



The Garden Tomb in Jerusalem

THE MESSENGERS

A Study of the Four Gospels

by

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Covenant Bible Studies

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COVENANT BIBLE STUDY

Background

Having majored in the Humanities in College (which had a good dose of Religion and Bible Courses), Systematic Theology and New Testament in Seminary, and Social Ethics and Missiology in Graduate School, I expected to emerge Biblically literate. I was wrong.

One day in my office, I came to the realization that I was Biblically illiterate, after I had earned a Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Divinity, and a Ph.D. The first step to becoming Biblically literate is to confess that you are Biblically illiterate. That is precisely what I did in the summer of 1979. My first step out of illiteracy was to read the Bible for an hour each morning before I began my workday, but I found that lonely and unsatisfying.

This led me to a second step that changed me, and my ministry forever. It also enabled me to see how little the Church knows about the Book it claims as its source for faith and morality. The tragic thing is that most people do not recognize that they are Biblically illiterate, and so they go on quoting Scripture as though they know what they are talking about. In my second step I invited members of my congregation to join me in the study of Scripture on Sunday evenings. I was not sure what I was going to do, but I knew that I had to do something. About a dozen parishioners were willing to confess that they were also Biblically illiterate, and so we entered into a Covenant to study the Bible every Sunday evening at 6:00 p.m. It took us six years to study from Genesis through Revelation, taking a major section each year. Below is a list of the way in which we proceeded:

- The Books of Law (Genesis through Deuteronomy)
- The Books of History (Joshua through Esther)
- The Books of Wisdom (Job through the Song of Solomon)
- The Books of Prophecy (Isaiah through Malachi)
- The Gospels and Acts
- The Letters and Revelation
- The Apocrypha

The most difficult part was not working through all those laws, but through one hundred and fifty Psalms. By the time we finished there were two groups meeting with me. The second group met on Thursday mornings at 9:30 a.m. As both groups reflected on our ordeal through the Psalms, we decided not to do that again. There had to be a better way.

Not yet realizing what that better way might be, I moved to another congregation, where I started four groups, the two new ones meeting on Sunday night at 7:30 p.m., following the 6:00 p.m. group, and another one on Wednesday afternoon at 1:00 p.m. As we began our journey through the Bible, some of the participants suggested studying the Apocrypha as well. That gave me an idea. I included the Apocrypha with the Wisdom Books, and began using a Psalm as a meditation prior to beginning each session. Occasionally, I

selected a Psalm to fit what we were studying; but at other times, I just used the Psalm for the week.

In spite of our difficulty with the Psalms, I still believe in studying the Bible just the way it is written. After we have done that, we may begin to explore its themes and topics, but not before. We must first do our homework. This holds for youth as well as for adults. The following reason was given in the October, 1985 issue of *The Christian Herald*:

For teens, studies of Bible books are preferable to studies of topics. Teenagers accustomed to only thematic Bible Studies may find themselves and their friends in a vulnerable and dangerous spot when they get to college. Cults that focus on reaching college students use topical-style Bible studies that select verses throughout the Bible to “prove” their false doctrines. A solid foundation in Bible-book studies will help young people not to be taken in by cultic teachings. Studies on topics are helpful after a group has done a number of Bible-book studies.

The difficulty with Bible Study in the manner that I am proposing is the tendency to get bogged down, or to spend too much time on a few passages. I would like to suggest that you keep moving. That is why I have broken each book into a number of lessons. You should move on, even if you have not finished your discussion. All this assumes, of course, that you are studying with other people, which I believe to be an absolute necessity. Very few people continue studying the Bible on a regular basis without the discipline of meeting with others. This is necessary because others contribute to your understanding and they keep you honest about your conclusions.

Methodology

At first I called what I was doing *In-depth Bible Study*, but after proceeding through the Bible three times, I decided to change the name to *Covenant Bible Study*. My goal had been to take six to twelve chapters in an hour or hour and one-half session. I liked the longer sessions better, but I am aware of the contemporary expectation to finish everything within an hour. Covering that much material in such a short time can hardly be called dealing with it in depth. My goal was however to get the stories or passages on the table, answer questions about them, and apply them to modern life. This required a Covenant between pastor and people. We covered each major section in nine months, meeting around thirty times in the course of that time. I am not worried that we did not spend enough time on a section, for I have found many themes coming up again and again. Our purpose was to study the whole Bible in Covenant together, trying to understand how the various components relate to one another.

One thing I insisted upon from the beginning—everyone has a right to their own opinion without having to fear criticism from anyone in the group. I have also advertised what we were doing in the newspaper, and have managed to pick up people from all kinds of traditions. Their contributions have greatly enriched the Bible Study Groups, keeping us honest about their traditions. Without their presence, we would not have treated their traditions fairly. One tradition that was never represented, although I wish it were, was

modern Judaism. Covenant Bible Study is best done in an Ecumenical context, but that of course, raises some other questions. Does it mean that we are trying to win or convert people of other traditions to our own? My answer has always been, “No!” Their traditions need to be treated with respect, and they are encouraged to stay within their own traditions. The purpose of Covenant Bible Study is to expand our understanding of the whole Bible, and the only way we can do this is to include people of other traditions, without trying to convert them.

Dr. Harrell Beck, from Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University suggested some principles I have used. He was addressing a group of pastors at a School for Christian Ministry, and he stressed how important it was to teach the Old Testament to children, believing that it could be done. His methodology was very simple, tell them a story, give them an opportunity to ask questions about the story, and work together on the practical application of that story. This gave me the idea for working with adults.

Summarizing the Material

In a typical session, I make assignments to those who will accept them. Not everyone is willing to accept an assignment, and that is okay. I try to encourage those who are too shy to take on an assignment, that it is okay just to sit there. I keep assignments to one or two chapters. The breakdown of assignments is listed right below the title to every session, and I generally pass a sheet of paper with the breakdown around the table, asking those who would take an assignment to simply write their name down next to the assignment they would like to choose. Their task is to read those one or two chapters more carefully than the rest of the assigned material for a session. When we begin our session, I ask those who have accepted assignments to simply summarize their chapters to the group. They may refer to a few scriptures now and then, but they are not to read everything in class. They are to highlight the story, or if there is no story, the essence of what they have read. They are to recognize that someone else might handle it differently, but that is okay. Their assignment is to get the story or the essence of the material on the table.

There are always some people who, though they are unwilling to take an assignment, are willing to read in class. In the assignments I handle myself, I try to find a verse or two in each section, which summarizes things. I then ask persons, who do not take assignments, to read those verses. In the charts that accompany the Bible Studies, you will *sometimes* find these brief references, which point to the essence of things. These are the portions I ask people to read in class. The first third of our session is dedicated to the above task. We may run over, but our intention is to get the content on the table for further discussion.

Questions and Answers

In the second third, our purpose is to ask questions. This does not mean that I answer all the questions. Sometimes, while I am thinking, someone else answers the question, having discovered it in a Study Bible, or commentary. While I do not encourage everyone to use commentaries, I do encourage the use of a good Study Bible. I have also written

my own commentary, which I pass out in advance to all participants. I did not do this the first year, but I found people wanting to know where I was getting some of my information, and so I decided to pass the material out. Those who accepted assignments seemed to feel more comfortable when they knew what I knew ahead of time. Some people had a tendency to read only my commentary, but I have always told them, "If you do not have enough time to prepare, read the Bible rather than my commentary." Most people have done that.

Practical Application

The final third of the session has to do with making a practical application of the material that we have studied together. To help people along, I prepare two things: a one page chart of all the material so that they can see it in its entirety, and no more than two pages of my own thoughts on the practical application of what we have studied. These two things seem to be enough to get the discussion moving. All of my materials are made available prior to our meeting. Everyone has them while they are doing their own studying. It is difficult to give enough attention to this final third when you meet for only one hour. This is why I prefer an hour and one-half. As the discussion moves along, it is difficult to stop and there is a tendency to move beyond the allotted time. The group should stop on time. There will always be some people with other commitments. The issues will come up again, and so they should not force you to extend the time of a session.

Leadership

I have found the above method of studying the Bible with groups very rewarding. This method does not need a clergy person. The problem lies in the willingness of other laity to accept a layperson as their leader. Many of the participants in my Bible Studies were competent people, fully able to lead sessions. You do not need an expert to lead you. All you need is a good Study Bible, a couple of good commentaries, and four or five other people willing to enter into a Covenant to study the Bible. It will be helpful to set up some questions for discussion. *The Serendipity Study Bible*, which contains 20,000 questions, will help you; but even without it, you can assign different persons to think up questions on chapters or sections to be studied. You do not have to aim at becoming Bible Scholars. The purpose of Bible Study is not knowledge, but reverence for God and discipleship. Do not be too worried if you cannot remember everything. "Its authors," wrote Frederick Herzog, "never expected to provide literalistic guidelines for the 20th century. But they did want to communicate the power of God (cf. I Cor. 4:20)."

Among some groups I have found resistance to taking assignments. When I have felt this resistance, I have used a different approach. Instead of asking people to summarize chapters, I have asked them to mark their Bibles in a certain way. The following scheme has been used, and it always inspires much more discussion than time permits:



Mark those verses with a heart that offer special insight into religious experience.



Mark those verses with a lamp or light bulb, which offer special insight or illumination.



Mark those verses with a star, which might be used to give guidance or application to daily living.



Mark those verses with a cross, which are difficult to follow or obey.



Mark those verses with a check, which are important to you, but do not fall under any other categories.



Mark those verses with a question mark that you do not fully understand.

When I ask people to mark their Bibles as discussed above, I begin each session with an introduction and a brief video segment. We then attempt to answer questions, share insights, talk about applications, and discuss how to deal with the difficult passages.

Final Comments

The Use of Videos and DVDs

Two final comments need to be made. The first has to do with the use of video, which can add much to a Bible Study session. I have found a number of videos helpful, but I always limit the amount of video that I might use to less than fifteen minutes. This requires previewing video sources, which is very time consuming; but I think that it is very important to limit the use of video to illustrating relevant points. I am reluctant to list the most helpful videos because new ones are being introduced all the time.

The Need for Balance

My second comment has to do with balance. John Wesley called for that balance when he said, “Let us now unite the two so long divided, knowledge and vital piety.” This is my purpose in Covenant Bible Study. Some will think that I give too much attention to the academic side of things, while others will say that I do not give it enough attention. The attempt to apply what we learn is aimed at vital piety. I think that the two must be held together, but I do not view the Bible as a book of rules. For me, “The Bible,” to quote Luther, “is the manger in which we find Christ, the swaddling clothes in which he is wrapped.” Covenant Bible Study helps us sort through all that straw in the manger to discover the Christ, who reveals God and his Will to us. For those who only want to use the Bible devotionally, I say, “You must first study it, hear what its characters are really saying, and then learn the lessons of history, in which God really is present.” These are the tasks of Covenant Bible Study.

The Purpose of Bible Study

One participant, overwhelmed by the pessimism of the prophets, asked, “Is there anything that we can do to break the vicious cycle of the rise and fall of nations (and individuals)?” I firmly believe that there is something we can do. Our first obligation is to study the Scriptures to find out what they are really saying. We have spent enough time manipulating them to say what we want them to say, New and Old Testaments alike; it is now time to enter into Covenant with one another to study them completely, allowing them to speak to us. That is a task that will take us the rest of our lives, but we can begin the journey now. The second step in this journey is to begin applying the truths we learn from our study. Jesus, in Matthew 7:24-25, told us that we should be building our houses (nations and lives) on solid rock, on foundations that will stand. Not to do this, says Psalm 73:18, would be to set our feet “in slippery places.” The purpose of Covenant Bible Study is to help us find our way back to the God of the Bible and build our lives and nation on the solid rock. In the Scriptures we can discover the steppingstones of history, which will enable us to walk on the waters of faith.

Discovering the Main Points

As I wrote my commentary on the Bible, I wrote a short article, which can be found at the end of each lesson. My purpose in doing this was to focus on what I thought was the main point in each of the lessons. Obviously, there is more than one point; but I thought it might be helpful for someone to look for a theme. That is what I have attempted to do.

Studying the Bible is like looking at the many sides of a diamond. Light comes from unexpected places. I would recommend that everyone in a Bible Study Group look for that which sparkles most and attempt to describe what they see. That is what I am attempting to do here. It is only one person’s opinion, but it is worth doing, even if only for that one person.

Not everyone will feel capable of doing what I have done, but everyone should be able to raise a couple of questions about the section to be studied. If that is all you can do, go with it. You will be surprised at how much you will learn, even by asking questions. Remember how, according to Luke 2:46-47, Mary and Joseph found Jesus, “...sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.” As you grow in knowledge, understanding, and wisdom, people will be amazed at your questions and answers as well.

My only advice is that my commentary and these articles are not to be studied in place of the Bible. Your textbook should be *the Bible*. If this commentary and these articles can help you understand and apply what you read there, then they will have contributed to their purpose. Just keep in mind that they do not represent the last word on the subject. They are but descriptions of the light shining from the diamond, which is God’s Word as it has been communicated through human authors.

The Purpose of Bible Study

When we read the Bible, we are really asking two questions:

1. Do I expect to meet God?
2. Am I willing to obey God?

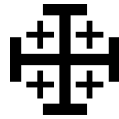
Applying the Bible

1. Is there an example for me to follow?
2. Is there a sin for me to avoid?
3. Is there a command for me to obey?
4. Is there a promise for me to claim?
5. What does this passage teach me about God or Jesus Christ?
6. Is there a difficulty for me to explore?
7. Is there something in this passage I should pray about today?

A Covenant for Studying Together

Entering into Covenant to Study the Bible together is one of the most important decisions we can make in our lives, and it requires a special Covenant, which will not be easy to follow. Of all the Covenants I have read concerning studying together, I like the one proposed by Augustine:

Let us, you and I lay aside all arrogance.
Let neither of us pretend to have found the truth.
Let us seek it as something unknown to both of us.
Then we may seek it with love and sincerity
when neither of us has the rashness nor
presumption to believe that he (she) already
possesses it.
And if I am asking too much of you,
allow me to listen to you at least,
to talk with you as I do with beings whom,
for my part,
I do not pretend to understand.



INTRODUCTION TO THE GOSPELS

THE PURPOSE

The purpose of the Gospels goes right along with their meaning—GOOD NEWS or GOOD TIDINGS. Their purpose is to present the Good News in order to convert unbelievers and build up believers in their faith. They are not biographies of Jesus. They are more like sermons, which proclaim, interpret facts, and call for a decision.

This quite naturally led into some secondary purposes, such as: to instruct converts, discipline members, reject heresies, and enhance worship.

What was not necessary was not included; hence, the Gospels do not write history chronologically, nor are they concerned about Jesus' early life. They are four testimonies of Jesus written that people might believe. Each one of them has a slightly different purpose.

Matthew

The purpose of Matthew is to give careful proofs to Jewish readers that Jesus fulfilled the words of the Old Testament prophets and is indeed the Messiah.

Mark

Mark was the first Gospel written, and his purpose is to help those who thought the Messiah would be a political leader to understand that he came as a crucified Savior, who chose the path of humble service and suffering. Only in his second coming will he appear as the King of Glory.

Luke

In the Gospel of Luke Jesus is carefully presented to the Hellenistic (Greek) world as a historical, rather than a mythical figure. Jesus is portrayed both as the ideal human being and the son of God. Luke did make some attempt to present his story in chronological order, and so his book is the most historical.

John

Of all the Gospels John is most theological. He attempts to show how Jesus was sent by God to be the Savior of the world. Not only is the book more theological than the others, it is also more sermonic (John 20:31). Sometimes it is difficult to tell the difference between the words of Jesus and the words of the apostle's own interpretation. It is often suggested as the first Gospel to be read by new converts.

THE LANGUAGE OF THE GOSPELS

Although Jesus spoke in Aramaic, the Gospels were all written in Greek. Luke was written in classical Greek, and Mark was written in colloquial Greek. The writers wrote according to their abilities to communicate in the dominant language of their time.

THE STORY OF JESUS

Can the chronological story of Jesus be pieced together from the four Gospels? Although this cannot be done in minute detail, we can sketch the following:

1. Birth and Childhood (4 B.C.E.)
2. Preparation for Public Ministry (29 C.E.)
3. The Beginning of Ministry
4. The Galilean Ministry
5. The Judean and Perea Ministry
6. The Journey to Jerusalem
7. The Last Week (33 C.E.)
 - a. Death
 - b. Resurrection
8. The Resurrection Appearances

COMPARING THE GOSPELS

A careful comparison of the Gospels will reveal the similarity of Matthew, Mark, and Luke; and for this reason, we call them the *Synoptic Gospels*. The word *Synoptic* means: “seeing together.” On the other hand, the Gospel of John is very different, having been written much later. If John was the last Gospel to be written, which was the first? There is disagreement on this. Some believe that Mark was the first, while others choose Matthew. I will be dealing with some of the reasons for this disagreement later. One thing we cannot assume is that the Books of the New Testament appear in the order in which they were written. Many of the Books are out of their chronological order, and the same could be true of the Gospels. I believe that Mark was the first account of the Gospel to be written, followed by Matthew, Luke, and John; but we will study them in the order in which they appear.

THE NEW MOSES



The Gospel of Matthew

INTRODUCTION TO THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

MATTHEW (LEVI) <i>Gift of God or the Lord</i>	
Date: 70-90 C.E.	Place: Antioch
Purpose: <ul style="list-style-type: none">•Jesus is the Jewish Messiah!•The Law and Prophets declare it!•Matthew is a Manual of Instruction!	Sources: <ul style="list-style-type: none">•500 Verses from Mark•250 Verses from Quelle•300 Verses unique to Matthew

Author

From the earliest times Matthew has been named as the author of the first Gospel of the New Testament, but nothing in the Gospel itself verifies this. His name means “gift of the Lord,” and Mark and Luke call him Levi.

Date

It is believed that Matthew copied large sections of the Gospel of Mark (500 verses). Another 250 verses came from a source identified as Q. Q comes from the German word for Source (Quelle). We do not know whether this was an oral or written source. We do know that Luke also used it. Matthew himself includes another 300 verses not found in any other Gospel.

Since the Gospel of Mark was written around 65-70 C.E., we know that Matthew had to be written later. Since Ignatius mentioned it in 115 C.E., we know that the book had to be written earlier than that. Another way of dating things is in relation to historical events. What about the fall of Jerusalem in 70 C.E.? Is Matthew 22:7¹ an updated reference to the burning of Jerusalem, or is it a prediction of its burning? No one can be sure. Those who feel that it is a reference to the end of Jerusalem suggest a date later than 70 C.E., and those who understand this verse as a prediction suggest a date earlier than 70 C.E. About the best we can do is to give an approximate date of somewhere between 65 and 100 C.E. Most scholars give a date between 70 and 90 C.E., but it is difficult to be precise.

¹ Other passages to be considered are Matthew 21:41; 24:2 and 24:15-16.

Place

The place where Matthew was written is unknown. We can only make some intelligent guesses. Since the Gospel was written in Greek, a logical guess would be that it was not written in Palestine; but since it has a heavy Jewish emphasis, it must have been written in a predominantly Jewish community. Where might such a community have existed? One answer would be in Antioch (Syria). It is a good guess, but we have no evidence that this is a fact.

Purpose

While all of the Gospels present us with a portrait of Jesus, each of them has a special emphasis. Matthew's emphasis is on Jesus as the Messiah (Christ). He focuses on Jesus as the long awaited Messianic King. The Old Testament Scriptures, particularly the prophets, contributed to this expectation. Matthew's Gospel, more than any of the others, stands as a link between the Old and New Testaments. This Gospel stands first in the New Testament because it quotes the Old Testament more than 60 times, connecting the Old and New Testaments together, like a bridge. Since Matthew focuses on Jesus as the Messianic King, he also carefully records what Jesus has to say about the Kingdom of Heaven. This became the core of early Christian thought, and so the Gospel of Matthew was quickly used as a Manual of instruction for new Christians.

Organization.

The Gospel of Matthew is highly structured. Its organization can be described in two ways. Let us look first at the broad view: the coming of Jesus as God's Messiah, 1-2; the Ministry of God's Messiah, 3-25; and the humiliation and exaltation of God's Messiah, 26-28.

(1-2)	(3-25)	(26-28)
Coming of Jesus	Ministry of Jesus	Passion of Jesus

Next, let us look at the more detailed way, which organizes it into a fivefold structure. This was intended as an imitation of the first five books of Moses (the Pentateuch). Jesus is the Messianic fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets. The end of each section is marked with the phrase, "when Jesus had finished." (See 7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; and 26:1) These five major sections focus on the teachings of Jesus, but they are all preceded by segments of the story (narratives) of Jesus. One might outline the Gospel as follows:

THE BIRTH OF JESUS (1-2)	
1. ETHICS	
Narrative: Jesus' Ministry in Galilee (3:1—4:25)	Teachings: The Sermon on the Mount (5-7)
2. MISSIONS	
Narrative: Authority of Jesus' Ministry (8:1—9:35)	Teachings: Missionary Discourse (10:1—11:1)
3. THE KINGDOM OF GOD (KERYGMA OR PROCLAMATION)	
Narrative: The Kingdom and Its Coming (11:2—12:50)	Teachings: The Parables of the Kingdom (13:1-52)
4. THE CHURCH (ECCLESIOLOGY)	
Narrative: The New Community (13:53—17:27)	Teachings: Greatness and Responsibility (18)
5. LAST THINGS (ESCHATOLOGY)	
Narrative: Conflict and Consummation (19:1—24:2)	Teachings: On the End of History (24:3—25:46)
THE PASSION (26-28)	



1. The Early Life of Jesus

Matthew 1:1—4:2

1. THE EARLY LIFE OF JESUS (1:1—4:25)

JESUS' ROYAL ASCENT (1:1-17)

Abraham Isaac Jacob Judah Perez (<i>Tamar</i>) Hezron Aram Aminadab Nahshon Salmon (<i>Rahab</i>) Boaz (<i>Ruth</i>) Obed Jesse King David	Solomon Rehoboam Abijah Asaph Jehoshaphat Joram Uzziah Jotham Ahaz Hezekiah Manasseh Amos Josiah Jechoniah	Salathiel Zerubbabel Abiud Eliakim Azor Zadok Achim Eliud Eleazar Matthan Jacob Joseph <i>Mary</i> Jesus the Messiah
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THE BIRTH OF JESUS (1:18-25)

THE WISE MEN (2:1-12)

THE FLIGHT TO EGYPT (2:13-23)

THE FIVE DREAMS

The Virgin Birth (1:21-23)	The Birth in Bethlehem (2:6)	The Trip to and from Egypt (2:13 & 19-20)	The Slaughter of the Children (2:16-17)	The Move to Nazareth (2:23)
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THE BAPTISM OF JESUS (3:1-17)

THE PUBLIC MINISTRY OF JESUS (4:1-25)

The Temptation of Jesus (4:1-11)			The Beginning of Ministry (4:12-25)		
Economic Temptation	Religious Temptation	Political Temptation	Central Message (4:17) Compare (3:2)	Preaching Teaching Healing	The First Messengers (4:19) Peter, Andrew, James and John

1. THE EARLY LIFE OF JESUS

Matthew 1:1—4:25

ASSIGNMENTS			
Jesus' Royal Ascent and Baptism (1:1-25)	The Wise Men and the Flight to Egypt (2:1-23)	The Baptism of Jesus (3:1-17)	The Public Ministry of Jesus (4:1-25)

JESUS' ROYAL ASCENT (1:1-17)

Genealogies are given only in Matthew and Luke, and they are both different. Matthew's genealogy ascends from Abraham to Jesus and emphasizes Jesus' legal rights through Joseph. Luke's genealogy descends from Jesus to Adam and emphasizes Jesus' blood relationship through Mary. In Matthew the genealogy begins with Abraham, but in Luke it begins with Adam. Matthew is concerned about primarily persuading Jews, while Luke's main concern is with convincing Gentiles; (See Luke 2:23-38) nevertheless, both of them emphasize that Jesus is the Messiah (the anointed one).

The list of persons is not meant to be comprehensive. Many names are missing. What is of importance is the inclusion of four women: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba. It was unusual to list women in a Jewish genealogy, and so we must conclude that these women are important. Tamar had children through her father-in-law (Genesis 38), Judah; Rahab was a prostitute in Jericho (Joshua 2); Ruth was a foreign Moabite woman; and Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11) committed adultery with David. Matthew could have given a genealogy without including these women's names, but he chose to include them. His purpose was not to show the purity of Jesus' background, but to proclaim a Messiah with whom anyone and everyone could identify.

Matthew's list is not only abbreviated, but stylistic. There are three groups of fourteen names, provided we include Mary in the last group. Why does Matthew list three groups of fourteen? We cannot be sure, but Hebrew letters also have numerical values, and if we analyze the numerical value of David's name in Hebrew, we come up with fourteen. (d [4] + v [6] + d [4] = 14). Perhaps this was another way of stressing the royalty of Jesus. But what about the three groups? The first group ends with David, the model and ideal King; the second ends with Jechoniah (Jehoiachin), who forfeited his royal position and was taken into captivity; and the third group ends with Jesus, who is to regain the throne and fulfill Israel's destiny.

It is interesting to note that Matthew 1:16 names Joseph as the “husband of Mary.” The author of the Gospel does this to avoid compromising the miracle of the virgin birth while still demonstrating Jesus’ legal relationship to David. This makes him a legal descendant of David and qualifies him as royalty.

Matthew knew that Jews would demand proof that Jesus had a right to the Messianic throne; therefore, he attempted to demonstrate that right by showing Jesus’ relationship to David and Abraham. Another element of proof, which Matthew uses a great deal, is the way in which Jesus is the fulfillment of prophecy.

THE BIRTH OF JESUS (1:18-25)

According to Matthew 1:18, Mary was engaged or *betrothed* to Joseph. Unlike modern engagement, *betrothed* was legal and binding. Betrothed persons were not to engage in sexual intercourse, nor could they break off their relationship without seeking a divorce. What follows is Joseph’s agony over what to do about Mary’s pregnancy. Matthew focuses on Joseph’s side of the story, while Luke focuses on Mary’s. Joseph is informed not to break off the coming marriage through an *angel* and a *dream*. Both were commonly described as the means by which God speaks to and warns his people. The dream is only the first of four. The contents of the four dreams and prophetic fulfillments are as follows:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| 1. Virgin Birth (1:20-23) | Virgin Birth (1:21-23) (Isaiah 7:14) |
| 2. Flight to Egypt (2:13-15) | Birth in Bethlehem (2:5-6) (Micah 5:2) |
| 3. Return to Israel (2:19-21) | Flight to Egypt (2:14-15) (Hosea 11:1) |
| 4. Settling in Nazareth (2:22-23) | Slaughter of the Children (2:16-18) (Jeremiah 31:15)
Move to Galilee (2:23) (Isaiah 11:1) |

Joseph was told in the dream to name the child Jesus (Yeshua), which means “he will save.” Matthew includes “his people from their sins.” Since the tradition had to do with saving people from their enemies, this is something new. It is Matthew’s way of defining the essence of what it means to call Jesus the Messiah (Christ). As a Messianic King he differs from the Kings he succeeds.

Another thing that makes him different is his miraculous birth. According to Isaiah 7:14, he is to be born of a virgin. The Hebrew word used in Isaiah is *almah* which means “young woman.” Matthew, like the other Gospel writers, used the Greek version of Isaiah, and the Greek word was *parthenos*, which means “virgin.” Many scholars have been critical of using the word *virgin* in the Gospel of Matthew. No one else in the Bible emphasizes his virgin birth.

The doctrine of the virgin birth became important during the second century as the Church tried to stress both the divinity and humanity of Jesus. To many his virgin birth is very important, but to others; it is enough to say that Jesus is Emmanuel (God with us), another part of the prophecy (1:23). The miracle of the virgin birth is connected to the

miracle of the incarnation, which is to affirm that God entered into the world through Jesus the Messiah.

Regardless of what one thinks about his virgin birth, Protestants agree that Mary did not remain a virgin. The concluding verse (1:25) seems to indicate that Mary and Joseph went on to live a normal married life, including sexual intercourse. Matthew 13:55-56 seems to confirm this conclusion.

THE WISE MEN (2:1-12)

The wise men from the east were astrologers. No one understands why or how they could discern the coming of a Jewish King in the movement of the stars. All we know of them is that they were a learned class in Persia. Although early Judaism and the early church both related the reference to the star of Jacob in Numbers 24:17, Matthew makes no reference to the star as a fulfillment of scripture.

Many have tried to explain the star. If one is looking for a natural explanation, one might conclude that it was the conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn in 7 B.C.E., which would have occurred at the right time for his birth. This would not explain how the star led them to Bethlehem, but then the wise men gained this information from Herod, who consulted the chief priests and scribes (2:3-8). Micah 5:2 points to Bethlehem. The Herod mentioned here is Herod the Great, who ruled Palestine from 47 to 4 B.C.E.

We do not know how many wise men followed the star. Tradition tells us that there were three, the same number as the gifts they brought. The gifts pointed to the royal position attributed to the child and the worldwide acknowledgement he was about to receive. Gold was for a king, frankincense for God, and myrrh for mortal human beings.

THE FLIGHT TO EGYPT (2:13-23)

The flight to Egypt is also a fulfillment of Scripture. “Out of Egypt” is a quote from Hosea 11:1. The place of bondage became a place of safety.

Herod was afraid of the talk of a Jewish King, and so he tried to eliminate the child as he eliminated his own sons. The killing of the children under two years of age was completely within character for Herod. While the number was probably small (20 to 30), the killing of the children was tied in with an important symbol of national tragedy—Rachel’s tomb. Rachel was the mother of Israel, and she died and was buried on the way to Bethlehem. When the nation fell and its people were taken into Exile, they all passed Rachel’s tomb on the way to Babylon. This is what Jeremiah 31:15 is about, but Matthew links it up to the killing of the children.

Mary and Joseph fled to Egypt until they were told that it was safe to return. They returned following the death of Herod in 4 B.C.E. Herod’s three sons divided up Palestine. Archelaus reigned in Judea, Samaria, and Idumaea from 4 B.C.E. to 6 C.E. Antipas ruled Galilee and Perea, and Philip gained control over Traconitis, the territory

north and east of Galilee. Mary and Joseph chose to return to Nazareth, and according to Matthew, this fulfills Isaiah 11:1. While it is difficult to find *Nazarene* in Isaiah 11:1, we do find a word in Hebrew which sounds like the Aramaic word for Nazareth. The word is *Netzer*, which means “sprout” or “shoot.” This has become a common symbol for the restoration of the Davidic monarchy. There shall come forth a *shoot* from the stump of Jesse (David’s Father).

These events in Matthew help us to date the birth of Jesus. The death of Herod occurred in 4 B.C.E. Since one must account for some time in Egypt, the birth of Jesus probably occurred two or three years earlier. Most scholars give an approximate date of 7 B.C.E. When one takes into consideration the story in Luke, the date is confused. According to Luke 2:2 Jesus was born during the census when Quirinius was Governor of Syria. The trouble with this event is that it occurred in 6 C.E. Hence there is a problem of twelve to thirteen years in determining the birth of Jesus in history, but that is not too bad when you consider the length of time that has passed.

THE BAPTISM OF JESUS (3:1-17)

John the Baptist began preaching in the Judean wilderness (southeast of Jerusalem). His message (3:2) was the same as that of Jesus (4:17). He called for “repentance,” which was a call back to the way of life described in the Covenant (Exodus 19:3-6; 24:3-8; and Jeremiah 31:31-34). His use of the phrase “Kingdom of Heaven” indicates that he was a pious Jew, who avoided the direct use of the word *God*. *Heaven* had the same meaning for him, and so the phrases “Kingdom of Heaven” and “Kingdom of God” can be understood as synonymous.

John is thought to be the last of the Old Testament type prophets. His clothing was reminiscent of Elijah, with whom he was identified; and his diet of locusts and wild honey seem to point to one who lived an ascetic life. For this latter reason, he has often been identified as a member of the Essene community. He was probably not an Essene, for he did not call people to withdraw from the main body of Judaism to create an ascetic life. Through a call to repentance, he tried to create a spiritual remnant within Judaism. Although he has been identified with Elijah, his message more closely resembles that of Zechariah and Daniel. At any rate, John resembled the Old Testament prophets, and was considered the forerunner of the Messiah (3:3; Isaiah 40:3; Malachi 3:1; and 4:5).

If Baptism was a symbol of repentance and preparation for the Kingdom of Heaven, why did Jesus need baptizing? This is a question asked by Christians in the early church as well as in the contemporary Church. Baptism had primarily been used as a symbol of cleansing for Gentile converts and for Jews entering the Essene community. It was not considered necessary for the average Jew, and yet, even the Pharisees and Sadducees responded to John. While one might be able to understand that, it is very difficult to understand why it was necessary to baptize Jesus. Two answers might be offered: (1) Jesus was identifying with human sinfulness, and (2) Baptism became a symbol of his ministry to overcome human sinfulness and establish the Kingdom of Heaven.

Even John recognized his unworthiness to baptize Jesus, but Jesus urged him to do it anyway. The baptism of Jesus was then spiritualized. First, he would be baptized with the Spirit; and then, he would baptize others with the Spirit. The symbol of this new baptism was the Dove, which was similar to God's hovering over his creation (Genesis 1:2) and his people as they wandered through the wilderness (Deuteronomy 32:11). The baptism of Jesus initiates the beginning of his ministry, which is to be empowered by the Spirit of God. What was true for him is also true for us. In our baptism we are made ministers of God. The words of God's favor over the baptism of Jesus are a combination of Psalm 2:7 and Isaiah 42:1. It is not that Jesus became the Messiah at the moment of his baptism, but that he began his messianic work at that time. Even the place where it happened is significant. He was baptized in the lower Jordan, at or near the very spot, where Joshua led the children of Israel into Canaan. John the Baptist can be compared to Moses, who only gained a glimpse of the Promised Land; and Jesus can be compared with Joshua, who crossed through the waters leading his people into it. It is no accident that the Hebrew name for Jesus is Joshua.

THE PUBLIC MINISTRY OF JESUS (4:1-25)

The Temptation of Jesus (4:1-11)

Although the Devil is named as the *tempter*, the temptation of Jesus was probably more like an internal struggle going on within Jesus. The big issue for him was: "Should I use secular or divine methods to bring in the Kingdom?" The forty days represent a rounded off number for an extended period of time, and cannot be disassociated from Moses' forty days on Mount Sinai and the forty years that Israel spent in the wilderness following the Exodus. Passing through the Red Sea (Sea of Reeds) was like a baptism, which was followed by a period of testing; likewise, a period of testing was to follow Jesus' baptism. The testing has to do with how Jesus will act as God's Messiah in the world, and can be described in economic, religious, and political terms.

Economic

Was he to gain disciples by providing them with bread? Although he proved he could do it by feeding the 5,000, Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 8:3 to declare that God's word is more vital to life than bread. He will not use any economic miracle to gain followers to the Kingdom of God.

Religious

In the second temptation the Devil quotes Psalm 91:11-12 to encourage Jesus to perform a sign that he is the Messiah. He is to jump off the pinnacle of the Temple. According to the scripture, God will protect him from injury. The pinnacle of the Temple was either located at the corner where Solomon's porch and the Royal porch met (450 feet above the Kidron Valley), or at the place where the priest blew the trumpet at the first light of dawn to announce the time for the morning sacrifice. In either event, a large crowd could see the pinnacle of the Temple. It would be the perfect place to offer a sign of one's religious

power, but Jesus, quoting Deuteronomy 6:16, insisted that signs shall not be given to gain followers.

Political

The Devil's final challenge is for Jesus to bow down and worship him. By doing this he would be assured of political power and control over the world. Quoting Deuteronomy 6:13, Jesus commits himself to serving and worshiping God alone.

The real issue is, "Does the End justify the Means?" Jesus' answer is, "No!" The Means only corrupts the End. One can compare the Means to a river flowing into a lake. If there is poison in the river, it will find its way into the lake. Jesus chooses the Divine, rather than the Secular, *means* to establish the Kingdom. That Angels minister to him in the end is a sign of God's continuing favor and support of Jesus.

The Beginning of Ministry (4:12-25)

Following the arrest of John the Baptist, Jesus initiated his ministry in Galilee. Why did he wait for the imprisonment of John to begin his ministry? No answer is given. Their messages had been the same. (Compare 3:2 with 4:17.) There might have been a disagreement in how they carried out their messages. Jesus made friends with sinners and religious outcasts. This would have been abhorrent to John, who proclaimed a message of doom to sinners. In spite of this, there is no reason to suppose that Jesus and John had any disagreement. Perhaps it was the circumstance of John's arrest that forced Jesus to begin his public ministry alone, but why does he choose to do that in Galilee? According to Matthew he is doing this to fulfill Scripture (4:14-16). Isaiah 9:2 suggests that Galilee will be the place where the Messiah will begin his work. This is with good reason. Galilee lies in the North, and when Israel fell, it was Galilee, which fell first. Since the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali (Galilee) were the first to fall, they would also be the first to see the Light of God's deliverance.

Galilee was larger in Jesus' time than it is today. There were some 15,000 people in 204 villages in an area 50 by 25 miles. Jesus chose the city of Capernaum to be his headquarters, and there he called his first four disciples: Peter, Andrew, James, and John. They were all fishermen, and he called them to become fishers of men. Although it sounds like a first encounter, John 1:35-42 indicates that it was not.

Jesus worked within the Jewish religious institution. This means that he proclaimed his message in the Synagogue. His work was threefold: (1) Teaching, (2) Preaching, and (3) Healing. With his message of the Kingdom of Heaven (4:17), he gained much popularity. Great crowds came from all over, even from the Decapolis, which consisted of ten Greek cities. What attracted people was his ability to heal. All this was consistent with his message of God's present reign. These were considered to be the signs that Jesus was the Messianic King. While the message itself proved to be popular, the way in which the Kingdom is to be established was not. In Matthew 16:21, Jesus makes clear that it means

his own crucifixion; and that was not popular, not even among Jesus' closest disciples. Peter resisted, and Jesus saw in his resistance a renewed temptation from the Devil.

THE KINGDOM IS HERE!

According to Matthew 1:23, a "...virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means, "God is with us." This verse is referring to Jesus, whom we call the Christ. Why do we not then call him *Emmanuel*? The reason is simple. Matthew was not telling us his personal name; rather, he was affirming that in Jesus the Christ, God is with us. This is what we mean by the Incarnation, a Latin word which means "being or taking flesh." In Jesus we encounter God in the flesh.

John the Baptist knew that something like this was about to happen when he began preaching in the wilderness. "Repent," he cried, "for the kingdom of heaven has come near." (Matthew 3:2) John saw himself fulfilling the role of the one sent ahead to announce the coming of the King of that Kingdom. He therefore became the voice crying out in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." (Matthew 3:3) If God was coming in human form, it was important to prepare for him; and the best way that could be done is through repentance and submission to the coming King.

We call Jesus the Christ because Christ means "Anointed King;" and if he is the Anointed King of God's coming Kingdom, then we need to listen to him. His opening words are similar to John the Baptist's: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." (Matthew 4:17) That Kingdom has come near in Him.

We now have to face the inevitable conflict between two kingdoms, the kingdom of this world and the kingdom of God himself. These two kingdoms differ radically, and they call for a decision from every one of us. In responding to Jesus, we all become fishers of people, (Matthew 4:19) which is to say, we begin to invite others to become citizens of God's Kingdom which has now been established in the world.



2. The Sermon on the Mount

Matthew 5:1—7:29

2. THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT (5:1 – 7:29)				
INTRODUCTION (5:1-2)				
THE BEATITUDES (5:3-12)				
The Poor in Spirit (5:3)	The Meek (5:4)	The Merciful (5:7)	The Peacemakers (5:9)	
Those Who Mourn (5:4)	The Righteous (5:7)	The Pure in Heart (5:8)	The Persecuted (5:10-12)	
THE TASKS OF DISCIPLESHIP (5:13-16)				
Salt (5:13)		Light (5:14-16)		
THE LAW (5:17-48)				
The Permanence of the Law (5:17-20)		The Meaning of the law (5:21-48)		
Murder and Anger (5:21-26)	Adultery and Lust (5:27-30)	Divorce and Remarriage (5:31-32)	Oaths and Truth (5:33-37)	Retaliation and Love (5:38-48)
RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES (6:1-18)				
Invocation: Our Father (6:9)	Petitions to God: Name, Kingdom, Will (6:9-10)		Petitions of Need: Bread, Forgiveness, Temptation, Deliverance (6:11-13)	
MATERIAL POSSESSIONS (6:19-34)				
ATTITUDES TOWARDS OTHERS AND GOD (7:1-12)				
Others (7:1-6)	God (7:7-11)		The Golden Rule (7:12)	
THE DEMANDS OF THE KINGDOM (7:13-29)				
Narrow Gate/Way (7:13-14)	Good Works (7:15-23)	Wise/Foolish Builders (7:24-27)	Conclusion (7:28-29)	

2. THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Matthew 5:1 — 7:29

ASSIGNMENTS			
The Beatitudes and Salt and Light (5:1-16)	The Law and Jesus (5:17-48)	Observances and Possessions (6:1-34)	Attitudes and Demands (7:1-29)

INTRODUCTION (5:1-2)

Technically what follows is not taken from one sermon; rather, it represents the teachings of Jesus taken from many sermons or teaching situations. Jesus traditionally retreated into the mountains in order to escape the crowds. This seems to be the case here. He did not go into a mountain to gain a better vantage point, but to withdraw from the crowds. He sat down, as was the custom of Jewish teachers, and he shared with his disciples his vision of the Kingdom of God. Matthew's version is an extension of what we find in the Gospel of Luke, where the sermon is on the plain to a great crowd.

THE BEATITUDES (5:3-12)

The first major section is called the Beatitudes, which are eight descriptions of that which brings happiness or blessedness.

The Poor in Spirit (5:3)

The poor in Spirit are not those who are spiritually weak, but those who, like the Psalmist (Psalm 34), does not live out of his own resources, but relies upon God alone. Poverty of Spirit is best described as humility (Isaiah 66:2).

Those Who Mourn (5:4)

Those who mourn are not simply grieving over the loss of a loved one, but bewail the present state of affairs in the world. They long for the coming of the Kingdom of God, in which they will find their comfort.

The Meek (5:5)

Both Moses (Numbers 12:3) and Jesus have been described as meek, and so *meekness* cannot be equated with *weakness*. It would be better to say that the meek are *gentle*. This beatitude is not new with Jesus, but was already described in Psalm 37:11.

The Righteous (5:6)

The emphasis is clearly on those who hunger and thirst for (seek) righteousness. Matthew 6:33 confirms this and places it at the center of the Christian life.

The Merciful (5:7)

Mercy is only available to those who express mercy, and those who express it find that mercy blesses those who express it and those who receive it. No one has expressed this double joy that is experienced by the merciful like Shakspeare in *The Merchant of Venice*, Act 4, Scene 1:

The quality of mercy is not strain'd,
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath: it is twice blest;
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes.

Though justice be thy plea, consider this,
That in the course of justice none of us
Should see salvation. We do pray for mercy
And that same prayer doth teach us all to render
the deeds of mercy.

The Pure in Heart (5:8)

Purity of heart means “single-minded.” Those who seek God with all their hearts are pure in heart. They shall not be disappointed. They shall see him.

The Peacemakers (5:9)

It is not that peacemakers become the children of God, but that the children of God are quite naturally peacemakers. To be the children of God is to be involved in what God is doing and God is involved in peacemaking.

Unfortunately the English language lacks an adequate word for peace. Biblical peace is more than the absence of conflict. It has to do with harmony and wellbeing. This is why so many people use the Hebrew word *Shalom* to talk about the Biblical concept of peace.

The Persecuted (5:10-12)

Persecution is not a sign of God's disfavor, but a sign that his people are walking in the shoes of the prophets. They have reason to rejoice, even though they do not seek persecution.

The above beatitudes are not moral laws, but eschatological promises. At the same time that they are promises about God's coming Kingdom, they are also instructions on how to live the Christian life now. The first two beatitudes describe those who met the conditions for spiritual perception. Beatitudes three through seven describe the characteristics of the Christian life, and the final beatitude warns that persecution may be the consequences of living out these beatitudes in the world.

THE TASKS OF DISCIPLESHIP (5:13-16)

Israel had been given the task of being a Light to the Nations. Christians, as the New Israel, are to fulfill this ancient covenant (Isaiah 42:6 and 49:6). In addition to the image of light, salt is used. Not to fulfill this task is to act foolishly against God and one's own interests. Salt and Light exist to be used, and when they are not used, they are worthless.

THE PERMANENCE OF THE LAW (5:17-20)

The Law (the first five books of the Old Testament) was made clear in the prophets and fulfilled in Christ. God's purpose was not to do away with the Law, but to make it clear and fulfill it through Love. There is no relaxation in the fulfillment of the Law. God's children are to surpass the Scribes and Pharisees in their zeal for fulfilling the Law. This will not be done by obeying the *letter* of the Law. It can only be done by living according to the *spirit* of the Law.

THE MEANING OF THE LAW (5:21-48)

Five statements illustrate the meaning of the Law. They give the Law an inward and spiritual dimension, which was precisely what Jeremiah predicted for the New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34).

Murder and Anger (5:21-26)

The Law regulates murder, but God is concerned with anger. The intent of the Law (Exodus 20:13 and Deuteronomy 5:17) against murder is fulfilled only as we learn how to deal constructively with anger. Both God and Jesus expressed anger, and we, being made in the divine image, will express anger too. Anger must never focus on hurting other persons. We can constrain people without intentionally hurting them. This Law is fulfilled when we make friends with our adversaries.

Adultery and Lust (5:27-30)

The Law regulates adultery, but God is concerned about lust. The intent of the Law against adultery (Exodus 20:14 & Deuteronomy 5:18) is fulfilled only as we learn how to deal with lust. Lust may be present, but that is no reason to give in to it. We fulfill this Law by not allowing it to dominate us. Human relationships are more important than our getting what we lust after.

Divorce, Remarriage, and Faithfulness (5:31-32)

The Law permits divorce, but God is concerned with faithfulness. Matthew's comment is less radical than Mark's (Mark 10:2-9), but Mark gives the divine purpose for marriage, which is that "two shall become one flesh." Matthew deals with this later (Matthew 19:3-9).

Some scholars think that Matthew permits divorce and remarriage when one party has committed adultery, but the Law also called for the stoning of the guilty party, in which case divorce would not be necessary. Jesus does not seem to allow for divorce under any circumstances, and he suggests that remarriage involves other people in the adulterous relationship.

Swearing Oaths, and the Truth (5:33-37)

The Law demands binding oaths, but God is concerned with truthfulness. In the ninth commandment (Exodus 20:16), we are always to speak the truth when bearing witness. *Swearing* and *oaths* should not be necessary among God's people. We do not need to add to the force of our words by appeal to God or anything God has created. James 5:12 makes clear that our words, without the need for *swearing* and *oaths*, are committed to *truth* and can be trusted.

Retaliation and Love (5:38-48)

The Law permits revenge, but God seeks a people who will love their enemies. The ancient Law requiring an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth (Exodus 21:23-25) was actually an improvement over the tribal law that existed previously. According to tribal law a single offense permitted the wholesale destruction of the offending tribe; but this new law limited retaliation to getting even. The two examples concerning the right cheek and the cloak both have to do with exceptions to what was expected. The blow on the right cheek was considered an insult, and to give up the cloak was to give up the more expensive garment, which served as protection against the elements and was used as bedding for the night.

While many may agree that the individual should encounter evil with grace, there is much disagreement when it comes to discussing how the State should confront evil. What must be remembered is that we are not talking about nonresistance as the fulfillment of

the Law, but Love. Love is not to be equated with nonresistance, nor is love to be divorced from force.

The way to fulfill the Law—any law—is through love. This involves the performance of a positive good in the face of evil. It is to do the unexpected. Evil is to be overcome by Grace. This is the reversal of the old pattern that suggested love for the friend and hatred for the enemy. Most Jewish scholars note that the Old Testament does not command hatred of the enemy. Some of the Psalmists do call upon God to bring judgment down upon Israel's enemies, but the Old Testament contains no direct command to hate them. Such an appeal has turned up in the Dead Sea Scrolls, however; and so it may well be this tradition to which Jesus is referring. God's way of love is to become the standard.

The final call to perfection could be a call to maturity and completeness, or it could connote peace and wholeness. If it is the latter, then we are all called to share in God's reconciling work (2 Corinthians 5:18-19). To be perfect is to confront evil with mercy. In the end Jesus is not against the Law. He is only against the rabbinic interpretation of it, which has not gone far enough. When it is carried out to its proper end, the Law is fulfilled through the power of Love. Hence Jesus is calling his people to make the shift from the love of power to the power of love. We are being called to the high ideal of perfect love.

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES (6:1-18)

While the latter part of chapter five dealt with how the New Kingdom compares with the teaching of the scribes, the beginning of chapter six contrasts the New Kingdom with the teaching of the Pharisees. The main point is that what really counts is the motive, whether we are talking about the commandments (the Law) or religious observances. To give (alms), to pray, and to fast must all be done without drawing attention to ourselves. These were the three pillars of Jewish religious observance, which carry over into the New Kingdom with a new interpretation.

We are most familiar with the Lord's Prayer, which contains seven petitions. The first three have to do with God's name, God's Kingdom, and God's Will. The final four have to do with human needs, such as daily bread, forgiveness, temptation, and deliverance from evil.

1. The Opening Invocation. (6:9) "Our Father..."
2. The Three Petitions to God. (6:9-10)
 - a. Hallowed be your name
 - b. Your Kingdom Come
 - c. Your will be done

3. The Four Petitions for Human Need. (6:11-13)
 - a. Daily Bread
 - b. Forgiveness
 - c. Temptation
 - d. Deliverance from the evil one

4. The Doxology. This was not part of the original text. It was something the early church used in worship. The emphasis was on the coming of God's Kingdom. It does date back, however, to ancient times and was already used in the *Didache*.² Phrases of the Doxology were probably taken from 1 Chronicles 29:11-13 and 1 Esdras 4:40. A briefer formula can be found in 2 Timothy 4:18.

The only petition that is difficult to understand is the one asking for deliverance from temptation. The word *temptation* could be translated "tribulation." It is a petition asking God for strength in the time of persecution and tribulation, which will come just prior to the end of history. The Lord's Prayer looks towards God's future Kingdom, and for this reason, we call it an eschatological prayer.

MATERIAL POSSESSIONS (6:19-34)

What follows is a collection of the sayings of Jesus that call his disciples away from anxiety over money and possessions, and common everyday needs, such as food, drink, and clothing.

The passage about light (6:22-23) does not seem to fit. Perhaps it was placed in the midst of these teachings to illustrate what disciples, who were set free from such anxieties, would be like. They would be light in the darkness. The Gospel of Thomas, found in 1945, helps to make clear the intent. "Within a man of light there is light and he lights the whole world. When he does not shine, there is darkness." Those who seek the Kingdom of God first in their lives (6:33) are set free of all these anxieties, and they are light, which illuminates the whole world.

Two other confusing words used in older translations are *mammon* (6:24) and *cubit* (6:27) which in the newer translations are rendered *wealth* or *money* and *a single hour*. Since a cubit refers to the distance between one's elbow and the tip of one's finger, it hardly makes any sense to talk about adding a cubit to one's life, but it does make sense to talk about adding a cubit to one's property, just as it makes sense to talk about adding a day to one's life. The newer translations focus on the latter, thinking that this would be easier for us to understand today.

² The *Didache* dates back to the second century. See Henry Bettenson, *Documents of the Early Church* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), pp. 90-93.

ATTITUDES TOWARDS OTHERS AND GOD (7:1-12)

Towards Others (7:1-6)

We are not to judge others. The reason is because we cannot see clearly enough, and so judgment belongs to God alone. Any attempt to judge others will turn in on ourselves. This will become obvious to us as we take the log out of our own eye. Instead of enabling us to judge, this act will render us unwilling to pass judgment.

The reference to dogs and pigs in verse six has to do with the receptivity of Gentiles, and not, as the early church supposed, sinners. The early church used this verse to withhold the Lord's Supper from those it judged as unworthy. The point being made here is that timing is important. We must deal with others according to their capacity to receive our message. Holy things cannot be forced on people.

Towards God (7:7-11)

We are to pray constantly. God is more ready to answer our prayers than we are to pray. This does not mean that he will fulfill every request, but he will indeed answer every prayer. We do not always know what is best for us, but he does and answers our prayers accordingly. We should never give up praying.

The Golden Rule (7:12)

Our attitude towards others and God should be controlled by the Golden Rule. This was not new. The Golden Rule had been known within Judaism, and many other religions, such as Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism, for centuries. It was even present in Greek and Roman moral teachings, but Jesus gave it new depth when he made a positive command out of it. Other versions of the Golden Rule had always been put into a negative form.

While Jesus saw the Golden Rule as the fulfillment of the Law and Prophets, it can also be seen as a general rule for behavior or as practical advice on how to succeed in the world.

THE DEMANDS OF THE KINGDOM (7:13-29)

The Narrow Gate and Way (7:13-14)

There are two gates and two ways. The gate that leads into God's Kingdom is narrow, and only a few will choose it. The gate that leads away from God's Kingdom is broad, and many will choose it. The former is unpopular and hard; while, the latter is popular and easy. The Kingdom of God demands the restricted gate and the road less traveled, but only a minority will choose them.

In teaching about the Narrow Gate and Way, Jesus is simply drawing upon some Old Testament images found in Deuteronomy 11:26-29, Joshua 24:15, and Jeremiah 21:8. Jesus' description of the two ways makes clear to us that he is in no way trying to avoid the strictness of the Law and the Prophets. In fact the Sermon on the Mount reminds us of how much more difficult it is to follow Jesus compared to Moses.

The Necessity of Good Works (7:15-23)

Since false prophets (wolves) appear in sheep's clothing (confessing Jesus as Lord), they represent a very real danger. How does one recognize them? As a tree bears good fruit, true disciples bear good works. They do the will of their heavenly Father, and will be known by their good fruit.

None of this means that we save ourselves by our good works. This passage is not a rejection of Justification by Faith; rather, it affirms the necessary fruit of faith. Faith produces the fruit of good works, or it is not authentic faith. To call Jesus Lord is to submit to his reign.

The Wise and Foolish Builders (7:24-27)

This is a final warning to take the narrow gate leading to the way of life and to bear the good fruit of works in harmony with the Kingdom of God. All this will adequately prepare us for the final judgment and establishment of God's Kingdom. To go through the wide gate, taking the popular way, and bearing evil fruit, inconsistent with the Kingdom, leads to judgment and destruction.

This is a typical eschatological parable, reminding us of the consequences of our decisions. If we take the wrong way, or build on the wrong foundation, all that we can expect is the collapse of our lives and society. Faith causes us to take the right way and build on the right foundation. This means that faith is both a decision and a gift. The decision is based on a revelation from God. We do not dream up the wisdom that is expressed in this eschatological parable, but we must respond to it.

Conclusion (7:28-29)

The Sermon on the Mount ends with the phrase: "Now when Jesus had finished saying these things..." The next four collections of Jesus' teachings will end as does Matthew 7:28. (See 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; and 26:1) This ending adds impact to Jesus' authority. What is unique about Jesus is that he did not have to appeal to other authorities. His person and words rang with authority within themselves, and this astounded the crowds.

What might be puzzling here is the mere mention of the crowds. The Sermon on the Mount began with Jesus instructing his disciples. Nothing is said about any crowd until here at the end. Did the crowds find him and join in, or is Matthew simply suggesting that what was true for the disciples, is true for everyone who would follow Jesus. Certainly

these teachings were spread to the crowds, who then responded to them with astonishment.

THE SPIRIT OF THE LAW

When I was in college I had a New Testament professor who memorized the entire Sermon on the Mount. He was frequently asked to say it from memory before youth groups. The settings were either in camps or on lakeshores. I remember one in which he delivered the entire Sermon on the Mount from inside a rowboat. It was moving because he also lived what he memorized.

You see, memorizing Scripture, even the entire Sermon on the Mount is not enough. In Matthew 7:21, Jesus warns: “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.”

Jesus reinterpreted the Law and the Commandments to help us better understand them and put them into practice. He does not want us to merely obey the letter of the Law. That is why he challenges us to obey the Spirit of the Law. It is not enough to keep from murdering someone; we must also control our anger. It is not enough to keep from committing adultery; we must also control our lust. Jesus does not make obeying the commandments easier; in fact, He makes them harder than ever, for he expects us to obey their very spirit, their original intent; and that is to love our neighbor as we love ourselves, indeed, even as God has loved us in Christ. Such love reaches out even to the enemy.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus describes the character of the citizens of God’s Kingdom, and invites us to build our lives on the solid foundation of His teachings. To do anything else is like building on the sand. As soon as the rains fall, the floods come, and the winds blow, our foundation collapses. If however we aim at obeying the spirit of the Commandments, then we are building our lives on the solid rock, and the foundation of our lives will stand firm.



3. Missions

Matthew 8:1—11:1

3. MISSIONS (Matthew 8:1 – 11:1)			
THE AUTHORITY OF JESUS' MINISTRY (8:1 – 9:38)			
The Leper (8:1-4)	The Storm (Nature) (8:23-27)	Jairus' Daughter (9:18-26)	
The Centurion's Servant (8:5-13)	Two Demoniacs (Evil) (8:28-34)	Woman with a Hemorrhage (9:20-22)	
Peter's Mother-in-Law (8:14-17)	The Paralyzed Man (Sin) (9:1-8)	Two Blind Men (9:27-31)	
The Would-Be Disciples (8:18-22)	The Call of Matthew (9:9-13)	The Mute Demoniac (9:32-34)	
	Fasting or Feasting? (9:14-17)	Summary (9:35-38)	
MISSIONARY INSTRUCTIONS (10:1 – 11:1)			
Commissioning the Twelve (10:1-4)		The Mission of the Twelve (10:5-15)	
Simon Peter Andrew James Son of Zebedee John Son of Zebedee Philip Bartholomew	Thomas Matthew [Levi] James Son of Alphaeus Thadaeus [Lebbaeus] Simon the Cananaean Judas Iscariot	Nearness of The Kingdom (10:7)	Heal the Sick Raise the Dead Cleanse Lepers Cast out Demons (10:8)
The Perils Involved in Missions (10:16 – 11:1)			
The Need for Wisdom (10:16)	The End is Coming (10:23)	Confess Christ before Others (10:32-33)	
Promise of the Holy Spirit (10:19)	Do not fear Death (10:28)	Confess Christ before Family (10:34-37)	
The Invitation to Take up the Cross (10:38-39)			

3. MISSIONS

Matthew 8:1—11:1

ASSIGNMENTS				
3 Healings (8:1-22)	3 Healings (8:23—9:17)	5 Healings (9:18-38)	The Twelve (10:1-15)	The Perils (10:16—11:1)

THE AUTHORITY OF JESUS' MINISTRY (8:1—9:38)

Matthew minimizes the details of the following stories about Jesus and maximizes the emphasis on the authority of Jesus. As Moses performed ten miracles, Jesus does too.

The Leper (8:1-4)

Although we cannot be certain as to what leprosy really was, we do know that lepers were considered unclean and untouchable. When Jesus healed the leper, he reached out and touched him. Since the leper asked to be made clean, Jesus advised him to show himself to the priest, who would deal with him according to the Law of Moses (Leviticus 13-14). It was absolutely necessary to be declared ceremonially clean by the priest. Without the ritual cleansing, the man would still have been ceremonial unclean; and Jesus for having touched him, would be ceremonially unclean as well.

The Centurion's Servant (8:5-13)

A centurion was a minor officer, who exercised leadership over one hundred infantry in the Roman Army. Although he was Roman (a Gentile), he addressed Jesus as *Lord*, and asked him to heal his servant. Jesus was willing to go with him, but he saw Jesus' actual presence as unnecessary. Jesus admired such faith and compared it to the faith of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. With the authority of his Word, Jesus healed the Roman officer's servant.

Two very interesting issues arise in this story. The first is the centurion's comment in Matthew 8:8 that he was not worthy to have Jesus come under his roof. To enter a Gentile's home would have, according to the Law, defiled Jesus. The centurion knew this, appreciated Jesus' offer, but told him that it was unnecessary. All Jesus would have to do is say the word and his servant would be healed. Jesus interpreted this as faith greater than he found among the Jews. The second issue is Jesus' comment concerning the fate of unbelieving Jews. He suggests in Matthew 8:12 that they will be thrown into outer

darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Even as heirs of the kingdom, they have no assurance of entering it apart from faith. Faith is necessary for Jew and Gentile alike.

Peter's Mother-in-Law (8:14-17)

Jesus took her by the hand and healed her. Many others came for healing, and he healed them with the authority of his Word. They were healed of physical, psychological, and spiritual illnesses. According to Matthew 8:17, all this was the fulfillment of Isaiah 53:4.

The Would-be Disciples (8:18-22)

When would-be disciples approached Jesus concerning following him, he called for an immediate response. Discipleship was so urgent that they had to give priority to it over home and family obligations.

Jesus' reference to himself in Matthew 8:20, as the *Son of Man* points beyond his mere humanity (Daniel 7:13-14). He has the authority to call people away from their homes and family obligations.

The man's father was not yet dead. He just wanted to be excused until after his father's death so that he would be free of family obligations. Jesus was not willing to excuse him. Discipleship demands commitment beyond all other obligations, including family responsibilities.

Jesus Calms a Storm (8:23-27)

The ability to calm a storm emphasized Jesus' authority and power over nature. Although Jesus accused his disciples of having little faith, they immediately recognized Jesus' authority and power.

Two Men with Demons (8:28-34)

Even demons recognized Jesus' authority, and begged for mercy. These two men would not have been Jews. This explains why the citizens of Gadara chased Jesus off. With the demise of their pigs they faced an economic loss. This was more important to them than the exorcisms that had just taken place. The loss of the pigs, however, would not have been considered much of a loss to the Jews.

A Paralyzed Man (9:1-8)

Jesus healed a man of a physical ailment with spiritual authority when he healed a paralyzed man by forgiving him of his sins. Some saw this as blasphemy; others stood in awe at the authority they saw in Jesus. Jews did believe in forgiving one another, but Jesus was forgiving as if he were God. This could be nothing but blasphemy; and

according to Matthew 26:65, blasphemy was one of the charges made against him at his trial.

In referring to himself as the *Son of Man*, Jesus used a Messianic title to indicate his authority. This further infuriated the Scribes, who were not ready to acknowledge him as the Messiah.

The Call of Matthew (9:9-13)

The Gospels of Mark and Luke call this man *Levi*. Could *Matthew* be his Christian name? The name *Matthew* means “Gift of the Lord.” In going home to have dinner with Matthew, Jesus created a scene. To eat a meal with someone was considered the most intimate kind of personal contact, and good Jews were to eat with the right kind of people. Since Matthew was known as a tax collector, he would not have made good company at the meal table.

Tax collectors would have been considered unclean for two reasons: (1) as traitors and (2) as extortioners. They were Jews, but forced to collect taxes for Rome; hence, their fellow Jews despised them. In defense of his eating with Matthew, Jesus quoted Hosea 6:6, and suggests that he did not come to save the righteous, but sinners. Moving among the outcasts was part of his divine mission.

Fasting or Feasting? (9:14-17)

When questioned as to why he feasted while John fasted, Jesus indicated that the time of fasting would come. This was an indirect reference to his impending death. For the time being, however, it was a time for feasting. The Kingdom had been inaugurated in him, and that called for celebration.

Two parables illustrate conflict between the Old and New Kingdoms. A new patch could not be put on an old garment, nor could new wine be poured into old wineskins. Something new has come, and the old is no longer adequate. God is doing a new thing, and the old Jewish customs will be shattered, as the new breaks forth.

Jairus' Daughter (9:18-26)

Jairus, not named here, was the leader of a synagogue. His daughter was as good as dead when he sought help from Jesus. As Jesus drew near to her, news reached him that she had already died. His reply was that she was only sleeping. Everyone laughed. This indicates how strongly they believed that she had died. When Jesus raised her, up, everyone marveled at his authority and power.

There is a lot of discussion over whether or not Jairus' daughter really died, or was merely sleeping. What must be understood here is that *sleep* is frequently used in both the Old and New Testaments as a metaphor for death. Whether this girl was in a coma or dead makes little difference. The point being made in all of these stories is that sin and

death no longer have power over us. Jesus has the authority to overcome these old powers as he establishes a new realm or Kingdom.

A Woman with a Hemorrhage (9:20-22)

While Jesus was making his way to help Jairus, a woman interrupted him, who had been ill for twelve years. She felt that if she could only touch the fringe of his garment, she would be healed. Jesus told her that it was not her touch, but her faith that healed her.

Two Blind Men (9:27-31)

This story is very similar to the healing of Bartimaeus in Jericho. The two men are healed of their blindness with the *touch* of Jesus and their own *faith*. Although they are told not to tell anyone, they cannot help but tell everyone.

Why did Jesus not want the story told? He probably wanted to avoid giving people the wrong impression about the essence of his mission, which was to proclaim the Kingdom of God, not simply to heal people and perform miracles.

The Mute Demoniac (9:32-34)

When Jesus cast out the demon enabling this man to speak, the crowds were amazed; but the Pharisees accused him of being possessed himself.

The stories of casting out demons were especially powerful in all Jewish literature, which concerned itself with the coming of the Messiah and the establishment of the Kingdom of God.

Summary (9:35-38)

Jesus greatly influenced the crowds in all the cities and villages of Galilee, where he proclaimed his message, taught the people in the synagogues, and healed the sick. He fully expected his disciples to continue his work, for the people badly needed leaders, and the laborers were few. Faith can only flourish and live in a community where people are led and compassionate. These healings were successful for two reasons: the compassion of Jesus and the faith of the afflicted, or their friends.

All of the above stories point to Jesus' power and authority, which he exercised over physical disease, psychological disorders, sin, and nature itself. Matthew was trying to link Jesus up with the Jewish expectation of the Messiah, and the Kingdom, which he was inaugurating.

MISSIONARY INSTRUCTIONS (10:1—11:1)

Commissioning the Twelve (10:1-4)

Twelve apostles are commissioned. The number twelve was no accident. There were twelve tribes in the past, and according to Matthew 19:28, they anticipated twelve judges in the last day. The term *apostle* meant “one commissioned by the King to fulfill a mission in his name and with his authority.” The term was probably not used prior to the resurrection, and then it referred primarily to eyewitnesses of the resurrection, although it was not restricted to them. The lists of the twelve vary, but Matthew’s is as follows:

- | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Simon [Peter] | 7. Thomas |
| 2. Andrew | 8. Matthew [Levi] |
| 3. James [Son of Zebedee] | 9. James [Son of Alphaeus] |
| 4. John [Son of Zebedee] | 10. Thadaeus [Lebbaeus] |
| 5. Philip | 11. Simon [the Cananaean] |
| 6. Bartholomew | 12. Judas [Iscaiot] |

There is some confusion in this passage over the terms *apostle* and *disciple*. The twelve were not generally called *apostles* until after the resurrection. At this point in time it would be more correct to refer to them as *disciples*. The term *disciple* has the connotation of a learner or follower; whereas, an apostle connotes one who is sent on a mission. While the twelve are indeed sent on a mission, they are still learning what that mission is. They are apprentices to Jesus; and during their apprenticeship, their mission will be limited.

The Mission of the Twelve (10:5-15)

The twelve were to go first to the Jews (10:5) and were warned not to go to the Samaritans and Gentiles. According to Matthew 15:24, Jesus saw the mission to the lost sheep of Israel, the disobedient Jews, as being primary. He did recognize and commend the faith he found among Samaritans and Gentiles, but the mission to them had to wait until the time was right. In Matthew 28:19, following his resurrection, the time was right.

The twelve were to announce the nearness of the Kingdom of God as their primary message (10:7), which was the same as the message of John the Baptist and Jesus, and they were to perform the same signs (10:8) of that inbreaking Kingdom, which consisted of (1) healing the sick, (2) raising the dead, (3) cleansing lepers, and (4) casting out demons.

They had to travel light, and to this extent they became the models for the first circuit riders, even though they used no horses. They took no baggage, no money, and were expected to survive on the generosity of those who would receive their message. They were to go directly to those who were *worthy*, which means *receptive to them*. While they were to extend freedom to others to accept or reject both them and their Lord, they were

also to recognize the seriousness of such rejection. Rejection would carry the same consequence as it did for the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, in Abraham's time.

When they encountered such rejection, they were to shake the dust off their feet. This idea came from the Jewish practice of shaking the dust off their feet whenever they returned home from traveling through Gentile lands. They did not want to defile their native land with dust from pagan lands. Houses where they were not received were to be considered heathen and unclean. God's people would certainly have responded to God's message, and those who did not, could only be considered heathen.

The Perils Involved in Missions (10:16—11:1)

What follows is a series of teachings concerning the perils of missionary work. Persecution will inevitably follow, but God will enable his missionaries to speak with the help of the Spirit (10:19-20). These verses were designed to encourage God's missionaries. They were never intended to give excuses to pastors to preach without adequate preparation.

A particularly troublesome verse has to do with Jesus' promise that the Son of Man (the Messiah) would come before they had finished fulfilling his mission. Albert Schweitzer concluded that Jesus was mistaken. Some have suggested that this verse is not an authentic saying of Jesus, but others have felt that this prediction had to be fulfilled in some unknown manner. If the latter is the case, it might be a reference to the resurrection of Jesus or the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. The primary point Jesus is making however is that his disciples will also have to suffer (10:24-25). The obligation is to proclaim the Kingdom of God (10:17), and all who confess Jesus will be accepted and those who deny him will be rejected (10:32-33).

Responses to Christ will even divide the family, which was the center of Jewish faith and life. While Christians must obey the commandment, which requires them "to honor their father and mother," they must first honor their "heavenly father." Primary allegiance goes to God.

CONTINUING THE TASK

Jesus proclaimed the coming of God's Kingdom, and even though, according to Matthew 10:7, Jesus commissioned his disciples to continue that proclamation, they soon began proclaiming Him. I have often wondered: *Have we changed his message?*

Not only did Jesus teach that the Kingdom was coming, but he also taught that it had already begun where certain signs and wonders were being performed. As Moses and Aaron performed ten signs and wonders before the Pharaoh, Jesus performed similar signs and wonders at the beginning of his ministry. Ten of those signs and wonders are described in Matthew 8:1—9:38. They have to do with healing the sick, calming the storm, casting out demons, and forgiving sin. Jesus instructed his followers to perform these same signs and wonders as they continued the task of his Kingdom.

Dr. Harrell Beck illustrated how this can happen in his Bible Study at the Centennial Conference of World Methodism in Hawaii with a moving story from the life of Giacomo Puccini. When Puccini was stricken with cancer in 1922, he said, "I want to write one more opera." So, when he sat down and began to write *Turandot*, his students asked, "But suppose you die?" "Oh," replied Puccini, "my disciples will finish it. Never care." In 1924 he died without finishing his music.

The premier performance of *Turandot* was held in Milan, Italy, at La Scala Opera House, under the baton of Puccini's best student, Arturo Toscanini. The performance proceeded to the point in the music where the composer had laid down his pen. At that precise moment, Toscanini laid down his baton, with tears streaming down his face, and said, "Thus far, the master wrote...and then the master died." Picking up his baton, with a radiant smile on Toscanini's face, he shouted out to the audience, "But his disciples finished his music."

We may not finish our Master's music, but we will continue to play it. The task has been turned over to us.



4. The Proclamation of the Kingdom

Matthew 11:2—13:51

4. THE PROCLAMATION (KERYGMA) OF THE KINGDOM (11:2—13:52)

THE KINGDOM IS COMING (11:2—12:50)						
The Messengers from John (11:2-19)		The Rejection of the Signs (11:20-24)			The Acceptance of the Signs (11:25-30)	
		Chorazin	Bethsaida	Capernaum		
The Lord of the Sabbath (12:1-14)		The Source of Power (12:15-37)			The Request for a Sign (12:38-50)	
THE PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM (13:1-52)						
The Meaning of Parables (13:1-3a, 10-17, 34-35, 51-52)						
The Seed and the Soil (13:3-9, 18-23)						
The Seed is The Word of God			Four Kinds of Soil (Disciples)			
Encouragement	Fruitfulness		The Path: Casual Disciple Rocky Soil: Shallow Disciple Thorny Soil: Worldly Disciple Good Soil: Responsive Disciple			
The Wheat and the Weeds (13:24-30, 36-43)		The Mustard Seed (13:31-32)		The Leaven (13:33)		
Christians must live in the world <i>Paradox of the Kingdom</i>		The beginning is insignificant The end is fantastic <i>Significance of the Kingdom</i>		The Kingdom fills our lives with Purpose and Meaning <i>Quality of the Kingdom</i>		
The Treasure in the Field (13:44)		The Pearl of Great Value (13:45-46)		The Fisherman's Net (13:47-50)		
The Kingdom has a hidden attraction <i>Value of the Kingdom</i>		The Kingdom is worth more than all our possessions <i>Value of the Kingdom</i>		The Separation of the righteous/unrighteous <i>Establishment of the Kingdom</i>		

4. THE PROCLAMATION (KERYGMA) OF THE KINGDOM

Matthew 11:2—13:52

ASSIGNMENTS				
The Request for the Messianic Signs (11:2-30)	The Lord of the Sabbath (12:1-50)	The Meaning of Parables (13:1-3a, 10-17, 34-35, 51-52)	Two Allegories (13:3-9, 18-23; 13:24-30, 36-43)	Five Parables (13:31-32; 13:33; 13:44; 13:45-46; 13:47-50)

THE KINGDOM IS COMING (11:2—12:50)

The Messengers from John (11:2-19)

After John was imprisoned by Herod Antipas, (the younger son of Herod the Great), he sent some of his own disciples to ask Jesus if he really was the Messiah. He seems to have had doubts about Jesus, doubts which were prompted by a different understanding of what the Messiah was supposed to do. Jesus did not fit into the *judgmental* role that John expected. John was the last of the Old Testament type prophets, a kind of latter-day Elijah. In fact Malachi 3:1 and 4:5 predict such a person, not as a literal return of Elijah, but as a prophet like Elijah. Jesus saw John as more than a prophet, one who prepared the way for his own coming; and yet, the least in the Kingdom of God will be greater than John (11:11). This was not a criticism of John the Baptist, but a way of stressing the radical character of the Kingdom of God.

Jesus had a high regard for John, but John still represents a different generation. He answers John's disciples by giving them a list of the signs of the Kingdom, which were: (1) the blind see, (2) the lame walk, (3) the leper is cleansed, (4) the deaf hear, (5) the dead are raised, and (6) the poor vindicated. The old expectation was that the Kingdom would be taken by violence and force, but Jesus proclaims its establishment by justice and love. Therefore a warning is necessary. Jesus advises caution so that they would not be led astray. John's response of fasting was fitting, but so was Jesus' response of feasting. The old has passed, and the new has begun.

The Rejection of the Signs (11:20-24)

One would expect signs to convince people, but three cities were not convinced. Had the pagan cities of Tyre and Sidon seen the signs that Jesus performed in Chorazin and

Bethsaida, they would have repented and believed. Had Sodom seen the signs and miracles performed in Capernaum, Jesus' headquarters, even the people of that wicked city would have repented and believed. Rejection of the signs and Jesus as the Messiah could only result in the inevitable judgment of God.

The Acceptance of the Signs (11:25-30)

Not everyone rejected the signs of the Kingdom. Three brief subsections point to the fact that humble and ordinary people did observe the signs and accept Jesus and his Kingdom.

Verses 27-28 seem out of place. They have more of the flavor of the Gospel of John than of Matthew, but they too deal with the acceptance of the Messiah.

The promise to those who accept is a yoke. Although the teachings of Jesus were more demanding than the teachings of Moses, the promises he made were more rewarding, and he offered to be yoked to the believer to lighten the load.

The Lord of the Sabbath (12:1-14)

Jesus violated the Sabbath Law by picking and eating grain and by healing a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath. Although the Sabbath was the most sacred and distinctive of all Jewish institutions, the Rabbis did permit its violation in life-threatening emergencies. The difficulty with the two Sabbath violations in this chapter is that they were not emergencies. Jesus' disciples were not starving to death, and the man with a withered hand could have waited until the next day.

The point being made by Jesus is that compassion is more important than legalism, and if David could get away with eating the sacred bread in the Temple (1 Samuel 21:1-6), surely the Messiah (Jesus himself), could pick and eat some grain on the Sabbath. After all, he is greater than the temple, and he is the Lord of the Sabbath. The Pharisees would have considered both of these claims to be the ultimate blasphemy.

The Source of Power (12:15-37)

Jesus continued to heal people, and following the healing of a demoniac (blind and mute man), the Pharisees accused him of success because of his relationship with the prince of demons (Beelzebul); but Jesus denied it and proceeded to demonstrate how impossible that might be. A Kingdom divided against itself, he claimed in Matthew 12:25, cannot stand. Good trees bear good fruit, and bad trees bear bad fruit. To confuse this connection, he claims in Matthew 12:31-32, is to commit the unforgivable sin against the Holy Spirit, which is open rebellion against God and a refusal to recognize his activity in the world. It is to call evil good and good evil.

Many have agonized over what the unforgivable sin is. It has nothing to do with God's unwillingness to forgive. God wants to forgive. It has to do with our so confusing good

and evil that we no longer ask God to forgive us. This makes us incapable of receiving the forgiveness that is offered.

The Request for a Sign (12:38-50)

When the Scribes and Pharisees asked for a sign, Jesus told them that such a request was in itself evil. Signs neither create nor nurture faith. The only sign that would be given was that of Jonah, and the heart of that sign was his preaching that led people to repentance. The comparison to Jonah's experience in the belly of the big fish with Jesus' death and resurrection is not the sign. This is only a reference to Jonah's experience in providing the sign, which is further illustrated with the story of the Queen of the South (Sheba), who traveled from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon. We are not to seek signs, but rather, to heed the message. Both the Ninevites and the Queen of the South heeded the message. The heeding of the message defines not only discipleship, but also family relationships. The relationship that counts is not physical, but spiritual and moral. We enter the Kingdom not by seeing signs, but by repenting and turning to God.

In looking back through chapter 12, we find three statements that angered the Pharisees. They are as follows:

“...something greater than the temple is here.” (Matthew 12:6)

“...something greater than Jonah is here!” (Matthew 12:41)

“...something greater than Solomon is here!” (Matthew 12:42)

The above statements would have angered us too. They are claims to divinity. We can only accept them today because Jesus is separated from us by centuries. The Pharisees did not have twenty centuries of theological and historical evaluation of Jesus and his teachings. They had to respond in the moment. Given the same context, we would probably have sided with them.

THE PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM (13:1-52)

Parables (13:1-3a)

Of the five major sections in the Gospel of Matthew, this is the only one told specifically to the crowd. In this chapter Jesus tells seven parables about the Kingdom of God to a crowd at the Gaililean lakeside. The crowd was so large that he had to sit in a boat (13:1-2).

A parable is a story told to make one spiritual or moral truth. It differs from an allegory, where every detail must be analyzed and decoded. In a parable the details are not that important. The early church may have turned these first two parables, the Sower and the Weeds, into allegories. They required something Jesus rarely gave—an interpretation.

The reason for telling parables is confusing. Jesus assures the disciples that they will understand, but unbelievers will not. Parables are not instruments of evangelism, but a

kind of inside language. That most people may hear the story but miss the point is a fulfillment of Isaiah 6:9-10. Another reference to the fulfillment of prophecy is Matthew 13:34-35, where the quotation is taken from Psalm 78:2. Since the author of this Psalm is Asaph, and Asaph according to 1 Chronicles 25:2 was considered to be a prophet, Matthew is not incorrect in quoting him as one of the prophets.

Those who do understand, insists Jesus in Matthew 13:10-17, will repent and become part of the Kingdom. The final imagery of the householder has to do with the disciple's ability to connect the Old Testament tradition with Jesus' new proclamation of the Kingdom of God.

The primary purpose of this third teaching section is to define, or sort out just who the true disciples of the Kingdom of God are.

The Seed and the Soil (13:3b-9) (13:18-23)

That the disciples did not understand this parable is astounding. The seed (the Word of God) is the same, but the various kinds of soil (the hearts of people) are different. The path, the rocky ground, the thorns, and the good soil refer to the various kinds of people who come in contact with the Gospel: the casual, the shallow, the worldly, and the responsive.

The main point of this parable is that the disciple should sow the message of the Kingdom of God with assurance. Not everyone will accept it, but some will. The latter explanation of the parable shifts to the slightly different meaning of the fruitfulness of the good person (soil). One should ignore the questionable farming methods of sowing before plowing, or even before the land has been cleared. These have nothing to do with the main points of the parable, which are encouragement and fruitfulness.

The Wheat and the Weeds (13:24-30) (13:36-43)

This parable follows closely on the heels of the seed and the soil. The disciple is to be encouraged by it to carry on the work of the Kingdom faithfully in spite of how difficult it is to eliminate evil. God allows good and evil to exist together until the close of history; and if that is the case, then the Church will have to do the same.

This does not mean that the Church should not exercise discipline on itself. The field is not the Church, but the world. When the Church does exercise discipline, it should not at the same time judge. The Son of Man will exercise judgment at the end of history. It is not the Church's task.

The Mustard Seed (13:31-32)

Although the beginnings of the Kingdom are small, those beginnings will grow into enormous results. This does not mean that the Kingdom will grow slowly, like seeds grow into trees. Jesus is contrasting the smallness of a seed with the largeness of the tree.

He preached the sudden inbreaking of the Kingdom, and his followers expected it to happen quickly.

The Leaven (13:33)

Working in a hidden way, the Kingdom will penetrate a person's life giving it a new quality.

The Treasure in the Field (13:44)

A true disciple will respond with wholehearted dedication to Jesus' message. Such a person would be willing to give up everything for the privilege of obtaining the treasure (the Kingdom of God). That secrecy is involved is not significant. This is a parable, not an allegory.

The Pearl of Great Value (13:45-46)

In comparing the Kingdom to other claims, the true disciple recognizes how much more the Kingdom of God is worth and is willing to give up those claims to be part of it.

The Fisherman's Net (13:47-52)

This parable has some similarity to the Parable of the Wheat and the Weeds. God and his angels will carry out the final judgment. We do not have to exercise judgment. It is not our task.

There is a natural progression in these seven parables of the Kingdom. One might sum them up as follows: (1) The Seed and the Soil: Individuals respond differently to the Word's invitation. (2) The Wheat and the Weeds: Citizens of the Kingdom live among the people of the world, growing together until God's final harvest or judgment. (3) The Mustard Seed: The Kingdom begins insignificantly, but its greatness will be revealed. (4) The Leaven: The Kingdom penetrates our lives with purpose and meaning. (5) The Treasure in the Field: The Kingdom possesses a hidden attraction. (6) The Pearl of Great Value: The Kingdom demands the abandonment of all other values. (7) The Fisherman's Net: The Kingdom will be fully established with the final separation of the unrighteous from the righteous.

THE INVISIBLE KINGDOM

Even though John had recognized and baptized Jesus as the Messiah (Anointed King), he had difficulty recognizing the inauguration of the Kingdom. One reason is that he found himself in prison. This is why, according to Matthew 11:3, he sent some of his own disciples to ask Jesus, "Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?" Jesus answered the questions in Matthew 11:4-5: "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them."

These signs are no more convincing to us today than they were to the Pharisees and teachers of the Law, who asked Jesus in Matthew 12:38, “Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you.” Perturbed by their inability to recognize the significance of the signs already performed, Jesus replied in Matthew 12:39, “An evil and adulterous generation asks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.” What is the sign of Jonah? I believe that it is the positive response of the people of Nineveh to Jonah’s preaching. The comparison of Jonah’s experience in the belly of the sea monster with Jesus’ crucifixion and death is secondary, even if his resurrection from that experience is the primary sign that he is indeed the Messiah (Anointed King).

The above conversation is followed with a series of parables to illustrate how God’s invisible kingdom operates in the world. Citizens of the world and citizens of the Kingdom live side by side, but everything is moving towards the final establishment of the Kingdom, when the Judgment of God will make the Kingdom visible. The Kingdom may only be the size of a mustard seed, but it will grow into the largest of all trees, and no one will be able to miss its presence.



5. The Church

Matthew 13:53—18:35

5. THE CHURCH (ECCLESIOLOGY) (13:53—18:35)

THE NEW COMMUNITY (13:53—17:27)

The Rejection of Jesus (13:53-58)	The Death of John (14:1-12)	The Feeding of the 5,000 (14:13-21)	Walking on the Water (14:22-36)	The Tradition of the Elders (15:1-20)
A Woman's Daughter (15:21-28)	The Healings (15:29-31)	The Feeding of the 4,000 (15:32-39)	Second Demand for a Sign (16:1-12)	Peter's Profession (16:13-20)
First Prediction of the Cross (16:21-28)	Transfiguration of Jesus (17:1-13)	The Healing of the Epileptic (17:14-21)	Second Prediction of the Cross (17:22-23)	The Temple Tax (17:24-27)

GREATNESS AND RESPONSIBILITY (18:1-35)
A Manual of Church Discipline

True Greatness (18:1-4)	Responsibility to New Disciples (18:5-6)	Personal Temptation (18:7-9)
The Lost Sheep (18:10-14)	Resolving Disputes (18:15-20)	Christian Forgiveness (18:21-35)

5. THE CHURCH (ECCLESIOLOGY)

Matthew 13:53—18:35

ASSIGNMENTS				
Jesus and John (13:53-58) (14:1-12)	Miracles and Healings (14:13-36) (15:21-39) (17:14-21)	Religious and Secular Leaders (15:1-20) (16:1-12) (17:24-27)	Profession, Cross, and Transfiguration (16:13-28) (17:1-13) (17:22-23)	Manual of Church Discipline (18:1-35)

THE NEW COMMUNITY (13:53—17:27)

The Rejection of Jesus (13:53-58)

When Jesus returned home to Nazareth to preach, he was rejected. They perceived him as Joseph’s son, and do not seem to be aware of his virgin birth.

James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas are named as Jesus’ brothers, and reference is made to his sisters. Roman Catholics understand these to be cousins, not siblings. Protestants affirm that Jesus is the eldest of several children. These are the additional children of Mary and Joseph, even though Joseph is presumed dead by this time.

Jesus could not do any great works in Nazareth because of unbelief. This caused him to suggest that a prophet is without honor in the midst of his own family and hometown.

The Death of John (14:1-12)

Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great, murdered John the Baptist. Antipas ruled over Galilee and Perea and although Palestine was under Roman power, Herod Antipas had the authority to deal with local matters. The murder took place in the context of a birthday party for Herod in which Salome (Herodias’ daughter) danced for Herod. Herod promised to do whatever she asked. Herodias encouraged her to ask for the head of John the Baptist. John had been critical of Herodias’ relationship with Philip, Herod Antipas’ half-brother. The basis of John’s criticism comes from the Law in Leviticus 18:16 and 20:21, which forbids a man to marry his brother’s wife. Salome is said to have later married her Uncle Philip. The death of John the Baptist, which took place in the fortress

prison of Machaerus east of the Dead Sea, caused Jesus to withdraw briefly from his public ministry.

The Feeding of Five Thousand (14:13-21)

Although Jesus tried to get away from the crowd, he could not, for the people followed him into the hills (a lonely place). There was no place to purchase provisions, and so Jesus performs the feeding of the five thousand, not including women and children. Since the women and children were not permitted to eat with the men in public, they would have been off in a place by themselves.

The threefold action of taking, blessing, and breaking was the normal action of a Jewish meal; but here, it is related to the Lord's Supper. The point being made is that Jesus is able to supply everyone's needs in abundance. That the details of five barley loaves (bread of the poor) and two fish are given, along with the twelve baskets of leftovers, is indication that we are also talking about a miracle that occurred in history. This miracle is the only one mentioned in all four Gospels.

Although fish are not used in the Lord's Supper, they were highly symbolic in the early church. The Greek word for fish (Ichthus) meant Jesus, Christ, God's Son, and Savior. This was the early church's full title for the Lord, whom they worshiped. The Greek words are as follows: Iesous Christos Theou Uios Soter.

Walking on the Water (14:22-36)

After Jesus sent the crowd away, and sent the disciples into their boats on Lake Galilee, he withdrew to be alone with God in prayer. When a storm came up, he walked on the water towards the disciples to overcome their fear. This occurred between 3:00 and 6:00 a.m. in the morning. When they saw him, they were even more afraid, for they thought they saw a ghost.

The point of both the feeding of the five thousand and the walking on water has to do with the authority of Jesus, not only over history, but also over nature. He not only has the power to heal sickness and forgive sin, but also to perform miracles and control the forces of nature itself.

Peter's request to walk on water was granted, but his lack of faith caused him to sink. This illustrates both the power of faith and the way in which fear threatens to destroy faith.

The Tradition of the Elders (15:1-20)

The tradition of the elders refers to the oral teachings of the rabbis, which was used as a supplement to and a way of interpreting the written Law. The Pharisees understood these to be binding. At a later date these oral teachings were codified and written down in the Mishnah. Jesus had a conflict with the Pharisees over this tradition and accused them of

undermining the written law with it. That these Pharisees came from Jerusalem indicates that Jesus teachings were being taken very seriously.

Jesus raised two issues with the Pharisees, one having to do with honoring one's parents and the other with preserving ceremonial purity. According to the tradition, people were free of the responsibility of supporting their parents if they gave all their possessions to God; hence, in the name of piety, one could evade the direct responsibility to obey the fifth commandment. The oral law also expanded the dietary cleansing regulations to the point where people sought purity through what they ate. This, says Jesus, is not the way to purity. Purity is a product of the heart, not of the hands and stomach.

The Canaanite Woman's Daughter (15:21-28)

A Canaanite woman would have been one of the natives. This woman would have descended from those persons living in Palestine prior to the arrival of the Israelites under Joshua's leadership. Many warnings had been given that Israelites were to have nothing to do with these corrupting people, but here in this story, we have a Gentile acknowledging Jesus as the Messiah. She came from Tyre and Sidon (modern Lebanon), two notoriously ungodly cities. Jesus hesitates to fulfill her request, and decides to test the depth of her faith, but as Martin Luther put it, "She ensnares Christ in His own words." The final point of the story is that Jesus could not refuse the request of anyone with such deep faith.

The Healings (15:29-31)

The number of healings reinforces the presence and activity of God in the ministry of Jesus.

The Feeding of Four Thousand (15:32-39)

Is this a second account of the feeding of the five thousand, or is it another event entirely? The fact that it is also located in the brief Gospel of Mark suggests that we are dealing with two separate events.

In the feeding of the five thousand, there were twelve baskets left over. Twelve was a number, which regularly symbolized Judaism. There were twelve tribes and twelve disciples.

The seven baskets left over might symbolize that this miracle was performed for the benefit of the Gentiles. When they selected helpers for the Greek-speaking widows, they selected seven helpers (Acts 6:2-3).

Numbers play a very important role in the Bible and must not be overlooked. Matthew and Mark both record these differences, and that was no accident. They do not seem to be giving two accounts of the same miraculous event. Each miracle has a purpose. One was for the Jews and the other for the Gentiles.

A Second Demand for a Sign (16:1-12)

The Pharisees asked for a sign in Matthew 12:38ff. Now the Sadducees join them in their request. The answer is still the same. No sign will be given except the sign of Jonah. No explanation is made this time, but it is assumed that anyone who can read the sign of the red sky and predict the weather should be able to discern God's activity in history and in the works of Jesus.

When the disciples expressed concern about bread, Jesus reminded them of the two miracles he had just performed. Even his closest disciples were having difficulty recognizing what was really going on before their very eyes. Jesus warns them to be leery of the teachings of the Pharisees and Sadducees. No specific false teaching is named. The Pharisees and Sadducees just cannot be trusted, for they cannot read the signs of the times and do not recognize the activity of God in history.

Peter's Profession of Jesus (16:13-20)

This is the turning point of the Gospel. From here on in the shadow of the cross begins to rise. It is very interesting that Peter makes his profession in Caesarea Philippi, a Gentile community. This community got its name from Philip the Tetrarch, who changed its name from Paneas to Caesarea Philippi to honor Augustus Caesar and himself. He added his own name to distinguish the city from other communities named after the emperor. It was the site of the pagan shrine to the Greek god, Pan, and lies outside of the bounds of Jewish Palestine.

In this setting Jesus asks his disciples who they think he is, and they tell him that some people are saying that he is John the Baptist, Elijah, or Jeremiah. As we have seen in Matthew 14:2, Herod Antipas thought that Jesus was John the Baptist raised from the dead. Others thought that Jesus might be the prophet Elijah, as predicted in Malachi 4:2; but John the Baptist has been identified as Elijah, although he denies it (John 1:21). Some thought that he was Jeremiah, not because it was predicted, but because Jeremiah talked about the establishment of a new covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-40), which Jesus did indeed come to establish. There never was however any suggestion that Jeremiah would return from the dead.

Peter speaks for all the disciples when he professes that Jesus is none of these, that he is the Messiah (Christ), the Son of the Living God. Jesus admits it, and states that the Holy Spirit prompted Peter to make his profession. What follows, is a little play on words as Jesus gives Simon the name of *Peter*. The Aramaic name is *Cephas*, and the Greek name is *Petros*. They both mean *rock* or *stone*. He is to become the rock or foundation stone of the Church (Ekklesia). Church, as it is used here, is referring to the community of faith rather than the ecclesiastical organization. That the powers of death will not prevail against it is a sign that the church will be on the offensive. Other translations of the Bible refer to the powers of death as a fortress with gates, which lock in death and lock out any potential rescuers. In Matthew 12:29, Jesus tells Peter that the domain of Satan has been

plundered by himself; and in Matthew 16:18, he suggests that in the future it will be plundered by the church.

Peter is also told that he will hold the keys of the Kingdom. This echoes the words of Isaiah 22:22, where authority is turned over to Eliakim. A similar authority is to be given to Peter, but it is not a power to withhold the Good News of the Kingdom from anyone. He is given the power and authority to proclaim the Gospel (Kerygma) and formulate Christian teaching (Didache). It does not mean that God binds himself to what Peter says, but that Peter will do these things in accord with the will of Christ. Neither the naming of Peter as the Rock nor the bestowing upon him the keys makes him the first pope. He does however become the first apostolic witness to the resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:5).

Matthew has taken the above account from Mark 8:27—9:1, but he has added the discussion about the Church and Peter's role in it.

The First Prediction of the Cross (16:21-28)

This is the first prediction by Jesus of his upcoming death. The other three are found in Matthew 17:22-23; 20:17-19; and 26:1-2. Both the death and resurrection of Jesus took the disciples by complete surprise; and even though Jesus tried to prepare them for both, they did not seem to hear him. When Peter did hear him, he thought that Jesus misunderstood his role as the Messiah. Jesus however pointed out that he is the Messiah in the sense of Isaiah 53, which describes the Messiah as a suffering servant. Not only does Jesus see a cross in his future, but in the future of every disciple as well. This does not mean that he expects crucifixion for every disciple, but he does expect every disciple to voluntarily take up the stigma attached to the cross. Disciples are to share in his sufferings.

The Good News in all of this is that beyond the cross God will have the last word, for he will raise Jesus—and all future disciples—from the dead. Matthew 16:28 states that this will happen before many of Jesus' disciples have died. What does this mean? It certainly cannot be referring to the end of history, for Jesus rejected any such prediction of that (Acts 1:6-7). He must be talking about their vision of him after he is raised up from the dead, or their experience of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. These events will be God's confirmation of his Kingdom, even if that Kingdom still must exist within the context of worldly kingdoms.

The Transfiguration of Jesus (17:1-13)

The transfiguration of Jesus looks back to the baptism of Jesus and forward to the resurrection of Jesus. This, according to 2 Peter 1:17-18 was an important experience for the disciples. It was intended to carry them through the dark period of the crucifixion of Jesus. They gained a foretaste of his glory, and they needed that to take them through his time of suffering. The point of the transfiguration is that God's redemptive work began prior to the cross and extended beyond the cross. The change in the appearance of Jesus helps the disciples to recognize just who Jesus is, and as they accompany him towards the

cross, and beyond, they will need to remember this experience. The words spoken to Jesus from the cloud are the same words spoken at his baptism, and so the transfiguration is another step along the way to the crucifixion and resurrection experience.

The transfiguration took place either on Mount Tabor or Hermon, but Hermon, being closer to Caesarea Philippi, is the more likely choice. Moses and Elijah had similar experiences of God on a high mountain. Moses represents the Law and Elijah the prophets. The two of them confirm Jesus as the priestly and prophetic King of Israel. They bind the Old and New Covenants together, for in Jesus both the Law and the Prophets are fulfilled. The response of the inner circle (Peter, James, and John) is not to argue, but to prostrate themselves before Jesus. Peter, not knowing what else to say, suggests the building of a tabernacle for all three of them, but in the new Covenant, God does not live in tabernacles (Revelation 21:22); and besides, there is much work to be done down in the valley. Finally the figures of Moses and Elijah fade, and only Jesus stands before them. As they move down into the valley, Jesus tells them in Matthew 17:9 not to tell anyone until after he is raised from the dead, for people are not yet ready to deal with his work as the Messiah.

The Healing of the Epileptic (17:14-21)

The other disciples could not heal the epileptic boy. Jesus reveals their lack of faith as the reason, and then heals him immediately. The point is that faith can move mountains. This is to be taken figuratively. Faith can remove immovable obstacles.

When Jesus tells the disciples that with faith nothing will be impossible to them, his words must be taken within the context of doing the will of God and the work of Jesus. This is not license for selfish praying.

The Second Prediction of the Cross (17:22-23)

The message is beginning to sink in, for upon hearing it a second time, the disciples are greatly distressed. Other predictions of the crucifixion are given in Matthew 16:21-28; 20:17-19; and 26:1-2, and so there are two more to come.

The Temple Tax (17:24-27)

Every male Jew, above the age of 20 was required to pay the Temple tax, which consisted of two drachma or about one-half a shekel. This would have been approximately two day's wages. Although Jesus is under obligation as a Jew to pay the tax, he refuses to acknowledge any religious or theological obligation; hence, he performs a miracle to pay the tax in order not to offend the Jewish authorities. The point of the miracle, and the paying of the tax, is difficult to comprehend.

After the Temple was destroyed in 70 C.E., the Romans continued to collect the tax from the Jews; only now support was given for the shrine of Jupiter, which stood on the site of the former Temple. Jews and Christians alike continued to struggle with their obligation

to support governments which, encouraged idolatry. Although they had no religious or theological obligation, like Jesus, they supported them rather than to offend them; but at the same time, they refused to worship their idols, which got many of them into trouble. They did however attempt to express their loyalty by praying for national leaders.

GREATNESS AND RESPONSIBILITY (18:1-35)

In this fourth section on Jesus' teachings, we find *humility* and *forgiveness* listed as the two vital attributes of Christian disciples. This chapter is sometimes referred to as a *Manual of Church Discipline*.

True Greatness (18:1-4)

True greatness is found in the acceptance of humility. Disciples are to become like little children. This means "childlike dependence" rather than "childish behavior." We are to turn away from selfish goals and line ourselves up with the will of God. Humility, not arrogance, is the Christian attribute.

Responsibility to New Disciples (18:5-6)

There is an easy movement from *children* to *little ones*. *Little ones* refer to brand new disciples, who have not yet matured in the faith. Mature Christians have a *serious* responsibility to nurture those who are new in the faith, and terrible physical punishment is threatened against those who would neglect their responsibility towards these *little ones*.

Personal Temptation (18:7-9)

The hands, feet, and eyes refer to the need for complete self-control. The removal of these body parts is not to be taken literally. They are used symbolically to make us remove that which tempts us to sin. It is better to go through life without something, than for that something to become our god and destroy us for eternity.

The Lost Sheep (18:10-14)

The community is to be so concerned over one individual that it is willing to accept the neglect of the saved for the sake of the lost. Robert Schuller suggests that if time only permitted him to be with one person who was dying, he would always choose the non-Christian or unchurched to a member, even if that member is his most important leader. Jesus urged the community to express a similar concern for the one who has strayed.

Resolving Disputes (18:15-20)

What we find here are three principles for dealing with an offender within the Christian community. The principles are: (1) Talk with the offender in private, (2) Take one or two witnesses to confront the offender, and finally, (3) Bring the matter up before the entire

congregation. These are the principles that were later used to deal with the process of excommunication.

Many have asked whether the above principles came from Jesus or from the early church; but even if they came from the early church, those who put them together were only trying to interpret what they perceived to be the intention of Jesus. These principles were never to be carried out without prayer and a sense of Jesus' guiding presence, which was promised wherever two or three persons gathered in his name. To gather in Jesus name means to be in agreement to follow his will and teachings. There is nothing magical about his name. Praying in his name has a similar meaning.

Christian Forgiveness (18:21-35)

In the pre-Israelite period vengeance knew no limits. In suggesting that one forgive seven times, Peter is quite generous; but Jesus takes him far beyond seven times and suggests that mercy know no limits. Seventy times seven is symbolic for infinity.

A story follows this teaching to illustrate the depth as well as the breadth of forgiveness. The first debtor owed ten thousand talents (approximately \$10,000,000 dollars), and when he threw himself on the mercy of his master, he found forgiveness; but then, he held someone else accountable for a much smaller debt of 100 denarii (a day's wage for a laborer). The conclusion is that an unforgiving person does not deserve forgiveness, and that divine mercy requires human mercy. All this is consistent with the petition in the Lord's Prayer to forgive as we have been forgiven.

THE VISIBLE KINGDOM

One of the purposes of the Church, which is the Body of Christ, is to make Christ visible in the world. "For where two or three are gathered in my name," said Jesus in Matthew 18:20, "I am there among them." While Jesus' presence is still invisible, it is felt by those of us who have gathered in his name. He is the spiritual presence of the Church on earth, which proudly, but humbly, attempts to make him visible to the world.

It goes back to Peter's profession at Caesarea Philippi, which is described in Matthew 16:13-20. Jesus asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" Peter replied, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah."

Peter's profession, and ours, stands at the center of what it means to be a visible member of the Church and of the Kingdom of God; but why did Jesus tell his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah? The reason is simple. They, including Peter, did not yet

understand what it meant. They had to experience his death on the cross and his resurrection from the dead before the mystery of faith would be unlocked for them. Once that was done for them, they had the obligation to make Christ visible to the world, and if they did not do it, they would leave people imprisoned in darkness. They had been called to become a light to the world.



6. Final Teachings and Events

Matthew 19:1—23:6

6. FINAL TEACHINGS AND EVENTS (19:1 – 23:36)			
TEACHINGS AND EVENTS ENROUTE TO JERUSALEM (19:1 – 20:34)			
Marriage, Divorce, & Celibacy (19:1-12)	Children (19:13-15)	Eternal Life (19:16-30)	
Workers in the Vineyard (20:1-16)	Third Prediction of the Cross (20:17-19)	A Mother's Request (20:20-28)	
The Blind Men in Jericho (20:29-34)			
TEACHINGS AND EVENTS IN JERUSALEM (21:1 – 23:36)			
Entry into Jerusalem (21:1-10)	Cleansing the Temple (21:11-17)	The Fig Tree Cursed (21:18-22)	Jesus' Authority (21:23-27)
Parables on Obedience (21:28-46)	The Wedding Banquet (22:1-14)	Taxes (22:15-22)	Resurrection (22:23-33)
Great Commandment (22:34-40)	David's Son (22:41-47)	The Seven Woes (23:1-36)	

6. FINAL TEACHINGS AND EVENTS

Matthew 19:1—23:36

ASSIGNMENTS				
Teachings enroute to Jerusalem (19:1-30)	Teachings enroute to Jerusalem (20:1-34)	Teachings in Jerusalem (21:1-46)	Teachings in Jerusalem (22:1-47)	The Seven Woes (23:1-36)

TEACHINGS AND EVENTS ENROUTE TO JERUSALEM (19:1—20:34)

Following Peter's confession of Jesus as the Christ at Caesarea Philippi and Jesus' transfiguration on the mountain, Jesus travels to Jerusalem on the eastern side of the Jordan River. He does this to avoid traveling through hostile Samaritan territory. Things will get hostile enough as he and his disciples enter Jerusalem. Some of the following teachings carry with them a tremendous amount of controversy, some of which contribute to the hostility that will nail him to the cross.

Marriage, Divorce, and Celibacy (19:1-12)

The Pharisees decided to test Jesus by asking him his opinion about divorce. There was disagreement within Judaism concerning this matter. Some, mainly the followers of Hillel, believed a man had a right to divorce his wife for any reason; others, the followers of Shammai, believed that he could only do so within carefully defined restrictions. With whom would Jesus agree? Jesus avoided the dilemma and pushed them back to Genesis 1:27 and 2:24, God's intention in creation, which stated that marriage was to be a permanent union between husband and wife.

The Mosaic Law represented a lowering of the ideal, but even the permission to divorce one's wife because of adultery would be a lowering of the ideal. Jesus tends to set aside all reasons for divorce. Mark 10:11 is an earlier version of Jesus' teachings. It is believed that the church was not able to live up to it, and so Matthew 19:9 is a modification of Jesus' teaching to make it easier to apply to everyday life. Even remarriage was considered to be adultery.

The teachings of Jesus on this subject are hard, and it is difficult to know whether we should treat them as a new law, which prohibits divorce. The early church did not understand them as a new law, but it did begin to see celibacy as somehow being holier

than marriage. The Lutheran Reformation reversed this tendency. Holiness is not a question of remaining single or getting married, but of living out God's intention for human life. If one marries, according to Jesus, the proper intention is to form a permanent union.

Children (19:13-15)

Parents believed that there would be a special blessing for the children blessed by a popular rabbi, but, the disciples thought that Jesus' time was too valuable to be taken up by children. Jesus not only takes the time, but he suggests that everyone must become like a child to enter the Kingdom of God. This does not mean that we must adopt *childish* behavior, but that we must approach God with the same dependence that children have upon their earthly parents.

Although this passage does provide a rationale for including children in the Christian community, it does not provide any basis for infant baptism. Jesus did not baptize children.

Eternal Life (19:16-30)

The inquiry into how one might obtain eternal life is answered with a reference to the commandments. Jesus named five of the six commandments having to do with the neighbor, omitting the commandment against coveting, but summarizing everything with "love for the neighbor."

The man's great wealth kept him from responding positively. Jesus' conclusion that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for the wealthy to enter the Kingdom of Heaven only points to the difficulty, not the possibility. Some scholars suggest that *camel* should be understood as *rope*, but others point to the small gate called *the needle's eye*. Camels had to stoop down to enter, and it was extremely difficult for camels to do this.

The point of this story is that wealth is not a reward for one's goodness, but can be an obstacle into the Kingdom of Heaven. Eternal life is equated with the Kingdom of Heaven, and the blessings for faithfulness can be experienced in the present. The rewards in the future will be even greater than they are in the present.

The Workers in the Vineyard (20:1-16)

The owner of the field, not the disgruntled workers, illustrates Matthew's point, that God bestows grace upon us. The workers are hired at five different hours (6:00, 9:00, Noon, 3:00, and 5:00), and each agrees to go to work in the field for a fair wage, which was one denarius (a day's wages for a common worker).

Payment could have been by the hour, for there were smaller denominations of money available; but this parable does not have economic justice as its focus. It runs counter to

our sense of fairness when considered in that way. The point is that God deals with us with his standard of grace and not according to our standard of merit. The attitude of the workers is similar to that of the elder son in the parable of the prodigal son. Jesus is trying to get them and us to welcome people into the Kingdom of God.

Third Prediction of the Cross (20:17-19)

The plot thickens as they move towards Jerusalem, and this time Jesus gives more detail about his impending death. He was handed over to the chief priests and scribes, condemned to death and delivered over to the Gentiles, mocked, flogged and finally crucified; but on the third day, he insists God will raise him up from the dead. The disciples make no response.

A Mother's Request (20:20-28)

In parallel accounts of this story James and John seek honor for themselves, but here, it is their mother. Perhaps she was prompted to seek it on their behalf. Jesus warns them that humiliation and suffering must precede honor and triumph, and that he has no authority to grant permission for them to share in his glory. The reaction of the other disciples indicates that even they do not understand what Jesus has said, and that they too seek honor rather than suffering. All this indicates that they were not listening very well when Jesus was talking about his impending death and the suffering role of the Messiah. This is probably a reference to Isaiah 53.

Matthew 20:28 calls Jesus' death "a *ransom* for many." This is simply a word used to describe the powerful effect that Jesus' death will have upon sinners. It will release them from their slavery or addiction to sin. All of us are called upon to take up Jesus' cross of humility and service. In the end most of the disciples did have to learn the bitter lesson of suffering, and James was the first to meet a violent death for his faith (Acts 12:2). Every Christian must be ready to follow Jesus to the cross.

The Blind Men in Jericho (20:29-34)

Mark and Luke mention only one blind man, and they name him as Bartimaeus. What is significant in this brief passage is their calling Jesus *Son of David*, which was a messianic title. This means that they recognized who he was. To call him by this title meant that they were expressing their hope for the restoration of Israel to take place in him.

The other title they call him is *Lord*, which expresses something quite different. This was the title given Jesus by the early church. It was not a common title for Jesus in his own lifetime.

TEACHINGS AND EVENTS IN JERUSALEM (21:1—23:36)

The Entry into Jerusalem (21:1-10)

Jesus went directly from Jericho through the Judean Wilderness over the Mount of Olives right into Jerusalem. All the Gospel writers understand his entry into Jerusalem as a Messianic claim. The reference to the donkey and its colt is supposed to be the fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9. Matthew may have misunderstood the Hebrew poetic expression when he suggests that two animals were used. On the other hand, a mother donkey frequently followed her colt. Whether there were one or two animals makes little difference. Jesus rode on the colt.

When the people spread their garments and palm branches on the road before him, it was to bestow honor upon him; and their *hosannas*, which meant “O Save,” were shouts of praise. The latter was a common way of greeting pilgrims as they entered Jerusalem to worship at the Temple (Psalm 118:25-26).

The Cleansing of the Temple (21:11-17)

Jesus went straight to the Temple where he drove out those who were buying and selling, including the moneychangers. They were operating legitimate businesses to support the sacrifices and offerings for the Temple, but they were charging exorbitant prices, and this angered Jesus. He denounces the largest and most powerful commercial enterprise in the nation.

The commercial activity was taking place within the Court of the Gentiles; and according to Mark 11:15-19, this made it even worse, for the Temple complex was to be a house of prayer “a house of prayer for all the nations.” Matthew, for some reason, leaves this brief phrase out.

Jesus probably spent the night with Mary, Martha, and Lazarus at Bethany, which would have been about two miles from Jerusalem.

The Fig Tree Cursed (21:18-22)

Two points seem to be mixed up in this one story, that of faith and the fate of Israel. The leaves of a fig tree normally appeared after the fruit, and so Jesus was right in expecting some fruit on the tree. Fig trees also bore fruit some ten months of the year. Like Israel, the tree did not bear fruit, and so its fate was to shrivel up. A living faith will remove mountains, but a dead faith is good for nothing, except to be cast aside.

Jesus' Authority (21:23-27)

When they questioned his authority, Jesus turned the question back to them. They were afraid to answer because of John the Baptist's popularity. They were also afraid to

acknowledge that Jesus' authority came from God, for that would require their obedience, which they were hesitant to give.

Two Parables Concerning Obedience (21:28-46)

The Two Sons (21:28-32)

Two sons were asked to work in the vineyard. One agreed to go, but the other refused. The first one did not go however, while the second did. The first son symbolizes Israel's leader, and the reluctant son symbolizes the tax collectors and prostitutes. Obedience is not a matter of talk, but of action.

The Evil Tenants (21:33-46)

This parable is based on a similar one found in Isaiah 5:1-7. It is actually much more than a parable. The Vineyard represents Israel, while the tenants represent the nation's leaders. The slaves who have been beaten up and killed represent the prophets, and the son of course is Jesus himself. The point of the story is that Israel and its leaders have not obeyed God, and because of their disobedience, God will choose another people, the Gentiles.

The Wedding Banquet (22:1-14)

The wedding banquet symbolizes the messianic (royal) invitation to Israel, who rejected it. The invitation has two stages: (1) the announcement, and (2) the final urging to come. Weak excuses were given, and so the King sent his troops in to destroy those who were invited. This destruction might be a historical reference to the Roman troops entering Jerusalem in 70 C.E.

Others are compelled to attend the banquet, but even after they arrive, they are inspected; and those without *a wedding robe* are cast out. There can be no excuse for not wearing it, for the host always provided it. Those who refused to wear it insulted the host. The wedding robe symbolizes *righteousness*, and those who reject it are those who think that they can believe without expressing their faith through works. The way into the Kingdom is still narrow, even though the invitation is inclusive.

The Question about Taxes (22:15-22)

The Pharisees hoped to trip Jesus up on a question about taxes. Everyone was expected to pay a head tax of one denarius. The Roman Government required it from all subjected peoples. The Pharisees objected to paying this tax. If Jesus sided with the Pharisees he would have been accused of subversion.

The Herodians, who were sympathetic with the family of Herods (Rome's puppet rulers), favored paying the tax. If Jesus sided with them, he would have alienated himself from all those who longed for freedom from Rome.

Jesus threw the question back to the Pharisees. He recognized Rome as the occupying Government, which owned the coinage; and as such, had a right to taxes. He also lifted up one's responsibility to God, in whose image everyone has been created. The higher loyalty, he said, is owed to God (Romans 13:7; 1 Peter 2:17).

The Question about the Resurrection (22:23-33)

After the Pharisees had their turn, the Sadducees proposed a question concerning the general resurrection, which they rejected, since it was not supported in the Torah (the first five books of the Law). Some scholars believe that Exodus 3:6 is a reference to the general resurrection. The verse names God as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, all of whom had already died. If this is a reference, it is somewhat vague.

The Sadducees propose what was probably the standard skeptical question: "What about Levirate marriage?" Levirate marriage had to do with a man's responsibility to his brother's widow. He was supposed to marry her. But, the Sadducees inquire, what happens if she runs through seven men? Whose wife will she be in the resurrection? Jesus' answer is that there will not be any marital relationships in the resurrection. Men and women will live like angels.

The Great Commandment (22:34-40)

The Pharisees and Sadducees join together to ask Jesus which commandment is the greatest of them all. An expert lawyer, representing them, puts this question straight to Jesus. The joining together of the commandment to love God (Deuteronomy 6:5) with the commandment to love the neighbor (Leviticus 19:18) was not new, but the deeper definitions of love and the neighbor were. Love did lie in the heart of the Old Testament, but its proper definition had to wait for Jesus. The same can be said of the neighbor.

David's Son (22:41-47)

Jesus finally asks the Pharisees a question about the Messiah. Whose son is he? The answer of course is given as *David*. Jesus then quotes Psalm 110:1, and asks them why the Messiah is also David's Lord. Jesus is not merely the Son of David; he is more than that. He is his Lord.

Is Jesus struggling with his own messianic consciousness here, or is the early church dealing with a controversy, which it resolves by putting these words into the mouth of Jesus. The only reason why this might be questioned is the use of the word *Lord* for Jesus. This was not what Jesus called himself, but it was commonly used of him in the early church. He proclaimed himself *Messiah*, but they called him *Lord*.

No one could win any argument against Jesus, and so the arguing came to an end. When they met again, force would be introduced.

Woe to the Scribes and Pharisees (23:1-36)

Jesus' criticism of the Scribes and Pharisees is almost cruel. Why was he so kind to the sinners and outcasts and so cruel to the religious leaders? Could their sin of arrogance be more severe than all other sins put together? Jesus does not find fault with their teachings, and even recommends that they be followed. What he condemns is their example. They wear phylacteries, which were little amulets containing passages from the Pentateuch (Exodus 13:16; Deuteronomy 6:8; and 11:18). These were normally only worn at prayer times, but they wear them so that others might see how religious they are. In addition to how they dress, they also demand to be properly addressed as rabbi, father, or master. *Rabbi* was a word that meant "great one." *Father* applied to the great rabbis of the past, and *master* had the connotation of a professor. Jesus criticized the use of all these terms and emphasized truly great people as servants. Among his followers there are only brothers and sisters.

Another sin was hypocrisy. Although they tithed (Matthew 23:23) mint, dill, and cummin—more than would have been expected (Deuteronomy 14:22-23)—they ignored the weightier matters of the law, which would have been justice, mercy, and faith (Micah 6:8).

The Scribes and Pharisees are not only descendants of those who killed the prophets; they are also their spiritual sons. They might as well finish what their ancestors started. The reference to Zechariah's murder is difficult to verify. There is no such account of Zechariah's death in the Bible. The only Zechariah that was murdered was Zechariah, son of Baris, who was killed in the middle of the Temple just before the siege of Jerusalem. Josephus tells the story, but no such story exists in the Bible. That of course does not mean that Zechariah was not murdered, only that we have no account of it. Jesus may have had information about him that has been lost.

THE FRUIT OF FAITH

Two of the most difficult teachings of Jesus to understand are the Workers in the Vineyard and the Cursing of the Fig Tree. The first was told enroute to Jerusalem, and the second occurred inside Jerusalem itself. The key to understanding reward and punishment in the Kingdom of God lies hidden in these two stories.

The owner of the vineyard hires workers at five different times, ranging from 6:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. He offers them a fair wage, and they all agree to work in the vineyard, but then a very surprising thing happens. The owner starts paying off those who worked least first. Those who worked the longest expected more, but to their astonishment, they were paid the same wage as everyone else. This story does not teach economics, but salvation. The vineyard is the Kingdom of God, and everyone is invited to work in it. Work in the Kingdom is like work in the Garden of Eden. It is not drudgery, but joy and all who truly understand this, welcome the latecomers with open arms. Those who have worked in the vineyard all day have already been rewarded, but our negative attitudes towards work make it difficult for us to comprehend this.

If the story of the Workers in the Vineyard symbolizes the Grace of God available to all, the Cursing of the fig tree symbolizes dead faith. Since fig trees bear fruit ten months out of the year, and the leaves follow the fruit, this fig tree should have been bearing fruit. Jesus cursed the fig tree like we would break off a dead branch. This is how divine judgment works. God's people are expected to produce fruit, not to earn their salvation, but out of sheer gratitude. As a fig tree exists to produce fruit, people of faith exist to produce works. Even a little faith will enable us to move mountains.

In Ephesians 2:8-10, Paul makes the relationship between grace, faith, and works clear: "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God—not the result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life." No one stressed salvation by faith like Martin Luther; and yet, he pointed to the necessary relationship between faith and works. "It is impossible," he said, "to separate works from faith, just as it is impossible to separate heat and light from fire."¹ One might say, "We are saved by grace through faith, but we keep our salvation through works.

¹*Martin Luther's Preface to The Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources), 1962.



7. Last Things

Matthew 23:37—25:46

7. LAST THINGS (ESCHATOLOGY) (23:37—25:46)

JESUS' LAMENT OVER JERUSALEM (23:37—24:2)

THE END OF HISTORY (24:3—24:51)

Birthpangs of the Kingdom
(24:3-14)

The End of Jerusalem
(24:15-28)

The End of History
(24:29-51)

THE PARABLES OF JUDGMENT (25:1-46)

The Wise and Foolish
Bridesmaids
(25:1-13)

The Parable
of the Talents
(25:14-30)

The Last
Judgment
(25:31-46)

7. LAST THINGS (ESCHATOLOGY)

Matthew 23:37—25:46

ASSIGNMENTS				
The End of Jerusalem (23:37—24:28)	The End of History (24:29-51)	The Bridesmaids (25:1-13)	The Talents (25:14-30)	The Last Judgment (25:31-46)

JESUS' LAMENT OVER JERUSALEM (23:37—24:2)

Jesus laments over the coming fate of Jerusalem, and compares his love for the city and its people to that of a hen for her chicks.

THE END OF HISTORY (24:3-51)

The Birthpangs of the Kingdom (24:4-14)

The Disciples of Jesus wonder about what he has just said, and so they ask him *when* all this will take place. Although he shares some signs with them, he never answers their question, primarily because he himself does not know. Only the Father knows.

The end of Jerusalem was close, for it would be destroyed by Titus in 70 C.E., but the end of the age would not come for some time, even though the signs were already present.

When a new Kingdom is born, there are always signs to be observed. Three of them are the emergence of (1) false messiahs [4:5], (2) war [24:6-7a], and (3) natural disaster [24:7b]. Before the old rule can pass away and the new rule be born, says Jesus in Matthew 24:14, the Gospel of the Kingdom must be proclaimed throughout the world.

The End of Jerusalem (24:15-28)

The *desolating sacrilege* spoken of by Daniel 9:27, 11:31, and 12:11 was the erection of the pagan god Zeus in the Temple by the Syrian King Antiochus IV in 168 B.C.E. (1 Maccabees 1:54; 2 Maccabees 6:2). Jesus compares it to the upcoming desecration of the Temple by the Romans, who were about to lay siege to Jerusalem, the end of which would come in 70 C.E.

It is difficult to distinguish between when Jesus is talking about the end of Jerusalem and when he is talking about the end of the history. Vultures should be translated as “eagles.” The image of the eagle refers to the Roman standards, which are about to swoop down on the rotting corpse of Judaism. Expecting that end, many Christians fled to Pella in 68 C.E. People should pray that this flight not be in winter, for the Jordan River would be at its highest level, and that would make flight very difficult.

The End of the History (24:29-51)

It sounds like the end of the history will immediately follow the destruction of Jerusalem, but no one will know when it will take place, not even Jesus. Only the Father knows. All that anyone can do is prepare for it.

Three examples of the need for readiness are given. If people can read the sign of the fig tree putting forth leaves, then they should be able to recognize three signs. They are (1) the story of Noah, (2) the householder about to be burglarized, and (3) the servant placed in charge of his master’s possessions. Those who are ready will be received into the Kingdom, but those who are not will weep and gnash their teeth in hell.

Chapter 24 is apocalyptic, which means that its purpose is to disclose a hidden meaning of events taking place in the world. It gives comfort and direction to people who are living in chaotic times. Mark 13 and Luke 21 are equivalent apocalyptic chapters.

THE PARABLES OF JUDGMENT (25:1-46)

The Wise and Foolish Bridesmaids (25:1-13)

This parable has to be understood in the light of the marriage custom of the bridegroom fetching the bride from her parent’s home. What is somewhat confusing in the story is that no mention is made of the bride. The delay of the bridegroom was a compliment. He was spending a long time haggling with the bride’s parents, and that was a sign that he considered her a valuable catch.

The bridegroom is the Messiah, Christ himself, who will arrive unexpectedly. The point of the story is that his followers will have to be ready, and that their readiness cannot be lent to someone who is not ready. The delay of Christ is a good sign, for it indicates the depth of God’s love and how in his patience he waits for people to prepare for him.

The Talents (25:14-30)

The term *talent* was originally used to describe a unit of weight of approximately 75 pounds; but by Jesus’ time, it had become a unit of financial exchange, worth about fifteen years of wages for a common laborer. One talent was no small amount.

The whole idea of our *talents* comes from this parable in which the people of God are expected to invest the gifts God has given them. Not everyone’s gifts are the same. Some

have five talents, some two, and some only one; nevertheless, one is supposed to invest what has been given. The man with only one talent still had a remarkable gift. Our future depends upon how we use the precious gifts that God has given to us.

The move from money to spiritual gifts is valid. Although Jesus uses a financial term, this is not all that he means by it. We need to be investing both our financial and spiritual gifts. To whom much is given, much will be expected.

The Last Judgment (25:31-46)

At the end of history there will be a final judgment. Christ will come and judge all nations and individuals. All races and tribes will be present. Judgment will not be made simply by what one believes, but according to how that belief is expressed. This accounts for the presence of those who did not know of Christ. Some professing Christians will find their faith lacking, and some who never heard of Christ will find their faith accepted. Faith without works is dead. Faith that is alive always bears fruit.

These last three parables teach that God will pass judgment. At judgment time it will be too late for the five foolish bridesmaids, the man who refused to invest his one talent, and all those who failed to serve people with pressing human needs. The time for developing one's faith is *now*. Tomorrow may be too late. We should not be troubled by judgment, for it means reward as well as punishment. God knows how to divide those with faith from those without it, and his judgment will be just and fair. This passage affirms the reality of both heaven and hell. It also emphasizes the urgency of our task to proclaim the coming Kingdom of God and to invite people to make their responses to it now. Matthew 24 and 25 are both a warning and an invitation.

THE JUDGE

“One of the illusions,” said Ralph Waldo Emerson, “is that the present hour is not the critical, decisive hour. Write it on your heart that every day is the best day in the year. No man has learned anything rightly, until he knows that every day is doomsday.” What do we think of when we hear the word judgment? Does it not usually carry a negative connotation? When we think of someone being judged, we usually think of a criminal being sentenced to prison for committing a crime. We do not think of righteous people being rewarded for good deeds, and yet, Biblically speaking, this is the positive side of judgment.

Jesus told a series of Parables concerning Judgment. They deal with both sides of judgment—punishment and rewards. The most well known is the Parable of the Last Judgment found in Matthew 25:31-46. What is so interesting about this Parable is that the negative and the positive elements of judgment are present, and those who are punished and those who are rewarded are both surprised. When they ask about why they are punished or rewarded, the answer they get in Matthew 25:40 and 45-46 is: “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.”

There is an element of surprise in all of the parables of the Last Judgment. No one seems to be aware of reward or judgment. This inspired someone to write the following:

There will be three things which will surprise us when we get to heaven; one, to find many there that we did not expect to find there; another, to find some not there whom we had expected; a third, and perhaps the greatest wonder, will be to find ourselves there.³

One question remains. What about Divine Grace and Forgiveness? Is this not a step back into legalism, where one gets what one deserves? It could be, except for two things. Judgment has to do with human relationships, and God offers us forgiveness and a new start. All we have to do is turn away from our sins and accept God's gift of Grace. To turn our backs on divine love, that is the negative side of Judgment. To allow our hearts to be filled with divine love, that is the positive side of Judgment. It is dangerous to wait for a better time. The time to respond to God, and our neighbor, is now. In the end, we judge ourselves.

³I am not sure who was the original author of this quotation. It may have been Augustine or John Wesley. At any rate, I am unable to document it.



8. The Passion

Matthew 26:1—28:20

8. THE PASSION (26:1—28:20)		
THE CRUCIFIXION (26:1—27:66)		
The Preparation of Jesus and his Disciples		
The Plot (21:1-16)	The Last Supper (26:17-29)	The Prayer in Gethsemane (26:30-46)
The Trial before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin		
The Arrest (26:47-56)	The Trial (26:57-68)	The Denial of Peter (26:69-75)
The Trial before Pilate and the Romans		
Jesus before Pilate (27:1-26)	The Crucifixion (27:27-44)	The Death of Jesus (27:45-66)
Judas (27:3-10) Pilate's Question (27:11) Pilot's Wife's Dream (27:19) The Barabbas Incident (27:17 & 20-22) Pilate washes his Hands (27:24)	The Scourging (27:27-31) Simon of Cyrene (27:32) The Wine (27:34) Casting lots for his clothes (27:35) The Sign on the Cross (27:37) The Robbers (27:44)	The last Word (27:46) Curtain of the Temple (27:51) The Earthquake (27:54) The Open Tombs (27:52) The Two Marys (27:56) Joseph of Arimathea (27:57) The Guards (27:65)
THE RESURRECTION (28:1-15)		
The Witnesses (28:1-10)	The Bribing of the Guards (28:11-15)	
THE GREAT COMMISSION (28:16-20)		

8. THE PASSION

Matthew 26:1—28:20

ASSIGNMENTS				
The Preparation of Jesus and his Disciples (26:1-46)	The Trial before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin (26:47-75)	The Trial before Pilate and the Romans (27:1-26)	The Crucifixion and the Death of Jesus (27:27-66)	Resurrection and Great Commission (28:1-20)

THE CRUCIFIXION (26:1—27:66)

The Plot (26:1-16)

The plot takes place in the house of Caiaphas the High Priest (18-36 C.E.), and within two days Jesus is crucified, as he had predicted on three other occasions (16:21; 17:22; 20:18).

The connection with Passover is more symbolic than historical. While Matthew, Mark, and Luke indicate that Jesus shared his Last Supper during the Passover Feast, John does not agree. The main point is that these events took place near to the Passover and that Jesus was thought of as the Passover Lamb. Naturally those who plot against him do not make such a comparison.

One woman anoints him with oil in the house of Simon the Leper, a man who had been healed by Jesus. The disciples are shocked by the wasted oil (perfume) but Jesus interprets the woman's action as a prediction and preparation of his coming death. Her action alludes to the central point of the Christian proclamation (kerygma), which is the inevitable crucifixion of the Messiah.

The final stage of the plot against Jesus continues with the betrayal by Judas, who offers to lead his enemies to him for 30 pieces of silver, the price of a dead slave and the fulfillment of Scripture (Zechariah 11:12-13 and Exodus 21:32).

The Last Supper (26:17-29)

As mentioned earlier it is doubtful that the Last Supper was also the Passover Meal. The essential elements, such as the lamb and bitter herbs, are missing. There is no doubt

however that there is a connection between the Passover event in history and the suffering and death of Jesus. That connection is clear, and even if the Last Supper and the Passover Meal did not take place on the same night, they are indeed related. Jesus' death as the Messiah looks backward to the Passover event and forward to the future Messianic banquet.

Why did Judas betray him? No one can say for sure. It was probably not for the 30 pieces of silver. One widely held theory is that Judas was trying to force Jesus to inaugurate the Kingdom. While this cannot be proven, it at least puts Judas in a good light. He was one of the twelve carefully chosen disciples. The other theory, of course, is that he was corrupt from the beginning; and his betrayal was simply the acting out of his true nature.

Prayer in Gethsemane (26:30-46)

Gethsemane, which means "olive press," was located in a grove of trees on the slope of the Mount of Olives. Jesus predicts that everyone will desert him. Peter denies it, but Jesus assures him that he will deny him three times.

In contrast to Peter's threefold denial, Jesus prays three times and submits to God's will. Meanwhile, Peter, James, and John fall asleep. Jesus' later prediction that they would desert him is a fulfillment of Zechariah 13:7.

The Arrest (26:47-56)

Judas led the crowds armed with swords and clubs to arrest Jesus on behalf of the chief priests and elders. This was the nature of his betrayal. Peter was willing to defend Jesus with his sword, but felt helpless without it. Jesus assured him that he was not helpless, for he could call in 12 legions of angels (72,000) at any time. Jesus questioned why anyone would have to lead the crowd to him, for he had been teaching openly in the Temple area.

The Trial before the Sanhedrin (26:57-68)

The trial before the Sanhedrin took place at night and was therefore illegal; nevertheless, the Sanhedrin, led by Caiaphas, the High Priest, proceeded to entertain charges against him. Two unknown men charged him with threatening to tear down the Temple. Caiaphas asked him directly if he were the Messiah. His answer here is not direct, but they took it in the affirmative.

The claim to be the Messiah would not in itself bring the final charge of blasphemy, a charge which, according to Leviticus 24:13-16, required death by stoning. Crucifixion was a Roman penalty, and so additional charges were needed. Blasphemy was enough of an excuse for Caiaphas, but he knew that Pilate would have to see Jesus as a political or military threat.

The mood now turned ugly as they spat on Jesus and beat him. In Mark 14:65 we are told that they blindfolded Jesus. This would explain why they asked him if he knew who struck him.

The Denial of Peter (26:69-75)

Peter did not have the courage to stand up for him in such an environment, and denied that he even knew him to two women and some bystanders. People suspected he was lying because of his Galilean accent, an accent very different from the Judeans. Because Jesus himself was a Galilean, they suspected Peter of being one of his disciples.

As Jesus prayed three times in faithfulness, Peter denied him three times in unfaithfulness. After the Resurrection, Jesus will ask him three times for his love (John 21:15-17).

Jesus before Pilate (27:1-26)

In the early morning hours, the Sanhedrin, who had met illegally during the night, confirmed their condemnation of Jesus, and turned him over to the Romans. Judas now realized that he had made a mistake and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the priests. He felt such remorse that he hanged himself. This incident seems to support the idea that he was only calling upon Jesus to act.

Pilate was the Roman Governor of Judea and Samaria from 26 to 36 C.E. His official headquarters was located in Caesarea. He just happened to be in Jerusalem at the time, and so they brought Jesus before him. The name of his Jerusalem residence was the *Praetorium*.

Pilate's question in Matthew 27:11 was strictly political. Not being convinced that he was dangerous, he presented an even more dangerous man to the crowd—Jesus Barabbas. The name itself is ironical. *Jesus bar Abbas* means "Jesus, son of the Father." Tradition suggests that Barabbas was an insurgent or revolutionary. Perhaps Pilate hoped that the crowd would release Jesus instead of Barabbas, but he was wrong.

Pilate's wife tried to warn him to keep his distance from Jesus. Her dream fits in to a theology present in Matthew that God speaks through dreams. Does Pilate listen to the dream? Probably not, for even though he does not command the crucifixion, he authorizes, or allows it to take place.

When they demanded crucifixion for Jesus, they were demanding a Roman style execution. Pilate washed his hands of the whole affair, but not without turning Jesus over to the crowd. In the end the crucifixion could not have been carried out without Roman approval. Instead of standing up for what was right, Pilate gave in to what was expedient.

The Crucifixion (27:27-44)

Roman soldiers flogged Jesus right there in the Praetorium to mock his Messianic claim. The Roman reason for allowing his crucifixion was strictly political. The Romans were determined to execute every leader of a freedom movement. Pilate's hesitation indicates that he was not fully convinced that Jesus was such a leader. The Jews had a different reason for wanting his death—blasphemy. Even though their reasons differed, they cooperated to crucify him.

Simon of Cyrene helped Jesus by carrying his cross part way. Since Cyrene was a North African city, many have suggested that Simon was Black. Tradition indicates that Simon and his family became early followers of Jesus. Simon's two sons were named Alexander and Rufus.

In writing this account of Jesus' crucifixion, Matthew was interested in showing how Jesus' death was the fulfillment of Scripture. The wine offered as a sedative was the fulfillment of Psalm 69:21; the casting of lots for his garments was the fulfillment of Psalm 22:18; and the derision of the passers-by was the fulfillment of Psalm 22:7.

The Death of Jesus (27:45-66)

It is difficult to explain the darkness that spread over the earth from 12:00 Noon to 3:00 P.M. One ought not to explain it away with natural explanations. Matthew presupposes a supernatural explanation. Jesus' cry, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani" was not fully understood by those who witnessed his crucifixion. They thought he was crying out for Elijah, but Matthew indicates that his cry of abandonment was a fulfillment of Psalm 22:1, a Psalm that begins with this cry of abandonment, but ends with cries of thanksgiving and praise (Psalm 22:22-31).

During the event of Jesus' death, two highly symbolic things happened. The first has to do with the tearing of the Temple curtain, which would have divided the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies. This would have symbolized an access of the common person into the presence of God. The second symbolic thing to happen was the raising of God's saints from the dead. This is a foretaste of what is about to happen to Jesus.

While the Romans generally denied an immediate burial to those crucified, the Jews believed that an exposed body polluted the Sabbath. Joseph of Arimathea, a disciple of Jesus, offered his tomb, and Jesus was hastily buried without the ordinary preparations. Nothing else is known about Joseph.

That the Chief Priests and Pharisees approached Pilate on the Sabbath is not very likely. It would have been a violation of the Sabbath. Matthew's point is that even official action on the part of Pilate could not stop the Resurrection from happening. It is not clear whom the men are who go to guard the tomb. Are they Temple police, or Roman soldiers? The latter is more likely.

THE RESURRECTION (28:1-15)

The Witnesses (28:1-10)

Only two women are named as the first witnesses of the Resurrection. They are Mary Magdalene and Mary, the wife of Clopas and sister of Jesus' mother. The stone was rolled back by means of an earthquake, which is only mentioned by the Gospel of Matthew. Other Gospels have the women asking how they will roll back the stone, but they do not suggest that God did it by means of an earthquake. The resurrection was not dependent upon the opening of the tomb. It was done, not to let Jesus out, but to let the women see the inside of the empty tomb.

The women in turn tell the disciples. The immediate instructions are to go on to Galilee, where Jesus will meet them with his final commission. This brief description is not meant to be a detailed account of everything that occurred on that first Easter. There is no way to reconstruct every detail. What the Gospels offer are four testimonies to the fact of his Resurrection. Matthew's testimony in no way rules out further appearances in Jerusalem.

That the resurrection occurs at dawn is very significant. A new era has dawned. The resurrection of Jesus from the dead is God's confirmation of who he is and everything he taught. This is the supreme miracle of all four Gospels.

The Bribing of the Guards (28:11-15)

To admit that you fell asleep was a serious charge indeed. The punishment was death. Perhaps the guards already feared this punishment, and that is why they were willing to take a bribe. This story illustrates the growing hostility between Christians and Jews.

No one had anything to gain from the stealing of the body. The Jews needed the cover up in order to try to stop the new movement in its tracks, but lying about it would not convince them that Jesus was a false Messiah. The disciples had nothing to gain by stealing the body. No great movement can be based on a lie. The truth of his resurrection makes up the foundation of Christian faith. It is its central teaching, with everything else revolving around it. It authenticates Jesus' teaching. Without it, many of Jesus' teachings do not even make good common sense.

The Great Commission (28:16-20)

Not every one of the eleven remaining disciples had an easy time believing. Thomas' doubt is well known, but not mentioned by Matthew. Perhaps others also had doubts. There is nothing wrong with doubt as long as it is *creative* and motivates one to continue the search for truth.

The name of the mountain, where they met with Jesus is not known. Four mountains have been mentioned in the Gospel of Matthew. They are the Mount of Temptation, the Sermon on the Mount, the Mount of Transfiguration, and now the Mount of the Great

Commission. Jesus, like Moses before him, gives direction to God's people from a mountain somewhere in Galilee, but the name of the mountain is less important than the directions Jesus gave from the mountain.

The commissioning includes three tasks: (1) To make disciples of people from all nations, (2) To baptize people from all nations, and (3) To teach people from all nations. Thus, the most Jewish of the four Gospels, closes with an opening to people from every nation on earth.

The trinitarian formula, which suggests baptizing in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, may reflect the later liturgical experiences of the early church, but the ideas that lie behind it most certainly belong to Jesus.

The closing is accompanied with the promise of God's unceasing, though invisible, presence. The promise of his presence was made in the beginning when the announcement was made in Matthew 1:23 that Jesus would be called *Emmanuel*, which means "God is with us." That presence will accompany his people to the end of history and beyond, right on into eternity.

THE MISSION

A young woman asked me recently, "Why are we still sending missionaries to other countries? Why bother people who already have a religion?" These are good questions, but there is an equally good answer. Jesus told us to do it.

It is true that Jesus saw his own mission as being primarily to the Jews, and so he never had any reason to leave Palestine. His mission was to go to Jerusalem, where he would be crucified on the cross and be raised up from the dead. His disciples were not comfortable with that mission. The Messiah, they reasoned, should govern. Death and Resurrection did not fit into their concept of his and their own Mission. Even though he told them what to expect, when it happened, it was the last thing they expected.

His last words, recorded in Matthew 28:19-20, make up his Great Commission:

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

This is the primary mission of the Church. Everything else is secondary. We gladly fulfill this mission because the one who was crucified and raised up to new life commands it. No one else can speak with such authority, and so we take him seriously. All that remains is how to do it faithfully in our time.

While every generation must discover its own methods, the mission remains the same, even if we have to find new imagery with which to describe it. Pope John XXIII did just

that when he let a breath of fresh air into a Roman Catholic Church that had lost its focus. “We are not here on earth to be curators of a museum,” he said, “but to cultivate a garden full of flowers and life. It must grow into a wonderful garden.”¹ If we carry out our mission properly, the world will become such a garden.

¹Quoted in Walbert Buhlmann, *The Coming of the Third Church* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1977), p. 177.

THE NEW HUMANITY



2nd Century Synagogue in Capernaum

The Gospel of Mark

INTRODUCTION TO THE GOSPEL OF MARK

MARK <i>A Large Hammer</i>	
Date: 64-70 C.E.	Place: Rome
Purpose: A Missionary Sermon	Sources: Oral Teachings Oral Stories

Author

Although the author of this Gospel is not named, tradition has long affirmed a man by the name of John Mark. John is his Hebrew name and Mark his Latin name. According to Acts 12:12, Mary, Mark's mother, had a house in Jerusalem in which the early church met. Mark was a cousin of Barnabas and a companion to Paul. He accompanied both of them on the first missionary journey, but was alienated from Paul when he turned back in the middle of the trip. There was a later reconciliation, after which he became of much comfort to Paul (Colossians 4), and greatly loved by Peter (I Peter 5:13).

The tradition that names Mark as the author comes from Papias, who was a bishop around 140 C.E. Eusebius in the fourth century, accepted the tradition, but there has always been considerable doubt. If author is not Mark, the author will have to remain anonymous. The Gospel will continue to carry his name, even if it does not name him as its author.

Date

The Gospel cannot be dated precisely, but it can be dated in between two historical events: (1) the death of Peter and Paul in 64 C.E. and (2) the fall of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. Those who favor Mark as the author lean towards the earlier date, and those who favor an anonymous author suggest the later date.

Place

Tradition names Rome as the place where Mark wrote the Gospel. Since Peter had been preaching in Rome, tradition suggests that the Gospel is a summary of his preaching.

Mark does not assume Jewish readers. Because he is always explaining Jewish customs, his readers must have been Gentiles. This would suggest that he was writing for the benefit of Gentiles. Rome sounds like an educated guess, but other places have also been suggested, such as Syria, Egypt, and Asia Minor.

Purpose

The purpose of this first Gospel is to present the Good news of Jesus Christ as the Son of God. Mark writes as a simple evangelist or street preacher, telling the story of Jesus in plain, fast-moving terms. It is best read in one sitting. This Gospel might best be called a missionary sermon.

Unlike Matthew, who goes into great detail with Jesus' teachings, Mark concerns himself with the activity of Jesus. A favorite word of his is *immediately*, which he uses twenty-seven times in the New Revised Standard Version of his Gospel.

Jesus is a man of authority and action, and Mark's emphasis falls on his mighty works and signs, which point to the presence of the Kingdom of God. A key verse in which Jesus defines his activity might be Mark 10:45, where he says: "For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many."

Mark also believes that the end of history is right around the corner and preparing people for it is urgent. Since he expects the Church to be persecuted, he involves himself in warning people of the coming persecution and suffering.

Organization

The Son of Man came... (1:1-13)	...to Serve... (1:14—10:52)	...to give his Life. (11:1—16:8)
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1. The Opening Events of Jesus Ministry (1:1-13)
2. The Public Ministry of Jesus in Galilee (1:14—9:50)
3. The Journey from Galilee to Jerusalem (10:1-52)
4. The Crucifixion and Burial of Jesus (11:1—15:47)
5. The Resurrection of Jesus (16:1-8)
6. The Appearances and Ascension of Jesus (16:9-20)



1. Preparation for Ministry

Mark 1:1—4:34

1. PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY (1:1—4:34)					
THE PREPARATION (1:1-13)					
John the Baptist (1:1-8)		The Baptism of Jesus (1:9-11)		The Temptation of Jesus (1:12-13)	
THE MESSAGE OF JESUS					
The Message of Jesus (1:14-15)		Withdrawal for Prayer (1:35-39)		The Question of Fasting (2:18-22)	
Jesus and the Sabbath (2:23—3:6)		The Popularity of Jesus (3:7-12)		Questions about Jesus' Power (3:20-35)	
THE MIRACLES					
In the Synagogue (1:21-28)		Peter's Mother-in-Law (1:29-34)		The Leper (1:40-45)	A Paralytic (2:1-12)
CALLING THE DISCIPLES					
The First Disciples (1:16-20)		The Call of Levi (2:13-17)		Appointment of the Twelve (3:13-19)	
Simon (Peter)	James	John	Andrew	Philip	Bartholomew
Matthew	Thomas	James (Alphaeus)	Thaddaeus	Simon (Cannaean)	Judas Iscariot
THE PARABLES					
The Four Soils (4:1-20)		The Lamp (4:21-25)		Seed Growing Secretly (4:26-29)	The Mustard Seed (4:30-32)

1. PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY

Mark 1:1—4:34

ASSIGNMENTS				
Preparation (1:1-13)	Message (1:14-15, 1:35-39; 2:18—3:12; 3:20-35)	Miracles (1:21-34, 40-45; 2:1-12)	Disciples (1:16-20; 2:13-17; 3:13-19)	Parables (4:1-34)

THE PREPARATION (1:1-13)

John the Baptist (1:1-8)

The Gospel, which means Good News, refers to the salvation offered through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Mark's intention is to proclaim the whole Gospel. The Gospel for Mark does not begin with the miraculous birth of Jesus, but with the activity and preaching of John the Baptist, which had been predicted by the prophets in Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3. John wore a camel hair tunic and a leather belt, the dress of Elijah, and people recognized him instantly as a prophet. He ate locusts and wild honey, the food of the poor. His preaching was directed at preparing people for the coming Kingdom of God; hence, he was the forerunner of the Messiah.

People came to hear John preach and responded to his call to baptism. Like the Old Testament prophets he called people to repentance, but unlike them, he used baptism as a sign of their repentance. It is most likely that he immersed people in the Jordan River at about the same location as Joshua entered Canaan. It is not clear why he used baptism to symbolize his message, but even he recognized the incompleteness of water baptism. That is why he pointed to the Baptism of the Spirit, which would draw people into an even closer relationship with God.

The Baptism of Jesus (1:9-11)

The baptism of Jesus is described as an objective event (water baptism), although it is most easily explained in subjective terms (spirit baptism). His baptism was accompanied with the gentleness of a dove, and can be contrasted sharply with the baptism of the Spirit in the early church, which came with wind and fire. What happens here echoes the coronation of a king, such as is described in Psalm 2:7. It also recalls the consecration of

God's servant in Isaiah 42:1. This is clearly the initiation of Jesus' public ministry. The time is approximately 27 C.E., and Jesus is approximately 30 years old.

Water baptism is our own initiation and ordination into ministry, but the baptism of the Spirit is our motivation to fulfill our calling. While we must admit that Jesus was probably immersed fully in the Jordan River, the real significance of this event is his baptism by the Spirit. That baptism seems to take place privately. The voice from heaven speaks only to Jesus.

The Temptation of Jesus (1:12-13)

Everyone's ministry is tested, and so was the ministry of Jesus. While Mark's description is very brief, it is still present. Wild beasts symbolize the armies of Satan and angels symbolize the armies of God. Jesus must have shared this experience with the twelve disciples he called into ministry. There is no other way they could have known about it, for they were not present.

THE GALILEAN MINISTRY (1:14—4:34)

Galilee was a prosperous and densely populated province under Herod's jurisdiction. The Sea of Galilee divided Herod's province from that ruled by his half-brother Philip to the east. Lake Galilee itself lies 700 feet below sea level and is 6 miles wide and 14 miles long. The area around Lake Galilee was the busiest and most cosmopolitan region in all of Palestine. Jesus did not remove himself from life, but projected himself into the very midst of life.

Two sites can be visited today in Capernaum. The first is the Synagogue in which Jesus taught. Although the ruins of the Synagogue in Capernaum date back to the third century, the floor of the synagogue dates back to Jesus' time. The second site consists of the ruins of an ancient church that was built over the home of Simon Peter.

The Message of Jesus (1:14-15)

According to Mark Jesus did not begin his public ministry until after the arrest of John the Baptist. This would make John a true forerunner to the Messiah. *Repent and believe the Gospel* is the heart of Jesus' message and everything that follows in the Gospel of Mark is an expansion of that proclamation.

The First Disciples (1:16-20)

Jesus made Capernaum his headquarters and called four fishermen to follow him. They were Simon, Andrew, James, and John. With the exception of Andrew, these became the inner circle of disciples. Mark leaves the impression that Jesus called them on his first encounter with them, but other accounts clarify this false impression.

Teaching and Healing in the Synagogue (1:21-28)

Jesus worked through the religious institutions already in place, but he put immense pressure on them as he began to act according to the spirit—rather than the letter—of the Law. His healing of a man with an unclean spirit or demon was a demonstration of his tremendous authority. He did not quote authorities; he acted out his authority. Everyone recognized his amazing authority. Since demons recognized who he was, he charged them to be silent about it.

The Healing of Peter's Mother-in-law (1:29-34)

Not much is said about the families of the twelve, but here we discover that Peter was married. In 1 Corinthians 9:5 we are told that his wife accompanied him on some of his trips. Through such healings as these Jesus became very well known, and many people came to him to be healed of their physical illnesses.

Withdrawal for Prayer (1:35-39)

Jesus did not define his primary task as that of healing; hence, he withdrew for prayer. Following his prayer time, he decided to go elsewhere to preach. Preaching was clearly his top priority, but his compassion caused him to heal the sick.

Healing the Leper (1:40-45)

The leper cried out for healing, and Jesus healed him; but he demanded that the healed leper remain quiet about the whole incident. The news of this healing made it impossible for Jesus to appear in any town. He stayed out in the country, but people still sought him out.

Jesus' demand that everyone restrain from telling people about his activity has been called *the Messianic Secret*. The *secret* is that his reign can only be realized through his death and resurrection, and most people, including his followers, were not ready to accept that truth. We even find it difficult today, and we have the advantage of 2000 years of history and tradition to help us.

Healing a Paralytic (2:1-12)

It is not clear whose house Jesus is in. Was it his own or Peter's? Only Peter's house has been identified. The house would have been a typical Palestinian house with a flat roof and perhaps an outside staircase leading to the roof.

This story is told to describe Jesus' authority. The paralytic himself expressed no faith in Jesus' ability to heal. His friends took him to Jesus. In healing this man, Mark describes Jesus' twofold authority. Not only does he have authority over physical illness, but also over spiritual illness.

Tradition would have dictated that sin and illness are related. Jesus forgave the man his sin, which in turn brings about his healing. The Scribes saw in this a claim to deity. They believed that only God could forgive. Jesus healing the paralytic was seen by them as blasphemous, but for Mark, it was a sign of his deity and authority. Jesus indeed was the Messiah.

The Call of Levi (2:13-17)

The fifth disciple called by Jesus did not have an honorable profession like the first four. He was a hated tax collector, who worked for Herod Antipas, the tetrarch over Galilee. When Jesus called him, he left his profession, as did the others, to follow him. We usually identify Levi with Matthew, but the Scripture itself does not do this.

When Jesus eats with Levi and his fellow tax collectors, there is much criticism. Jesus' response is that he did not come to save the righteous, but sinners. His identification with sinners and outcasts led to much hostility against him. It still does.

The Question of Fasting (2:18-22)

Fasting was common in Jewish Religion. That neither Jesus nor his disciples fasted raised some serious criticism, but Jesus answers it by making sharp distinctions between Judaism and his message of the Kingdom of God. He was proclaiming something new, something that needed to be celebrated. The present time was a time for rejoicing, not fasting. When the early church fasted it did so as a memorial to his death; but if he is indeed, risen, then fasting is just as inappropriate today as it was then.

Jesus and the Sabbath (2:23—3:6)

In addition to blasphemy, Jesus gets accused of violating the commandment on the Sabbath. The problem was that so many rules grew up around the proper observance of the Sabbath, that the true meaning of the Sabbath got lost. The purpose of the Sabbath was for: (1) physical rest, and (2) spiritual nourishment.

Jesus is accused of violating the Sabbath in two ways. The first is for threshing grain (2:23-28) and the second is for healing (3:1-6). Neither is justified. The intention of the Sabbath was never to prevent people from eating, nor was it to prevent the sick from being healed. The intent was physical rest and spiritual nourishment. The Pharisees however took these as serious violations of the Law of Moses, and joined forces with an unlikely ally—the Herodians. The Herodians were Jews who favored the Herodian dynasty, which in turn supported Rome. These Pharisees must have feared political fallout from Jesus' claims and teachings. They were right to fear such fallout, but they were wrong to seek his death.

Jesus makes a mistake in illustrating his point with the story of David and his rebels. Abiathar was not the high priest at the time. It was Ahimelech. 1 Samuel 21:1-6 tells the

story and names the high priest. How can this be explained? It might be a scribal error, but then again, Jesus might have misquoted 1 Samuel 21:1.

Popularity of Jesus (3:7-12)

This passage describes the height of Jesus' popularity, particularly with the common people. They came from Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, Tyre, and Sidon. He healed those who were sick and cast demons out of those who were possessed.

Only the demons seemed to recognize his divinity, and he forbid them to reveal it to others. It needed to be kept a secret so that he could function somewhat normally.

The Appointment of the Twelve (3:13-19)

Not all the lists are the same, but we can piece them together with some degree of certainty. Only the Gospel of John gives no list at all, but the mention of various disciples contributes to our knowledge of the twelve. Either Jesus or the early church thought it necessary to have twelve disciples as counterparts to Jacob's (Israel's) twelve sons. The discrepancy in the names causes some to believe that the early church named them.

1. Jesus renamed Simon as **Peter**. *Peter* comes from the Greek word meaning "Petros."
2. **James** Son of Zebedee
3. **John** Son of Zebedee. *Boanerges* has been translated "Sons of Thunder" or "Twins."
4. **Andrew**
5. **Philip**
6. **Bartholomew** (Nathanael): *Bartholomew* means "Son of Talmai" in Aramaic. If this is the case, then the name is Nathanael son of Bartholomew (Talmai).
7. **Matthew** or Levi son of Alphaeus (2:14)
8. **Thomas**
9. **James** Son of Alphaeus. Does this mean that James and Matthew are brothers? No one knows.
10. **Thaddaeus**. Elsewhere he is named Judas Son of James.
11. **Simon** the Cananaean. Cananaean is the older term and Zealot the newer term to describe a member of a revolutionary organization in Palestine. The Zealots as an organized party did not appear until after the time of Jesus.
12. **Judas** Iscariot. He was the only one who was not a Galilean. *Iscariot* means "man of Kerioth or Assassin." *Kerioth* would refer to the town of Kerioth Hezron, located 12 miles south of Hebron, and *Assassin* comes from the Latin *sicarius*, which refers to one who uses a *sica*, that is a dagger.

Questions about Jesus Power (3:20-35)

Questions about Jesus' power came from two very different sources: Jesus own family and the Scribes. Both thought that he was beside himself, that is, demon possessed.

Mental illness was equated with demon possession. The Scribes accused him of being possessed by Beelzebul, a term derived either from Baal or thought of as an equivalent to Satan.

Jesus' response is that a house divided cannot stand and will not possess any power. He accuses them of being close to the sin against the Holy Spirit. Mark 3:28-29 has been a problem throughout all of Christian history. It ought not be explained away, but neither should it cause undue distress. The sin against the Holy Spirit is no isolated act or sin, but an attitude of defiant and deliberate rejection of the light given by the Spirit. According to John 3:19, such persons prefer darkness to light.

The close of this section focuses on Jesus' family, who is trying to get close to him, perhaps to take him home. Jesus responds by pointing out that one's real family consists of those who do the will of God. Roman Catholics have generally concluded that Jesus did not have any blood brothers and sisters, and that those named here were either cousins or stepbrothers. They are trying to preserve the doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary. Protestants generally accept these as Jesus' blood brothers, but agree that deeper relationships exist between the spiritual children of God.

The Parables (4:1-34)

Mark is not as interested in parables as Matthew and Luke. In contrast to Matthew's fifteen and Luke's nineteen, Mark only includes four. The theme of Mark is action, and so instead, he uses eighteen miracles to express Jesus' activity.

The Four Soils (4:1-20)

A parable is a story to illustrate a teaching, but this parable seems to have a slightly different purpose. Its point is to explain why Jesus' teaching was not successful. The explanation given in verses 13-20 represents a later development of the church to explain why everyone has not accepted the teachings of Jesus.

The sower is represented as one of the apostolic preachers and the Word is the Gospel about Jesus Christ. Those who are good soil not only hear and believe, but also bear fruit. Verses 10-12 indicate that the truth made plain in a parable is a riddle to those who do not yet believe. A faith relationship is required, and without it, the whole message appears as foolishness. Jesus compares his use of parables to the commission received by Isaiah to preach to people who not only will not listen; they will be openly hostile. It takes faith to continue such a ministry.

The Lamp (4:21-25)

The purpose of a lamp is to give illumination, and those who take heed will increase their knowledge of the Kingdom. Those who do not take heed will lose everything.

The Seed Growing Secretly (4:26-29)

The point of this parable is that the emerging Kingdom is a divine act. It is not accomplished by human toil. Therefore we must be patient. God will establish it in his own time.

The Mustard Seed (4:30-32)

The Kingdom of God grows gradually and naturally. It does not emerge suddenly and dramatically. Its final establishment may be dramatic, but that is not the way it grows.

THE BEGINNING OF THE END

The earliest and most profound words of Jesus are recorded in Mark 1:15, where he says: “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.” Repent and believe are clear enough, but what does he mean by saying that the time is fulfilled and the Kingdom of God has come near?

Charles Colson, in his book, *Kingdoms in Conflict*, illustrates what Jesus meant by comparing his initial message to the beginning of the end in World War II. The most significant event in Europe, he says, was D-Day, June 6, 1944. This was not the end of the war, but it was the day that put into motion those events, which would draw the war to its inevitable conclusion.

It was the day when the Allied armies stormed the beaches of Normandy. That attack guaranteed the eventual destruction of the Axis powers in Europe. Though the war continued with seeming uncertainties along the way, the outcome was in fact determined. But it wasn't until May 8, 1945 — VE Day — that the results of the forces set in motion eleven months earlier were realized.¹

Jesus' opening pronouncement about the Kingdom of God can be compared to D-Day and his Resurrection from the dead three years later on Easter Sunday morning can be called the first major victory in the campaign for the Kingdom. Easter however is not VE-Day. That must wait until evil has finally been destroyed, and to use the imagery of the Book of Revelation, has been cast into the Lake of Fire. VE-Day for the Church still lies in the future and is symbolized by the Second Coming, the end of history, or the final establishment of the Kingdom. This does not mean that Christians simply wait for VE-Day any more than the allied forces waited for it. Since we know how things will come out, “Let us...do today what shall be tomorrow.”² This is the most practical thing we can do, for as Jesus put it, the Kingdom of God “...is like a mustard seed, which, when sown

¹Charles Colson, *Kingdom's in Conflict* (Grand Rapids: William Morrow and Zondervan Publishing House), 1987), p. 84.

²Jürgen Moltmann, *The Gospel of Liberation* (Waco: Word Books, 1973), p. 38.

upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.”



2. Public Ministry

Mark 4:39—9:50

2. PUBLIC MINISTRY (4:35—9:50)			
THE MINISTRY		THE MIRACLES	
		The Storm at Sea (4:35-41)	
		The Gerasene Demoniac (5:1-20)	
		Jairus' Daughter (5:21-43)	
Rejection at Home (6:1-6)		Feeding of the 5,000 (6:30-44)	
Mission of the Twelve (6:7-13)			
Death of John the Baptist (6:14-29)		Walking on the Water (6:45-52)	
The Power and Popularity of Jesus (6:53-56)			
Faith and Tradition (7:1-23)		The Syrophoenician Woman (7:24-30)	
Jesus and the Gentiles (7:1-37)		The Deaf and Dumb Man (7:31-37)	
A Request for Signs (8:11-13)	The Yeast (8:14-21)	Feeding of the 4,000 (8:1-10)	
		Healing of the Blind Man (8:22-26)	
A MINISTRY BEYOND GALILEE (8:27—9:29)			
Peter's Confession (8:27-33)	Discipleship and the Cross (8:34—9:1)	The Transfiguration of Christ (9:2-13)	The Epileptic Boy (9:14-29)
STATUS AND CHRISTIAN RESPONSIBILITY (9:30-50)			
The Necessity of Suffering (9:30-32)	True Greatness (9:33-37)	An Independent Disciple (9:38-41)	Temptations (9:42-50)

2. PUBLIC MINISTRY

Mark 4:35—9:50

ASSIGNMENTS					
Some Special Miracles (4:35—5:43)	Jesus, the Twelve, and John (6:1-29)	A Special Group of Miracles (6:30—7:37)	A Special Group of Miracles (8:1-26)	Jesus' Confession and Transfiguration (8:27—9:29)	Status and Responsibility (9:30-50)

SOME SPECIAL MIRACLES (4:35—5:43)

The following miracles demonstrate Jesus' authority. Mark strings three stories together to demonstrate Jesus' power over nature, evil, and death.

The Storm at Sea (4:35-41)

Storms were common enough on Lake Galilee, which was below sea level. The cool air, drawn through the mountain passes, clashed violently with the hot, humid air on the Lake. Jesus calmed the storm with the single command, "Peace! Be still!" The disciples were terrified and amazed at his authority and power over nature.

The Gerasene Demoniac (5:1-20)

This story, which took place in Gentile territory, west of Lake Galilee, demonstrates Jesus' authority and power over evil in human nature. Both the howling winds and the howling demons are subject to Christ. The demonic forces recognize him and yield to his power.

Many demonic forces possessed this man. They are named *legion*, which is a reference to a Roman military *legion* consisting of four to six thousand men. This man was being torn apart by many conflicting forces. Jesus healed him restoring him to a single identity, where he himself becomes the center of the man's life.

The demonic forces feared being sent into the Abyss, and so they pleaded with Jesus to send them among the pigs. Jesus granted their request, and once they entered into the pigs, two thousand pigs drowned themselves in the lake.

The man healed by Jesus begged to go with Jesus, but he sent him home to his family and encouraged him to share his Good News with the people in the Decapolis. The Decapolis consisted of ten Gentile cities, located on both sides of the Jordan River between Judea and Galilee.

A number of questions have been raised concerning the location of this miracle. Mark 5:1 simply says that all this took place in the country of the Gerasenes. Did this take place in Gerasa, a city some thirty-five miles southeast of Lake Galilee, or in Gedara, a city about six miles away. Neither of these two cities was located on shores of Lake Galilee. Perhaps Mark is about as specific as he can get by simply saying that it happened in the country of the Gerasenes.

Jairus' Daughter (5:21-43)

Jairus, a ruler of a Synagogue, asked Jesus to heal his daughter, who was twelve years old. Jesus took the inner circle, Peter, James, and John, along with him.

Along the way a woman, who had a flow of blood for more than twelve years, reached out to touch his garment for healing. Her hemorrhage ceased immediately. The healing was attributed to her faith.

When Jesus arrived at the home of Jairus, he was told that the little girl had already died; but he told them that she was only sleeping. Sleeping was frequently a synonym for death, but this may not be the case here, for everyone laughed at him. To argue whether the girl was alive and sleeping or dead is to miss the point. Even if she was only in some kind of coma, no one had the power to wake her up.

Taking the girl's father and mother, along with his three disciples, Jesus went into the girl's room and called her to get up. The Aramaic words he used are, "Talitha cum," which mean, "Little girl, get up!" Unlike the woman who touched Jesus' clothes, this girl was unable to exercise any faith. Jesus' authority and power extend beyond human faith.

What we call the Messianic secret continues. No one is to be told about these miracles. Jesus fears that public knowledge will prevent him from fulfilling his calling. This would not have been the problem in Gentile territory, where no Messianic expectation existed.

REJECTION AT HOME (6:1-6)

In contrast to his increasing popularity, Jesus finds rejection in his hometown of Nazareth. While Nazareth is not named here, it can be assumed. Jesus could perform no *mighty works* there because of a lack of faith. Only a few sick people were healed.

We do gain four valuable insights in Mark 6:3-4. In the first insight Jesus is called the "Son of Mary." It was very unusual to call someone the "Son of their mother." This could be a veiled reference to the Virgin Birth, but it might also be an indication that Joseph has died, leaving Mary a widow. The second insight has to do with his vocation as a

carpenter. The third is the identity of his brothers and sisters. The brothers are named: James, Joses (Joseph), Judas (Jude), and Simon, but the sisters are never named. James eventually became the leader of the Church in Jerusalem (Acts 15:13) and Judas wrote the Epistle of Jude. The final insight has to do with a prophet being without honor among those who know him. Was Jesus quoting someone else, or is this an original statement? We do not know for sure, but it is likely to be an original.

MISSION OF THE TWELVE (6:7-13)

The twelve are sent out two by two with the task of casting out demons and calling people to repentance, in preparation for the Kingdom of God. Why they are only to take a staff is not clear. Matthew 10:10 and Luke 9:3 include this in the forbidden items. The admonition to wear sandals implies a long journey, but Matthew 10:10 and Luke 10:4 suggest that they are not to take sandals. They are to work with those who receive them, and not worry about those who reject them. To shake off the dust from one's feet is the traditional Jewish response to rejection.

The disciples imitated Jesus. They called for repentance and drove out demons and anointed the sick with oil. The practice of anointing with oil is also described in Luke 10:34 and James 5:14. Oil symbolized externally the inner operation of the Spirit of God.

DEATH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST (6:14-29)

As Mark discusses Jesus' growing influence, he compares it to John the Baptist. Suddenly he remembers that he has not told the story of John's death, and so he breaks in to do that. He makes one mistake. He suggests that the reason for Herod's killing of John the Baptist had to do with Herod's marrying Herodias, the wife of his half-brother Philip. Actually Herodias was the wife of another half-brother, and was never married to Philip. The daughter that pleases Herod with her dancing is, according to Josephus, Salome, who did marry Herod's half-brother Philip.

John was critical of Herod for his immorality, and this led to John's own death. Herod did not really want to kill him, but his promise to give Salome what she desired for pleasing him with her dancing boxed him into a corner.

A SPECIAL GROUP OF MIRACLES (6:30—7:37)

This is the first series of special miracles. The second group, found in Mark 8:1-26, has some similarity and repetition.

Feeding the Five Thousand (6:30-44)

Jesus intended to take his disciples on a retreat to rest, but the people saw where they were going and got there ahead of them. When mealtime came the disciples were worried, and the suggestion was made that the crowd be dispersed to obtain food in the nearby villages. This, being a possibility, seems to indicate that Jesus did not have to

perform this miracle; and that the needs of the crowd could have been taken care of in another way.

The cost of feeding the crowd worried the disciples. Two hundred denarii might be difficult to understand today, but it was a considerable amount of money. One denarii was the average daily wage of a laborer. This was much more than the disciples had or could earn. That is what worried them.

The miracle itself reminds us of a similar miracle performed by Elisha in 2 Kings 4:42-44, and the organization of the people into groups of 50 and 100 reminds us of the way in which Moses divided the people in Exodus 18:21. The symbolism in this story is important. The five loaves and two fish add up to the magic number of seven, and the twelve baskets left over add up to the number of the sons/tribes of Jacob/Israel and the disciples of Jesus.

Some scholars have also found traces of the Lord's Supper in this miracle; and although the Gospel of John does not contain an account of the Lord's Supper, it does contain this story of the feeding of the 5,000. In fact, this is the only miracle that appears in all four Gospels. That indicates how important this miracle was to the early church.

Walking on the Water (6:45-52)

Having sent the disciples by boat to Bethsaida, Jesus retreated to a mountain for prayer. Heavy winds came up, and so Jesus walked on the water past the boat. He intended to go right on by, but their cries for help caused him to enter the boat. Immediately the winds ceased.

This happened during the fourth watch of the night, which would have been from 3:00 to 6:00 A.M. According to Roman customs there were four watches in the night, each one lasting three hours.

What is the message in this story? Does it have to do with his authority and power over nature, or is this a misplaced resurrection appearance? No one knows for sure. What it does do is point to his divinity, as do all the miracle stories. They are however not proofs of his divinity, but expressions of it. Only the faithful understand. They do not convince unbelievers.

The Power and Popularity of Jesus (6:53-56)

As they went into the land of Gennesaret, many people came to Jesus to be healed. This story contrasts sharply with his experience in Nazareth. Their faith was so strong that all they needed to do was to touch the fringe of his cloak. This would have been the blue-tasseled border of his cloak. His popularity was at an all-time high.

Jesus and the Gentiles (7:1-37)

Mark is writing this chapter for the benefit of nonJews. He connects the solution of the early church to what Jesus taught and did.

Faith and Tradition (7:1-23)

Three groups and issues are dealt with in this first section. The common people were concerned with their *needs*. Jesus responded to those needs with *compassion*, and the religious leaders were preoccupied with *ritual*.

The first issue dealt with was *unwashed hands*. Not washing one's hands under certain circumstances was considered a violation of the Mosaic Law. The more serious problem for Jesus was an unclean heart, not dirty hands. Instead of quoting from the tradition, he quotes Isaiah 29:13. The second issue had to do with the *Corban Vow*, which was a special gift of money or property to God. People used this vow to get out of their responsibility to care for their aging parents. The third issue was the eating of *kosher food*.

Mark 7:15 is the key verse for understanding all three issues. Everything else is commentary. In discerning between the tradition of men and the commandment of God, Jesus sets Gentiles free of obedience to the Jewish Law. There is only one exception. No one is free of the Moral Law.

The Syrophoenician Woman (7:24-30)

This woman is described both as a Canaanite and a Greek. The important point is that she is not Jewish. Even Jesus emphasizes his mission as being first to the Jews, but this woman insists that he share his authority with her (a Gentile). The reference to *dogs* is not an insult, but a symbol commonly used to describe Gentiles. This woman is the only person in the Gospel of Mark to acknowledge Jesus as Lord; hence, she lays claim to the Gentile share in the Good News.

The Deaf and Dumb Man (7:31-37)

A deaf and dumb man is healed, and people are amazed. The more Jesus tells them to keep quiet about what he is doing, the more zealously they talk about it. This is positive disobedience. They simply cannot keep silent as they witness the deaf hearing and the dumb speaking. Charles Wesley expressed it best in a hymn:

Hear him, ye deaf; his praise, ye dumb
Your loosened tongues employ;
Ye blind, behold your Savior come;
And leap, ye lame, for joy.

How can anyone keep their mouth shut upon seeing such displays of authority and power?

Much has been made of the route taken by Jesus, apparently to avoid returning to Galilee. Was he trying to avoid Herod Antipas, who ruled there, and the people who wanted to make him King? Because his secret is out prematurely, Jesus' mission is more difficult. Since the mission includes the Gentiles, Jesus set himself up for Gentile acceptance by traveling through nonJewish areas, such as the Decapolis.

ANOTHER SPECIAL GROUP OF MIRACLES (8:1-26)

One question frequently asked has to do with whether we have duplicate stories of the same miracles. The question cannot be answered.

Feeding the Four Thousand (8:1-10)

Is the feeding of the 4,000 an earlier version of the feeding of the 5,000, or do we have two separate miracles? No one can say for sure. This might be a simpler less developed account, but it may also be an entirely different miracle. I prefer to think that we have two distinct miracles.

There are more differences than similarities between the feeding of the 4,000 and the feeding of the 5,000. The similarities in the two stories symbolize the inexhaustible grace of Christ as the bread of life (John 6:35). The differences may point to the inclusion of Gentiles in the feeding of the 4,000. The number of baskets left over is seven in contrast to twelve in the feeding of the 5,000. The twelve may symbolize the twelve tribes, and the seven may symbolize the inclusion of Gentiles. See Acts 6:1-6 for the use of the number seven as it relates to the Gentiles.

The location of Dalmanutha is unknown, but a good guess would be Magadan or Magdala (Matthew 15:39). Another suggestion made is South of the Plain of Gennesaret, where a cave has been found bearing the name *Talmanutha*. While the name bears some resemblance, no one can say that this was the place where this miracle happened.

A Request for Signs (8:11-13)

Jesus refused to give in to the Pharisees' request for a sign from heaven. This does not mean that Jesus never gave any signs. The miracles themselves were signs. This refusal to give a sign must be contrasted to Jesus' criticism of the Pharisees for failing to read the signs of the times (Matthew 16:1-4). No one is so blind as the person who refuses to see. How can any sign be given to a person who refuses to look at it?

The miracles are signs only to those who believe. They can never be proof to unbelievers. Signs can never be proof to unbelievers. They are difficult enough for religious people to understand. The Pharisees, for example, attributed Jesus miracles to the activity of Satan.

The Yeast (8:14-21)

The yeast of the Pharisees refers to their *hypocrisy* and the yeast of Herod refers to *worldliness* and *sensuality*. These things kept them from reading the signs that were given. The disciples also had difficulty reading those signs. The miracles pointed to the “bread of life” and still they had difficulty making the connection. If it is difficult for believers, one can imagine how much more difficult it is for unbelievers.

The Healing of the Blind Man (8:22-26)

This healing is strikingly close to the healing described in Mark 7:31-37. There is however a significant difference which makes it difficult to conclude that we have two accounts of the same healing. The latter story tells of a second touch.

A MINISTRY BEYOND GALILEE (8:27—9:29)

Peter’s Confession (8:27-33)

Caesarea Philippi was not only located outside of Galilee, it was also a center of pagan worship. It had been built by Philip, son of Herod the Great, in honor of Caesar and himself. One can still see evidence of its pagan past by visiting the area today.

It was on the way to Caesarea Philippi that Jesus asked his disciples who he was. The Holy Spirit inspired Peter’s reply, but Peter’s understanding was less than complete. Jesus acknowledged that he was the *Messiah* (Hebrew) or *Christ* (Greek), which mean “anointed king.”

Following his acceptance of Peter’s confession, Jesus began to define what it would mean. The Messiah would have to suffer, die, and be raised from the dead. This was not part of the Jewish Messianic expectation. The idea of a suffering Messiah could be found in Isaiah 53, but the concept of a triumphant Messiah found in Isaiah 11 caught on more easily. For Jesus, the suffering preceded the triumph, and so he began the first of three predictions of his suffering and death, which can be found in Mark 8:31; 9:31; and 10:33ff. He saw Peter’s words as a continuation of Satan’s temptation. Nothing personal was meant by his scathing remark to Peter. Peter was still to become the leader of the Church, but he had a great deal to learn.

In Mark 8:31, Jesus refers to himself as the *Son of Man*. This was the way in which he usually referred to himself. The Son of Man was an image he took from Daniel 7:13-14 and refers to a heavenly figure at the end time, who comes as God’s representative to act in the final judgment. No one else calls Jesus the Son of Man, but he uses the title for himself. He may be trying to reinterpret the disciples mistaken concept of the Messiah.

Discipleship and the Cross (8:34—9:1)

Jesus also calls his disciples—past and present—to join him in bearing the cross of suffering. This chapter concludes with the remark that the current generation will see him return with the holy angels. Did Jesus expect the end of history to come in his own time? The Church certainly expected an early return (1 Corinthians 7:26-31 and 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18).

It is remarkable that this saying of Jesus, which was not fulfilled, was included in the Gospel. Those who felt that the prediction was fulfilled looked for that fulfillment in one of four possibilities: (1) the transfiguration of Jesus, (2) the resurrection of Jesus, (3) the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E., or (4) the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The fourth possibility comes closest to fulfilling the prediction, but a fifth possibility exists. (5) Jesus was simply wrong. The end did not come within the generation of his twelve disciples, as he expected. The famous missionary, Albert Schweitzer opted for the fifth option.

The Transfiguration of Christ (9:2-13)

Tradition has it that the transfiguration took place on Mount Tabor, but another likely location would be Mount Hermon. No one knows for sure. The word transfiguration implies some kind of *non-earthly* appearance. Some scholars think that this is a misplaced resurrection appearance, but others suggest that it was a special event to prepare the disciples for what was to come.

The three disciples singled out to see the transfigured Christ were Peter, James, and John. They were to become pillars in the Jerusalem Church. They needed this special vision of Jesus, for they were going to have to suffer for their faith in the future. But why did they have to see Moses and Elijah? Moses experienced a similar kind of transfiguration and had been Israel's great Lawgiver. The Mosaic Law was the basic authority in Judaism. Elijah was the first great prophet, and Malachi 4:5-6 predicted that he would return to act as the forerunner of the Messiah. They both approve of Jesus as the Messiah. Their disappearance, leaving Jesus alone before his three disciples, symbolizes that Jesus replaces them in the new order of things.

The Epileptic Boy (9:14-29)

As they go back down into the valley, they come across the rest of the disciples arguing with the scribes. They have been unable to heal a boy with epileptic fits. Jesus indicates that such healing can only take place through faith and prayer. The father of the boy calls upon Jesus to help his unbelief, and Jesus immediately heals the boy. He does not wait for the father's faith to mature. This demonstrates that the potency of faith lies with God. It is not under the believer's control.

STATUS AND CHRISTIAN RESPONSIBILITY (9:30-50)

What follows is a number of miscellaneous incidents and teachings of Jesus that are not related to one another. If we can find a common theme it might be that selfish ambition does not lead to discipleship.

The Necessity of Suffering (9:30-32)

Jesus indicates again that he will suffer, but on the third day he will rise. The disciples do not fully comprehend what he is saying and so they remain quiet. The final journey to Jerusalem begins, and the Galilean ministry is finished.

True Greatness (9:33-37)

Arrogance is condemned and humility and service exalted. “Humility,” said William Jenkyn, “is the ornament of angels, and pride the deformity of devils.” The true disciple of Jesus rejects selfish ambition and is ready to serve. The modern emphasis on *self-fulfillment* is anti-Christian. It does not lead anyone into the Kingdom of God. Only humility and service can do that.

An Independent Disciple (9:38-41)

An independent disciple, one not in fellowship with the twelve, is having a successful ministry. What should be done about him? Jesus’ answer is that his ministry is valid. Leave him alone. The Church may have been dealing with independent leaders like Paul, or the emerging Gentile leadership. Mark gives them an answer from Jesus. Their ministry is valid. Even Jesus accepts them.

Temptations (9:42-50)

The heart of these verses warns against giving into temptations. The hand, foot, and eye represent the common agents of temptation. It is better to undergo *spiritual surgery* than to end up in hell. The word hell is symbolized by the refuse dump in the Valley of Hinnom. *Hinnom* is the Hebrew word, and *Gehenna* is the Greek transliteration. This was the place where children were sacrificed to the Ammonite god Molech. Josiah put an end to this and made a refuse dump out of it. This does not have the same meaning as *Sheol* in Hebrew or or *Hades* in Greek.

One is tempted to think of “little ones” as children, but Jesus frequently talked of his disciples and other believers as children. He was probably talking about believers of all ages. It would be better to be thrown into the sea with a millstone around one’s neck than to cause a believer to stumble. The millstone was so large that it had to be turned by a donkey. Jesus does not take our sins lightly.

The final three verses on salt suggest that disciples act as salt in the world. Salt on the sacrifice symbolizes suffering, which every disciple must anticipate. This is what Jesus

means when he says that everyone will be salted with fire. In spite of the inevitable suffering Christians will have to face, they are to have a positive influence and witness in the world. They are not to yield to temptation, nor are they to lead other believers astray.

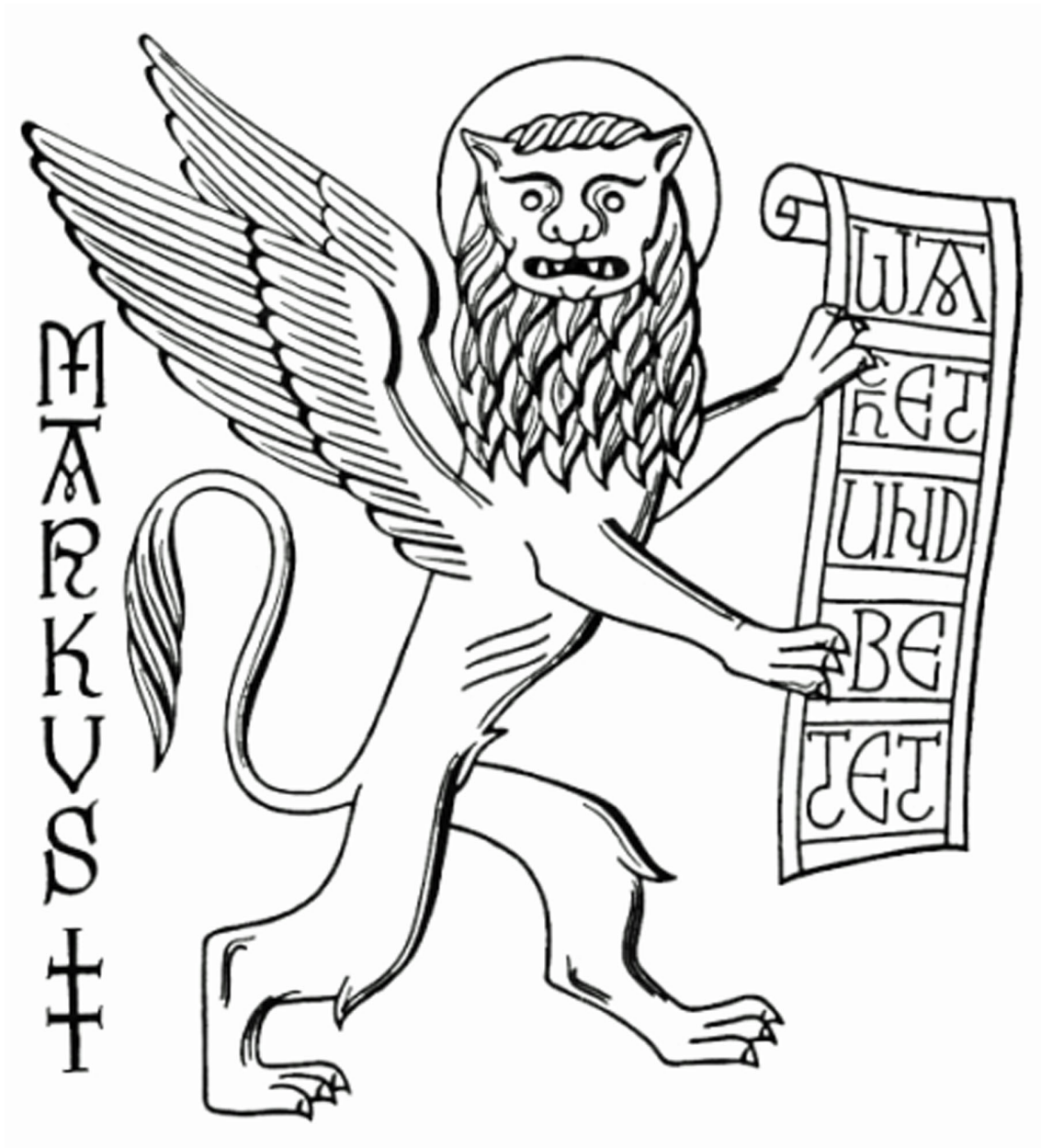
ACCEPT HIS POWER AND AUTHORITY

One of the most famous and also original sayings of Jesus is found in Mark 6:4, where he experiences rejection in his own hometown. “Prophets are not without honor,” says Jesus, “except in their hometown, and among their own kin, and in their own house.” Mark goes on to say, “And he could do no deed of power there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and cured them.”

What is remarkable is the number of healings and miracles Jesus could do elsewhere, both in Jewish and Gentile communities. Jesus expresses his power over nature, evil, disease, and death; and although he astonishes the crowds, he does not seem to impress the Pharisees. When the Pharisees ask him for a sign, he replies in Mark 8:12, “Why does this generation ask for a sign? Truly I tell you, no sign will be given to this generation.” He has just given a number of signs. Why does he say that no signs will be given? Signs nurture believers; they do not convince unbelievers. This is why miracles cannot be performed in the midst of unbelief and why they erupt where faith is present.

Even faith needs guidance, and that is why it is so important to study the life and ministry of Jesus with an open mind. It was faith that guided Peter into confessing Jesus as the Christ at Caesarea Philippi, but that does not mean that he fully comprehended the implications of his confession. As soon as Jesus tried to offer that guidance, Peter thought he knew better. This is why Jesus rebuked Peter so strongly in Mark 8:33, saying, “Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.”

Peter needed to be convinced, not as an unbeliever, but as a believer, and this is why Jesus led Peter, James, and John up a high mountain, where they could see him transfigured and confirmed by Moses, representing the Law, and Elijah, representing the Prophets. Out of the clouds God spoke saying, “This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!” Jesus’ authority comes not from his ability to perform miracles, but out of his relationship to God. That is precisely why we should take him seriously.



3. Jerusalem

Mark 10:1—13:37

3. JERUSALEM (10:1 – 13:37)			
THE JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM (10:1-52)			
Teachings Along the Way (10:1-34)			
Marriage and Divorce (10:1-12)	Example of Children (10:13-16)	The Rich Man (10:17-31)	The Final Prediction (10:32-34)
Two Requests (10:35-52)			
The Request of James and John (10:35-45)		The Request of Bartimaeus (10:46-52)	
THE MINISTRY IN JERUSALEM (11:1 – 13:37)			
The Entry and Cleansing of the Temple (11:1-33)			
The Triumphal Entry (11:1-11)	The Fig Tree (11:12-14, 20-25)	Cleansing the Temple (11:15-19)	Jesus' Authority (11:27-33)
Teachings in Jerusalem (12:1-44)			
The Parable of the Vineyard (12:1-12)	Taxes (12:13-17)		The Resurrection (12:18-27)
The Commandments (12:28-34)	David's Lord (12:35-37)	Pride and Humility (12:38-40)	The Widow's Coins (12:41-44)
The Little Apocalypse (13:1-37)			
The Tribulation	The Parousia		The Rapture?

3. JERUSALEM

Mark 10:1 – 13:37

ASSIGNMENTS				
Teachings along The Way (10:1-34)	James and John and Bartimaeus (10:35-52)	The Entry into Jerusalem (11:1-33)	Teachings in Jerusalem (12:1-44)	The Little Apocalypse (13:1-37)

THE JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM (10:1-52)

The Departure (10:1)

Jesus and the twelve left Capernaum and moved down on the east side of the Jordan, avoiding Samaria, passing through Jericho on the way to Jerusalem. Since the Old Testament Jericho did not exist in the time of Jesus, the Jericho mentioned here is a new city built by Herod the Great. It was located south of the old city.

Marriage and Divorce (10:2-12)

The Pharisees sought to test him in the debate over divorce. Those who followed Rabbi Hillel allowed divorce for a number of reasons, but those who followed Rabbi Shammai allowed divorce only in the case of adultery. The Pharisees were pushing Jesus to take one side or the other. Jesus refused to take either side and insisted that Moses gave concessions because of human weakness. Deuteronomy 24:1-4 helped the woman by granting her a divorce. This was much better than simply being cast aside. The Law limited irresponsible behavior. In his response to the Pharisees Jesus went back to God's original intention, locating marriage in the act of creation itself, where male and female compliment one another and become one flesh. What God joins together is to be permanent and indissoluble.

Verses 11-12 present a slight problem. Adultery was never committed against one's wife. It was committed against the husband of the other woman. This is why Matthew 19:9 accurately omits the phrase "against her." Another problem reflected here is the idea that a woman could divorce her husband. A Jewish woman did not have such a right. This would have been a right within the Greco/Roman culture. Mark might be trying to make Jesus' teaching relevant to Gentile Christianity.

The Example of Children (10:13-16)

The point of this passage is far from clear. It definitely has nothing to do with infant baptism. When Jesus talks about the Kingdom of God belonging to little children, he does not mean that they deserve it because of their behavior. Children have both desirable and undesirable traits.

The Kingdom is not a matter of merit; rather, it is a gift of God. Children are unable to earn anything for themselves; therefore, they are dependent upon others for everything. None of us can earn the Kingdom of God. We all must accept God's gift as little children.

The Rich Man (10:17-31)

The rich man addressed Jesus in a very unusual manner. He called him, *Good Teacher*. This was a very uncommon title for a rabbi. Jesus rejected the title because it lacked discernment. The man did not recognize Jesus as the Christ. The man was looking for some kind of affirmation. He was probably a very sincere man, for he ran up and knelt before Jesus. This symbolizes eagerness and respect.

Jesus responded by testing him with the second half of the Law. The man claimed to have no trouble with these commandments, and so Jesus tests him with the first and most important commandment. He does it in an indirect manner, and the man fails the test. His god is clearly revealed as his wealth. The idol must be removed. Anything that stands between a person and God must be removed. The man walked away in great sorrow. He could not give up his god (possessions). He may have obeyed the lesser commandments, but he could not obey the commandment that really counted.

With his famous imagery of the impossibility of a camel passing through the eye of a needle, Jesus says that it is impossible to enter the Kingdom of God as long as one hangs on to an idol, which in this case was the man's possessions. The medieval explanation that there is a Needle's Eye Gate in Jerusalem that a camel could pass through by kneeling is unfounded in fact. The point Jesus is making is that the rich man is worshiping an idol, and that makes his entry into the Kingdom of God impossible.

The disciples were astonished because Judaism had always taught that wealth was a sign of divine favor, and Jesus had just named it as idolatry. Salvation, on the other hand, cannot be earned; it is a gift to those who are willing to receive it. To be saved is to enter into the Kingdom, and only God can enable that to happen.

The Final Prediction (10:32-34)

Although this final prediction of his impending death and resurrection is very similar to the first two predictions, there is one difference. This is the first time that Jesus reveals that the Gentiles will have a part in it. The Jews will finally condemn him, but the Gentiles will carry out the sentence. It now becomes clear that he will die by crucifixion. In spite of being told three times, the disciples fail to understand.

The Request of James and John (10:35-45)

According to Matthew 20: 20-21, the mother, Salome, of James and John made the request. Salome was the sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus; hence, James and John were first cousins to Jesus. Was this a move to bypass Peter and keep leadership within the family, or was it simply a move to gain the seats of honor in heaven? Up to this point there is no indication that James and John are thinking of another world. They still believe that Jesus will set his Kingdom up in this world. They want to keep the movement within the family.

Jesus uses the occasion to teach his disciples a lesson in humility. These positions will not be given out as a personal favor. They will be given out to those who are worthy of them. James and John did express a willingness to drink the cup (of martyrdom) and be baptized with Jesus' kind of baptism (death), and in the end, both of them suffered and died for their faith. The death of James is recorded in Acts 12:1-2. According to one tradition, John also died for his faith, but according to another, John lived into old age and died a natural death. John's death is not recorded in Scripture.

The other ten disciples were angered by the request of James and John. This does not mean that they understood the nature of discipleship. None of the disciples seem to comprehend Jesus' definition of discipleship. When Jesus finally faces the cross, the disciples all flee. Discipleship, for Jesus, demands servanthood that leads to the possibility of suffering and crucifixion.

Blind Bartimaeus (10:46-52)

There may be several accounts of this healing. In some of them Jesus is entering Jericho, but in this one, he is leaving. In the other accounts two unnamed men are healed, but here, one man, named Bartimaeus, is healed. Bartimaeus is an Aramaic name which means "Son of Timaeus."

In asking Jesus to heal him, Bartimaeus addresses him with the phrase, "Son of David," which is a Messianic title. This means he acknowledges who Jesus is. This is the only time that this particular Messianic title is used in the Gospel of Mark. When Jesus stopped to respond to his cries, he asked, "What do you want me to do for you?" He knew what Bartimaeus wanted, but he also wanted him to define his own need.

THE MINISTRY IN JERUSALEM (11:1—13:37)

The Triumphal Entry (11:1-11)

The triumphal entry into Jerusalem did two things: (1) It was the fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9, and (2) it was a bold assertion of his Messiahship. Those watching him understood what he was doing, but they did not understand what kind of Messiahship he was claiming. Jesus' manner of entry emphasized the character of his Messiahship. The mood of the crowd was expressed in what they did and said.

Only John says that they spread Palm branches on the road. Palm branches were not native to Jerusalem. They would have been brought from Jericho. This would have meant that the crowd followed him from Jericho with an expectation that he was about to throw out the Romans. Mark simply says that they spread branches they had cut in the fields.

The crowd then cried, “Hosanna!” *Hosanna* means “Save Now!” This was not however his intention. At least he had no intention of delivering them from Roman political domination. They expected him to attack the Roman authorities, but his intention was to attack the Temple and put an end to the whole sacrificial system. Once that is understood, it is easy to understand how he knew that he was going to be crucified.

The Withering of the Fig Tree (11:12-14 and 20-25)

Jesus’ curse on the fig tree is difficult to understand. One explanation is that Jesus noticed that the immature fruit was absent in the tree and that it would not bear mature fruit in due season. This immature fruit traditionally appeared even before the leaves did. Its absence indicated that the tree would be barren.

The fig tree represented the Jewish nation, which abounded in the leaves of religious professionalism, but lacked the fruits of righteousness. Without such fruit, the nation was worthless. The final teachings of Jesus on faith and forgiveness must be understood in light of his curse on the fig tree. Faith without works is dead; but faith, which issues the fruit of righteousness, is alive and well. It can move mountains.

The Cleansing of the Temple (11:15-19)

There is little agreement about when this event took place. John places it two years earlier, but Matthew, Mark, and Luke, all place it in the last week of Jesus’ ministry. Matthew places it on the first day of that week, Mark on the second day, and Luke does not name the day.

The merchants were selling pigeons, which were needed for sacrificial offerings, and the moneychangers acted as bankers to help the people exchange currencies. Jesus combines Isaiah 56:7 and Jeremiah 7:11 to emphasize the way in which the Temple—and its surrounding area—was intended to be used. One of the major problems here is that they were depriving the Gentiles of a place to participate in the worship of Yahweh.

The cleansing of the Temple however is not simply an attempt on the part of Jesus to reform worship to include Gentiles. Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross is about to put an end to the whole sacrificial system, which made Temple worship necessary. His sacrifice on the cross will make animal sacrifice in the Temple unnecessary.

The Questioning of Jesus' Authority (11:27-33)

After the priests, Scribes, and Elders questioned Jesus' authority, Jesus turned their questions back at them, asking them what they thought of John the Baptist's baptism. Did it come from heaven or did it have human origins?

They were afraid to deny its divine origin for that would open them up to hypocrisy, but they were also afraid to attribute it to human origins, for that would put them against the crowds. They simply refused to answer, and so Jesus refused to answer them. When he does answer them, it will be with a parable, which was his usual way of teaching.

The Parable of the Vineyard (12:1-12)

Jesus presented an image to his listeners, which would easily be understood. A similar parable can be found in Isaiah 5:1-7. In this instance however it is more like an allegory than a parable. This has raised some questions about its authenticity. Is Mark making an allegory of one of Jesus' parables in order to support the Church as the New Israel?

Every part of the story symbolizes something. The man is God. The vineyard is Israel. That God leases the vineyard to tenants refers to his giving Canaan to Israel. The fruit that he demands is their obedience. The servants sent are the prophets, and the beloved son is Jesus.

The point of the story is that Gentile Christianity has become the New or True Israel. God has given the vineyard to someone else. Psalm 118:22-23 is quoted in Mark 12:10 in support of this point.

The Question about Taxes (12:13-17)

The Pharisees and Herodians—political opponents—join forces against Jesus. They ask him a question that is likely to get him in trouble either with Rome or with the public. If he gives in to paying the oppressive Roman tax, then he will become unpopular, but safe; on the other hand, if he rejects the tax, the people will love him, but Rome will arrest and execute him.

Jesus' answer is ambiguous. One does have a debt to the ruling powers, but one also has a debt to God. This same issue is dealt with in Romans 13:1-7. Neither Jesus nor Paul teaches that one's duty to the state is incompatible with God. In the end the state too has an obligation to God as well as to those whom it rules.

The Question about the Resurrection (12:18-27)

The Sadducees were far less numerous than the Pharisees. They were also less popular among the common people. They were the rationalists of the day, but they were also quite conservative. They rejected the oral traditions of the Pharisees and focused on the

Pentateuch (the first five books of the Bible). They saw nothing in these books about the resurrection.

They tried to trip Jesus up on his belief in a resurrection by bringing up the question of Levirate marriage, which is commanded in Deuteronomy 25:5-10. Jesus replied to their question by rejecting the need for sexual union and procreation in the resurrection. No one will die in the Kingdom; therefore, sex and procreation—and marriage—are not necessary. We will live like the angels. The biblical belief in the resurrection is totally based on communion with God, which is the chief end of humanity.

The Question about the Greatest Commandment (12:28-34)

Finally we have a sincere scribe who asks Jesus how to sum up the 613 laws. Jesus ties Deuteronomy 6:4-5 and Leviticus 19:18 in a threefold statement about worshiping one God, loving him with all one's heart, and loving the neighbor as oneself. The scribe agrees that this is better than burnt offerings and sacrifices, and Jesus affirms him by telling him that he is not far from the Kingdom. This stopped all questioning.

Jesus' reply was really quite orthodox and in line with the teachings of the prophets. In fact he was not even the first one to put these commandments together. Other examples can be found in Judaism, one being the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*. What is different about what Jesus does is the interpretation he gives it, especially the interpretation he gives of the neighbor. We are not to look for someone who might be acceptable as our neighbor, but we are to be a good neighbor. That is how we would want others to love us.

Christ as David's Lord (12:35-37)

Jesus finally asks the crowd a question about the Messiah. Whose son is he? The answer of course is "*David's Son*." Jesus then quotes Psalm 110:1, and asks them why the Messiah is also David's Lord. Jesus is not merely the Son of David; he is more than that. He is his Lord.

Is Jesus struggling with his own messianic consciousness here, or is the early church dealing with a controversy, which it resolves by putting these words into the mouth of Jesus. The only reason why this might be questioned is the use of the word *Lord* for Jesus. This was not what Jesus called himself, but it was commonly used of him in the early church. He proclaimed himself *Messiah*, but they called him *Lord*.

Pride and Humility (12:38-40)

Jesus criticizes the arrogance of the scribes. This does not mean that they were all arrogant. The point he is making is that moral and spiritual power are more important than long robes and official status. The scribes were not paid a salary, but were dependent upon the generosity of others. This system opened itself wide to abuse, and hence, widows were vulnerable to exploitation.

The Widow's Two Copper Coins (12:41-44)

There were thirteen offering boxes around the temple's enclosure. Jesus observed how people made their offerings and praised a poor widow for her two copper coins (mites), which were worth about one penny. They were worth about one sixty-fourth of a denarius.

What counts is not how much this woman's gift was worth, but the motivation behind it. This woman's gift was an expression of her love. That made it the best gift.

The Little Apocalypse (13:1-37)

This chapter has parallels in Matthew 24-25, Luke 21, and 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11. It is similar in purpose to Daniel 7-12 and the Book of Revelation, and that is why it has been called *the Little Apocalypse*. Jesus seems to be talking only to Peter, Andrew, James, and John, although this is not the case in Matthew and Luke.

Apocalyptic literature has the characteristic of being written for times of persecution. Jesus prepares his disciples for just such a time by predicting the destruction of the Temple, including Jerusalem, the end of the age, and the beginning of the Kingdom of God. No one knows when all this will take place, but, there will be certain signs. Those signs will be related to war and natural disaster. They will also take place in the time of the desolating sacrilege (13:14), which has to do with idolatry and the possible placing of an idol in the Temple itself. This would indeed be a desolating sacrilege. While the actual setting up of the desolating sacrilege took place under Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the Seleucid King of Syria, precipitating the Maccabean Revolt of 165 B.C.E., the historical event referred to by Mark might be the attempt to do a similar thing by the corrupt Roman Emperor Caligula, who tried to set up his own image in the Temple in 41 C.E. All of this, according to Daniel 9:27, 11:31, and 12:11, will lead to three and one-half years of suffering. The time period should be understood in symbolic terms, but the suffering will be real.

Three terms that have become popular in Christian circles must be explained because they relate to the events described here in Mark 13. The first is the *Tribulation*, which can be defined as the suffering of the faithful. Christians were expected to live out their discipleship in an increasingly hostile environment. Synagogue and political leaders would oppose them, and they would find divisions erupting in their own families. Such was the cost of discipleship, and Christians should expect such hostility. The Tribulation should be viewed as an opportunity for witness, prompted by the Holy Spirit. The second term is the *Parousia*, which refers to the Second Coming of Christ, and was expected to take place following the Tribulation. No one but God knows when this will take place, but every Christian's task is to be ready for it whenever it happens. This does not mean that we are to do nothing while we wait. We are to be engaged in mission as we await the Parousia. These first two words are New Testament words and make up a valid part of Jesus' Apocalyptic message. The third word is not in the New Testament, but many Christians have used it in attempting to explain what will happen in the Parousia. The

term is *the Rapture*. The Rapture refers to God's sending out of his angels to collect his own, sparing them from the Tribulation. The idea is that Christ will claim his own as he promises to do in Matthew 24:36-41 and Luke 17:30-36.

The most puzzling verse in the chapter is verse 30 which indicates that all these things will happen prior to the end of the present generation. Jerusalem was indeed destroyed in 70 C.E., but the end of the age did not come, nor was the Kingdom of God completely established. What could Jesus have meant? One suggestion has been that the Jewish race will survive until the end of the age, but a better suggestion is that Jerusalem would come to an end within the lifetime of the present generation. The signs of the end have more to do with the birth pangs of the new age than its final establishment. This would mean that the Kingdom of God is still breaking in on us, and that we are still awaiting its final and complete establishment.

THE JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM

Elie Wiesel, the famous Holocaust survivor, once said, "Wherever I come from, I come from Sigit, and wherever I go, I...go to Jerusalem. Except there was Jerusalem in Sigit and there is Sigit in Jerusalem." For Wiesel, Jerusalem was the sign of hope and liberation from the tragedy he endured in the Holocaust, Wiesel believed that his memory of Sigit would not have survived a single day without his dream of the eternal city.

Jesus set his face towards Jerusalem, the city that he loved and the city over which he wept. It was also to become the place where he would be crucified. Enroute to Jerusalem, according to Mark 10:33-34, Jesus made his final prediction:

See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death; then they will hand him over to the Gentiles; they will mock him, and spit upon him, and flog him, and kill him; and after three days he will rise again.

As Jesus journeyed to Jerusalem, he taught along the way, and these teachings are important. They give us insight into what the Kingdom of God will be like in the New Jerusalem. When Jesus entered Jerusalem, he cleansed the Temple and foretold its destruction. In the New Jerusalem, according to Revelation 21:22, there will be no need for a Temple, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb.

We must keep this in mind as we journey towards Jerusalem. The New Jerusalem will be very different from anything we have yet experienced. The Good News is that we do not have to wait until we die to begin this journey. The journey begins for each of us when we respond to Jesus and choose to live according to his teachings. Our old ways may get in the way, but that is precisely why we need to journey towards the New Jerusalem.



4. Crucifixion and Resurrection

Mark 14:1—16:20

4. CRUCIFIXION AND RESURRECTION (14:1 – 16:20)				
THE PLOT AND ANOINTING (14:1-11)				
THE LAST SUPPER (14:12-25)				
THE GETHSEMANE EXPERIENCE (14:26-52)				
THE TRIALS (14:53 – 15:15)				
The Religious Trial (14:53-65)	Peter's Threefold Denial (14:66-72)	The Political Trial (15:1-15)		
THE CRUCIFIXION (15:16-47)				
The Mocking of Jesus (15:16-20)	The Crucifixion (15:21-32)	The Death of Jesus (15:33-41)	The Burial of Jesus (15:42-47)	
THE RESURRECTION (16:1-20)				
The Ending of Mark (16:1-8)		The Added Endings (16:9-20)		
The Three Women (16:1)	The Young Man (16:5)	Emmaus (16:12-13)	Commission (16:14-18)	Ascension (16:19-20)

4. CRUCIFIXION AND RESURRECTION

Mark 14:1—16:20

ASSIGNMENTS				
The Last Supper (14:1-25)	Getthsemane (14:26-52)	The Trials (14:53—15:15)	Crucifixion (15:16-47)	Resurrection (16:1-20)

THE PLOT AND AN ANOINTING (14:1-11)

In the midst of the plot to eliminate Jesus, a story of love is placed. According to the Gospel of John (12:1), this event took place six days before Passover in the home of Lazarus. Could there have been two such anointings? This account places it in the home of Simon the Leper, who might have been related to Lazarus. The anointing is an act of love, interpreted here as the anointing of Jesus for burial; but one might also read into it a messianic anointing.

John names this woman as Mary, the sister of Lazarus, but in Mark no name is given. Several people object to her using the valuable nard, imported from India, which makes it very expensive. It was valued at approximately one year's wages for a common laborer. Jesus did not object. Our gifts do not always have to be related to their usefulness in the community.

THE LAST SUPPER (14:12-25)

Two issues are raised in this passage. The first has to do with when the Last Supper took place. Mark clearly identifies it with Passover, but his details are clearly inaccurate. Thus the time of the Last Supper has been debated in literature from the second century to the present. John insists that Jesus was crucified at the same time as the paschal lamb was prepared for Passover. This would have been on the day prior to Passover. Mark's Gentile background makes him less reliable than John.

The second issue raised in the Last Supper is the drinking of blood. Roman Catholics have taken Jesus' words literally, while Quakers have taken them completely symbolically. The very idea of drinking blood would have been repugnant to Jews, who were forbidden to drink blood in their dietary laws. It is difficult to imagine Jesus even saying this, much less for him to mean it literally. Luke takes all references to wine as blood out of his account. Paul makes a claim for it in 1 Corinthians 11:23, but his

ministry was primarily with Gentile Christianity, where there would not have been the same aversion to it.

The main point of the Last Supper is that the New Covenant is initiated by the spilling of blood, not the drinking of it. There is little in the Gospels to suggest the drinking of wine to symbolize blood as a weekly ritual. Only in John 6:52-58, is any sacramental significance given to it. The drinking of wine, according to the Gospels, will only take place again when the Kingdom is finally established.

THE GETHSEMANE EXPERIENCE (14:26-52)

As they entered the Mount of Olives, Jesus foretold that they would all desert him. Peter refused to believe it.

Moving into the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus asked his three closest disciples to wait while he prayed. They fell asleep three times. The heart of the Gethsemane Experience is Jesus prayer found in Mark 14:36. He had taught this prayer to his disciples; now he was living it out.

Following the prayer, Judas appeared with a crowd, sent by the chief priests, scribes, and elders, who were armed with swords and clubs. He betrayed him with a kiss. No good answer is given as to why this had to be accompanied with a kiss.

Mark does not identify the one who cut the ear off of the slave of the High Priest. According to John 18:10, it was Peter, who cut off Malchus' ear.

After the above incident, everyone forsook him. Only one man seemed to follow him, but when they tried to seize him, he too fled. Mark does not identify him. One guess is that this young man was Mark himself, but many doubt this. The man was dressed only with a linen cloth. This indicates that a nearby householder came out to see what was going on. That is why he was so scantily dressed. The incident is not important, and so it does not matter that we do not know who he is.

THE RELIGIOUS TRIAL (14:53-65)

The Sanhedrin gathered to deal with the accusations made against Jesus. Caiaphas (18-36 C.E.) was the High Priest at the time of this religious trial. The Sanhedrin was made up of 71 members from influential families. There would have been elders, lawyers, Pharisees, and Sadducees in it. Several things indicate that this trial was held illegally. No Sanhedrin Trial could take place at night, the witnesses had to agree, and no death sentence could be made. This trial did not pass the first two requirements, and there is even some suspicion about the last one.

Jesus was accused of two things: Blasphemy against the Temple, and Blasphemy for claiming to be the Messiah. Since the accusations of the witnesses conflicted, Caiaphas asked Jesus point blank in Mark 14:61-62, "Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed

One?” Jesus’ answer was direct, “I am; and ‘you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power,’ and ‘coming with the clouds of heaven.” That was enough. They condemned him. This does not mean that they were commuting the death sentence, however, for they did not have the authority to do that. He would now have to be sent to Pilate for a Political Trial.

PETER’S THREEFOLD DENIAL (14:66-72)

Questions are often raised in regard to how anything is known about the trial. The disciples had all fled, except for Peter and John who were known to be in the vicinity of where it took place. Peter tried his best not to be discovered, but he could not hide himself from a servant girl of the High Priest, who recognized him twice.

Several bystanders also recognized Peter as a Galilean and concluded that he was one of Jesus’ companions. Peter tried to cover his identity by invoking a curse on himself. This does not mean that he used profanity, but that he tried to convince those around him that he was not one of Jesus’ disciples. He was using an oath to convince people.

THE POLITICAL TRIAL (15:1-15)

In the morning, the Sanhedrin confirmed the illegal decision it had made the night before; and since they could not carry out the execution, they sent Jesus on to Pilate. Pilate, who normally lived in Caesarea, happened to be in Jerusalem. According to Luke, noticing that Jesus was a Galilean, Pilate referred him to Herod. Nothing is said of Jesus’ appearance before Herod in the Gospel of Mark

Pilate’s jurisdiction was Judea. The charge made against Jesus was that of political insurrection, and so Pilate asked him if he claimed to be a King, specifically of the Jews. Jesus’ answer in Mark 15:2 was ambiguous, but it is generally believed that he said, “Yes.”

Although Pilate was very cruel to the Jews, the Gospel accounts do not portray him that way. It might be that in Mark’s time he had to be careful what he said about the Romans. Relations between Rome and the growing Church were very fragile. In the Gospels Pilate admits that Jesus has done nothing that deserves a penalty of death, and so he attempts to find a way out of his predicament by offering one of two men their freedom. Barabbas, according to Mark, was an insurrectionist; but the other Gospels describe him as a common criminal. Mark is probably right. Barabbas’ name means “Son of the Father,” which was a messianic title in itself; hence, he might have been under the same charge as Jesus. In fact his full name might have been Jesus Barabbas, just as we have given Jesus the name Jesus Christ. The latter part of the name refers to their claims to be the Messiah.

The people called for the release of Barabbas, a more experienced revolutionary. He may also have been one who advocated the way of violence, which was precisely what the people wanted. What is difficult to understand is why Pilate went along with them. It

would not have been to his or Rome's advantage, but then, nothing ever comes of Barabbas. He fades away into the mists of history, as does all violence.

While Mark tends to place all the blame on the Jews for Jesus' crucifixion, he cannot avoid dealing with the punishment about to be carried out on Jesus. It was the Romans who executed slaves and insurrectionists, and since Jesus was not a slave, he was crucified as an insurrectionist.

THE CRUCIFIXION (15:16-47)

The scourging of a condemned man was a normal part of carrying out the death penalty. Frequently men died under the scourging itself, and in the case of Jesus, he probably died quickly on the cross because of it. Prior to his crucifixion they mocked him by placing a purple cloak and crown of thorns on him. Matthew calls it "a scarlet robe" and Luke "an elegant robe." It was probably some worn out military garb used to mock him. The reed represented a king's staff. All three of these symbols reinforce the idea that the charge against him was the claim to be the Messiah, the King of the Jews. None of these items would have been with him when he was actually crucified. He was naked upon the cross, and so pictures that show him otherwise, are mistaken.

Simon of Cyrene helped him carry his cross. Not much is known about Simon. Mark names his sons as Alexander and Rufus. A man named Rufus is named in Romans 16:13. This may be the same Rufus, but this is only a guess.

He was taken to Golgotha for crucifixion. *Golgotha* is a transliteration of the Aramaic term *gulgoltah*, which means "skull." Calvary is the Latin term. Although the site is disputed, one thing is known. It would have been outside the city walls of Jerusalem. Both sites, the traditional one and Gordon's Calvary, meet that criterion.

Jesus was nailed to the cross at 9:00 A.M. Darkness covered the earth at 12:00 Noon, and he was dead by 3:00 P.M. The darkness could not have been natural, for it was the time of the full moon. It was a supernatural event, or else a symbolic description of it. Amos 8:9 describes such a darkness.

Mark only quotes one of Jesus seven last words from the cross—the cry of despair. Since his readers will not understand the Aramaic, he translates it into Greek for them. The cry must have been slurred because those who are near him think that he is crying out to Elijah. *Eli*, which means "my God" and *Eli-yah*, which means "Elijah" are very close, and could easily be confused. The Talmud taught that Elijah would aid the distressed, but why is Jesus, the Son of God, distressed? What is known about these words is that they are quoted from the beginning of Psalm 22. He may have been reciting the Psalm, and just never finished. The Psalm ends with a shout of victory, but of course, he never gets that far with the recitation. In his previous predictions he talks about both his crucifixion and his resurrection, and so this Psalm fits perfectly into what he is trying to say.

The curtain of the Temple was torn from top to bottom. This symbolizes that access to God has been achieved through the death of Jesus and that the Temple and its whole sacrificial system are no longer needed.

A Roman Centurion concludes that Jesus truly was the Son of God. This has been interpreted in many ways, but for Gentile Christianity it declares that a Gentile recognized him as the Son of God before his own disciples did. At most the disciples hoped that he might be the Jewish Messiah.

Mary Magdalene, Mary (mother of James the younger and Joses), and Salome (mother of James and John) observed from a distance. Nothing is said about Jesus' mother, who must have been even closer to him.

Most bodies were left on the cross to rot in disgrace, but Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for permission to bury Jesus' remains in his own grave. Joseph was a minority leader in the Sanhedrin, and might have simply been concerned about the illegal charges made against Jesus, or he might have been a disciple. Nothing is said for sure.

THE RESURRECTION (16:1-20)

The Empty Tomb (16:1-8)

Mark's account of the resurrection seems to end rather abruptly. Three women, Mary Magdalene, Mary (mother of James) and Salome go early in the morning to anoint Jesus' body; but when they arrive, all they find is an empty tomb and a young man who interprets what has happened. Since this young man is dressed in a white robe, we think of him as an angel, but Mark does not say this, even though he might assume it.

The women are afraid, astonished, and joyful all at the same time. There is no appearance of Jesus, but there is certainty that he has risen. His friends could not have stolen his body, and his enemies would not have dared to do it. The best evidence however of the validity of the resurrection is the way in which the church has survived through severe persecution. These early witnesses were sure of their faith, even if they were fearful.

The Epilogues (16:9-20)

What follows creates one of the major textual problems of the New Testament. The longer ending is not present in the codices Sinaiticus and Vaticanus, the oldest New Testament manuscripts. Four other less important manuscripts contain a shorter ending, and so that leaves us with two epilogues.

The longer epilogue summarizes Jesus' appearances to the two walking to Emmaus, to the eleven, and his giving of the great commission. Unlike Matthew, the Great Commission is not set in Galilee. These summaries are followed with the account of his Ascension. The shorter ending is but a summary of their faithfulness in spreading the Good News of eternal salvation to the ends of the earth.

What happened, and why does Mark come to such an abrupt conclusion? Three possibilities exist. First, the ending was mutilated and could not be restored. What is left might be two attempts, on the part of others, to summarize Mark's ending. The second possibility might be that Mark never had a chance to finish his Gospel. Persecution might have stopped him. A third possibility might be that he did indeed finish his Gospel, but had no intention of saying more. Although Jesus told his disciples in Mark 14:28 that he would see them in Galilee after his resurrection, Mark does not describe any such appearance. Perhaps Mark believed that Jesus was talking about the Parousia, or his second coming, which had not yet taken place. This would mean that he ended his Gospel while the followers of Jesus were still living in expectation of the second coming, which he believed would take place in Galilee. This of course goes against the tradition that Jesus would return to Jerusalem. Of the three possibilities, the first sounds the most convincing.

Even though everyone seems to agree that Mark did not write either of the endings, early scholars agreed that in spite of grammatical and theological peculiarities, they were consistent with Mark's work; hence, they were included in the New Testament canon. They were probably inserted in the middle of the second century.

The signs to follow Jesus' disciples must be mentioned. They are five in number: exorcism, tongues, snake handling, drinking of poison, and healing. According to Acts 8:7; 2:4; 28:3-5; and 28:8 all of these are fulfilled in the New Testament Church except for the drinking of poison.

MISSING

In this past year a number of people have simply disappeared. Ronelle Eichstedt and Laurie Depies are the most well known. When Ronelle Eichstedt's body was found, there was sadness because she had been brutally murdered, but there was also relief. Her fate was now known, and her family could get on with grieving their loss. The search for Laurie Depies continues. As long as Laurie's body is missing, we do not know whether she is alive or dead.

Everyone had seen Jesus' body. They knew he was dead. Some women went to anoint his body, only to discover it missing. They were alarmed. According to Mark 16:5-7, a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side, said to them, "Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you." So they fled from the tomb in terror and amazement; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid. This is the way Mark, the first Gospel, ends.

The longer that Laurie Depies is missing, the more we will fear that she is dead; but until her body is discovered, her family and friends will go on nurturing hope that she is alive. The missing body of Jesus lacks the power to nurture hope that he might be alive, mainly because everyone had witnessed his death, and even the words of a young man dressed in

white fail to convince the women. They might be excited by the possibility, but they are also afraid to tell anyone, lest they be accused of hallucinating.

We have to live without seeing his resurrected body and we have to nurture our hope on the basis of the testimonies of people we have never met. The enemies of Jesus could not produce the body, even though they had guards at the tomb. The only conclusion that we can draw from the missing body is the witness of the young man in white, who said, “He has been raised.”

THE NEW ADAM



The Nativity in a Church in Cairo, Egypt

The Gospel of Luke

INTRODUCTION TO THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

LUKE <i>The Beloved Physician</i>	
Date: 80-85 C.E.	Place: Rome
Purpose: To inform Theophilus	Sources: Mark Quelle

Author

While the author's name does not appear in the Gospel, tradition indicates that Luke, the physician and companion of the Apostle Paul, researched and wrote this Gospel. As Mark reflected the views of Peter, Luke reflected the views of Paul.

Luke does not say that he was a physician. Paul reveals this information about him in Colossians 4:14, where he greets the Colossians on Luke's behalf. We know from Luke's use of the Greek language, that he was well educated.

Date

Luke seems to be familiar with the Fall of Jerusalem, and so he probably wrote after 70 C.E., but an earlier date cannot be ruled out. Since he does not seem to be dependent upon Josephus (93 C.E.), a well-known historian, he must have written prior to him. The content of Luke/Acts fits well into the political situation during the time of Emperor Domitian (81-96 C.E.), and so a good guess would be around 80-85 C.E.

Place

The Gospel was written either from Achaia (Greece) or Rome, although Ephesus and Caesarea have also been suggested. Luke's strong dependence upon Mark suggests Rome.

Luke was writing to a government official in Achaia, although Antioch and Ephesus are also possible destinations. Because the identity of the person, to whom the Gospel is

written or dedicated, is not known, we do not know the destination of the letter. What we do know is that it had to be written to people unfamiliar with the places where these events had occurred. This ruled out locations in Palestine, for the author feels that it is necessary to clarify where various places in Palestine are. Anyone living in Palestine would not have needed these comments.

Purpose

Why was another Gospel needed? According to Luke, these things needed to be put down in a more orderly account. His work is closer to a biography of Jesus than any of the other Gospels, and yet, he also expresses more interest in facts vital to faith than to other kinds of facts, which would interest a biographer.

This Gospel lifts Jesus up as the Savior of Israel and of all humanity. Luke’s genealogy goes back to Adam, and his inclusion of the oppressed and the Samaritans, indicates that he is writing for non-Jews. He even avoids Jewish words such as *rabbi* and *Golgotha* because they would be offensive and misunderstood among Greeks.

Luke includes events and parables not included by the other Gospel Writers, such as the Parables of the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son, the story of Zaccheaus, the trial before Herod, the thief on the cross, and the walk to Emmaus. These stories and events point to Jesus’ compassion for all people.

Although there is a strong emphasis on the “wideness of God’s mercy,” there is no *cheap grace* present. Luke articulates some of the most stringent demands of Jesus. When God’s grace breaks through to sinners, everyone rejoices; hence, there is a sparkle of joy expressed throughout the Gospel.

Organization

Birth and Childhood of Jesus (1:5—2:52)		John the Baptist and Jesus (3:1—4:13)	
Jesus’ Ministry in Galilee (4:14—9:50)	The Journey to Jerusalem (9:51—19:27)	Jesus’ Ministry in Jerusalem (19:28—21:38)	
The Crucifixion of Jesus (22:1—23:56)		The Resurrection of Jesus (24:1-53)	



1. The Birth and Maturing of Jesus

Luke 1:1—4:13

1. THE BIRTH AND MATURING OF JESUS (1:1—4:13)

THE INTRODUCTION (1:1-4)

THE EARLY YEARS OF JOHN	THE EARLY YEARS OF JESUS
Gabriel's Appearance to Zechariah (1:5-25)	The Genealogy of Jesus (3:23-38)
Gabriel's Appearance to Mary (1:26-38)	The Birth of Jesus (2:1-20)
Mary's Visit to Elizabeth (1:39-56)	The Presentation of Jesus in the Temple (2:21-40)
The Birth of John (1:57-66)	Wise Men from the East The Flight to Egypt and Return
The Prophecy of Zechariah (1:67-79)	The Boy Jesus in the Temple (2:41-52)
The Early Years of John (1:80)	The Baptism of Jesus (3:21-22)
The Activity of John (3:1-20)	The Temptation of Jesus (4:1-13)

1. THE BIRTH AND MATURING OF JESUS

Luke 1:1—4:13

ASSIGNMENTS				
Elizabeth and Mary (1:1-56)	The Birth of John the Baptist (1:57-80)	The Birth and Childhood of Jesus (2:1-52)	The Activity of John the Baptist (3:1-20)	The Preparation of Jesus (3:21—4:13)

INTRODUCTION (1:1-4)

Luke, a friend of Paul's, clarifies his purpose. He intends to write an orderly account. Does this mean *chronological*? He does not change Mark's *chronological order* in any significant way, but he does add material not in Mark. Another thing that might be meant is that he intends to write a *geographical* account, beginning in Jerusalem, moving on to Galilee, and ending up again in Jerusalem.

The intended reader is a man named Theophilus. He is unknown in biblical and Christian history. Luke refers to him, as *most excellent*, a term reserved for high government officials. This would mean that he was a man of high social standing, perhaps a Roman government official. Was he inquiring into Christianity, or was Luke nurturing him in the faith? No one knows. Since his name means "friend of God," some scholars have seen his name as symbolic and the Gospel as being dedicated to all true Christians. Most believe however that there really was a man named Theophilus, to whom Luke was writing his Gospel, but that the Gospel was intended for a much wider reading than one man, no matter how important he might be.

THE BIRTH OF JOHN (1:5-80)

Gabriel's Appearance to Zechariah (1:5-25)

What follows is a story about Zechariah and Elizabeth, who give birth to John the Baptist. This couple was a model of Jewish piety. Zechariah and Elizabeth were both of priestly descent from the line of Aaron. As a member of the priestly division of Abijah, one of 24 divisions of the priesthood, Zechariah had to take his turn in keeping the incense burning on the altar in front of the Most Holy Place. Priests served in this capacity in Jerusalem for two weeks out of every year.

At this point we are introduced to Gabriel, one of the seven archangels of Jewish tradition, whose name means “man of God” or “God has shown himself mighty.” The only other archangel named in the Bible is Michael.

Gabriel appeared to Zechariah while he was performing his duties in Jerusalem. This occurred at a time when Zechariah had been chosen by lot to offer the incense. This was an honor given to a priest only once in his lifetime, and many were never given the opportunity. To be fair the priest was chosen by lot. Gabriel appeared at the right side of the altar and announced that Elizabeth would bear a son, who would be named John, which means “God is gracious.” John would be identified with the Jewish expectation of Elijah, which is defined in Malachi 4:5, and he would serve like a Nazirite, which means that he would be empowered by the Spirit and be expected to abstain from wine. He would be the forerunner of the expected Messiah. We are not to think of John actually being Elijah, but of John functioning like Elijah. He called for repentance as did this pioneer of the prophets, and thus fulfilled Malachi 4:5-6.

Because of Zechariah’s unbelief, he was struck dumb (speechless). This was symbolic of the overpowering character of the divine Word. Meanwhile the people were waiting for the benediction, which Zechariah was unable to pronounce. He had to do it with sign language. When Elizabeth discovered that she was pregnant, she hid herself. Why? It was more shameful not to bear children in Jewish society. Why did she hide herself when she became pregnant? While Zechariah’s silence awaited the Word of God, Elizabeth’s secrecy awaited divine revelation. These events did not go unnoticed. The people began to anticipate that something was in the air, perhaps a great miracle of some kind.

Gabriel’s Appearance to Mary (1:26-38)

Six months after Gabriel had appeared to Zechariah, he appeared to Mary in Nazareth. This would mean that Zechariah’s wife, Elizabeth, was already six months pregnant. The message told to Mary was that she would become pregnant and give birth to the Messiah. Mary was surprised, not because she would give birth prior to her official marriage to Joseph, but because she was to give birth to the Messiah.

Mary’s betrothal to Joseph was an official relationship, which frequently involved cohabitation, culminating in legal marriage. Luke is clear that the two have had no sexual relations; nevertheless, it was important to clarify a legal relationship to Joseph, a descendant of the house of David. The child was to be named Jesus, which is *Joshua* in the Old Testament. It means, “the Lord is Salvation.”

In Luke 1:36, Elizabeth is described as Mary’s relative. What does this mean? Was she her cousin or aunt? Most have assumed that the two were cousins, but no help is given from Scripture. All that we know is that the two were related.

Mary's Visit to Elizabeth (1:39-56)

Having heard the news, Mary went to a city in Judah. The city is unnamed and unknown to us. The thoughts and feelings of the two women were expressed in Elizabeth's *benediction* (1:42-45) and Mary's *song* (1:46-55). While some think that Mary's *song*, the *Magnificat*, was the expression of Elizabeth, Luke attributes it to Mary. This does not mean that Mary composed the song herself. Hannah's *song* in I Samuel 2:1-10 certainly had a tremendous influence on it. The song has two parts: (1) Mary's personal thanksgiving, and (2) a national thanksgiving. The song has a tremendous emphasis on God's bias for the poor and the oppressed.

Mary seems to have stayed with Elizabeth through the birth of John the Baptist. She arrived when Elizabeth was six months pregnant, and left after Elizabeth's ninth month. Although Luke does not say so, it is assumed that she only went home to Nazareth after Elizabeth gave birth.

The Birth of John (1:57-66)

Eight days after John was born, he was taken to the Temple for Circumcision. In the context of his circumcision the discussion arises as to what he will be named. It was unusual to wait until the day of Circumcision. The neighbors and relatives expect that he will be named Zechariah, after his father; but Elizabeth, his mother, indicates that it will be John.

The father always had the final say in such matters, and so everyone looked at Zechariah. Since he could not talk, he asked for a tablet on which he wrote *John*. At this precise moment God gave him back his speech, and he not only named his son, but began to prophesy as well.

The Prophecy of Zechariah (1:67-79)

This prophecy has frequently been referred to as the *Benedictus*, which was the first word in the Latin translation of it. The prophecy has much the same flavor to it that we find in Mary's *Song*, the *Magnificat*.

The prophecy has two parts to it. In the first part (1:67-75), the emphasis is on who is coming, and in the second part (1:76-79) the emphasis is on John as his forerunner. The one who is coming will be the "Horn of Salvation," which means that he will establish God's Kingdom, and by his strength, he will usher it in.

The Early Years of John (1:80)

The period of time John spent in the wilderness would approximate thirty years. Could these years have been spent at Qumran with the Essenes. Some say "Yes," others say, "No." If he did grow up in the Qumran Community, he broke with them before he began his ministry of baptizing.

The Essenes separated themselves from the Nation; but John embarked on a mission to the Nation. With his appearance in the wilderness a new age was about to begin. It was to be an age of preparation for Jesus who would inaugurate the Messianic Age.

THE BIRTH OF JESUS (2:1-40)

The Birth in Bethlehem (2:1-20)

Jesus was born in Bethlehem, the City of David, during the census, which forced his parents to return home for the enrollment. The Roman census was used for military service and taxation, but since Jews were exempt from military service, this one would have been for the purpose of taxation.

The date of Jesus' birth has been estimated between 6-5 B.C.E. While Quirinius was governor of Syria-Cilicia from 6-9 C.E., he was not governor during the birth of Jesus. The census was nearly ten years earlier, and that is why we say that Jesus was born around 6 B.C.E. The census might have taken place in two stages: (1) The enrollment stage, when all the data was collected, and (2) the assessment stage, when the new taxes would have been declared. The enrollment stage would have begun under a different governor, such as Saturninius (9-6 B.C.E.), but the assessment stage would have been accomplished under Quirinius. Quirinius would have been a viceroy at the time of the enrollment, but he would not yet have been Governor.

Augustus Caesar (27 B.C.E. to 14 C.E.) would have been the Roman Emperor throughout both stages. Caesar was a ruling title, such as King or Emperor, and Augustus was a title given to him by the Roman Senate in 27 B.C.E., after he assumed office. *Augustus* means: "exalted." His previous name was Gaius Octavius, and he was a nephew of Julius Caesar. Augustus was the first of the Roman emperors to expand the empire over the entire Mediterranean world and establish what was to be called the *Pax Romana*, ushering in the golden age of Roman literature and architecture.

Jesus was born in a cave, beneath the Inn, where the animals would have been stabled. Strips of cloth (swaddling cloths) were customarily wrapped around a newborn child. The appearance of the shepherds symbolize his humanity (humility), and the appearance of the angels his divinity. In verse 11 he is given three titles: Savior, Christ (Messiah), and Lord. This is the acknowledgment that he is more than the expected Messiah. He will save all his people and rule over all nations. While Rome might bring political peace, he will bring inner peace. He is indeed the Prince of Peace.

The Presentation in the Temple (2:21-40)

Two rituals were observed, one by Mary (The Ceremony of Purification) and one by Joseph (The Redemption of the Firstborn). The first one is described in Leviticus 12:2ff and the second in Exodus 13:2, 12-13. The mother was considered unclean for a period of seven days, after which a male child would be circumcised. A mother would not have been considered purified for another thirty-three days. Since Jesus was a first born child,

the family would also have to redeem him. Firstborn children were considered holy, belonging to God; and had to be redeemed for five shekels. The offering of a pair of turtledoves and two young pigeons symbolized the poverty of Mary and Joseph, his legal father. The proper sacrifice would have been a one-year-old ram.

Simeon and Anna, led by the Spirit, recognize who Jesus is and express gratitude to God for allowing them to behold him. They too recognize him as the universal Savior, Christ, and Lord; but they also perceive his impending suffering and death.

Nothing is known of Simeon. Because he held the baby Jesus in his arms and blessed the holy family, some have suggested that he might have been a priest on duty in the Temple. The hymn of Simeon found in verses 29-32 has become known as the *Nunc Dimittis*. These words are taken from the first words of the passage as it has been recorded in the Latin Vulgate, which mean: “you are dismissing...”

A woman could not be a priest, but she could be a prophetess. Anna follows in the line of Miriam (Exodus 15:20), Deborah (Judges 4:4), and Huldah (2 Kings 22:14). In the New Testament we have another example in the daughters of Philip (Acts 21:9). Anna’s name means “grace,” and is Hannah in the Old Testament. She praised God for Jesus as Hannah praised God for Samuel (1 Samuel 2:1-10).

All we know about Anna is that she had been married and that she was eighty-four years old at the time of Jesus’ birth. She seems to have been a widow for many years and spent all of her time around the Temple. She may have been allowed to live in one of the many rooms in the Temple area itself.

THE BOY JESUS IN THE TEMPLE (2:41-52)

Jesus accompanied his parents to Jerusalem to celebrate *Passover*, one of the three major feasts that were to be celebrated in Jerusalem (Exodus 23:14-17). The other two feasts were *Pentecost* and *Booths*. At the age of 12 Jesus became a “son of the Law,” and was expected to fulfill his duty along with adults. The group that made its way to Jerusalem would have been large, and it would have been normal for parents not to know where their children were. The city of Jerusalem would have been alive with excitement as it grew from 25,000 to nearly 100,000 in population during such a time.

As Mary and Joseph left the city, they did not notice his absence until the end of the first day. The second day would have been spent returning to Jerusalem, and the third day searching for Jesus. Their surprise at finding him in the Temple sounds strange. The birth stories seem to indicate that they knew who Jesus was from the very beginning, but this story seems to indicate that they might not have known. Could this story have had a different source than the birth stories? When Jesus answers their questions, he indicates that they should have known that he had to spend this time in his “father’s house.” “Father’s house” is a better translation than his “father’s business.” His parents give him a mild rebuke, and he returns with them to Nazareth, where we hear nothing more about him for eighteen years.

According to Luke 2:19 and 2:51, Mary treasured these things in her heart. Her awareness of her son's significance dawned on her gradually. What about Jesus? Did he know all these things, or did they dawn on him gradually as well? The final verse of this chapter seems to indicate the latter: "And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor." The same thing was said about the boy Samuel in 1 Samuel 2:26.

THE ACTIVITY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST (3:1-20)

The information shared here in regard to political and religious leaders enables us to date this initial activity of John the Baptist. Since there are alternative ways of determining the beginning of Tiberius Caesar's reign (14-37 C.E.), we cannot be precise, but we can get pretty close. Pilate was the governor from 26 to 36 C.E. When we come to religious leaders we run into some difficulty. Annas (6-15 C.E.) and Caiaphas (18-36 C.E.) are both named, but only one could serve as the High Priest at a time. Perhaps Luke is talking about the influence of Annas on Caiaphas. One of the best guesses would be around 28-29 C.E.

Two things are important in the baptism of John. First, it is not effective unless repentance is present; and secondly, the imagery of Spirit and Fire seems to anticipate Pentecost, or the coming of the Holy Spirit. Water had frequently been used for ceremonial cleansing, but it was always related to the uncleanness of the body. John calls for an inner cleansing, which can only be accomplished by the Holy Spirit. One must however prepare for this act by repenting of one's sins and preparing for the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Any use of water is symbolic.

Herod Antipas was criticized for divorcing the daughter of Aretas IV of Arabia and marrying his own niece, Herodias, who had been his half-brother, Herod Philip's wife. Herod Antipas could not take this criticism, and responded by having John imprisoned in Machaerus, a prison located on the eastern side of the Dead Sea. Josephus, the Jewish historian, verified John's imprisonment, which did not take place, however, until sometime after Jesus began his ministry.

THE BAPTISM OF JESUS (3:21-22)

Luke's description of the baptism is very brief. Its main point is to show Jesus' special relationship with God. Luke is the only Gospel writer who points out that Jesus was praying when the Holy Spirit fell upon him. The symbolism of the dove goes back to Noah's covenant with God following the flood. *Jonah* means, "dove" and in the short story of Jonah, he represents all of Israel. Because the dove brought peace and hope, it became the symbol of God's presence.

The words of God spoken to Jesus are recorded here and in two more instances. The first took place on the Mount of Transfiguration (Luke 9:35), and the second occurred during Jesus' final week as he faced the cross (John 12:28). God's words are not the same, but they affirm his support of Jesus in his ministry.

THE GENEALOGY OF JESUS (3:23-38)

The big question here is why did Luke wait until now to include his genealogy? Why did he not begin with it? That is an impossible question to answer.

What can be said is that Luke had a different purpose in his Genealogy. The Genealogy in Matthew goes back only to Abraham, but Luke traces it back to Adam. The two genealogies differ in other respects. Matthew includes 39 names, while Luke includes 73; not including the names of Joseph or Mary; but even if Luke only went back to Abraham, as Matthew does, he would still have 54 names. Some of the names are the same, but many are not. From Abraham to David, the names are almost the same, but from David on they are very different. How can these differences be explained? Two explanations have been given. The first is that Luke attempted to be more complete, and another is that while Matthew focused on Joseph's legal or royal line, Luke focused on the bloodline of Mary.

It has also been suggested that Luke had difficulty with the virgin birth because he noted in Luke 3:23 that Jesus was "the son (as was thought) of Joseph."

THE TEMPTATIONS OF JESUS (4:1-13)

Full of the Holy Spirit, Jesus went into the Wilderness, where he was tempted for forty days. The forty days can be compared to other special events in Jewish history, such as the Flood in Genesis 7:4, Moses on Mount Sinai in Exodus 24:18, Elijah's journey in 1 Kings 19:8, and Jonah's prediction of judgment on Nineveh in Jonah 3:4. The temptation is not to be thought of as happening only within a specific period of forty days, but must be seen as something that continued throughout Jesus' ministry. No one was with him, and so he must have shared his experience with his disciples, or else they became aware of these temptations as Jesus faced them in the next three years leading up to the cross.

Only Matthew and Luke give a detailed account of the temptations, and Luke's account differs from Matthew's. The difference is in the reversal of the last two temptations, and the avoidance of going up on a very high mountain. For Luke a mountain was a place for prayer, not temptation; and so he simply says that Jesus was taken up in order to see all the kingdoms of the world. Nothing is said about being taken up on a mountain.

The order of Luke's temptations are: (1) The temptation to turn stones into bread, (2) the temptation to worship Satan in order to rule the world, and (3) the temptation to give a sign by jumping off the pinnacle of the Temple. The temptations might be viewed as the economic, political, and religious temptations. While Jesus quotes scripture each time from Deuteronomy, the Devil quotes only from Psalm 91:11-12. While that may have been understood as scripture, it would be somewhat like quoting from the Hymn Book. When the devil finally leaves, it is only until he has another opportunity. Temptation is never finished. As one draws closer to God, the temptations increase in their power.

PREPARATIONS

About six years ago a very special friend and I began a six-year tradition of offering to prepare a Thanksgiving Dinner for anyone who wanted to come. We used the fellowship hall of the Church. No fewer than 25 have come, and we have had as many as 50. Ron and I began our preparations at 6:00 a.m., and we managed to have Thanksgiving Dinner on the Table by 1:00 p.m. It took us all morning to prepare, but it took us all less than an hour to finish eating. That includes the devotion time, which had to be brief, lest the food got cold, but it was a great meal.

God made the same kind of elaborate preparations for the introduction of Jesus into the world. Elizabeth gave birth to John the Baptist, and Mary gave birth to Jesus; but not much happened on the surface until they both were nearly 30 years of age. About John the Baptist, the Bible says in Luke 1:80: "The child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness until the day he appeared publicly to Israel." Jesus, too, needed many years to develop. Luke 2:52 tells us: "And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor."

It was in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, 28-29 C.E., that John exploded on the scene of history, fulfilling Isaiah 40:3-5. He came to prepare people for the coming of God's Anointed One and for the salvation, which would be made available to all. As soon as the implications of John's preaching became clear, John's life was threatened. The decisive moment came when he rebuked Herod Antipas for divorcing his wife and marrying his half-brother's daughter. Thirty years of preparation went down in less than a year. The same was to be Jesus' fate. He could have extended his ministry by giving in to the economic, religious, and political temptations of his time, but he refused, choosing to remain faithful to his divine mission. It took him thirty years to prepare for a three-year ministry, but it was worth the preparation.

ΛΥΚΑΣ †



2. The Ministry of Jesus in Galilee

Luke 4:19—9:50

2. THE MINISTRY OF JESUS IN GALILEE (4:14—9:50)			
THE GOOD NEWS OF THE KINGDOM (4:14—5:11)			
The Summary (4:14-15)	Nazareth (4:16-30)	Capernaum (4:31-44)	The Miraculous Catch (5:1-11)
THE GOOD WORKS OF THE KING (5:12—6:11)			
Jesus Heals a Leper (5:12-16)	Jesus Forgives a Sinner (5:17-26)	Jesus Calls Levi (Matthew) (5:27-32)	
Jesus' Attitude Towards Fasting (5:33-39)		Jesus' Attitude Towards the Sabbath (6:1-11)	
JESUS CHOOSES THE TWELVE APOSTLES (6:12-16)			
Simon Peter Andrew James	John Philip Bartholomew/Nathanael	Matthew/Levi Thomas James Son of Alphaeus	Simon the Zealot Judas son of James/Thaddeus Judas Iscariot
THE SERMON ON THE PLAIN (6:17-26)			
Beatitudes and Woes (6:17-26)	The Golden Rules (6:27-36)	Christian Behavior (6:37-45)	Two House Builders (6:46-49)
THE SIGNS OF THE KINGDOM (7:1-50)			
The Centurion's Slave (7:1-10)	Widow's Son at Nain (7:11-17)	The Messianic Question (7:18-35)	Response of Gratitude (7:36-50)
A MISSIONARY TOUR (8:1—9:50)			
Jesus' Companions (8:1-3)	Parable of the Soils (8:4-15)	Light and Ears (8:16-18)	Jesus' True Family (8:19-21)
Calming the Storm (8:22-25)	Gerasene Demoniac (8:26-39)	Jairus' Daughter (8:40-56)	Commissioning the 12 (9:1-6)
Herod's Question (9:7-9)	Feeding the 5000 (9:10-17)	Peter's Confession (9:18-22)	Jesus on Discipleship (7:23-27)
The Transfiguration (9:28-36)	Boy with a Demon (9:37-43a)	Jesus on his Death (9:43b-45)	Jesus on Greatness (9:46-48)
<i>Those Outside Our Group (9:49-50)</i>			

2. THE MINISTRY OF JESUS IN GALILEE

Luke 4:14—9:50

ASSIGNMENTS				
Good News of The Kingdom (4:14—5:11)	Works and Teachings (5:12—6:49)	The Signs of the Kingdom (7:1-50)	A Mission Tour A (8:1-56)	A Mission Tour B (9:1-50)

THE GOOD NEWS OF THE KINGDOM (4:14—5:11)

The Summary (4:14-15)

What follows is not in chronological order, and is a departure from what was written by Mark. This does not bother Luke, whose purpose is to provide a summary of Jesus' ministry; hence, he begins with a general statement about it.

Having moved through his baptism and temptation, where the Spirit was present, Jesus now begins his ministry, anointed by the power of the Spirit.

Nazareth (4:16-30)

The Synagogue in Nazareth was not the first place in which Jesus preached, but it was in his own home town and that provided him with some difficulty. Synagogue worship consisted of the following three parts: (1) prayers, (2) scripture, and (3) teaching. In the reading of Scripture, a priest, if present, was expected to read from the Law, but anyone was welcome to read from the Prophets. Visitors were frequently asked, and on this special day, Jesus participated by reading from Isaiah 61:1-2 (and 58:6). After he finished reading, he sat down, as was the custom to teach. In his teaching he claimed to have fulfilled the prophecy from Isaiah. While Isaiah was referring to the liberation of the Jews from their Babylonian captivity, Jesus taught that he was about to liberate all people from the captivity of sin. This means that he was claiming to be the Messiah and that the proof was in what he was about to do. This in itself did not alienate him from his listeners. People expected a Messiah, but on their own terms. They expected the Messiah to relate only to the Jews.

It was obvious to Jesus that everyone wanted to see some sign or miracle, and so he quoted the proverb: "Doctor, cure yourself!" In contrast to this proverb, he quoted

another: “Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in the prophet’s hometown.” These two proverbs are joined together in the Gospel of Thomas, where they read: “No prophet is acceptable in his village; no physician heals those who know him.” Apparently Jesus was unable to perform the same kind of miracles in Nazareth, which he performed in Capernaum, and he attributes his failure to their lack of faith. Luke has not mentioned any of the ministry of Jesus in Capernaum, and so we can only conclude that this incident in Nazareth is out of chronological order, or else that Luke has not recorded everything Jesus did. Mark 6:1-4 seems to indicate a different chronological order, for he has Jesus involved in ministry prior to the incident in Nazareth.

The two illustrations Jesus uses from the Old Testament make the congregation angry. The first is a reference to Elijah, who provided never-failing meal and oil for the widow from Zarephath near Sidon (1 Kings 17:8-24), and the second is a reference to the way in which Elisha healed Naaman the Leper from Syria (2 Kings 5:1-27). Not only does Jesus imply that they experienced no miracles in Nazareth because of their lack of faith, but that the Gentiles do experience miracles through their faith and that God moves among those who are open to Him. This alienates the people of Nazareth enough to want to kill him, but he moves through the middle of the crowd safely.

Capernaum (4:31-44)

Instead of working among those who have little faith, Jesus now goes to Capernaum, which becomes his headquarters for his Mission in Galilee. He is able to cast out demons and heal the sick, including Peter’s mother-in-law. The crowds flock to him, but he retreats to reevaluate what he is doing, and decides to move on to other towns. His task is not that of healing, but of proclaiming the Good News of the coming Kingdom of God.

Jesus’ ability to exorcise the demons seems to inaugurate his ministry. He has the power to destroy the demonic completely, but he only exorcises it from people. The demons recognize who he is and fear their own demise. Even though they cry out, “You are the Son of God!” he silences them. It is too soon for this announcement to be made; and besides, the demons are not the ones commissioned to proclaim it to the world. Even Jesus’ own disciples will have to keep it a secret until they fully understand what it means.

The Miraculous Catch (5:1-11)

Lake Gennesaret was an alternative name for the Sea of Galilee, which referred more specifically to the district south of Capernaum. Gennesaret is also the name of a valley on the northwest shore. Only Luke uses this term. The other Gospel writers usually say the Sea of Galilee, but on at least two occasions, John calls it the Sea of Tiberias (John 6:1 and 21:1).

This story about the miraculous catch of fish has no parallel in the other Gospels. The only other story that comes close is one told in John 21:4ff., in which Jesus appears to his

disciples following his resurrection. The purpose is the same—to encourage his disciples to fulfill their Great Commission of proclaiming the Good News to the whole world.

The catch was indeed miraculous. Fishing at night was a common practice. It was done because the fish were at greater depths during the hot day and were much easier to catch in the cool of the night. This catch was made following failure at night. It seemed like, and was indeed, a miracle.

One might read more into the symbolism of this story than was meant. Does the catch, for example, refer to Jesus' call to catch men; and if so, then "out into the deep" might refer to the "abyss" from which people will be saved (8:31).

However one reads the above symbolism, one thing is clear. Jesus calls them and us to the higher vocation of fishing for people. Peter's response to the miraculous catch is self-judgment. He recognizes that Jesus is more than a mere man. We too respond as did Peter and shrink back from the primary mission of the Church—TO FISH FOR PEOPLE.

THE GOOD WORKS OF THE KING (5:12—6:11)

Jesus Heals a Leper (5:12-16)

A leper asked Jesus to make him clean. Jesus' response was positive, but he instructed the man to obey the Law. This meant that he would have to see the priest before he could move freely again in society (Leviticus 14:1-32).

The multitudes pressed close to him to hear and to be healed, but he went into the wilderness to pray. This is the third time that he went out to pray alone. The first two times are recorded in Luke 4:1 and 41. Prayer was necessary to keep his ministry in focus. He came to establish the Kingdom of God, not simply to heal the sick.

Jesus Forgives a Sinner (5:17-26)

When a man was brought to Jesus to be healed, he forgave his sins; hence, we have the beginning of a series of stories, which illustrate a growing conflict between Jesus and the religious leaders. The conflict in this story is with the Scribes and the Pharisees.

The Scribes were a professional class of lawyers and teachers, who were usually, but not always, associated with the Pharisaic party. That is why the two are usually mentioned together. There were about 6,000 Pharisees all over Palestine. Their main task was to teach the Law in the synagogues. They considered the Oral Law (Interpretation) to be as binding as the Written Law (Scripture). That Jesus forgave the man's sins was considered blasphemy, a sin, which the Pharisees considered to be the most serious sin one might commit.

The above story is similar to the one told by Mark, but since Luke is writing for a Gentile audience, he does a little Hellenizing. Instead of a roof with mud and wattle, he describes one with tiles, which would have been the Hellenistic equivalent.

Jesus Calls Levi (Matthew) (5:27-32)

One way to deepen the conflict with the Scribes and Pharisees would be to relate to the Tax Collectors and Sinners. The Tax Collectors would have been regarded unclean because they worked for the Romans and fleeced their fellow-Jews. Sinners would have included such persons as criminals and prostitutes. Jesus ate with Tax Collectors and Sinners in their homes. This deeply offended the Pharisees, who tried to keep separate from them. The word Pharisee literally means “separated ones.”

Did Jesus call a Tax Collector to become one of his Disciples? Most scholars assume that Levi is a reference to Matthew, although there is no real evidence to substantiate this. Matthew identifies himself in Matthew 9:9-12 as a Tax Collector, but this does not mean that he is Levi, even though both would have been Tax Collectors. There is no way to know for sure, but we do know that Jesus had a Tax Collector as one of his twelve disciples. This seemed like a scandal, but Jesus defends himself by insisting that he came to save the sick, not the righteous.

Jesus' Attitude towards Fasting (5:33-39)

The Scribes and Pharisees criticized Jesus for not taking up their own practice of fasting twice a week. He defended himself by stating that a new era had begun in which it was inappropriate to fast. The comparison he makes is with guests mourning at a wedding. Joy would be a more appropriate attitude than fasting. Fasting will have to wait until those days between his death and resurrection.

Two illustrations are used to describe the tension between the old and the new. No one patches an old garment with a piece from a new garment, and no one puts new wine into old wineskins. Verse 39 is a bit of irony. It describes the unbelievable attitude of the conservatives who hang on to the old when the new has come. How can one mourn when there is reason to rejoice?

Jesus' Attitude towards the Sabbath (6:1-11)

Jesus and his disciples ate some grain on the Sabbath. This angered the Scribes and Pharisees, who were concerned about keeping the Law and saw the Law concerning the Sabbath as one of the most important Laws. Jesus rejects their legalism by reminding them that David himself ate the bread of the presence, which only the priests normally ate. Luke carefully omits the mistaken reference to Abiathar as the High Priest at the time.

A second apparent violation of the Sabbath takes place when Jesus heals a man with a withered hand. Healing on the Sabbath was permitted if the illness was life threatening.

Jesus claimed that the Sabbath was the time to perform good deeds. While the Scribes and Pharisees would have agreed, Jesus went beyond their concept of doing good. For him failing to do good when one had an opportunity to do so was in itself an evil. This was not the case for the Scribes and Pharisees. Jesus was trying to show them that the Old Testament does not adhere to their rigorous legalism.

JESUS CHOOSES THE TWELVE APOSTLES (6:12-16)

After a night of prayer, Jesus, with the help of divine guidance, chose his twelve Apostles. An *Apostle* is an “appointed representative,” and was not limited to one of the twelve. (See Romans 16:7 and Acts 14:14.) Below is his list of the twelve:

- | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. Simon Peter | 7. Matthew (Levi) |
| 2. Andrew | 8. Thomas |
| 3. James | 9. James Son of Alphaeus |
| 4. John | 10. Simon the Zealot |
| 5. Philip | 11. Judas Son of James (Thaddaeus) |
| 6. Bartholomew (Nathanael) | 12. Judas Iscariot |

THE SERMON ON THE PLAIN (6:17-49)

What follows is a collection of Jesus’ sayings, which were delivered in various places. Matthew expanded the collection in the Sermon on the Mount. Luke’s collection is probably more accurate. Keeping the mountain as a place for prayer and visions, Luke has Jesus teaching on the plain.

The Beatitudes and Woes (6:17-26)

Luke has both beatitudes and woes. Matthew only includes the beatitudes. Matthew also gives the beatitudes spiritual interpretation, which Luke does not do. Luke talks not about the poor in spirit, but about the poor, the hungry, those who mourn, and the persecuted. Luke shows a more intense bias for the poor of the land than does Matthew.

The woes are for the rich, the full, those who laugh, and those who never have to face persecution for their faith. Luke shares with us a contrast between those who follow Jesus and those who do not.

The Golden Rules (6:27-36)

The primary principle is found in Luke 6:27, where Christians are told to love their enemies. Their enemies are those who persecute them. Two examples are given. Christians love their enemies by resisting the urge to retaliate and by going the second mile with a readiness to give and be helpful to the enemy.

All of the above is summed up in Luke 6:31, which we call the Golden Rule. This was indeed a revolutionary idea. It was the rejection of the principle of mutuality, where one

only loves those who will return their love. Christians act without the hope of an earthly reward, but they do, of course, hope for the heavenly reward. They believe that by loving their enemies, they will be loved by God.

Christian Behavior (6:37-45)

How we treat others is how we can expect to be treated by God. Disciples of Christ are therefore people (1) who do not judge, (2) who see clearly, and (3) who bear fruit. Their hearts are in right relationship with God.

The Two House Builders (6:46-49)

Like Matthew, Luke has Jesus telling a parable about two house builders. The parables are slightly different. Luke keeps in mind his Gentile audience, who would not be familiar with the torrential rains of Palestine. Instead they would be familiar with the swelling of some important river in some non-Palestinian urban setting.

In spite of the differences, the teaching of Jesus is the same. His words are to be obeyed. When we depart from them, we build our lives on shaky foundations, which will bring them crashing down.

THE SIGNS OF THE KINGDOM (7:1-50)

The Centurion's Slave (7:1-10)

When Jesus entered Capernaum again, the Elders of the Synagogue met him, They had been sent to request his help, in healing the slave of a Centurion. The Centurion was probably an employee of Herod Antipas. Although he was not Jewish, he was sympathetic to the Jewish faith. The Elders gladly represented him to Jesus. The reasons were because he loved the Jewish nation and helped the people to build their Synagogue.

Jesus responded by setting out to visit the Centurion's slave, but before he arrived, the Centurion sent another delegation telling him that it was not necessary. In doing this he was expressing his humility and respect for authority. It was enough just to have Jesus say the word. Jesus marveled at such faith, and replied in Luke 7:9, "I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith." The point of this story is that the faith of a Gentile is acceptable to Jesus. The Kingdom cannot be contained in Israel alone. We will find one more example of a Centurion's faith at the cross (23:47).

The Widow's Son at Nain (7:11-17)

Nain was about six miles southeast of Nazareth and about 25-30 miles from Capernaum. The ruins of the town have been discovered today. As Jesus and his companions were passing through Nain, there was a funeral procession in progress. A widow had lost her son, upon whom she was dependent for a living. Jesus raised the boy from the dead, and the people marveled that a great prophet had come among them.

What lies behind the people's recognition of Jesus as a prophet are two miracles of a similar nature, one performed by Elijah in 1 Kings 17:17-24 and the other by Elisha in 2 Kings 4:32-37. Jesus is equated to these two great prophets of old.

Luke refers to Jesus as *Lord*, one who has power over life and death. Luke is the only Gospel writer to use the term *Lord*. Its usage comes directly out of early Gentile Church, which used it in its worship liturgies. Jesus was not referred to in this way during his lifetime, but Luke is writing to a Gentile audience, who would find *Lord* more meaningful than *Messiah*. The point he is making is that an encounter with the *Lord* always results in life. This story sets the stage for John's messianic question.

The Messianic Question (7:18-35)

John sends two of his disciples to ask the Messianic Question, which according to Luke 7:19, is: "Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?" Jesus' response in Luke 7:22 is: "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have good news brought to them." These are the signs of the Kingdom.

Following Jesus' answer there is a shift of emphasis to who John is. He is more than a prophet; he is the *forerunner* of the Messiah. Jesus' reference in verse 27 to Malachi 3:1 confirms this. Because he belongs to the old age, he is less than those who belong to the new age. In the transition people have difficulty identifying with either age. In the case of John, the Pharisees and Lawyers think of him as being possessed by a demon; and in the case of Jesus, they accuse him of being a glutton, drunkard, and friend to tax collectors and sinners. Through John we have moved beyond the prophets, and in Jesus the prophetic message has been fulfilled. He is the Messiah, the King of the new age.

The Response of Gratitude (7:36-50)

For some reason Simon, one of the Pharisees invited Jesus into his home for a meal. This probably took place after a Synagogue service, and it was not uncommon for others to join such festivities uninvited. It would have been unusual however for someone like this woman to attend. She must have experienced the forgiving love of Jesus earlier and therefore felt more at ease in entering Simon's house. When she did, she washed Jesus' feet with her tears, wiped them with her hair, kissed them with her lips, and anointed them with costly ointment. Simon accused Jesus of being unable to recognize this woman for who she was, and thought it strange that a prophet of his capability would lack such insight.

Jesus responded to Simon with the parable of two men, one with a debt of 500 denarii (a day's wage for a common laborer) and one with a debt of 50 denarii. His question for Simon was, "When they could not pay, he canceled the debts for both of them. Now which of them will love him more?" Even Simon recognized that the man with the largest debt would be most grateful. With this parable Jesus explained why this woman had a right to be there to express her gratitude. The Kingdom of God will be made up of people

who express their love because they have been forgiven. This turns things around, for in the old age, people tried to earn their forgiveness. In the new age things will be different, and this woman is an example of the new age. The passage ends by questioning Jesus' right to forgive, but as Lord and Messiah, he has the right to forgive.

A MISSIONARY TOUR (8:1—9:50)

Jesus' Companions (8:1-3)

Jesus now takes a missionary tour to other cities and villages to preach and teach the Good News of the Kingdom. Along with the twelve disciples, three women are named who both accompany him and help to fund the tour. They are Mary Magdalene (not the same woman as described in Luke 7:36-50), Joanna, the wife of Chuza (a domestic administrator in Herod's government), and Susanna (not mentioned again in the Bible).

The seven demons mentioned in regard to Mary represent the worst possible corruption. Jesus has profoundly influenced all of these women, and this causes them to underwrite his missionary tour.

The Parable of the Soils (8:4-15)

The seed represents the Word of God, which is planted in various kinds of soil (people). There is the seed that fell on the path and is constantly walked over, where birds devour the seeds. The birds represent the devil, which takes the words out of people's hearts. Secondly there is the seed that fell on the rocky soil, in which the Word begins to grow, but soon withers away because it cannot take root. There is no depth. Next there is the thorny soil, which represents people's fascination with the cares, riches and pleasures of this world. The Word is choked out. Finally there is the good soil, in which the word not only takes root, but matures and bears much fruit.

Parables such as this both reveal and conceal the Kingdom of God. Since parables will increase as Luke continues with Jesus ministry, it might help to stop for a moment to define just what a parable is and to contrast it with allegory and metaphor. A parable is a picture story that conveys one thought. One cannot take every element of the story too seriously. While an allegory has a similar purpose to a parable, every element of an allegory has meaning and must be carefully interpreted. The Parable of the Soils comes very close to an allegory, but most of Jesus' parables do not. A metaphor is a figure of speech. Jesus' parables go far beyond that.

Light and Ears (8:16-18)

This brief passage is somewhat confusing, but we can at least say that as light exists to shine, so do ears exist to hear. This is a warning to those of us who are nominal in our faith.

Those who seek the truth will find more truth, but those who have little room for truth will not only lose what insight they have, they will lose their faith as well. Faith and truth cannot be separated.

Jesus' True Family (8:19-21)

The encounter between Jesus and his mother and brothers is toned down in Luke's Gospel. The story is simply told to teach us that no one is automatically a child of God. God's children are made up of those who hear the Word of God and do it.

Matthew 13:55 names Jesus' brothers as James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas. Only James became significant as he assumed leadership of the Church in Jerusalem, but that followed Jesus' death and resurrection. That Jesus' brothers could not get near Jesus might mean that the crowd did not recognize them.

The early church disagreed on the relationship of Jesus' brothers and sisters. Helvidius taught that they were indeed the children of Joseph and Mary, and this has been the position of most Protestant Churches. Since Jerome taught that they were Jesus' cousins, this has been the position of the Roman Catholic Church. According to Epiphanius, they were sons of Joseph from a previous marriage. I do not know of any major Church that accepts Epiphanius' position. What is important here is that all, who hear God's word and put them into practice, are related to Jesus.

Jesus calms the Wind and Sea (8:22-25)

What lies behind this story is the common belief that storms were caused by demons. When Jesus rebukes the wind and the waves, he is responding according to that worldview.

The disciples call him Master because they recognize in him one who acts as God. That is why they ask the question at the end, "Who then is this?" The whole point is that they see Jesus doing those things that only God can do.

The Gerasene Demoniac (8:26-39)

Jesus and his disciples sailed to the region of the Gerasenes, which was on the east side of the Lake of Galilee. While some Jews may have lived in the region, it was an area in which many Gentiles lived. The first man they encountered was a man possessed by multiple personalities, which everyone believed to be demonic forces.

People did not know how to deal with mental illness, or demon possession; and so they did the only thing they could think of—isolate the afflicted one. When Jesus encounters him, he (or they) immediately recognizes the consequence of the encounter. *They* refer to themselves as *Legion* because they are *Many*. The one place they do not want to end up in is the *Abyss*, which would have been the place of punishment or the equivalent of Hell.

Therefore they ask to be sent into the herd of swine, who then run headlong down a cliff into the Lake of Galilee. The death of the swine cannot be considered equal to the *Abyss*.

The man is healed, but this frightens the people from the nearby village and the owners of the swine. That people owned swine in this area would not have been unusual, for Jesus was in a non-Jewish area. Why were the owners of the swine concerned? Was it because of their economic loss, or was it because they had observed the mighty acts of God? Most scholars think the latter. They are afraid because they have seen an incursion of the supernatural.

Having been healed, the man wanted to go with Jesus; but Jesus advised him to return home and tell everyone what had happened to him. The power of God had gone beyond the borders of the chosen people, and it had tremendous power even among the Gentiles.

Jairus' Daughter (8:40-56)

Jairus was the ruler of a local synagogue, who had a twelve-year old daughter, whom they thought was dying. That is why they sent for Jesus.

In the midst of this story is the intrusion of another story. It is about a woman who had a hemorrhage of blood for twelve years. Luke probably puts these stories together because of the twelve years mentioned in both stories, but it is difficult to see what connection they might have, other than Jesus meets the older woman on the way to heal the girl.

The woman is afraid to meet Jesus directly because her condition was considered unclean, but she has enough faith to think that a mere touching will help her. She touched the "fringe of his clothes," which would have been one of the four tassels attached to the fringe of the outer garment worn by every pious Jew. These tassels were prescribed in Numbers 15:38-39 and Deuteronomy 22:12 to serve as reminders to obey the commandments. Jesus does not consider her touch superstitious; instead, he calls it faith. The touch does not take place without Jesus' awareness. The woman trembles at his feet, but he sends her away in peace.

Why all the fuss about a touch? Unclean persons were not to touch anyone, lest they spread their uncleanness. This woman hoped that she could touch Jesus without anyone knowing it, and when she is found out, she trembles. She knows that she has violated both law and tradition.

When Jesus finally arrives at Jairus' home, he seems to be too late. The girl, they think, is dead; but Jesus, along with Peter, John, James, and the girl's parents, enter the room. Jesus assures everyone that the girl is only asleep. They all laugh. He then commands her to rise, and she does. What is strange in the conclusion of this story is his command not to tell anyone. He does not want to become a famous miracle worker. He has a message to proclaim about the Kingdom of God. But why did he tell the Gerasene demoniac to tell his news? That remains a mystery. Perhaps it was because the Gentiles would not have a preconceived idea concerning the Messiah.

This is the first time that Peter, John, and James are mentioned as an inner circle of disciples, but it will not be the last. Were they chosen to enter the room with Jesus, or was it just kind of natural for them to accompany him. While the twelve were chosen, nothing is said about how the inner circle was selected.

Jesus Commissions the Twelve (9:1-6)

The twelve are given both power and authority to preach about the Kingdom of God and to heal the sick. They are to live frugally and stay where invited. No staff is to be taken. This would symbolize their radical dependence upon God.

When they are rejected, they are to shake the dust off their feet and move on. This symbolizes to the people that they are cutting themselves off from the true Israel. This comes from the ancient tradition of the Rabbis, who upon returning home from Gentile territory would shake the dust off their sandals. Shaking off the dust was a way of symbolizing pagan blindness to the things of God.

Herod's Inquiry Concerning Jesus (9:7-9)

Rumors were spreading that Jesus was John the Baptist, Elijah, or another prophet raised from the dead. His mission was having a tremendous impact, even on the highest authority in the land, which would have been Herod Antipas (the Tetrarch). Having beheaded John the Baptist, Herod did not want such rumors to spread, and so he sought to see Jesus for himself. This, according to Luke 23:8, would come to fulfillment soon in the trial of Jesus.

Jesus Feeds the 5000 (9:10-17)

On the return from their missionary tour, Jesus proposes a rest near Bethsaida (House of the Fishes), but the crowds keep pressing them. After he blesses God, not the loaves, Jesus feeds the five thousand with five loaves and two fish. They are fed in groups of fifty, and twelve baskets of remains are left over.

The blessing and breaking of bread prefigured the Lord's Supper and symbolized the Eucharist for the early church. Some of that liturgy may be reflected back into the original incident, which was considered to be so important that it was recorded in all four Gospels. It is the only miracle that gets such coverage.

Peter's Confession (9:18-22)

Since there seems to be confusion as to who Jesus is, Jesus asks his own disciples if they know. They replied that others were equating him with a risen John the Baptist, Elijah, or some other prophet. When Jesus pressed them further, Peter replied that he believed him to be the Messiah.

Jesus told him not to tell anyone because he feared that it would not be understood. His reference to himself as the “Son of Man” indicates that he is trying to remove the *political* connotation from the Jewish concept of the Messiah. Jesus took his reference to the “Son of Man” from Daniel 7:9-22, who will suffer, die, but be raised again. No one had this kind of a concept of the Messiah.

Luke differs from Mark in that he supposes that this confession took place on Israelite soil. Mark, on the other hand, locates it in Caesarea Philippi, which would have been on pagan soil.

Jesus talks about Discipleship (9:23-27)

Not only was Jesus ready to suffer and die, he also expected his followers to be ready. This does not mean that they should seek death. The inclusion of taking up the cross *daily* might have been an effort to discourage martyrdom in the early church; nevertheless, every disciple must set the right priorities. What good would it do to gain the world, but lose one’s soul (life).

The final reference that some of them would not taste death before seeing the Kingdom of God does not refer to the end of history, but to the inauguration of the Kingdom of God. Could this be the transfiguration or the resurrection? No one knows for sure. What is meant is that they will see evidence of the coming Kingdom before they die and they will know that their discipleship has not been in vain.

The Transfiguration (9:28-36)

This may have taken place at night. Peter, James, and John were sleepy. The event is described as having taken place one week after Peter’s confession of Jesus as the Messiah. Although Mark said it took place six days and Luke eight days, the eight days represents the way in which the Romans looked upon one week.

None of the Gospel writers indicate just where the Transfiguration took place. Tradition suggests Mount Tabor (1,800 feet), but Tabor was some distance from Caesarea Philippi, where Peter’s confession occurred. Mount Hermon (9,000 feet) was a much higher mountain and Caesarea Philipi was on the ascent to it. For this reason many favor Mount Hermon as the location.

Moses and Elijah were, according to Jewish tradition, expected to appear at the end of time. Moses represented the Law and Elijah the Prophets. The unnatural brilliance associated with the transfiguration was also associated with other mystical experiences. See Exodus 34:29-35 and Acts 9:3 for other examples.

Peter desired to build three booths so that the experience might continue, but a cloud came over them and Moses and Elijah disappeared. The cloud symbolizes the presence of God. The experience cannot last at this time. Much work remains to be done.

Jesus heals a Boy with a Demon (9:37-43a)

Luke summarizes what is dealt with in much more detail by Mark. Today we would call this boy's condition an epileptic fit, but in Jesus' time they called it demon possession.

Jesus speaks about his Death (9:43b-45)

On this second occasion Jesus only mentions that he will be delivered into human hands. This means that he will suffer and die at their hands. The resurrection following is not mentioned. Luke is probably trying to emphasize the importance of the cross for Jesus. It must be taken seriously.

Following the crucifixion, the disciples will have to depend upon their faith. Jesus will not be with them physically, although he promises to be with them spiritually. Other places in which he speaks about his death are: 9:22 and 18:31-34. Although he predicts his own death and resurrection three times, the disciples do not seem to comprehend. In the end they are unprepared to deal with it.

Jesus' Teaching on Greatness (9:46-48)

The disciples had an example of greatness in their midst, but they still jostle for the favored position. Jesus has to teach them that the truly great person is humble. A child is mentioned because children were considered in Jewish eyes to be the most insignificant members of society. They, the disciples, must be humble enough to receive a child. The power of God works not through arrogance, but through humility and dependence on faith.

Those Outside our Group (9:49-50)

When the disciples notice someone who is casting out demons in the name of Jesus, they question his authority on the basis that he is not part of their group. They wanted him to stop it. We act in a similar manner when we see others doing things in the name of Christ, which we may not like. Jesus responds by telling them that he is not against them, therefore, he must be for them.

The opposite viewpoint to the above is given in Luke 11:23, where anyone not with them is against them. The issue raised here is complicated. Only God really knows the motive and can judge the action. We have to compare what others are doing to the biblical understanding of God's action in the world. Jesus is our best example of how God operates in the world.

This ends the ministry of Jesus in Galilee. He has performed miracles of exorcism and healing, which are signs of the new age. He claimed to be the Messiah, who is establishing a new kind of Kingdom. His disciples do not fully understand, but they will as they make the journey to Jerusalem and witness the tragic events that must occur there.

THE PRIMARY MISSION

Just as Jesus was becoming popular, he withdrew to a solitary place to pray. When the people found him, they tried to convince him that there was plenty to keep him busy around Capernaum for a long time. He surprised them by saying in Luke 4:43, "I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other cities also; for I was sent for this purpose." Imagine that! He developed a ministry of healing and helping people; and just as it was taking off, he reminded people of his real ministry and left town.

Even as Jesus proclaimed the good news of the Kingdom of God in the other cities, he continued to perform miracles, heal the sick, and raise the dead. He also continued his practice of withdrawing to solitary places to remind himself of his primary mission.

After he helped a group of fishermen catch a large number of fish in their nets, he said to Peter in Luke 5:10, "...from now on you will be catching people." He included James and John in this invitation to participate in his primary mission as well, and later on he called twelve special disciples to accompany him in fishing for people. At the end of his ministry, he invited everyone to help him in this task.

But how does one go about fishing for people? Fishing for people can be compared to a salesman in contrast to a mere clerk. "You can be a clerk or a salesman," warned Jesse M. Bader, "the clerk waits for a customer, and the salesman goes out for him. We should be ringing door bells, instead of church bells..." No fisherman catches fish by staying at home waiting for the fish to come to him or her. One catches fish by going fishing. We need to withdraw occasionally to catch the vision of our primary mission, which is to go fishing for people who would be willing to become citizens of God's Kingdom and confess Jesus as their Lord and king. This is our primary mission. We are fishermen, not keepers of the aquarium.



3. The Journey to Jerusalem I

Luke 9:51—13:35

3. THE JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM I (9:51 – 13:35)			
THE DUTIES AND PRINCIPLES OF DISCIPLESHIP (9:51 – 10:24)			
The Samaritan Resistance (9:51-56)		Discipleship and the Family (9:57-62)	
The Mission of the 70 (10:1-24)			
<i>The Sending Out (10:1-12)</i>	<i>The Woes on Palestine (10:13-16)</i>	<i>The Return of the 70 (10:17-24)</i>	
QUESTIONS PEOPLE ASK (10:25 – 11:13)			
On Eternal Life (10:25-37)	On Priorities (10:38-42)	On Prayer (11:1-13)	
CONTROVERSIES AND CONFLICTS (11:14-54)			
Exorcism (11:14-28)	Signs (11:29-32)	Light (11:33-36)	The Six Woes (11:37-54)
GETTING READY FOR THE CRISIS (12:1 – 13:9)			
Hypocrisy and Blasphemy (12:1-12)	Parable of the Rich Fool (12:13-21)	Do not be Anxious! (12:22-34)	
Be always Ready! (12:35-48)	The End of the Age (12:49-59)	All need to Repent (13:1-9)	
HEALING AND TEACHING (13:10-35)			
The Crippled Woman (13:10-17)		Parables of the Kingdom (13:18-21)	
The Narrow Door (13:22-30)	Words for Herod Antipas (13:31-33)	Lament over Jerusalem (13:34-35)	

3. THE JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM I

Luke 9:51—13:35

ASSIGNMENTS				
Duties of Discipleship (9:51—10:24)	Questions People Ask (10:25—11:13)	Controversies and Conflicts (11:14-54)	Getting Ready for the Crisis (12:1—13:9)	Healing and Teaching (13:10-35)

What follows may include teachings and incidents from several journeys to Jerusalem. Luke places them thematically in the context of a single journey. The trip is mentioned in 9:51; 13:22; and 17:11. The general theme has to do with discipleship, and it is expressed against the background of the necessity of Jesus to go to Jerusalem to suffer and die.

THE DUTIES AND PRINCIPLES OF DISCIPLESHIP (9:51—10:24)

The Samaritan Resistance (9:51-56)

There was resistance among the Samaritans almost from the beginning. According to 1 Kings 16:24, Omri, King of Israel, purchased the hill of Samaria from a man named Shemer. He named the city Samaria, after Shemer. Samaria means “place of watch.” As hostility developed between Israel and Judah, a temple was built on Mount Gerizim, which was located close to the city of Samaria. It became a place for the Samaritans to worship, when they were not welcome in Jerusalem. John Hyrcanus destroyed the Samaritan Temple in 128 B.C.E.

Jesus sent some of his disciples on ahead to prepare for a journey through Samaria. This would have been necessary for dietary reasons. The Samaritans, as soon as they found out he had set his face towards Jerusalem, refused to help. Their problem with his journey was that he was going to the wrong place to celebrate a feast. They believed that the only right sanctuary was in Samaria, not Jerusalem. James and John wanted to call fire down upon them, just as Elijah had done in 2 Kings 1:9-10, but Jesus refused. This incident helps us to understand Jesus’ nickname of “Sons of Thunder” for James and John. Jesus was going to Jerusalem to suffer, not to inflict suffering. The disciples did not yet understand this principle.

Discipleship and the Family (9:57-62)

Two men express a willingness to become disciples, but they wanted to take care of family obligations first, such as taking care of an aging father, or saying goodbye to one's family. All this may seem harsh, but Jesus' point is that nothing can stand in the way of discipleship, not even family obligations.

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

The Sending Out (10:1-12)

The number 70, or in some cases 72, could refer to the number of non-Jewish nations thought to exist. It is more likely to refer to Moses' choosing of the 70 in Numbers 11:16-17, 24-25, a practice that ultimately led to the formation of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish High Court. The Sanhedrin also consisted of 70 members. By choosing 70 people to help him, Jesus imitates Moses.

This story most certainly symbolizes the later mission of the Church. Every town and place was to be evangelized, even though the laborers were few. Disciples were to go out in pairs, traveling light, and when rejected, move on to other places. They were to salute no one on the road. This simply meant that they were not to get bogged down in the complexities of oriental greetings. Their mission was urgent. They were to heal the sick and proclaim the Kingdom of God. They were to tie social concern and evangelism together.

The Woes on Palestine (10:13-16)

A warning is given here that the Gentile cities of Tyre and Sidon, had they seen and heard Jesus, would have repented long ago. Jewish cities, such as Chorazin and Bethsaida, had the privilege of seeing him and hearing him; therefore, their unresponsiveness will bring them to a fate similar to that of Sodom.

Of all the cities that should have been responsive, Capernaum leads the list. Capernaum is where Jesus made his headquarters, and where most of his teachings were heard and miracles performed. Its people are without excuse, and so their fate is Hades.

The Return of the Seventy (10:17-24)

When the 70 return, they confess that Jesus truly is the Lord. In his name they have had great success in casting out demons. In this they see the ultimate defeat of Satan himself (Revelation 12:7-10).

Jesus cautions them, and tells them that they should rejoice not in their success, but in the fact that their names have been written in Heaven. They have seen and heard what prophets and kings desired to see and hear. What a privilege!

QUESTIONS PEOPLE ASK (10:25—11:13)

Three basic questions are asked in the verses that follow. They have to do with the NEIGHBOR, GOD, and PRAYER.

A Question about Eternal Life (A Lawyer) (10:25-37)

The first question begins with an inquiry into eternal life and ends up being a question on how to define one's neighbor. In Luke's Gospel the man who asks the question is a Lawyer. In Jewish terms, he would have been a Scribe, whose job it was to study and interpret the Law. Since Gentile readers would be more familiar with *Lawyer*, Luke uses a word they would understand.

The Parable of the Good Samaritan was Jesus' answer to the Lawyer's question, which was: "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" With the help of Jesus' follow up question, the Lawyer answered his own question. The answer was to love God and one's neighbor.

For the Lawyer this raised a second question concerning the definition of his neighbor. This was the wrong question, and so Jesus illustrated his point with a Parable. Everyone in the Parable seems to be going from Jerusalem down to Jericho, a city 17 miles away and 3,300 feet lower in elevation. Jerusalem is 2,600 feet above sea level while Jericho is 900 feet below sea level. Half way down this route stands the ruins of the Inn of the Good Samaritan, a building dating back to Roman times. This is not the Inn of Jesus' story. We must remember that Jesus is illustrating his point with a story, which is not necessarily related to actual places. He of course does relate his story to commonly known practices.

Jericho was the home of many of the priests who served in the Temple, and so we know that the Priest and Levite were not on their way to perform priestly duties. In his parable, Jesus points to Priests and Levites (lay associates), who represent the highest religious leadership, who walk right on by the wounded man. This is disappointing because, of all people, we would expect them to help.

The Samaritan, a foreigner not expected to show sympathy to a Jew, stops and helps. The oil and wine he pours on the wounds were the only medication known at the time. Not only does the Samaritan help; he seems to expect nothing in return. After helping the wounded man, he just disappears.

In the end Jesus asked the Lawyer a different question. "Which of these three," he says, "do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" The answer was then obvious. It was the man who showed mercy. The crucial question is not, "Who is my neighbor?" but "To whom will I be a neighbor?" This is the route to eternal life and the fulfillment of the Great Commandments to love God and the neighbor.

A Question about Priorities (Mary and Martha) (10:38-42)

Having answered the question about the neighbor (2nd Commandment), Luke has Jesus answer a second question about God (1st Commandment).

John 11:1 locates Mary and Martha in Bethany, a considerable distance from Samaria. In fact Luke does not even name the place where Mary and Martha live. The point here is not geography but faith.

In her attempt to be a good hostess, Martha begins preparations for an elaborate meal, and then she expresses resentment because Mary does not help her. She appeals to Jesus, who rebukes her mildly. Food for the stomach is important, but food for the spirit is even more important. Mary has chosen the better way because she has chosen to place the emphasis on that which is primarily important.

The Question about Prayer (The Disciples) (11:1-13)

Apparently other teachers taught their disciples (pupils) how to pray, and so the twelve disciples ask Jesus to do the same for them. Perhaps they noticed how he constantly withdrew to pray. Jesus responds to their request with the Lord's Prayer.

Luke's version of the Lord's Prayer is closer to the original words of Jesus than Matthew's. The address *Father* is easy to misunderstand. It is not a formal but a personal address. The Aramaic word was *Abba*, which would be similar to our "daddy." This would have been offensive to pious Jews, who considered the name *Yahweh* so sacred that they substituted the more generic term *Adonai* for it. *Adonai* however was still a formal term and lacked the intimacy of *Abba*.

The petition calling for the Kingdom to come in this world is, recognition that the future Kingdom is being established now. What is most difficult to understand about this prayer is the choice of sins, debts, and trespasses in the petition concerning forgiveness. Debts might have been the choice in a culture in which money was seen as the key value. Trespasses might have been chosen in a society in which property was viewed as most important. I prefer Luke's use of "sins" because what Jesus has in mind is the path to faith. Without a willingness to forgive, one cannot be forgiven. We are not talking about money or property, but sin, even if our modern culture prefers to ignore the word.

Jesus illustrates God's willingness to answer prayer with a story that seems to say the opposite. It would be a mistake to equate God with the man who was awakened from his sleep. Jesus' point is that God would be much more willing to help than was this man. He is eager to answer prayers, but his answers are better than our requests. We do not always ask for that which is good for us, but he only wants to give us good gifts. When we unconsciously ask for serpents and scorpions, he purposely gives us fish and eggs. It is not God who is negligent in prayer. We need to learn how to pray, and Jesus has given us a model prayer. The prayer is not to be memorized, but prayed. Every word teaches us how to pray for the right things.

CONTROVERSIES AND CONFLICTS (11:14-54)

Exorcism (11:14-28)

After Jesus cast a demon out of a dumb man, they charged him with exorcism through the power of Beelzebul (Beelzebub), the Prince of Demons. Jesus responded with a twofold argument. First, if he was doing it through the power of Beelzebul, then his Kingdom would be divided against it self; and secondly, his accuser's own exorcists would be subject to the same charge.

Jesus casts out demons by the "finger of God," which is to say, by the "power of God." Once the demon is gone, something is needed to fill the vacuum, or seven more demons will replace it. Exorcism today would create even more controversy and conflict than it did in Jesus' time.

Signs (11:29-32)

Jesus rejects every request for a sign. Jonah's mission to Nineveh is sufficient. There is a difference here between the interpretations given by Luke and Matthew. Matthew interprets the sign in terms of the resurrection (three days and nights in the belly of the fish), but Luke emphasizes Jonah's preaching and the people's repentance. Someone greater than Jonah or Solomon has arrived, and people should listen to the message rather than to ask for signs. The message is self-authenticating.

Light (11:33-36)

In this brief passage Jesus claims that when the *eye* and *body* are sound, light will be reflected. A person whose whole "eye is healthy" will be a person of integrity and singleness of purpose. Such a person will give off the maximum amount of light.

The Six Woes (11:37-54)

The context of this conflict is a meal with the Pharisees. Jesus pronounces six woes on the Pharisees as they criticize him for not ceremonially washing his hands prior to eating. Jesus responds by telling them that the inner life is as important, if not more important, than the outer life.

The same message is declared in regard to the tithe, which according to Leviticus 27:30-32, was ten percent of their crops and domesticated animals. The Pharisees expanded the Law to include "mint and rue and herbs." Jesus did not object, but he did criticize them for not using justice and love as their inner motivation. The inner motivation is as important as the tithe itself.

The final three *woes* are delivered to the lawyers, who not only reject God's rule, but also keep others from following it. In the end both the Pharisees and the Lawyers begin to oppose Jesus.

The “key of knowledge” refers to “shutting up the kingdom of God” by their teachings. They have lost the way and were unable to teach the way into the kingdom to others.

GETTING READY FOR THE CRISIS (12:1—13:9)

What follows is a collection of Jesus’ teachings concerning the future. There are *warnings* and *assurances*. Those who focus on materialism will be disappointed, for such philosophies lead to disaster; but on the other hand, those who confess and follow Christ, will be delighted.

Hypocrisy and Blasphemy (12:1-12)

The first thing to look out for is the *leaven* of the Pharisees, which would be their hypocrisy. One does not get away with hypocrisy because everything will ultimately be revealed. Hypocrisy is avoided by fearing the one who has control over our eternal destiny.

The second danger is *blasphemy* against the Holy Spirit. We can be forgiven for many sins, but there is no forgiveness for blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. Such blasphemy would be the rejection of the very God who forgives. We reject him when we reject the clear evidence of his activity or when we attribute such activity to the power of Satan. Those who accept the light of God in Jesus Christ will find the Holy Spirit empowering and encouraging them in their hour of trial and crisis. The Holy Spirit will even give them the words to say.

In Luke 12:5 we come across the word *hell*, which in Greek is “Gehenna.” While this is the only use of the word in the Gospel of Luke, it is used in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark. It is also used in James 3:6. The literal meaning of the word is “Valley of Hinnom,” which was a depository for garbage on the south west side of Jerusalem. Since the garbage was continually burned, the fires never went out. Pagan rites were practiced in this place, and Josiah destroyed some pagan altars and disposed of human bones in Gehenna. See 2 Kings 23:10 and 14.

Other terms used to describe the place of the dead are *Sheol* and *Hades*. *Sheol* simply refers to a place of the dead, and *Hades*, a Greek word meaning “unseen,” is used to translate *Sheol*. Gehenna was a much stronger term. One might escape from *Sheol*, or *Hades*; but from *Gehenna* there would be no escape. It was a place of destruction, where both body and spirit perish forever.

Parable of the Rich Fool (12:13-21)

When a man asked Jesus to help him get the rightful share of his inheritance, he was approaching Jesus as one would approach an ordained Rabbi. Rabbis dealt with both religious and civil matters, but Jesus did not have that authority. Even if he had it, he would have refused to exercise it.

According to Deuteronomy 21:17, when there are two brothers, the older one is supposed to get 2/3 and the younger one 1/3. It is probably the younger one who has asked Jesus for help in obtaining his inheritance. His older brother is probably refusing to share anything with him. Instead of helping him get what is rightfully his, Jesus draws attention to the sin of covetousness, which is affecting both brothers. He illustrates his point with the parable of the Rich Fool, who basically lives a materialistic lifestyle. In the end he will be condemned because he loves neither God nor his neighbor. Jesus warns this young man that his attitude is leading him towards this same kind of foolishness and eventually towards his own destruction.

Do not be Anxious (12:22-34)

A true disciple will not be anxious about anything, not even the most basic of needs, such as food and clothing. All of our anxiety should be focusing on the Kingdom of God (12:31), for where our treasure is, there will our heart be also (12:34).

The reference to “little flock” is an Old Testament image used to describe humble people willing to accept the rule or reign of God.

Be Ready at All Times (12:35-48)

Several images describe the necessity to be always ready. For Jesus readiness was for the Kingdom of God, but for Luke it means for the delayed return of Jesus himself. Our concern should not be for possessions, but for readiness.

The “gird up your loins” found in older translations becomes “be dressed for action.” This is a reference to binding up the loose Palestinian robe so that one has freedom to move quickly and with no restrictions.

That one’s lamps might be burning indicates that the crisis will occur at any time, even in the middle of the night. The Roman night was divided into four watches while the Jewish night was divided into three watches. The mentioning of the second and third watches in Jewish thought would start at 9:00 p.m. and 3:00 a.m. The Roman equivalents would start at 10:00 p.m. and 2:00 p.m. Whichever is meant, it is clear that these are the times when one is most tempted to fall asleep. The return of one’s Master, or the intrusion of a thief, provide the imagery for the need to be prepared.

Peter asked if this kind of readiness was necessary for everyone, or just for them. The question was never answered directly, but it is clear that the warning is given primarily to leaders. The more one knows, the more one is responsible. All leaders bear the responsibility of being ready themselves and instructing others to be ready for any impending crisis. They must be especially ready for the coming of the Kingdom and the one who is its Anointed King.

The End of the Age (12:49-59)

Judgment is coming. Fire is the symbol of that judgment, but fire has both a positive (purification) and negative (destruction) quality. So does judgment. There are rewards and there are punishments.

Jesus' baptism is his death on the cross, which is given to make possible our salvation. It also brings about division in the family, as various members decide for or against him.

The Kingdom is coming, and everyone ought to be able to read the signs. People can already read the signs of the weather. A cloud coming out of the west signifies rain, for that is the direction of the Mediterranean Sea; and wind blowing from the south signifies scorching heat, for in that direction lies the desert. If we can read the signs concerning the weather, we ought to be able to read the spiritual signs of the Kingdom and get ready for its coming.

As a wise person settles with an accuser prior to going to court, so should a wise person be reconciled to God prior to the judgment. The *copper* coin (penny) mentioned is a *lepton*, the smallest Greek coin in circulation. Two lepte made a quadran, eight lepte made an assarion, and 128 lepte made one denarius, which was equivalent to a day's labor. This smallest of coins is the same as the widow's mite mentioned in Luke 21:2.

All Need to Repent (13:1-9)

Two incidents are told to illustrate Jesus' teaching about the need for everyone to repent. The first incident has to do with some Galileans who were making their sacrifices in Jerusalem at Passover time. Roman troops killed them and mixed their blood in with their sacrifices. The second incident has to do with an accident. The tower of Siloam apparently fell and killed eighteen people.

The question raised in the above otherwise unknown incidents is this: "Were the people killed in these two incidents worse sinners than those who escaped injury?" Jesus' answer is, "No." This goes against Jewish moral thought at the time, which indicated that people suffer because of their sinfulness. Jesus' response was, that everyone needs to repent before the final catastrophe overwhelms the whole nation.

The story about the fig tree demonstrates God's willingness to grant more time to the people, but the emphasis is clearly on their repentance. If they do not take advantage of this time, then their fate will be their own responsibility. God is doing all he can to save his people from the consequences of their sins.

HEALING AND TEACHING (13:10-35)

The Crippled Woman (13:10-17)

Jesus healed a woman crippled for eighteen years on the Sabbath. She did not ask for healing. He simply saw her, had compassion on her, and healed her. She responded with praise. Those religious leaders who observed this healing were indignant because Jesus healed her on the Sabbath. They felt that the healing could have waited until the Sabbath was over.

Jesus' response to them was that they would care for their ox or donkey on the Sabbath. Was this woman not as important as livestock? Nothing is said about the laws regulating the care of livestock, which they could have used as an argument against Jesus. Livestock need water daily. The woman had been crippled for eighteen years. She could have waited another day. Jesus however sees the Sabbath as an appropriate time for God to heal, and the common people rejoice with him. What Jesus did here out of compassion does not excuse our misuse of the Sabbath. It is difficult to see Jesus approving of what we do with the Sabbath or Lord's Day in our time.

Parables of the Kingdom (13:18-21)

These two parables teach us that the Kingdom has small beginnings and big endings. It may seem to grow slowly, but it is indeed growing.

The Narrow Door (13:22-30)

The question about whether few or many will find their way into the Kingdom prompts Jesus to talk about the narrow door. His answer is certain. Only a few will walk through this door, and of those who do, the last will go first.

Luke is stressing the Gentile mission. Although the Gospel was offered first to the Jews, they turned away from it, but the Gentiles accepted it gladly. Therefore they will go through the door first. This reference has nothing to do with the entrance of sinners and the righteous.

The very idea that Gentiles could feast at the table with the heroes of the Jewish Faith while Jews were excluded was very disturbing to Jesus' listeners. This would have caused many of them to turn against Jesus with great hostility.

Words for Herod (Antipas) (13:31-33)

Herod ruled over Galilee and Perea. At one time he wanted to see Jesus, but now he wants to kill him. Jesus calls him a *fox*. In Old Testament imagery this refers to a destructive animal, but in Greek imagery it refers to a person who is crafty. What does Jesus mean by calling Herod a *fox*? While we may never know precisely, we do know that Jesus' remark was derogatory. This was no compliment.

What is interesting in this brief passage is the way in which some Pharisees warn Jesus of Herod's intent to harm him. Up to this point most of the Pharisees have been hostile to Jesus, but now we discover some friendly ones. In John's Gospel Nicodemus is named early on as a friendly Pharisee, and there may be good reason to think that Joseph of Arimathea was also a Pharisee. These are enough examples to break down any generalization that the Pharisees opposed Jesus.

Lament over Jerusalem (13:34-35)

Jesus, like Jeremiah, loved Jerusalem, and it grieved him greatly that he, like the prophets before him, was about to be martyred. With Jerusalem's rejection of him, the city's fate is sealed. It too will be destroyed, as it was in 70 C.E. Only as it accepts the Messiah, will it have any future. Jeremiah and Ezekiel told a similar story. The New Jerusalem is tied in to the Promised Messiah, and Jesus ends with a projection of the Second Advent, which is future oriented.

THE OUTSIDERS

Have you ever felt like an outsider, like you did not belong? That is precisely how the Samaritans felt. There were good reasons for the way in which Jews treated Samaritans. They had diluted the faith of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and that is why their offer to help rebuild the Temple following the Babylonian Captivity was rejected. In Jewish circles they became the outsiders.

When Jesus decided to journey to Jerusalem, he had to travel through some Samaritan territory. He sent some messengers ahead to make arrangements for staying overnight in a Samaritan village. Luke 9:53 simply says, "but they did not receive him." James and John wanted "to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" Jesus turned them aside, rebuked them, and led them to another village.

Then a surprising thing happened. A Lawyer asked Jesus what was necessary to inherit eternal life. Jesus prompted him to answer his own question, and he came up with two commandments out of the Old Testament, recorded in Luke 10:27: "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." This however prompted the man to ask another question, "Who is my neighbor?" Jesus illustrated his answer with the story of the Good Samaritan, the point of which is, "Be a good neighbor to anyone who needs one, just as this outsider was a good neighbor to one of your own people."

Anyone who expects to enter the Kingdom of God will have to learn to love the outsider. That is what lies behind Jesus' hard words in Luke 13:24, where he says, "Strive to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able." Those who fail to enter through this narrow door will weep as they see outsiders in the company of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all of the prophets. According to Luke 13:29-30 there will be people there from the east and west, from the north and south.

“Indeed, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last.” How do you treat outsiders?

LUKAS +



4. The Journey to Jerusalem II

Luke 14:1—19:27

4. THE JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM II (14:1 – 19:27)			
A PHARISEE’S TABLE (14:1-24)			
Healing on the Sabbath (14:1-6)	On Humility (14:7-11)	On Invitations (14:12-14)	On Excuses (14:15-24)
THE CONDITIONS OF DISCIPLESHIP (14:25-35)			
THE PARABLES ABOUT THE LOST (15:1-32)			
The Lost Sheep (15:3-7)	The Lost Coins (15:8-10)	The Lost Sons (15:11-32)	
WARNINGS TO THE RICH (16:1-31)			
The Dishonest Steward (16:1-13)	Law and Gospel (16:14-17)	Divorce and Adultery (16:18)	The Rich Man/Lazarus (16:19-31)
SIN, FAITH, AND DUTY (17:1-19)			
Various Teachings (17:1-10)		The Ten Lepers (17:11-19)	
THE COMING OF THE KINGDOM (17:20-37)			
The First Coming (17:20-21)		The Second Coming (17:22-37)	
PARABLES CONCERNING PRAYER (18:1-14)			
The Persistent Widow (18:1-8)		The Pharisee and the Tax Collector (18:9-14)	
JESUS BLESSES THE CHILDREN (18:15-17)			
THE RICH RULER (18:18-30)			
THE THIRD PREDICTION (18:31-34)			
TWO BLIND MEN (18:35 – 19:10)			
A Blind Man Healed (18:35-43)		Zacchaeus (19:1-10)	
THE PARABLE OF THE POUNDS (19:11-27)			

4. THE JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM II

Luke 14:1—19:27

ASSIGNMENTS					
Pharisees and Discipleship (14:1-35)	Parables about the Lost (15:1-32)	Warnings to the Rich (16:1-31)	Sin, Faith, and the Kingdom (17:1-37)	Prayer, Children, and the Rich (18:1-30)	Heading through Jericho (18:31—19:27)

A PHARISEE'S TABLE (14:1-24)

While Jesus eats at a Pharisee's table, he continues to heal and teach. In this incident the Pharisees were silent and did not criticize him.

Healing on the Sabbath (14:1-6)

With other Pharisees present, Jesus heals a man with dropsy. Dropsy was a condition in which fluid collected in certain parts of the body causing swelling and pain. The Pharisees did not see it as a disease. For them it was punishment for unchastity; hence, Jesus made two mistakes. He healed a person, who did not deserve to be healed, and he did it on the Sabbath.

Jesus claims that the Sabbath is a good time to do God's work, and Luke records four or five occasions on which Jesus heals on the Sabbath. We find more examples in John 5:9 and 9:14, and another in Mark 1:21-26. God's work includes healing and forgiving people on the Sabbath, and so we ought to accept such tasks for ourselves as well.

On Humility (14:7-11)

Other people will seek those seats, which give them status, but this will not be so among God's people. They will seek the seats that represent humility.

On Invitations (14:12-14)

Christians are supposed to reach out to the poor. That is why Jesus suggests inviting the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind to a banquet. Unlike family and friends, they cannot issue a similar invitation. Christians will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.

On Excuses (14:15-24)

These verses signify how people react to God's invitation in Jesus Christ. Some people will consider all kinds of worldly involvements as more important than the Kingdom of God. That is why they use weak excuses such as having purchased a field, or some oxen, or that they have just gotten married.

Their answer to the invitation is not, "I cannot," but "I will not." What Luke is trying to lift up here with Jesus' teaching is that the Jews have rejected his message; therefore, the message will be taken to the Gentiles, who will accept it.

THE CONDITIONS OF DISCIPLESHIP (14:25-35)

Anyone who seeks to enter God's Kingdom must be aware of its demands. Although we have a responsibility towards our families and ourselves, our commitment to God should come first. To *hate* our family and ourselves means to "love them less" than God. God and his Kingdom must take first place in our lives; therefore, we had better count the cost of discipleship.

Only a foolish person would build a tower or go to war without having looked at his resources. The tower would have been a farm building or a watchtower for a vineyard. To proceed without having counted the cost would be foolish. Such an approach would also make discipleship impossible. It would be like adding impurities to salt. Eventually the impurities would make the salt tasteless. Everyone understood that the purpose in extracting salt from the Dead Sea or from the Mediterranean Sea was to purify it. That is also the task of discipleship. Its conditions must be thoroughly understood so that we can truly become disciples.

PARABLES ABOUT THE LOST (15:1-32)

Three parables follow a dialogue Jesus has with the Pharisees and Scribes, who were murmuring against him for receiving and eating with sinners. Jesus uses these three parables to teach the Pharisees and Scribes a lesson about compassion for the lost.

The Lost Sheep (15:3-7)

This first parable tells us that a shepherd will leave ninety-nine sheep vulnerable in order to seek one that is lost, and when he finds it, he will carry it on his shoulders rejoicing. God is like this shepherd.

This story has its background in Ezekiel 34:12 and Isaiah 49:22 of the Old Testament. If God gains more joy over the repentance of a sinner than he does over ninety-nine righteous persons, then we, his people, should rejoice with him whenever a sinner is found, who is willing to turn to him.

The Lost Coin (15:8-10)

The point of the lesson is intensified with the second parable. The woman's coins probably made up her headdress. One was lost, and she could not rest until it was found. The coin was a Greek drachma, roughly equivalent to a Roman denarius. Such a coin would be equivalent to one day's labor.

The woman's poverty made the coin valuable to her. That she needed light indicated that she lived in a typical Palestinian peasant house, which had a low door and no windows. Imagine her joy upon finding her lost coin. The angels have as much joy over the return of one sinner.

The Lost Sons (15:11-32)

Now we come to the real point. The younger son definitely represents the sinners and tax collectors while the elder son represents the Pharisees and Scribes. The younger son asked for his inheritance (Deuteronomy 21:17) prior to his father's death. He had a right to do this, but in doing it, he relinquished all further claims on his father's estate. One could ask for his inheritance while his father was alive, in which case he received it as a *gift*, or one could receive it later as part of the *will*.

Both of these young men seem to be single, which means that they were probably less than twenty years of age. The younger boy left his Jewish culture and lived among Gentiles. His rejection of his father was nearly complete. As things went badly for him, he finally had to take the most menial of tasks for a Jew, that of employment taking care of swine. He could sink no lower than this.

When the younger son returns home, he does not expect to be forgiven. He only wants to be tolerated. The reception he gets surprises both him and his elder brother. God's compassion is so great that he gets the best robe, sandals, and a ring. All of this meant that he was being treated not as a slave, but as a free person. A great feast was held and he was the honored guest.

All of the attention bestowed on the returning prodigal was difficult for the elder brother to accept, for he had never left his father's side. Jesus' point is that he should have been as happy over his brother's return as was his father. This parable may have two points: first, God loves and forgives sinners, and second, God's people ought to do the same thing. What is sad is that the elder son can never come to the point of calling him *brother*; instead, he refers to him as *your son*. The Pharisees and Scribes expressed this same attitude towards the lost. This story was told for their benefit.

WARNING TO THE RICH (16:1-31)

Two parables, with a brief comment concerning Law and Gospel, provide a warning to the rich.

The Dishonest Steward (16:1-13)

Jesus is not commending this man for his dishonesty, but for his shrewdness. He uses the present opportunity to ensure his future survival. The children of light should be as astute as the children of darkness.

Recent scholarship suggests that this man might not have been as dishonest as it first appears. In changing people's debts, he might have been releasing them from an illegal interest imposed upon them. The main point however is not whether this man was dishonest, but that his present actions ensured his future. The children of light should act as he did. Keeping the law and being generous will gain God's approval.

Law and Gospel (16:14-17)

The era of the Law and Prophets continued up to John the Baptist's time; after which, the era of the Kingdom of God began. The beginning of the Kingdom however does not mean the end of the Law. It only means that the Law is sharpened with new insight. An illustration concerning divorce follows.

Divorce and Adultery (16:18)

The point is painfully clear. Divorce followed by remarriage is defined as adultery. Jesus sharpens the law on divorce and adultery, but he also makes the man more responsible. According to Jewish Law adultery was something a woman committed against her husband or one man against another, but now it is something a man commits against a woman as well.

The Rich Man and Lazarus (16:19-31)

The point of this parable for a rich man is to change his ways while there is still time. Tomorrow will be too late. The rich man in the parable traditionally has been called *Dives*, which is a Latin word meaning "rich man." One recently discovered manuscript gives him the name *Neues*. Lazarus, the poor man, is not the same Lazarus, whom Jesus raised from the dead (John 11:1-44; 12:1,9).

The intent of the above parable is not to say that all of the rich are immoral. The question of their morality is passed over; nothing is said about it. The point is that there will be a separation from God, and the rich are in more danger than the poor. Hades or hell is a real possibility, and once there, one's situation becomes irreversible. The rich man pleads for a warning to his five brothers, but no warning will be, or can be, given. They have had the teachings of the Law and the Prophets, which repeatedly express the urgency and sufficiency of repentance. Miracles made no difference in the past, and they will make no difference to his brothers. The same is true for us.

SIN, FAITH, AND DUTY (17:1-19)

Various Teachings (17:1-10)

Verses 1 to 4 emphasize the seriousness of sin and the need to forgive. One must not lead the little ones (new disciples) astray. It would be better for one to have a millstone tied around his or her neck and be cast into the sea than to be found guilty of leading anyone astray. Sin must be confronted, but it must also be forgiven. On the frequency of forgiveness, Luke's version differs from Matthew's. In Matthew 18:21-22 Jesus instructs his disciples to forgive seventy-seven times (or seventy times seven), but in Luke 17:4, he says seven times in one day.

In verse 5 Jesus moves on to talk about faith. Even a little faith is powerful. The tree, which a little faith can uproot and plant in the sea, is a Black Mulberry tree. The final image in verses 7-10 is the most difficult to understand. What he appears to mean is that God's grace or favor is never earned. Even after we have done our duty, we are not to think that we deserve any kind of special favors. Forgiveness and faith are gifts from God. They are not rewards.

The Ten Lepers (17:11-19)

The location of this incident is important, for a mixed group of Lepers could only operate on the border of Galilee and Samaria. This means that either Jesus and his disciples backtracked, or this story is out of chronological order. The latter is most likely the case.

When Jesus pronounced their healing, he sent them off to Jerusalem to the priest, who alone could confirm their health and return them back into society. Only one, a Samaritan, expressed any gratitude to Jesus for his healing. The others expressed their faith by obeying his command to go see the priest, but they did not return to express any gratitude. The point seems to be that those who receive grace by faith should also express gratitude. After all, they did not heal themselves.

One question might be raised? Was it also necessary for the Samaritan to go to the priest? No answer is given. Even if the Jewish lepers had to follow the laws concerning ritual cleansing (Leviticus 13 and 14), they could have expressed gratitude before they left Jesus. This is certainly the point of the story. They should have taken the time to thank Jesus.

THE COMING OF THE KINGDOM (17:20-37)

The First Coming (17:20-21)

When Jesus says that the Kingdom will come without any dramatic signs, he is talking about his own inauguration of it. It has come in Jesus' own ministry. There are signs of its coming, but these signs are not as dramatic as they will be in his second coming.

While there is a difference of opinion as to whether Jesus meant the “Kingdom of God is within you” or the “Kingdom of God is among you,” it is clear that it has come in Jesus himself. It is only *within* those who allow Jesus to rule over them.

The Second Coming (17:22-37)

The second coming of the Kingdom, or its final establishment will be visible and dramatic; but first, certain things will have to happen, such as Jesus’ own suffering and death, which he compares to Noah’s time. When that time comes, which no one can predict, one should not look back (as did Lot’s wife).

The final judgment will be clear to everyone, both those who benefit and those who do not. Even families will be split up when judgment is exercised. The disciples wonder where all this will take place. Jesus’ answer is that the place will be as clear as the time. When a corpse lies in the desert, the place is obvious to the vultures. The final establishment of the Kingdom will be obvious to everyone.

PARABLES CONCERNING PRAYER (18:1-14)

The Persistent Widow (18:1-8)

God is not being compared to the unjust judge. There is a bit of irony in this parable. If this widow could persist in presenting her case against such odds (as an unjust judge), just think of how much easier it would be for a person of faith to pray to a just and loving God?

The question is not whether God will answer, but will we continue to pray until we understand what his answer is for us? He answers our prayers much more quickly than we think. What is the state of our faith?

The Pharisee and the Tax Collector (18:9-14)

Forgiveness and acceptance comes not to the arrogant Pharisee, but to the humble tax collector. Not all Pharisees are arrogant, nor are all tax collectors humble.

Jesus describes the Pharisee as one who depended on his own virtues. He gave more than a tithe. According to Numbers 18:26 and Deuteronomy 14:22, one only had to tithe of one’s produce, but this man tithed of all he earned and of all he acquired. He went beyond what the Law required, and so one can hardly call him a legalist.

Fasting was only required once a year on the Day of Atonement, but the Pharisees generally fasted twice a week. Some sources say that they fasted on Mondays and Thursdays, but other sources say Tuesdays and Thursdays. Although this man did more than the law required in regard to fasting as well, he depended upon his own virtues to justify himself before God. That simply will not work.

The Tax Collector, On the other hand, found himself unable to make retribution. This is the reason he beat his breast. He was expressing his deepest sorrow. If one cheated anyone, retribution required that the original amount be paid back plus a 20% interest or fine, but this man no longer had the means. He found himself completely dependent upon the mercy of God. Jesus' conclusion was that he went away *justified* or *accepted* by God. The prayer of humility is always more effective than the prayer of arrogance.

JESUS BLESSES THE CHILDREN (18:15-17)

The Kingdom of God is never denied to those who rely upon God as a child relies upon its parents. What is being praised is the childlike *trust* and *dependence* that exists in children.

THE RICH RULER (18:18-30)

The rich ruler was either a member of the Sanhedrin or a leader of a Synagogue. When he asked Jesus what had to be done to inherit eternal life, Jesus told him to obey the commandments. His listing of the commandments follows the order of the commandments found in the Septuagint (Greek Old Testament). The commandment against *covetousness* is missing. No reason is given for this omission. The first four commandments are also missing. This might be easier to understand. Obeying the commandments concerning the neighbor presupposes that one is also obeying the commandments concerning God.

When the rich ruler insists that he has kept all these commandments, Jesus puts him to the acid test. What about wealth or money? Is this his god? Jesus reveals to the man what his real god is, but his attachment to his wealth was too great. He walked away with great sadness. Jesus calls us to surrender our selves and our possessions. When this is done, we not only experience blessings now, but also in the age to come, where we will inherit eternal life.

When Jesus says that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for the rich to enter the Kingdom of Heaven he is telling a terrifying truth. It may be difficult for the rich to allow God to control the center of their lives, but it is not impossible. There are examples of wealthy disciples, but their wealth always takes on a new purpose. With a new center in their lives, their resources are used in new ways.

THE THIRD PREDICTION (18:31-34)

When Jesus took the twelve a side and told them that they were going up to Jerusalem, he left us with a clue as to where he was at the time. He must have been in the Jordan Valley, which was below sea level. The first city they will pass through is Jericho, a city, which is located 900 feet below sea level. They will indeed be going up to Jerusalem, which is located some 2,600 feet above sea level. The distance from Jericho to Jerusalem is only 17 miles.

Jesus predicted that his coming death and resurrection were the fulfillment of prophecy, which meant that they were in accordance with the purpose of God. Why do the disciples not comprehend what he is telling them? It is not for lack of clarity on the part of Jesus, but an inadequacy in their own faith. What could be clearer than these words of Jesus? The problem was that his disciples lacked the faith to understand his prediction.

TWO BLIND MEN (18:35—19:10)

A Blind Man Healed (18:35-43)

This blind man is not named. The healing takes place as they approach Jericho. Is this Bartimaeus? Other accounts indicate that Bartimaeus was healed as Jesus left Jericho.

The story of this man's healing indicates that he comprehends who Jesus really is. His eyes have been opened and he recognizes him as the Son of David (the Jewish Messiah). Even those who still have their physical sight need to be healed so that they can see with their spiritual eyes; hence, another blind man, Zacchaeus, is healed.

Zacchaeus (19:1-10)

Having healed a physically blind man in Jericho, Jesus now turns to a spiritually blind man. Zacchaeus, because of his shortness of stature, has often been portrayed as a sweet little man who could not see Jesus above the crowd; but the fact is, he was the chief-tax collector in Jericho, a trading and customs center, where he ripped off nearly everyone. The Romans farmed out the task of collecting taxes to him, and he was a tax farmer, who made enemies of his fellow Jews.

Zacchaeus is an example of what is possible with God (18:27), for in him God performs the miracle of saving a rich man. The purpose of Jesus is summed up in the portrayal of him as the shepherd in search of his lost sheep (Ezekiel 34:16 and Luke 15:3-7), which he finds in Zacchaeus. The proof of salvation coming to Zacchaeus can be seen in his willingness to give half of his wealth to benefit the poor and in paying back those whom he cheated fourfold. This would be in accordance of the Law, as found in Exodus 22:1, Leviticus 6:5, and Numbers 5:6-7.

THE PARABLE OF THE POUNDS (19:11-27)

The disciples, because they were headed for Jerusalem, expected Jesus to throw the Romans out and establish the Kingdom of God. In order to clarify things for them, Jesus told this parable.

The parable is based on a commonly known event, which occurred around Jesus' birth. When Herod the Great died, his kingdom was divided between Herod Antipas, Herod Philip, and Archelaus, subject to Roman ratification. His son Archelaus went to Rome in 4 B.C.E. to seek ratification and the title of King. An embassy of Jews followed him, and objected, saying to Caesar Augustus, "We do not want this man to rule over us."

Augustus must have listened to them because he sent Archelaus back to Judea with the title of Ethnarch, which only gave him half of the country. If he became a virtuous ruler, the intent was to increase his responsibilities and perhaps make him King. Archelaus was not nearly as bad as his father, but he did have difficulty gaining the people's respect and in acquiring kingly authority.

We should not compare the Nobleman in this story to God. The point Jesus is making is that he too is finding acceptance by the people difficult, and that he too will have to leave them for a while; but in the end, he too will return with the authority given to him by his Father in Heaven. Meanwhile the disciples, like the nobleman's servants, will have to carry on for him.

The focus of this parable should be on the servants, who are given a pound each to invest. The coin referred to as a pound was a Greek mina worth about three months wages. They are all expected to try to make a profit with it. Two of them succeed and are proportionately rewarded. One of them does not even have the wisdom to invest in a bank, which could have assured him of about 1% per month of interest. Seven of them do not even appear before him when they are called. Those who do not try to invest their pound are all condemned. The condemnation is not given for failing to make a profit, but for not even trying.

THE WELCOME

Jesus was accused of eating and drinking with sinners and tax collectors. He defended himself with one of the most beautiful stories in the Bible—The Parable of the Prodigal Sons. These two sons are brothers. The younger of the two is to be compared with the sinners and tax collectors. Without question, everything he did was stupid and wrong; and in the end, he too acknowledges the error of his ways.

The older son is to be compared to church members. What should his response be to his younger brother when he finally comes home because he has no place else to go? Jesus' clear answer is *compassion* and *welcome*, such as the Father expresses by throwing his arms around his young son and calling everyone together for a welcome home dinner. This of course infuriates the older son, who is reluctant to welcome his brother home at all, doubting the sincerity of his return.

Could it possibly be that we who are in the church are the biggest obstacles to those who are outside? Jesus teaches us to be like the loving father in this story and welcome home all who would come, without judging their sincerity. In Luke 15:10, Jesus says, "...there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents." We may not be angels who can discern a sinner's sincerity, but we can express joy over those who come home. The welcome itself may bring about their transformation.

As Jesus passed through Jericho, a tax collector named Zacchaeus climbed a sycamore tree to get a glimpse of Jesus. He demonstrated no remorse, nor did he confess any of his sins; and being the chief tax collector, one could assume that there were many. When

Jesus caught sight of him, according to Luke 19:5-6, he said to him, “Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today.” So he hurried down and was happy to welcome him. The transformation of Zacchaeus took place later.

These two stories teach us the importance of making people feel welcome, without criticizing their immoral behavior. Only God can accurately judge anyone. Our task is not to judge, but to welcome.



5. Jesus' Ministry in Jerusalem

Luke 19:28—21:38

5. JESUS' MINISTRY IN JERUSALEM (19:28—21:38)

THE ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM (19:28—20:1-8)

The Entry into Jerusalem (19:28-40)	The Destruction of Jerusalem (19:41-44)	The Cleansing of the Temple (19:45-48)	Jesus' Authority (20:1-8)
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SOME TEACHINGS OF JESUS IN JERUSALEM (20:9—21:4)

The Parable of the Vineyard (20:9-19)	Paying Taxes to Caesar (20:20-26)	
Questions about the Resurrection (20:27-40)	Christ as David's Son (20:41-44)	The Scribes and the Widows (20:45—21:4)

THE LAST DAYS (21:5-38)

The Fall of Jerusalem	The Return of Jesus
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5. JESUS' MINISTRY IN JERUSALEM

Luke 19:28—21:38

ASSIGNMENTS		
Entering Jerusalem (19:28—20:8)	Five Teachings of Jesus (20:9—21:4)	The Last Days (21:5-38)

THE ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM (19:28-40)

Jesus enters the city by way of Bethphage and Bethany (about two miles east) through the Mount of Olives. There is great expectation that he will act decisively, throw out the Romans, and establish a new Jewish government. In Matthew the people shout, “Hosanna,” which meant “Save Us Now,” but in Luke it’s toned down to “Blessed.” Perhaps Luke is afraid of offending the Romans.

Only the Pharisees fear what might happen, and so they ask him to silence his enthusiastic followers. He replies that he cannot do that, for should he try, even the stones will shout. The way in which Jesus was received in Jerusalem was similar to the way in which Jehu was received when he was anointed King. See 2 Kings 9:13.

Riding in on a colt symbolizes that Jesus is on a mission of peace in fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9. No one seems to comprehend that he is not on a warhorse, and so they do not seem to understand the symbolism. This is in keeping with everyone’s misunderstanding of him as the Messiah, including that of the disciples. Although he told them three times that he was going to Jerusalem to die, they could neither understand nor accept it.

THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM (19:41-44)

Instead of predicting victory for Jerusalem, Jesus predicts Jerusalem’s fall. Luke’s description of that fall reflects knowledge of the events of 70 C.E., when the Romans built a wall around the city in order to carry out their siege. Instead of victory and peace, the city could only anticipate defeat and violence. The city responded by crucifying Jesus, but in the end the city itself was crucified.

THE CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE (19:45-48)

The Temple seemed to be the goal of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. Luke says that he went straight to it and cleansed it, but this even more than likely occurred on Monday of Holy Week. In the Gospel of John this incident takes place at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, but in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, it is the focus of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem at Passover. If these three Gospels are correct, there would have been a tremendous crowd in Jerusalem at the time. Josephus, the Jewish historian, estimates a crowd of around 100,000 for such festive occasions as Passover.

The trade that was going on in the Temple area was related to the needs of the pilgrims. This is understandable enough, for pilgrims needed sacrificial animals without blemish, and they would bring a high price. Haggling over the price was common, and the atmosphere became like that of a giant souvenir shop under the shadow of a great cathedral. What made this so bad is that it closed off the Court of the Gentiles to prayer for non-Jews. It was more like a thieves' kitchen than a place of prayer. Jesus went to the Temple to teach a new way. The old religion was about to encounter a transfiguration, and the mission of the church would begin from this point (24:52-53).

JESUS' AUTHORITY (20:1-8)

In this strange encounter with the chief priests, scribes, and elders, Jesus sounds like he is evading their question about his authority. He responds by asking them whether they believe John the Baptist's authority was *divine* or *human*. They immediately see the trap he has set up for them. If they say, "divine," he will ask them why they do not obey him; and if they say "human," they know they will have to deal with the crowd, who believe his authority is *divine*. Jesus is not evading the question but affirming that his authority is *divine*.

PARABLE OF THE VINEYARD (20:9-19)

This parable reminds us of the vineyard in Isaiah 5:1-7, where the vineyard is Israel. In Jesus' parable the owner, God, has a right to expect some of the fruit from the vineyard. Since none comes his way, he sends three servants, symbolizing the prophets, who are all sent home empty-handed. Finally he sends his son, who is immediately killed. The son is obviously Jesus himself.

The point is that the servants like the Jews themselves, trip over the foundation stone. This foundation stone can be viewed in positive and negative terms. Those who build upon it are building upon rock, but those who ignore it, trip over it, destroying themselves. The rejection of Jesus can only result in judgment upon Jerusalem itself.

PAYING TAXES TO CAESAR (20:20-26)

They tried to trap Jesus with a question concerning his loyalty. They asked him if it was right to pay taxes to Rome. The taxes they were talking about were the annual poll tax

collected from every adult mail. Archelaus had established this tax in about 6 C.E. It quickly became a very unpopular tax, which the masses hated with a passion.

Jesus replied to their challenge by calling for a coin. The coin was a silver denarius, which bore Caesar's image on the front and the goddess of peace on the other side. Along with Caesar's image was an inscription, which read, "Tiberius Augustus, Son of the Divine Augustus, Chief Priest." Looking at the coin, Jesus instructed them to pay to Caesar what was due him, and to God what was due him. This was no evasion. The emphasis was on what one owes to God rather than on what one owes to Caesar. They were trying to get him in trouble with the Roman government or the popular masses, but they failed.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE RESURRECTION (20:27-40)

Not believing in the resurrection, the Sadducees tried to trap him. The Sadducees were a group within Judaism that traced themselves back to Zadok, the High Priest during David's reign (2 Samuel 8:17). They believed only in the Torah (the first five books) as Scripture, and since it did not seem to teach any resurrection, they rejected the idea of eternal life and the existence of angels. This caused them to adapt to this world and to accommodate themselves to Roman power.

The Sadducees asked Jesus how God would deal with a woman whose husband had died, and whose seven brothers had taken on the responsibility of marrying her. Whose wife would she be in the resurrection? Jesus tried to point out to them that the earthly realm is not the same as the heavenly realm. Relationships will reach such a high level in the heavenly realm that the exclusiveness of marriage will cease. While we will be as the angels, who do not marry, we will still recognize one another and relate to the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

The reference to Moses talking to God in the burning bush, and calling him the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, was an attempt to show the Sadducees that the Torah does indeed suggest life after death. How could Moses talk about the God of people who were dead? Is Yahweh not the God of the living?

CHRIST AS DAVID'S SON (20:41-44)

To call Jesus Christ a Son of David is not descriptive enough. He must be called *Lord*. David himself called the future Messiah, his Lord, not his son (Psalm 110:1ff).

THE SCRIBES AND THE WIDOWS (20:45—21:4)

Jesus warns us against the *false piety* or *arrogance* of the Scribes, and Luke contrasts that with the *genuine piety* of a widow. Having seen the poor widow give her last two copper coins (lepton or mite), Jesus says that she gave more than did the Scribes. The monetary value may be little, but the spiritual significance is great.

The widow symbolizes the poor who accept the demands of the Kingdom by acknowledging their complete dependence upon God.

THE LAST DAYS (21:5-38)

The End, according to Jesus, will come in two phases. In the first phase Jerusalem will fall and the temple be destroyed. In the second phase Jesus will return to establish the Kingdom of God in all its fullness.

The Fall of Jerusalem

Along with the Fall of Jerusalem the Temple will be destroyed. This may be what he was talking about in Luke 21:32 when he said that the present generation would not pass away before these things took place. Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed in 70 C.E. Roman armies encircled it, just as Jesus predicted. Was Luke writing after the fact, or was he telling of Jesus' prediction?

The destruction of the Temple was even more inconceivable at this time than it had been in the time of Jeremiah. It was bigger, stronger, and more beautiful; and people were determined never to let it happen again. The mere suggestion that the Gentiles would destroy the Temple was considered blasphemous. It is one of the main reasons why Jesus was crucified.

The Return of Jesus

The Return of Jesus and the final establishment of the Kingdom of God will occur after two things happen: the *final siege* and *cosmic disorder*.

Both of these will involve Christians in an opportunity to witness by expressing their faith in difficult circumstances. Although they will have to experience persecution and suffering, the Holy Spirit will inspire them to share their message of hope.

According to Mark 13:32, no one knows when these things will happen. The precise time will not be important for Christians, for they will always be ready. As people have learned how to read the signs of nature, they should also learn how to read the signs of history.

The fig tree was the first of the trees to grow leaves in the spring. As this is the sign of faith and hope in the coming spring and summer, there are also signs to be read in history. The prophets led the way in this, and Jesus followed in their wake. Christians will be ready for the end, for they will have read the signs. The end will not come before Jesus' followers have had an opportunity to evangelize throughout the whole world.

A KICK IN THE PANTS

If Jesus was such a nice person, then why did they crucify him? What did he teach that eventually turned everyone against him? It all started when he entered Jerusalem and

taught everyone that the Temple would soon be destroyed, and then cleansed it by running out those who were selling the sacrifices to those who had come long distances to worship. “It is written,” Jesus cried, “‘My house shall be a house of prayer’; but you have made it a den of robbers.” This was enough for the leaders, who then set out to find a way to put him to death. They could not do it right away because the common people still supported him, but that support would quickly disappear as they began to count the cost of their loyalty.

We need to look afresh at what we are doing to the house of God’s people, lest we too make of it a den of robbers. In trying to get at the essence of what the Church should be doing, Martin Luther suggested that beautiful image of “the inn and hospital of Christ.”¹ Sam Shoemaker, the famous Episcopalian priest, refined Luther’s image and said: “The Christian church is not a museum for saints—it’s a hospital for sinners.”²

Every hospital needs patients, but it also needs a staff of doctors, nurses, and administrators and all those people necessary to help patients get well. A hospital of only patients would not be of much use. While the Church is a hospital for sinners, it also needs people who are no longer crippled by sin, even though sin may still infect them. The Church needs pastors and leaders, and yes, even committees, to make the Church function as a hospital for sinners. What it must never do is forget its reason for existence. The moment it does that, it ceases to be the Church and stands in need of cleansing.

When Sam Shoemaker refined Luther’s image of the Church, he did not mean that all discipline should be set aside. “The church has failed,” he said, “because it has given me too much freedom and too little discipline. It has assumed that all I needed was the right hand of fellowship...what I am in greater need of is a kick in the pants....”³

¹Quoted in John Stacey, *Church* (London: The Local Preachers’ Office in the Division of Ministries of The Methodist Church, 1971), p. 140.

²Quoted in Robert Schuller, *Life’s Not Fair, but God Is Good* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1991), p. 266.

³Quoted by Stanley High, *Revive Thy Church Beginning with Me* (Work, 1948), p. 117.



6. Death and Resurrection

Luke 22:1—24:53

6. DEATH AND RESURRECTION (22:1—24:53)			
THE LAST SUPPER (22:1-53)			
The Plot against Jesus (22:1-6)		The Last Supper (22:7-38)	
The Prayer on the Mount of Olives (22:39-46)		The Betrayal of Judas (22:47-53)	
THE TRIALS (22:54—23:25)			
Jesus before Caiaphas (22:54-71)	Jesus before Pilate (23:1-5 & 13-25)	Jesus before Herod (23:6-12)	Jesus before Pilate (23:13-25)
THE CRUCIFIXION (23:26-56)			
On the Way to the Cross (23:26-31)		The Place of the Skull (23:32-43)	
<p>The Last Words of Jesus from the Cross</p> <p><i>“Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” (23:34)</i></p> <p><i>“Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.” (23:43)</i></p> <p><i>“Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit.” (23:46)</i></p>			
The Death of Jesus (23:44-49)		The Burial of Jesus (23:50-56)	
THE RESURRECTION (24:13-35)			
The Women (24:1-12)		The Road to Emmaus (24:13-35)	
Mary Magdalene	Luke 24:10	Cleopas (24:18) and Simeon (?) Simeon was Clopas’ Son (John 19:25)	
Joanna	Luke 24:10		
(The Other) Mary	Luke 24:10		
Salome	Mark 16:1		
The Commissioning of the Disciples (24:36-49)		The Ascension of Jesus (24:50-53)	

6. DEATH AND RESURRECTION

Luke 22:1—24:53

ASSIGNMENTS			
The Last Supper (22:1-53)	The Trials (22:54—23:25)	The Crucifixion (23:26-56)	The Resurrection (24:1-53)

THE LAST SUPPER (22:1-53)

A number of events occur within the context of the preparation and actual sharing of the last supper. Let us look at them one by one.

The Plot against Jesus (22:1-6)

The first of these events is the plot against Jesus, which was initiated by the chief priests and scribes, who were seeking a way to kill him. Although Judas agrees to participate, Luke blames Satan for the betrayal.

According to most scholars, Luke mistakenly identifies the Feast of the Unleavened Bread with Passover. They are two different festivals. The one Luke is talking about follows Passover and lasts for seven days. As a Gentile, Luke might not have been thoroughly familiar with the two festivals.

The Last Supper (22:7-38)

The Last Supper is described as an event in anticipation of the Messianic Banquet. The bread and wine look forward to the final establishment of the Kingdom of God. In spite of this, those who share it with Jesus are still in danger of betrayal and denial. They may not think so, but Jesus predicts that both will happen.

The question raised about *greatness* reveals the reasons why we are subject to betraying and denying Jesus. It is difficult for us to accept our servant roles. In the end Luke implies that Satan is responsible for the death of Jesus, but the destiny of Jesus is determined by God. The Last Supper looks forward to the future Kingdom, which has already been inaugurated by Jesus.

The Prayer on the Mount of Olives (22:39-46)

Following the Last Supper, Jesus takes his closest disciples to watch and pray with him. Luke abbreviates this account, but the content is still the same. Jesus turns his will over to the Father, and asks the disciples to offer the same prayer for themselves. They too will face suffering and death.

The Betrayal by Judas (22:47-53)

Judas betrayed Jesus with a kiss. Peter bravely prepared for battle, but was told to put his sword away. Both Judas and Peter were willing to fight, but they became confused when Jesus seemed to passively accept the suffering, which he had predicted. Judas may have been trying to force Jesus to engage in violence against Rome. Peter was certainly willing to take up the sword, but Jesus was moving in a nonviolent direction.

According to John 18:10, Peter used his sword to strike off the ear of the servant of the high priest. The servant's name was Malchus. Luke does not say who did it, or what the servant's name was. Since Malchus is not mentioned anywhere else in the Bible and John was written much later, we can give no explanation as to why Matthew, Mark, and Luke do not name this servant. They were certainly closer to the event than John.

THE TRIALS (22:54—23:25)

Jesus before Caiaphas (22:54-71)

While Jesus was being illegally charged with blasphemy before the Jewish Council (Sanhedrin), Peter denied him three times. On the third denial he was recognized as a Galilean, and many would have equated Galileans with revolutionaries. The cock crowed during this last denial, and Jesus glanced at Peter in such a way that Peter never forgot. The trial before the High Priest was considered illegal because it occurred in the evening. To make it more acceptable, the judgment was made in the morning.

When they asked Jesus if he were the Christ (Messiah), his answer seemed evasive, but they drew the conclusion that he responded in the affirmative. They could not execute him themselves, and so they had to alter their charge for the benefit of the Roman authorities. They sent him before Pilate, not with the charge of blasphemy, but with the charge of treason. Pilate would not have been interested in blasphemy against Jewish Law, but he would have been very interested in any attempted revolt against Rome. Since the Messiah was expected to revolt against foreign powers, such as Rome, the charges are not unrelated. The only problem one might see in them is the fact that the Jewish Council was rejecting Jesus' claim to be the Messiah. This would then mean that any charge of treason against Jesus could hardly be substantiated.

Jesus before Pilate (23:1-5 & 13-25)

When the charge was presented to Pilate, it had to be translated into political terms. Instead of blasphemy it became insurrection and treason. Pilate seems to have seen through what they were trying to do. He did ask Jesus if he were a King, but he took Jesus' evasive answer as a negative. Actually there had been a double charge, that of calling himself a King and of encouraging others not to pay tribute to Caesar. Pilate never seemed to have taken the secondary charge seriously, for Jesus was known to have taught the people to pay Caesar what he was due (Luke 20:25). Pilate tried his best to set Jesus free.

The pressure from the crowd became too great, and Pilate yielded by setting free Barabbas, a convicted insurrectionist; but not before he turned Jesus over to Herod Antipas. He did this because he recognized that Jesus was a Galilean, and Herod ruled over that territory.

Jesus before Herod (23:6-12)

Herod Antipas was the son of Herod the Great. There had been great animosity between Herod and Pilate. It is difficult to see why they would have consulted with one another, but their dealing with Jesus caused a friendship to develop between the two of them. The only reason why this might have happened is their apparent respect for each other's authority.

Herod saw no more reason than did Pilate to condemn Jesus, but he treated him more harshly. With sarcasm he had him treated as a king, but it was all a mockery. Perhaps he thought that would appease the Jews, but that was not to be the case. They were still calling for his crucifixion.

THE CRUCIFIXION (23:26-56)

On the Way to the Cross (23:26-31)

The condemned person was usually expected to carry his own cross, but Jesus seems to have been weakened to such an extent that Simon of Cyrene was asked to carry it for him. Cyrene was an important capital city on the north coast of Africa, founded by the Greeks; and Simon, according to Mark 15:21, was the father of Alexander and Rufus, two early Christians. Romans 16:13 makes a reference to Rufus and his mother. Perhaps the whole family became Christian as a result of this experience.

As Jesus moved towards the cross a group of women began to wail for him, but he told them to weep for Jerusalem rather than for him. Jerusalem was condemning itself by this act against him.

The Place of the Skull (23:32-43)

Luke avoids the Aramaic term *Golgotha* and uses its meaning, which is “the place of the skull.” Since the Greek rendering of the place of crucifixion was *kranion* and the Latin *calvaria*, the English reference has become Calvary. The present location is under the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

Luke names three of the seven last words or statements of Jesus from the cross, which are:

“Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” (23:34)

“Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.” (23:43)

“Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit.” (23:46)

The first statement appears only in Luke’s account, and even then, it does not appear in all of the ancient manuscripts of Luke. Since it is consistent with the teachings of Jesus, it is generally accepted as authentic.

The second statement raises the most questions. What does he mean by *Paradise*? Luke is the only one who writes about a repentant thief and Jesus’ promise to him. *Paradise* has a similar meaning to “Abraham’s bosom” in Luke 16:22. It was a Jewish term for the lodging place of the righteous just prior to the resurrection. It does not mean “today” as we generally think of the term. We have great difficulty thinking beyond space and time. What Jesus means is that salvation has come *now* to this man. A similar kind of idea is used in his teaching about the Kingdom of God. It has been inaugurated, but its final establishment still lies in the future.

The Death of Jesus (23:44-49)

The darkness covering the earth from the sixth hour (12:00 Noon) to the ninth hour (3:00 p.m.) could not have been the result of an eclipse of the sun. Passover season took place during the time of the full moon, and this rules out a solar eclipse. The darkness might have been created by a dust laden sirocco wind, which could also be related to the tearing of the curtain in the Temple.

The tearing of the curtain is an ambiguous symbol. It could mean one of following: that God can now be approached without a mediator, or that the Spirit of God has left the Temple. His departure may even have split the curtain. Which Luke had in mind cannot now be determined, but the former is generally favored.

The Roman centurion observed all these things and concluded that Jesus did not deserve crucifixion. Was this man in charge of the crucifixion? It is possible that he was. Even if he was, Luke does not hold him guilty, but is impressed with his affirmation of Jesus’ innocence.

The Burial of Jesus (23:50-56)

There was one man in the Sanhedrin, Joseph of Arimathea, who did not go along with the decision to crucify Jesus. This man is described as one who was seeking the Kingdom. Since all Jews were seeking the Kingdom, he must have been one who was seeking it according to Jesus' own teachings. At any rate, he sees the need to bury Jesus prior to the beginning of the Sabbath, and this is done in such haste that proper anointing of the body does not get done.

THE RESURRECTION (24:1-53)

The story of the resurrection appearances that follow confines itself to Jerusalem. This is not to say that nothing happened outside of Jerusalem. Jerusalem is emphasized because it is the city in which the prophets were killed and the Messiah expected. It was important for him to be seen here, for it was to become the birthplace of and center for the Church.

The Women (24:1-12)

The women named, Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary (the mother of James), are not the same as those named in Mark's Gospel. More than three are present in both cases, but no definite number is given. They went to the tomb to anoint the body of Jesus, which had not been properly prepared for burial.

When the women arrived, they encountered two angels, and looked into an empty tomb. In the Gospel of Mark only one angel was mentioned, but Mark might have only been talking about the one who spoke. In Luke's Gospel none of them encountered the Lord. When they returned to tell the apostles, no one would believe them. Although they had witnessed an empty tomb, this was not sufficient for faith; therefore, Luke moves on to tell of the two who encountered Jesus on the road to Emmaus.

The Road to Emmaus (24:13-35)

Why these two persons walked away from Jerusalem on Sunday afternoon is a mystery. Only one of them is named—Cleopas. Some scholars identify him with Clopas, the father of Simeon (John 19:25). Simeon later succeeded James as the leader of the Jerusalem Church. The other one was either his wife or a friend. Tradition has named Cleopas' friend *Simon* in light of Luke 24:34, but the Simon mentioned there might very well be Simon Peter.

The two of them were aware of the women's report that the body was missing, and probably thought someone had stolen it. At any rate, they were on the road to Emmaus, a city that has not been identified for certain. It is usually identified with Kubeibeh, or Mozah. Jesus joins them on their journey, but they do not recognize him. Luke points out that this is intentional on the part of God. Recognition is withheld from them. They discuss scripture as they walk along, but still there is no recognition. When they arrive, they invite Jesus to spend the night with them. As they have their evening meal, Jesus

takes on the role of the host. This reminds us of what he did in the miracle of the feeding of the 5,000 and in the Last Supper. As he shares bread with them, their eyes are opened and they recognize him. This reminds us of the church's celebration of the Lord's Supper in which we experience his real presence.

After Jesus disappeared, Luke 24:32 tells us that these two reflect back on how he broke the bread of scripture with them. The imagery they use can also be found in Psalm 39:3 and Jeremiah 20:9. Nothing is said about recognizing him in the breaking of bread.

They are so excited about seeing him that they return that same evening to seek out the others to share their Good News with them. When they arrive, they discover that the Lord has already appeared to Simon Peter. The appearing to Peter *first* agrees with 1 Corinthians 15:5, which is the earliest account we have of any resurrection appearances.

The Commissioning of the Disciples (24:36-49)

This passage resembles Matthew 28:16-20 and John 20:19-23. The main difference is Matthew's locating of the event in Galilee. It is possible that the commissioning was done on several occasions. The main point here is that Jesus is indeed alive, which is proven by his eating boiled fish.

All of the above has been talked about in Scripture, identified here as the Law, Prophets, and Psalms. Actually, the Psalms were not yet officially adopted as Scripture, but they were in common use. Jesus is the fulfiller and interpreter of Scripture, and his resurrection is God's way of moving the world in a new direction, which requires a worldwide missionary effort.

All four of the Gospels have their Great Commission, and this is Luke's. Mark's is part of what has been called the Longer Ending (Mark 16:15-16). The Great Commissions of Matthew and John have already been mentioned. All of these Great Commissions have the common theme of proclaiming Jesus' call to repent and believe in the Good News of God's Kingdom, which of course includes his own resurrection as the Messianic King. The Apostles are commissioned to continue what Jesus has started. They will be his physical body in the world.

The Ascension of Jesus (24:50-53)

Jesus' departure from Bethany creates a problem. If Luke wrote both the Gospel and Acts, then why are two accounts of the Ascension given? Acts 1:9-11 gives a similar account. Could it have been a retelling of the story as Luke begins his second volume?

A FIRE IN THE HEART

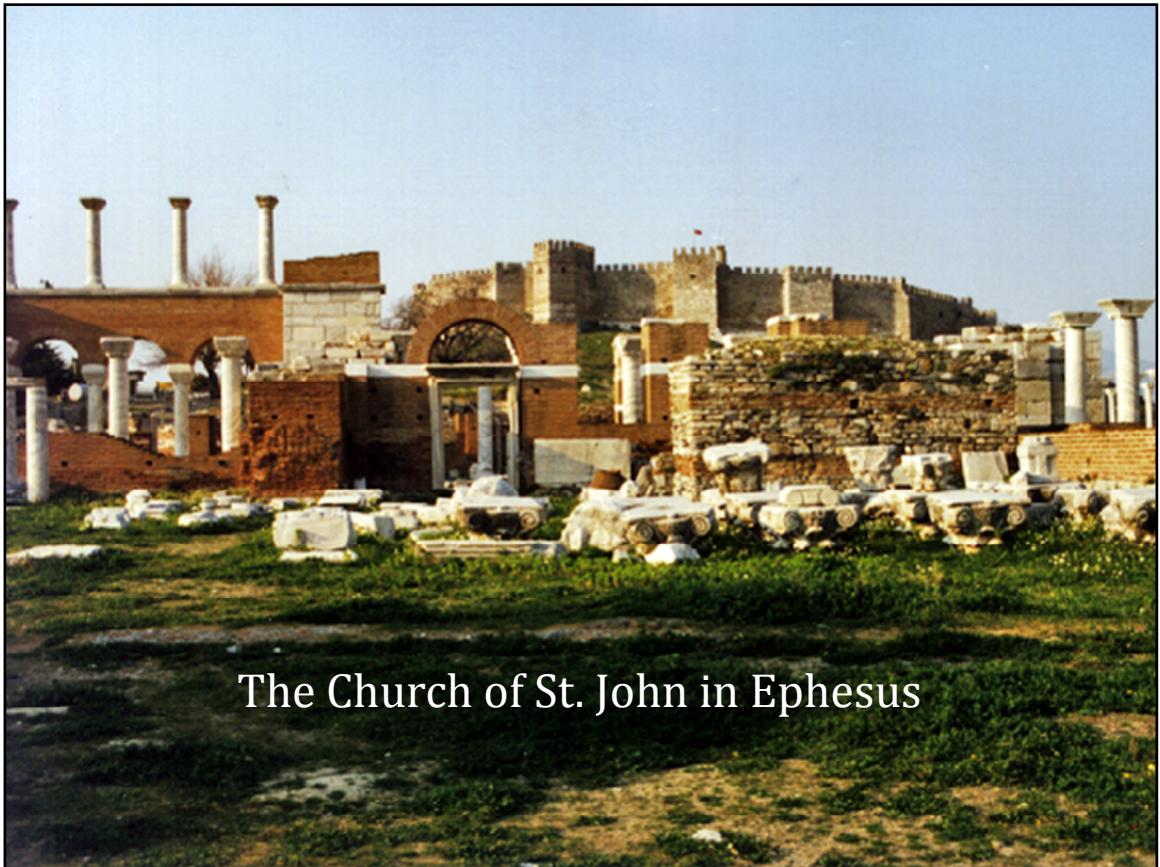
In Luke's Gospel Jesus is crucified for threatening to bring down the Temple and for teaching people not to pay their taxes. The latter charge was of course false, but the former was true. It was difficult for anyone to believe that such a beautiful Temple would be leveled to the ground with not one stone left upon another; and yet, within forty years, not only was the Temple destroyed, so was the whole city of Jerusalem.

As Jesus was being crucified, Luke 23:45 tells us that the "...sun's light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two." The destruction of the Temple had begun. How could anyone experience the presence of God without the Temple? Little did they know at the time that everyone's flesh was about to become a Temple, and everyone's heart, an Altar.

The primary appearance of Jesus in Luke's Gospel is not to Mary Magdalene or the Apostle Peter, but to someone we have not even met before—Cleopas and his unnamed friend. Cleopas and his friend were on the way to Emmaus when Jesus began to walk along with them, inquiring about their sadness and sharing his insights into the Scriptures. As they shared a meal that night, their eyes were opened and they recognized him. Then he vanished from their sight, and according to Luke 24:32, they said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?"

It is much better to experience the presence of God within the heart than to have to go to some building made of wood or stone, but this does not deny the need for corporate worship. The first thing Cleopas and his friend did was to run back to Jerusalem to share the fire in their hearts with the others. The New Temple is made up of many living stones inspired by the fire within, which is the promise made by Jesus that he would be with us always, even unto the end of the Age.

THE NEW REVELATION



The Church of St. John in Ephesus

The Gospel of John

INTRODUCTION TO THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

JOHN <i>Son of Zebedee</i>	
Date: 90 C.E.	Place: Ephesus
Purpose: That all might believe	Sources: Personal Experiences

Author

Tradition has it that the author is John the Apostle and son of Zebedee and Salome. Salome was Mary's sister (Matthew 27:56; Mark 15:40; and John 19:25). This would make him a first cousin of Jesus. In the Gospel of John the author only refers to himself as "the one who had reclined next to Jesus at the supper" (21:20, 24). From this we get the idea that he was close to Jesus, and must be identified as one of the inner circle. The other two would be Peter and James.

Since John is never mentioned in this Gospel and John the Baptist is simply referred to as John, one draws the conclusion that John himself is the author. Irenaeus (140-203 C.E.) states that he received this tradition firsthand, while still a youth, from Polycarp (70-160 C.E.).

Date

This is clearly the last Gospel written. Most scholars agree that it was written after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. and after the expulsion of Jewish Christians from the Synagogues around 85-90 C.E. The date usually assigned to it is 90 C.E. Taking into consideration John's age, it could not have been written much later.

There are some scholars who want to assign an earlier date to the Gospel. They point to John 5:2, for example, which says, "Now in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate there is (not was) a pool, called in Hebrew Beth-zatha, which has five porticoes." Their point is that John wrote this prior to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E.

One solution to the dilemma is the suggestion that the Gospel of John was written in stages. Different styles of writing found in the Gospel seem to support the idea that the Gospel went through some editing and revision. According to this theory, John may have written the first draft somewhere between 60 and 70 C.E., with his disciples editing the Gospel after his death, adding stories and events following his death. This would explain the early and late evidence for dating John's unique Gospel.

Place

John probably started putting his thoughts down while he still lived and ministered in Palestine. Following Jesus' death, John continued to minister in Jerusalem, but at some point he made the journey to Ephesus.

We have no idea why John moved to Ephesus. We know it had to be after Paul's visit there in the 50s, and so the best guess would be that he went to Ephesus in the 60s. The Gospel of John shows evidence that its author was appealing to both Jews and Hellenists, and so we must conclude that the Gospel was put in its present form in Ephesus (Turkey).

Purpose

The purpose is quite different from the other Gospels. John concentrates on Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God; but his purpose is clearly evangelistic. His own words spell it out clearly. "...these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name." (John 20:31)

For Christians, this book has been a source book to teach them how to witness and preach to potential converts; and for those converts, it has been an introduction into the Christian faith. It is not a simple biography, but an interpretation of the Christian faith.

All of this simply reflects the environment in which John found himself. The congregation in Ephesus was very diverse, consisting of both Jewish and Hellenistic believers. The Jewish believers saw Christ through Jewish eyes, which resisted seeing the divinity of Jesus; and the Hellenistic believers saw him through Greek philosophy, culture, and wisdom, resisting his full humanity. John attempts to present a balanced Christ who is both fully divine and fully human.

Two things are striking as one reads this Gospel. It contains no parables and lacks a long sermon by Jesus to summarize his teachings. John's Gospel develops around seven signs and seven claims that point to the identity and mission of the Christ. Those signs are as follows:

THE SEVEN SIGNS
1. The Turning of Water into Wine (2:1-11)
2. The Healing of the Royal Official's Son (4:46-54)
3. The Healing the Paralyzed Man by the Pool (5:1-18)
4. The Feeding of the 5000 (6:1-14)
5. Walking on the Water (6:16-21)
6. The Healing of a Blind Man (9:1-41)
7. The Raising of Lazarus (11:1-57)

THE SEVEN CLAIMS
1. I AM the Bread of Life (6:35)
2. I AM the Light of the World (8:12; 9:5)
3. I AM the Gate (10:7, 9)
4. I AM the Good Shepherd (10:11, 14)
5. I AM the Resurrection and the Life (11:25)
6. I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life (14:6)
7. I AM the Vine (15:1, 5)

Organization

Prologue (1:1-18)	Jesus Christ as the Object of Faith (1:19—4:54)	Conflict with Unbelievers (5:1—12:50)	Fellowship with Believers (13:1—17:26)	Death and Resurrection (18:1—20:31)	Epilogue (21:1-25)
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A NEW FAITH FOR THE WORLD						
JESUS CHRIST IS THE WORD OF GOD (1:1-18)						
JOHN THE BAPTIST						
The First Testimony of John (1:19-34)		The Second Testimony of John (3:22-36)				
DISCIPLES	MIRACLES	CLAIMS	PEOPLE			
Andrew	Nature Jesus turned Water into Wine (2:1-12)	Jesus cleansed the Temple (2:13-25)	A Jew Nicodemus (3:1-21)			
Simon Peter						
Philip	Disease Jesus healed an Official's Son (4:46-54)	I AM the Bread of Life (6:35)	A Samaritan Woman at the Well (4:1-42)			
Nathanael						
Judas Iscariot						
Judas Thaddeus (1:35-51)	Disease and Sin Jesus healed a Paralyzed Man (5:1-18)	I AM the Light of the World (8:12; 9:5)	A Gentile An Official's Son (4:43-54)			
PASSOVERS						
First Passover (2:13ff)				Nature Jesus fed the 5000 (6:1-14)	I AM the Good Shepherd (10:11, 14)	A Woman caught in Adultery (7:53—8:11)
Second Passover (11:55ff)						
Third Passover (12:1ff)	Disease and Sin? Jesus healed a Blind Man (9:1-41)	I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life (14:6)	A Woman who anoints Jesus (12:1-50)			
				Death Jesus raised Lazarus (11:1-57)	I AM the Vine (15:1, 5)	The Greeks (12:20-36a)

PREPARATION	PRAYERS	THE HOLY SPIRIT	TEACHINGS
The Anointing of Jesus (12:1-11)	For Himself (17:1-26)	(14:16-17)	The Hour has Come (12:20-36a)
The Triumphal Entry (12:12-19)	For the Disciples (17:6-19)	(14:25-26)	Salvation or Judgment (12:36b-50)
The Lord's Supper and The Washing of Feet (13:1-38)	For the Church (17:20-26)	(15:26-27)	Footwashing and Humility (13:1-38)
		(16:5-11)	Questions and Assurances (14:1-31)
		(16:12-15)	Christians in the World (16:1-33)



1. A New Faith for the World

John 1:1—4:54

1. A NEW FAITH FOR THE WORLD (1:1—4:54)			
THE WORD OF GOD (1:1-18)			
THE TESTIMONY OF JOHN			
The First Testimony of John (1:19-34)		The Second Testimony of John (3:22-36)	
THE FIRST DISCIPLES (1:35-51)			
Andrew	Philip	Simon	Nathanael
THE TURNING OF WATER INTO WINE (2:1-12)			
THE CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE (2:13-25)			
PEOPLE WHOM JESUS MET			
Jews: Nicodemus (3:1-21)	Samaritans: The Woman (4:1-42)		Gentiles: The Royal Officer 4:43-54)
THE SEVEN SIGNS		THE SEVEN CLAIMS	
1. The Turning of Water into Wine (2:1-11)	2. The Healing of the Royal Official's Son (4:46-54)	3. The Healing the Paralyzed Man by the Pool (5:1-18)	4. The Feeding of the 5000 (6:1-14)
5. Walking on the Water (6:16-21)	6. The Healing of a Blind Man (9:1-41)	7. The Raising of Lazarus (11:1-57)	1. I AM the Bread of Life (6:35)
			2. I AM the Light of the World (8:12; 9:5)
			3. I AM the Gate (10:7, 9)
			4. I AM the Good Shepherd (10:11, 14)
			5. I AM the Resurrection and the Life (11:25)
			6. I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life (14:6)
			7. I AM the Vine (15:1, 5)

1. A NEW FAITH FOR THE WORLD

John 1:1—4:54

ASSIGNMENTS			
The Word, the Forerunner, and the First Disciples (1:1-51)	The First Miracle and the Cleansing of the Temple (2:1-25)	Nicodemus and the Second Witness of John the Baptist (3:1-36)	The Woman from Samaria and the Royal Officer (4:1-54)

THE WORD OF GOD (1:1-18)

John begins his Gospel in a very different manner from Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Matthew began with Abraham, Luke with Adam, and Mark with the baptism of Jesus. John went way back beyond creation itself. He uses *Logos*, which is the Greek word meaning “Word.” This word means much more than it does in English. It is God’s creating, revealing, and redeeming Word. It is divine, eternal, and personal. John understands Jesus to be the preexistent Son of God. In this brief introduction, John mixes Jewish theology and Greek philosophy to establish the identity of Jesus for all.

John’s theological statement serves as a preface to the life and teaching of Jesus, in whom, John is convinced, God dwelt. These eighteen verses also serve as an outline of the Gospel of John.

1. Jesus Christ is the agent of a new creation (Chapters 1-2)
2. Jesus Christ is the source of life (Chapters 3-6)
3. Jesus Christ is the Light of the World (Chapters 7-9)
4. Jesus Christ is rejected by his own (Chapters 10-12)
5. Jesus Christ acknowledges all who believe (Chapters 13-20)

While verse 14 is probably the most profound thought in the entire Bible, not until verse 17 does John name Jesus as the Word of God, who fulfills Moses and the Law. The Law came through Moses, but Grace and Truth come through Jesus Christ. In Him God dwelt and continues to dwell.

THE TESTIMONY OF JOHN (1:19-34)

Although John baptizes with water, no mention of his baptism of Jesus is made. The question arising here has only to do with who he is, and John rejects the three popular possibilities. He is not the Messiah (Christ), Elijah (Malachi 4:5), or one of the prophets (Deuteronomy 18:15). John's baptism has no official status or authority. It is simply a call to repentance and preparation for the coming of the Messiah.

In verse 28 we are told that John did his baptizing in Bethany on the other side of the Jordan. This Bethany is not to be confused with the Bethany located a few miles from Jerusalem. Nothing is known about the Bethany on the other side of the Jordan.

THE FIRST DISCIPLES (1:35-51)

When John finally sees Jesus coming, he testifies to the baptism of the Spirit and Jesus' role as the Messiah. He even urges his own disciples to leave him and follow Jesus. Two of his disciples, Andrew and an unnamed disciple took his advice and joined up with Jesus at the tenth hour, or about 4:00 P.M. Some scholars think that the unnamed disciple is John himself, but Philip seems to be the second disciple. Both Andrew and Philip introduce another person to Jesus. Andrew brought his brother Simon, whom Jesus names as Cephas (Peter or the Rock Man); and Philip introduces Nathanael (Bartholomew). Although Nathanael doubts whether the Messiah could come out of Nazareth, Jesus quickly convinces him otherwise by referring to him as a "true Israelite," and promising him a similar vision to that of Jacob, the "first Israelite," according to Genesis 28:12. Perhaps Nathanael was meditating on Jacob's vision. The imagery of the angels of God ascending and descending makes one think of Jacob, whose name God changed to Israel (Genesis 32:28 and 35:10). Jesus' reference to himself as the "Son of Man" comes straight out of Daniel 7:13-14.

THE TURNING OF WATER INTO WINE (2:1-12)

This miracle, the first of Jesus' seven signs, took place in Cana, the hometown of Nathanael. Jesus and his disciples went to a wedding, in which Jesus' mother was present, and an embarrassing moment occurred. They ran out of wine. Mary turned to Jesus, who appeared somewhat hostile, since his time had not yet come; nevertheless, he performed the first miracle that signified the glory of God's presence working in him.

Some early writers associate this miracle with the feeding of the five thousand. They see traces of the Lord's Supper in both of them. Since wine has been seen as a symbol for blood, it is easy to see why they do this. The first miracle of Moses for the Pharaoh, for example, was the turning of water into blood (Exodus 7:14-24). Other Old Testament images that seem to have some relationship are Elisha's multiplication of bread (2 Kings 4:42-44), and Elijah's (1 Kings 17:1-16) and Elisha's (2 Kings 4:1-7) miracles with the oil. Jesus can do the same and even more.

The jugs, which contained the water, symbolize the Old Covenant. They contained 120 gallons of water, presumably all of which was turned into wine. That would have been far more wine than they needed, but the real point is not the quantity but the quality of what has been accomplished. This wine is even better than the wine served earlier. The New Covenant is to be better than the Old. The water jugs, which were used for Jewish purification ceremonies, that is for the ritual washing of hands and utensils have become empty and meaningless. The new wine of the Gospel replaces them. Jesus brought something entirely new into being. This miracle nurtures the new faith of the Gospel, which has replaced the old faith of the Law. Six more miracles or signs will follow in John's Gospel, and they are as follows:

THE SEVEN SIGNS
<i>1. The Turning of Water into Wine (2:1-11)</i>
2. The Healing of the Royal Official's Son (4:46-54)
3. The Healing the Paralyzed Man by the Pool (5:1-18)
4. The Feeding of the 5000 (6:1-14)
5. Walking on the Water (6:16-21)
6. The Healing of a Blind Man (9:1-41)
7. The Raising of Lazarus (11:1-57)

THE CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE (2:13-25)

John is the only one who places the cleansing of the Temple at the beginning of Jesus' ministry. Did he do this more than once, or does John have a different purpose? The latter is probably the case. John makes no attempt to place everything in order, as does Luke; rather, he has a theological purpose in arranging his material. He is trying to illustrate the corruption, which lies at the heart of Israel's religion, and could find no better story than this one. This story illustrates the inevitable clash developing between Jesus and the religious authorities of his time.

The Temple, which had been begun in 20-19 B.C.E., was not yet finished, and would not be finished until 64 C.E. John 2:20 helps us to date this event. If forty-six years had gone by, then the date would be 26 C.E. In addition to cleansing the Temple, Jesus predicted its eventual destruction, which took place under the Romans in 70 C.E. He proclaimed that another Temple, his own body, would replace it. God would rebuild it in three days. His hearers did not comprehend that he was talking about himself. Because of what he had done, many believed in him, but he would not entrust himself to them because he knew them well. They did not yet fully understand what it meant to believe, nor did they understand the consequences of belief.

JESUS AND NICODEMUS (3:1-21)

Nicodemus, a Pharisee and member of the Sanhedrin, met with Jesus at night. While this might have been unusual, it is certainly understandable. Hostility had developed between the Pharisees and Jesus. Nicodemus was just seeking an opportunity to talk with Jesus in secret. They both acknowledge each other with respect and call one another *rabbi* or *teacher*. Nicodemus seems confused and unable to understand what Jesus is talking about. Jesus uses the image of new birth to explain, but even this does not help. That one must be born of the *water* and the *Spirit* certainly means that Jesus is talking about two kinds of baptism—water baptism and Spirit baptism. One is a reference to the distinction between John’s baptism and Jesus’ baptism (John 1:33), which became an initiation into the Church (Ephesians 5:26). Water baptism, however, was always to be understood in terms of spiritual regeneration (Ezekiel 36:25-27 and Titus 3:5). The reference to Moses’ lifting up the bronze serpent on a pole in the desert to save those who had sinned (Numbers 21:9) is an image used to point to Jesus’ own coming death on the cross, which will save us from our sins. While this imagery may be difficult to understand, the main point is that FAITH is required for salvation.

While Nicodemus defends Jesus from unjust and prejudiced accusations (7:50-51) and joins Joseph of Arimathea in providing Jesus with a decent burial (19:39), there is no proof that he became one of Jesus’ disciples. Gamaliel protected the rights of early disciples too (Acts 5:34-39), but this does not mean that he became one. Nicodemus does not seem to understand what Jesus is talking about, and soon fades from the immediate focus of the Gospel writer.

As we move into verses 16-21 there seems to be a shift of focus. It is difficult to determine whether Jesus is still speaking or the author is making an interpretive comment. Whatever is the case, the passage is important. Martin Luther called John 3:16 the “Gospel in Miniature.” The portion following speaks of how judgment takes place. It is not God who judges. God has come in Jesus Christ to save, but those who turn away from God’s light and salvation, judge themselves. Those who persist in hanging on to the darkness will find God’s opposition to evil total and complete, for God is totally committed to the light, which is fully represented in Jesus Christ.

JESUS AND JOHN THE BAPTIST (3:22-36)

John’s ministry seems to be threatened by Jesus; but this does not bother John, for he sees himself as the *forerunner* and *witness* of the Messiah. According to John 3:25, Jesus baptized people, but this gets corrected in John 4:2, which states that only his disciples did the baptizing. An argument developed between John’s disciples and a certain unnamed Jew over the matter of ceremonial washing. The seemingly easy acceptance of baptism must be due to some kind of Jewish preoccupation at the time with achieving ceremonial purification. John started it, but he fully understood that a spiritual dimension was needed, that only Jesus could provide. Jesus then gets described as the bridegroom. John only considered himself a friend of the bridegroom, and was quite satisfied with the role of introducing people to the bridegroom.

As in the previous section, we discover more verses that are difficult to identify with the speaker. Is John the Baptist talking in verses 31-36, or is this John the Gospel writer's comment. It is difficult to be certain, but the intent is clear. One gains eternal life in the present through belief in Jesus Christ and that belief is expressed through obedience to him. Faith then consists of belief in the person of Jesus plus obedience to his teachings. Those who do not believe will be judged. Judgment is not what God desires for them, but it is brought on by their rejection of faith.

JESUS AND THE SAMARITANS (4:1-42)

The initial contact with the Samaritans took place at Jacob's well in Sychar, where Jesus began a conversation with a Samaritan woman. This may not seem like much of a problem today, but it was in Jesus' time. Rabbis had nothing to do with Samaritans, or women. Samaritans can be traced back to Nehemiah's time (5th Century B.C.E.). Being denied the right to work with the Jews on the Jerusalem Temple, they built their own Temple on Mount Gerizim in approximately 400 B.C.E. They felt it was a legitimate thing to do for at least three reasons. Both Abraham and Jacob had built altars in the region of Mount Gerizim (Genesis 12:7 and 33:20); the people had been blessed from this mountain (Deuteronomy 11:29 and 27:12); and Moses had commanded an altar to be built on this mountain (Deuteronomy 27:4-6). After the Jewish revolt against Alexander the Great, John Hyrcanus destroyed the Samaritan Temple and attempted to suppress the Samaritan cult; but after Rome took over in 64-63 B.C.E., the Samaritans were again free to pursue their independent religious tradition, which they did. Jesus and the Samaritan woman began their conversation about water, but Jesus spoke to her on two levels, just as he did with Nicodemus. He talked about water, which would quench all human thirst, just as did Isaiah (55:1) and Jeremiah (2:13). Jesus' water would quench all thirst because its source is God. Jesus later identified this water with the Holy Spirit (7:37-39).

In the story the Samaritan woman expresses astonishment that Jesus would have anything to do with her, for Jewish rabbis had nothing to do with Samaritans, and they would never speak with women in public. Jesus then reveals to her that he knows all about her personal life, the fact that she has had five husbands and that the man she now lives with is not her husband. She is astounded by all this and runs to tell her friends. There seems to be an expectation for a Messiah among the Samaritans (4:25) and Jesus affirms that he himself is that Messiah (4:26). This is very different from the Messianic Secret we find in the first three Gospels. One explanation for this might be that the Samaritans confined their scriptures to the Pentateuch, or the first five books of the Bible. This means that their expectation of a Messiah was not related to the Davidic Monarchy, and so the term lacked the political overtones in Samaria that it carried in Judea. This made it possible for Jesus to admit that he was the Messiah. Other Samaritans believed because of what the woman told them, but after they had an opportunity to hear Jesus, they believed because of what they heard with their own ears.

In the context of his encounter with the Samaritan woman, Jesus made two very important statements. The first has to do with the place of worship. According to Jesus, the place has little significance. When people begin to understand this, neither Mount Gerizim nor

Jerusalem will have any importance. This leads quite naturally into the second statement. God is Spirit and must be worshiped in Spirit and in Truth. Truth has to do with the One who is the Truth. It refers to God's nature as it is revealed through Jesus Christ. All other worship is false (4:23-24).

JESUS AND THE GENTILES (4:43-54)

Jesus' first contact with Gentiles in the Gospel of John came through a request made by a Gentile Royal Official for the healing of his son. The Greek noun used for *official* suggests royalty for a court official, and so we might assume that this man was a court official appointed by King Herod. When he encounters a rebuff from Jesus over signs and miracles, he persists and Jesus tells him that his son will live. When he returned home and found his son well, he asked what time the fever left. They told him, "the seventh hour" (1:00 P.M.), which was the precise time that Jesus told him his son would live. This was the second sign performed by Jesus, and the conversation between Jesus and the Royal Official took place in Cana, where Jesus had performed his first sign.

THE SEVEN SIGNS
1. The Turning of Water into Wine (2:1-11)
2. <i>The Healing of the Royal Official's Son (4:46-54)</i>
3. The Healing the Paralyzed Man by the Pool (5:1-18)
4. The Feeding of the 5000 (6:1-14)
5. Walking on the Water (6:16-21)
6. The Healing of a Blind Man (9:1-41)
7. The Raising of Lazarus (11:1-57)

Both incidents in this chapter are illustrations of a mission beyond the Jews to the whole world, of which Jesus is Savior (4:42).

THE MIND AND THE HEART

The distance between the mind and the heart is about eighteen inches, but for some of us it might as well be a thousand miles. This is particularly true in the area of religion, but it is also true in other areas of life. We polarize people, for example, and call them right brained or left brained, intellectual or creative. We think that people are moved primarily by the mind or the heart. Is it possible to strike a balance, or must we be one or the other?

The Gospel of John begins as if it were addressed to the Greek philosophers. "In the beginning was the Word," says John 1:1, "and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Philosophical as this opening chapter sounds, it is also very poetic. The mind and the heart seem to come together in this poem of the coming of Jesus Christ.

Then there is the prose account of Nicodemus' conversation with Jesus at night, where Jesus says in John 3:3, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above." Nicodemus has great difficulty with Jesus' imagery, for he can only take it literally. This is why he replies in John 3:4 by asking, "How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?" Perceiving that Nicodemus speaks from the head, Jesus tries to direct his attention to the heart in John 3:7-8, as he says, "Do not be astonished that I said to you, 'You must be born from above.' The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes." Because Nicodemus seems puzzled, Jesus asks him his final question, "Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?" (John 3:10) In other words, "Can you not comprehend this with both your mind and heart?"

"Let us now unite the two so long divided," said John Wesley, "knowledge and vital piety." Let us also unite the mind and heart so that we can become new and whole persons in Jesus Christ, born from above.



2. Jesus' Controversy with the Jews

John 5:1—11:57

2. JESUS' CONTROVERSY WITH THE JEWS (5:1 – 11:57)

JERUSALEM (5:1-47)

Jesus heals a Man on the Sabbath (5:1-18)	The Claims of Jesus (5:19-47)		
	To Know the Will of God (5:20)	To Give Eternal Life (5:21, 24, 40)	Authority to Pass Judgment (5:22, 25-29)

GALILEE (6:1-71)

The Feeding of the 5000 (6:1-15)	Jesus walks on the Water (6:16-21)	Jesus as the Bread of Life (6:22-71)
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JUDEA (7:1 – 11:57)

Jesus as the Water of Life (7:1-52)	The Woman Caught in Adultery (7:53 – 8:11)	Jesus as the Light of Life (8:12-59)
Jesus heals a Blind Man (9:1-41)	Jesus as the Good Shepherd (10:1-42)	The Raising of Lazarus (11:1-57)

THE SEVEN SIGNS

1. The Turning of Water into Wine (2:1-11)
2. The Healing of the Royal Official's Son (4:46-54)
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6. The Healing of a Blind Man (9:1-41)
7. The Raising of Lazarus (11:1-57)

THE SEVEN CLAIMS

1. I AM the Bread of Life (6:35)
2. I AM the Light of the World (8:12; 9:5)
3. I AM the Gate (10:7, 9)
4. I AM the Good Shepherd (10:11, 14)
5. I AM the Resurrection and the Life (11:25)
6. I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life (14:6)
7. I AM the Vine (15:1, 5)

2. JESUS' CONTROVERSY WITH THE JEWS

John 5:1—11:57

ASSIGNMENTS			
The Claims of Jesus (5:1-47)	Jesus as the Bread of Life (6:1-71)	Jesus as the Water of Life (7:1-52)	Jesus as the Light of Life (7:53—8:59)
Jesus and the Blind Man (9:1-41)	Jesus as the Good Shepherd (10:1-42)	The Raising of Lazarus (11:1-57)	

JERUSALEM

Jesus heals a Man on the Sabbath (5:1-18)

A man, paralyzed for 38 years, could not make it into the pool at Bethzatha (Bethesda or Bethesda); and when Jesus encountered him, he asked him if he really wanted to be healed. After giving an excuse, Jesus told him to pick up his mat and walk. Following the healing, Jesus commanded him not to sin again or something worse would afflict him (5:14).

The Jews attacked Jesus, not because he did not observe the Sabbath, but because he failed to obey one of the intricate rules on what not to do on the Sabbath. If a healing could be put off until the next day, it was to be delayed. According to the *Mishnah*, a mat could be carried if someone was on it, but this man was carrying it empty. Jesus observed the Sabbath by attending the Synagogue Services, but he saw the needs of an individual as having priority over the requirements of rules and regulations. Although the Jews were upset over Jesus' breaking the rules of the Sabbath, they were even more upset when he identified his work with God's (5:17). Jesus stands guilty of (1) breaking the Sabbath, and (2) blasphemy. The latter however is the most serious charge. The Jews might have referred to God as "Our Father," but never as "My Father." The term Jesus used was just too intimate a term, and this seemed to them that Jesus saw himself in a special relationship to God. They considered this blasphemy because he seemed to be saying that he was equal with God. Jesus' healing on the Sabbath and his apparent blasphemy must be understood in terms of who he really is. It should be apparent as he performs his third sign, but his critics do not understand.

This miracle story points to Jesus' controversy with the Jews. The man who was healed does not acknowledge Jesus as the Christ. When asked who healed him, he simply said, "It was Jesus who had made him well." (5:15) Jesus does not use this miracle to reveal himself to this man.

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7. The Raising of Lazarus (11:1-57)

The healing took place at the Sheep Gate pool, which was near an entrance to the Temple, which has become popularly known as the pool of Bethesda. The pool has been identified and excavated. It contained five porticoes, or colonnades, which were arranged with four on the outside and one in the middle. The size of the pool was approximately 200 by 300 feet, with steps descending into the pool at its four corners. The location of this pool today is at the present-day Saint Anne's Church. The healing took place on a festival of the Jews, which would have been either Pentecost or the New Year Festival. While Pentecost might be the best guess, we cannot be certain.

The Claims of Jesus (5:19-47)

Jesus made at least three significant claims that fueled the controversy over his blasphemy. They are, (1) his claim to know the will of God (5:20); (2) to be able to give eternal life (5:21, 24, 40); (3) and to have authority to pass judgment (5:22, 25-29). These claims are backed up by, (1) the witness of John (5:33-35); (2) the works of Jesus (5:36-38); and (3) the Scriptures of Moses (5:39-47).

Jesus recognized their enthusiasm for studying the Torah, but accused them of failing to understand its true significance. The aim of Scripture, including the Torah, is to bear witness to the Messiah; and because they cannot understand Scripture, they do not recognize him. Jesus' introduction of a new Sabbath, Law, and Temple, only met with increasing hostility and his inevitable crucifixion.

GALILEE (6:1-71)

The Feeding of the 5000 (6:1-15)

The feeding of the 5000 took place in Galilee. The Sea of Tiberias, was associated with the city built by Herod the Great in 22 C.E. and named after the Emperor Tiberius. It was not commonly known by this name in Jesus' time, but John was aware of it and used the term. This is the fourth sign recorded by John and perhaps the most important one, for it alone appears in all four Gospels. It is the decisive sign of the long awaited Messiah and can only be compared to the feeding of the manna in the wilderness (Exodus 16) and Elisha's multiplying of the barley loaves (2 Kings 4:42-44). That it occurred at Passover time is significant. The images are similar and contrast the continuity between the Old and New Covenants. Christians would have seen the connection between Passover and the Last Supper. Deliverance at the Red Sea would have been tied into Jesus walking on the Sea, and the manna from heaven would have been connected to the bread from heaven. The important thing here would be Jesus' superiority over Moses. The bread Jesus gives produces eternal life. Jesus has redefined the Passover.

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6. The Healing of a Blind Man (9:1-41)
7. The Raising of Lazarus (11:1-57)

The big difference between John's account and those found in the other Gospels is the attempt to make Jesus a political King and his rejection of it (18:36). This points out the inability on the part of the people to understand the nature of their anticipated Messiah. Jesus' refusal of that role lost him his public following and support.

The 200 denarii (silver coins), the 5 loaves and 2 fish, and the 12 containers of leftovers do not have any great significance. One might tie in the 12 baskets of leftovers into one for each disciple, but of what importance is that?

Can anything be made of the boy who contributes the five barley loaves and the two fish? None of the other Gospels mention this boy, and so we must be careful of assuming too much. He did not perform the miracle, but he was part of it. Barley loaves were the food of the poor, and he represents those who cooperate with Jesus.

Jesus walks on the Water (6:16-21)

Jesus withdrew into the mountains to be by himself, and the disciples started to cross the Sea to Capernaum. They probably had agreed to meet there later, but meanwhile, the disciples encounter a serious storm. Jesus appeared, walking on the Sea, and calmed the storm. This stresses the fact that he is greater than any political ruler. He is Lord of nature. This incident reminds one of the resurrection appearances, but John does not intend it as such.

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7. The Raising of Lazarus (11:1-57)

Jesus as the Bread of Life (6:22-71)

The crowd followed him to Capernaum, where he spoke in the Synagogue. He knew that they were only impressed by his ability to give them bread and that their desire to make him king was related to the Roman oppression. He saw a deeper oppression and promised them spiritual deliverance from sin. In John 6:35, he claimed to be the bread of life, which would give them eternal life. This was the first of the "I AM" sayings, which they took literally. His message to them concerning bread was similar to his message to the Samaritan woman in regard to water.

THE SEVEN "I AM" SAYINGS
1. <i>I AM the Bread of Life (6:35)</i>
2. I AM the Light of the World (8:12; 9:5)
3. I AM the Gate (10:7, 9)
4. I AM the Good Shepherd (10:11, 14)
5. I AM the Resurrection and the Life (11:25)
6. I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life (14:6)
7. I AM the Vine (15:1, 5)

When Jesus told them in John 6:53 that they would have to eat his flesh and drink his blood, they took offense and rejected him. Nothing could have been more offensive to them than the eating of flesh and the drinking of blood (Genesis 9:4; Leviticus 3:17; Deuteronomy 12:23; Ezekiel 39:17-19; and Acts 15:20). John is clearly relating this to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and any early Christian would have understood this. The offensive saying was a hard saying that drove off everyone but the faithful. When Jesus asked his disciples if they too would leave him, Peter spoke for the group, "Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life." (6:68) Jesus concludes by declaring that one of the twelve, Judas, will betray him. From this point on we will be continually encountering the impending shadow of Jesus death.

JUDEA (7:1—11:57)

Jesus as the Water of Life (7:1-52)

In this chapter Jesus' brothers challenge him to go public at the Feast of Tabernacles in Judea. The Feast of Tabernacles (Booths) is one of three holy days in which people are expected to go to Jerusalem. It is an eight-day harvest festival in which the Jews remember their wandering in the wilderness following their Exodus from Egypt. They began celebrating this feast on the fifteenth day of the seventh month (September-October).

At first Jesus refuses to be pushed into going, but after his brothers go, he follows secretly. Once in Jerusalem he uses the opportunity to teach in the Temple area, and on the final day of the festival, when there is a water ritual, he compares himself to the water of life, which is better than the ritual. The refreshment he offers is available only to believers.

Jesus enters into conflict on several points, all of which are a bit confusing in this chapter. The main reasons for the conflict are: (1) his claim to know the will of God, (2) his claim to be the Messiah, and (3) his healing on the Sabbath. On this last point he brings up the fact that, according to the Law of Moses, it was okay to circumcise on the Sabbath. It should also be okay to heal on the Sabbath. At any rate, hostility to Jesus increases and they would like to arrest him, but they are afraid to do so.

As the Jews hurl charges against Jesus, Nicodemus (7:50-51) stands up for him. This does not mean that Nicodemus is being described as a disciple. They still doubt that Jesus is "the Prophet" because they know nothing of a prophet coming from Galilee. John has, however, mentioned that Jesus was born of David and was born in Bethlehem; and these criteria were very important in their expectation of a Messianic King. Are they comparing "the Prophet" with "the Messiah?" This is somewhat confusing and unclear.

The Woman caught in Adultery (7:53—8:11)

This story did not appear in the earliest manuscripts of the Gospel of John. The first manuscripts in which it does appear are from the fifth century C.E. In some manuscripts

it follows Luke 21:38, but it was no more a part of Luke than of John. It seems to interrupt Jesus' teaching during the Feast of Tabernacles.

In spite of the problem with its source and where it belongs, it is considered to be consistent with Jesus' teachings. One would expect Jesus to be merciful to a woman caught in the act of adultery and to challenge those accusing her. What is inconsistent with those making the accusation and calling for the death penalty is that according to the Law (Leviticus 20:10 and Deuteronomy 22:22-24), both the man and the woman were to be stoned. No one could pick up the first stone because Jesus, according to one source, wrote on the ground "the sins of each of them." According to John 8:8, we do not know what Jesus wrote, but the traditional source does make some sense. None of this appears in any of the manuscripts, and probably is not all that important to the story. What must not be forgotten is that Jesus does not approve of adultery, and instructs the woman not to sin again (8:11).

Jesus as the Light of Life (8:12-59)

This is a continuation of Jesus' teaching during the Feast of Tabernacles. On the eighth day of this feast the four great golden candelabra were lit in the Court of women, which symbolized the pillar of fire by which God guided his people through the desert (Exodus 13:21). The "I AM" which Jesus uses is part of the divine name (Exodus 3:14), and his use of it was considered as blasphemy (8:58-59).

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3. I AM the Gate (10:7, 9)
4. I AM the Good Shepherd (10:11, 14)
5. I AM the Resurrection and the Life (11:25)
6. I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life (14:6)
7. I AM the Vine (15:1, 5)

The controversy with Jesus continues. They accuse him of being a Samaritan with a demon. On every count they think in earthly terms, while Jesus speaks in heavenly ones. Jesus forces them to probe deeply about the issues of (1) death and life, (2) falsehood and truth, and (3) bondage and freedom. They are dying in their sins, says Jesus, and the only way it can be avoided is through faith (8:24). While they have appealed to their relationship to Abraham, Jesus tells them that one is a child of Abraham through faith, not through genetics (8:37). They are ready to stone him, but according to John, his hour has not yet come. His hour refers to his coming crucifixion and subsequent resurrection.

Jesus heals a Blind Man (9:1-41)

This sixth sign is one of the most dramatic thus far. Jesus heals a man born blind. This was unthinkable. Even the disciples attributed such a condition to sin, either the man's parents or his own; but Jesus states that his suffering is due neither to his parents' sin nor his own. He does not deny that suffering is the consequence of sin. The Bible as a whole says that, but this is not the same as attributing a certain condition to a specific person's sin. Jesus saw in this man's suffering an opportunity to demonstrate the power and love of God, and so he healed him.

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6. <i>The Healing of a Blind Man (9:1-41)</i>
7. The Raising of Lazarus (11:1-57)

The healing took place at the Pool of Siloam, which was incidental to the healing. Many see the water in the Pool of Siloam and this man's confession as a liturgy for baptism, but I do not. What is more significant is the Pharisaic response. Jesus performed a miracle, and all they could see was a violation of the Sabbath Law. For Jesus the Sabbath is the sign of the new age of God's creative work. As the discussion continues, the man, who was healed, comes to faith. He begins by referring to the man called Jesus (9:11); then as a Prophet (9:17), and finally as Lord (9:38).

The Pharisees have difficulty both with this man's healing and his confession. How could a man from God violate the Sabbath, they ask; but on the other hand, how could a man, apart from God, heal someone who had been blind from birth. The story points to spiritual sight as well as physical sight. His physical sight may have been restored (9:7), but so was his spiritual sight (9:35-37). In the end belief opened the eyes of his spirit, and unbelief blinded the Pharisees.

Jesus the Good Shepherd (10:1-42)

The first six verses of chapter 10 make up John's only parable, or should we say allegory. In an allegory there is much more symbolism. The Gatekeeper is not identifiable, but the Door is Jesus. The Shepherd served as a door to protect the sheep from danger. Thieves and Robbers were messianic pretenders with temporal ambitions. The hireling symbolized false teachers and the wolf symbolized Roman persecutors. The Good

Shepherd had the best interests of the sheep at heart. John 10:10 tells us Jesus' reason for calling us into his fold, to give us *abundant life*. For this he lays down his life, something thieves and robbers, hirelings and wolves would never do. Many of Jesus' hearers are not convinced and accuse him of being demon possessed, but at the same time, they recognize there is a contradiction. How can a demon heal a blind man?

THE SEVEN "I AM" SAYINGS
1. I AM the Bread of Life (6:35)
2. I AM the Light of the World (8:12; 9:5)
3. <i>I AM the Gate</i> (10:7, 9)
4. <i>I AM the Good Shepherd</i> (10:11, 14)
5. I AM the Resurrection and the Life (11:25)
6. I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life (14:6)
7. I AM the Vine (15:1, 5)

The imagery continues beyond John 10:22, but in a new context. John liked to relate events in Jesus' life to the great Jewish Holy Days. The next one he mentions, the only one not mentioned in the Old Testament, is the Festival of Dedication (Hanukkah). This was to commemorate the rededication of the Temple in December of 164 B.C.E. when the *Maccabees* defeated Antiochus IV Epiphanes. The *Maccabees* became a nickname for the Hasmonean Kings, who were descendants of the Maccabees. They set themselves up as priestly-kings and became more oppressive than the Greeks.

The eight-day celebration of the Festival of Dedication emphasized two themes. The first had to do with the role of God as shepherd and Israel as his sheep. In the second theme there is the anticipation of a shepherd in the line of David who will rule God's people. Since David had been a shepherd, his kingdom provided rich imagery in the celebration of this festival and encouraged a messianic expectation that Jesus claims to fulfill.

The Jewish leaders were confused by his claims and demanded to know who Jesus really was. He claimed to be one with God (10:30), which angered them. They considered that to be a blasphemous claim, for which the punishment was death by stoning. It was not that Jesus was making himself God, but that God had become human in Jesus. This was beyond anyone's comprehension. Jesus responded to them by asking them not to reject him on the basis of his words, but on the basis of his works (10:38). If his works were consistent with his claim, then they should follow him. Many did.

The Raising of Lazarus (11:1-57)

This is, according to John, Jesus' crowning miracle. His ability to raise the dead clearly identifies him as the Messiah. The story begins with Jesus and his disciples in the area of

the Transjordan (East of the Jordan), where there is less hostility towards him. When Jesus heard of his friend Lazarus' sickness, he delayed, for he already knew that Lazarus was dead. It would have taken the messengers one day to get to him, he waited two days, and then he spent one day going to Bethany (modern El'Azariyeh). When he got there, Lazarus had been dead for four days. He must have died right after the messengers left to tell Jesus. All of this has tremendous significance. Jews believed that if a person was not revived within three days, the situation was absolutely hopeless. Most of the disciples were reluctant to return to Bethany, where much hostility existed against them, but Thomas was willing to go. Was this out of despair or courage?

Mary and Martha have been identified before as friends of Jesus, but no mention was made that they had a brother (Luke 10:38-42). Is this the same Lazarus that was mentioned by Jesus in his parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man? (Luke 16:19-31) We cannot be sure, but probably not. After Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, fear sets in. If people believe in him as the Messiah, then the Romans might come and destroy the Jews, their holy place, and their nation. Caiaphas, the High Priest and also a Sadducee, suggests that Jesus might be sacrificed (killed) in order to save the nation; but little did he realize, that nothing could save the nation. When the Romans finally did destroy Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 C.E. no Christians were involved in the Jewish Revolt. Jesus' life was sacrificed, but it was not merely for Jews. It was for the whole world.

Some scholars have suggested that Lazarus is the "beloved disciple" (John 11:3) that John mentions (John 13:23), but this is not likely. The "beloved disciple" is most likely John himself. Beyond this story little is known about Lazarus, except that he was raised for the same reason that the blind man received his sight—that we might behold the glory of God. Lazarus represents every believer who loves Jesus and is loved by Jesus. All who believe will be raised to new life in the present and eternal life in the future. This is the message of this seventh and almost perfect sign. The perfect sign of course will be Jesus' own resurrection, which will redefine the meaning of the Passover itself. The Raising of Lazarus supports the fifth claim of Jesus to be the Resurrection and the Life.

THE SEVEN SIGNS
1. The Turning of Water into Wine (2:1-11)
2. The Healing of the Royal Official's Son (4:46-54)
3. The Healing the Paralyzed Man by the Pool (5:1-18)
4. The Feeding of the 5000 (6:1-14)
5. Walking on the Water (6:16-21)
6. The Healing of a Blind Man (9:1-41)
7. <i>The Raising of Lazarus (11:1-57)</i>

THE SEVEN "I AM" SAYINGS
1. I AM the Bread of Life (6:35)
2. I AM the Light of the World (8:12; 9:5)
3. I AM the Gate (10:7, 9)
4. I AM the Good Shepherd (10:11, 14)
5. <i>I AM the Resurrection and the Life (11:25)</i>
6. I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life (14:6)
7. I AM the Vine (15:1, 5)

MY NAME IS "I AM"

When Moses asked God for his name at the burning bush, God replied in Exodus 3:14, "I am Who I Am." "I Am" is related to the Hebrew word YAHWEH, which is the sacred name of God. Even though Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob worshiped the same God, they used other names to refer to him. That is why Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are mentioned in the very next verse. Just as God was present with them, he will be present with Moses, and us. These verses tell us that God is holy, but personal, and that he will go with Moses to Egypt, where they will work together to deliver the Hebrew people from slavery.

All of the above lies behind Jesus' seven great claims, all of which begin with the basic verb "I AM." The seven claims are, "I AM the Bread of Life (6:35), the Light of the World (8:12; 9:5); the Gate (10:7, 9); the Good Shepherd (10:11, 14); the Resurrection (11:25); the Way, the Truth, and the Life (14:6); and the Vine (15:1, 5). Seven signs are also named by John to support these claims, and these seven signs are the turning of water into wine (2:1-11); the healing of the royal official's son (4:46-54); the healing of the paralyzed man (5:1-18); the feeding of the 5000 (6:1-14); the walking on water (6:16-21); the healing of a blind man (9:1-41); and the raising of Lazarus (11:1-57) In these seven signs, Jesus alters nature, overcomes illness, and raises the dead. These signs point to his divinity. Jesus is the new burning bush for the disciples, and he promises to work together with them as God worked with Moses.

The seven claims to divinity did not endear Jesus to all his listeners. Even his disciples had difficulty understanding what he meant. We would have the same problem if it were not for two thousand years of history which have confirmed those seven claims, enabling us to recognize that God was indeed present in Jesus Christ. Jesus also promises to be with us, helping us to present the Good News that delivers people from sin and death, to the end of the age.



3. Jesus Prepares His Disciples

John 12:1—17:26

3. JESUS PREPARES HIS DISCIPLES (12:1—17:26)

JESUS' PREPARATION (12:1-50)

The Anointing of Jesus (12:1-11)	The Triumphal Entry (12:12-19)	The Hour has Come (12:20-36a)	Salvation or Judgment (12:36b-50)
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JESUS' LAST WORDS WITH HIS DISCIPLES (13:1—16:33)

The Last Supper (13:1-38)	Promises and Assurances (14:1-31)	Jesus as the Vine (15:1-27)	Christians and the World (16:1-33)
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JESUS' HIGH PRIESTLY PRAYER (17:1-26)

Prayer for Himself (17:1-5)	Prayer for the Disciples (17:6-19)	Prayer for Future Believers—The Church (17:20-26)
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3. JESUS PREPARES HIS DISCIPLES

John 12:1—17:26

ASSIGNMENTS					
Jesus' Preparation (12:1-50)	The Last Supper (13:1-38)	Promises and Assurances (14:1-31)	Jesus as the Vine (15:1-27)	Christians and the World (16:1-33)	Jesus' Priestly Prayer (17:1-26)

JESUS' PREPARATION (12:1-50)

The Anointing of Jesus (12:1-11)

Six days prior to Passover, Mary anointed Jesus in preparation for his burial. She might not have known what she was doing, but that is how Jesus interpreted her action. She used “pure nard” or an expensive kind of “liquid perfume.” Judas objected to its cost, which amounted to 300 denarii. That would have been equal to the wages of 300 working days for a common laborer.

Judas had a right to object, but John prepares the way for Judas' betrayal and describes him as a thief. He was not worried about the waste of perfume, but the loss of money. Jesus' statement that we will always have the poor with us may bother us, but what should bother us more is what was about to happen to Jesus (12:8). He is being prepared for the cross. Even Lazarus' life is endangered because of his faithfulness to the Lord.

The poor are helped most by focusing on Jesus who is a friend of the poor. Those who draw closest to Jesus do the most for the poor. This is the practical lesson to be learned from this simple story.

The Triumphal Entry (12:12-19)

As Jesus enters Jerusalem, the crowds seem to believe. Some of them had seen his miraculous sign of raising Lazarus from the dead, and so they took palm branches (symbols of victory) and cried “Hosanna,” which means “God save us now!”

Fulfilling Zechariah 9:9, Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a young ass. Worldly kings would have used horses and rode in a chariot, but the King of Peace uses the colt of an ass. The crowd expected him to lead them in victory over the Romans, but he rode to his crucifixion and a new kind of coronation in his resurrection. What is surprising is that his disciples, who have been with him for three years, do not understand the connection

between Zechariah 9:9 and the triumphal entry. They only come to understand after Jesus' glorification in the resurrection.

The Hour has Come (12:20-36a)

Jesus' hour has come. The appearance of the Greeks is to indicate that he dies not only for the Jews, but for the whole known world. Even the Greeks seek him. The Greeks went first to Philip because he had a Greek name. Philip came from Bethsaida, which was a Greek-speaking region in Galilee.

The crowd raises a significant question. How can the Messiah die? He is supposed to live forever. Jesus' answer is that following death will be resurrection. It is as a seed dies when it is planted. It must die before it can grow into a plant. Jesus calls them to believe in him as the Light, which has and will illuminate the world.

Salvation or Judgment (12:36b-50)

This marks the end of Jesus' public ministry. From now on his ministry is confined to his inner circle of disciples, who will have to carry on in spite of enormous odds. Salvation has been offered to all who believe. This was the goal for which Jesus entered the world. Judgment was not the goal—only the consequence for those who refuse to believe. There can be no excuses, for the Light of the World has illuminated the way.

The references back to Isaiah are attempts to tie in what is happening with their ancient Scriptures. The prophet did indeed foresee a time when the Israelites would be blinded by God's Light. Some of the religious leaders comprehended the Light and believed, but out of their fear of being put out of the Synagogue, they would not openly confess their faith in front of the Pharisees (12:42). They loved human glory above divine glory, and that too is spiritual blindness.

JESUS LAST WORDS WITH HIS DISCIPLES (13:1—16:33)

The Last Supper (13:1-38)

Although the foot-washing, which follows took place in the context of the Last Supper, John's account differs significantly from those found in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. This Supper does not take place on the Passover, nor does it come across as if it were the institution of a Sacrament; in fact, John does not even include in his earlier chapters any account of the institution of Baptism as a Sacrament. His references to Baptism and the Lord's Supper as a Sacrament are indirect at best. The emphasis falls on Foot-washing, not as a Sacrament, but as an example of servanthood. He is teaching his disciples that they must follow his example of humility and love.

Following the Foot-washing is the prediction of Judas' betrayal and Peter's denial. In between these two predictions is the new commandment (13:34-35). The New Commandment adds something new. We are to love one another not simply as we love

ourselves, but as Christ has loved us. Christ's love is our standard. Satan prompted Judas' betrayal. Because he refuses to follow the Light (Jesus), Judas goes out into the darkest night, which finally destroys him. Peter's threefold denial is followed by Jesus' threefold invitation to love (John 21:15-19). In spite of his denial, he still manages to follow the Light.

Promises and Assurances (14:1-31)

What follows is not easy to outline, but it does lift up some of the disciples' questions and the subsequent assurances of Jesus. Jesus has just told them in John 13:33 and 36 that he would be leaving, and this would trouble the disciples. In order to comfort them he tells them that he will prepare a place for them in heaven, and they are not to worry. They do worry because they are not sure that they know the way or how to get to where he is going. He assures them that they know the way simply because they know him.

There are many other well-known passages in this chapter which not only give assurances, but also raise further questions. We are told, for example, that Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, the only way to know God; and apart from him, there is no salvation.

THE SEVEN "I AM" SAYINGS
1. I AM the Bread of Life (6:35)
2. I AM the Light of the World (8:12; 9:5)
3. I AM the Gate (10:7, 9)
4. I AM the Good Shepherd (10:11, 14)
5. I AM the Resurrection and the Life (11:25)
6. <i>I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life (14:6)</i>
7. I AM the Vine (15:1, 5)

Christians believe that God is known through the person, words, and works of Jesus; but our faith in him must be linked with love, which leads us to obeying his commandments and teachings. Those who come to know him will experience his presence, peace, eternal life, and answers to their prayers. Praying in Jesus name means much more than repeating his name at the end of a prayer. Our wills must conform to his, and that in itself assures answers to our prayers. This does not mean immediate answers, but God will accomplish his will, no matter how long it may take. We are to pray according to his will and consistently with his teachings. This discussion is continued in John 15:7, where prayer is tied in with one's very relationship with Jesus.

Jesus' leaving will result in the presence of the Holy Spirit, which is not limited in time and place. John 14:16-17 is the first of five important statements regarding the Holy

Spirit. The coming of the Holy Spirit is one promise Jesus makes that he guarantees., Prayer for the Holy Spirit is always answered.

JESUS' PROMISE OF THE COMING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT				
(14:16-17)	(14:25-26)	(15:26-27)	(16:5-11)	(16:12-15)

Jesus seems to be discussing these things with his disciples as they proceed towards the Kidron Valley. (See Chapter 18 for a continuation. What follows seems to be inserted in the middle of the narrative.)

Jesus as the Vine (15:1-27)

It is difficult to tell where Jesus and his disciples are going as this chapter begins. The Kidron Valley has been mentioned in general, but where are they going in particular? Could it be Gethsemane? More important than the place is the discussion going on between them.

The image of the vine had been used to describe Israel, but Israel fell short of fulfilling God's purpose. Jesus claims that fulfillment for himself and for his followers. If they are to bear fruit, they will have to be connected to the vine; otherwise, they will dry up and will be fit for nothing but burning. This is not a discussion about salvation and so the fire mentioned does not symbolize hell. Jesus is talking about bearing fruit, such as that mentioned in Galatians 5:22-23. If they abide in him, they will find his kind of joy (15:11).

THE SEVEN "I AM" SAYINGS
1. I AM the Bread of Life (6:35)
2. I AM the Light of the World (8:12; 9:5)
3. I AM the Gate (10:7, 9)
4. I AM the Good Shepherd (10:11, 14)
5. I AM the Resurrection and the Life (11:25)
6. I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life (14:6)
7. <i>I AM the Vine (15:1, 5)</i>

Abiding in Jesus means obeying his commandments, following his teachings, and experiencing his joy. This has other effects as well. They will be considered friends rather than servants, and their prayers will be answered. The new fellowship will create a new intimacy in which they will know how to pray. None of this will enable them to avoid persecution. If Jesus could not escape persecution, neither will they. Christians can expect it, but they can also expect the help of the Holy Spirit.

JESUS' PROMISE OF THE COMING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT				
(14:16-17)	(14:25-26)	(15:26-27)	(16:5-11)	(16:12-15)

Christians and the World (16:1-33)

Christians will have to live in and deal with the world, but even in Jesus' absence, they will be given resources. In addition to the gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12) and the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) there are also the works of the Holy Spirit. The works of the Holy Spirit are at least three: (1) to convict us of sin, (2) to guide us into truth, and (3) to fill us with joy and peace.

JESUS' PROMISE OF THE COMING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT				
(14:16-17)	(14:25-26)	(15:26-27)	(16:5-11)	(16:12-15)

Christians can expect persecution and sorrow from the world for the present, but in the end they can expect joy and peace. The example Jesus shares with the disciples is the sorrow and joy of childbirth. The disciples note that Jesus has stopped using parables and now speaks plainly. That however will not prevent them from deserting him as he faces the cross, but they at least understand *that what lies ahead* will not be easy. Beyond the persecution and sorrow lies the triumph of Jesus' resurrection, which they do not yet fully comprehend. Jesus leaves them with the resources they will need—the Holy Spirit and Prayer.

JESUS' HIGH PRIESTLY PRAYER (17:1-26)

The theme of this prayer is *GLORY* and it can be divided neatly into three parts—for himself, for his disciples, and for the church.

Prayer for Himself (17:1-5)

Parts of this prayer are obviously the work of John. Jesus would not pray as he does in verse three. This is John's definition of eternal life. Jesus' purpose for coming into the world was indeed to give eternal life to believers, but this does not make up the essence of his prayer for himself. He has finished his work and expects to be glorified.

Prayer for the Disciples (17:6-19)

As Jesus ascends to heaven, he intends to leave the disciples in the world; hence, this prayer is vital to their survival. They will face the full onslaught of evil, and Jesus does not intend to prevent it; instead, he prays for three things: (1) that they might experience his joy, (2) be led by his truth, and (3) experience his victory.

Only one—Judas—will be lost, and that fulfills scripture. It is not that God decided that one had to be lost, but he knew human nature well and still does. He desires all to be saved, but he knows that many will take the wide path, which leads to destruction.

When Jesus prays for their sanctification, he is asking God to set them apart for his divine mission, even as he himself has been set apart. Such “setting apart” will involve a foundation in God's Word, which is Truth. Divine Revelation and Sanctification cannot be separated. Those who have received the Revelation are set apart to share it with others. As Christ is the Light of the World, so are his disciples.

Prayer for Future Believers—the Church (17:20-26)

The prayer for those who will believe (the Future Church) through the disciples' word or message is also a prayer for the unity of the Future Church. Jesus prays that this church might find the same unity that exists between the Father and the Son, and that it might express divine love and fulfill the mission to which God has called it. The mission is to call everyone to believe, have faith, and be reconciled to God. In this way everyone will be glorified, even as Jesus himself has been glorified.

THE ANCHOR

As Jesus faced the cross, he spent some time preparing his disciples for the coming storm by making two promises to them. They were to receive Eternal Life and the Holy Spirit. Both of these promises could be received immediately, and they would become the anchor to carry them through the coming storm. The first promise is recorded in John 14:1-3, where Jesus says:

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also.

This passage has sustained many Christians as they have faced death, and is still one of the most popular Scriptures read at funerals and memorial services.

The second promise has to do with the Holy Spirit, who serves as a guide to all truth, enables us to bear a faithful witness to the world, and ensures us of the continuing presence of Jesus in our lives. The promise is first made by Jesus in John 14:6-7:

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

These two promises come together in Jesus' famous prayer for all believers. John Knox affirmed this as he lay dying, and asked his wife, "Read where I first cast anchor." She knew immediately what he meant, and turned to John 17:3 and read the famous words of Jesus' prayer to the Father: "...eternal life means to know you, the only true God and to know Jesus Christ, whom you sent." The promise of eternal life and the continuing presence of Jesus through the Spirit carried Knox to his final hours, when he said confidently to his wife: "I want to lay hold of that anchor as I face the last storm."



4. Arrest, Trial, Crucifixion, and Resurrection

John 18:1—21:25

4. ARREST, TRIAL, CRUCIFIXION, RESURRECTION (18:1 – 21:25)			
THE ARREST AND TRIALS (18:1 – 19:16)			
The Arrest (18:1-11)			
The Religious Trial (18:12-27)		The Political Trial (18:28 – 19:16)	
The High Priest (18:12-14 & 19-24)	The Denial of Peter (18:15-18 & 25-27)		
THE CRUCIFIXION AND BURIAL (19:17-42)			
The Crucifixion (19:17-37)		The Burial (19:38-42)	
THE RESURRECTION (20:1 – 21:25)			
In Jerusalem (20:1-31)			
Sunday Morning (20:1-18)	Sunday Evening (20:19-23)	Thomas' Doubt (20:24-29)	Purpose of the Gospel (20:30-31)
In Galilee (21:1-25)			
An Appearance to Seven Disciples (21:1-14)		An Appearance to Peter (21:15-25)	

4. ARREST, TRIAL, CRUCIFIXION, AND RESURRECTION

John 18:1—21:25

ASSIGNMENTS				
The Religious Trial (18:1-27)	The Political Trial (18:28—19:16)	The Crucifixion and Burial (19:17-42)	Resurrection in Jerusalem (20:1-31)	Resurrection in Galilee (21:1-25)

THE ARREST (18:1-11)

Prior to his arrest, Jesus took his disciples to pray in the Garden. This would have taken place in Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives. The Kidron Valley, mentioned only by John, would be located between the Mount of Olives and the walled city of Jerusalem.

John is the only Gospel writer to name Peter as the swordsman and Malchus as the slave whose ear Peter cuts off (18:10). John must have been very familiar with the events taking place before his eyes, and describes many details left out by the other Gospel writers.

Although both the Roman soldiers and the Temple police arrest Jesus (18:3 & 12), he submits to arrest and makes no attempt to escape. He gives his life up. No one takes it from him.

THE RELIGIOUS TRIAL (18:12-27)

(Friday Evening)

The High Priest (18:12-14 and 19-24)

Two men are named: Annas and Caiaphas. Annas was actually the father-in-law of Caiaphas. He had been deposed by the Romans in 15 C.E., but still exercised tremendous influence. He seems to be leading the trial until verse 24 when he turns Jesus over to Caiaphas, the official High Priest at the time.

The charge is political. Jesus is accused of training his disciples to revolt against Rome. One might question the legality of the charge. Although the Sanhedrin (Jewish court/council) had the authority to try Jews, it lacked the authority to carry out the death penalty. For this it had to appeal to the political authority of Pilate.

The Denial of Peter (18:15-18 and 25-27)

Peter's threefold denial differs from the description in the other Gospels, but the denial itself is clear. John describes the chill of the evening and the need for a charcoal fire. He also includes information about how Peter got into the priest's courtyard and how one of Peter's accusers was related to Malchus. We do not know the name of the disciple, who knew the high priest, but a good guess would be John himself, who seems to know so many details.

THE POLITICAL TRIAL (18:28—19:16)

(6:00 a.m.)

Jesus is sent to Pilate in the Praetorium (the Governor's residence) because the Sanhedrin cannot carry out the death penalty. The dialogue, which takes place between Jesus and Pilate, revolves around Jesus' kingship. Does Jesus' claim to be the Messiah really challenge the kingship of Caesar? In answer to Pilate's question, Jesus only claims to rule a spiritual kingdom. This is beyond Pilate's comprehension.

Jesus connects his kingdom to truth, something Pilate would never have done. Pilate would have made the connection to power. Secular royalty has a difficult time seeing the necessity of relating its authority to truth. This is further illustrated in Pilate's desire to deal with the problem by offering the crowd the opportunity to choose between Jesus and Barabbas. Pilate recognized the innocence of Jesus three times (18:38; 19:4; and 19:6),¹ but desired popularity over truth. Barabbas was no ordinary robber. He was a *bandit-patriot*. Barabbas, not Jesus, was guilty of the charge of insurrection. Perhaps that is why the crowd favored him over Jesus, whose claim to kingship was not of this world. The crowd saw more hope for Israel in Barabbas than in Jesus. The people preferred a political revolutionary to a spiritual king.

Pilate was still intent on freeing Jesus, and so he had him scourged. A crown of thorns and purple robe was placed upon him, and he was humiliated. This only angered the chief priests and officers, who then cried out for his crucifixion. It is interesting that they cried out for a Roman punishment, while at the same time they accused him of blasphemy (claiming to be God). Pilate still sought to release him, but the chief priests and officers then accused him of not being Caesar's friend. Pilate could not afford to have such news get back to Rome, and so he commanded them to take care of the crucifixion themselves.

THE CRUCIFIXION (19:17-37)

They took him to the place of the skull, which is translated "Golgotha" in the Aramaic and "Calvary" in the Latin. Most scholars believe this place to be located under the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which was erected by Constantine. The only difficulty

¹Luke records this same threefold statement of Jesus' innocence (Luke 23:4, 14, and 22).

with this theory is that the area was formerly a quarry and not a garden. It still is given more authenticity than the Garden Tomb.

As Isaac had to carry the wood for his own sacrifice in Genesis 22:6, Jesus had to carry his own cross. That he collapsed under the weight of it might have been due to the scourging he received prior to his crucifixion.

Pilate had a sign placed above Jesus, which said in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek, “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.” This bothered the chief priests, but Pilate insisted. This does not express an acceptance on Pilate’s part. The sign was an expression of his contempt for Jesus.

Jesus was crucified naked. Four soldiers divided his clothes, but cast lots for the seamless tunic or undergarment. John stresses the fact that this fulfills the Scriptures (Psalm 22:18).

Those who were present, according to John, were Jesus’ mother, her sister (Salome), Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. If Salome is the proper identification (Mark 15:40), then John is related to Jesus. This would explain more clearly why Jesus charges him with the responsibility of caring for his own mother (19:26-27). Two other final statements or sentences are given by John. The first, “I am thirsty” (19:28) has to do with human need, and the last, “It is finished” (19:30) has to do with Jesus’ task.

After Jesus’ death, they did not break his legs, which according to John, is another fulfillment of Scripture (Exodus 12:46; Numbers 9:12; Psalm 34:20; & I Corinthians 5:7). Instead, they pierced his side, and out came blood and water (Zechariah 12:10). The spiritual significance of the blood and water is not clear, but it is frequently related to the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper. Jesus is somehow related to the Passover Lamb; hence, Passover does not occur until after his crucifixion. In Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Passover occurs first, and is related to the Last Supper.

THE BURIAL. (19:38-42)

Although the Romans tended to leave the bodies hanging on the cross as an example to others, Jewish Law required their removal (Deuteronomy 21:22-23). When it was time to bury Jesus, two secret disciples suddenly appear, to claim the body. They are Joseph of Arimathea, who is described as a secret disciple, and Nicodemus, who is not specifically named as such, but who contributes 100 pounds of costly myrrh and aloes to anoint the body. According to some this is a symbol of devotion and proves his secret discipleship. Nothing is said about the women’s role in preparing his body for burial. He is laid in a new tomb, which symbolizes that even in death he is free of corruption.

THE RESURRECTION (20:1-31)

Sunday Morning (20:1-18)

In John's version Mary goes to the tomb not to anoint Jesus, but out of her devotion to him. She found the tomb empty and ran immediately to inform Peter, who with an unnamed disciple, returned to the tomb. All of them saw the linen grave clothes still in place. The point John is making is that no one could have stolen the body, leaving the grave clothes still wound up. We are not talking about the immortality of Jesus' soul, but about the resurrection of his body. His body passed through the grave clothes.

After Peter left, Mary remained in the tomb weeping. Two angels in white appeared, one at the head and one at the feet of the place where Jesus had lain. As Mary turned around, she saw Jesus standing there. At first she thought it was the gardener, but all it took was a word from Jesus. As he said, "Mary," she recognized him and replied, "Rabbouni" (teacher). Her first instinct was to grab hold of him, but he replied, "Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father." (20:17) What did Jesus mean? Mary's effort to grab hold of him had to be abandoned for a new kind of relationship in which she would experience her ascended Lord.

Sunday Evening (20:19-23)

By Sunday evening the disciples were afraid, and so they gathered behind locked doors. Jesus appeared in the midst of them, and said, "Peace be with you." (20:19) He revealed his hands and side to them as proof that he was indeed the one who had been crucified and was now risen. Three concise statements are made to them, which reveal what he expects of them. They are to be sent (20:21); empowered (20:22); and told that forgiveness depends upon their faithfulness (20:23). It is no minor mission that has been entrusted to them. This is the Great Commission in the Gospel of John.

Thomas' Doubt (20:24-29)

(8 Days Later)

In Matthew 28:17, we are told that some doubted; and now in John, that doubt is made concrete in Thomas. For Thomas, Jesus must not only be seen, but also handled. He could not believe without seeing the scars and placing his fingers on them. Eight days later, Jesus appears again, with Thomas being present. He again says, "Peace be with you," and invites Thomas to believe. Thomas did not hesitate, and cried, "My Lord and my God!" (20:28) The confession of Thomas was a sign of a powerful faith, which Jesus accepts; but then he goes on to share a new beatitude: "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe." (20:29) Seeing and touching might have been important to Thomas, but it will not be necessary in the future.

The Purpose of the Gospel (20:30-31)

The above three events build to the climax of the Gospel of John. The story is told that the reader might believe—not simply know about—and gain life in the name of Jesus. JESUS IS THE CHRIST, in whom everyone can believe and find a rich and fulfilling life in this world and eternal life in the world to come. He may not reign fully now, but in the future, he will rule forever and ever. Much more could be said, but John is convinced that he has shared enough to lead anyone to faith.

RESURRECTION APPEARANCES IN GALILEE (21:1-25)

The addition of this final chapter clarifies the order of Jesus' appearances. He appeared first in Jerusalem and then in Galilee.

An Appearance to Seven Disciples (21:1-14)

Simon Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, James, and John are named; but two are left unnamed. Peter takes the lead to go fishing, which might be understood as an act of despair. Not knowing what else to do, he returns to his former vocation. Jesus appears on the shore, and the seven slowly recognize him. After instructing them on how to catch some fish, he invites them to eat bread and fish on the shore. These are not fish from the catch.

It is difficult to know how to interpret this meal. Is it an allusion to the Lord's Supper, or is it an ordinary meal. My own conclusion is that it is an ordinary meal and has nothing to do with the Lord's Supper.

Another image that is difficult to interpret is the number of fish that they caught. Jerome concluded that there were only 153 known species of fish. This could be symbolic of the need to take the Gospel to all tribes and races. On the other hand, John might only be sharing with us the actual count of the catch, and may have no intention of relating that to the mission of the Church. The story forms a background to lifting up Peter as the natural leader of the early church.

In John 21:14, we are told that this is Jesus' third appearance to his disciples. Is this important, or is it simply a statement about the number of times Jesus appeared to his disciples. Since we know that there were more than three appearances, it must have some other meaning. In the Jewish tradition the number three is a perfect number which refers to perfection and completeness. John must be saying in this case that three examples should be enough to convince anyone of Jesus' resurrection from the dead.

THE THREE RESURRECTION APPEARANCES		
The Appearance to the Disciples without Thomas in Jerusalem (20:19-23)	The Appearance to the Disciples with Thomas in Jerusalem (20:24-31)	The Appearance to the Seven Disciples in Galilee (21:1-14)

An Appearance to Peter (21:15-25)

The threefold questioning of Peter undoubtedly relates to his previous threefold denial. Peter is given a chance to cancel out his denial by responding positively to Jesus invitation to lead the church, which is about to be born. In the dialogue about love, Peter uses a different form (phileo) than does Jesus (agapao). Jesus challenges him to a higher form of caring, even if it will result in his death.

John 21:18-19 is a definite reference to Peter’s death under Nero in 64 C.E. Peter was stretched out on a cross (upside down), and according to one third-century source, bound with a belt and crucified. John was most likely familiar with Peter’s death as he wrote this Gospel. At the time of the writing, John had aged to such an extent that he did not expect to die a martyr’s death, and that is why he makes the reference to his long life and the second coming of Jesus, which he anticipates (21:22-23).

John justifies the selectivity of his writing by alluding to the fact that the world could not contain all the books that might be written about Jesus. Brief as his Gospel is, it provides everything necessary to the new believer. Many have used this Gospel to nourish their new faith, and although it can be extremely helpful to the new Christian, it always points beyond itself to the Christ, about whom much more has been written. The millions of volumes that have been written would not surprise John.

THE PURPOSE OF THE STORIES

“The resurrection of Christ,” says Jürgen Moltmann in his book, *Theology of Hope*, “is without parallel in the history known to us. But it can for that very reason be regarded as a ‘history-making event’ in the light of which all other history is illumined, called in question and transformed.” No other event has had such an impact on history as this one.

The Apostle Paul proclaimed the Good News of Jesus’ resurrection in Greece, where such an idea was irrational. The Greeks believed in the immortality of the soul, but not the

resurrection of the body. In writing to them in 1 Corinthians 15:17-20, he insisted that this story stands above all others.

If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have died in Christ have perished. If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied. But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died.

All four Gospels end with the missing body of Jesus, and no one seems to be able to say what happened to it. Was it stolen, and if so, by whom? We read about the possibility of such a scheme in Matthew 28:12-15, but no one had any reason for taking it.

The appearances of the resurrected Jesus, following his death upon the cross, simply make up the most important and pivotal event in history. There is little need to expand upon it more than the Gospels have already done, and so in John 20:30-31, the author of the last Gospel defines the central purpose for all four Gospels: “Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.”

Appendix

COMPARISON OF MATTHEW AND LUKE'S GENEALOGIES

COMPARISON OF THE GNEALOGIES OF MATTHEW AND LUKE	
MATTHEW'S GENEALOGY	LUKE'S GENEALOGY
<p style="text-align: center;">Abraham</p> <p>Isaac Jacob Judah Perez (<i>Tamar</i>) Hezron Aram Aminadab Nahshon Salmon (<i>Rahab</i>) Boaz (<i>Ruth</i>) Obed Jesse King David Solomon Rehoboam Abijah Asaph Jehoshaphat Joram</p>	<p>Adam Enosh Kenan Mahalalel Jared Enoch Methuselah Lamech Noah Shem Arphaxad Cainan Shelah Eber Peleg Reu Serug Nahor Terah Abraham Isaac Jacob Judah Perez Hezron Ram Amminadab Nahshon Salmon Boaz Obed Jesse David Nathan Mattatha Menna Melea Eliakim Jonam</p>

COMPARISON OF MATTHEW AND LUKE'S GENEALOGIES

MATTHEW'S GENEALOGY	LUKE'S GENEALOGY
Uzziah	Joseph
Jotham	Judah
Ahaz	Simeon
Hezekiah	Levi
Manasseh	Matthat
Amos	Jorim
Josiah	Eliezer
Jechoniah	Joshua
Salathiel	Er
Zerubbabel	Elmadam
Abiud	Cosam
Eliakim	Addi
Azor	Melki
Zadok	Neri
Achim	Shealtiel
Eliud	Zerubbabel
Eleazar	Rhesa
Matthan	Joanan
Jacob	Joda
Joseph	Josech
<i>Mary</i>	Semein
Jesus the Messiah	Mattathias
	Maath
	Naggai
	Esli
	Nahum
	Amos
	Mattathias
	Joseph
	Jannai
	Melki
	Levi
	Matthat
	Heli
	Mary
	Joseph
	Jesus the Messiah

THE HEROD FAMILY

THE HEROD FAMILY

Aristobulus

Father of Herodias

Cleopatra **Herod Philip II**

Tetrarch of Iturea
and Traconitis

Malthace **Archelaus**

Tetrarch of Judea,
Idumea, and Samaria

Herod the Great
(10 Wives)

Malthace **Herod Antipas**

Tetrarch of Galilee
and Perea

Second Husband of **Herodias**

Mariamne **Herod Philip I**

First Husband of **Herodias**

Salome

marries Philip II

NAMES OF THE TWELVE DISCIPLES

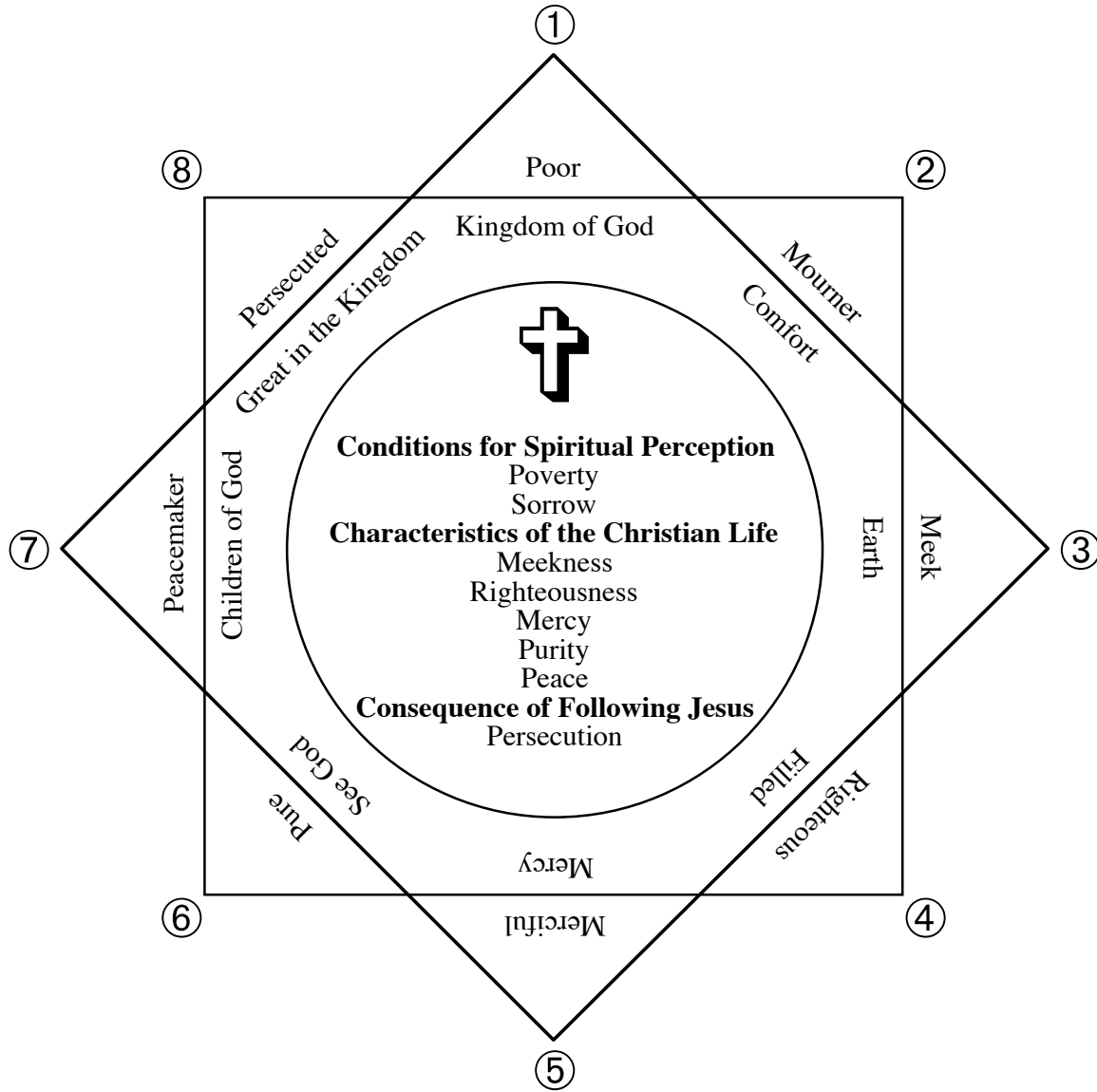
NAMES OF THE TWELVE DISCIPLES COMPARED			
MARK	MATTHEW	LUKE	ACTS
(Mark 3:16-19)	(Matthew 10:2-4)	(Luke 6:14-16)	(Acts 1:13)
Simon Peter	Simon Peter	Simon Peter	Simon Peter
James	James	James	James
John	John	John	John
Andrew	Andrew	Andrew	Andrew
Philip	Philip	Philip	Philip
Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Bartholomew
Matthew	Matthew	Matthew	Matthew
Thomas	Thomas	Thomas	Thomas
James Son of Alphaeus	James Son of Alphaeus	James Son of Alphaeus	James Son of Alphaeus
Thaddaeus	Thaddaeus	Judas Son of James	Judas Son of James
Simon the Zealot	Simon the Zealot	Simon the Zealot	Simon the Zealot
Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot	

THE TWELVE DISCIPLES

THE TWELVE DISCIPLES						
NAME	HOME	ATTRIBUTE	VOCATION	CONTRIBUTION	MARTYRED	
Andrew	Bethsaida Capernaum	Strength	Fisherman	Introduced Peter to Jesus	Patrae in Achaia North of Greece	
Bartholomew Nathanael		Imagination			Armenia (?) or Albania	
James The Brother of John	Capernaum	Wisdom	Fisherman	First Martyred by Herod (Antipas I)	Jerusalem 44 A.D.	
James The Less, Son of Alphaeus		Order		Went to Parthians/Medes	Prussia (?) Persia	
John	Capernaum	Love	Fisherman	Pastor in Ephesus	Not Martyred Burned in Oil (?)	
Judas Iscariot	Kerioth	Life	Treasurer	He betrayed Jesus	Hung Himself in Jerusalem	
Jude Thaddaeus or Judas		Renunciation		Missionary to Near East (?)	Persia (?) Berito Mesopotamia	
Matthew Levi	Capernaum	Will	Tax Collector	Wrote the first Gospel Went to Parthians/Medes	Ethiopia (?)	
Peter Simon	Bethsaida Capernaum	Faith	Fisherman	Apostle to the Jews	Rome 64 A.D.	
Philip	Bethsaida	Power		Missionary to Scythia (?) or Persia	Hieropolis (?)	
Simon The Zealot/Cananaean		Zeal		Missionary to Africa Asia Minor	Persia or Egypt (?)	
Thomas	Antioch (?)	Understanding	Fisherman (?)	Missionary to India	Near Madras, India Malapore	
Matthias				Chosen to Replace Judas		
Saul/Paul	Tarsus		Tent Maker	Apostle to the Gentiles	Rome 64 A.D.	

THE BEATITUDES

Matthew 5:1-12



JESUS AND THE COMMANDMENTS

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

Exodus 20:3-17
Deuteronomy 5:7-21

YE	One God		Our Father (Matthew 6:9)
HAVE	No Images		No forms needed at all (Matthew 6:7)
HEARD	No Blasphemy	BUT	Hallowed be Thy Name (Matthew 6:9)
THAT	Man made for the Sabbath	I	Sabbath made for Man (Mark 2:27)
IT WAS	Honor Your Parents	SAY	And also all good people (Matthew 12:50)
SAID	No Murder	UNTO	No Anger (Matthew 5:22)
BY	No Adultery	YOU	No Lust (Matthew 5:28)
THEM	No Stealing		Give Freely (Matthew 5:42)
OF OLD	No False Swearing		No Swearing (Matthew 5:34)
TIME	No Coveting		Covet Righteousness (Matthew 5:6)

THE PARABLES OF JESUS

PARABLES IN ONE GOSPEL	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE
1. Tares (Weeds)	13:24-30		
2. Treasure in the Field	13:44		
3. Pearl of Great Price	13:45-46		
4. Net	13:47-50		
5. Unmerciful Servant	18:23-35		
6. Laborers in the Vineyard	20:1-16		
7. Two Sons	21:28-32		
8. Wedding Feast	22:2-14		
9. Ten Virgins	25:1-13		
10. Talents	25:14-30		
11. Seed Growing Secretly		4:26-29	
12. Absent Householder		13:33-37	
13. Two Debtors			7:41-43
14. Good Samaritan			10:30-37
15. Importunate Friend			11:5-13
16. Rich Fool			12:16-21
17. Servants Watching			12:35-40
18. Faithful Steward			12:42-48
19. Barren Fig Tree			13:6-9
20. Great Feast			14:16-24
21. Building a Tower and a King going to War			14:25-32
22. Lost Coin			15:8-10
23. Prodigal Son			15:11-32
24. Dishonest Steward			16:1-13
25. Rich Man and Lazarus			16:19-31
26. Unprofitable Servant			17:7-10
27. Unrighteous Judge			18:1-8
28. Pharisee and the Tax Collector			18:9-14
29. Pounds			19:11-27
PARABLES IN TWO GOSPELS			
30. Two Builders	7:24-27		6:47-49
31. Leaven	13:33		13:20-21
32. Lost Sheep	18:12-14		15:3-7
PARABLES IN THREE GOSPELS			
33. Lamp under a Bushel	5:14-16	4:21-22	8:16-17 11:33-36
34. New Cloth on an Old Garment	9:16	2:21	5:36
35. New Wine in Old Wineskins	9:17	2:22	5:37-38
36. Sower	13:3-23	4:2-20	8:4-15
37. Mustard Seed	13:31-32	4:30-32	13:18-19
38. Wicked Tenants	21:33-45	12:1-12	20:9-19
39. Fig Tree	24:32-44	13:28-32	21:29-33

THE MIRACLES OF JESUS

POWER OVER DISEASE	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
1. A Leper	8:1	1:40	5:12	
2. A Servant of a Roman Soldier	8:15		7:1	
3. A Paralyzed Man	9:1	2:1	5:17	
4. A Woman who touched Jesus	9:20	5:25	8:42b	
5. Two Blind Men	9:27		2:22	
6. A Dumb Man	9:32			
7. A Man with a Crippled Hand	12:9	3:1	6:6	
8. Two Blind Men (Bartimaeus)	20:29	10:46	18:35	
9. A Deaf and Dumb Man		7:31		
10. A Blind Man at Bethsaida		8:22		
11. A Crippled Woman		13:10		
12. A Sick Man			14:1	
13. Ten Lepers			17:11	
14. An Official's Son				4:43
15. A Healing at the Pool				5:1
16. A Man born Blind				9:1
 POWER OVER EVIL				
17. Two Men with Demons	8:28	5:1	8:26	
18. A Boy with a Demon	17:14	9:14	9:37	
19. A Man with an Evil Spirit		1:21	4:31	
 POWER OVER DEATH				
20. An Official's Daughter	9:18	5:21	8:40	
21. A Widow's Son			7:11	
22. The Raising of Lazarus				11:1
 POWER OVER NATURE				
23. Water is changed into Wine				2:1
24. Calming the Storm	8:23	4:35	8:22	
25. The Loaves and Fishes				
5000 Fed	14:15	6:30	9:10	6:1
4000 Fed	15:32	8:1		
26. Jesus walks on the Sea	14:25	6:48		
27. The Cursing of the Fig Tree	21:19	11:14		

A BRIEF CHRONOLOGY

- A. The Birth And Early Life Of Jesus: (Matthew 1-2 & Luke 1-2)
 - 1. The Birth of Jesus in Bethlehem (4-5 B.C.E.)
 - 2. The Flight to Egypt
 - 3. The Return to Nazareth
- B. The Early Ministry Of Jesus: (Matthew 3-15, Mark 1-7, Luke 3-8, and John 1-3) (27-30 C.E.)
 - 1. The Baptism of Jesus (27 C.E.)
 - 2. Jesus returns to Galilee from his Baptism and Temptation
 - 3. Jesus preaches to the crowds and heals the sick in and around Capernaum
 - 4. Jesus visits Nazareth
 - 5. Jesus returns to Capernaum
- C. The Later Ministry Of Jesus: (Matthew 16-20, Mark 8-13, Luke 9:1—19:27, and John 4-11)
 - 1. Pursued by the police of Herod Antipas, Jesus leaves Galilee for Tyre and Sidon
 - 2. On the road to Caesarea Philippi, Peter confesses that Jesus is the Messiah
 - 3. On Mount Hermon (?) Jesus appears to Peter, James and John “transfigured” accompanied with Moses and Elijah
 - 4. Jesus travels through the Decapolis
 - 5. Jesus begins his journey to Jerusalem
 - 6. Jesus takes the east bank of the Jordan through Perea
 - 7. Jesus travels through Jericho to Jerusalem
- D. The Crucifixion Of Jesus: (Matthew 21-27, Mark 11-15, Luke 19:28—23:56, and John 12-19)
 - 1. The Last Supper
 - 2. The Prayer in Gethsemane
 - 3. The Religious Trial in Caiphas’ House
 - 4. The Secular Trial in the Antonia Fortress under Pilate
 - 5. Taken to Herod’s Palace
 - 6. Crucifixion on Golgotha (Calvary) (30 C.E.)
- E. The Resurrection Of Jesus: (Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, and John 10-21) (30 C.E.)
 - 1. Mary Magdalene sees Jesus near the Tomb
 - 2. Two disciples experience Jesus on the way to Emmaus
 - 3. Peter and his friends return to Galilee and see Jesus on the Lake
 - 4. Jesus ascends to Heaven from the Mount of Olives

All dates are approximate.

A DETAILED CHRONOLOGY

Events	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
1. Birth of John the Baptist Foretold			1:5	
2. Birth of Jesus Foretold		1:18		1:26
3. Birth and Naming of John				1:39
4. Birth of Jesus			2:1	1:1ff
5. Genealogies	1:1		3:23	
6. Circumcision and Naming of Jesus	2:21			
7. Presentation of Jesus in the Temple	2:22			
8. Coming of the Wise Men	2:1			
9. Flight to/Return from Egypt	2:19			
10. The Lad Jesus in the Temple	2:41			
11. John the Baptist's Ministry	3:1	1:1	3:1	1:6,15
12. The Baptism of Jesus	3:13	1:9	3:21	
13. The Temptation of Jesus	4:1	1:12	4:1	
14. Jesus Begins His Ministry	4:12	1:14	4:14	
15. John's Witness of Jesus		1:15		
16. Call of the First Disciples	4:18	1:16	5:1	1:35
17. Jesus' Sermon on the Mount		5-7	6:17	
18. Jesus' First Miracle				2:1
19. Jesus at Jerusalem				2:13
20. Nicodemus Visits Jesus				3:1
21. The Twelve	10:2	3:13	6:13	
22. The Twelve Commissioned	10:1	3:13	9:1	
23. The Twelve Return		6:30	9:10	
24. John the Baptist's Death	14:1	6:14	9:7	
25. Peter's Confession of Christ	16:13	8:27	9:18	
26. Jesus Foretells His Own Death	16:21	8:31	9:22	
27. The Transfiguration of Jesus	17:1	9:2	9:28	
28. The Seventy Sent Out Return	10:1			
29. The Raising of Lazarus				11:1
30. Jesus Journeys to Jerusalem	20:17	10:32	18:31	
31. The Council Plots Jesus' Death	26:3	11:47		
32. Jesus' Arrival at Bethany		12:1		
33. Jesus Enters Jerusalem	21:1	11:1	19:29	12:12
34. Jesus Cleanses the Temple	21:12	11:15	19:45	
35. Jesus Teaches in the Temple	21:23	11:27	20:1	
36. Judas' Plot Against Jesus	26:14	14:10	22:3	
37. Preparation for the Passover	26:17	14:12	22:7	
38. The Last Supper	26:20	14:17	22:14	
39. Jesus Washes His Disciples' Feet				13:1

A DETAILED CHRONOLOGY

Events	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
40. The Betrayer Revealed				13:10
41. Jesus' Last Discourse on Love				13:31
42. Jesus Institutes the Lord's Supper	26:26	14:22	22:19	
43. Peter's Three Denials Foretold	26:34	14:30	22:34	13:38
44. Jesus' Agony in Gethsemane	26:36	14:32	22:39	18:1
45. The Betrayal and Arrest	26:47	14:43	22:47	18:2
46. Jesus Taken to Annas				18:13
47. Before Caiaphas the High Priest	26:57	14:53	22:54	18:19
48. Peter's Three Denials	26:69	14:66	22:54	18:15
49. Jesus before the Council	27:1	15:1	22:66	
50. Jesus before Pilate	27:2	15:1	23:1	18:28
	27:11			
51. Pilate Declares Jesus Innocent			23:4	19:4
52. Pilate Sends Jesus to Herod			23:7	
53. The Jews Reject Jesus	27:21	15:6	23:18	18:40
	27:25	19:15		
54. Pilate Condemns Jesus to Death	27:26	15:15	23:24	19:16
55. Jesus Mocked by the Soldiers	27:27	15:16		19:2
56. Jesus Led Away to be Crucified	27:31	15:20	23:33	19:18
57. The Crucifixion of Jesus	27:35	15:24	23:33	19:18
58. Jesus on the Cross	27:36	15:25	23:34	19:19
59. The Death of Jesus	27:50	15:37	23:46	19:30
60. The Centurion's Witness	27:54	15:39	23:47	
61. The Burial of Jesus	27:57	15:42	23:50	19:38
62. The Resurrection of Jesus	28:1	16:1	24:1	20:1
63. Appearance to Mary Magdalene		16:9		20:11
64. Appearance to the Women	28:1			
65. Appearance to the Eleven		16:14		20:19
66. Appearance to Two going to Emmaus		16:12	24:13	
67. Appearance to the Eleven One Week Later				20:26
68. Appearance to the Apostles in Galilee		16:14		21:1
69. Appearance to Peter (1 Cor. 15:5)		24:34		
70. Appearance to 500 in Galilee (1 Cor. 15:6)				
71. Appearance to James (1 Cor. 15:7)				
72. Appearance to Paul (1 Cor. 15:8)				
73. Jesus' Great Commission	28:19	16:15	24:44	
74. Jesus talks with Peter				21:15
75. The Ascension of Jesus (Acts 1:4-11)		16:19	24:50	

EVENTS OF THE CRUCIFIXION

Events	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
The Plot and Anointing	26:1-16	14:1-11	22:1-6	
The Last Supper	26:17-29	14:12-25	22:7-38	
Judas plans to betray Jesus	26:20-25	14:17-21		
Gethsemane and the Arrest	26:30-56	14:26-52	22:39-53	18:1-11
The Religious Trial (Sanhedrin)	26:57-66	14:53-65	22:54-71	18:12-14 19-24
The Denial by Peter	26:67-75	14:66-72		18:15-27
The Political Trial (Pilate)	27:1-14	15:1-15	23:1-5	18:28—19:16
The Death of Judas	27:3-10			
Jesus before Herod			23:6-12	
Jesus before Pilate (Again)			23:13-25	
Release of Barabbas	27:15-26	15:6-15	23:18-25	18:40
The Crucifixion	27:27-56	15:16-47	23:26-49	19:17-37
1. Forgive them Father!			23:34	
2. Today you will be with me...			23:43	
3. Woman! Here is your son...				19:26-27
4. My God, my God, why...?	27:46	15:34		
5. I am thirsty.				19:28
6. It is finished				19:30
7. Father! In your Hands...			23:46	
The Burial	27:57-61	15:42-47		19:38-42
The Guard at the Tomb	27:62-66			

DETAILS OF THE CRUCIFIXION

Events	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
The Purple Robe	27:28	15:17		19:2 & 5
The Crown of Thorns	27:29	15:17		19:2 & 5
The Staff	27:29	15:19		
Simon of Cyrene	27:32	15:21	23:26	
Golgotha/Calvary	27:33	15:22	23:33	19:17
9:00 a.m.		15:25		
12:00 Noon	27:45	15:33	23:44	
3:00 p.m.		15:33	23:44	
Wine Mixed with Myrrh	27:34	15:23	23:36	
The Divided Clothes	27:35	15:24	23:34b	19:23-24
The Sign	27:37	15:26	23:38	19:19-20
The Robbers	27:38	15:27	23:32-33	19:18 (?)
The Vinegar	27:48	15:36		19:29
The Curtain of the Temple	27:51	15:38	23:45	
The Graves Open	27:52			
The Roman Centurion	27:54	15:39	23:47	
The Women Mary Magdalene Mary, Mother of James Salome/Zebedee (James and John)	27:56 x x x	15:40 x x x	23:55 Women	19:25 x Wife of Clopas x Mother of Jesus
The Bones and the Spear				19:31-37
Joseph of Arimathea	27:57	15:43	23:50	19:38
The Guard and the Seal	27:66			

SALVATION ACCORDING TO JOHN

Jesus talks on two levels in the Gospel of John. People usually think he is talking on the physical when he really means the spiritual. Salvation is described in terms of the *new birth*. John 1:12 locates the source of this new birth in God.

But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God...

When Jesus tried to explain the *new birth* to Nicodemus, he had great difficulty. Nicodemus could not think on the spiritual level. Jesus' words to Nicodemus apply to all of us today, but we must learn how to think spiritually.

Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above. (John 3:3)

Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. (John 3:5)

Being born of water and the Spirit refers to the baptism of water and the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The work of the Holy Spirit is presumed in the Gospel of John. The Spirit is responsible for everyone's new birth.

LIGHT

"I am the light of the world," said Jesus in John 8:12, "Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life." It is in this sense that we must understand the troubling passage found in John 14:6, where Jesus says, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." Wherever the divine light appears, it is consistent with God's revelation in Jesus Christ. It is over this very light that the judgment of God occurs, as described in John 3:19-21:

And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God.

LIFE

All who come to the light find life. This life consists of several things, the most important of which are as follows:

1. **Fullness of Life.** "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly." (John 10:10b)
2. **Internal Peace.** "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid." (John 14:27)
3. **Abiding Joy.** "I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete. (John 15:11)

4. **Eternal Life.** “And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.” (John 17:3)

LOVE

As God loved the world, so are we to love, first one another, and then the whole world.

1. **God loved Us.** “For God so loved the world that he gave his only son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.” (John 3:16)
2. **Love One Another.** “I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13:34-35)

Jesus prayed for his disciples, and the heart of that prayer is given in John 17:20-21:

I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

Although there is no Great Commission in John’s Gospel, the Gospel itself is evangelistic (bearer of the Good News). John’s very purpose for writing is described in John 20:31, where he says, “But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.” In the closing chapter, he instructs Peter to tend and feed his sheep and lambs (John 21:15-17). Carrying out this task took Peter to Rome, the center of the known world, and this task will not be completed until the Kingdom is completely established.

AFTERWORD

At the beginning of each lesson, I placed a graphic of a man, lion, ox, or eagle. I used Jerome's interpretation, which is as follows:

Matthew	Man
Mark	Lion
Luke	Ox
John	Eagle

Irenaeus of Lyons and Augustine of Hippo also assigned these same symbols to the four Gospels, but their interpretations differ from Jerome. Irenaeus offered the following:

Matthew	Man
Mark	Eagle
Luke	Ox
John	Lion

Augustine of Hippo offered yet another interpretation, and it differs from both Jerome and Irenaeus. Augustine's interpretation is as follows:

Matthew	Lion
Mark	Man
Luke	Ox
John	Eagle

They only agree on attaching the Ox to the Gospel of Luke. While I could have used any one of the interpretations, I chose to follow Jerome, mainly because he placed these images in his translation of the Bible into Latin, which became the Bible of the Roman Catholic Church right up to our own time.

Irenaeus attempts to give meaning to these four creatures. In his work, *Against Heresies*, Irenaeus writes:

The first living creature was like a **lion**, symbolizing His effectual working, His leadership, and royal power; the second was like a **cal**f, signifying His sacrificial and sacerdotal order; but the third had, as it were, the face of a **man**—an evident description of His advent as a human being; the fourth was like a flying **eagle**, pointing out the gift of the Spirit hovering with His wings over the Church. And therefore the Gospels are in accord with these things, among which Christ Jesus is seated.⁴

⁴ Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies*, 3.11.8.

Since they do not agree on which graphic belongs to which Gospel, I can only assume that there is no clear connection. I have used these graphics only because it is part of the tradition to do so.

The whole idea comes out of Ezekiel 1:10-11, where the prophet describes the four living creatures, “As for the appearance of their faces: the four had the face of a human being, the face of a lion on the right side, the face of an ox on the left side, and the face of an eagle; such were their faces.” Who are these four living creatures? They are cherubim, the highest order of angels. They appear again in the vision of God, the Creator. In Revelation 4:7-8, we read:

...the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with a face like a human face, and the fourth living creature like a flying eagle. And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and inside. Day and night without ceasing they sing,

Holy, holy, holy,
the Lord God the Almighty,
who was and is and is to come.

Let us give the same respect to the four Gospels as the four living creatures, the Cherubim, give to God. They all give different interpretations, but they all point to the God who came to us in Jesus of Nazareth, and they all anticipate his coming again as LORD of Lords and KING of Kings. Before him every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is LORD.

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