motives and Methods of the Authorities, 52-53.

22:52 - THEN JESUS SAID. Jesus said “to the chief priests and officers of the temple and elders who had come against Him, ‘Have you come out with swords and clubs as you would against a robber?’”

22:53 - THE POWER OF DARKNESS. “While I was with you daily in the temple, you did not lay hands on Me,” Jesus said, “but this hour and the power of darkness are yours.” There is more to this than the darkness of the night. “This hour” means that it was their hour of triumph. There would be another hour in the future and that would be an hour of triumph for Jesus.

Jesus Taken to the High Priest’s House Where Peter Denies Him, 22:54-62.

Peter Denied Christ Three Times, 54-60a.

NOTE: it is now FRIDAY.

22:54 - TO THE HOUSE OF THE HIGH PRIEST. Having arrested Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, “they led Him away and brought Him to the house of the high priest; but Peter was following at a distance.” According to John there was a hearing before Annas prior to this one with Caiaphas, his son-in-law (John 18:13).

PETER WAS FOLLOWING AT A DISTANCE. It is interesting, if we read this along with Mark 14, to note the path that led to Peter's denial:

1. He was overconfident (Mark 14:29, 31).
2. He was not praying (Mark 14: 37, 40-41).
3. He failed to listen to Jesus (Marl 14:47; Luke 22:49-51).
4. He associated with the wrong crowd (Mark 14:54).
5. He reverted to his old habits (Mark 14:71).
6. He denies Jesus three times (Mark 14, Luke 22).

22:55 - IN THE MIDDLE OF THE COURTYARD. Servants of the high priest kindled a

fire in the middle of the courtyard of Caiaphas “and had sat down together, Peter was sitting among them.” John (18:15-16) provides additional information:

Simon Peter was following Jesus, and so was another disciple. Now that disciple was known to the high priest, and entered with Jesus into the court of the high priest, but Peter was standing at the door outside. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to the doorkeeper, and brought Peter in.

The other disciple is believed to have been John, the brother of James. We are not told where the other disciples were at this time, but we do know that there are no serious danger because Jesus had secured their freedom at the time He was arrested.

22:56 - THIS MAN WAS WITH HIM. A servant-girl, observed Peter intently in the light of the fire, exclaimed, "This man was with Him too." Peter' speech may have betrayed him as well as his appearance.

22:57 - HE DENIED IT. Peter emphatically denied that he was a follower of Christ: "Woman, I do not know Him." Of all people, who would have expected Simon Peter to deny Jesus? A short while before he had drawn a sword and begun to defend Jesus against impossible odds.

22:58 - MAN, I AM NOT! "A little later, another saw him and said, 'You are one of them too!'" But Peter said, 'Man, I am not!"

22:59 - HE IS A GALILEAN TOO. "After about an hour had passed, another man began to insist, saying, 'Certainly this man also was with Him, for he is a Galilean too.' Peter never could keep his mouth closed. His Galilean accent gave him away. Galileans, we are told spoke a dialect of Aramaic, with readily detectable differences in pronunciation.

22:60a - I DO NOT KNOW WHAT YOU ARE TALKING ABOUT. For the third time Peter denies Jesus, this time more emphatically: "Man, I do not know what you are talking about."

While He Was Still Speaking, a Rooster Crowed, vs. 60b.

22:60b - A ROOSTER CROWED. "Immediately, while he was still speaking, a rooster crowed." Jesus had prophesied that Peter would deny Him three times before a rooster crowed.

Peter Remembers the Prophecy of Jesus, vs. 61.

22:61 - THE LORD TURNED AND LOOKED AT PETER. The instant Jesus turned and looked at him, "Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had told him, "Before a rooster crows today, you will deny Me three times." It is an awesome thing when the Lord looks upon our

sin. To see the Lord as He is to see ourselves as we are. Upon seeing the vision of the Lord, Isaiah exclaimed, "...Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts" (Is. 6:5). Here Peter is crushed beneath his guilt.

Peter Repented of His Shocking Sin, vs. 62.

22:62 - HE WENT OUT AND WEPT BITTERLY. First, Peter sinned - three times - in denying that he was a follower of Jesus. Then when the Lord looked at him, he experienced deep conviction of sin. Then he repented with bitter tears. How often, and how many ways do we deny Jesus today?

QUESTION: Why did Peter deny Christ? Do we ever deny Him? Why?

If you answer, "fear," you would be right. But if you think Peter was a coward in the usual sense of the word, you would be mistaken. How do we know that?

- (1). He fished for a living on a dangerous body of water.
- (2). He went to Jerusalem knowing it would be dangerous.
- (3). He defended Jesus with the sword against huge odds.
- (4). He may have followed from a distance, but he followed all the way to the courtyard.
- (5). He was to become one of the most courageous of the First Century martyrs.

Then what kind of fear led Peter to deny Jesus? The fear of ridicule. How do I know that.

- (1). He did not deny Jesus to soldiers, or temple officials, but to servants.
- (2). A vision was required to prepare him to go to the home of Cornelius.
- (3). He took Jewish witnesses with him to Cornelius' home.
- (4). Paul rebuked him for discriminating against Gentiles in Antioch.

Fear of ridicule is the greatest fear of many Christians in America today. That is the greatest thing many of have to fear, and that is the one fear that paralyzes most Christians, keeping them from witnessing to lost people and from taking a stand on moral and ethical issues for Jesus. When we are convicted of the fear of ridicule, we should do as Peter - repent in bitter tears.

Jesus Mocked and Beaten, 22:63-65.

22:63, 64, 65 - HOLDING JESUS IN CUSTODY. Luke tells us that "the men who were holding Jesus in custody were mocking Him and beating Him, and they blindfolded Him and were asking Him, saying, 'prophesy, who is the one who hit You?' Just as religious bigotry and hatred can be very intense, religious persecution can be especially cruel. Here officials of the high priest begin by mocking Jesus and beating Him, Then they blindfolded Him and struck Him and demand that He prophesy and tell them who had hit Him. In verse 65 we are told that "...they were saying

many other things against Him, blaspheming.” To blaspheme means to speak evil against. What would have been the subjects of their blasphemy? The virgin birth? Miracles? His sermons? The authority with which He taught? Cleansing the Temple? Prophecy of the destruction of the Temple? All of the above?

Jesus Faces the Council of Elders, 22:66-71.

22:66 - COUNCIL OF ELDERS. Following the hearings before Annas and Caiaphas during the night, and the mockery and beatings by the soldiers, Luke tells us, “When it was day, the Council of elders of the people assembled, both chief priests and scribes, and they led Him away to their council chamber...”

WHEN IT WAS DAY. Matthew (26:57-58) and Mark (14:53, 55) mention a preliminary hearing held at night. According to Matthew 26:57, “Those who had seized Jesus led Him away to Caiaphas, the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were gathered together.” Probably what this means is that the scribes and elders were apparently leaders of the Council (Sanhedrin) who had gathered unofficially (even illegally) to hear Him at the home of Caiaphas. The Sanhedrin, made up of 70 elders and teachers of the nation (some say 72), could not legally convene at night, so a daytime session was convened in order to make their verdict legal. The Sanhedrin had been given a lot of authority over Jewish affairs, not only in Palestine but in other places (Paul had been authorized to go to Damascus to arrest Christians). However, they had no power to carry out a capital sentence. Therefore, a capital case had to be remanded to Pilate, the senior representative of the Roman government in Judea.

The sequence of events which occurred during the last hours of Jesus' ministry may be arranged as follows:

- (1) the Last Supper (vv. 17-20).
- (2) Gethsemane (vv. 39-46).
- (3) the preliminary trial in the house of Annas (John 18:19-23).
- (4) the illegal Sanhedrin trial with Caiaphas (Matt. 26:57-68).
- (5) the morning Sanhedrin trial (vv. 66-71).
- (6) the first appearance before Pilate (John 18:28-38).
- (7) the referral to Herod (23:6-12).
- (8) the second appearance before Pilate (23:13-25).
- (9) the scourging and mockery (Matt. 27:26).
- (10) the crucifixion (23:26-33).

22:67, 68 - IF YOU ARE THE CHRIST, TELL US. They are not about to accept Him as the Messiah at this point; they only want to condemn Him. Their rejection had been final long before this. Jesus answered them, “If I tell you, you will not believe; and if I ask a question, you will not answer.” That they would not answer has already been demonstrated. In 20:41-44, when Jesus

challenges the authorities with a question about the sonship of the Messiah. They did not answer Him.

22:69 - THE SON OF MAN. Jesus continued, "But from now on THE SON OF MAN WILL BE SEATED AT THE RIGHT HAND of the power OF GOD."

22:70 - ARE YOU THE SON OF GOD. And they all said, "Are You the Son of God, then?" And He said to them, "Yes, I am." Jesus clearly affirms that He is the Son of God. What was the reaction of the Council and the high priest? We read in Matthew, "Then the high priest tore his robes and said, "He has blasphemed! What further need do we have of witnesses? Behold, you have now heard the blasphemy." The high priest tore his robes as an expression of grief and horror upon hearing what he considered to be Jesus' blasphemous claim that He was the Son of God. But that was nothing to compare with the horror they have lived with from the moment they drew their last breath on planet earth. They now know, He really is the Son of God!

22:71 - WHAT FURTHER NEED DO WE HAVE OF TESTIMONY? The Sanhedrin, upon hearing Jesus' response could now make official the decision they had already arrived at the night before, "For we have heard it ourselves from His own mouth." This is the confession they were seeking. Now they can go to Pilate and demand His crucifixion.

Jesus Is Handed Over to Pilate for a Roman Trial, 23:1-5.

23:1 - BROUGHT HIM BEFORE PILATE. Immediately after Jesus affirmed that He is indeed the Son of God, "...the whole body of them (the Sanhedrin) got up and brought Him before Pilate," the Roman governor who had the authority to sentence Jesus to death. Pontius Pilate was governor over this province from A.D. 26-36.

23:2 - THEY BEGAN TO ACCUSE HIM. Before Pilate, they launched into their charges against Jesus, saying, "We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, and saying that He Himself is Christ, a King." The charge brought against Jesus was very serious - sedition. They knew that Pilate could care less about religious claims. But this was political. They charged Him with claiming to be a king, which that He was a rival of the emperor. Insurrection against Rome was implied - a capital offence. Blasphemy would not be regarded by Rome as sufficient ground for the death penalty, so they brought a charge that demanded crucifixion. They did not want Jesus punished, they wanted Him dead and nothing less would satisfy them.

23:3 - ARE YOU THE KING OF THE JEWS? Upon hearing their charges, "Pilate asked Him, saying, 'Are You the King of the Jews?' And He answered him and said, 'It is as you say.' A more detailed account of this interview by Pilate is found in John 18:33-38:

Therefore Pilate entered again into the Praetorium, and summoned Jesus and said to Him, "*Are You the King of the Jews?*" Jesus answered, "*Are you saying this on your own initiative, or did others tell you about Me?*" Pilate answered, "I am not a

Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests delivered You to me; what have You done?" Jesus answered, "*My kingdom is not of this world*. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm." Therefore Pilate said to Him, "***So You are a king?***" Jesus answered, "*You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.*" Pilate said to Him, "What is truth?" And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews and said to them, "***I find no guilt in Him*** (emphasis added).

23:4 - I FIND NO GUILT IN THIS MAN. Before Pilate, Jesus acknowledged that He is indeed a king, but not a political king, not one who was about to lead an insurrection. Pilate understood and pronounced him innocent.

23:5 - THEY KEPT ON INSISTING. They want Him dead and they want Him sentenced before the crowds that followed Him knew what was happening. So they insisted, "He stirs up the people, teaching all over Judea, starting from Galilee even as far as this place."

Jesus taught service, loyalty, love, and repentance. The Jews tried to convict Him of teaching sedition, rebellion, and treason. His teachings upset their religious system and security. They claimed He sought to upset Rome's administrative system and peace. Representatives of Romans and Jews found Jesus innocent, but they did not have courage to enact justice [DSB].

Jesus Is Sent to Appear Before Herod Antipas, 23:6-12.

23:6, 7 - HE SENT HIM TO HEROD. When Pilate heard that Jesus was a Galilean, he figured he had found a way out of this situation. Galilee was under Herod's jurisdiction, so "he sent Him to Herod, who himself also was in Jerusalem at that time." This is a classic example of passing the buck.

23:8 - HEROD WAS VERY GLAD WHEN HE SAW JESUS. Herod "had wanted to see Him for a long time, because he had been hearing about Him and was hoping to see some sign performed by Him." Herod was fascinated by reports Jesus' signs and wanted to see Him perform some miracles for him. Miracles are "signs" (Greek *semeion*) which were performed to point people to God. "They are not sideshows entertaining the curious and doubtful. It is tragic to find the heartless curiosity which characterized Herod. Herod had no faith in Jesus. He only ridiculed Him (v 11). God does not waste His signs on such people" [DSB].

23:9 - HE QUESTIONED HIM. Herod, having a more intimate knowledge of the Jewish religion than did Pilate, questioned Jesus at some length; "but He answered him nothing." Thus fulfilling another Old Testament prophecy, this one found in the Suffering Servant passage in Isaiah:

He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, So He did not open His mouth (Is. 53:7).

23:10 - ACCUSING HIM VEHEMENTLY. Not to be denied at this stage of their game, “the chief priests and the scribes were standing there, accusing Him vehemently.” They had failed to persuade Pilate to condemn Jesus to death, but they are determined not to let this opportunity slip through their hands again.

23:11 - BACK TO PILATE. Herod and his soldiers treated Jesus “with contempt and mocking Him, dressed Him in a gorgeous robe and sent Him back to Pilate.” It was as though this whole situation was some kind of joke to Herod and his soldiers. After they had had their fun with Jesus Herod sent him back to Pilate without passing the sentence the Sanhedrin wanted.

23:12 - HEROD AND PILATE BECAME FRIENDS. Before this they had been enemies. Politics makes strange bedfellows.

Jesus Stands Before Pilate Again, 23:13-25.

Pilate Sought to Release Jesus, 13-14.

23:13, 14 - CHIEF PRIESTS AND THE RULERS. When the Jewish leaders were assembled, Pilate addressed them: "You brought this man to me as one who incites the people to rebellion, and behold, having examined Him before you, *I have found no guilt in this man regarding the charges which you make against Him* (italics added). Up to this point Pilate is representing Roman justice with integrity.

Herod Found Nothing Deserving Death," vs. 15.

23:15 - NOTHING DESERVING DEATH. Still upholding Roman Justice, Pilate reminded them that after he had found Jesus not guilty of any offence, he had sent Him to Herod. Herod had not found Him guilty, "...for he sent Him back to us; and behold, nothing deserving death has been done by Him."

Pilate Offered to Punish Him and Release Him, vs. 16.

23:16 - I WILL PUNISH HIM AND RELEASE HIM. Pilate still finds no guilt in Jesus, but to placate the Jewish leaders he announces that he will have him punished and then release Him.

They Demanded the Release of Barabbas Rather Than Jesus, 17-19.

23:17 - ONE PRISONER. Pilate was obliged by tradition to release to them at the feast one prisoner.

23:18 - RELEASE FOR US BARABBAS! Pilate had offered to punish Jesus and then release Him, but that is not at all what these religious leaders wanted. "...they cried out all together, saying, 'Away with this man, and release for us Barabbas!'" They wanted Jesus dead so much they demanded that a known criminal be released instead. And not just any criminal. Luke tells us that Barabbas "was one who had been thrown into prison for an insurrection made in the city, and for murder." And those who wanted him released were religious leaders!

Pilate Still Sought to Release Jesus, vs. 20.

23:20 - PILATE, WANTING TO RELEASE JESUS. Up to this point Pilate has given Jesus a fair hearing and found Him innocent of the charges. He wants to release Him but he leaders and people they have incited shout him down.

"Crucify, Crucify Him!," vs. 21-23.

23:21 - CRUCIFY, CRUCIFY HIM! There was no way Pilate could placate these religious leaders without sentencing Jesus to death. They want nothing less than His death. So "they kept on calling out, saying, "Crucify, crucify Him!" Satan is never more vile than when he disguises himself in religious symbols, institutions, robes, and jargon (garb and gab).

23:22 - WHAT EVIL. Pilate is still trying to reason with these religious leaders: "And he said to them the third time, 'Why, what evil has this man done? I have found in Him no guilt demanding death."

THEREFORE I WILL PUNISH HIM AND RELEASE HIM. The punishment was scourging. The Holman Bible Dictionary gives a brief definition and history of scourging. It is

A severe form of corporal punishment involving whipping and beating, usually was done with the victim tied to a post or bench and administered by a servant of the synagogue (if for religious reasons), or by a slave or soldier. John 19:1 uses this word for the beating given Jesus before His crucifixion. Matthew and Mark use a word meaning "flog" (a lesser punishment), while Luke says that Pilate offered to have Jesus "chastise[d]" (23:16), which was a still lighter punishment. The number of blows was set in Deuteronomy 25:3 at forty, but later reduced to thirty-nine. There

were to be thirteen strokes on the chest and twenty-six on the back. Often the victim died from the beating [HBD].

23:23 - THEIR VOICES BEGAN TO PREVAIL. When Pilate offered to scourge Jesus and release Him the Jewish leaders and many of the people "... were insistent, with loud voices asking that He be crucified. And their voices began to prevail." A mob prevailed. And a governor lost his integrity. Two thousand years later his name is still proverbial, a symbol of miscarriage of justice, of a political official giving in to pressure.

Pilate and Herod had declared Jesus innocent of the charges brought against Him five times and seemed determined to release Him. But the religious leaders continued to demand that Pilate crucify Jesus. Fearing a riot of the Jews and fearing the wrath of Caesar, Pilate gave in to their demands. Pilate sought to absolve himself of all responsibility for his decision. "He took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. 'I am innocent of this man's blood,' he said. 'It is your responsibility'" (Matt. 27:24).

But Pilate could not escape the sense of his responsibility. There was a custom among the Greeks, Jews, and Romans of that time that when a man shed blood, he would wash his hands, thus symbolically cleansing away the stain. Pilate felt that he was a murderer.

The rulers, the priests, and the people united in accepting responsibility for the death of Christ, saying, "Let his blood be on us and on our children" (Matt. 27:25). While Pilate could not be absolved from responsibility for this miscarriage of justice, the nation did accept responsibility for Christ's death.

The tragic reply came back like an echo of a groan from future generations: "His blood be on us and on our children." Thirty years later, on this very spot, judgment was pronounced against some of the best citizens of Jerusalem. Of the 3,600 victims of the governor's fury, not a few were scourged and crucified! Judas died in a loathsome suicide, the house of Annas was destroyed some years later, Caiaphas was deposed a year after the crucifixion, and Pilate was soon after banished to Gaul and there died in suicide. When Jerusalem fell, her wretched citizens were crucified around her walls until, in the historian's grim language, "space was wanting for the crosses, and crosses for the bodies." The horrors of the siege of Jerusalem are unparalleled in history [QV: BI].

Pilate Pronounced Sentence They Demand, 24.

A mob had prevailed. Injustice ruled the day. And the Son of God was condemned to death by a sanctimonious religious leaders and a spineless governor. The Jews were not easy to govern and they could make a lot of trouble for Pilate with Caesar. They were not beyond a letter writing campaign in which they would accuse Pilate of not responding to their evidence that Jesus was guilty of insurrection. Pilate would have to defend himself against these charges, and that could be uncomfortable and inconvenient. So he gave in and became a conspirator in the murder of Jesus

Christ.

He Released Barabbas, vs. 25.

23:25 - HE RELEASED THE MAN. Pilate released Barabbas, the man “they were asking for who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, but he delivered Jesus” to be crucified.

Roman Soldiers Led Jesus to the Place of the Crucifixion, 23:26-32.

Compare: Luke 23:26-56; Matt. 27:31-61; Mark 15:20-47; John 19:16-42.

Simon of Cyrene Forced to Carry the Cross for Jesus, vs. 26.

23:26 - PLACED ON HIM THE CROSS. “When they led Him away (from Pilate and the place of the scourging), they seized a man, Simon of Cyrene, coming in from the country, and placed on him the cross to carry behind Jesus.” Cyrene was the capital of Cyrenaica in north Africa. There was a large Jewish population there.

THE CROSS. This denotes the crossbeam of the cross which would be attached to the vertical beam when they arrived at the place of the crucifixion. It was usually carried to the place of execution usually by the victim, but Jesus had been so weakened by the tortures, lack of sleep, and lack of food that He was struggling beneath the heavy crossbeam.

A Large Crowd Followed Him, vs. 27.

23:27 - A LARGE CROWD. There followed Jesus “a large crowd of the people, and of women who were mourning and lamenting Him.” There is no reason to believe that these were the same people who had just been crying, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!” No doubt, many of those people were following the crowd as fallen human nature has always driven some people to rush to watch a lynching or other mob activity. The implication here is that these people are followers of Jesus.

WOMEN. True women’s liberation begins and ends with Jesus. A large number of these women “were mourning and lamenting Him.” Jesus defines the role of women forever. Throughout the ages it has often been the women who were most receptive to Jesus - and most faithful to Him. We will be hearing more from some of these women in reference to the Resurrection. Many women were prominent in the early church (i.e., Dorcas, Priscilla, Lydia).

Jesus Addressed His Followers, 28-31.

23:28, 29 - DAUGHTERS OF JERUSALEM. They are mourning for Him and He mourns for them. With compassion in his heart for them, "Jesus turning to them said,

"Daughters of Jerusalem, stop weeping for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. "For behold, the days are coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed.'"

"Daughters of Jerusalem" is an expression that shows tenderness and compassion. Jesus had already foretold the destruction of Jerusalem, with all the destruction and distress associated with it. Many of those in that crowd would live to see the fulfillment of the prophecy in A.D. 70. The coming catastrophe would be so great that childless women will be considered fortunate, because they have no children over whom to mourn. Some see this as a reference to the Tribulation and point to the following verse as proof: "Then they will begin TO SAY TO THE MOUNTAINS, 'FALL ON US,' AND TO THE HILLS, 'COVER US'" (vs. 30).

23:31 - IF THEY DO THESE THINGS. Jesus adds. "For if they do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?" This may mean that If an innocent person like Jesus is called upon to suffer like this, what will the guilty face? It is possible that if the Romans do this to Him now when the city seems at peace, what will they do to the people in the coming crisis when the people revolt and Titus crushes the revolution, captures the city and destroys the city?

Two Criminals Were Led Away to be Put to Death with Him vs. 32.

23:32 - TWO...CRIMINALS. There were "Two others also, who were criminals, were being led away to be put to death with Him." Multiple crucifixions were common.

Jesus Is Crucified, 23:33-38.

23:33 - THEY CRUCIFIED HIM. Luke records that, "When they came to the place called The Skull, there they crucified Him and the criminals, one on the right and the other on the left." "The Skull" denotes Golgotha, Aramaic for "skull," probably meaning that the place of crucifixion looked like a skull, though it is possible that it got its name from the fact that skulls of those who had been crucified had accumulated there. Its location is disputed, but the traditional site bears a resemblance to skull.

23:34 - FATHER, FORGIVE THEM. Jesus was praying, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." And they cast lots, dividing up His garments among themselves." Even while Jesus was praying for them, the soldiers were gambling for His clothes. The clothes of those they crucified became the property of the soldiers.

23:35 - LET HIM SAVE HIMSELF. Luke tells us that the people were standing by, looking on. But "...even the rulers were sneering at Him, saying, 'He saved others; let Him save Himself if this is the Christ of God, His Chosen One.' It was not enough to conspire to have Him put to death, they felt compelled to watch His suffering and mock Him while He was hanging on the Cross. He had said on many occasions, "Your sins are forgiven," so their barbed sneers would naturally include the mocking jeer, "He saved others; let Him save Himself if this is the Christ of God, His Chosen One."

23:36 - THE SOLDIERS ALSO MOCKED HIM. Crucifixions were routine with these soldiers and it is doubtful that they usually spent very much time mocking the victim. Some jesting and wisecracks might have been expected, but this seems excessive. They were mocking Him and "offering Him sour wine." According to Matthew 27:33, they (the Roman soldiers) offered Jesus wine mixed with gall to deaden the pain, but after tasting it, Jesus refused to drink it. Continuing their mocking, no doubt taking their cue from the religious leaders, they resonated their cry, "If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself!" (Vs. 37).

23:38 - AN INSCRIPTION. The inscription above Him on the cross read, "THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS." "No two accounts of the inscription over the cross are exactly the same. Mark's is the briefest; John's is the fullest. The central fact of all is the mockery of the inscription: 'King of the Jews'" [BSB].

One Thief Mocks Him, the Other Asks for Mercy, 23:39-43.

23:39 - ONE OF THE CRIMINALS. One of the two thieves "who were hanged there was hurling abuse at Him, saying, 'Are You not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!'

23:40 - THE OTHER ANSWERED. The second thief rebuked the first:

"Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed are suffering justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong. And he was saying, "Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!" (40-42).

23:43 - IN PARADISE. Jesus answered the repentant thief, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise." "Paradise" is derived from a Persian word meaning "garden" or "park." There is no intermediate state, no purgatory. There is either Heaven or hell. The difference is Jesus.

Jesus Dies on the Cross, 23:44-49.

23:44 - DARKNESS. Luke tells us that "It was now about the sixth hour, and darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour." The "sixth hour" by Jewish would be noon, and the "ninth

hour" would be three o'clock in the afternoon.

23:45 - VEIL OF THE TEMPLE. The NAS has, "because the sun was obscured; (the NKJV, "Then the sun was darkened) and the veil of the temple was torn in two." This was the veil which separated the Most Holy Place (where God dwells) from the holy place and the rest of the temple (Ex. 26:33; 2 Chr. 3:14). The tearing of the veil symbolizes the opening of the presence of God to all people through the sacrifice of Jesus.

In Matthew 27:51 we find that the veil was torn from top to bottom, meaning that only God could have done it under those particular circumstances. The tearing of the veil signifies the fact that through Jesus Christ there is a new way to enter into the presence of God (Heb. 10:20; Eph. 2:11-22). One probable result of this supernatural tearing of the veil is found in Acts 6:7b: "...a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith."

23:46 - I COMMIT MY SPIRIT. "And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, "Father, INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT." Having said this, He breathed His last." I would agree that "this is the most trusting prayer any human ever prayed at death"[DSB].

HE BREATHED HIS LAST. I still like the KJV, "he gave up the ghost." Jesus died by giving up His spirit, no man took His life from Him. He gave it for us.

23:47 - CERTAINLY THIS MAN WAS INNOCENT. Executioners can tell you a lot about those whom they execute. They are not easily deceived by false bravado, nor are they usually overly sympathetic with the person who is executed. A Chaplain in a state penitentiary once told me that the only time he ever saw an executioner shed tears for a man he executed, it was a man who was guilty of two murders and he was being executed for the second. There was no question as to his guilt, but most people who knew the situation wanted to see his sentence commuted to life with benefit of parole so that he could minister to other prisoners, after he was himself saved.

The centurion in charge of the crucifixion of Jesus "saw what had happened, he began praising God, saying, Certainly this man was innocent." He was not the only one there who knew that! The centurion, by now had probably come to understand that the religious leaders knew He was innocent.

23:48 - THE CROWDS. The crowd witnessing the crucifixion that day would have included believers, enemies, and all those in between. How did they react? Did they agree with the centurion? Probably only a few of them actually herd him. It was time for them to leave to prepare for the Sabbath Luke says, "And all the crowds who came together for this spectacle, when they observed what had happened, began to return, beating their breasts." "Beating their breasts" denotes grief.

23:49 - ALL HIS ACQUAINTANCES. All those who had followed Him from Galilee, including the women, "were standing at a distance, seeing these things."

C. Jesus Is Buried, 23:50-56.

Joseph of Arimathea Asks for the Body of Jesus, 50-52.

23:50, 51 - JOSEPH. Luke simply introduces him as “a man named Joseph, who was a member of the Council, a good and righteous man (he had not consented to their plan and action), a man from Arimathea, a city of the Jews, who was waiting for the kingdom of God.” Joseph was a member of the Sanhedrin, but he had not consented to the death of Jesus. Had he even been called to the meeting? John tells us that Joseph had been a secret disciple (John 19:38) and it may be inferred that he was not present when the Sanhedrin condemned Jesus (Mark 14:64).

ARIMATHEA. The ancient name was Ramah (Jer. 31:15), which belonged to Samaria during Old Testament times. During the New Testament period it belonged to Judea.

23:52 - ASKED FOR THE BODY OF JESUS. Joseph “went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus” so that he could provide a proper burial (fulfilling another prophecy from Isaiah 53).

He Laid Him in a Tomb Cut into the Rock, vs. 53.

23:53 - LAID HIM IN A TOMB. Luke tells us that Joseph of Arimathea “took it down and wrapped it in a linen cloth, and laid Him in a tomb cut into the rock, where no one had ever lain.” This fulfills another Suffering Servant prophecy:

His grave was assigned with wicked men, Yet He was with a rich man in His death,
Because He had done no violence, Nor was there any deceit (Isaiah 53:9).

WRAPPED IT. The word, *entulissw*, means to twist; to wrap up; wrap by winding tightly. Joseph wrapped the body tightly winding the strips of linen around the body (which should have been enough to have prevented any confusion about the shroud of Turin, which seems to have been wrapped end over end, head to toe over a body).

The Sabbath Was about to Begin, vs. 54.

23:54 - PREPARATION DAY. Luke writes that “It was the preparation day, and the Sabbath was about to begin.” The Preparation Day, Friday, was the day that was used to get ready for the Sabbath. Christians should use Saturday to get ready for the Lord’s Day. Many church members are not ready to worship on Sunday because of the way they spend Saturday - or Saturday night.

Women of Galilee Saw the Tomb, vs. 55.

23:55 - HOW HIS BODY WAS LAID. “The women who had come with Him out of Galilee followed, and saw the tomb and how His body was laid.” They paid close attention, because they knew there was no time to anoint His body for burial and they were planning to come back to anoint His body after the Sabbath.

They Rested on the Sabbath, vs. 56.

23:56 - PREPARED SPICES. The women “returned and prepared spices and perfumes. And on the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment.” They prepared spices and perfumes before the Sabbath and then waited until after the Sabbath to go back to the tomb. “According to the commandment” means the commandment not to work on the Sabbath (Ex. 20:10).

D. The Resurrection Is Followed By Appearances of the Lord, 24:1-49.

He is risen, 24:1-12.

NOTE: it is SUNDAY MORNING.

SEE ALSO: Matt. 28:1-16; Mark 16:1-20; John 20:1-29.

24:1 - ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK. On Sunday, “at early dawn,” a group of women came to the tomb “bringing the spices which they had prepared.” Jesus had been buried late Friday. The Sabbath began at 6:00 P.M. Friday and ended at 6:00 P.M. Saturday. Early Sunday was their first opportunity to go to the tomb. Jesus was in the tomb three days as they reckoned time. However, He was not in the grave three twenty-four days, nor did He have to be as far as they were concerned.

24:2 - THE STONE ROLLED AWAY FROM THE TOMB. The tomb was hewn from solid rock, and at the entrance a trench was hewn and then a circular stone like a solid wheel was hewn to set into that trench. It could be rolled into place in front of the opening of the tomb to seal it. There was probably a slight depression where it came to rest to make it difficult to move. Two strong men could roll it away but it would be very difficult for women to move. Jesus’ tomb had been sealed by the Roman authorities and guarded (Matt. 27:62-66), but when the women arrived at the tomb, the stone had already been rolled away.

24:3 - DID NOT FIND THE BODY. During his research, Luke may well have heard a member of this group tell the story in her own words. “When they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.”

24:4 - TWO MEN. According to the Gospel account, “While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men suddenly stood near them in dazzling clothing...” The two were angels. Because of New Age/Post-Modern spiritual beliefs, angels today are about as popular crystals, Mother Earth, or American Indian shamanism. Angels are real and we glean a lot from the Bible about them.

I strongly recommend that we avoid going beyond the Bible in our quest for knowledge about angels. They are not spirit guides here to help us communicate with the dead, or to give us special knowledge. God does send His angels to minister to people, but we must understand that they are sent at His discretion and initiative to do what He wants done. We do not order them, summon them, command them, or worship them. We can leave angelic ministry, service, or protection in God’s hands.

24:5 - WHY DO YOU SEEK. As we might imagine, the women “were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground.” But the angels appearing in human form, said to them, “Why do you seek the living One among the dead?” That is still a good question today. Why seek the living God among dead schools, churches, theology, witnesses?

24:6 - HE HAS RISEN. The angels continued, “He is not here, but He has risen. Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee.” Twice Jesus had spoken of His death and His resurrection while He was still in Galilee (9:21, 22, 43-45).

24:7 - THE THIRD DAY RISE AGAIN. Jesus had told them that “the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.” This should not have been a surprise to them, but it was. Amazingly, They had not heard that part. Or, is it that they had not paid attention?

24:8, 9 - REPORTED...TO THE ELEVEN. “And they remembered His words, and returned from the tomb and reported all these things to the eleven and to all the rest.”

24:10 - TELLING THESE THINGS TO THE APOSTLES. “Now they were Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James; also the other women with them were telling these things to the apostles.”

2:11 - THEY WOULD NOT BELIEVE THEM. The women rushed to tell the Apostles, but the words of the women “appeared to them as nonsense, and they would not believe them.” The tale the women told was just too incredible to accept it.

2:12 - PETER GOT UP AND RAN TO THE TOMB. Peter ran to the tomb and stooping down, and “looking in, he saw the linen wrappings only; and he went away to his home, marveling at what had happened.” John 20 gives a more detailed account, including the fact that another Apostle ran with Peter and outran him to the tomb. He looked in but Simon Peter rushed in and then the other disciple (probably John himself) wend in and saw and believed the first to believe in the Resurrection.

LINEN WRAPPINGS ONLY. All Peter saw was the wide bandage-like strips that were wound around the body (23:53). The body of Jesus was gone but the linen wrappings retained the same shape and position they had when the body was wrapped in them as though the body simply disappeared and the wrappings collapsed in their neat folds. If His disciples had stolen the body, they would surely have taken it without removing the strips of linen. In order for anyone to take the body and leave the linen wrappings, he would have had to unwrap it and the clothes would not have been left in neat folds.

The risen Lord appears to two disciples on the road to Emmaus, 24:13-32.

24:13 - TWO...WERE GOING...TO...EMMAUS. Luke records the post-resurrection appearances of the Lord to two of His disciples: "And behold, two of them were going that very day to a village named Emmaus, which was about seven miles from Jerusalem." Emmaus may have been located where the "modern Kubeibeh stands today, about 7 1/2 miles northwest of Jerusalem. Though some doubt remains, this place has been so identified from the time of the Crusades" [BSB].

24:14, 15 - JESUS HIMSELF APPROACHED. Two of Jesus' disciples from Emmaus were returning to their home after having witnessed the crucifixion of their Lord and as they were "talking with each other about all these things which had taken placeJesus Himself approached and began traveling with them." One wonders why they did not recognize Jesus. Verse 16 states that "...their eyes were prevented from recognizing Him." Does this mean that their grief was so intense that they did not recognize Him? If their grief was so intense, had they not believed the testimony of the women who claimed that He was alive? Or is it that God prevented their recognizing Him? We are not given any more information, but there is no reason that these two men suspected that the man who had joined them was anything other than human. This was no spirit that walked with them. Because of their grief they may not have taken a good look at the man who joined them, or they would have been surprised by the resemblance to Jesus.

24:17 - HE SAID TO THEM. Jesus spoke to the two men: "What are these words that you are exchanging with one another as you are walking?" And they stood still, looking sad." Jesus spent a great part of His time during His public ministry teaching His disciples. His teaching ministry continues after the Resurrection.

The risen Christ joined the preoccupied travelers and revealed in Scripture and personal presence the reality of God. They did not respond, being too concerned with their grief and fears. God's presence does not bring revelation if we are not open to Him. Only later reflection let the disciples see the revelation in this experience with Jesus. God walks beside us and within us, waiting to be recognized. At times, we have to reflect upon an experience to realize God was present and active with us [DSB].

24:18 - THE THINGS WHICH HAVE HAPPENED. One of the two travelers, a man named Cleopas, was amazed that their new companion was seemed unaware of all that had transpired in Jerusalem: "Are You the only one visiting Jerusalem and unaware of the things which have happened here in these days?" It was inconceivable to him that anyone could have been in Jerusalem without knowing what had happened.

24:18, 19, 20 - WHAT THINGS? Responding to His question, they said, "The things about Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word in the sight of God and all the people, and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to the sentence of death, and crucified Him." They gave Jesus a brief, no doubt, emotional account of what had happened, not sparing the chief priests and rulers in assigning them responsibility for what had happened.

24:21 - WE WERE HOPING. Hopelessly now, they explain that they "were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, it is the third day since these things happened."

24:22, 23 - SOME WOMEN AMONG US AMAZED US. "When they were at the tomb early in the morning, and did not find His body, they came, saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said that He was alive." Jesus had first appeared to Mary Magdalene (Mark 16:9-11; John 20:11-18) and then to some other women (Matt. 28:9-10) early Sunday morning.

24:24 - SOME. By "some of those who were with us," they mean Peter and John (John 20:1-8). They rushed to the tomb, John outrunning Peter to the tomb, "and found it just exactly as the women also had said; but Him they did not see."

24:25 - O FOOLISH MEN. After listening the men recount what they had seen and heard, Jesus rebuked them, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!" "Slow of heart" points to the Hebrew concept of the heart as the seat of intelligence. Their failure to comprehend all that had happened in light of Scripture led to their despair.

Christ wants persons to believe all that the prophets of Israel said about Him. His resurrection from the dead authenticated what the Scriptures had predicted. Suffering, not political power, was the legitimate Old Testament expectation of the Messiah. Compare Isa 52:13--53:12 [DSB].

24:26 - WAS IT NOT NECESSARY. Jesus began teaching the two men by asking a question: "Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" "These things" refers to the rejection and crucifixion of Jesus, which become stumbling blocks to these men" [BSB].

24:27 - HE EXPLAINED TO THEM. Can you not imagine what it would be like to have Jesus as your personal tutor? But Jesus teaches us that we do not actually need that as long as we have the Scripture (with the Holy Spirit, Who inspired the Scripture, to illuminate our spirit that we

might understand it). But what a joy it would be to have Jesus teach you a private Sunday School lesson! Luke writes, "Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures." When Jesus taught them He used Scripture. What the people need every Sunday is an exposition of the Holy Scriptures. That may not be what some of them want, but that is what they need and that is what God has commissioned the preacher to do.

MOSES AND ALL THE PROPHETS. In the synagogues each Sabbath someone read from the Law and from the prophets. On the Mount of Transfiguration Jesus was visited by Moses (Law) and Elijah (representative prophet). This expression denotes the whole Old Testament.

The Bible is the textbook of the Christian faith. The Old Testament sheds light on the mission and teaching of Jesus Christ, and the New Testament enlarges our understanding of the message of Israel's prophets. Christian teaching must be based on Scripture, must point to Jesus Christ, and must not contradict Scripture [DSB].

24:28, 29 - APPROACHED THE VILLAGE. As Jesus and the two men from Emmaus approached their village, Jesus "acted as though He were going farther. But they urged Him, saying, 'Stay with us, for it is getting toward evening, and the day is now nearly over.' So He went in to stay with them." They were being hospitable. They may have made the offer to any respectable traveler, but we can be sure they are more concerned with what Jesus is saying than they are with convention.

24:30 - HE TOOK THE BREAD AND BLESSED IT. Jesus did not wait for His host to break the bread. "When He had reclined at the table with them, He took the bread and blessed it, and breaking it, He began giving it to them." Either by His assuming the role of host, or possibly by something in His gestures, they suddenly recognize Him. Even after the Resurrection, Jesus continued to bless His food. Even after the Resurrection He ate food!

24:31 - THEIR EYES WERE OPENED. "They recognized Him; and He vanished from their sight" (lit., He became invisible).

24:32 - EXPLAINING THE SCRIPTURES. They excitedly discussed their experience: "Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?" It is amazing that they had not recognized Him while He was teaching. The obvious explanation is that the thought of His appearing to them personally was more than their minds could comprehend.

He appeared to Simon Peter in Jerusalem, 24:33-35.

24:33, 34 - THE LORD HAS REALLY RISEN. The two disciples from Emmaus "got up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found gathered together the eleven and those who were with them, saying, 'The Lord has really risen and has appeared to Simon.' They were anxious to tell

them that they had seen Jesus, but when they arrived the Apostles and other disciples were celebrating an appearance of Jesus to Peter. There is no record of this appearance of Jesus to Peter in the other Gospels (it is mentioned in 1 Cor. 15:5).

24:35 - THEIR EXPERIENCES. The two disciples form Emmaus “began to relate their experiences on the road and how He was recognized by them in the breaking of the bread.” These personal accounts would be repeated all over Judea and Galilee, and in short time, throughout the Roman Empire. The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead became the crowning miracle of the New Testament and of the early church. The unsophisticated accounts by simple folks was believable and the evidence, when considered all together, was compelling.

Jesus Appears to His Disciples, 24:36-49.

24:36, 37 - HE HIMSELF STOOD IN THEIR MIDST. “While they were telling these things, He Himself stood in their midst. But they were startled and frightened and thought that they were seeing a spirit.” Jesus suddenly appeared in their midst. He materialized and dematerialized at will, and doors were no barrier to him, yet when He stood there, He stood in a living body, He could eat and drink, and His body had the marks of the crucifixion in it. This was no spirit.

24:38, 39 - SEE MY HANDS. Dispelling any doubt, Jesus said, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.” Having said this, “... He showed them His hands and His feet.” In the Revelation we see the Lamb of God standing as One Who had been slain but was alive (Rev. 5:6).

24:41 - HAVE YOU ANYTHING HERE TO EAT? Not only did He bear the marks of the crucifixion, He could eat. Luke tells us that “While they still could not believe it because of their joy and amazement, He said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?” Whether or not he was hungry, He was perfectly capable of eating a meal.

24:42, 43 - HE TOOK IT AND ATE IT. “They gave Him a piece of a broiled fish; and He took it and ate it before them.” By His eating He is not showing that He needed food. He ate the fish to demonstrate the reality of His presence. “His body, though transcendent, is also tangible” [BSB].

24:44 - THESE ARE MY WORDS. In verses 44-48, Jesus opens the Scripture to them and then commissions them to be His witnesses. "...These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." Jesus then “opened their minds to understand the Scriptures” (vs, 45). In the Hebrew division of the Old Testament, the Prophets included most of the historical books, and the Psalms included the "writings."

The basic authority of Scripture is its witness to Jesus Christ, the living Word who

became flesh (Jn 1:14). Jesus claimed all the Old Testament writings pointed to Him when rightly interpreted. The task of the church is to interpret Scripture under guidance of the Spirit so that the Bible points people to Jesus. We should expect Bible promises to be fulfilled. We should understand the fulfillment in the light of Jesus' ministry, not in the light of human tradition or selfish interests. The criterion by which the whole Bible is to be interpreted is Jesus. Only as we interpret Scripture in light of what He has done will it lead us into all truth [DSB].

24:46-47 - IT IS WRITTEN. Jesus, still opening the Scripture for them, said, "Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem."

Jesus placed emphasis on the Scripture prophesying His suffering, death, and resurrection, and of the necessity of repentance for the forgiveness of sins (and the proclamation of that message to all nations).

2:48 - YOU ARE WITNESSES OF THESE THINGS. Initially, He means that those present would be witnesses to all they had seen and heard, but His great Commission includes all believers in preaching the forgiveness of sins to all peoples from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth (see Matt. 28:19-20; Acts 1:8; John 20:23). "Evangelism centers on the Scripture-fulfilling work of Christ. He sends His followers to call every person in the world to repentance and forgiveness. The Holy Spirit in us leads us and gives us power and courage to witness" [DSB].

24:49 - THE PROMISE OF MY FATHER. Jesus promises them the Holy spirit. "And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high." The "promise of My Father," we know from John 14-16, is the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. They were to stay in Jerusalem until the coming of the Holy Spirit, Who would both lead and empower believers to witness for Jesus.

In verses 44 - 49, we have the bases for evangelism and missions. We have the commission and we have the Holy Spirit to direct us, empower us, comfort us, convict us, and sustain us as we witness for Jesus Christ. The message is the Gospel

The risen Lord explained to the eleven apostles ("sent ones") the entire Old Testament as relating to Himself and the purpose of His life and ministry. He tied together all of the Old Testament and showed its relation to all of the events leading to His death and resurrection. He showed that the entire intent of the Old Testament and, thus, of His life, ministry, death, and resurrection, pointed to the missionary purpose of the "sent ones"--to proclaim repentance and forgiveness in the name of Jesus Christ to all the peoples of the world, beginning right where they were--in Jerusalem [DSB].

The Lord is using His brief remaining time with His apostles to the fullest advantage. His words have monumental implications, not just for those early believers, but for saints of all ages. The

Great Commission is not an afterthought that Jesus tacked on as a P.S. to the Gospel. It focuses upon the God's purpose in saving individuals and using those individuals to save others. The Discipleship Study Bible notes that this passage gives us:

- (1) the source of missions as the purpose of God;
- (2) the message as repentance and forgiveness in the name of Jesus;
- (3) the scope beginning where we are and reaching to the ends of the earth; and
- (4) the power--the Holy Spirit. The worldwide evangelistic and mission task is too great for human power, but God has provided for our being clothed in the power of the Holy Spirit for the task [DSB].

The Lord Ascends to Heaven, 24:50-53.

24:50 - HE LED THEM OUT. Jesus led His disciples out “as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them.” This might be translated “toward” Bethany. If, however, they went all the way to Bethany, the trip took almost an hour, so He had some additional time to instruct His followers.

24:51 - CARRIED UP INTO HEAVEN. When they arrived at their destination, and “while He was blessing them, He parted from them and was carried up into heaven.” Luke gives further details of the Ascension in his second volume, the Book of Acts (1:1-9). Jesus often blessed people. Now that He is about to leave them, but He prays that God will sustain them and give them power to continue in His service.

24:52, 53 - AFTER WORSHIPING HIM. After Jesus Ascended, His followers worshiped Him and “returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple praising God.”

The resurrection marked Jesus' victory over sin and death, assuring the completion of God's saving acts. The ascension is God's final and confirming act on Jesus. Theologians speak of Jesus' humiliation and His exaltation. The wonders of the virgin birth and the ascension bracket Jesus' earthly existence. The ascension is the only logically possible outcome of God's greatest act in Jesus Christ, the resurrection. The purpose of the ascension was to remove the glorified body of Christ out of earthly, physical limitations and to provide the appropriate context for Jesus' homecoming in heaven, God's sphere. There Jesus began His ministry for the church and prepared to return for the final judgment [DSB].

All the Gospels record various things about the Resurrection and post-Resurrection appearances of Jesus Christ. Mark is the only other Gospel that mentions the Ascension. Luke provides this brief account and then in Acts

And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And as they were gazing intently into the

sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them. They also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven (Acts 1:9-11).

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