



Life
of
Christ

Life of Christ One



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Course Introduction

Welcome to the Life of Christ Course: Part 1

You are about to begin a study of the Greatest Life Ever Lived! We are praying with you that this course will dramatically affect your life and ministry.

This course is part one of a two-part course consisting of a total of twenty-four lessons.

Here was a man born of a peasant woman. For the first thirty years of His life He lived in obscurity, working as a carpenter's son. He never wrote a book, He never ran for political office, He never even went more than 200 miles from His hometown. He never did any of the things which are normally associated with greatness.

During the last three years of His life He became an itinerant preacher, roaming the land of His birth, healing the sick, and comforting the poor. At the end of these three years, the tide of public opinion turned against Him, and He was betrayed by a friend and arrested for disturbing the status quo. He went through six trials, each of which was a mockery of jurisprudence. The charge was blasphemy. He had claimed to be the Son of God.

The Roman procurator was nervous. Never had he seen such quiet dignity, such intrepid courage, such noble majesty. He brought this now mutilated carpenter's son before the mob and hurled a challenge to them which has resounded across twenty centuries: he said: "*Ecce homo!*"—"Behold the man!" The crowd shouted, "Crucify him," and, cowardly washing his hands of the whole affair, Pilate turned Him over to be crucified. They beat Him, crushed a crown of thorns down upon His head, led Him outside the city walls, and nailed Him to a cross.

But the story does not end there. Three days later something happened which changed the entire course of human history—He emerged from the tomb in resurrection power. His greatness has never been paralleled. Though twenty centuries have come and gone, He is the cornerstone of history still today, the center of human progress. He still stands as the highest example of moral purity—the pinnacle of Divine Glory.

We would be well within the mark if we said that all the armies which have ever marched, all the navies which have ever sailed, all the kings who have ever reigned, and all the parliaments which have ever sat, put together, have not influenced man's life on this earth as powerfully as that...

One Solitary Life.

Description of the Course

The life of Jesus of Nazareth is without question *The Greatest Life* ever lived. In four short years of ministry, He not only launched a movement which changed history, but He displayed God the Father. The Holy Spirit knows, even if we sometimes do not, that the best way to communicate spiritual truths is to clothe them with flesh and blood. In the incarnation of the Son of God, God became man, and He lived life as God intended men to live.

Author

This course was written by Dr. Joseph Dillow. It is based upon the work of Dr. Bob Meltebeke in his course and textbook called, *The Greatest Life*.

Why Should I Take This Course?

It is always important when beginning a study of any biblical topic to firmly grasp WHY you are taking the time to do this. What difference will it make in your life? Why is it important? We have identified a number of questions you should keep in mind as you study *The Greatest Life*:

Have you ever wanted to understand the story of Christ's life and how the events, parables, miracles, and teachings fit into the overall plan of His life?

Have you ever asked yourself, *What can I learn about God and how He feels about me and what He is really like?* Jesus came to explain this to us by revealing God's personality, love, and character in His life and actions.

Have you ever wanted to know how to disciple others? How was Jesus able to launch a worldwide movement with only twelve very ordinary men as the founders? By the end of this course you will write a brief paper summarizing what you have learned about how Jesus trained the Twelve, and how this might apply to your own desires to mentor others.

What was the overall strategy Jesus employed in bringing his message to earth? What was His plan? When you have finished this study you will identify the major themes of His ministry. Also, you will see how His life and teaching revealed a gradual outworking of those themes, particularly that of the offer and rejection of the Kingdom to Israel.

Have you ever wondered why Jesus often placed such stringent requirements on those who would be disciples? In this course you will learn to distinguish between the concept of discipleship and the nature of saving faith.

Would you like to be able to identify key events in the life of Christ and know where to find them in the four Gospels? In this course you will identify the sixty-one key events of *The Greatest Life*. Then, by use of diagrams, maps, and a chronological chart, you will develop a teaching outline of *The Greatest Life*.

Does This Course Fit into the Internet Biblical Seminary Curriculum?

This course is required for the successful completion of the Diploma in Practical Ministry.

Units of Study

The lessons are grouped into eight units:

Life of Christ—Part I

Unit 1: Lessons 1-3

Unit 2: Lessons 4-6

Unit 3: Lessons 7-9

Unit 4: Lessons 10-12

Life of Christ—Part II

Unit 5: Lessons 12-14

Unit 6: Lessons 17-19

Unit 7: Lesson 10-21

Unit 8: Lesson 12-24

As you plan your study schedule, decide on what dates you want to finish each unit. You can then divide this time into study periods for each lesson.

We suggest that you try to do a lesson a week or three lessons per month. The lessons vary in length but you should allocate about four hours per lesson. You can do this if you study about one hour each day. At this rate, it will take you approximately eight months to complete the entire course. Many will desire to speed this up and do two or three lessons per week.

Lesson Organization

Please give careful attention to each part of the lesson:

Title

Lesson outline

Lesson objectives

Lesson assignments

Lesson development

The title, outline, and objectives provide a preview of the lesson. Your mind will be more alert and receptive and you will learn better because of this preview.

The lesson assignments describe how and in what order to complete the lesson.

The lesson development follows the lesson outline. Its comments, suggestions, and questions all help you reach the lesson objectives. Be sure to check your answers with the ones given for the study questions. These will fix your attention once more on the main points of the lesson. This procedure is designed to make your learning more effective and long lasting.

Make special note of the maps, charts, and other illustrations because they will help you identify with a part of the early church, sharing its problems, and letting the tremendous truths of these letters grip your heart. Also, you will find these illustrations useful in your preaching and teaching.

Recommended for Further Reading

This course will include readings in the following works:

The Life of Christ by Frederick Farrar. (Cassell, 1891).

The Training of the Twelve by A. B. Bruce. (T&T. Clark, 1924).

Jesus Christ: The Greatest Life Ever Lived, A Unique Blending of the Four Gospels. Compiled and Translated (from Greek) by Johnston M. Cheney and Stanley Ellisen, Th.D. Published by Paradise Publishing Inc., 1999.

The Master Plan of Evangelism by Robert Coleman. Spire Books. Fleming H. Revell Company. Old Tappan, New Jersey. 1963, 1964.

Using This Course

Overview

In order to benefit most from your study of this material, you should plan to work through the units and lessons in the order they are presented.

You will need the foundational information given in Unit 1 before beginning Unit 2, and so on.

The course is divided into eight units. Each unit includes questions and self tests to help you understand and apply the various practical truths.

You should allow yourself a minimum of four hours of study time to complete each lesson (about 30 min/day). This would include doing the required reading, answering the questions, and preparing to participate in your weekly seminar.

Unit Design

Near the beginning of each unit you will find a Unit Introduction, which summarizes the most important things you will learn as you work through the lessons that follow. Each unit typically has three lessons but on occasion that will vary. At the end of each unit you will take a twenty-five-question unit exam.

Interactive Questions

Interactive Questions are included in each lesson to help you review, evaluate, and apply what you are reading. There are many different interaction types: short answers, essay, multiple choice, matching, etc.

A very important interaction type is what is called your Life Notebook.

Life Notebook

Throughout the course, you will see references to what we call a Life Notebook.

This notebook has two purposes. First, it is a personal, spiritual life journal that you will maintain and add to as you go through various Internet Biblical Seminary courses. In this Life Notebook you should enter what you are learning, how it is impacting your life, and, perhaps, questions you have.

Second, the Life Notebook is a place where you will record essay-type questions which are more deeply reflective in nature. These questions will relate to practical application issues, such as your walk with God, teaching this material to others by leading your own group, and practical character lessons you learn through studying the lesson.

This notebook will become the basis for much of the discussion which goes on during the weekly seminars with other members of your group. It is the place where you can journal your growth in Christ.

Remember that at the end of each topic in a lesson, and **BEFORE** you go to the next page, you should always turn back to your Life Notebook. **It is important that you understand that the answers to your Life Notebook questions are NOT being graded.** The purpose of the

questions is to get you to think critically about the readings in Scripture, articles, and external textbooks. You will record a central point related to what you learned and what God is speaking to your heart in your Life Notebook before proceeding to the next page. As you progress through the course, you are developing a life journal describing how this course is impacting your daily life. Also, what you write here will be items you can contribute to the interactive discussions when you meet with your facilitator and accountability group either in person or online. (If you are taking this course as independent study, there is no group or facilitator).

Your Group Leader

If you are taking this course for independent study, this section does not apply to you. However, if you are taking it as a facilitated “class,” then shortly after you register in this course you will receive an e-mail from your group leader. You will be meeting with him or her and the other students in your group (usually ten to fifteen) either in person, or online.

You may be asked to prepare something to share with the others in the group during that time. If you have any questions about the material or other issues related to your course, you can contact your Group Leader.

Grading System

Your final grade for the course is based upon a number of factors. Your facilitator will probably modify the specific requirements to fit the group. However, you will be graded on lesson completion, self checks, unit exams, class participation, and completed projects.

Unit One: His Preparation and Early Years

Introduction

The Lord Jesus Christ is the only man who lived as God before He was born into the human race. His history begins, therefore, in eternity past as the Second Person of the Trinitarian God of the Bible. In their opening comments, the gospel writers trace His ancestry back to God the Father as it relates to His deity, and back to Abraham and David as it relates to His humanity.

In the opening lessons of this course we will trace the ancestry of Israel's Messiah and the world's Savior from eternity past, to His birth on earth, and to the beginning of His public ministry.

In Lesson 1 of this first unit of study you will learn about His eternal origin and His earthly lineage as Israel's King and Messiah.

In Lesson 2 you will consider Christ's miraculous birth and the events leading up to it. Angels, shepherds, and wise men from the East all came to worship the newborn King.

In Lesson 3 you will study Jesus' first public appearances, His baptism, and His temptation in the wilderness.

Unit Outline

Lesson 1: Preparation for the Birth

Lesson 2: The Worship of the Newborn King

Lesson 3: His Baptism and Temptation

Lesson 1: Preparation for the Birth

Lesson Introduction

Why did the God of creation choose to send His Son into the world through the womb of a peasant woman to be born in a cow stall? Later the Savior Himself would say that He did not come to be served but to serve. It is fitting then that He would model by His birth the central lesson of the lifestyle He came to teach: humility and dependence upon God.

In Topic 1 of this lesson we begin with a study of the names applied to Christ. In biblical thinking, a name had great significance and spoke of a particular quality or characteristic of a person.

We will consider the incarnation of Christ, His manifestation in human flesh in Topic 2. John said of Jesus, “Now the Word became flesh and took up residence among us. We saw his glory—the glory of the one and only, full of grace and truth, who came from the Father” (Jn 1:14).

Topic 3 will examine Jesus’ lineage. The Jews were expecting the Messiah to conquer the Romans and establish a new kingdom in Israel, but that did not happen. To meet the Jews’ objection to believing that Jesus was the Messiah, it was necessary to establish that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed of the lineage of David. The Gospels were written to provide an accurate and reliable history of Israel’s “greatest prophet.”

The historical accuracy of the New Testament documents will be covered in Topic 4. The astounding claims made by Jesus must be verified. Did Christ really say and do the things ascribed to Him? We will see that Dr. Luke was a very careful and accurate historian, and his record of “The Greatest Life” is trustworthy according to the canons of modern historical criticism.

Topic 5 introduces us to a godly Priest, Zechariah, the husband of Mary’s cousin, Elizabeth. The angel Gabriel appears to him while he is ministering in the temple and announces that his barren wife, Elizabeth, will give birth to the forerunner of the Messiah, John the Baptist.

The last topic, Topic 6, discusses the appearance of the angel Gabriel to Mary. The amazing faith and submission of the virgin from Nazareth has been a model of godly living for generations. Mary is told she will give birth to the Messiah predicted in the Old Testament.

Lesson Outline

Topic 1: Christ’s Titles—Jesus, Christ, Son of God

Topic 2: Christ’s (The Word) Manifestation in the Flesh

Topic 3: Christ’s Lineage

Topic 4: The Historical Accuracy of the Record

Topic 5: An Answered Prayer

Preparations for a Savior

Zechariah’s Prayer Is Answered

Topic 6: An Angel’s Message to a Virgin

Lesson Objectives

When you have completed this lesson, you will be able to:

- List the three names used by Mark to describe Jesus and appreciate their significance
- Define the word *logos* and describe how and why it was applied to Jesus in John 1:1-18
- Describe your growing confidence that God is at work in your life because you have grasped the major details mentioned in the genealogies written by Matthew and Luke
- Identify and list the different purposes for which each of the gospels was written

Topic 1: Christ's Titles—Jesus, Christ, Son of God

Throughout the Old Testament it was promised that one day a messiah would come to the land of Israel. The Hebrew word for *messiah* means “anointed one.” We begin this lesson looking at the first verse in the gospel of Mark where Jesus is called three names: Jesus, Christ (or Messiah), and the Son of God.

Names are important to us. They are also important to those who have false views of the gospel. Imagine this, there is a knock on your door and two young men dressed in black slacks and black ties courteously ask you if they can have a moment of your time. You soon realize that they are Mormons. You politely respond that you do not think it is useful to continue the discussion because they do not believe that Jesus is the Son of God. To this comment, one of the young men replies, “Oh yes, we do believe he is the Son of God.” The more you talk the more confusing the labels become. How would you respond to them?

There were three names used by Mark to describe the Lord Jesus Christ: Jesus, the Messiah (actually Mark used the Greek word transliterated “Christ”), and the Son of God. Let’s consider them in more detail.

The Scripture related to this topic is Mark 1:1.

QUESTION 1

Match the name describing Christ with the corresponding title.

<i>Name</i>	<i>Title</i>
Jesus	Equal with God
Messiah	Yahweh saves
Son of God	Anointed One

If you need help, read the article “Son of God,” in the articles section at the end of this lesson.

You might find additional help in the article “Jesus Christ,” with a subtopic on “Messiah,” also included at the end of this lesson.

QUESTION 2

After reading the above two articles, open your Life Notebook. What is the writer's main assertion about Jesus being the Son of God? How does he substantiate it?

Topic 2: Christ's (The Word) Manifestation in the Flesh

According to Mark's introduction, Jesus is the Messiah, the One who saves, and the divine Son of God. But how did He get here, and what is His eternal ancestry? John fills in this gap in the history of "The Greatest Life." Jesus Christ was and is the most unique personality of the centuries. In the opening chapter of John's gospel, Jesus is presented as fully God and fully man. He is a God-Man.

When you have completed this topic, you will be able to define the word *logos* and describe how and why it was applied to Jesus in John 1:1-18.

QUESTION 3

Read the article "Logos" (at the end of this lesson). John calls Jesus the *Logos* in John 1:1. What Hebrew word is behind this and what are some of the characteristics of the *Logos* in the Old Testament.

QUESTION 4

What promise is there for you in John 1:12? How have you applied this right, authority, and privilege in your life?

QUESTION 5

Review the Liar, Lunatic, or Lord below. Then open your Life Notebook, and record what you would say to persuade someone that Jesus Christ is God.

C. S. Lewis, one of the greatest literary scholars of the twentieth century, was a Cambridge Don and held the chair of renaissance English Literature there. Formerly an atheist, he was an associate of Bertrand Russell and was very skeptical of Christianity. He relates that there was something that bothered him greatly about the Christian faith which often confronted his skepticism: the claims that Christ made.

Reflecting on those claims led him to some unexpected conclusions and resulted, eventually, in his embracing Christ as God. He devoted the rest of his life to writing a number of books in which he set forth the intellectual basis for the validity of the Christian faith. In one of these books, *Mere Christianity*, he summarizes the line of thinking about Christ's claims that led to his conversion.

What I am trying to do here is to prevent anyone from saying the very foolish thing they often say about Him, “I am ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept His claim to be God.” That is the one thing we must not say. A man who is merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said, would not be a great moral teacher, he would either be a lunatic—on the level with a man who calls himself a poached egg—or else he would be the devil of hell. Either this man was and is the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, or can spit at him and kill him as a demon; or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God. But let us not come up with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left this option open to us. He did not intend to.

Jesus made astonishing claims, claims no man has ever made. He said He was the light of the world, “the resurrection and the life,” and claimed to have the authority to forgive sins. Most amazing were His direct claims to be God.

Now these claims are either true or false.

If they are true, then He is who He claimed to be, the Lord.

However, let us consider with C. S. Lewis the possibility that these claims are false. If they are false claims, then there are only two possibilities: He either knew or did not know they were false.

If He knew they were false, then we have a man who falsely claims to be God, and knows it is a false claim. He would be, in other words, a liar. But worse, He would be a demon because He asked men to entrust their eternal destinies to a belief He knows is a fraud. He said, “For unless you believe that I am the Christ, you will die in your sins” (Jn 8:24).

No one has seriously entertained the notion that Jesus was a liar.

But suppose He made a false claim and He really did not know it was false. He actually believed this delusion to be true. What would we then say about Him? We would normally conclude that such a man was mentally unstable; He would be a lunatic. But how can this be? Psychologist J. T. Fisher summarizes the problem well:

If you were to take the sum total of all the authoritative articles ever written by the most qualified psychologists and psychiatrists on the subject of mental hygiene—if you are to confine them and refine them and cleave out the excess verbiage—if you are to take the whole of the meat and none of the parsley, and if you are to have these unadulterated bits of pure scientific knowledge concisely expressed by the most capable of living poets, you would have an awkward and incomplete summation of the Sermon on the Mount. For nearly 2000 years the Christian world has been holding in its hand the complete answer to its restless and fruitless yearnings. Here rests the blueprint for successful human life with optimum mental health and contentment.¹

1. J. T. Fisher and L. S. Hawley, *A Few Buttons Missing* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1951).

But as it has been pointedly observed, one cannot very well have it both ways. If Jesus' teachings provide the blueprint for successful human life with optimum mental health, then the teacher cannot be a lunatic who totally misunderstands the nature of his own personality.

We are confronted then with the shocking alternatives, Jesus is either a Liar, a Lunatic, or He is the Lord of Glory.

Which of these three options, given all we know of Him, is the most probable?

Topic 3: Christ's Lineage



The Jews were very concerned with genealogies. Both Luke and Matthew give us carefully documented genealogies of Christ. When a Jewish man made the kinds of claims Jesus did, it became imperative for the Gospel writers to document His claims by proving that He did, in fact, descend from David and was the legal heir to the throne of Israel and possibly the Messiah.

When you have completed this topic, you will be able to describe your growing confidence that God is at work in your life because you have grasped the major details mentioned in the genealogies written by Matthew and Luke.

The Scriptures related to this topic are Matthew 1:1-17 and Luke 3:23-38.

QUESTION 6

Why does Matthew trace the genealogy of Christ back to Abraham?

- A. To establish that Jesus was truly the owner of the property upon which He and His family lived.
- B. To satisfy a Jewish cultural requirement for precise detail.
- C. To show that Jesus was truly the Son of God.
- D. To demonstrate that Jesus was in fact a descendant of Abraham and David and was a rightful heir to the throne of Israel.

QUESTION 7

Why do you think David was mentioned several times in Matthew's genealogy, while Luke mentioned him only once?

- A. Because Luke was written primarily for the Jews.
- B. Because Matthew was written primarily to the Jews and he wanted to show that Jesus is descended from David.
- C. There was no particular reason; it was simply a stylistic variation.
- D. Because Matthew wanted to prove that Jesus is the divine Son of Man.

QUESTION 8

Match the woman's name with the concept that she illustrates (additional information about some of these women is included in notes at the end of the lesson).

<i>Woman</i>	<i>Concept That She Illustrates</i>
Tamar (Gen 38:6-29)	A supreme example of faith.
Rahab (Josh 2:1-21)	The Gentiles are being brought back into fellowship with God.
Ruth (Ruth 1:16-18)	Even adultery does not exclude one from being in the line.
Bathsheba (2 Sam 11:3-27)	Illustrates the blackness of sin. Even sinners are included in the line of Christ. God's grace extends to all.

Topic 4: The Historical Accuracy of the Record

The gospel writers or their sources were eyewitnesses to the events they recorded. As such, they were primary witnesses, and in historical research such accounts are assumed to be reliable unless evidence can be presented to prove them false. To date, not one historical detail of the gospel narratives has been successfully proven to be incorrect. To the contrary, many items the critics formerly claimed to be "obvious" errors have been supported by new archaeological discoveries.

Luke's gospel was written by a man who was unusually careful in his historical documentation, noting who the Roman and Jewish leaders were at the time of Christ. It should also be noted that the gospel records, for the most part (except perhaps Luke's), were not written chronologically but were written thematically. This means that each gospel's timeline may vary, and its information may not appear in the same order as another's. Each writer intended to emphasize a certain aspect of the divine Son of God.

Have you ever wondered why we have four gospels? Why did John write the gospel of John and Matthew write the gospel of Matthew?

The Scripture related to this topic is Luke 1:1-4.

QUESTION 9

Read Luke's introduction (Lk 1:1-4). List some things you learned about Luke and his gospel.

QUESTION 10

The four gospels all begin at different points in Jesus' life history. It seems that these accounts would be more believable if they all began at the same point. *True or False?*

Explore the background of each of the gospels and how they differ from one another by reading the article (at the end of the lesson) on "The Four Gospels" with its divisions on "Matthew," "Mark," "Luke," and "John."



QUESTION 11

Match the name of the gospel with its purpose.

<i>Gospel Name</i>	<i>Purpose</i>
Matthew	Begins his account with John the Baptist's preaching and baptism of Jesus and characterizes John the Baptist as the Servant of the Lord. Audience: Gentiles in general, and the Romans specifically.
Mark	Shows Jesus' humanity from birth to ascension, revealing Him as the perfect Son of Man seeking to save the lost. Audience: the Greeks.
Luke	Traces Jesus' origin as the Son of God who took on human flesh to become God's Lamb, bringing redemption to all who believe in Him. Audience: the world (specifically for Gnostics who did not accept His fully God-fully man status).
John	Establishes the genealogy of Jesus through David and Abraham, which proves Him to be the rightful heir to the throne of Israel. Audience: the Jews.

Topic 5: An Answered Prayer

September, 6 BC

It was the perfect time for the Son of God to come to earth for our salvation. The whole course of history was prepared for and pointing to His arrival. His coming in human form was worthy of being the ultimate goal of history, for He is the eternal Son of God, the Word who was and is with God. He had existed from all eternity; He had been the instrument in creating the world. Jesus incarnate was Himself truly God, the same in substance with the Father, and equal in power and glory (Jn 1:1-18). Jesus' coming, which we call the Incarnation, was a voluntary act. When the Son of God humbled Himself to become truly human, He took upon Himself our nature. He was born, He grew in wisdom and stature, He suffered, He was crucified, and He died. It was His resurrection that proved He was and always is God, and yet He also was a man.

So, then, how did Jesus come to earth? The story is told in a beautiful narrative in the first two chapters of Matthew and Luke. The story of Christ's humanity actually opens when an angel visits the father of John the Baptist, the forerunner of the Messiah, to announce John's birth. Gabriel appeared to Zechariah, a devout priest, as he was ministering in the temple (Lk 1:5-25). Because Zechariah was very old, he and his wife, Elizabeth, had given up hope of ever having children. The promise seemed to him too wonderful to be true, so he doubted the angel's word. The punishment for his doubt was a loss of speech until the child was born, at which point the punishment was swallowed up in joy. The voice of Zechariah was restored, and he sang a wonderful song of praise (Lk 1:68-79).

Preparations for a Savior

September, 6 BC

The Old Testament announced that the arrival of the Messiah would be preceded by one who would prepare His way: His name was John the Baptist. But it was to an old priest, a godly man named Zechariah that the first hints of the new age were revealed. As a result of this lesson the student will know who the forerunners of the Messiah were and what their significance is to us. Who were these men?

Scriptures related to this topic are Malachi 3:1-5; Matthew 11:10; Mark 1:2-4; Luke 1:1-4, 5-25, 26-38, 68-79; 7:26-27.

The prophets of the Old Testament, writing hundreds of years before Christ came, wrote that:

A forerunner would come to announce the Messiah (Mal 3:1-5).

The Savior would be born in Bethlehem (Mic 5:2).

The Savior would be born of a virgin and come from the family of David, the Hebrew king (2 Sam 7:12-16; Ps 89:3-4).

It is interesting to observe that the combination of names mentioned in this lesson shows that the gracious God, remembering His oath, was about to fulfill His promise to Israel through His Son Jesus.

Elizabeth means "God remembers."

Zechariah means "God's oath."

John means "grace" or "God is gracious."

Gabriel means "strong man of God."

Zechariah's Prayer Is Answered

September, 6 BC

The Scripture related to this topic is Luke 1:5-25.

QUESTION 12

What do you deduce about Zechariah's character from the account in Luke 1:5-25? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. He was a moral man who lived righteously before God.
- B. He believed by faith that he and his wife would have a son.
- C. He was faithful in fulfilling his role as priest.
- D. He was understandably fearful when he saw the angel.
- E. He was skeptical of the angel's words because of his and his wife's advanced age.

QUESTION 13

From the textbooks section (at the end of this course), read chapter 1, "The Nativity," in Frederick Farrar's *The Life of Christ*. There is something spiritually significant about how the Lord Jesus entered this world. After reflecting upon the circumstances of Christ's birth described by Farrar, reflect upon what this says about you, your ministry, your relationships with your family and friends, and your aspirations for your work.

QUESTION 14

Read the following passages and compare the pregnancy of Elizabeth to that of several barren women in the Old Testament. Which of these comparisons are true? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Genesis 18:10-15; 21:1-7—Sarah and Abraham waited a long time for Isaac.
- B. Judges 13:2-5—Both Sarah and Samson's mother were given angelic instructions.
- C. Genesis 30:22-24—Rachel waited a long time for Joseph, as did Samson's mother who prayed a long time for a son.
- D. 1 Samuel 1:1-20—The similarities involve waiting, angelic or priestly contact, prayer, and faith.

Topic 6: An Angel's Message to a Virgin

March, 5 BC

About 675 years before Jesus was born, a prophet named Isaiah predicted the virgin birth of Jesus Christ (Isa 7:14).

Have you ever heard a comment like the one I overheard recently in a discussion with a person who claimed to be a Christian: "The important thing to me about Jesus was his teachings. Whether or not many of the historical events in the gospels actually occurred, I really don't care. It has no effect on my life. For example, who cares if Jesus was really born of a virgin? It seems impossible to me and it is not important to my faith?" But is it unimportant?

The Scripture related to this topic is Luke 1:26-38.

The name Gabriel is one of only three names given to angels in the Scriptures.

-Gabriel (Lk 1:19, 26)

-Michael (Dan 10:13)

-Lucifer, which means “O, shining one” or “Morning Star” (Isa 14:12)

The promise to Mary was a far more wonderful promise than that which had come to Zechariah, not only because of the greater glory of the promised Son, but also because of the mystery of His birth. The child was to have no human father, but was to be produced by the power of the Holy Spirit.

QUESTION 15

In what ways was Mary’s question to the angel Gabriel different from the doubt of Zechariah? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Zechariah asked for a sign, but Mary asked for understanding.
- B. The angel’s different responses show that he discerned a difference between the questions of Zechariah and Mary.
- C. Mary doubted like Zechariah, but the angel overlooked it.
- D. Mary clearly understood that Jesus was God.

During the second visitation by Gabriel, despite the strangeness of the promise, there was no unbelief as in the case of Zechariah. In Luke 1:38 Mary responded, “Look now, I am a woman servant of the Lord; let this happen to me according to your word.”

QUESTION 16

Consider the truth of the following statement: “Without the Virgin Birth, Jesus would have been unqualified to be our Savior.” As you think about this, read Romans 5:12-21 and the article “The Virgin Birth (of Jesus Christ)” (at the end of this lesson). According to the writer, what were the results of the Virgin Birth and why are those results significant in your life? Record your thoughts in your Life Notebook.

QUESTION 17

According to the article on the virgin birth, the Hebrew word *almah* always refers to an unmarried woman. *True or False?*

QUESTION 18

The prophecy of the Virgin Birth in Isaiah 7:14 is one of the most significant predictions regarding the Messiah in the Old Testament. Matthew quotes Isaiah as a prediction of the Virgin Birth of Jesus (Mt 1:22). Yet, as one reads the prediction some have concluded (incorrectly) that the prediction is not about a future messiah, and is not a prediction of a virgin birth. Rather it refers to a prediction of a son to be born as a sign in Isaiah’s time (709–722 BC). Open your Bible to Isaiah 7:14 and then read along in your Bible with the discussion in the article the “Prophecy of the Virgin Birth” (found at the end of this lesson).

Open your Life Notebook and reflect upon the following questions. What is the main thesis of the writer of this article regarding the prophecy in Isaiah 7:14-16? How does he support his thesis? What are the weaknesses in his interpretation? Do you agree or disagree with the author? Why or why not? Do you have an interpretation you prefer?

Lesson 1 Self Check

QUESTION 1

The famous prophecy of the Virgin Birth in Isaiah 7:14-16 is best explained by which of the following statements.

- A. The prophecy is directly messianic.
- B. The prophecy speaks of a child born during Isaiah's time which is a type of the future Child.
- C. The prophecy is about Isaiah's son, Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz.
- D. Immanuel and the Wonderful Counselor of Isaiah 9:6 are different individuals.

QUESTION 2

The word used for "virgin" (Hebrew *almah*) is sometimes used for a married woman as well as an unmarried woman. *True or False?*

QUESTION 3

Read these Scriptures: Matthew 1:1-17 and Luke 3:23-38. Why does Matthew trace the genealogy of Christ back to Abraham?

- A. To establish that Jesus was truly the owner of the property upon which He and His family lived
- B. To satisfy a Jewish cultural requirement for precise detail
- C. To show that Jesus was truly the Son of God
- D. To demonstrate that Jesus was in fact a descendant of Abraham and David, and was a rightful heir to the throne of Israel

QUESTION 4

The gospel of Matthew presents Jesus primarily as:

- A. The coming King predicted in the Old Testament
- B. The suffering servant who would die for the sins of the world
- C. The eternal Son of God
- D. The Son of Man

QUESTION 5

Why was David mentioned several times in Matthew's genealogy, while Luke mentioned him only once?

- A. Because Luke was written primarily for the Jews.
- B. Because Matthew was written primarily to the Jews, and he wanted to show that Jesus is descended from David.
- C. There was no particular reason; it was simply a stylistic variation.
- D. Because Matthew wanted to prove that Jesus is the divine Son of Man.

QUESTION 6

In the gospel of Mark, what were the three names that were used to describe the Lord Jesus Christ?

- A. King of Israel, Son of God, and Rabbi
- B. Christ Jesus, Son of man, and Lamb of God
- C. Jesus, Messiah, and Son of God
- D. Master, Lord, and King

QUESTION 7

The gospel of Luke emphasizes:

- A. The deity of Christ
- B. The humanity of Christ
- C. The prophetic fulfillment in the life of Christ
- D. The doctrines of the future

QUESTION 8

In Hebrew thought, the central idea of the *logos* was of an energy which pervades the universe and from which it develops. *True or False?*

QUESTION 9

The central purpose of the gospel of John was to:

- A. Present the full humanity of Christ
- B. Present Jesus as a true man
- C. Present Jesus as a suffering servant
- D. Present Jesus as one who works miracles, which authenticate His claim to deity

QUESTION 10

A possible reason for including Ruth in the genealogy of our Lord is:

- A. She illustrates that Gentiles are being brought back into fellowship with God.
- B. She is a supreme illustration of a Jewish believer trusting God.
- C. She illustrates the terrible blackness of sin.
- D. She shows that even adultery does not exclude one from the forgiveness of God.

Answers to Questions:

QUESTION 1:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Title</i>
Jesus	Yahweh saves
Messiah	Anointed One
Son of God	Equal with God

QUESTION 2: *Your answer*

QUESTION 3: *Your answer*

QUESTION 4: If we have received Christ, we become children of God.

QUESTION 5: *Your answer*

QUESTION 6:

D. To demonstrate that Jesus was in fact a descendant of Abraham and David, and was a rightful heir to the throne of Israel.

QUESTION 7:

B. Because Matthew was written primarily to the Jews and he wanted to show that Jesus is descended from David.

QUESTION 8:

<i>Woman</i>	<i>Concept That She Illustrates</i>
Tamar (Gen 38:6-29)	Illustrates the blackness of sin. Even sinners are included in the line of Christ. God's grace extends to all.
Rahab (Josh 2:1-21)	A supreme example of faith.
Ruth (Ruth 1:16-18)	The Gentiles are being brought back into fellowship with God.
Bathsheba (2 Sam 11:3-27)	Even adultery does not exclude one from being in the line.

QUESTION 9:

Luke was one among many who wrote accounts of the life of Christ. Luke carefully investigated the accuracy of the accounts written about Jesus. Luke wrote as accurately as he could and in chronological order. Luke's purpose was to preserve an account in which a Greek believer could have full confidence.

QUESTION 10: False

QUESTION 11:

<i>Gospel Name</i>	<i>Purpose</i>
Matthew	Establishes the genealogy of Jesus through David and Abraham, which proves Him to be the rightful heir to the throne of Israel. Audience: the Jews.
Mark	Begins his account with John the Baptist's preaching and baptism of Jesus and characterizes John the Baptist as the servant of the Lord. Audience: Gentiles in general, and the Romans specifically.
Luke	Shows Jesus' humanity from birth to ascension, revealing Him as the perfect Son of Man seeking to save the lost. Audience: the Greeks.
John	Traces Jesus' origin as the Son of God who took on human flesh to become God's Lamb, bringing redemption to all who believe in Him. Audience: the world (specifically for Gnostics who did not accept His fully God-fully man status).

QUESTION 12:

- A. He was a moral man who lived righteously before God.
- C. He was faithful in fulfilling his role as priest.
- D. He was understandably fearful when he saw the angel.
- E. He was skeptical of the angel's words because of his and his wife's advanced age.

QUESTION 13: *Your answer*

QUESTION 14:

- A. Genesis 18:10-15; 21:1-7—Sarah and Abraham waited a long time for Isaac.
- B. Judges 13:2-5—Both Sarah and Samson's mother were given angelic instructions.
- C. Genesis 30:22-24—Rachel waited a long time for Joseph, as did Samson's mother who prayed a long time for a son.
- D. 1 Samuel 1:1-20—The similarities involve waiting, angelic or priestly contact, prayer, and faith.

QUESTION 15:

- A. Zechariah asked for a sign, but Mary asked for understanding.
- B. The angel's different responses show that he discerned a difference between the questions of Zechariah and Mary.

QUESTION 16: *Your answer*

QUESTION 17: True

QUESTION 18: *Your answer*

Lesson 1 Self Check Answers:

QUESTION 1:

A. The prophecy is directly messianic.

QUESTION 2: True

QUESTION 3:

D. To demonstrate that Jesus was in fact a descendant of Abraham and David and was a rightful heir to the throne of Israel.

QUESTION 4:

A. The coming King predicted in the Old Testament.

QUESTION 5:

B. Because Matthew was written primarily to the Jews and he wanted to show that Jesus is descended from David.

QUESTION 6:

C. Jesus, Messiah, and Son of God

QUESTION 7:

B. The humanity of Christ

QUESTION 8: False

QUESTION 9:

D. Present Jesus as one who works miracles, which authenticate His claim to deity.

QUESTION 10:

A. She illustrates that Gentiles are being brought back into fellowship with God.

Lesson 1 Notes

Bath-sheba

Bath-sheba was the daughter of Eliam (2 Sam 11:3) or Ammiel (1 Chr 3:5); both names have the same meaning. She was the beautiful wife of Uriah the Hittite, and because of her beauty was forced by David to commit adultery (2 Sam 11:2-5; Ps 51). Her husband Uriah was treacherously killed by the order of David (2 Sam 11:6-16). After the death of her husband, David made her his wife and she lived with him in the palace (2 Sam 11:27). Four sons sprang from this marriage (2 Sam 5:14; 1 Chr 3:5) after the first child had died (2 Sam 12:14-19). With the help of the prophet Nathan, she stops the usurpation of Adonijah to his father David's throne and craftily secures the throne for her son Solomon (1 Kgs 1:11-35). Later Adonijah succeeds in deceiving Bath-sheba, but his plan is frustrated by the king (1 Kgs 2:13-25). According to Jewish tradition, Proverbs 31 was written by Solomon in memory of his mother. In the genealogy of Jesus (Mt 1:6) Bath-sheba is mentioned as the former wife of Uriah and the mother of Solomon by David.

Breslich, Arthur L. "Bath-Sheba," *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*. Edited by James Orr. Blue Letter Bible. 1913. 5 May 2003.

Ruth

The name Ruth is found in the Old Testament only in the book which is so entitled. Her name means, perhaps, "comrade," "companion" (feminine; compare Ex 11:2, "every woman of her neighbor").

The book of Ruth details the history of the one decisive episode owing to which Ruth became an ancestress of David and of the royal house of Judah. From this point of view its peculiar interest lies in the close friendship or alliance between Israel and Moab, which rendered such a connection possible. Not improbably also there is an allusion to this in the name itself.

The history lies in the period of the Judges (Ruth 1:1), at the close of a great famine in the land of Israel. Elimelech, a native of Bethlehem, had, with his wife Naomi and two sons, taken refuge in Moab from the famine. There, after an interval of time which is not more precisely defined, he died (Ruth 1:3), and his two sons, having married women of Moab, in the course of a further ten years also died, and left Orpah and Ruth widows (Ruth 1:5). Naomi then decided to return to Palestine, and her two daughters-in-law accompanied her on her way (Ruth 1:7). Orpah, however, turned back and only Ruth remained with Naomi, journeying with her to Bethlehem, where they arrived "in the beginning of barley harvest" (Ruth 1:22). The piety and fidelity of Ruth are thus early exhibited in the course of the narrative, in that she refused to abandon her mother-in-law, although three times exhorted to do so by Naomi herself, on account of Naomi's own great age and the better prospects for Ruth in her own country. Orpah yielded to persuasion and returned to Moab, but Ruth remained with Naomi.

At Bethlehem Ruth employed herself in gleaning in the field during the harvest and was noticed by Boaz, the owner of the field and a near kinsman of her father-in-law Elimelech. Boaz gave her permission to glean as long as the harvest continued, and told her that he had heard of her filial conduct toward her mother-in-law. Moreover, he directed the reapers to make intentional provision for her by dropping in her way grain from their bundles (Ruth 2:15-16). She was thus

able to return to Naomi in the evening with a whole ephah of barley (Ruth 2:17). In answer to questioning she explained that her success in gleaning was due to the goodwill of Boaz and the orders that he had given. She remained accordingly and gleaned with his maidens throughout the barley and wheat harvest, making her home with her mother-in-law (Ruth 2:23). Naomi was anxious for the remarriage of Ruth, both for her sake and to secure compliance with the usage and law of Israel; Naomi sent her to Boaz to recall to him his duty as near kinsman of her late husband Elimelech (Ruth 3:1-2). Boaz acknowledged the claim and promised to take Ruth in marriage, failing fulfillment of the legal duty of another whose relationship was nearer than that of Boaz himself (Ruth 3:8-13). Naomi was confident that Boaz would fulfill his promise and advised Ruth to wait in patience.

Boaz then adopted the customary and legal measures to obtain a decision. He summoned the near kinsman before ten elders at the gate of the city, related to him the circumstances of Naomi's return, with her desire that Ruth should be married and settled with her father-in-law's land as her marriage-portion, and called upon him to declare his intention to marry her.

Geden, A. S. "Ruth," *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*. Edited by James Orr. Blue Letter Bible. 1913. 5 May 2003.

Rahab

She is called a "harlot" in Hebrews 11:31 and James 2:25.

The two spies sent by Joshua from Shittim came into her house and lodged there (Josh 2:1). She refused to betray them to the king of Jericho, and when he demanded them, she hid them on the roof of her house with stalks of flax that she had laid in order to dry. She pretended that they had escaped before the shutting of the gate, and threw their pursuers off their track. She then told the spies of the fear that the coming of the Israelites had caused in the minds of the Canaanites—"Our hearts did melt...for the LORD your God, he is God in heaven above, and on earth beneath" (Josh 2:11, KJV)—and asked that the men promise to spare her father, mother, brothers and sisters, and all that they had.

They promised her to spare them provided they would remain in her house and provided she would keep their business secret. Thereupon she let them down by a cord through the window, her house being built upon the town wall, and gave them directions to make good their escape (Josh 2:1-24). True to their promise, the Israelites under Joshua spared Rahab and her family (Josh 6:16).

Isaacs, Nathan. "Rahab," *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*. Edited by James Orr. Blue Letter Bible. 1913. 5 May 2003.

Lesson 1 Articles

Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ: The Founder of the Christian religion; the promised Messiah and Savior of the world; the Lord and Head of the Christian church.

The Names

1. Jesus

(*Jesus*) is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew “Joshua” which means “Yahweh is salvation.”

2. Christ

(*Christos*) is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew “Messiah”; compare in the New Testament (Jn 1:41; 4:25, “Messiah”), meaning “anointed.”

Messiah

1. The Messianic King

The chief element in the conception of the Messiah in the Old Testament is that of the king. The passage on which the idea of the Messianic king who would rule in righteousness and attain universal dominion was founded is Nathan’s oracle to David in 2 Samuel 7:11-16. In contrast to Saul, from whom the kingdom had passed away, David would never want a descendant to sit on the throne of Israel. How strong an impression this promise of the perpetuity of his royal house had.

A similar description of the Messianic king is given by Isaiah’s younger contemporary (Mic 5:2-5), who emphasizes the humble origin of the extraordinary ruler of the future, who shall spring from the Davidic house, while his reference to her who is to bear him confirms the interpretation which regards the virgin in Isaiah as the mother of the Messiah.

By the great prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel, the hope of a Davidic ruler is kept before the people. By Jeremiah the Messiah is called the “righteous Branch” who is to be raised unto David and be called “Yahweh (is) our righteousness,” that is, Yahweh as the one making righteous dwells in him (Jer 23:5-6; compare Jer 30:9). In Ezekiel he is alluded to as the coming one “whose right it is” (Ezk 21:27), and as Yahweh’s “servant David” who shall be “prince” or “king” forever over a reunited people (Ezk 34:23 f; 37:24).

2. Servant of YAHWEH

The bitter experiences of the nation during the Exile originated a new conception, Messianic in the deepest sense, the Servant of Yahweh (Isa 40–66; chiefly Isa 41:8; 42:1-7, 19; 43:8, 10; 44:1, 21; 49:3-6; 50:4-9; 52:13-53

The Messiah in the New Testament

To the prevalence of the Messianic hope among the Jews in the time of Christ the Gospel records bear ample testimony. We see from the question of the Baptist that “the coming one” was expected (Mt 11:3 and parallel), while the people wondered whether John himself were the Christ (Lk 3:15).

The Messiah as King

In the popular conception the Messiah was chiefly the royal son of David who would bring victory and prosperity to the Jewish nation and set up His throne in Jerusalem. In this capacity the multitude hailed Jesus on His entry into the capital (Mt 21:9 and parallel); to the Pharisees also the Messiah was the son of David (Mt 22:42). It would seem that apocalyptic elements mingled with the national expectation, for it was supposed that the Messiah would come forth suddenly from concealment and attest Himself by miracles (Jn 7:27, 31).

The Title “Son of God”

It cannot be doubted that the “Son of God” was used as a Messianic title by the Jews in the time of our Lord. The high priest in the presence of the Sanhedrin recognized it as such (Mt 26:63). It was applied also in its official sense to Jesus by His disciples: John the Baptist (Jn 1:34), Nathaniel (Jn 1:49), Mary (Jn 11:27), Peter (Mt 16:16, though not in parallel). This Messianic use was based on Psalm 2:7; compare 2 Samuel 7:14. The title as given to Jesus by Peter in his confession, “the Son of the living God,” is suggestive of something higher than a mere official dignity, although its full significance in the unique sense in which Jesus claimed it could scarcely have been apprehended by the disciples till after His resurrection.

“The Son of Man”

But he sought chiefly to secure the acceptance of Himself in all His lowliness as the true Messianic king by His later use of His self-designation as the “Son of Man.” While “Son of Man” in Aramaic, *bar nasha*, may mean simply “man,” an examination of the chief passages in which the title occurs shows that Jesus applied it to Himself in a unique sense. That He had the passage in Daniel in His mind is evident from the phrases He employs in describing His future coming (Mk 8:38; 13:26 and parallel; Mk 14:62). By this apocalyptic use of the title He put forward much more clearly His claim to be the Messiah of national expectation who would come in heavenly glory. But He used the title also to announce the tragic destiny that awaited Him (Mk 8:31). This He could do without any contradiction, as He regarded His death as the beginning of His Messianic reign. And those passages in which He refers to the Son of Man giving His life a ransom “for many” (Mt 20:28 and parallel) and going “as it is written of him” (Mt 26:24 and parallel), as well as Lk 22:37, indicate that He interpreted Isaiah 53 of Himself in His Messianic character. By His death He would complete His Messianic work and inaugurate the kingdom of God. Thus, by the help of the title “Son of Man” Jesus sought, toward the close of His ministry, to explain the seeming contradiction between His earthly life and the glory of His Messianic kingship.

Crichton, James. “Messiah,” *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*. Edited by James Orr. Blue Letter Bible. 1913. 5 May 2003.

Logos

The Jewish Background of the Term

Recently more attention has been given to Jewish sources as a background for John's use of *logos* in his gospel prologue. It is doubtful the earlier idea that the *logos* was related to the Greek philosophical ideas of reason is accurate. A Jewish fisherman would have known nothing of this.

The Hebrew word for "word" is *memra*. It had several connotations that would have been immediately obvious to Palestinian fishermen.

1. The *Memra* was the Creator (Ps 33:6).
2. The *Memra* was God himself. In a Jewish commentary, for example, Genesis 39:21 is translated "The *Memra* was with Joseph in prison."
3. In Psalm 110 Jehovah addresses the first verse to the *Memra*. The *Memra* is the angel that destroyed the first-born of Egypt, and it was the *Memra* that led the Israelites in the cloudy pillar .
4. The *Memra* was divine wisdom (Prov 8:22-31).
5. The *Memra* was an intermediary for God. For example, in Exodus 19:17: "And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God" (NASB). The Palestinian Targum reads, "to meet the Word (*memra*) of God."
6. The *Memra* is the communication from God. The phrase "The Word (*memra*) of the Lord" occurs throughout the Old Testament (Ex 12:42).
7. The *Memra* was an instrument of judgment (Hos 6:5).
8. The *Memra* was an agent of healing (Ps 107:20).

In the Prologue of John's Gospel

Here the author makes three distinct affirmations:

1. "In the beginning was the Word."

The evangelist carries back his history of our Lord to a point prior to all temporal things. Nothing is said of the origin of the world. As in Genesis 1:1, so here there is only implied that the [*Logos*] was existent when the world began to be. When as yet nothing was, the [*Logos*] was. Though the eternal preexistence of the Word is not actually stated, it is implied.

2. "The Word was with God."

Here His personal existence is more specifically defined. He stands distinct from, yet in eternal fellowship with, God. The preposition [*pros*] (*bei*, Luther) expresses beyond the fact of coexistence that of perpetual intercommunion. John would guard against the idea of mere self-contemplation on the one hand, and entire independence on the other. It is union, not fusion.

3. "The Word was God."

He is not merely related eternally, but actually identical in essence with God. The notion of inferiority is emphatically excluded and the true Deity of the Word affirmed. In these three propositions we ascend from His eternal existence to His distinct personality and thence to His

substantial Godhead. All that God is the *Logos* is: Identity, difference, communion are the three phases of the Divine relationship.

The *Logos* is word as well as thought, and therefore there is suggested the further idea of communicativeness. Of this self-communication the evangelist mentions two phases—creation and revelation. The Word unveils Himself through the mediation of objects of sense and also manifests Himself directly. Hence, in this section of the prologue (Jn 1:3-5) a threefold division also occurs.

- a. He is the Creator of the visible universe. “All things were made through him”—a phrase which describes the [*Logos*] as the organ of the entire creative activity of God and excludes the idea favored by Plato and Philo that God was only the architect who molded into cosmos previously existing matter.
- b. The [*Logos*] is also the source of the intellectual, moral, and spiritual life of man. “In him was life; and the life was the light of men.” He is the light as well as the life—the fountain of all the manifold forms of being and thought in and by whom all created things subsist, and from whom all derive illumination (compare 1 Jn 1:1-3; also Col 1:17). But inasmuch as the higher phases of intelligent life involve freedom, the Divine Light, though perfect and undiminished in itself, was not comprehended by a world which chose darkness rather than light (Jn 1:5, 11).
- c. The climax of divine revelation is expressed in the statement, “The Word became flesh,” which implies on the one hand the reality of Christ’s humanity, and, on the other, the voluntariness of His incarnation, but excludes the notion that in becoming man the [*Logos*] ceased to be God. Though clothed in flesh, the [*Logos*] continues to be the self-manifesting God, and retains, even in human form, the character of the Eternal One. In this third phase is embodied the highest manifestation of the Godhead. In physical creation the power of God is revealed. In the bestowal of light to mankind His wisdom is chiefly manifested. But in the third especially is His love unveiled. All the perfections of the Deity are focused and made visible in Christ—the “glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (Jn 1:14, KJV).

Thus the Word reveals the divine essence. The Incarnation makes the life, the light and the love which are eternally present in God manifest to men. As they meet in God, so they meet in Christ. This is the glory which the disciples beheld; the truth to which the Baptist bore witness (Jn 1:7); the fullness whereof His apostles received (Jn 1:16); the entire body of grace and truth by which the Word gives to men the power to become the sons of God.

Alexander, Archibald. “Logos,” *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*. Edited by James Orr. Blue Letter Bible. 1913. 5 May 2003.

Prophecy of the Virgin Birth

In Isaiah 7:14 we read one of the most amazing predictions of the birth of Christ in the Old Testament. We are told in this passage that when Immanuel comes, he will be born of a virgin.

However, this passage has often been very difficult to interpret because on the surface the birth predicted by Isaiah is the birth of a son of Isaiah who would be born shortly after the prediction was made.

Let's look at the passage in more detail:

Background

The passage describes an event that occurred during the reign of Ahaz, when Isaiah was a prophet (about 734–722 BC). Ahaz is an evil unbelieving King. He faces an invasion from Rezin, the King of Aram, and Pekah, the king of Israel (the Northern Kingdom).

The Lord sent Isaiah to Ahaz with a word of encouragement saying that if Ahaz will trust in Yahweh, he has nothing to fear.

Ahaz Promised a Sign

As a means of strengthening his faith, **Ahaz** was told to **ask the Lord...for a sign**, an attesting miracle that would confirm God's word. The king could choose any miraculous work he wished.

But **Ahaz** refused to request a sign, saying he would **not...test** God (see Deut 6:16). This answer sounded pious but probably the way he said it showed he did not believe Isaiah.

Though Ahaz refused to request **a sign** that would have confirmed the truth of Isaiah's message, the prophet said God would **give** him one anyway. The sign was to be a boy named **Immanuel**. Three elements pertain to the sign:

The boy would be born of a **virgin** (v. 14).

He would be raised in a time of national calamity (v. 15; on the **curds and honey**).

In a time period of less than it would take for this son to mature, the two-king alliance against Ahaz would be broken (v. 16).

Prophecy

“Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel. He will eat curds and honey at the time He knows *enough* to refuse evil and choose good. For before the boy will know *enough* to refuse evil and choose good, the land whose two kings you dread will be forsaken” (Isa 7:14-16, NASB).

As we explain this passage, it will be necessary to clarify some issues of how it is translated. Let's look at each phrase, translate it from Hebrew and explain it. Then we will suggest a complete translation to follow

The word “Immanuel” literally means “God with us.” A natural reading of the passage would lead us to expect that the presence of God is to be seen in the birth of the Child Himself. The period from infancy to maturity (about twenty years) of the child is made the measure of time that would elapse until the two enemies are removed.

It seems best, then, to apply the name Immanuel to the Child Himself. In His birth the presence of God is to be found. God has come to His people in a little child, that very child whom Isaiah later (Isa 9:6) names “Mighty God.” This interpretation is strengthened by the fact that Isaiah is seeking to dissuade men from trusting the Assyrian king. The nation’s help rests not in Assyria but in God. In this dark moment God is with His people. He is found in the birth of a child.

The Virgin

When the passage speaks of a “virgin,” the Hebrew word is (*almah*). This is the one word which is never applied (either in the Bible or in the other Near Eastern sources) to anyone but an unmarried woman. This unmarried woman might have been immoral, in which case the birth could hardly have been a sign. We are left then with the conclusion that the mother was a good woman and yet unmarried; in other words, the birth was supernatural. It is the presence of this word *almah* which makes an application of the passage to some local birth difficult, if not impossible.

Therefore when Matthew quotes this in Matthew 1:22 and specifies “virgin” he uses the Greek word (*parthenos*) which can only mean virgin, not young woman.

The birth of Immanuel is called a “sign.”

Knowing Good from Evil

In the next verses, Isaiah 7:15-16, (NASB), His childhood and arrival at maturity are described.

“He will eat curds and honey at the time He knows *enough* to refuse evil and choose good. For before the boy will know *enough* to refuse evil and choose good, the land whose two kings you dread will be forsaken.”

Why are we told that He will eat sour milk and honey? Elsewhere in the Bible this phrase is often used for a time in which a person or the nation of Israel is on a restrictive diet for the purposes of discipline (see Deut 8:3, for example). There we have a similar phrase. They would be on a restrictive diet of manna *in order that you may know that not by bread alone does man live* (NASB).

We learn from this that Immanuel will be born during a time of judgment on the nation and He will go through a period of learning to know good from evil, that is, arrive at maturity through difficulty. This is of course, exactly what happened to Jesus. Israel was occupied by the Romans and Jesus was tempted in all ways as we are but He learned discipline through the things He suffered (Heb 2:10, 17-18; 5:8).

The phrase “*at that time*” should be translated “*in order that.*” In other words, Immanuel is not born at that time, but, whenever He is born, He will eat curds and honey “in order that” He may know how to refuse evil and choose good. Immanuel will go through a period of growth until He is an adult. At that time He will have learned through the disciplines of life to know good from evil. In the Old Testament this was considered to be twenty years (Deut 1:39). Therefore the prophecy says that a period of affliction (eating “curds and honey”) will come upon Judah for punishment and purification. During this period of suffering, Immanuel will emerge from youth and come to a disciplined maturity.

It is probably significant that Isaiah notes that Immanuel will function as one who knows enough to refuse evil and choose the good. In Scripture this is the characteristic of a ruler, specifically a judge. The ability to discern good from evil relates to the ability to judge rightly. Look up 1 Kings

3:9 and 2 Samuel 24:17 for examples. See also Isaiah 1:16; 5:20 where the rulers lacked this ability. Isaiah has already announced that there would be a restoration of judges and counselors in the coming kingdom (Isa 1:24-26), and Immanuel is the supreme example of this.

This points to the fact that Immanuel is not just any Davidic king; He is the one through whom the national promises would one day be fulfilled. He is none other than the Davidic Messiah, the wonderful counselor and the Mighty God (Isa 9:6-7).

The time of Immanuel is far beyond the period of the Assyrian invasion. Immanuel is the Messianic King who will rule in the future kingdom.

The next verse has caused difficulties:

“For before the boy will know *enough* to refuse evil and choose good, the land whose two kings you dread will be forsaken (Isaiah 7:16, NASB).

This could be interpreted to say that within twenty years of the life span of a boy then living, judgment will come upon Israel by the Assyrian invasion. Judah is dreading the two kings now, Pekah and Rezin, but within twenty years the whole nation will be forsaken, that is, destroyed. This happens not from Rezin and Pekah, but from the Assyrians. In fact, assuming this prophecy was made about 734 BC, Assyria did invade about twelve years later in 722 BC and destroy the Northern Kingdom.

However, as we will discuss below, Immanuel in this prophecy does not refer to a son then living, but to a future child (Isa 9:6), the Messiah, who when He matures will announced deliverance to Israel.

So the reference to the twenty-year time period of Immanuel’s growth to adulthood is probably to be understood in the following manner:

Before the time it will take for this future Immanuel to come to maturity, about twenty years, that is how much time will elapse before judgment comes upon the nation of Israel.

In other words the infancy of the divine child is a measure of the time that will elapse until Ahaz is freed from the fear of his two northern enemies (Isa 7:15-16). Ahaz rejects the sign of Immanuel, and turns to the king of Assyria. That king and his successors caused Judah’s downfall, but for the remnant there was given the promise of Immanuel, and in Immanuel they would find their hope and salvation.

How Does This Apply to Ahaz and the People of Isaiah’s Time?

But how would a prediction of a future Messiah give any assurance to Ahaz? The answer is “it probably wouldn’t.” Ahaz has already rejected any sign. God is bypassing Ahaz and making an announcement to the nation, “Regardless of what happens to Judah now, my promises are sure. One day Immanuel will come and bring in the final fulfillment of the promises to the nation.”

But how can one know that Messiah will come. To answer that, Isaiah gives another prophecy as a sign in Isaiah 8:1-8.

The Sign of Maher-shalal-hash-baz and Coming Assyrian Invasion

Then the Lord said to me, “Take for yourself a large tablet and write on it in ordinary letters: Swift is the booty, speedy is the prey. And I will take to Myself faithful witnesses for testimony, Uriah the priest and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah.” So I approached the prophetess, and she

conceived and gave birth to a son. Then the Lord said to me, “Name him Maher-shalal-hash-baz; for before the boy knows how to cry out ‘My father’ or ‘My mother,’ the wealth of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria will be carried away before the king of Assyria.” And again the Lord spoke to me further, saying, “Inasmuch as these people have rejected the gently flowing waters of Shiloah, And rejoice in Rezin and the son of Remaliah; now therefore, behold, the Lord is about to bring on them the strong and abundant waters of the Euphrates, even the king of Assyria and all his glory; And it will rise up over all its channels and go over all its banks. Then it will sweep on into Judah, it will overflow and pass through, it will reach even to the neck; and the spread of its wings will fill the breadth of your land, O Immanuel” (Isa 8:1-8).

Isaiah announces judgment from Assyria, which occurred about twelve years later in 722 BC. Because Ahaz had refused a sign from God regarding God’s protection against Rezin and Pekah and chose not to trust in God, God now gives a sign that Isaiah himself will have a son. This son’s name is not Immanuel, but *Maher-shalal-hash-baz*, which means “quick to the plunder, swift to the spoil.” Soldiers would shout these words to their comrades as they defeated and plundered their foes.

This son is not the predicted Immanuel. The sign this son foretells is that that the Assyrian invasion is very soon, before the boy can say “mommy” or “daddy,” (less than two years) and not twenty years away or less as the sign of Immanuel signified.

How is this a sign to the believing remnant within the nation? The fact that Isaiah’s prediction of the birth of *Maher-shalal-hash-baz* occurs as a sign of the coming invasion, and then the invasion happens shortly thereafter, proves that Isaiah is a prophet from God. Since he is a prophet, his prediction of the future Immanuel and hence of the future restoration of the nation can be trusted.

The Role and Nature of Immanuel

Isaiah 8:23–9:6 explains of the role and nature of Immanuel. The flow of this section is as follows:

8:16-18 –This describes a period in which God hides His face. Isaiah and his sons await the coming destruction from Assyria.

8:19-22 –As the invasion sweeps over the land, the people, in spite of Isaiah’s warning, prefer to seek mediums and consult the dead. Instead of trusting God, they curse Him.

9:1-7 –Yahweh promises a future day, the reign of Immanuel. He is the child of v. 6 and is the King, the counselor, and the prince of Peace. He establishes the Davidic kingdom as anticipated in Isaiah 7:14.

Son of God

Meanings in the Old Testament

While to the common mind “the Son of man” is a title designating the human side of our Lord’s person, “the Son of God” seems as obviously to indicate the divine side. In Scripture the title is bestowed on a variety of persons for a variety of reasons. First, it is applied to angels, as when in Job 2:1 it is said that “the sons of God came to present themselves before Yahweh”; they may be so called because they are the creatures of God’s hands or because, as spiritual beings, they resemble God, who is a spirit. Second, in Luke 3:38, it is applied to the first man; and from the parable of the Prodigal Son, it may be argued that it is applicable to all men. Third, it is applied to the Hebrew nation, as when, in Exodus 4:22, Yahweh says to Pharaoh, “Israel is my firstborn son,” the reason being that Israel was the object of Yahweh’s special love and gracious choice. Fourth, it is applied to the kings of Israel, as representatives of the chosen nation. Thus, in 2 Samuel 7:14, (NIV), Yahweh says of Solomon, “I will be his father, and he will be my son”; and, in Psalm 2:7, (KJV), the coronation of a king is announced in an oracle from heaven, which says, “Thou art my son; this day have I begotten thee.” Finally, in the New Testament, the title is applied to all saints, as in John 1:12, (NASB), “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe on His name.” What then does the term mean when it is applied to Jesus Christ?

Sense as Applied to Jesus

The term is applied to Jesus in the New Testament for several reasons.

Physical Reason

When we come to examine its use in the New Testament as applied by others to Jesus, the facts are far from simple, and it is not applied in a uniform sense. In Luke 1:35, the following reason for its use is given, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you: and for that reason the holy child shall be called the Son of God” (NASB). This is a physical reason, similar to the way the angels or the first man received the title; but it is rather curious that this point of view does not seem to be adopted elsewhere, unless it be in the exclamation of the centurion at the foot of the cross, “Truly this was the Son of God!” (Mt 27:54, NASB).

Equivalence to Messiah: Personal Sense Implied

1. Baptism, Temptation.

It has been contended, not without plausibility, that for Jesus Himself the source of the title may have been the employment of it in the voice from heaven at His baptism, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased” (Mt 3:17, NASB). By these words, it is usually assumed, He was designated as the Messiah; but in the adjective “beloved,” and the words “in whom I am well-pleased,” there is something personal, beyond the merely official recognition. The same may be said of the voice from heaven in the scene of the Transfiguration. Milton, in “Paradise Regained,” makes Satan become aware of the voice from heaven at the Baptism; but this is also implied in the terms with which he approached Him in the Temptation in the wilderness, “If you are the Son of God” (Mt 4:3); and, if this was the sense in which the prince of devils made use of the phrase,

we may conclude that in the mouths of the demoniacs who hailed Jesus by the same title it must have had the same meaning.

2. At Caesarea Philippi.

When, at Caesarea Philippi, Jesus evoked from the Twelve their great confession, this is given by two of the synoptists in the simple form, “Thou art the Christ” (Mk 8:29; Lk 9:20, KJV); but Matthew adds, “the Son of the living God” (Mt 16:16, KJV). It is frequently said that Hebrew parallelism compels us to regard these words as a mere equivalent for “Messiah.” But this is not the nature of parallelism, which generally includes in the second of the parallel terms something in excess of what is expressed in the first; it would be quite in accordance with the nature of parallelism if the second term supplied the reason for the first. That is to say, Jesus was the Messiah because He was the Son of God.

3. Trial before Sanhedrin.

There is another passage where it is frequently contended that “the Christ” and “the Son of God” must be exactly parallel, but a close examination suggests that the term “Son of God” is an even higher title than “the Christ.”

In the account of the ecclesiastical trial in the gospel of Luke, He is charged, “If thou art the Christ, tell us”; and, when He replies, “If I tell you, ye will not believe: and if I ask you, ye will not answer. But from henceforth shall the Son of man be seated at the right hand of the power of God.”

Then they all say, “Art thou then the Son of God?” and, when He replies in the affirmative, they require no further witness (Lk 22:67-71, KJV), Matthew informs us that the high priest then rent his garments, and they all agreed that He had spoken blasphemy and was worthy of death (Mt 26:65).

When Jesus affirmed this, their angry astonishment knew no bounds, and their sentence was immediate and capital. It may be questioned whether it was blasphemy merely to claim to be the Messiah; but it was rank and undeniable blasphemy to claim to be the Son of God. This recalls the statement in John 5:18, (KJV), “The Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God”; to which may be added (Jn 10:33, KJV), “The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not, but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God.”

Higher Use by Jesus Himself

Naturally it is with the words of Jesus Himself on this subject that we are most concerned. He speaks of God as His Father, and to the disciples He speaks of God as their Father; but He never speaks to them of God as their common Father: what He says is, “My Father and your Father” (Jn 20:17).

But the most direct equivalent of the title “Son of God” and “God” is made by Jesus himself in John 5:17, 18 where his opponents clearly understand that Jesus was claiming to be God because He called “God his own Father”. Here Jesus claims to be the very God of the Old Testament by calling himself the understood equivalent of “the Son of God.” (Adapted from Stalker, James. “Son of God, The” *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*. Edited by James Orr. Blue Letter Bible. 1913. 5 May 2003.)

The Four Gospels

Matthew

Introduction

The Old Testament prophets predicted and longed for the coming of the Anointed One who would enter history to bring redemption and deliverance. The first verse of Matthew (NKJV) announces that long-awaited event: “The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham.” Matthew provides the essential bridge between the Old and New Testaments. Through a carefully selected series of Old Testament quotations, Matthew documents Jesus Christ’s claim to be Messiah. Jesus possesses the credentials of Messiah, ministers in the predicted pattern of Messiah, preaches messages only Messiah could preach, and finally dies the death only Messiah could die.

Matthew is the gospel written by a Jew to Jews about a Jew. Matthew is the writer, his countrymen are the readers, and Jesus Christ is the subject. Matthew’s design is to present Jesus as the King of the Jews, the long-awaited Messiah. Through a carefully selected series of Old Testament quotations, Matthew documents Jesus Christ’s claim to be Messiah. His genealogy, baptism, messages, and miracles all point to the same inescapable conclusion: Christ is King. Even in His death, a seeming defeat is turned to victory by the Resurrection, and the message again echoes forth: the King of the Jews lives.

At an early date this gospel was given the title *Kata Matthaion*, “According to Matthew.” As this title suggests, other gospel accounts were known at that time (the word gospel was added later). Matthew (“Gift of the Lord”) was also surnamed Levi (Mk 2:14; Lk 5:27).

Purpose

Although Matthew has no purpose statement, it was clearly written to proclaim the words and works of Jesus Christ so that the reader could make an intelligent decision about Him. The opening genealogy reaches back into the Old Testament, and the many references to Christ’s fulfillment of specific prophecies show that Israel’s long-awaited Messiah had come. By quoting repeatedly from the Old Testament, Matthew validates Christ’s claims that He is, in fact, the prophesied Messiah (the Anointed One) of Israel. Everything about this King is unique: His miraculous birth and obscure yet carefully prophesied birthplace, His flight into Egypt, His announcement by John, His battle with Satan in the wilderness, all support the only possible conclusion—Jesus is the culmination of promises delivered by the prophets over a period of a thousand years. Thus God’s redemptive plan is alive and well, even after four hundred years of prophetic silence. Matthew was no doubt used by Jewish believers as an evangelistic tool to reach other Jews.

It is evident that Matthew also had an instructional purpose in writing his gospel. It systematically presents the claims, credentials, authority, ethical teachings, and theological teachings of the Lord Jesus. As such, it has been used as a teaching manual since the early years of the church.

Keys to Matthew

Key Word: Jesus the King

Key Verses (16:16-19; 28:18-20)—“Simon Peter answered and said, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’ Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And 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’” (16:16-19, NKJV).

“And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’ Amen” (28:18-20, NKJV).

Key Chapter (12)—The turning point of Matthew comes in the twelfth chapter when the Pharisees, acting as the leadership of the nation of Israel, formally reject Jesus Christ as the Messiah, saying that His power comes not from God but from Satan. Christ’s ministry changes immediately with His new teaching of parables, increased attention given to His disciples, and His repeated statement that His death is now near.

Christ in Matthew

Matthew presents Jesus as Israel’s promised messianic King (1:23; 2:2, 6; 3:17; 4:15-17; 21:5, 9; 22:44-45; 26:64; 27:11, 27-37). The phrase “the king of heaven” appears thirty-two times in Matthew but nowhere else in the New Testament. To show that Jesus fulfills the qualifications for the Messiah, Matthew uses more Old Testament quotations and allusions than any other book (almost 130). Often used in this gospel is the revealing phrase “that what was spoken through the prophet might be fulfilled,” which appears nine times in Matthew and not once in the other gospels. Jesus is the climax of the prophets (12:39-40; 13:13-15, 35; 17:5-13), “the Son of man” (24:30-31), the “servant” of the Lord (12:17-21), and the “son of David” (the Davidic references occur nine times in Matthew, but only six times in all of the other gospels).

Contribution to the Bible

The most striking feature of the first gospel is its Jewish emphasis. Matthew traces the genealogy of Jesus back to Abraham and frequently calls Him the son of David. He strongly stresses the fulfillment of messianic prophecies in the life of Christ. Also prominent are Jewish customs and traditions (without explanations), the place of the Mosaic Law in Jesus’ teaching, the “lost sheep of the house of Israel,” and the scribes and Pharisees. Matthew develops the theme of the kingdom because the Jewish reader would wonder why Jesus did not establish the promised kingdom if He was indeed Messiah.

The good news of this book reaches beyond the Jews to the rest of the world as well. Gentile women are found in Christ’s genealogy; Gentiles worshiped Him after His birth, “the field is the world” (13:38); and the Great Commission is to “make disciples of all the nations” (28:19; see also 8:11-12; 21:33-43).

Fully 60 percent of Matthew's 1,071 verses contain the spoken word of Jesus. Matthew paints a broad picture of Christ's life without going into the fine details that are often seen in the other gospels. The highly organized content of this gospel (discourses, miracles, parables, questions) is thematically arranged to stress the combined thrust of the Savior's words and work. Matthew builds his themes in such a way that they all join together in the climax of the book.

Mark

Mark, the shortest and simplest of the four gospels, gives a crisp and fast-moving account of the life of Christ. With few comments, Mark lets the narrative speak for itself as if tells the story of the Servant who is constantly on the move: preaching, healing, teaching, and finally dying for sinful men. A ministry that disciples, and finally culminates on the cross. There the Servant who "did not come to be served," makes the supreme sacrifice of servanthood by giving "his life a ransom for many" (10:45). And that pattern of selfless service becomes the model for those who follow in the Servant's steps.

Introduction and Title

The message of Mark's gospel is captured in a single verse: "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many" (10:45). Chapter by chapter, the book unfolds the dual focus of Christ's life: service and sacrifice.

Mark portrays Jesus as a Servant on the move, instantly responsive to the will of the Father. By preaching, teaching, and healing, He ministers to the needs of others even to the point of death. After the Resurrection, He commissions His followers to continue His work in His power—servants following in the steps of the perfect Servant.

The ancient title for this gospel was *Kata Markon*, "According to Mark." The author is best known by his Latin name, Marcus, but in Jewish circles he was called by his Hebrew name, John. Acts 12:12, 25; 15:37 refer to him as "John, whose surname was Mark."

Theme Purpose

Even in the first verse it is obvious that this gospel centers on the person and mission of the Son of God. Mark's theme is captured well in chapter 10, verse 45, because Jesus is portrayed in this book as a Servant and as the Redeemer of men (Phil 2:5-11). Like the other gospels, Mark is not a biography but a topical narrative. Mark juxtaposes Christ's teachings and works to show how they authenticate each other. Miracles are predominant in this book (there are eighteen), and they are used to demonstrate not only the power of Christ but also His compassion. Mark shows his Gentile readers how the Son of God was rejected by His own people, achieving ultimate victory through apparent defeat. There was no doubt an evangelistic purpose behind this gospel as Mark directed his words to a Gentile audience that knew little about Old Testament theology. This book may also have been used to instruct and encourage Roman believers.

Keys to Mark

Key Word: Jesus the Servant

Key Verses (10:43-45; 8:34-37)—"Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be

slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (10:43-45, NKJV).

“When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said, to them ‘Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel’s will save it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?’” (8:34-37, NKJV).

Key Chapter (8)—As in the book of Matthew, Mark’s gospel contains a pivotal chapter showing the change of emphasis in Jesus’ ministry. In Matthew it is chapter 12; in Mark it is chapter 8. The pivotal event lies in Peter’s confession, “You are the Christ.” That faith-inspired response triggers a new phase in both the content and the course of Jesus’ ministry. Until this point He has sought to validate His claims as Messiah. But now He begins to fortify His men for His forthcoming suffering and death at the hands of the religious leaders. Jesus’ steps begin to take Him daily closer to Jerusalem—the place where the Perfect Servant will demonstrate the full extent of His servanthood.

Christ in Mark

The Lord is presented as an active, compassionate, and obedient Servant who constantly ministers to the physical and spiritual needs of others. Because this is the story of a Servant, Mark omits Jesus’ ancestry and birth and moves right into His busy public ministry. The distinctive word of this book is *euthus*, translated “immediately” or “straightway,” and it appears more often in this compact gospel (forty-two times) than in the rest of the New Testament. Christ is constantly moving toward a goal that is hidden to almost all. Mark clearly shows the power and authority of this unique Servant, identifying Him as no less than the Son of God (1:1, 11; 3:11; 5:7; 9:7; 13:32; 14:61; 15:39).

Contribution to the Bible

Mark uses a simple and unvarnished style that is brisk and clear. The narrative moves vigorously and efficiently, very appropriate for a gospel that depicts the divine Servant at work. The quick pace and brevity of this book (it has only two extended discourses: 4:1-34; 13:3-37) reflect Mark’s emphasis on action more than words, making it suitable to the practical orientation of the Roman mind. Only eighteen out of Christ’s seventy parables are found in Mark—and some of these are only one sentence in length—but he lists over half of Christ’s thirty-five miracles, the highest proportion in the Gospels. Mark’s language is characterized by broken sentence structure, colloquialisms, and extra expressions that may reproduce Peter’s style of speaking. He uses the historic present tense 151 times to depict action in progress. The vivid descriptions in this book are often more detailed than the parallel accounts in Matthew and Luke. Mark records a wide range of emotional reactions: “they were all amazed” (1:27), “they feared exceedingly” (4:41, NKJV), “they laughed Him to scorn” (5:40, NKJV), “they took offense at Him” (6:3), “they were astonished beyond measure” (7:37, NKJV). Jesus’ own reactions of compassion, anger, grief, sorrow, warmth, distress, sympathy, and indignation are also very evident.

Luke

Luke, a gentile physician, builds his gospel narrative around a historical, chronological presentation of Jesus' life. Luke's is the longest and most comprehensive of the four gospels, presenting Jesus Christ as the Perfect Man who came to seek and save sinful men.

Introduction and Title

Luke, a physician, writes with the compassion and warmth of a family doctor as he carefully documents the perfect humanity of the Son of Man, Jesus Christ. Luke emphasizes Jesus' ancestry, birth, and early life before moving carefully and chronologically through His earthly ministry. Growing belief and growing opposition develop side by side. Those who believe are challenged to count the cost of discipleship. Those who oppose will not be satisfied until the Son of Man hangs lifeless on a cross. But the Resurrection insures that His purpose will be fulfilled: "to seek and to save the lost" (19:10).

Kata Loukon, "According to Luke," is the ancient title that was added to this gospel at a very early date. The Greek name Luke appears only three times in the New Testament (see Col 4:14; 2 Tim 4:11; Phm 24).

Theme and Purpose

Luke clearly states his purpose in the prologue of his gospel: "...to write to you an orderly account...that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed" (1:3-4, NKJV). Luke wanted to create an accurate, chronological, and comprehensive account of the unique life of Jesus the Christ to strengthen the faith of Gentile believers and stimulate saving faith among nonbelievers. Luke may also have had a secondary purpose of showing that Christianity was not a politically subversive sect. He records Pilate's acknowledgment of Christ's innocence three times (23:4, 14, 22). The theme of this gospel is the perfect Son of Man who came "to seek and to save the lost" (19:10).

Keys to Luke

Key Word Jesus the Son of Man

Key Verses (1:3-4; 19:10)—"It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus, that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed" (1:3-4, NKJV).

"For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost" (19:10, NKJV).

Key Chapter (15)—Captured in the three parables of the Lost Sheep, Lost Coin, and Lost Son is the crux of this gospel: that God through Christ has come to seek and to save that which was lost.

Christ in Luke

The humanity and compassion of Jesus are repeatedly stressed in Luke's gospel. Luke gives the most complete account of Christ's ancestry, birth, and development. He is the ideal Son of Man who identified with the sorrow and plight of sinful men in order to carry our sorrows and offer us the priceless gift of salvation. Jesus alone fulfills the Greek ideal of human perfection.

Contribution to the Bible

Luke, the longest book in the New Testament, is the most comprehensive and precise of the Gospels. The combined books of Luke and Acts constitute 28 percent of the New Testament, making Luke the most prolific of its contributors (2,138 verses; Paul wrote 2,033). Not only was this gospel carefully recorded and documented, but it was also written in the most refined Greek in the New Testament—only the epistle to the Hebrews is comparable. Luke’s large vocabulary and great breadth of expressions and constructions give his work a literary richness and beauty that make his gospel the favorite of many. Luke alone contains the four beautiful hymns commonly known as the Magnificat of Mary (1:46-55), the Benedictus of Zacharias (1:67-79), the Gloria in Excelsis of the heavenly host (2:14), and the Nunc Dimittis of Simeon (2:28-32).

Luke’s strong interest in people is evident from his portraits of Zacharias, the Good Samaritan, the Prodigal Son, the repentant tax gatherer, Zaccheus, and the two disciples on the Emmaus road. He also gives a special place to women (e.g., Elizabeth, Mary, Anna, Martha, Mary of Bethany) and children (e.g., the childhoods of John and Jesus). Other themes that are developed in Luke include prayer, the work of the Holy Spirit, poverty and wealth, medical topics, praise and thanksgiving, and domestic life. Luke’s gospel shows the universality of the Christian message, describing the Son of Man as the Savior for all men: Jews, Samaritans, Gentiles, poor and rich, respectable and despised, publicans and religious leaders.

John

The gospel of John is a gospel apart. Matthew, Mark, and Luke are called the Synoptic Gospels because, despite their individual emphases, they describe many of the same events in the life of Jesus of Nazareth. John draws mainly upon events and discourses not found in the other gospels to prove to his readers that Jesus is God in the flesh, the eternal Word come to earth, born to die as God’s sacrifice for human sin. Seven miraculous signs prove that “Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name” (20:31, NKJV). No finer gospel tract has ever been penned than John’s inspired account of Christ’s life, death, and resurrection.

Introduction and Title

Just as a coin has two sides, both valid, so Jesus Christ has two natures, both valid. Luke presents Christ in His humanity as the Son of Man; John portrays Him in His deity as the Son of God. John’s purpose is crystal clear: to set forth Christ in His deity in order to spark believing faith in his readers. John’s gospel is topical, not primarily chronological, and it revolves around seven miracles and seven “I am” statements of Christ.

Following an extended eyewitness description of the Upper Room meal and Discourse, John records events leading up to the Resurrection, the final climactic proof that Jesus is who He claims to be—the Son of God.

The title of the fourth gospel follows the same format as the titles of the Synoptic Gospels: *Kata Ioannem*, “According to John.” As with the others, the word “gospel” was later added. Ioannes is derived from the Hebrew name Johanan, “Yahweh Has Been Gracious.”

Theme and Purpose

The fourth Gospel has the clearest purpose statement in the Bible: “But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His

name” (20:31, NKJV). John selected the signs he used with the apologetic purpose of creating intellectual (“that you may believe”) and spiritual (“that believing you may have life”) conviction about the Son of God. The key verb in John is “believe” and requires both knowledge (8:32; 10:38) and volition (1:12; 3:19; 7:17).

The predominant theme of this gospel is the dual response of faith and unbelief in the person of Jesus Christ. Those who place their faith in the Son of God have eternal life, but those who reject Him are under the condemnation of God (3:36; 5:24-29; 10:27-29)—this is the basic issue. Chapter 1, verses 11-12, summarize the reactions of reception and rejection that are traced through the rest of the book. His rejection by His own people can be seen over and over in chapters 2–19 (“those who were His own did not receive Him”), but John also lists a number of men and women who believed in Him (“But as many as received Him...”).

Some of the key words in this thematic presentation of portions of Jesus’ life are truth, light, darkness, word, knowledge, belief, abide, love, world, witness, and judgment. This gospel is not only evangelistic, but it is also designed to build believers in their faith and understanding of spiritual principles. John was no doubt familiar with the Synoptic Gospels and created this fourth gospel as a spiritual supplement to the others. While the other gospels focus on the Galilean ministry, John practically avoids it and concentrates on the Judean ministry.

Keys to John

Key Word: Jesus the Son of God

Key Verses (1:11-13; 20:30-31)—“He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (1:11-13, NKJV).

“And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name” (20:30-31, NKJV).

Key Chapter (3)—John 3:16 is without doubt the most quoted and preached verse in all of Scripture. Captured in it is the gospel in its clearest and simplest form: that salvation is a gift of God and is obtainable only through belief. The conversation with Nicodemus and the testimony of John the Baptist provide the setting that clearly points out that being “born again” is the only way to find the “kingdom of God.”

Christ in John

This book presents the most powerful case in all the Bible for the deity of the incarnate Son of God. “A Man called Jesus” (9:11) is also “Christ, the Son of the living God” (6:69, NKJV). The deity of Christ can be seen in His seven “I am” statements: “I am the bread of life” (6:35, 48); “I am the light of the world” (8:12; 9:5); “I am the door” (10:7, 9); “I am the good shepherd” (10:11, 14); “I am the resurrection, and the life” (11:25); “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (14:6); “I am the true vine” (15:1-5). The seven signs (1–12) and the five witnesses (5:30-40) also point to His divine character. On certain occasions, Jesus equates Himself with the Old Testament “I AM,” or Yahweh (see 4:25-26; 8:24, 28, 58; 13:19; 18:5-6, 8). Some of the most crucial affirmations of His deity are found here (1:1; 8:58; 10:30; 14:9; 20:28).

The Word was God (1:1), but the Word also became flesh (1:14). The humanity of Jesus can be seen in His weariness (4:6), thirst (4:7), dependence (5:19), grief (11:35), troubled soul (12:27), and His anguish and death (19).

Contribution to the Bible

John is the most selective, topical, and theological of the Gospels. Its simple style and vocabulary somehow capture the most profound theological concepts, making the book itself reminiscent of the teaching techniques of Jesus. John uses simple linguistic constructions and avoids the complex sentence structure characteristic of the Pauline epistles. He is particularly adept at parallelism (e.g., light versus darkness), which is an important feature in Hebrew poetry. Unlike the Synoptics, John contains no parables; he uses allegories instead (e.g., the Good Shepherd in 10:1-18, and the True Vine in 15:1-6).

Although John is more fragmentary and selective in his use of material (21:25), the structure of his narratives and discourses is tighter and more coherent than that of the other gospels. The discourses in John are logical units that develop unified themes and the frequent sprinkling of questions and objections help to develop these themes. These discourses are interwoven with the narrative sections and John uses them to explain the spiritual significance of the “signs.” In this way the narratives of this gospel become symbolic. Of the eight miracles in chapters 1–12 and 21, only the feeding of the multitudes and the walking on the water are found in the Synoptics.

One of the unique features of John’s gospel is the highly theological prologue. It gives a matchless portrayal of the incarnation of the truth, life, and glory of the eternal God. John shows the relevance of the Living Word to all men (3:16; 10:16; 12:32).

Wilkinson, B. (1997, c1983). *Talk Thru the Bible* (electronic ed.). Logos Library Systems. (Page 318). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Virgin Birth (of Jesus Christ)

The Agent

It is clear from the New Testament that it was the Holy Spirit who caused Mary's conception. For example Matthew 1:20, (NKJV), states, "that which is conceived in her is of [Gk. *ek*] the Holy Spirit." Other terms are used such as "come upon" and "overshadow" (Lk 1:35, NKJV) to explain how the Holy Spirit caused Mary's conception.

In a similar way the Holy Spirit "came upon" the apostles at Pentecost (Acts 1:8), therefore it is preposterous to claim that the phrase is a euphemism for sexual intercourse.

To "overshadow" means that the power of the Spirit will rest upon her, so that she will bear a child who will be the Son of God. There is no divine "begetting," in fact we do not know how it happened. The main issue, however, is that Jesus did not have a human father. Joseph did not beget Jesus.

The Results

(1) Prior to the Virgin Birth, the Second Person of the Trinity did not have a human nature. At the conception, His human nature was created. Christ was already a person from eternity before the conception, what happened is that the Divine Person acquired a human nature.

(2) With the acquisition of a body, Jesus acquired a sinless human nature. Although He was born of a human mother, the conception by the Holy Spirit guaranteed the sinlessness of Christ. It is because of this that the importance of the Virgin Birth cannot be over emphasized. If Jesus had a human father, He would be no different than other man. Because of the Virgin Birth, the apostle John could say, "in him there is no sin." (1 Jn 3:5)

(3) Though fully God, He was also fully human; as such, He was tired (Jn 4:6); He became thirsty (Jn 4:7); He slept (Mt 8:24); He wept (Jn 11:35). He submitted to the voluntary limitations of humanity. During His thirty-five years on earth, he "emptied himself" of the independent exercise of His divine attributes and lived life as man, fully dependent upon the Father.

Is This a Fiction?

The men who incorporated this incident into the gospel narrative could not possibly have been blind to the importance of what they were doing (compare Lk 1:3). In view of these facts it would be well for the serious student to ask himself this question: "On the hypothesis of invention, what manner of men were they who fabricated these narratives and succeeded in foisting them upon the church so early as to dominate its earliest official records and control the very making of all its creeds?" It is clear that deliberate invention is the only alternative to historical credit. We may throw out of court as altogether inadmissible the hypothesis that the church as a whole, by a naive and semi-unconscious process, came to believe these stories and to accept them without criticism. Rumors always grow in the absence of known facts, especially where curiosity is keen. Absurd rumors multiply among the credulous. But no statement contrary to natural expectation was ever yet promulgated among people of even average intelligence without meeting the resistance of incredulity on the part of some individuals who wish to inquire, especially if means of verification are within reach. In this particular instance, the issue may be stated much more sharply.

That the word virgin, in the prophets, denotes an *untouched virgin*, sufficiently appears from the sense of the place, Isaiah 7:14. King Ahaz there was afraid, lest the enemies that were now upon him might destroy Jerusalem, and utterly consume the house of David. The Lord meets this fear by a signal and most remarkable promise, namely, “that sooner should a pure virgin bring forth a child, than the family of David perish.” And the promise yields a double comfort: namely, of Christ hereafter to be born of a *virgin*; and of their security from the imminent danger of the city and house of David. So that, although that prophecy, of a *virgin’s* bringing forth a son, should not be fulfilled till many hundreds of years after, yet, at that present time, when the prophecy was made, Ahaz had a certain and notable sign, that the house of David should be safe and secure from the danger that hung over it. As much as if the prophet had said, “Be not so troubled, O Ahaz; does it not seem an impossible thing to thee, and that never will happen, that *a pure virgin* should become a mother? But I tell thee, *a pure virgin* shall bring forth a son, before the house of David perish.”

Lightfoot, John. *Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud & Hebraica* (Hendrickson Publishers, 1989)..

Lesson 2: The Worship of the Newborn King

Lesson Introduction

The subject of this lesson is the incarnation of the Son of God and the amazing events surrounding His birth.

Mary's visit to Elizabeth is the subject of Topic 1. Upon learning that she is to be the bearer of the Messiah, she hurriedly runs to visit her cousin Elizabeth, Zechariah's wife. The two women rejoice in the role they are both to play in the most astounding event of the centuries.

Topic 2 discusses the "Benedictus." When Elizabeth's baby finally comes, Zechariah bursts into a hymn sometimes called the "Benedictus."

In Topic 3 an angel appears in a dream to Mary's husband, Joseph, assures him that what is happening to her is from the Lord, and instructs him to protect and marry her.

The birth of the Son of God is covered in Topic 4. Joseph had faithfully taken Mary as his wife, and they traveled to Bethlehem to register for a census. While in Bethlehem, Mary gave birth to Jesus, fulfilling prophecy. She laid Him in a manger because there was no room at the inn.

In Topic 5 Mary goes to the temple for her ceremonial purification after childbirth. A dear older couple, Simeon and Anna, after seeing the baby Jesus, testify by the Holy Spirit that this indeed is the one who would bring salvation to Israel.

Topic 6 introduces us to the visit of the wise men, approximately two years after Jesus was born. Following a star in the East, they traveled hundreds of miles to find the promised Messiah for the purpose of worshipping Him.

We study the escape of the Holy Family to Egypt in Topic 7. When the evil ruler, Herod the Great, heard from the wise men that Jesus would rule Israel, he sent soldiers to kill all the children in Bethlehem, the birthplace of Jesus. Warned by an angel to run away, Joseph obeyed and took his family to Egypt. After Herod died, they returned to Israel and raised Jesus in a town called Nazareth.

Finally in Topic 8, we consider Jesus' visit to Jerusalem at the time of the feast of the Passover. We see Him engaging the rabbis in biblical discussion and amazing them with His understanding.

This lesson is the story of the early days of Jesus, filled with expectation and danger, hope and faith, fulfillment and joy.

In the days of Caesar Augustus, God sent an angel to a virgin named Mary (see end-of-lesson article "Mary, the Virgin). She was engaged to Joseph (see note at end of lesson), a carpenter. The angel shocked Mary when he declared that by God's power, she would conceive before she was married or had any sexual contact with, and she would give birth to a son to be named Jesus. Time passed and when Joseph learned that Mary was pregnant, an angel instructed him to protect and marry her. Joseph faithfully took her as his wife, later traveling to Bethlehem to register for a census. While in Bethlehem, Mary gave birth to Jesus, fulfilling prophecy. She laid Him in a manger because there was no room at the inn. Shepherds visited Jesus in Bethlehem after their

ears heard the good news of great joy announced by an angel, “To you is born today in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord” (Lk 2:11). With the angel was “a multitude of the heavenly host... praising God and saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among people with whom he is pleased!’” (Lk 2:13-14). Those who were associated with our Lord’s birth were mostly humble and poor people. Even the scene of His birth was surrounded by poverty and difficult manual labor.

Before visiting Mary, Gabriel had appeared to a priest named Zechariah, whose name means “God remembers.” He and his wife, Elizabeth, were very old and had never been able to have children. Gabriel told Zechariah that they would have a son named John, which means “grace.” John would prepare the way of the Lord as the forerunner to Jesus. Mary visited her cousin Elizabeth in the sixth month of her pregnancy, and Elizabeth’s baby leaped for joy in her womb.

When Jesus was born, the world was unaware of the arrival of its Deliverer. But devout believers like Simeon and Anna were watching and waiting for the arrival of the Messiah, the Christ of Scripture. On the eighth day after Jesus’ birth, Joseph and Mary observed the Law of Moses by presenting Him in the temple for circumcision. Joseph named Him Jesus, just as the angel had instructed. The Law of Moses also required mothers to present an offering forty days after a son was born. As a result, Mary and Joseph went to Jerusalem to present this offering at the temple. A devout Jew named Simeon met Joseph’s family in the temple. The Holy Spirit had informed Simeon that he would see the Christ before he died. When Simeon saw Jesus, he blessed God and said aloud, “For my eyes have seen your salvation” (Lk 2:30). Joseph and Mary were amazed at the prophetic words spoken over Jesus. Anna was a very old widow and prophetess who never left the temple where she devoted her time to prayer and fasting. After Anna recognized Jesus, she spread the news of His birth to all the faithful coming to the temple, those looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

Later, wise men brought gifts to Jesus. Unfortunately, they told the evil king, Herod the Great, that Jesus was born the King of the Jews. So Herod, in his suspicion and fear, sent soldiers to kill all of the male infants in Bethlehem, the birthplace of Jesus. Warned by an angel to run away, Joseph obeyed and took his family to Egypt. After Herod died, they returned to Israel and raised Jesus in a town called Nazareth.

Lesson Outline

Topic 1: Two Women Rejoice

Mary Is Chosen

Mary Meets with Elizabeth

Topic 2: To Clear a Path for the Lord

The Naming of the Forerunner

John the Baptist Is Born

Topic 3: Call Him Jesus—An Angel Visits Joseph

Gabriel Appears

Joseph’s Dilemma

Topic 4: Good News of Great Joy

Jesus Is Born

Shepherds Come to Worship

- Topic 5: Simeon and Anna Testify
 - Jesus' Temple Presentation
 - Mary's and Joseph's Obedience
- Topic 6: Gifts for a King
- Topic 7: Escape to Egypt
- Topic 8: A Missing Child
- Topic 9: Matching Events
- Topic 10: Knowing, Being, Doing

Lesson Objectives

When you have completed this lesson, you will be able to:

- Describe Zechariah's importance and character and the character and ministry of John the Baptist
- Compare and contrast the special traits of faith stressed in Elizabeth's song and Mary's nativity hymn
- Compare and contrast the hymns of Zechariah and Mary and make application of them to your own life
- Identify several ways in which the Virgin Birth is emphasized in Matthew 1:18-25
- Recognize the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy in the birth of Jesus and in His early life which gives you confidence in the reliability of God's Word
- Explain the importance of the circumcision of Jesus and the importance of Anna and Simeon's recognition of Him as the Messiah
- Discuss the time of the wise men's arrival and their importance to the narrative
- Analyze Herod the Great's character
- Explain the disappearance of Jesus at age twelve and how this applies to your relationship with your family
- Apply the concepts learned in this lesson to your mind, character, and ministry

Topic 1: Two Women Rejoice

Mary Is Chosen

March, 5 BC

Soon after the angel's message, Mary realized that a miracle had taken place in her body; she was going to have a baby who had no earthly father. God had chosen her to be the mother of His Son, the Savior! But Mary faced a serious problem: Who would believe her claim to virginity? She was engaged to a good man, a carpenter named Joseph, but what would he think when he found out that she was pregnant? If he accused her of sexual misconduct, she could face the death penalty! What would she do?

Mary Meets with Elizabeth

March, 5 BC

It is striking that throughout the Gospel records, women play an extremely important part. Their role in the ministry of Jesus is all out of proportion to their role in the society at large. Jesus exalted women. Two of the most wonderful hymns of praise were sung by Jesus' mother and her cousin Elizabeth. Let's take a look at what these hymns say to us today.

The Scripture related to this topic is Luke 1:39-56.

When Mary went to Judea to visit her cousin Elizabeth, the wife of Zechariah, Elizabeth greeted Mary with a song she composed which we call the "Ave Maria." "Ave Maria" are the first two words of the song according to the Latin Vulgate translation; it means "Hail (or welcome) Mary."

In Judea Mary gave a glorious expression of her thanksgiving in the hymn she composed, the "Magnificat," named from its first words as written in the Latin translation of the Bible, meaning "it does magnify." Set to music today, the song begins, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior." Three months later Mary returned to her own home in Nazareth.

QUESTION 1

Identify which statements are true. (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Both women were encouraged when the baby leaped for joy in Elizabeth's womb.
- B. Mary and Elizabeth were encouraged by the fulfillment of the angel's predictions.
- C. Mary was encouraged by Elizabeth's words, which showed that someone understood her situation.
- D. Elizabeth was encouraged by knowing that the Messiah was coming soon.
- E. Mary stayed three months, a practical help to Elizabeth as the time grew near for John to be born.
- F. Both women must have had some knowledge of the Old Testament promises involved in the miraculous birth of their sons.

QUESTION 2

Elizabeth's song (Lk 1:42-45) makes it clear that she expressed her faith by immediately recognizing Mary's unborn child to be her "Lord." *True or False?*

QUESTION 3

Choose three things we learn from Mary's nativity hymn, the "Magnificat," found in Luke 1:46-55.

- A. She is thankful as she gives God praise and glory.
- B. Because Mary is sinless, she does not recognize her child as the Savior, nor does she express her need of a Savior.
- C. She is humble, recognizing that God has uniquely blessed her. She proclaims that God resists the proud and helps the humble.
- D. She sees her child as a fulfillment of the promise to Abraham which shows she has knowledge of the Old Testament Scriptures.
- E. She is embarrassed and ashamed because she is pregnant.

Topic 2: To Clear a Path for the Lord

The Naming of the Forerunner

June, 5 BC

When John was born, his relatives wanted to call him Zechariah after his father. When they came to the mute Zechariah to ask his son's name, he wrote, "His name is John" (Lk 1:63).

Immediately thereafter Zechariah was able to speak; he began blessing the Lord and prophesied concerning his son, saying, "You, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High" (Lk 1:76).

The name of Zechariah's song, "Benedictus," the third nativity hymn, is based upon the first words of Luke 1:68-79 in the Latin translation of the New Testament called the Vulgate.

Zechariah's hymn has similarities to and differences from the hymn of Mary.

John the Baptist Is Born

June, 5 BC

The hymns from the godly continue to pour forth as the Savior is about to be born. Zechariah's "Benedictus" is full of theological and practical significance. A comparison of how Zechariah praised God and how his mother praised Him is revealing and will be the subject of this topic.

Zechariah obeyed the angel he had initially failed to believe. The naming of John drew special attention to him because it was not a family name. The meaning of the name is "God is gracious" or "grace," and it was certainly appropriate for the forerunner of Jesus Christ.

The Scripture related to this topic is Luke 1:57-80.

QUESTION 4

Based upon your reading and comparison of Zechariah's "Benedictus" to Mary's "Magnificat," which of the following similarities were evident? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Both showed no knowledge of the Old Testament.
- B. Both praised God for salvation as a fulfillment of His covenant with Abraham.
- C. Both recognized Jesus as the Messiah.
- D. Both seemed to come from the higher classes of Jewish society.

QUESTION 5

Based upon your reading and comparison of Zechariah's "Benedictus" to Mary's "Magnificat," which of the following differences did you observe that dealt mainly with spiritual character? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Mary praised the Lord more for what He did for the poor and humble.
- B. Mary focused on the nation rather than the individual.
- C. Zechariah praised the Lord first for what He would do for the nation and then for His spiritual blessings of salvation.
- D. Zechariah illustrated amazing faith in accepting that Elizabeth would have a son.

QUESTION 6

How do the words of Mary's and Zechariah's songs encourage you to deepen your relationship with the Lord and/or expand your ministry? Open your Life Notebook, and record your answers as you reflect on each of the following:

I should be thankful for the provision of God's Son for my salvation.

I should be actively involved in reaching the poor and oppressed in my country with the message of Jesus.

I should study the Old Testament passages that predict the birth of Jesus.

I should study the connection between the promise to Abraham in Genesis 12 and the birth of Jesus Christ.

I should be concerned about my nation and share the message of Christ's coming with others.

Topic 3: Call Him Jesus—An Angel Visits Joseph

Gabriel Appears

December, 5 BC

Imagine that you are engaged to a beautiful young woman who suddenly announces that she is pregnant, even though you have had no sexual relations with her. How would you feel, and what would you do? We need to examine what Joseph did when he learned that Mary was pregnant.

We are told that Joseph was an honorable man (see note at end of lesson for more about him) who wanted to do the right thing; he did not want to embarrass Mary publicly. Also, if he had publicly

exposed her, her life would have been in danger for breaking a Mosaic law. While under great stress he planned how he would handle the situation: He would break the engagement quietly. It was during the time of his deliberation that an angel appeared to him in a dream (Mt 1:18-25).

Joseph's Dilemma

You can imagine how the young Joseph must have felt when he discovered that his wife was pregnant. How would you feel if during the engagement period, you discovered that your bride to be was pregnant and you knew it was not by you?

Gabriel's message to Joseph comes in the midst of a dilemma. He is to take Mary as his wife immediately; her pregnancy is of the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, her son will be named Jesus, for He shall be the Savior. According to Matthew, this is the fulfillment of Isaiah 7:14, and Jesus' other name would be Immanuel, meaning "God with us."

This message in a dream left Joseph with three choices:

Take Mary to the judges and have her stoned for premarital relations (Deut 22:23-24).

Take Mary to the judge and draw up a divorce document quietly (Deut 24:1).

Take Mary as his wife as the angel commanded (Mt 1:20).

The Scripture related to this topic is Matthew 1:18-25.

QUESTION 7

For what reasons did Joseph also need an angelic visit before Jesus' birth? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. The angel had to keep him from killing Mary.
- B. The angel came to frighten him into submission.
- C. The angel was a supernatural visitation that announced to Joseph the divine responsibility to care for Mary and the Child of God.
- D. The visit from the angel made it clear that this was not a conception through human contact.

QUESTION 8

Which of the following statements are correct? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Matthew detailed the plot of Joseph to get a divorce because of Mary's pregnancy.
- B. Matthew noted that Joseph and Mary did not have sexual intercourse until after Jesus' birth.
- C. Matthew did not refer to Isaiah 7:14 when he wrote Matthew 1:23.
- D. Matthew recorded Mary's response and carefully described Gabriel's declarations of the virgin birth.

Topic 4: Good News of Great Joy

December, 5 BC

Joseph and Mary lived in Nazareth (see note at end of lesson), a town in the northern part of Palestine, which was called Galilee. However, the promised Child/Messiah belonged to the lineage of David. To fulfill the prediction of Christ's birth, it was necessary for Him to be born in Bethlehem, a little town five miles south of Jerusalem where David himself had been born. (Read more about the area of Judea in the lesson notes.) God used an event in Roman political history to make this a reality (Lk 2:1-7). A decree had gone out from Augustus, the emperor at Rome, that the whole empire should be taxed as a basis for future taxation and military purposes. This enrollment or census seems to have been carried out in the kingdom of Herod the Great by the Jewish method, which took into account family relationships. So, although Joseph and Mary were living in Nazareth at the time, they traveled to Bethlehem, the home of Joseph's ancestors, to be enrolled. While they were in Bethlehem, the Savior was born. There was no room in the inn, so they sought shelter near the cattle stalls. The newborn baby was cradled in a manger (see notes at end of this lesson) or trough that was intended for cattle feed.

But as humble as the environment was for the newborn King, His birth was not without majesty (Lk 2:8-20). Shepherds, keeping watch in the fields by night, heard a large number of angels praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among people with whom He is pleased!" (Lk 2:14). The shepherds went then to investigate the sign that had been announced to them. It was a strange sight—Christ the Lord, the promised King, wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in a manger.

Jesus Is Born

It has often been said that fulfilled prophecies are the fingerprints of God. One of the most powerful arguments for the inspiration of the Scriptures are the many prophecies fulfilled in the life of Christ. Let's take a look at some of them which were fulfilled in connection with the birth narratives.

It was promised over and over again that the Messiah-Redeemer should be part of the kingly lineage of David whose family home was Bethlehem. Check 2 Samuel 7:12-16 and 1 Chronicles 17:11-14; 22:10 for promises to David fulfilled in the life of Christ. Joseph (see Mt 1:6-16) and Mary (see Lk 3:23-31) were both descendants of David through the ancestral line of the kings of Judah.

In 488 BC the prophet Micah made a precise prediction. He said, in Micah 5:2 (NIV):

"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times."

The birth of the Messiah was to occur in Bethlehem, but Mary lived in Nazareth. Furthermore, at the time of her pregnancy, a decree went out from Augustus Caesar saying everyone in the empire must enroll in the city where they lived for taxation. Rome was broke and needed money.

The Roman method of taxation required that each citizen was to go to the city in which he lived, his legal residence, and place his name on the tax roll.

However, in Palestine another method was followed. Individuals did not register in the place of the legal residence. Instead they registered in the place of the inheritance, or family residence. The family residence of Joseph and Mary was in Bethlehem.

For the first and last time in Roman history, Caesar permitted the Jews to use the Jewish method of registration for taxation. It was a political move in which Caesar hoped to placate the Jews and make tax collection by Roman Gentiles a bit easier to swallow.

The prophecy said that the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem. Had Augustus not made an exception this one time, the child would have been born in Nazareth.

But a number of other improbabilities also had to be overcome.

The census decree was sent out from Rome and delivered by ship. It was not unusual for such ships to be delayed because of weather. A slight delay and Jesus would have been born in Nazareth.

Often strong rains turned the Palestinian roads into mud. This could cause a week's delay of the message, and Jesus would have been born in Nazareth.

But the God who turns the hearts of kings, who governs the wind, and who sends the rain orchestrated all these improbabilities so that the prophecy would be fulfilled and the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem.

This should bring us all comfort in a world or life that seems out of control. The blessed controller of all things is fully in charge and is bringing everything together to accomplish His purpose among the nations, and His purpose in our lives.

The Scripture related to this topic is Luke 2:1-21.

Shepherds Come to Worship

December, 5 BC

The Scripture related to this topic is Luke 2:15-21.

QUESTION 9

Whose edict contributed to the fulfillment of the prophecies of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem?

- A. Herod the Great
- B. Augustus
- C. Tiberius
- D. Pilate

QUESTION 10

Why was Jesus' birth in Bethlehem rather than Nazareth significant to Israel?

- A. The prophecy in Micah 5:2 said that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, the city of David.
- B. It really didn't matter in what city Jesus was born as long as He was born in Israel.
- C. Bethlehem was a quiet village where Joseph could protect Mary and hide from the gossip that was in Nazareth.
- D. Isaiah 7:14 recorded a prophecy that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem.

Topic 5: Simeon and Anna Testify

February, 4 BC

Approximately forty days after Jesus was born, Joseph and Mary took Him to Jerusalem to be presented at the temple and to offer a sacrifice as the Old Testament law required. Jesus had already been circumcised in obedience to the Law of Moses, so the sacrifice was the next action required.

According to Leviticus 12:4-6, the following offerings were to be made for the mother's purification: a one-year-old lamb for a burnt offering, and a young pigeon or a turtledove for a sin offering. The law provided, however, that if the parents were too poor to bring a lamb (as Joseph and Mary were), a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons would be accepted: one for a burnt offering, the other for a sin offering.

One day when Simeon, a devout Jew, entered the temple, he saw a couple presenting their firstborn son before the priest (Lk 2:29-32). Then Simeon blessed the couple (Lk 2:34-35).

Jesus' Temple Presentation

February, 4 BC

Two godly people are now introduced, Simon and a prophetess named Anna. In many ways and through common people, Jesus was being announced as the Redeemer of the world and the long awaited King of the Jews. Yet, his parents were so poor they could not purchase a sacrifice when it came time to dedicate Him in the temple. What does all of this say about the ways of God vs. the ways of man?

The Scripture related to this topic is Luke 2:22-39.

Simeon prayed for God's blessing on Mary and Joseph (Lk 2:34-35). He revealed to Mary that Jesus would be responsible for bringing many people in Israel to the point of making an important moral decision. Some of them would reject Jesus as the Messiah and cause their own fall, while others would accept Him and therefore rise. Jesus would be a sign in the sense that He would exemplify the decision to obey God's will.

Mary's and Joseph's Obedience

QUESTION 11

Mary and Joseph were obedient to all the requirements of the Law of Moses regarding Jesus' birth. *True or False?*

According to Jewish law, the birth of a child rendered the mother ceremonially unclean for forty days. It was therefore required that Mary go to the temple on the forty-first day to be ceremonially purified by the priest.

This purification involved two things. First, the mother must offer a burnt sacrifice for her purification.

But, second, she must redeem her firstborn son from the priesthood. God had said that every firstborn child is His (Num 8:17), and, therefore, the parents "must redeem every firstborn son" (Num 18:15, NIV). This involved paying a redemption price to the sons of Aaron, who, representing God, "owned" the firstborn child. Only the sons of Aaron, the priests, were exempt from this requirement.

The purpose of this was to remind the Jews that all blessings, such as children, ultimately are owned by God and are only given as a gift to care for while we are on earth.

So Mary went up to Jerusalem and offered the burnt offering (Lk 2:24) for her purification. However, there is no record of her offering the redemption price to purchase her firstborn from the priesthood, even though Jesus was not a son of Aaron and therefore had to be redeemed.

The reason was that there was no relinquishing of God the Father's right to His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ was not redeemed from the priesthood because he is a priest of another order, the order of Melchizedek. This is a major emphasis in the book of Hebrews.

We now have a living High Priest who always makes intercession for us and is constantly bringing us before the throne of grace in His prayers.

QUESTION 12

What prophetic messages did Simeon make known about Jesus? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Simeon, a righteous and devout man not of Levitical ancestry, could prophesy about the Messiah when filled with the Holy Spirit.
- B. Simeon saw Jesus as a light to the Gentiles and a glory to Israel.
- C. Simeon predicted that Jesus would be either a stepping-stone or a stumbling block for many in Israel.
- D. The opposition that Jesus would face would become a sword to pierce the soul of Mary.

QUESTION 13

Anna, an elderly prophetess, would NOT be able to spread the news of Jesus' birth to all the faithful coming to the temple. *True or False?*

Topic 6: Gifts for a King

March, 4 BC

Forty days after the birth of Jesus, Joseph and Mary made the offering required by Old Testament law, while presenting the Christ Child, as a firstborn son, to the Lord in the temple at Jerusalem (Lk 2:22-38). Most Bible scholars believe that there was a break in time between verses 38 and 39 that allowed for the family to return to Bethlehem to receive the gifts presented by the wise men. Therefore, it appears that the Holy Family must have returned to Bethlehem, for it was at Bethlehem that gifts were presented by wise men from the East (Mt 2:1-12). The wise men had been guided to Bethlehem partly by a brilliant star that they had first seen in their own country and partly by their own studies and observations.

The wise men visited, as predicted, the birthplace of the Messiah (see Isa 60:6). Their visit showed that Jesus was acknowledged to be King even in His infancy. The wise men may have been advised in a dream of the future Jewish Messiah, just as they were told in a dream to leave Bethlehem by another way and not to return to Herod. The wise men may have been sufficiently acquainted with the Old Testament that they understood predictions of the Messiah. They may have received these revelations from believing Jews during the Diaspora (the relocation of the Jews).

Wise Men Visit Jesus

We are often under the impression that there were three wise men; however, Scripture does not tell us that. But why did they come and why are they so important to the birth narratives?

The Scripture related to this topic is Matthew 2:1-12.

The wise men, or magi, from the East were believed by some to be philosophers and astrologers. The term *magi* indicates that they belonged to a large and influential class which included men of noble birth and comprised much of the wealth and learning of their nation. Others were upright men who studied the indications of providence in nature and who were honored for their integrity and wisdom. The wise men who came to Jesus seemed to be of the latter character.

QUESTION 14

We do not know the exact number of wise men who visited Jerusalem and Bethlehem, but it must have been a large enough contingent to alert Herod and others in Jerusalem. *True or False?*

QUESTION 15

Read the end-of-lesson article, “Magi, the (“Wise Men”).” Through what ways might the wise men have known about the predicted King? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Having come from the East, the wise men may have read the prophecy of Balaam, the eastern prophet, who predicted the coming of the King of the Jews (Num 24:17).
- B. The wise men may have made a connection between Isaiah 14:12 and the sighting of a star, a figure for a king, in its ascendancy and then journeyed to Bethlehem to see the newborn “King of the Jews” (Mt 2:2).
- C. Astronomers tell us there was a confluence of planets which appeared in the heavens in 6 BC. This may have appeared as a star.
- D. The wise men probably received a vision.

Topic 7: Escape to Egypt

March, 4 BC through AD 8

The arrival of the magi became general knowledge throughout Jerusalem. The news of their visit created excitement among the people and reached the ears of King Herod. The devious king was terrified at the prospect of a rival. Already a large number of murders had been attributed to Herod's paranoia about keeping his throne. One more would not matter. As an Edomite, Herod the Great was hated by the Jewish people over whom he ruled. His only security was the favor of Rome; beyond that, he feared any possibility of a threat to his rule. Herod may have suspected the priests of plotting with the wise men to excite a popular revolt that would unseat him from power. He concealed his mistrust, however, and calling the chief priests and the scribes, Herod questioned them about the teaching of their Scriptures regarding the birthplace of the Messiah.

The wise men had not discerned Herod's plan to kill Jesus. After seeing and honoring Jesus, they prepared to return to Jerusalem, intending to report to Herod about their success. But in a dream they received a divine message to have no further communication with Herod. Avoiding Jerusalem, they set out for their own country by another route.

Similarly, Joseph received a warning in a dream to flee to Egypt with Mary and the Child (Mt 2:13-15). Joseph obeyed, traveling by night for greater security.

Herod waited impatiently in Jerusalem for the return of the wise men. As time passed and they did not appear, his suspicions were aroused. He was maddened at the thought. Herod's craftiness had failed, so he tried another plan. He would make an example of this Child-King. Soldiers were sent at once to Bethlehem, with orders to put to death all of the male babies of two years old and younger. The quiet homes of the city of David witnessed those scenes of horror that, six hundred years before, had been prophesied (Mt 2:18; Jer 31:15). Soon after the slaughter of the innocent children, Herod died a terrible, painful death.

Joseph, who was still in Egypt, was then told by an angel of God in a dream to return to the land of Israel. Joseph may have wanted to make his home in Bethlehem, but learning that Archelaus reigned in Judea in his father's stead, Joseph feared that the son might carry out the father's plan against Christ. Of all of Herod's sons, Archelaus most resembled him in character. Already Archelaus' succession to the government had been marked by a riot in Jerusalem and the slaughter of thousands of Jews by the Roman guards. Again Joseph was directed to a place of safety in a dream; he and Mary returned to Nazareth, their former home. Jesus lived in Nazareth for nearly thirty years so the prophecies might be fulfilled: "He shall be called a Nazarene" (Judg 13:5).

Herod the Great

Without question, Herod was one of the most despicable characters in the New Testament. His slaughter of all infants under two years of age ranks high in the annals of infamy. *The visit of the Wise Men to see him and their wisdom in seeing through Herod's deceit saved the life of the newborn Christ.* The unfolding tragedy which followed and the flight of Mary, Joseph, and Jesus to Egypt all were anticipated in the writings of the Hebrew prophets.

The Scriptures related to this topic are Matthew 2:1-12, 13-23 and Luke 2:40.

After reading the introduction to Topic 7 and the Scriptures above, review the following summaries and then answer the questions that follow them.

Summary of Herod the Great's Life:

He was an alien and usurper to the throne in Palestine.

His subjects hated him.

He was king only by Roman favor.

He was able and ambitious, yet cruel and crafty.

He murdered his own favorite wife, three of his sons, and many other relatives.

He was tortured with disease and unpopularity.

The massacre of the small children in Bethlehem was in keeping with other cruelties recorded of Herod the Great. It is estimated that this massacre led to the death of less than thirty male children, two years of age or younger. The event seems not to be significant enough, though, to be recorded by Josephus, the historian.

Facts about Rachel:

Rachel was the mother figure of Israel and Jacob's most beloved wife.

She died giving birth to Benjamin at Ramah on the way to Bethlehem.

Ramah was six miles or about ten kilometers northwest of Jerusalem, the "staging area" from which captives were taken to Babylon during the exile.

Jeremiah 31:15 describes the wailing at this time.

Life of Archelaus:

He received Judea and Samaria, one-third of Herod the Great's kingdom.

He later killed 3,000 Jews at a Passover riot.

He was dethroned by Rome in AD 6.

As a ruler he was as equally cruel as Herod the Great.

Magi Worship

The visit of the wise men from the East has always been a source of fascination to students of the birth narrative of Christ. They apparently arrived shortly after Christ's birth because they visit Jesus in a "house." No doubt Joseph had moved his family out of the stable as soon as Mary was able to walk and established them in a home in Jerusalem.

There are two interesting questions raised by their visit. The first question is "Why did they come at this precise time?" The journey took many months and yet they arrived shortly after the Messiah's birth. The answer, of course, is that God provided a sign in the heavens, a star to guide them.

The more important question is not why did they come at that time, but why did they come at all? The journey they made took months of difficult travel from Persia or Babylon, much of it over desert. Furthermore, it was a very expensive undertaking and they were not even Jews, they were pagan Gentiles. The startling answer to this question is that they came for one reason: to worship! They said to Herod, "We saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him" (Mt 2:2, NIV).

This raises some important issues for all of us. Would you be willing to take a three-month trip across deserts on horseback or camelback for the purpose of worshipping God? The goal of all history is worship. One day the whole earth will be filled with His glory. History moves toward the magnificent scene in Revelation chapters 4 and 5 when all the saints and angels are gathered around the throne saying, “holy, holy, holy.” The visit of the magi highlights the importance of personal worship of the King.

There is a touching indication here of God’s providential care. Soon after the magi left, an angel appeared and told Joseph to take his family to Egypt. This was to escape the slaughter of all children under the age of two by Herod. But where would this very poor family get the money for such a trip and how would they support themselves in this foreign land for two years. The gifts of the wise men to the baby Jesus provided all they needed. God often works His miracle of provision in very practical and simple ways.

The Scripture related to this topic is Matthew 2:21-23.

QUESTION 16

The religious leaders informed Herod where the Messiah would be born, and yet the religious leaders ignored His birth. *True or False?*

QUESTION 17

Even though Herod the Great could be characterized as evil, he was probably a believer in Jesus Christ who died as a happy and popular ruler. *True or False?*

Topic 8: A Missing Child

March, 4 BC through AD 8

Only Luke records any information about Jesus after His infancy. This brief record is summarized in the statement, “And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him” (Lk 2:40). From this we learn that His mind was actively questioning and was imbued with thoughtfulness and wisdom beyond His years. His character was without flaw. The powers of His mind and body developed gradually in keeping with the laws of childhood.

Yet Jesus turned away from exhibition. During all of the years of His stay in Nazareth, He displayed none of His miraculous powers. He sought no high position and assumed no titles. His quiet and simple life, and even the silence of the Scriptures concerning His early years, teaches an important lesson: the more quiet and simple the life of the child—the more free from artificial excitement and the more in harmony with nature—the more favorable it is to physical and mental vigor and to spiritual strength.

The last recorded activity of Jesus’ youth involved him lingering at the temple after his parents had started the journey back to Nazareth. The worried parents discovered this later, after their departure. Why was Jesus so seemingly disrespectful to his parents?

The Scripture related to this topic is Luke 2:41-53.

QUESTION 18

Why was it three days before Jesus’ parents were able to find Him?

- A. Jesus was good at hiding from His parents.
- B. Jesus was lost and was looking for His parents in another part of Jerusalem.
- C. Jesus was kidnapped.
- D. Jesus’ parents evidently traveled one day without noticing that He was gone, one day back, and one day looking for Him.

QUESTION 19

Jesus loved and respected His family’s authority. However, He also had to obey His heavenly Father and go to the temple and be questioned by the religious leaders. *True or False?*

QUESTION 20

Based upon your reading of Luke 2:41-53, write your answer to these two questions in your Life Notebook: (1) How can you explain Jesus’ seeming lack of consideration for His parents? (2) What does His subsequent behavior say to us about child-parent relationships? There is not a “correct” answer to this, but come prepared to discuss your thoughts at your group meeting.

Topic 9: Matching Events

QUESTION 21

One of the objectives of this course is for you to gain a working knowledge of the major events in the life of Christ and know the chapter in the gospels where each of sixty-one events occurred. Match the event on the left with the related Scripture on the right.

<i>Event</i>	<i>Scripture</i>
Angel foretells Jesus’ birth	Matthew 2
Jesus is born in Bethlehem	Luke 2:41
Wise Men visit Jesus	Luke 2
Jesus at age twelve in the temple	Luke 1

QUESTION 22

To help you memorize these events, we have compiled a list of sixty-one important events in the life of Christ. You will find them at the end of this course. Take a moment and review events 1-4. Hold your hand over the event descriptions on the left and see if you can identify the associated Scriptures on the right.

Topic 10: Knowing, Being, Doing

Take a moment in this final section to reflect on the practical application of this lesson to your life.

QUESTION 23: KNOWING

As you reflect on the various sections in this lesson, consider carefully what you have learned about the nature of God. Record your meditations in your Life Notebook.

QUESTION 24: BEING

Over and over again, we are told in Scripture that God desires us to be “rich in faith.” In fact, faith is one of the qualities necessary for fruitfulness. Read the article “Faith” (at the end of this lesson) and then prayerfully meditate on the faith of the people in this lesson, for example, Mary, Joseph, Simeon, and Elizabeth. How were they weak and how were they strong? Write out how you identify with their strengths and weaknesses. Record your meditations in your Life Notebook.

QUESTION 25: DOING

When God speaks, we are to act. In your Life Notebook record your meditations on Mary and Joseph and how each responded to God’s revelation. List some of the barriers you experience when you are challenged to respond to God’s Word.

Lesson 2 Self Check

QUESTION 1

Elizabeth's song in Luke 1:42-45 makes it clear that she expressed her faith by immediately recognizing Mary's unborn child to be her "Lord." *True or False?*

QUESTION 2

The word used for "virgin" (Hebrew *almah*) is sometimes used for a married woman as well as an unmarried woman. *True or False?*

QUESTION 3

Mary and Joseph were obedient to all of the requirements of the Mosaic Law regarding Jesus' birth and thus demonstrated their faith in the promises of the Abrahamic covenant. *True or False?*

QUESTION 4

Why was Jesus' birth at Bethlehem rather than Nazareth significant to Israel?

- A. The prophecy in Micah 5:2 said the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, the city of David.
- B. It really did not matter in what city Jesus was born as long as He was born in Israel.
- C. Bethlehem was a quiet village where Joseph could protect Mary and hide from the gossip that was in Nazareth.
- D. Isaiah 7:14 recorded a prophecy that said the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem.

QUESTION 5

What edict or announcement contributed to the fulfillment of the prophecies of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem?

- A. The edict of Herod the Great
- B. The edict of Augustus
- C. The edict of Tiberius
- D. The edict of Pilate

QUESTION 6

When Jesus became a man, He became man so completely that He gave up some of the attributes of deity and for thirty-four years ceased to be fully God. *True or False?*

QUESTION 7

The doctrine of the Virgin Birth is important because:

- A. It proves that Jesus is God.
- B. It establishes the authority of the Bible.
- C. It was the only way Jesus could have a sinless nature.
- D. It resulted in a God-man, fully God and yet fully human.

QUESTION 8

Based upon your reading and comparison of Zechariah's "Benedictus" to Mary's "Magnificat," which of the following similarities were evident? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Both showed no knowledge of the Old Testament.
- B. Both praised God for salvation as a fulfillment of His covenant with Abraham.
- C. Both recognized Jesus as the Messiah.
- D. Both seemed to come from the higher classes of Jewish society.

QUESTION 9

According to the gospels, the magi came for the purpose of _____.

QUESTION 10

Both the "Benedictus" and the "Magnificat" reflected praise that God was fulfilling his promises to Abraham. *True or False?*

Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1:

- A. Both women were encouraged when the baby leaped for joy in Elizabeth's womb.
- B. Mary and Elizabeth were encouraged by the fulfillment of the angel's predictions.
- D. Elizabeth was encouraged by knowing that the Messiah was coming soon.
- E. Mary stayed three months, a practical help to Elizabeth as the time grew near for John to be born.
- F. Both women must have had some knowledge of the Old Testament promises involved in the miraculous birth of their sons.

QUESTION 2: True

QUESTION 3:

- A. She is thankful as she gives God praise and glory.
- C. She is humble, recognizing that God has uniquely blessed her. She proclaims that God resists the proud and helps the humble.
- D. She sees her child as a fulfillment of the promise to Abraham which shows she has knowledge of the Old Testament Scriptures.

QUESTION 4:

- B. Both praised God for salvation as a fulfillment of His covenant with Abraham.
- C. Both recognized Jesus as the Messiah.

QUESTION 5:

- A. Mary praised the Lord more for what He did for the poor and humble.
- C. Zechariah praised the Lord first for what He would do for the nation and then for His spiritual blessings of salvation.

QUESTION 6: *Your answer*

QUESTION 7:

- C. The angel was a supernatural visitation that announced to Joseph the divine responsibility to care for Mary and the Child of God.
- D. The visit from the angel made it clear that this was not a conception through human contact.

QUESTION 8:

- B. Matthew noted that Joseph and Mary did not have sexual intercourse until after Jesus' birth.
- D. Matthew recorded Mary's response and carefully described Gabriel's declarations of the virgin birth.

QUESTION 9:

- B. Augustus

QUESTION 10:

- A. The prophecy in Micah 5:2 said that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, the city of David.

QUESTION 11: True

QUESTION 12:

- A. Simeon, a righteous and devout man not of Levitical ancestry, could prophesy about the Messiah when filled with the Holy Spirit.
- B. Simeon saw Jesus as a light to the Gentiles and a glory to Israel.
- C. Simeon predicted that Jesus would be either a stepping-stone or a stumbling block for many in Israel.
- D. The opposition that Jesus would face would become a sword to pierce the soul of Mary.

QUESTION 13: False

QUESTION 14: True

QUESTION 15:

A. Having come from the East, the wise men may have read the prophecy of Balaam, the eastern prophet, who predicted the coming of the King of the Jews (Num 24:17).

C. Astronomers tell us there was a confluence of planets which appeared in the heavens in 6 BC. This may have appeared as a star.

QUESTION 16: True

QUESTION 17: False

QUESTION 18:

D. Jesus' parents evidently traveled one day without noticing that He was gone, one day back, and one day looking for Him.

QUESTION 19: True

QUESTION 20: *Your answer*

QUESTION 21:

<i>Event</i>	<i>Scripture</i>
Angel foretells Jesus' birth	Luke 1
Jesus is born in Bethlehem	Luke 2
Wise Men visit Jesus	Matthew 2
Jesus at age twelve in the temple	Luke 2:41

QUESTION 22: *Your answer*

QUESTION 23: *Your answer*

QUESTION 24: *Your answer*

QUESTION 25: *Your answer*

Lesson 2 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1: True

QUESTION 2: True

QUESTION 3: True

QUESTION 4:

A. The prophecy in Micah 5:2 said the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, the city of David.

QUESTION 5:

B. The edict of Augustus

QUESTION 6: False

QUESTION 7:

D. It resulted in a God-man, fully God and yet fully human.

QUESTION 8:

B. Both praised God for salvation as a fulfillment of His covenant with Abraham.

C. Both recognized Jesus as the Messiah.

QUESTION 9:

Correct answers include:

Worship

Praise

Adoration

QUESTION 10: True

Lesson 2 Notes

Joseph

Joseph, the carpenter (Mt 13:55), was a “just man” (Mt 1:19, who belonged to Nazareth (Lk 2:4). He was of Davidic descent (Mt 1:20; Lk 2:4), the son of Heli (Lk 3:23) or Jacob (Mt 1:16), the husband of Mary (Mt 1:16), and the earthly father of Jesus (Mt 13:55; Lk 3:23; 4:22; Jn 1:45; 6:42).

Character

If a type is to be sought in the character of Joseph, it is that of a simple, honest, hard-working, God-fearing man, who was possessed of large sympathies and a warm heart. Strict in the observance of Jewish law and custom, he was yet ready when occasion arose to make these subservient to the greater law of the Spirit. Too practical to possess any deep insight into the divine mysteries or eternal significance of events which came within his knowledge (see Lk 2:50), he was quick to make answer to what he perceived to be the direct call of God (see Mt 1:24). Originally a “just man” (KJV), the natural clemency within his heart prevailed over mere justice, and by the promptings of the Holy Spirit that clemency was transferred into a strong and enduring love (see Mt 1:24). Joseph is known to us only as a dim figure in the background of the Gospel narratives, yet his whole-hearted reconciliation to Mary, even in the face of possible slanderings by his neighbors, and his complete self-sacrifice, when he left all and fled into Egypt to save the infant Jesus, are indicative that he was not unworthy to fulfill the great trust which was imposed upon him by the Eternal Father.

Kerr, C. M. “Joseph, Husband of Mary,” *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*. Edited James Orr. Blue Letter Bible. 1913. 5 May 2003.

Judea

This geographical region is called the “land of the Jews,” the Greco-Roman equivalent of Judah. As most of the Israelites returning from the captivity belonged to the tribe of Judah, they came to be called Jews and their land Judea. The limits of this district varied greatly, extending as the Jewish population increased, but in many periods with very indefinite boundaries.¹

In some places the term covers the entire region of Palestine (Lk 4:44).

We do not know for certain where the land of Samaria ended and Judah began.

After the death of Herod the Great, Archelaus (called “Herod the Ethnarch” on his coins) received Judea. He reigned in Judea “in place of his father Herod” (Mt 2:22) from 4 BC to AD 6, but without the title of king. He was Herod’s elder son by his Samaritan wife Malthace, and has the worst reputation of all the sons of Herod. He offended Jewish religious susceptibilities by marrying Glaphyra, the widow of his half brother Alexander. He continued his father’s building policy, but his repressive rule became intolerable; a deputation of the Judean and Samaritan aristocracy at last went to Rome to warn Augustus that, unless Archelaus were removed, there would be a full-scale revolt. Archelaus was accordingly deposed and banished, and Judea became

¹James Orr, M.A., D.D. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia: 1915 Edition*. Edited by James Orr. Albany, OR: Ages Software, 1999.

a Roman province, and, during the ministry of Christ, it was administered by prefects appointed by the emperor.

Howard Marshall, J.I. Packer, D.J. Wiseman, and A.R. Millard, eds., *New Bible Dictionary*. 3rd ed.. (Intervarsity Press. 1996) p 469.

Manger

A manger is defined as: the place in a stall or stable where the food of cattle is placed (in the Old Testament “crib” (Job 39:9; Prov 14:4; Isa 1:3)); thus also, apparently, in the narrative of the nativity in Luke 2:7, 12, 16. In Septuagint, the Greek word, representing different Hebrew words, has also the extended meaning of “stall” (2 Chr 32:28; Hab 3:17); thus also in Luke 13:15, where the Revised Version margin has “manger.” Old tradition says that Jesus was born in a cave in the neighborhood of Bethlehem; even so, a place for food for cattle may have been cut in the side of the rock.

James Orr. “Manger,” *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*. Edited by James Orr. Blue Letter Bible. 1913.5 May 2003.

Nazareth

Nazareth was a town in Galilee. It was the home of Joseph, the Virgin Mary, and for about thirty years, the scene of the Savior’s life (Mt 2:23; Mk 1:9; Lk 2:39, 51; 4:16). He was therefore called Jesus of Nazareth, although His birthplace was Bethlehem, and those who became His disciples were known as Nazarenes. This is the name, with slight modification, used to this day by Moslems for Christians, *Nasara*, the singular being *Nasrany*.

It is probable that the present town occupies pretty nearly the ancient site; and the scene of that attempt on Jesus’ life may have been the cliff, many feet in height, not far from the old synagogue, traces of which are still seen in the western part of the town.

In Nazareth, Jesus preached His first recorded sermon (Lk 4:16-21), when His plainness of speech aroused the homicidal fury of His hearers. “He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief” (Mt 13:58, KJV). Finding no rest or security in Nazareth, He made His home in Capernaum.

All the inhabitants of Galilee were looked upon with contempt by the people of Judea because they spoke a ruder dialect, were less cultivated, and were more exposed by their position to contact with the heathen. But Nazareth labored under a special scorn, for it was a Galilean and not a southern Jew who asked the reproachful question whether “any good thing” could come from that source (Jn 1:46). Above the town are several rocky ledges, over which a person could not be thrown without almost certain destruction. There is one very remarkable precipice, almost perpendicular and forty or fifty feet high, near the Maronite church, which may well be supposed to be the identical one over which His infuriated fellow townsmen attempted to hurl Jesus.

W. Smith. (1997). *Smith's Bible dictionary* (electronic ed. of the revised ed.). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Lesson 2 Articles

Faith

The Definition of Faith

It is somewhat perplexing how this simple, universally understood, and commonly used term has been so loaded with additional meanings. Ideas like obedience, yieldedness, repentance, and many other terms are continually read into this word in order to make it serve the purpose of some particular theological system. It is perplexing because the Greek dictionary authorities are virtually unanimous in their assertion that faith, *pistis*, means belief, confidence, or persuasion. The verbal forms all mean the same—to believe something, to give assent, to have confidence in, or to be persuaded of.

Benjamin Warfield continually stresses that faith is a mental matter rather than a matter of obedience:

The central movement in all faith is no doubt the element of assent; it is that which constitutes the mental movement so called a movement of conviction. But the movement of assent must depend, as it always does depend, on a movement, not specifically of the will, but of the intellect; the assensus issues from the notitia. The movement of the sensibilities which we call ‘trust,’ is on the contrary the produce of the assent. And it is in this movement of the sensibilities that faith fulfills itself, and it is by that, as specifically ‘faith,’ it is formed” (“Faith,” in *Biblical and Theological Studies*, 444).

This view of faith has strong historical precedent in the Lutheran confessions. Indeed, this is one of the principal areas of disagreement between Lutheranism and the English Puritans. The Puritan view of faith, like that of many modern Calvinists, is virtually the same as Rome’s. By adding words like “submission” and “obedience” to the concept, they have aligned themselves with their opponents. The Council of Trent declared, “If anyone should say that justifying faith is nothing else than trust (*fiducia*) in the divine compassion which forgives sins for Christ’s sake, or that we are justified alone by such trust, let him be accursed.” Lutheranism, in agreement with Calvin, has traditionally defined faith as “personal trust, or confidence, in God’s gracious forgiveness of sins for Christ’s sake.” It is viewed as a passive instrument for receiving the divine gift. The will is not involved. Faith, according to Lutheran theologian Mueller, “merely accepts the merits that have been secured for the world by Christ’s obedience.” He calls it a passive act or a passive instrument.

If anything is clear from the New Testament, faith is the opposite of obedience. It is passive “hearing” in contrast to a volitional decision. In, for example, Paul speaks of God working miracles among them because “you believe what you heard” and set this in contrast to works of obedience. Whatever faith is, it certainly does not include within its compass the very thing it is contrasted with—obedience! In Romans he is equally clear:

“But to one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness” (Rom 4:5, NASB).

“For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the law” (Rom 3:28, NASB).

The Reformed faith has commonly held that the sanctification of the believer involves the work of God and of man. With this the writer agrees. But the only works of obedience which God performs related to our justification **are imputed to us and not worked in us**. These works are known as the active obedience of Christ, His perfect obedience to the requirements of the law on our behalf. These merits are reckoned to our account in the act of justification (Rom 10:4; 5:19; Col 2:10) When MacArthur speaks of works being worked in us, his doctrine of justification differs not a whit from Catholicism's idea of justification making us righteous. However, the conclusion of the Reformation was that justification is a public act of God in which He declares us righteous.

The Role of the Will in Faith

Actions of will arise from faith, but the will itself does not seem to be involved in the production of faith. This may seem surprising to some, but a moment's reflection will confirm the commonly understood idea that faith is located in the mind and is persuasion or belief. It is something which "happens" to us as a result of reflection upon sufficient evidence. We can no more will faith than we can will feelings of love.

That faith is a passive thing, and not active, is evident when Paul says: "Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?" (Gal 3:2, NASB).

As he often does, Paul throws faith into the sharpest contrast possible with works and describes its function as "hearing." In choosing that word (instead of "obeying"), he is not only stating that faith is a passive reception, but he is aligning himself with his Master who taught that faith was "looking" and "drinking" and with the writer to the Hebrews who described it as "tasting." All these terms assign a passive, receptive function to faith. The will plays no part.

Saving faith is reliance upon God for salvation. It does not include within its compass the determination of the will to obey, nor does it include a commitment to a life of works. To believe is to be persuaded and be reliant and includes nothing else. If anything is clear in the New Testament, whatever belief is, it is the opposite of works:

"Does He who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?" (Gal 3:5, NASB).

"Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life" (Jn 3:14-15, NIV).

In the latter passage the Lord is equating "belief" with mere "looking." He is referring to Num 21:8-9, (NIV):

"The Lord said to Moses, 'Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live.' So Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, he lived."

The intent is obviously that a man should look with the expectation of healing and with belief in God, asking for help. A non-Christian who will not believe will not be healed, even if he looks. But the point is that looking and believing are synonymous terms.

When Paul and Jesus connect faith with hearing and looking, they are trying to throw it into the strongest possible contrast to anything connected with working. Hearing and looking are passive functions. Trust does not include a life of works!

There are, says Warfield, two factors, not one, involved in the production of faith: (1) the evidence, or the ground on which faith is yielded; and (2) the subjective condition by virtue of which the evidence can take effect in the appropriate act of faith:

Evidence cannot produce belief, faith, except in a mind open to this evidence, and capable of responding to it. (Warfield, Benjamin. *Biblical and Theological Studies*. Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company.)

Something more is needed to produce faith. Faith is not a mechanical result of the presentation of evidence. Good evidence can be refused because of the subjective nature or condition of the mind to which it is addressed. This is the ground of responsibility for belief or faith: "it is not merely a question of evidence but of subjectivity; and subjectivity is the other name for personality." Warfield continues,

If evidence which is objectively adequate is not subjectively adequate, the fault is in us. If we are not accessible to musical evidence, then we are by nature unmusical, or in a present state of unmusicalness. If we are not accessible to moral evidence, then we are either unmoral, or being moral beings, immoral. (Warfield, Benjamin. *Biblical and Theological Studies*. Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company.)

Since this is true, it is easy to see that a sinful heart which is at enmity to God is incapable of the supreme act of trust in God. Arminians resist this conclusion, because they attribute higher abilities to the mind and will of the natural man than Scripture allows. They are therefore tempted to make faith an act of will instead of a response to testimony. It is surprising that many modern Calvinists, in their concern to incorporate obedience into the meaning of faith, have inconsistently accepted this Arminian view of faith.

The biblical solution, however, is to admit that, for the natural man, faith is impossible and attribute it to the gift of God. This gift is not communicated mechanically. Rather, it is given through the creation of a capacity for faith on the basis of the evidence submitted. It starts with illumination, softening of the heart, and a quickening of the will. As a result, a man is enabled to believe on the basis of the evidence submitted to him in the Gospels. This creation of capacity precedes rebirth. The biblical evidence that faith itself is a gift is impressive and has often been repeated. It comes not of one's own strength or virtue but only to those who are chosen of God for its reception (1 Thess 2:13); hence, it is a gift (Eph 6:23; 2:8-9; Phil 1:29). It comes through Christ (Acts 3:16; 1 Pet 1:21), by means of the Spirit (2 Cor. 4:14; Gal 5:5), and by means of the preached word (Rom 10:17; Gal 3:2, 5). Because it is thus obtained from God (2 Pet 1:1; Jude 3), thanks are to be returned to God for it (Col 1:4; 2 Thess 1:3).

Faith and Knowledge

But if faith is merely a mental act, a persuasion based upon evidence, how is it distinguished from mere knowledge, which the demons possess? Are we to say that saving faith is simply the acceptance of a set of propositions about the deity of Christ and the atonement?

There are two things which differentiate saving faith from mere knowledge. The first may be summed up in the word "trust." It is one thing to intellectually accept certain propositions; it is another to be in a state of reliant trust. It is one thing to believe that Jesus is God and that He is the Savior, as the demons do; it is another to look to Him as one's personal Savior from the penalty for sin.

The story has been told of a man who pushed a wheelbarrow across the Grand Canyon on a tightrope wire. For five dollars one could daily watch his death-defying performance. As the finale he would ask his assistant to get into the wheelbarrow, and he would push her across in front of him. Now imagine you are watching this performance and a man turns to you and says, "Do you believe he can push his assistant across the Grand Canyon on the wire?"

"Of course," you reply. "I have watched him do it every day for a week."

"Then, get in!"

To believe that he can push the wheelbarrow across without accident is knowledge. To have an inward conviction that you could "get in," is not only knowledge but faith.

This illustration is helpful in highlighting the error of the Calvinist view of faith. Note that the story said that "to have an inward conviction that you could get in" is faith. Calvinists would say that, unless you "get in," you do not have faith. But faith is, after all, "the conviction of things hoped for." It is not necessary to actually get in order to have faith. One needs only to have the inward conviction that this man could safely carry you across the canyon.

But there is a second characteristic of true faith which separates it from mere knowledge or intellectual assent. According to Archibald Alexander in *Thoughts on Religious Experience*, true faith is distinguished from historic faith in the differing evidence upon which it is based. The ground of historical faith, or assent, is only the deductions of reason or the prejudices of culture and education. It is based upon cultural familiarity (i.e., "I am a Christian because I am an American," etc.) or intellectual acceptance of logical conclusions based upon reasonable data. Biblical faith, however, differs from this. Faith in the Bible is not based upon cultural convenience or a deduction of reason. It is based upon a perception of the beauty, glory, and sweetness of divine things as revealed in Scripture and the gospel promise. The object of biblical faith is the saving work of Christ and the gospel offer. The evidence upon which it rests is the promises of Scripture.

While a true believer can quench the Spirit and lose his first love, the faith which emerges from our regeneration is more than detached knowledge; it is assent.

Neither Alexander or Warfield nor a host of other Reformed theologians, including Calvin himself, ever taught that faith included obedience. They would all, no doubt, be surprised to learn that some modern-day Calvinists view them as unhistoric or antinomian (one who holds that under the gospel dispensation of grace the moral law is of no use or obligation because faith alone is necessary to salvation)! What they did teach was that true faith always results in obedience, a conclusion which is simply untrue to Scripture, as earlier chapters of this book have shown.

Faith and Profession

Closely related to the question of faith and knowledge is the question: How is a saved man to be distinguished from one who professes to be saved but in fact is not? Or, how is a false profession of faith in Christ to be distinguished from a true one? If the preceding train of thought is granted, then it is clear how we do not discern a false profession. We do not discern this by an examination of his fruits or an assessment of his grief over sin or a measurement of his desire to have fellowship with God. Rather, the presence of a false profession is to be discerned by asking questions which will reveal whether or not a man understands the gospel and has Christ as the conscious object of faith. We ask questions which will reveal whether or not a man is trusting in Christ for salvation and whether or not he has accepted the gospel offer. While such an

examination can never yield the certainty which the Calvinist seems to desire, it should be realized that his method of examining fruit yields no certainty at all. Indeed, the whole quest for certainty is ill-founded. Paul warned us to judge no man before the time.

Only the individual can know if he has believed. We cannot externally know this for him. Certainly the lack of fruit in a person's life raises the question: Does he possess the Spirit at all, or if he does, has he quenched Him? But just as the presence of fruit cannot prove a man is a Christian, neither can its absence deny it.

The Magi (“Wise Men”)

Originally a Median Tribe

The Magi were originally a Median tribe (Herodotus i.101); and in Darius’ Inscriptions Magush means only a member of that tribe. The Magi even in Herodotus’ time had gained a reputation for “magic” articles (see Acts 13:6, 8). They also studied astrology and astronomy (*rationes mundani motus et siderum* (Amm. Marc., xxiii.6, 32)), partly learned from Babylon.

The Magi at Bethlehem

These latter studies explain why a star was used to lead them to Christ at Bethlehem when our Lord was less than two years old (Mt 2:16). No reliable tradition deals with the country whence these particular magi came. Justin Martyr, Tertullian, and Epiphanius fancied that they came from Arabia, founding their opinion on the fact that “gold, frankincense, and myrrh” abounded in Yemen. But the text says they came not from the South but from the East. Origen held that they came from Chaldea, which is possible. But Clement of Alexandria, Diodorus of Tarsus, Chrysostom, Cyril of Alexandria, Juvenius, Prudentius and others are probably right in bringing them from Persia. Sargon’s settlement of Israelites in Media (circa 730–728 BC (2 Kgs 17:6) accounts for the large Hebrew element of thought which Darmesteter recognizes in the Avesta. Median astronomers would thus know Balaam’s prophecy of the star out of Jacob (Num 24:17). That the Jews expected a star as a sign of the birth of the Messiah is clear from the tractate Zohar of the Gemara and also from the title “Son of the Star” (Bar Kokheba) given to a pseudo-Messiah (AD 130–35). Tacitus and Suetonius (Roman historians) tell us how widespread in the East at the time of Christ’s coming was the expectation that “at that time men starting from Judea would make themselves masters of things.” All this would naturally prepare the Magi to follow the star when it appeared.

The visit of the wise men from the East has always been a source of fascination to students of the birth narrative of Christ. They apparently arrived shortly after Christ’s birth because they visit Jesus in a “house.” No doubt Joseph had moved his family out of the stable as soon as Mary was able to walk and established them in a home in Jerusalem.

There are two interesting questions raised by their visit. The first question is “Why did they come at this precise time?” The journey took many months and yet they arrived shortly after the Messiah’s birth. The answer, of course, is that God provided a sign in the heavens, a start to guide them.

Astronomers tell us that there was a confluence of planets that appeared in the heavens in 6 BC. Some have conjectured that this sign signaled to the Magi that the birth of a king was about to occur in Palestine.

While this speculation is interesting, the more important question is not why did they come at that time, but why did they come at all! The journey they made took months of difficult travel from Persia or Babylon, much of it over desert. Furthermore, it was a very expensive undertaking and they were not even Jews, they were pagan Gentiles. The startling answer to this question is that they came for one reason, to worship!! They said to Herod, “We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him” (Matt 2:2, NIV).

They raise some important issues for all of us. Would you be willing to take a three-month trip across deserts on horseback or camelback for the purpose of worshipping God? The goal of all

history is worship. One day the whole earth will be filled with His glory. History moves toward the magnificent scene in Revelation chapters 4 and 5 when all the saints and angels are gathered around the throne saying, “holy, holy, holy.” The visit of the magi highlights the importance of personal worship of the King.

There is a touching indication here of God’s providential care. Soon after the magi left, an angel appeared and told Joseph to take his family to Egypt. This was to escape the slaughter of all children under the age of two by Herod. But where would this very poor family get the money for such a trip and how would they support themselves in this foreign land for two years. The gifts of the wise men to the baby Jesus provided all they needed. Very often God works his miracles of provision in very practical and simple ways.

W. St. Clair Tisdall. “Magi,” *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*. Edited by James Orr. Blue Letter Bible. 1913. 5 May 2003.

Mary, the Virgin

The biography of the mother of Jesus is gathered about a brief series of episodes which serve to exhibit her leading characteristics in clear light. Two causes have operated to distort and make unreal the very clear and vivid image of Mary left for us in the Gospels. First, Roman Catholic dogmatic, sentimental exaggeration has nearly removed Mary from history.

On the other hand, reaction and overemphasis upon certain features of the Gospel narrative have led some to credit Mary with a negative attitude toward our Lord and His claims, which she assuredly never occupied. It is very important that we should follow the narrative with unprejudiced eyes and give due weight to each successive episode.

Mary appears in the following passages: the infancy narratives, Matthew 1 and 2; Luke 1 and 2; the wedding at Cana of Galilee, John 2:1-11; the episode of Matthew 12:46; Mark 3:21, 31; the incident at the cross, John 19:25-27; the scene in the upper chamber, Acts 1:1.

1. Mary in the Infancy Narratives

A. It is to be noted, first of all, that Mary and her experiences form the narrative core of both infancy documents.

Luke tells the story of Mary's inward and deeply personal experiences, her call (Lk 1:26), her maidenly fears (Lk 1:29, 35), her loyal submission (Lk 1:38), her outburst of sacred and unselfish joy (Lk 1:39-55). From this anticipatory narrative he passes at once to the Messianic fulfillment.

Matthew tells the story of the outward and, so to say, public experiences of Mary which follow hard upon the former and are in such dramatic contrast with them: the shame and suspicion which fell upon her (Lk 1:18); her bitter humiliation (Lk 1:19), her ultimate vindication (Lk 1:20).

B. One can hardly fail to be impressed in studying Mary's character with her quietness of spirit, her meditative inwardness of disposition, her admirable self-control, her devout and gracious gift of sacred silence. The canticle (Lk 1:46-55), which at least expresses Luke's conception of her nature, indicates that she is not accustomed to dwell much upon herself (four lines only call particular attention to herself), and that her mind is saturated with the spirit and phraseology of the Old Testament. The intensely Jewish quality of her piety thus expressed accounts for much that appears anomalous in her subsequent career as depicted in the Gospels.

2. Mary at Cana

The first episode which demands our attention is the wedding at Cana of Galilee (Jn 2:1-11). The relationship between Jesus and His mother has almost eclipsed other interests in the chapter. It is to be noted that the idea of wanton interference on the part of Mary and of sharp rebuke on the part of Jesus is to be decisively rejected. The key to the meaning of this episode is to be found in four simple items:

1. In a crisis of need, Mary turns naturally to Jesus as to the one from whom help is to be expected.
2. She is entirely undisturbed by His reply, whatever its meaning may be.
3. She prepares the way for the miracle by her authoritative directions to the servants.
4. Jesus does actually relieve the situation by an exercise of power.

Whether she turned to Jesus with distinctly Messianic expectation, or whether Jesus intended to convey a mild rebuke for her eagerness, it is not necessary for us to inquire, as it is not possible for us to determine. It is enough that her spontaneous appeal to her Son did not result in disappointment, since, in response to her suggestion or, at least, in harmony with it, He “manifested his glory.” The incident confirms the infancy narrative in which Mary’s quiet and forceful personality is exhibited.

3. Mary and the Career of Jesus

In Matthew 12:46 (parallel Mk 3:31-35), we are told that, when His mother and His brethren came seeking Him, Jesus in the well-known remark concerning His true relatives in the kingdom of heaven intended to convey a severe rebuke to His own household for an action which involved both unbelief and presumptuous interference in His great life work. The explanation of this incident, which involves no such painful implications as have become connected with it in the popular mind, is to be found in Mark’s account. He interrupts his narrative of the arrival of the relatives (which belongs in Mk 3:21) by the account of the accusation made by the scribes from Jerusalem that the power of Jesus over demons was due to Beelzebub. This goes a long way toward explaining the anxiety felt by the relatives of Jesus, since the ungoverned enthusiasm of the multitude, which gave Him no chance to rest and seemed to threaten His health, was matched, contrariwise, by the bitter, malignant opposition of the authorities, who would believe any malicious absurdity rather than that His power came from God. The vital point is that the attempt of Mary and her household to get possession of the person of Jesus, in order to induce Him to go into retirement for a time, was not due to captious and interfering unbelief, but to loving anxiety. The words of Jesus have the undoubted ring of conscious authority and express the determination of one who wills the control of his own life—but it is a serious mistake to read into them any faintest accent of satire. It has been well said (Horace Bushnell, *Sermons on Living Subject*, 30) that Jesus would scarcely make use of the family symbolism to designate the sacred relationships of the kingdom of heaven, while, at the same time, He was depreciating the value and importance of the very relationships which formed the basis of His analogy. The real atmosphere of the incident is very different from this.

4. Mary at the Cross

To be sure that many have misinterpreted the above incident we need only turn to the exquisitely tender scene at the cross recorded by John 19:25-27. This scene, equally beautiful whether one considers the relationship which it discloses as existing between Jesus and His mother, or between Jesus and His well-beloved disciple removes all possible ambiguity which might attach to the preceding incidents, and reveals the true spirit of the Master’s home. Jesus could never have spoken as He did from the cross unless He had consistently maintained the position and performed the duties of an eldest son. The tone and quality of the scene could never have been what it is had there not been a steadfast tie of tender love and mutual understanding between Jesus and His mother. Jesus could hand over His sacred charge to the trustworthy keeping of another, because He had faithfully maintained it Himself.

5. Mary in the Christian Community

The final passage which we need to consider (Acts 1:14) is especially important because in it we discover Mary and her household at home in the midst of the Christian community, engaged with them in prayer. It is also clear that Mary herself and the family, who seemed to be completely under her influence, whatever may have been their earlier misgivings, never broke with the circle

of disciples and persistently kept within the range of experiences which led at last to a completed Christian faith. This makes it sufficiently evident, on the one hand, that the household never shared the feelings of the official class among the Jews; and, on the other, that the family of Jesus passed through the same cycle of experiences which punctuated the careers of the whole body of disciples on the way to faith. The bearing of this simple but significant fact upon the historical trustworthiness of the body of incidents just passed in review is evident.

The sum of the matter concerning Mary seems to be this: The mother of Jesus was a typical Jewish believer of the best sort. She was deeply meditative, but by no means a daring or original thinker. Her inherited Messianic beliefs did not and perhaps could not prepare her for the method of Jesus which involved so much that was new and unexpected. But her heart was true, and from the beginning to the day of Pentecost, she pondered in her heart the meaning of her many puzzling experiences until the light came. The story of her life and of her relationship to Jesus is consistent throughout and touched with manifold unconscious traits of truth. Such a narrative could not have been feigned or fabled.

6. Mary in Ecclesiastical Doctrine and Tradition

A. Legend

The ecclesiastical treatment of Mary consists largely of legend and dogma, about equally fictitious and unreliable. The legendary accounts, which include the apocryphal gospels, deal, for the most part, with details of her parentage and early life, her betrothal and marriage to Joseph, her journey to Bethlehem, and the birth of her child. At this point the legendary narratives are in striking contrast to the chaste reserve of the canonical story, and of evidential value on that account.

B. Doctrine of Mary's Glorification as the Object of Worship and Her Function as Intercessor

Three arguments are most frequently used to justify the place accorded to Mary in the liturgy.

1. Christ's perpetual humanity leads to His perpetual Sonship to Mary. This argument, if it carries any weight at all, in this connection, implies that the glorified Lord Jesus is still subject to His mother. It is, however, clear from the Gospels that the subjection to His parents which continued after the incident in the Temple (Lk 2:51) was gently but firmly laid aside at the outset of the public ministry (see above, II, 2, 3). In all that pertains to His heavenly office, as Lord, Mary's position is one of dependence, not of authority.

2. Christ hears her prayers. Here, again, dogmatic assumption is in evidence. That He hears her prayers, even if true in a very special sense, does not, in the least, imply that prayers are to be addressed to her or that she is an intercessor through whom prayers may be addressed to Him.

3. Since Mary cared for the body of Christ when He was on earth, naturally His spiritual body would be her special care in heaven. But, on any reasonable hypothesis, Mary was, is, and must remain, a part of that body (see Acts 1:14). Unless she is intrinsically a divine being, her care for the church cannot involve her universal presence in it and her accessibility to the prayers of her fellow-believers.

C. Conclusion

Our conclusion on the whole question is that the literature of Mariolatry belongs, historically, to unauthorized speculation; and, psychologically, to the natural history of asceticism and clerical celibacy.

Lesson 3: His Baptism and Temptation

Lesson Introduction

In the fall of AD 28, a voice began to boom out of the Judean wilderness. The prophetic ministry of John the Baptist had begun. The purpose of John's ministry was to announce the Messiah and prepare the way for the people of the nation of Israel to place their trust in Him.

In Topic 1 we will consider this strange man who shook the nation to its core while dressed in camel's hair and eating curds and honey.

Topic 2 covers what happened to Jesus in the years prior to John's ministry. The so-called "hidden years" have intrigued students of the life of Christ for centuries.

We will focus our attention in Topic 3 on the baptism of Christ. "To fulfill all righteousness" (Mt 3:15), Jesus, who knew no sin, submitted to the baptism of John. Why? What was the significance of Christ's baptism?

In Topic 4 we will examine an issue of considerable importance in establishing Jesus' credentials to be the Messiah: His ancestry. Was He indeed of the house of David, the legal heir to the throne and at the same time of the blood lineage of David? Both were necessary if He was to support His claims to be the King of Israel.

We will see how Jesus defeated these temptations in Topic 5 by the use of Scripture and emerged victorious to begin His ministry—offering the Kingdom of Heaven to Israel.

Immediately after being baptized by John, Jesus was led by the Spirit of God into the wilderness. After forty days of fasting, Jesus was tempted by Satan. Those forty days were crucial in the battle plan for the salvation of man. Only a sinless sacrifice could achieve redemption.

In Topic 6 we will study how Jesus, immediately upon His return from the wilderness, was identified by John as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Crucial to Christ's strategy for launching a movement which would one day change history, He selected and carefully trained twelve men to carry on His work.

We will consider in Topic 7 the calling of the first five of these disciples: John, Simon Peter and his brother Andrew, and Nathanael and his brother Philip.

Finally, in Topic 8, we will consider the first of the thirty-five miracles Christ performed during His four years of ministry, the turning of water to wine at the wedding feast at Cana.

Lesson Outline

Topic 1: A Voice Crying in the Wilderness

 Preparing the Way

 John's Message of Repentance

Topic 2: The Hidden Years

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Two Genealogies

Topic 5: The Temptation of Christ

Topic 6: The Lamb of God

Topic 7: Choosing the First Five Disciples

Peter, John, and Andrew

Philip and Nathanael

Topic 8: Changing Water to Wine—The First Miracle

Topic 9: Matching Events

Topic 10: Knowing, Being, Doing

Lesson Objectives

When you have completed this lesson, you will be able to:

- State the meaning of John’s ministry and how it prepared the way for the coming of the Messiah
- Modify your own attitudes regarding proper preparation for a life of significance and implement those attitudes in one concrete action today
- Clarify the purpose and significance of Christ’s baptism by John the Baptist
- Explain the purpose of Luke’s genealogy and how it harmonizes with Matthew’s
- Appreciate Christ’s method of dealing with temptation
- Understand some of the principles which Jesus used in the training of His men
- Apply the guiding principles behind Christ’s selection of His men to your own ministry of discipleship training
- Appreciate the compassion and sensitivity of Christ
- Apply the concepts learned in this lesson to your mind, character, and ministry

Topic 1: A Voice Crying in the Wilderness

The time had come for Jesus to launch His messianic ministry; however, first the way must be prepared. In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar (AD 28), a voice roared from the desert of Judea. John the Baptist, the forerunner to the Christ predicted in the Old Testament, announced to the nation that the Coming One was near and Israel must repent and prepare herself for the dawn of the messianic era.

Preparing the Way

September, AD 28

I became a Christian while I was a student at the University. The first year of my new life in Christ was spent sharing the gospel with scores of my fellow students. Many of them received

Christ. Much of my time was invested in teaching Bible studies and in personal mentoring appointments. One day, together with a close friend, I went to share the gospel with another college student. To my surprise, my friend told him that unless he was baptized by immersion, he could not go to heaven. As we left the student's house I told him that I had only been baptized by sprinkling, did that mean I would not go to heaven? He told me that I would not. I responded, "I think you are denying living proof. My life has been radically transformed, and I love Christ with all my heart."

Is anything other than faith alone necessary to become a Christian? What about repentance? Not long ago a man who was not a believer, but was sincerely interested, attended a Bible study in which the gospel was being presented. He was told that to become a Christian he must commit to obey Christ in everything, live by the Sermon on the Mount, and be a fully committed life-long disciple. He was told that this was the requirement for salvation called "repentance." At the time he was going through many difficulties in his life and this challenge overwhelmed him. He could not feel drawn to such a demanding God, and, discouraged, he left the Bible study.

What about repentance? The issue of repentance is thrust upon us directly in the ministry of John the Baptist. What did he mean when he said, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near" (Mt 3:2)?

The Scriptures related to this topic are Matthew 3:1-12; Mark 1:2-8; Luke 3:1-18.

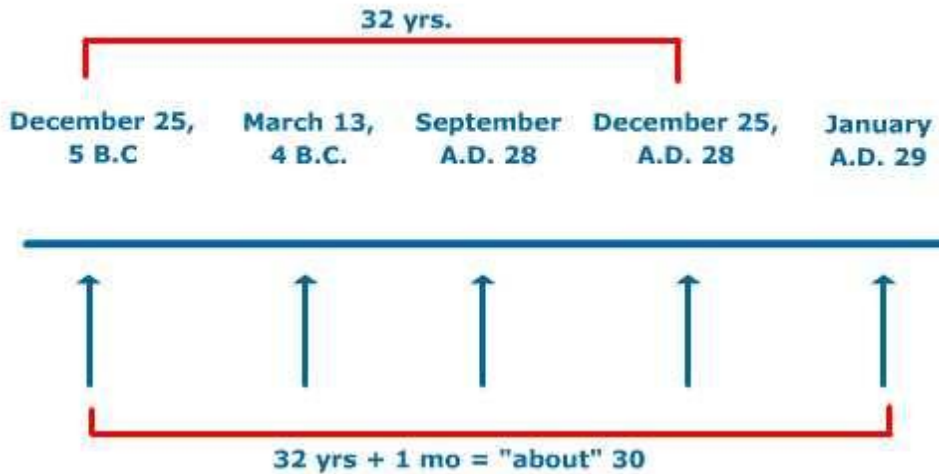
Luke tells us that in the fifteenth year of the reign of the emperor Tiberius Caesar, John the Baptist (read the Lesson 3 article "John the Baptist") came on the scene preaching that people should repent of their sins. (Lk 3:1-3). For years he had lived in the desert, eating locusts (See lesson note) while his message grew in his heart. The ministry of Christ was about to begin, but first, His herald and forerunner must prepare the way.

There are legitimate differences of opinion about when Christ began His public ministry. In this course we will assume that John the Baptist began his ministry in September, AD 29, with the ministry of Christ commencing sometime later. Based on this, Jesus had a four-year public ministry beginning in January, AD 29, and ending in April, AD 33.

According to Luke 3:23, Jesus began His ministry when He was "about" thirty. The chronology suggested in this course assumes that He had just turned thirty-two when He returned from the temptation and began His public ministry. The Greek word *hosei*, translated "about," is not a precise indicator of age. It only means that He was in His early thirties (see Acts 2:41; Mt 14:21; Lk 22:41). If His ministry began before His thirty-second birthday in December, AD 28, then Jesus could have been thirty-one.

The chart below presents the chronology assumed in this course.

Beginning of Christ's Ministry



For more background on the basis for these conclusions, read the article on the “Four-year Ministry of Christ” (at the end of the lesson).

John's Message of Repentance

Multitudes flocked to hear John, whom they regarded as a prophet. Even the Pharisees journeyed into the desert to hear this voice! John sarcastically compared them to a bunch of snakes who were coming out of their holes because a fire was sweeping the desert (Lk 3:7).

The heart of John's message was a call to repentance (read note on repentance in Lesson 3 notes). As we shall see in this topic, however, it is possible that more than individual repentance was in view. He was calling the nation to repent, to turn from sin or face certain judgment. Many scholars believe that the invasion of the Roman armies under Titus in AD 70 was the fulfillment of this warning. The ax, John said, was already laid to the root of the tree (Lk 3:9)!

QUESTION 1

In your Life Notebook record your answers to the following questions: What predictions did Isaiah (Isa 40:3-5; 52:7) make concerning John's special work, and what did that suggest about the spiritual conditions of John's time?

John's main role was to awaken Israel to the fact that the Messiah was coming. The nation was seething in rebellion against Rome and, unless the people changed their ways, was headed for a catastrophe. They longed for a “return from exile,” which was understood to be the return of their King to Zion, the removal of Roman power, and the restoration of the Davidic theocracy.

Emperor Tiberius was an evil despot. Palestine was ruled by King Herod, who was a Roman governor. (see note on Roman rule in Palestine). The Herodian Dynasty, which ruled Palestine was cruel and violently despised. Both the religious and political systems were corrupt and were causing the people great distress. Many people were looking for a way out from under the oppression. When, they wondered, would the promised Messiah come? When would the kingdom be restored to Israel?

QUESTION 2

According to the Old Testament, the land promised to the true sons of Abraham was an unconditional and irrevocable pledge God made to the nation (Gen 12:1-3; 15:18; 17:1-8). However, whether a particular generation of Jews experienced this promise was dependent upon national repentance (Ps 89:30-33; Rom 11:25-32). Based upon the teaching of John the Baptist, what would he say about whether or not the current Jewish state of Israel has a biblical claim to this land?

- A. Until they repent and turn to Christ as Messiah, they have no claim on this land.
- B. Because they are the sons of Abraham, the promises clearly apply to them.
- C. They have forfeited the claim altogether because they rejected the Messiah.
- D. The land was to be given to any generation of Jewish people, regardless of their moral condition.

The central message from John the Baptist was “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Mt 3:2). The special significance of the word *repent* is important to understand. According to John, it was necessary for the nation to repent if it was to escape the “coming wrath” (Lk 3:7-8). Some Bible scholars believe it was a call to the nation as a whole and not to individuals alone. They believe that act of repentance does not seem to be related to individuals escaping the judgment of hell. John addressed the nation with this call to escape the coming judgment in time, the Roman invasion of AD 70.

Repentance can prepare the heart for faith and certainly restores fellowship with God for the man who is already saved, but faith alone is the condition of receiving the forgiveness of sin.

QUESTION 3

In Luke 3:7-8, John the Baptist warns the Jews about the “wrath to come.” Look up the following verses in which the same word for “wrath” is used: Romans 1:18; 9:22; 12:19; 13:4; Ephesians 4:31; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 5:9; Hebrews 3:11; Revelation 6:16. Based upon these verses, the coming wrath is:

- A. God’s judgment on Satan and his angels at the Second Coming.
- B. The wrath of the Messiah.
- C. Eternal damnation in hell.
- D. A reference to a temporal judgment.

A study of the uses of the word *wrath* suggests that John was calling the nation and individuals within it to turn from their sin and away from the external formalism of a dead religion and their continual stirrings of insurrection against Rome if the nation was to have any chance of avoiding the destruction of Jerusalem that Jesus predicted would come upon them (Lk 21:20-24; Mt 24:2). This observation bears directly upon the purpose of John’s baptism and the nature of his call to repentance.

QUESTION 4

Carefully read the article “Repentance” (at the end of this lesson). Open your Life Notebook and answer these questions: What is the author’s thesis? What evidence does the author employ? Does the author acknowledge counter-arguments? Does the author demonstrate bias? If so, how? Does the author’s evidence support his thesis appropriately? Does the author ignore obvious counter-examples? Is the author persuasive? How does the author’s argument fit into the overall themes of this unit?

QUESTION 5

According to the article “Repentance,” when John called the nation to “repent,” he was: (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Calling upon them to turn from sin and obtain eternal life.
- B. Calling upon them to “get right with God,” which included believing to be saved and turning from sin to walk in fellowship.
- C. Calling upon them to believe on Christ and thus escape the wrath to come.
- D. Asking them to become his followers.

Topic 2: The Hidden Years

June, AD 8, to June, AD 28

Most of Jesus’ boyhood remains a mystery to us. Only one gospel writer recorded the story of Jesus visiting the temple in Jerusalem when He was twelve. In that story we read these words, “Why were you looking for me? Didn’t you know that I must be in my Father’s house?” (Lk 2:49). Then there is silence about His life for the next twenty years!

What was happening during those “hidden years” for both Jesus and His cousin John? After a long silence, suddenly John, nicknamed “the Baptist,” burst on the scene with his demand, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near” (Mt 3:2). Shortly thereafter, Jesus began His public ministry after submitting to baptism and then enduring temptation in the wilderness. The gospel of John alone records the earliest events including the calling of the first disciples and the first miracle at the wedding feast in Cana (see note at end of lesson).

One of the curiosities of the various presentations of Christ’s life in the Gospels is that so little is revealed about anything that occurred between His miraculous birth and His public ministry. From age twelve until His appearance at the Jordan River to be baptized by John, readers are met with total silence about His life. This has given rise to many myths that have no historical foundations. Our desire to know what Christ was doing during those “hidden years” between ages twelve and thirty-two has never been satisfied. What was happening to Jesus during those years? The text of the New Testament is as silent as the extra-biblical records: silent, except for one word—carpenter.

The Scripture related to this topic is Luke 2:52.

Oh what a blessed word! It opens a world of insight into the hidden years of our Savior. Without that one word, we would be left with nothing. But with it the tasks of manual labor have been forever dignified. Because the Son of God spent eighteen years of His life in one of the trades, the dignity of work is established. A carpenter was one of the lowliest professions, and these workers

were among the working poor of the Jewish culture. They were, however, considered to be very skilled craftsmen.

What was Jesus doing during all of those years between His birth and the beginning of His public ministry? Read the note on “Carpenter,” in the Lesson 3 Notes and the textbook excerpt from *The Life of Christ*, “The Hidden Years(at the end of the course) by Farrar before proceeding.

QUESTION 6

The discussion in Farrar lists nine things we can reasonably surmise were happening to Jesus as He matured in obscurity in Nazareth. In your Life Notebook list each of those nine items in a sentence or two. Then compare how each point of Christ’s development in Nazareth applies to your progress in fulfilling your life’s mission.

Topic 3: The Baptism of Christ

January, AD 29

At Jesus’ first appearance in Judea, He approached John the Baptist and submitted Himself to John’s baptism. Why? For what purpose? John’s baptism was not to put away sin (i.e., to replace sacrifices); rather, it was for purification. Either way, why did the sinless Son of God submit to such a baptism? (Read note on “baptism” found in Lesson 3 Notes.)

It is very likely that he did this in order to take the next step in the outworking of the history of salvation.

If Jesus was sinless, why did he submit to John’s baptism for the forgiveness of sins? Some have said that this proves that Jesus had a consciousness of His own sin and thus could not be God, as the early church claimed? For further discussion see the information on baptism in the articles section (at the end of the lesson) under “John the Baptist.”

The Scriptures related to this topic are Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-38.

After all those years in obscurity, Jesus emerged from Nazareth to present Himself for baptism by John the Baptist. This occurred in January, AD 29, just after his thirty-second birthday.

QUESTION 7

From John’s point of view, even the Messiah of Israel must identify with His people through baptism in order to escape the coming wrath. *True or False?*

QUESTION 8

Why did Christ submit to John’s baptism?

The exchange between Christ and His Father, in which the Father declared Jesus to be His “one dear Son” (Lk 3:22), may have been a private experience between Christ and His heavenly Father. There is no indication of any reaction from the crowds (Mk 1:9-11). Mark tells us that the

heavens were “opened.” The Greek word *skizein*, translated “open,” may be significant. It speaks of a ripping open of the heavens. The violence of the term indicates that the kingdom of heaven is now breaking in. God is about to enter history in a way completely different from anything He has done before!

In no uncertain terms, Jesus is declared to be God’s Son. It is probable that this declaration by God recalls Psalm 2:7 and Isaiah 42:1. It is significant that the Old Testament anticipated that God would have a Son other than His “son” Israel.

The baptism of Christ brings the ministry of John and Jesus together. In this event we see God’s prophet, John, preparing the way for God’s Son-Messiah, heralding the approach of a new era of deliverance from God.

Topic 4: The Genealogy of Christ

We now come to Luke’s presentation of the genealogy of Christ. In the Jewish culture a genealogy was the main way of documenting inheritance rights; therefore, accurate records were of great importance. But even more important was the claim that Jesus and His followers made, that He was Israel’s long-awaited Messiah. For that claim to have any validity, it was imperative that the gospel writers prove that Jesus was both a legal heir and blood descendant of David. The promises of the kingdom were given to David and to his “descendant” (2 Sam 7:12-16; Ps 89:28-37). The Messiah was to be a “root of Jesse,” a physical descendant of Jesse, David’s father (Isa 11:10; Rom 15:12), and of David’s “house” (2 Sam 7:16), the tribe of Judah. If Jesus’ ancestry could not be proven, then His messianic claims would be rejected outright. Therefore, both Matthew and Luke supply their readers with the necessary genealogical data.

The Jeconiah Curse

While interacting with a professor of theology one day, I was challenged regarding his belief that there were errors in the Bible. I responded that I did not believe there were any errors.

The professor said, “Then how do you explain the contradictions between the genealogies of Jesus recorded by Matthew and Luke.”

“What contradiction?” I replied.

“Well,” he said, “Matthew tells us, for example, that Joseph (Jesus’ father) was the son of Jacob (Mt 1:16); Luke contradicts this saying that Joseph was the son of Heli (Lk 3:23).”

In this topic, we will explore the answer to the professor’s objection.

The Scriptures related to this section are Luke 3:23-38; Matthew 1:1-17; 1 Kings 1:28-30; Jeremiah 22:28-30; 1 Chronicles 22:9-10.

According to the messianic promises, the legal right to the throne of David came down through the line of Solomon (1 Kgs 1:28-30). David was promised that, through Solomon’s dynasty, “permanent” rule over Israel would be granted (1 Chr 22:9-10).



However, a problem developed toward the end of the rule of the southern kingdom (600 BC). In Judah, one of her kings, Jeconiah, sinned so grievously that God said no blood descendant of his would ever sit on the throne of Israel (Jer 22:28-30). Yet it was through this line, the line of Judah from David through Solomon to Jeconiah, that the legal right to rule was passed. It was to Solomon and his house that the inheritance rights were granted.

QUESTION 9

If the legal inheritance rights could only be passed on via Solomon's line but no one from that line could be a blood descendant, how is it possible that Jesus could be the blood descendant of David and the legal heir through Solomon? Notice that, in the diagram above, David's son Solomon qualified to reign as Israel's king.

Two Accounts

QUESTION 10

How does the genealogy in Luke's gospel differ from that in Matthew's? How do their purposes differ? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Matthew shows Jesus' genealogy goes back to Adam; Luke does not.
- B. Matthew traces Jesus' genealogy back to Solomon to establish his legal right to the throne.
- C. Luke tracks Jesus' line backwards from Mary to Nathan.
- D. Luke wants to show that Jesus is the true Son of Man by tracing His lineage to Adam.
- E. Matthew wants to show that Jesus is the King of Israel by following His ancestry back to David.

Luke notes that Jesus began His public ministry "at about age thirty" (Lk 3:23). Assuming Jesus was born in December, 5 BC, and His baptism was in the fall of AD 28, He was thirty-one, a month or so shy of His thirty-second birthday, when He was baptized and probably began His public ministry shortly thereafter. As discussed previously, this course assumes His ministry began in January, AD 29, just after His thirty-second birthday when He was "about thirty."

Topic 5: The Temptation of Christ

February, AD 29

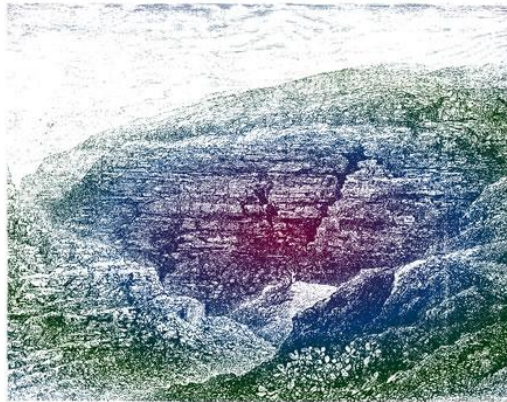
The battle now must be joined! The heavens had been ripped open (Mk 1:10), the kingdom was breaking in, and Jesus knew that He must now depart to face His enemy. The Sinless One must show Himself sinless and qualified to be the Redeemer of those He came to save. These forty days would not only prepare Him for ministry (Heb 2:10-18) but also set up a test of His qualifications for it.

From the waters of the Jordan He was led (Mk 1:12 says He was “driven”) by the Spirit into the wilderness. There, for forty days, the sinless Son of Man endured every onslaught that the enemy of our souls could hurl at Him. In the desert He endured and was victorious.

We are all confronted with temptation on a daily basis. For some the temptations seem to be so severe that no amount of willpower is sufficient to resist them. Because Jesus was sinless and therefore unable to sin, anytime He was tempted, the temptation increased to the maximum. Because we are sinful, we always yield before it has reached its maximum strength. Therefore Jesus felt the power of temptation to sin more strongly than any of us. Yet the scripture says He was without sin. How did He do it? How was He able to resist temptation successfully? In the discussion to follow we will learn from Him!

The Scriptures related to this topic are Matthew 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-13.

A tradition, said to be no older than the time of the Crusades, fixes the scene of the temptation on a mountain to the south of Jericho. Naked and arid, rising precipitously from a desert plain, overlooking the salty waters of the Dead Sea (see note at end of lesson), this mountain was imagined to be the haunt of evil influences. It was a place where, in the language of the prophets, the owls dwell and the satyrs dance. That mount of temptation offered a sharp contrast to the smiling softness of the hillside where the Beatitudes were spoken and to the limpid crystal blue of the Sea of Galilee. And there, according to the graphic descriptors of Mark, Jesus was with the wild beasts. They could not harm Him; the psalmist writes, “You will trample underfoot a young lion and a serpent” (Ps 91:13). (Adapted from Frederick Farrar, *The Life of Christ*, chap. 9.)



Into this barren wilderness of Judea, Christ was led by the Holy Spirit for his battle with Satan.

Into this desolate wilderness, Jesus was led by the Spirit to engage in a battle with Satan.

Satan waited forty days before he began his assault. Having suffered forty days without food, Christ's body was weakened, and His emotions were drained like a soldier at the end of a battle or a champion just finishing a race. He was at His most vulnerable state when the tempter struck: "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become bread" (Mt 4:3). Jesus was hungry, and the stones may have even begun to look like little loaves of bread, increasing the temptation. For further information, read the textbook article (at end of course) by Farrar on the first "Temptation."

In the gospel of Matthew, during Satan's second attack, Jesus was tempted to put God to the test. Satan challenged Jesus: "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down" (Mt 4:6). In other words, "You are not in danger, and by doing this, you can prove your trust in God. The angels will certainly hold you up." Since Jesus had appealed to Scripture, the devil also quoted Scripture for his purpose.

This was a deep and clever temptation (see note on "Temptation of Hunger" at end of Lesson 3) for there was nothing vulgar, selfish, or sensuous in this temptation. It was *not* an appeal to natural appetites; instead, its attraction was to perverted spiritual impulses. The history of church splits, the creation of sects, and the downfall of religious leaders demonstrate that thousands, who would never sink into the slough of sensuality, have instead rushed headlong into ruin from the pinnacle of spiritual pride.

And how calm, yet full of warning, was the Lord's simple response, "Once again it is written: *'You are not to put the Lord your God to the test'*" (Mt 4:7).

The words of the command, "you are not," mean you must not presume upon all that God can do for you! You shall not claim God's miraculous intervention to save you from your own presumption and folly; you shall not challenge His power just for the sake of proving it.

QUESTION 11

In each temptation, what was Jesus' basic approach to dealing with the enemy?

- A. He railed against Satan and rebuked him.
- B. He directed His mind to think of other things.
- C. He knew that He needed to fast in order to overcome temptation.
- D. He used the Word of God as His shield of defense.

QUESTION 12

What are some ways you or others may have tempted the Lord?

QUESTION 13

Based upon a reading of Psalm 2:8, it is probable that Satan's offer of the kingdoms of this world to Jesus was not a serious temptation. *True or False?*

Foiled in his appeal to the Lord's hunger and to spiritual pride, Satan staked his final attempt on man's carnal desire for self-glorification. What Satan lacked in subtlety, he made up for by the sheer magnificence of his offer. From a high mountain he showed Jesus all of the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. As the "prince of this world," he offered them all to Him, who had lived as the village carpenter, in return for one expression of homage, one act of acknowledgment.

Satan does not need to tempt us with kingdoms, as much less will do. He offers us a better job, a higher status, a financial reward, or sometimes just a meal and a pair of shoes if we will compromise on God's principles.

Satan says to us, "God is not answering your prayer or doing anything you asked for. Better take things into your own hands and do it your own way."

Some trivial matter often brings us to our knees before the devil, until we are reminded by the Spirit that Christ taught, "What advantage is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?" (Mk 8:36).

QUESTION 14

Read the section (at the end of the course) in Farrar on the "Temptation of Christ." In your Life Notebook, summarize in your own words the nature of each temptation, and what you learned about Jesus' method of dealing with each one.

Topic 6: The Lamb of God

February, AD 29

Jesus began His ministry through the open door created by His forerunner, John the Baptist. The Baptist had called the people to recognize that the new era was coming and to prepare by repenting. God wanted a purified people to walk in His paths. John stressed the ethical requirements of those who would bring forth fruit in keeping with repentance.

When the Coming One appeared at His baptism, God "ripped open" the heavens and poured upon Him the provision of the Holy Spirit, anointing Him for ministry. Jesus then entered into the temptation in the wilderness and, after coming forth victorious, began His ministry. The forerunner pointed the way, God opened the way, and Satan failed to block the way. The first step of victory in the salvation of man was achieved.

Victorious over the fiery ordeal that took place during the wilderness temptation, Jesus returned to the fords of the Jordan River. The Synoptic Gospels, which mainly describe Christ's ministry in Galilee and date its commencement from the imprisonment of John, omit all record of the intermediate events before our Lord's retirement to Nazareth. We owe the beautiful narrative of the days which immediately followed the temptation to the fourth evangelist. John begins his eyewitness reporting with the details of encounters Jesus had when He went to the river.

In fact, John seems to have made it a point to relate nothing to which he had not been an eyewitness. There are a few indications that John had special connections in Jerusalem (Jn 18:15). Although the apostle John was a fisherman, he may have lived in Jerusalem at certain seasons

when the fish from the Sea of Galilee (see note at end of lesson) were sent in large quantities to the city. This may have occurred in connection with his employment with his father and his brother who, as the owners of their own boat and the masters of hired servants, evidently occupied a position of some importance. Be that as it may, John's gospel alone narrates Jesus' earliest call of the apostles, and he paints graphic touches on the details as one upon whose heart and memory each incident had been indelibly impressed.

It is instructive that Jesus devoted his life to twelve ordinary men. He was entrusting His life's work to fishermen, tax collectors, political activities, and common laborers. The strategy obviously worked. Why? What can we learn from him that we can apply to our own mentoring and discipleship relationships with others?

The Scripture related to this topic is John 1:19-34.

The deputation of priests and Levites sent from the Sanhedrin to question John the Baptist seems to have taken place one day prior to our Lord's return from the wilderness. On the morning of His return, John the Baptist saw Jesus approaching, he delivered a public and emphatic testimony that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. John the Baptist announced that the One who had been marked out to him by the appointed sign was "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn 1:29). He must have used the expression with distinct reference to the picture of divine patience and suffering in Isaiah 53:7 and Jeremiah 11:19. John's words could hardly have involved a lesser meaning than this—that the gentle and sinless Man to whom he pointed would be the Man of sorrows, and that these sorrows would be for the salvation of His race.

QUESTION 15

Which of the following describe what John meant when he referred to Jesus as the Lamb of God in John 1:29? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Christ paid the price for our sin.
- B. Christ was an illustration of humility.
- C. Christ provided atonement.
- D. Christ was spotless and without blemish.
- E. Christ's death was to be an example of how we all should love others.

Topic 7: Choosing the First Five Disciples

"Lamb of God!" What an amazing confession that must have been for John's audience to hear! Memorable as that testimony was, it seems to have produced no tangible results on the first day John proclaimed it. However, on the following day, when the Baptist was standing with two of his disciples, Jesus walked by again. John, fixing his intense and earnest gaze upon Him, exclaimed again, as though with involuntary awe, "Behold the Lamb of God!" The words were too remarkable to be neglected again, and the two Galilean youths who heard them followed the retreating figure of Jesus. He caught the sound of their timid footsteps and, turning around to look at them as they came near, gently asked, "What do you want?" (Jn 1:38).

During the events which followed (see Jn 1:35-51), Jesus selected His first five disciples: Peter, John, Andrew, Philip, and Nathanael. Let's take a look!

Peter, John, and Andrew

February, AD 29

A weary pastor returned home late at night after attending a grueling four-hour “elders” meeting. A pall of discouragement swept over him as he drove home thinking about the events which had just transpired. He remembered that he suggested to the men that they open in about thirty minutes of conversational prayer. One of the elders looked at his watch and said, “We have a lot to discuss tonight, and I think many of us need to get home to our families, why don’t you just open us in prayer to save time?” Then after the pastor excitedly presented his vision for the church, one elder replied, “I have been a member of this church for fifteen years; this is my church, and I will not have you changing it.” Noticing that one of the leading elders was not present, he asked, “Where is Bill?” He was told that Bill had just received the news that his wife was divorcing him because of years of physical and emotional abuse. As a result, he wanted to withdraw from the elder board.

How were these men selected to become leaders of the church? A major problem in our churches is that leaders are often selected because of their position in the community, their wealth, their networks, or how many years they have been members.

If you were going to select some key individuals whom you would like to invest your life in, what selection criteria would you chose?

Read “Beginnings,” a brief article in the textbooks section (at the end of the course) from A.B. Bruce’s book *The Training of the Twelve*.

The Scripture related to this topic is John 1:35-42.

Immediately after the temptation in the wilderness, Jesus traveled north to the region of Perea (read note on “Perea” in Lesson 3 Notes) where John was baptizing people in the Jordan River. John had declared Jesus to be the Lamb of God. The next day two of John’s disciples, upon hearing this, began to follow Jesus.

QUESTION 16

Why would these men so suddenly leave all and follow Christ? Read the lesson note on “Appearance of Christ.” (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. They were immature and impulsive.
- B. John, their leader, pointed to Christ as the Messiah.
- C. They were no doubt part of a community looking for the Coming One.
- D. They saw in Jesus the possibility of their obtaining political positions in His Kingdom right from the beginning.
- E. Christ apparently possessed a dramatic sense of personal presence, dignity, and charisma.

QUESTION 17

The first two disciples called by Jesus were:

- A. John and Andrew
- B. Peter and John
- C. Philip and Nathanael
- D. Andrew and Philip

It is striking that the Lord gave Peter a new name right from the beginning of their acquaintance. He would no longer be called Simon. Instead, he would be called Cephas in Aramaic, which in Greek is translated “Peter” (Jn 1:42) and means “rock.” It was common for rabbis to give characterizing nicknames to their disciples. The name Simon may mean “violent or unstable.” Another suggestion is that it comes from a root which means “hearing.” Thus, Simon is a “hearer.” Indeed, Jesus saw Simon in terms of what he could become.

QUESTION 18

Based upon what you have read and the name Jesus gave to Peter, why do you think Peter was selected by Christ?

- A. Because, being a fisherman, he had good connections with many others all around the Sea of Galilee.
- B. Because Jesus saw Peter in terms of what he could be and wanted to be.
- C. Because he was Andrew's brother.
- D. Because Jesus wanted only common workers to be part of His band of apostles.

Philip and Nathanael

February, AD 29

The Scripture related to this topic is John 1:43-51.

On the following day, Jesus traveled north to Galilee. There He met a young fisherman named Philip in the village of Bethsaida (see notes regarding “Philip” and “Bethsaida” at end of lesson). Jesus looked at him and said, “Follow me” (Jn 1:43). Seemingly without an afterthought, Philip not only followed, but went to find his friend Nathanael to invite him to follow as well.

A fifth neophyte was added to that sacred and happy band when Philip, eager to communicate the discovery he had made, sought out Nathanael. It is generally believed that Nathanael and Bartholomew are names for the same person. Nathanael’s name only appears in John’s gospel twice, but John never refers to Bartholomew; however, the Synoptic Gospels all refer to Bartholomew (literally, “son of Tolmai”).

Nathanael’s home was in Cana of Galilee (Jn 21:2), so he might have become acquainted with the young fishermen of Galilee. It is interesting to note that Nathanael knew Philip who was from Bethsaida, the same town Andrew and Peter called home, some eighteen miles away as the crow flies; yet, he knew nothing of Jesus whose hometown was a much shorter distance from Cana. Nathanael’s response to Philip’s excitement about meeting the One of whom the prophets wrote was, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” (Jn 1:46).

Philip found Nathanael under a fig tree (see note at end of lesson) and encouraged him to meet Jesus. The Lord looked at Nathanael and commented that while he was under the fig tree, Jesus knew him. Nathanael's response seems out of proportion to the Lord's comment (see Jn 1:17-49). How could this allusion to Nathanael's silent contemplations under the fig tree produce such an instantaneous response to follow Christ?

We do not have the answer to this question, but we do know that Christ's appearance produced a dramatic effect on people. He possessed a great sense of charisma. (Reread the special note on "Christ's appearance.")

The immediate cause of Nathanael's choice to follow Christ seems to be connected with Christ's indication that He knew what Nathanael was thinking about as he meditated under the fig tree. Only one who knew the secrets of hearts could have known those thoughts. Consider how you would feel if someone approached you and told you what you were praying about and where you were praying when he had not been physically present at the time. This would have an incredible impact on you. For Nathanael it certainly did.

QUESTION 19

What was the good trait Jesus evidently saw in Nathanael (Jn 1:47)? Why would that make him a good disciple?

The first band of followers gathered around Jesus; it was a small beginning to a great movement that would one day change the course of history. The five fishermen were ordinary people like us. They were, however, characterized by one thing, total devotion to Jesus.

Topic 8: Changing Water to Wine—The First Miracle

April, AD 29

Jesus left the region of the Jordan, chose His first five disciples, and led them into the city of Cana in Galilee. There He and His new disciples joined His mother at a wedding feast, possibly the wedding of one of His relatives since His mother seemed to have felt some responsibility for making sure the guests had enough to drink. There the first miracle of His public career was performed when He turned water to wine.

John tells us that Jesus made God fully known (Jn 1:18). One reason Christ came to earth is to explain to us what God is like. The Holy Spirit knows, even if we do not, that the best way to explain spiritual reality is to clothe it in flesh and blood. In this topic we will not only study Jesus' first miracle, but we will learn some things about what God is like by observing His relationships. As you study this topic, ask yourself, "*What am I learning about the nature of God as I observe Jesus' behavior at the wedding feast in Cana?*"

The Scripture related to this topic is John 2:1-12.

In Cana of Galilee, a small village four or so miles north of Nazareth, the Lord performed His first miracle. In those days wedding ceremonies in Palestine started at twilight when the bride would begin a march to the home of the bridegroom. She was covered from head to toe in a loose and flowing veil, garlanded with flowers, and dressed in her fairest robes. She was heralded by

torchlight with songs and dances to the music of the drum and flute as she approached the bridegroom's home. She was attended by the maidens of her village, while the bridegroom came to meet her with his youthful friends.

The village of Cana was the location of the first of Jesus' thirty-five recorded miracles.

The presence of Mary, who must have traveled from Nazareth to attend the wedding, seems to indicate that one of the bridal pair was a member of her family. Jesus and His disciples were also invited (the use of the singular form of the verb *invite* implies that they were invited for His sake, not He for theirs). We cannot know with certainty, but the fact that Mary evidently took a leading position in the house and commanded the servants in an authoritative tone renders it possible that this may have been the wedding of one of her nephews, the sons of Alphaeus, or even of one of her daughters, "the sisters of Jesus," to whom tradition gives the names Esther and Thamar. That Joseph himself was dead is evident from the complete silence about him in the Gospels, which, after Christ's first visit to Jerusalem as a boy, make no further mention of his name.

QUESTION 20

Based upon your reading in John 2:1-12 and what you read in the section called "The First Miracle" in Farrar (at the end of the course), select the items below which are correct.

- A. Jesus' first miracle was an act of selflessness.
- B. The dramatic turning of water to wine was an unobtrusive miracle.
- C. Calling Mary "Woman" was a rather harsh address to one's mother.
- D. Each stone jar contained about twenty to thirty gallons.
- E. This miracle was symbolic of many things Jesus intended to do.

Topic 9: Matching Events

QUESTION 21

One of the objectives of this course is for you to gain a working knowledge of the major events in the life of Christ and know the chapter in the Gospels where each of sixty-one events occurred.

To help you memorize these events, we have compiled a list of sixty-one important events in the life of Christ. Take a moment and review events 1, 2, and 4-9. You will find them in the article titled "Matching Events" at the end of this course. Hold your hand over the event descriptions on the left and see if you can identify the associated Scriptures on the right.

Topic 10: Knowing, Being, Doing

Now you will have the opportunity to reflect upon what you have learned and apply the principles in a practical way. The next four questions will help you do this. This is intended to be a devotional time with the Lord; therefore, do not brush past this. If you are not able to spend at least a half hour in prayer and reflective thought right now, it might be better for you to wait to answer these three questions until you can prepare your heart for this exercise.

QUESTION 22: KNOWING

In your Life Notebook record your reflections upon the life and example of Christ. Consider all that you have learned about the nature and actions of God by observing Jesus. Review your readings from Matthew 3:1-17; 4:1-11, and ask God to reveal Himself to you in the Bible's description of His Son. List all that you have learned about God.

QUESTION 23: BEING

Jesus said that Nathanael was a "true Israelite in whom there is no deceit," or in the words of other translations, he was "without guile" (Jn 1:47). This is very similar to what Peter referred to when he spoke of godliness (see note at end of lesson). Use your Life Notebook to begin a section entitled "Knowing." Record what you have learned about yourself in regard to godliness after having read about Nathanael and about godliness.

QUESTION 24: DOING

Think for a moment about how Jesus trained His men. In your Life Notebook write out the principles you have learned from observing Jesus and His five new disciples in this lesson. Then describe situations where you could put these principles into practice, and write out in concrete terms what you plan to do. You may want to review the sections John 1:35-42 and "Beginnings" in A.B. Bruce's book *The Training of the Twelve*. Make a list of ten individuals you want to pray for—that God will form them into a group with whom you can share this course. Conclude your Life Notebook discussion of Knowing, Being, and Doing by writing a prayer to God in which you praise Him and ask Him for help in developing personal godliness and a Christlike strategy for training your "disciples."

Lesson 3 Self Check

QUESTION 1

According to the Old Testament, the land promised to the true sons of Abraham was an unconditional and irrevocable pledge that God made to the nation. Based upon the teaching of John the Baptist, what would he say about whether or not the Jewish state of Israel today has a biblical claim to this land?

- A. Until they repent and turn to Christ as Messiah, they have no claim on this land.
- B. Because they are the sons of Abraham, the promises clearly apply to them.
- C. They forfeited the claim altogether because they rejected the Messiah.
- D. They have a biblical mandate to own the land because of their victory in war.

QUESTION 2

From John's point of view, even the Messiah of Israel must identify with His people through baptism in order to escape the coming wrath. *True or False?*

QUESTION 3

Matthew traces Jesus' genealogy back to Solomon to establish His legal right to the throne. *True or False?*

QUESTION 4

Based upon the section in the lesson on "The Lamb of God," what did John mean when he referred to Jesus as the Lamb of God?

- A. Christ paid part of the price for our sin.
- B. Christ was an illustration of greatness.
- C. Christ provided atonement.
- D. Christ's death was to be an example of how we all should love others.

QUESTION 5

Based upon your reading John 2:1-12 and "The First Miracle" in Farrar, which item below is correct?

- A. Jesus' first miracle was an act of selfishness.
- B. The dramatic turning of water to wine was an obtrusive miracle.
- C. Calling Mary "Woman" was a rather harsh address to one's mother.
- D. Each stone jar contained about forty gallons.
- E. This miracle was symbolic of many things Jesus intended to do.

QUESTION 6

According to the discussion in the lesson, “about thirty” means that Jesus began His ministry when He was: *(Select all that apply.)*

- A. Thirty-two years and one month old
- B. Thirty-one years and eleven months old
- C. Thirty years old
- D. Thirty-two years old

QUESTION 7

Although there is little information in the Gospels regarding the “hidden years” of Jesus’ life between age twelve and when he was “about thirty,” we are fortunate to have some reliable information about this period in literature outside the Bible. *True or False?*

QUESTION 8

Christ submitted to the Baptism of John in order to fulfill all _____.

QUESTION 9

As discussed in this lesson, John’s call to “repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,” was not a call to personal salvation from hell, but a call for the nation to turn to Jesus as Messiah to escape the wrath of God’s judgment upon the nation in time. *True or False?*

QUESTION 10

The essence of the temptation to jump off the pinnacle of the temple and allow the angels to catch Him was very subtle because?

- A. It was a warning not to arouse God’s anger.
- B. It was a warning not to presume upon God.
- C. It was a temptation to demonstrate that He was truly the Messiah.
- D. It was a temptation to use His divine power independently of God the Father.

Unit One Exam

QUESTION 1

Read these Scriptures: Matthew 1:1-17 and Luke 3:23-38. Why does Matthew trace the genealogy of Christ back to Abraham?

- A. To establish that Jesus was truly the owner of the property upon which He and His family lived
- B. To satisfy a Jewish cultural requirement for precise detail
- C. To show that Jesus was truly the Son of God
- D. To demonstrate that Jesus was in fact a descendant of Abraham and David and was a rightful heir to the throne of Israel

QUESTION 2

The gospel of Matthew presents Jesus primarily as:

- A. The coming King predicted in the Old Testament
- B. The suffering servant who would die for the sins of the world
- C. The eternal Son of God
- D. The Son of Man

QUESTION 3

Why was David mentioned several times in Matthew's genealogy, while Luke mentioned him only once?

- A. Because Luke was written primarily for the Jews.
- B. Because Matthew was written primarily to the Jews and he wanted to show that Jesus is descended from David.
- C. There was no particular reason; it was simply a stylistic variation.
- D. Because Matthew wanted to prove that Jesus is the divine Son of Man.

QUESTION 4

Christ never referred to Himself as the "Son of God." *True or False?*

QUESTION 5

In the gospel of Mark, what were the three names that were used to describe the Lord Jesus Christ?

- A. King of Israel, Son of God, and Rabbi
- B. Christ Jesus, Son of Man, and Lamb of God
- C. Jesus, Messiah, and Son of God
- D. Master, Lord, and King

QUESTION 6

The gospel of Luke emphasizes:

- A. The deity of Christ
- B. The humanity of Christ
- C. The prophetic fulfillment in the Life of Christ
- D. The doctrines of the future

QUESTION 7

In Hebrew thought, the central idea of the *logos* was of an energy which pervades the universe and from which it develops. *True or False?*

QUESTION 8

The central purpose of the gospel of John was to:

- A. Present the full humanity of Christ
- B. Present Jesus as a true man
- C. Present Jesus as a suffering servant
- D. Present Jesus as one who works miracles which authenticate His claim to deity

QUESTION 9

Possible reasons for including Ruth in the genealogy of our Lord are: *(Select all that apply.)*

- A. She illustrates that Gentiles are being brought back into fellowship with God.
- B. She is a supreme illustration of faith.
- C. She illustrates the terrible blackness of sin.
- D. She shows that even adultery does not exclude one from the forgiveness of God.

QUESTION 10

The term “Son of God” was clearly a messianic term in first century Palestine. *True or False?*

QUESTION 11

According to the Old Testament, the land promised to the true sons of Abraham was an unconditional and irrevocable pledge God made to the nation. Based upon the teaching of John the Baptist, what would he say about whether or not the Jewish state of Israel today has a biblical claim to this land?

- A. Until they repent and turn to Christ as Messiah, they have no claim on this land.
- B. Because they are the sons of Abraham, the promises clearly apply to them.
- C. They forfeited the claim altogether because they rejected the Messiah.
- D. They have a biblical mandate to own the land because of their victory in war.

QUESTION 12

From John’s point of view, even the Messiah of Israel must identify with His people through baptism in order to escape the coming wrath. *True or False?*

QUESTION 13

Matthew traces Jesus' genealogy back to Solomon to establish His legal right to the throne. *True or False?*

QUESTION 14

Elizabeth's song in Luke 1:42-45 makes it clear that she expressed her faith by immediately recognizing Mary's unborn child to be her "Lord." *True or False?*

QUESTION 15

The word used for "virgin" (Hebrew *almah*) is sometimes used for a married woman as well as an unmarried woman. *True or False?*

QUESTION 16

Mary and Joseph were obedient to all of the requirements of the Mosaic Law regarding Jesus' birth and thus demonstrated their faith in the promises of the Abrahamic covenant. *True or False?*

QUESTION 17

Why was Jesus' birth at Bethlehem rather than Nazareth significant to Israel?

- A. The prophecy in Micah 5:2 said the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, the city of David.
- B. It really did not matter in what city Jesus was born as long as He was born in Israel.
- C. Bethlehem was a quiet village where Joseph could protect Mary and hide from the gossip that was in Nazareth.
- D. Isaiah 7:14 recorded a prophecy that said the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem.

QUESTION 18

What edict or announcement contributed to the fulfillment of the prophecies of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem?

- A. The edict of Herod the Great
- B. The edict of Augustus
- C. The edict of Tiberius
- D. The edict of Pilate

QUESTION 19

When Jesus became a man, He became man so completely that He gave up some of the attributes of deity and for thirty-four years ceased to be fully God. *True or False?*

QUESTION 20

The doctrine of the Virgin Birth is important because:

- A. It proves that Jesus is God.
- B. It establishes the authority of the Bible.
- C. It was the only way Jesus could have a sinless nature.
- D. It resulted in a God-man, fully God and yet fully human.

QUESTION 21

Based upon your reading and comparison of Zechariah's "Benedictus" to Mary's "Magnificat," which of the following similarities were evident? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Both showed no knowledge of the Old Testament.
- B. Both praised God for salvation as a fulfillment of His covenant with Abraham.
- C. Both recognized Jesus as the Messiah.
- D. Both seemed to come from the higher classes of Jewish society.

QUESTION 22

According to the gospels, the magi came for the purpose of _____.

QUESTION 23

Both the "Benedictus" and the "Magnificat" reflected praise that God was fulfilling his promises to Abraham. *True or False?*

QUESTION 24

According to the discussion in the lesson, "about thirty" means that Jesus began His ministry when He was: (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Thirty-two years and one month old
- B. Thirty-one years and eleven months old
- C. Thirty years old
- D. Thirty-two years old

QUESTION 25

As discussed in the third lesson, John's call to "repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," was not a call to personal salvation from hell, but a call for the nation to turn to Jesus as Messiah to escape the wrath of God's judgment upon the nation in time. *True or False?*

Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1: *Your answer*

QUESTION 2:

A. Until they repent and turn to Christ as Messiah, they have no claim on this land.

QUESTION 3:

D. A reference to a temporal judgment.

QUESTION 4: *Your answer*

QUESTION 5:

B. Calling upon them to “get right with God,” which included believing to be saved and turning from sin to walk in fellowship.

C. Calling upon them to believe on Christ and thus escape the wrath to come.

QUESTION 6: *Your answer*

QUESTION 7: False

QUESTION 8:

According to the article, and most students of this issue seem to agree, Christ submitted to John’s baptism for three reasons. First, it was to “fulfill all righteousness” (Mt 3:15). This refers to fulfillment in the next step in the outworking of salvation history, the anointing of the Messiah for ministry. Second, it was for His identification with John and his message. And, third, it was the time of His official anointing and confirmation from His Father for His future ministry.

QUESTION 9:

There is only one legitimate way in which the legal right to the throne and the blood lineage could be passed on—a virgin birth! If the Messiah had to be a blood descendant of David’s but that blood descendant could never be the legal heir, then the legal right to the throne had to be passed on through Joseph, a descendant of Solomon, and the blood lineage through Mary, a descendant of Nathan, David’s other son. Therefore, Joseph could not be the biological father of Jesus or the curse on Jeconiah would have been invalidated. But Joseph had to be Jesus’ father by marriage, so the legal inheritance rights of the house of David could be passed on to Mary’s firstborn son.

QUESTION 10:

B. Matthew traces Jesus’ genealogy back to Solomon to establish his legal right to the throne.

C. Luke tracks Jesus’ line backwards from Mary to Nathan.

D. Luke wants to show that Jesus is the true Son of Man by tracing His lineage to Adam.

E. Matthew wants to show that Jesus is the King of Israel by following His ancestry back to David.

QUESTION 11:

D. He used the Word of God as His shield of defense.

QUESTION 12:

Your answer might include things such as: (1) refusing to see a doctor because you are trusting God to perform a “miracle”; (2) spending money you do not have for a project for God and believing that, because it is “His work,” God will supply the money; (3) making very risky business decisions because you have promised God that you will give Him a percentage of the profits, trusting Him that the business plan will result in profits.

QUESTION 13: False

QUESTION 14: *Your answer*

QUESTION 15:

- A. Christ paid the price for our sin.
- B. Christ was an illustration of humility.
- C. Christ provided atonement.
- D. Christ was spotless and without blemish.

QUESTION 16:

- B. John, their leader, pointed to Christ as the Messiah.
- C. They were no doubt part of a community looking for the Coming One.
- E. Christ apparently possessed a dramatic sense of personal presence, dignity, and charisma.

QUESTION 17:

- A. John and Andrew

QUESTION 18:

- B. Because Jesus saw Peter in terms of what he could be and wanted to be.

QUESTION 19:

Jesus describes him as straightforward and transparent, that is, “a true Israelite in whom there is no deceit!” This trait was essential for a disciple of Jesus as He sought to call the nation away from the hypocritical tendencies of legalism to a true knowledge of grace.

QUESTION 20:

- A. Jesus’ first miracle was an act of selflessness.
- B. The dramatic turning of water to wine was an unobtrusive miracle.
- D. Each stone jar contained about twenty to thirty gallons.
- E. This miracle was symbolic of many things Jesus intended to do.

QUESTION 21: *Your answer*

QUESTION 22: *Your answer*

QUESTION 23: *Your answer*

QUESTION 24: *Your answer*

Lesson 3 Self Check Answers:

QUESTION 1:

A. Until they repent and turn to Christ as Messiah, they have no claim on this land.

QUESTION 2: False

QUESTION 3: True

QUESTION 4:

C. Christ provided atonement.

QUESTION 5:

E. This miracle was symbolic of many things Jesus intended to do.

QUESTION 6:

A. Thirty-two years and one month old

B. Thirty-one years and eleven months old

QUESTION 7: False

QUESTION 8: Righteousness

QUESTION 9: True

QUESTION 10:

B. It was a warning not to presume upon God.

Unit One Exam Answers

QUESTION 1:

D. To demonstrate that Jesus was in fact a descendant of Abraham and David and was a rightful heir to the throne of Israel.

QUESTION 2:

A. The coming King predicted in the Old Testament.

QUESTION 3:

B. Because Matthew was written primarily to the Jews and he wanted to show that Jesus is descended from David.

QUESTION 4: True

QUESTION 5:

C. Jesus, Messiah, and Son of God

QUESTION 6:

B. The humanity of Christ.

QUESTION 7: False

QUESTION 8:

D. Present Jesus as one who works miracles, which authenticate His claim to deity.

QUESTION 9:

A. She illustrates that Gentiles are being brought back into fellowship with God.

B. She is a supreme illustration of faith.

QUESTION 10: True

QUESTION 11:

A. Until they repent and turn to Christ as Messiah, they have no claim on this land.

QUESTION 12: False

QUESTION 13: True

QUESTION 14: True

QUESTION 15: True

QUESTION 16: True

QUESTION 17:

A. The prophecy in Micah 5:2 said the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, the city of David.

QUESTION 18:

B. The edict of Augustus

QUESTION 19: False

QUESTION 20:

D. It resulted in a God-man, fully God and yet fully human.

QUESTION 21:

B. Both praised God for salvation as a fulfillment of His covenant with Abraham.

C. Both recognized Jesus as the Messiah.

QUESTION 22:

Correct answers include:

Worship

Praise

Adoration

QUESTION 23: True

QUESTION 24:

A. Thirty-two years and one month old

B. Thirty-one years and eleven months old

QUESTION 25: True

Lesson 3 Notes

Appearance of Christ

We do not know what Jesus looked like but we can surmise that He possessed an electrifying charisma. John called him “the Christ”; the multitude wanted to make Him king; the city saluted him with triumphant shouts as the Son of David; women ministered to him with deep devotion; His countenance, even in the troubled images of a dream, inspired Pilate’s wife with interest and awe; His single word caused Philip and Matthew and many others to leave all and follow Him; His one glance broke into an agony of repentance the heart of Peter; before His presence those possessed with devils were alternately agitated into frenzy and calmed into repose; in the very crisis of His weakness and betrayal, His most savage enemies shrank and fell prostrate in the moment of their most infuriated wrath—such a One as this could not have been without the personal majesty of a Prophet and a Priest. All the facts of His life speak convincingly of that strength, endurance, dignity, and electric influence which none could have exercised without a large share of human, no less than of spiritual, gifts. “Certainly,” says St. Jerome, “a flame of fire and starry brightness flashed from His eye, and the majesty of the Godhead shone in His face.”

Baptism

The basic meaning of the Greek word translated “baptize” (Gk. *baptizo*) is “to immerse.” Furthermore, it often has a metaphorical meaning of “to change the identity.” The purpose and means of Christian baptism is expressed by Paul in Romans 6:4, (NIV), “We were buried therefore with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.” The submergence and emergence of immersion thus, according to Paul, symbolize the death and burial to sin on the one hand and the resurrection to the new life in Christ on the other. Sanday and Headlam put it thus in their *Commentary on Romans* (p. 153): “It expresses symbolically a series of acts corresponding to the redeeming acts of Christ. Immersion= Death. Submersion= Burial (the ratification of death). Emergence= Resurrection.” In Colossians 2:12 Paul again says: “having been united with him in baptism, you also have been raised with him through your faith in the power of God who raised him from the dead.” The same image is here presented. Baptism is a picture of the burial of the old man and the re-birth of the new man. In this symbol the believer is buried and all his past sins and corrupt inclination were buried with him. He comes out of the water born again and alive with new life.

When a person was baptized his identity was changed. He is no longer who he was. If he was baptized as a Christian, he is a new man in Christ, he is now “in Christ.” If he was baptized by John the Baptist, he is no longer a follower of dead institutional Judaism but has a new identity, he is now a follower of the Messiah to come.

Bethsaida

Bethsaida of Galilee was the home of Philip, Andrew, Peter (Jn 1:44; 12:21), and perhaps James and John also. The house of Andrew and Peter seems to have been not far from the synagogue in Capernaum (Mt 8:14; Mk 1:29). Unless they had moved their residence from Bethsaida to Capernaum, of which there is no record, and which for fishermen was unlikely, Bethsaida must

have been located close to Capernaum. It may have been the fishing town adjoining the larger city. As in the case of the other Bethsaida, no name has been recovered to guide us to the site.

Carpenter

Both Joseph (Mt 13:55) and Jesus (Mk 6:3) followed the ancient trade of carpentry. A skilled worker in wood undertook all the carpentry tasks required in building operations: making roof, door, window, and stair fittings. Of the furniture he constructed couches, beds, chairs, tables, and footstools. Examples of some of these, as well as finely carved bowls, spoons, and boxes have survived in the tombs at Jericho (c. 1800 BC). The same carpenter would manufacture agricultural implements, plows, yokes, threshing instruments (2 Sam 24:22), boards (Isa 28:27-28), and irrigation machines. In the large cities groups of carpenters who made carts would, in time of war, build chariots (Song 3:9).

Cana

The name “Cana” means “a place of reeds.” It was a Galilean village in the uplands west of the lake, mentioned in John’s gospel only. It was the scene of Jesus’ first miracle (John 2:1-11), the place where with a word he healed the nobleman’s son who lay sick at Capernaum (John 4:46-50, and the home of Nathanael (John 21:2). Not definitely located, it has been identified by some with Kefr Kenna, about six km north-northeast of Nazareth on the road to Tiberias. This site, where excavations have been made, is a likely place for the events of John 2:1-11, having ample water springs and providing such shady fig trees as that suggested in John 1:48. Many modern scholars, however, prefer an identification with Khirbet Kaḏnaḡ, a ruined site fourteen km north of Nazareth, which local Arabs still call Cana of Galilee.

Fig Tree

The Talmud refers to sitting under a fig tree as a way of receiving certain blessings while having devotions. It was the custom of pious Jews to study and have their daily prayers under a fig tree; some have imagined that there is something significant in the fact of the apostle having been summoned from the shade of a tree which symbolized Jewish ordinances and Jewish traditions, but which was beginning already to cover the ground.

Godliness (2 Peter 1:6)

The Greek word translated **Godliness** is simply “the duty which a man owes to God” or “behavior reflecting correct religious beliefs and attitudes.” It appears to be derived from two words, “well” and “to be devout,” “to reverence, shrink back in fear, worship”; hence “to worship well” or “to reverence well.” True Godliness can only be achieved by the power of the Spirit (2 Pet 1:3), and in view of the final dissolution of all things, it is a quality which not only endures but by which we will be judged (2 Pet 3:11).

Godliness involves a devout, devotional, reverent attitude toward God. A “godly” person is one who knows God, who worships Him, and who has a devotional sense of God’s presence.

No doubt Peter has a firm grip on New Testament truth when he teaches that Godliness emerges out of endurance. As a man “keeps under” the trial, the Bible everywhere announces that by means of the Holy Spirit, God will fashion strong character and a devout life (Jas 1:4; “tribulation produces perseverance” Rom 5:3; Heb 12:10).

Locusts

The Arabs prepare for food the thorax of the locust, which contains the great wing muscles. They pull off the head, which as it comes away brings with it a mass of the viscera, and they remove the abdomen (or “tail”), the legs and the wings. The thoraxes, if not at once eaten, are dried and put away as a store of food for a lean season. The idea of feeding upon locusts when prepared in this way should not be as repellent as the thought of eating the whole insect. In light of this, it is not incredible that the food of John the Baptist should have been “locusts and wild honey” (Mt 3:4).

Perea

A portion of Transjordan, called Perea, is included in the kingdom of Herod the Great, and included with Galilee in the tetrarchy of Herod Antipas. It is the region to the east of Jerusalem on the other side of the Jordan, “beyond the Jordan,” or Transjordan.

Philip

Philip was the only one of the apostles who had a Greek name, derived, perhaps, from the tetrarch Philip, since the custom of naming children after reigning princes has always been a common one. If so, he must at this time have been under thirty. Possibly his Greek name indicates his familiarity with some of the Greek-speaking population who lived mingled with the Galileans on the shores of Gennesaret; and this may account for the fact that he, rather than any of the other apostles, was appealed to by the Greeks who, in the last week of His life, wished to see our Lord. One word, the one pregnant invitation, “Follow me!” was sufficient to attach to Jesus for the gentle and unsophisticated apostle, whom in all probability he had previously known.

Repentance

The basic meaning of the Greek word (*metanoia*) is “a change of mind.” It has sometimes been thought that John’s call to repentance was a call to eternal salvation. Yet nowhere else in the Bible is repentance a condition for receiving eternal life. The Bible is clear that faith alone, believing on Christ, is the one, the only, and the sufficient agency by which we are connected with the saving work of Christ.

John’s call to repentance might be expressed in modern terms as a call to “get right with God.” For the nation that meant a national repentance, a turning away from institutional Judaism, a turning away from their sins, and a turning toward the coming Messiah. For the individual within the nation it meant (1) believe in Christ and (2) live like it. Believing in Christ was all that was needed for the gift of eternal life. But if one was to escape the “wrath to come,” the judgment upon national Israel in AD 70, he must also repent of his sins, turn from institutional Judaism, and identify himself with the people who are waiting for the coming Messiah.

Sea of Galilee

The name “Sea of Galilee” is used five times in the New Testament (Mt 4:18; 15:29; Mk 1:16; 7:31; Jn 6:1). The same body of water is also called “the sea of Tiberias” (Jn 21:1; compare to Jn 6:1); “the lake of Gennesaret” (Lk 5:1); “the sea” (Jn 6:16), and “the lake” (Lk 5:1).

The sea lies in the deep trough of the Jordan valley, almost due east of the Bay of Acre. The surface is 680 ft. below the level of the Mediterranean. It varies in depth from 130 ft. to 148 ft.,

being deepest along the course of the Jordan. From the point where the Jordan enters in the north to its exit in the south is about thirteen miles. The greatest width is in the north, from el-Mejdel to the mouth of Wady Semak, being over seven miles. It gradually narrows toward the south, taking the shape of a gigantic pear, with a decided bulge to the west. The water of the lake is clear and sweet.

W. Ewing. "Galilee, Sea Of," *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*. Edited by James Orr 1915.

The Dead Sea

The name, Dead Sea, was given by Greek and Latin writers to the remarkable inland lake occupying the deepest part of the depression of the ARABAH. In the Bible it is called the Salt Sea (Gen 14:3; Deut 3:17); the Sea of the Plain (*`Ardhbah*) (Josh 3:16); and the (East) Eastern Sea (Ezek 47:18; Joel 2:20).

The so-called Dead Sea is the final receptacle of the river Jordan, the lowest and largest of the three lakes which interrupt the rush of its downward course.

If we go back a few thousand years into prehistoric times the evidence is abundant that the valley has witnessed remarkable climatic changes. The geological evidence concerning this point is so interesting, and of so much importance in its bearing upon our interpretation of various historical statements concerning the region, that it is worthwhile to present it somewhat in detail. As already stated (see ARABAH), the present level of the Dead Sea is determined by the equilibrium established between the evaporation (estimated at 20,000,000 cubic ft. daily) over the area and the amount of water brought into the valley by the tributary streams.

The Dead Sea was formed by the depression of that part of the valley through which the Jordan once flowed to the Red Sea. But this great depression caused all the waters of the Jordan to remain without outlet, and the size of the Dead Sea must be such that the evaporation from its surface just balances the amount of water which flows in through the river. This accounts in part for the amount of matter held in solution by the Dead Sea waters; for the evaporation is of pure water only, while the inflow contains more or less of salts and other matter in solution.

The present area of the sea is, in round numbers, 300 square miles. The historical evidence shows that this evaporating surface has not varied appreciably since the time of Abraham. But the encroachments of the delta of the Jordan upon this area, as well as of the deltas of several other streams, must have been very great since that period. The effect of this would be to limit the evaporating surface, which would cause the water to rise until it overflowed enough of the low land at the south end to restore the equilibrium.

Temptation of Hunger

It was a temptation to the senses—an appeal to the appetites—an impulse given to that lower nature, which man shares with all the animal creation. But so far from coming in any coarse or openly sensuous form, it came shrouded in a thousand subtle veils. Israel, too, had been humbled, and suffered hunger in the wilderness, and there, in extreme need, God fed them with manna, which was as angels' food and bread from heaven. Why did the Son of God not provide Himself with a table in the wilderness? He could do so if He liked, and why should He hesitate? If an angel had revealed to the fainting Hagar a fountain of water, if an angel had touched the starving

Elijah, and shown him food, why should Jesus wait for even the ministry of angels to whom such ministry was needless, but whom, if He willed it, angels would have been so glad to serve?

How deep is the wisdom of the reply! Referring to the very lesson which the giving of the manna had been designed to teach, and quoting one of the noblest utterances of Old Testament inspiration, our Lord answered, "It is written, Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God." (Mt 4:4). This is a tremendous lesson for us, that we are not to be dominated by our own earthly desires. He who thinks that we live by bread alone will make the securing of bread the main goal of his life. He will determine to have it at whatever cost and he will be unsatisfied and unruly if he is ever denied of it. Because he does not seek spiritual nourishment, he will inevitably starve spiritually. However, he who does not live by bread alone will trust God to provide all things needful for man to live and thrive. He will earnestly seek the bread from heaven, and that living water which, when one drinks it, he will never thirst again.

History of Roman Rule over Palestine

The Romans established control over Palestine in 64 BC. When Caesar was assassinated on March 15, 44 BC, the whole area became unstable and the Parthians invaded and took over Palestine.

The Romans responded immediately. Herod, the Tetrarch of Judea, fully supported Rome and now had to regain his kingdom. He finally took Jerusalem again in 37 BC. He reigned over Judea, Samaria, and Perea from 37 BC to 4 BC.

Herod was born in the late 70s BC into an aristocratic Idumean family that had converted to Judaism a half century earlier, in the reign of John Hyrcanus I. The Romans found it useful to appoint client kings over conquered people. These kings were absolutely loyal to Rome but also knew the local situation. They would collect the taxes and be hated by the people and Rome would get the money. It was a nice arrangement for them.

When Herod died in 4 BC, his kingdom was divided up among his three sons (Archelaus, Philip, and Antipas). The area called Palestine was divided into four divisions: The tetrarchy of Judea and Samaria (Archelaus); the tetrarchy of Galilee and Perea (Antipas); the Decapolis and the tetrarchy or "region" of Ituraea and Trachonitis (Philip). (A tetrarchy was a government of four persons ruling jointly).

Lesson 3 Articles

John the Baptist

Parentage

John was of priestly descent. His mother, Elisabeth, was of the daughters of Aaron, while his father, Zacharias, was a priest of the course of Abija, and did service in the temple at Jerusalem. It is said of them that “they were both righteous before God, following all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blamelessly” (Lk 1:6). This priestly ancestry is in interesting contrast with his prophetic mission.

Early Life

We infer from Luke’s account that John was born about six months before the birth of Jesus. Of the place we know only that it was a city of the hill country of Judah. Our definite information concerning his youth is summed up in the angelic prophecy, “Many will rejoice at his birth; for he will be great before the Lord. He must never drink wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even before his birth” (Lk 1:14-16), and in Luke’s brief statement, “And the child kept growing and becoming strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness till the day he was revealed to Israel” (Lk 1:80). The character and spiritual insight of the parents shown in the incidents recorded are ample evidence that his training was a fitting preparation for his great mission.

Ministry

1. The Scene

The scene of the Baptist’s ministry was partly in the wilderness of southern Judea and partly in the Jordan valley. Two locations are mentioned, Bethany or Bethabara (Jn 1:28), and Aenon near Salim (Jn 3:23). Neither of these places can be positively identified.

2. His First Appearance

The unusual array of dates with which Luke marks the beginning of John’s ministry (Lk 3:1, 2) reveals his sense of the importance of the event as at once the beginning of his prophetic work and of the new dispensation. His first public appearance is assigned to the fifteenth year of Tiberius, probably AD 28.

3. His Dress and Manner

John’s dress and habits were strikingly suggestive of Elijah, the old prophet of national judgment. His desert habits have led some to connect him with that strange company of Jews known as the Essenes. There is, however, little foundation for such a connection other than his ascetic habits and the fact that the chief settlement of this sect was near the home of his youth. It was natural

that he should continue the manner of his youthful life in the desert, and it is not improbable that he intentionally copied his great prophetic model. It was fitting that the one who called men to repentance and the beginning of a self-denying life should show renunciation and self-denial in his own life. But there is no evidence in his teaching that he required such asceticism of those who accepted his baptism.

4. His Message

The fundamental note in the message of John was the announcement of the near approach of the Messianic age. But while he announced himself as the herald voice preparing the way of the Lord, and because of this the expectant multitudes crowded to hear his word, his view of the nature of the kingdom was probably quite at variance with that of his hearers. Instead of the expected day of deliverance from the foreign oppressor, it was to be a day of judgment for Israel. It meant good for the penitent, but destruction for the ungodly. "He will gather his wheat into the storehouse, but the chaff he will burn up with...fire" (Mt 3:12). "Even now the ax is laid at the root of the trees; and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire" (Lk 3:9). Yet this idea was perhaps not entirely unfamiliar. That the delay in the Messiah's coming was due to the sinfulness of the people and their lack of repentance, was a common theme in the message of their teachers (Edersheim, Alfred. *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, 2 Vols. Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1962. 169).

The call to repentance was then a natural message of preparation for such a time of judgment. But to John repentance was a very real and radical thing. It meant a complete change of heart and life. "Produce fruits that prove your repentance" (Lk 3:8). What these fruits were he made clear in his answers to the inquiring multitudes and the publicans and soldiers (Lk 3:10-14). It is noticeable that there is no reference to the usual ceremonies of the law or to a change of occupation. Do good; be honest; refrain from extortion; be content with wages.

Only those who repented would escape the temporal judgment coming upon the nation.

5. His Severity

John used such violence in addressing the Pharisees and Sadducees doubtless to startle them from their self-complacency. How hopelessly they were blinded by their sense of security as the children of Abraham, and by their confidence in the merits of the law, is attested by the fact that these parties resisted the teachings of both John and Jesus to the very end.

With what vigor and fearlessness the Baptist pressed his demand for righteousness is shown by his stern reproof of the sin of Herod and Herodias, which led to his imprisonment and finally to his death.

Baptism

The symbolic rite of baptism was such an essential part of the work of John that it not only gave him his distinctive title of "the Baptist," but also caused his message to be styled "preaching the baptism of repentance." That a special virtue was ascribed to this rite, and that it was regarded as a necessary part of the preparation for the coming of the Messiah, is shown by its important place in John's preaching, and by the eagerness with which it was sought by the multitudes. Its

significance may best be understood by giving attention to its historical antecedents, for while John gave the rite new significance, it certainly appealed to ideas already familiar to the Jews.

We may say, then, that as a “baptism of repentance” it meant a renunciation of the past life; as a cleansing it symbolized the forgiveness of sins (Mk 1:4), and as preparation it implied a promise of loyalty to the kingdom of the Messiah. It did not in itself result in salvation, only deliverance from the coming wrath which was to be executed upon the nation for their national unbelief, the destruction of Jerusalem. Repentance has nothing to do with salvation from hell, only believing on Christ can do that. We have no reason to believe that Jesus experienced any sense of sin or felt any need of repentance or forgiveness, but as a divinely appointed preparation for the Messianic kingdom His submission to it was appropriate.

Imprisonment and Death

1. The Time

Neither the exact time of John’s imprisonment nor the period of time between his imprisonment and his death can be determined. On the occasion of the unnamed feast of John 5:1, Jesus refers to John’s witness as already past. At least, then, his arrest, if not his death, must have taken place prior to that incident, i.e., before the second Passover of Jesus’ ministry.

2. The Occasion

According to the gospel accounts, John was imprisoned because of his reproof of Herod’s marriage with Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip (Lk 3:19, 20; compare Mt 14:1, 3; Mk 6:17-18). Josephus says that Herod was influenced to put John to death by the “fear lest his great influence over the people might put it in his power or inclination to raise a rebellion. Accordingly, he was sent a prisoner, out of Herod’s suspicious temper, to Macherus, and was there put to death.” This account of Josephus does not necessarily conflict with the tragic story of the Gospels. If Herod desired to punish or destroy him for the reasons assigned by the evangelists, he would doubtless wish to offer as the public reason some political charge, and the one named by Josephus would be near at hand.

John and Jesus

1. John’s Relation to Jesus

John assumed from the first the role of a herald preparing the way for the approaching Messianic age. He clearly regarded his work as Divinely appointed (Jn 1:33), but was well aware of his subordinate relation to the Messiah (Mk 1:7) and of the temporary character of his mission (Jn 3:30). The Baptist’s work was twofold. In his preaching he warned the nation of the true character of the new kingdom as a reign of righteousness, and by his call to repentance and baptism he prepared at least a few hearts for a sympathetic response to the call and teaching of Jesus. He also formally announced and bore frequent personal testimony to Jesus as the Messiah.

There is no necessary discrepancy between the synoptic account and that of the fourth gospel in reference to the progress of John’s knowledge of the Messianic character of Jesus. According to Matthew 3:14, John is represented as declining at first to baptize Jesus because he was conscious

of His superiority, while in John 1:29-34 he is represented as claiming not to have known Jesus until He was manifested by the heavenly sign. The latter may mean only that He was not known to him definitely as the Messiah until the promised sign was given.

The message which John sent to Jesus from prison seems strange to some in view of the signal testimonies which he had previously borne to His character. This need not indicate that he had lost faith in the Messiahship of Jesus, but rather a perplexity at the course of events. The inquiry may have been in the interest of the faith of his disciples or his own relief from misgivings due to Jesus' delay in assuming the expected Messianic authority. John evidently held the prophetic view of a temporal Messianic kingdom, and some readjustment of view was necessary.

2. Jesus' Estimate of John

Jesus was no less frank in His appreciation of John. If praise may be measured by the worth of the one by whose lips it is spoken, then no man ever received such praise as he who was called by Jesus a shining light (Jn 5:35), more than a prophet (Mt 11:9), and of whom He said, "Among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist" (Mt 11:11). If, on the other hand, He rated him as less than the least in the kingdom of heaven, this was a limitation of circumstances, not of worth.

Jesus paid high tribute to the divine character and worth of John's baptism; first, by submitting to it Himself as a step in the fulfillment of all righteousness; later, by repeated utterance, especially in associating it with the birth of the Spirit as a necessary condition of inheriting eternal life (Jn 3:5); and, finally, in adopting baptism as a symbol of Christian discipleship.

Miller, Russell Benjamin. "John the Baptist," *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*. Edited by James Orr. Blue Letter Bible. 1913.

Four-Year Ministry of Christ

How long was the ministry of Jesus? Though several opinions have been put forward by scholars, the traditional view is that He ministered just over three years. That appears to allow sufficient time for the events recorded. However, it also introduces several time crunches that make the traditional view extremely questionable, if not impossible.

One of the interesting discoveries brought to light in the combined harmony of the Gospels in *The Greatest Life* is a new and more exact chronology of Jesus' ministry. The process of arranging all the materials in their natural sequence allows the texts to develop their own chronology. Such a process provides solutions to many perplexing problems of harmonizing the Gospels.

To appreciate this, let's briefly review the basic information for dating Jesus' ministry and for determining its length.

The Dating of Jesus' Ministry

Two historical details (given in Mt 2 and Lk 3) help us determine that Jesus was born before the death of Herod the Great in March, 4 BC. First, how long before his death is not known, but the gospel portrayal of Herod fits well with the historical record of family treachery and mental psychosis in this king's final days. Since the magi arrived before Herod's death, Jesus' birth must have been three or four months earlier, assuming these wise men left immediately from "the East" after the star appeared (see the length of a similar journey in Ezra 7:8-9; 8:31). Second, Herod killed all the infant boys of Bethlehem who were age "two years and under" to guarantee that none escaped. "Two years" meant "in their second year." Thus Jesus' birth could well have been in December of 5 BC.

Luke, the careful historian, pinpoints the beginning of John's wilderness ministry as the "fifteenth year" of Emperor Tiberius (Lk 3:1). Roman history shows that Tiberius succeeded Augustus Octavius in August, AD 14; the fifteenth year of Tiberius would therefore begin in the fall of AD 28. This would then be when John's ministry began, with Jesus' ministry beginning the following spring of AD 29.

Though this seems fairly clear, it is not the generally held view. Rather than dating the beginning of Tiberius' reign at the death of Augustus, many date it at the time he became a co-regent under Augustus. This date, however, is imprecise, being sometime in AD 11.

Some prefer this less exact date because of another misconception. The logic runs as follows: Luke declares in Luke 3:23 that Jesus began his ministry at "about age thirty." Counting thirty years from Jesus' birth in 5 BC brings us to AD 26 (there was no year "0"). Since John's ministry began the year before the ministry of Jesus, AD 25 would be the fifteenth year of Tiberius. So Luke must have had AD 11 in mind as the first year of Tiberius, rather than the year Tiberius actually became emperor. Such impreciseness is out of character for Luke, but the two misconceptions seem to confirm each other.

It should be noted that Luke 3:23 does not give the exact age of Jesus. The expression "about [Greek *hosei*] thirty" is only an approximation. By contrast, Jesus' age when attending his first Passover with Mary and Joseph is given as precisely "twelve" (Lk 2:42), not "about twelve." Jewish boys became "sons of the Law" exactly at age twelve, when they began attending Passover. Thus the phrase "about thirty" would signify that Jesus was "in his early thirties" at the

beginning of his ministry. This would fit with our previous reckoning, by which Jesus would be thirty-two or thirty-three when he began his ministry in the spring of AD 29 (assuming his birth was in 5 BC).

The Traditional Three-Year Chronology

The best foundation for a gospel chronology is John's gospel, because it indicates three observances of Passover, the Jewish feast that occurred annually (The Synoptic Gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke—refer to only one Passover). Besides the Passovers John mentions in John 2:12; 6:4; 11:55, an additional one is assumed somewhere between John 2 and John 6 to fit with other events noted in the Synoptics. These four Passovers span a period of three years, from his first temple cleansing to the Passion Week when Jesus would suffer and die.

Note: Some scholars have opted for a two-year ministry based on John's mention of only three Passovers. To do this they reverse the order of John 5 and John 6, making the unnamed feast of John 5:1 to be the Feast of Tabernacles in the second year of Jesus' ministry. Most harmonies, however, assume that Jesus had a ministry of three years and several months.

John's Purpose in Mentioning Passovers

On the basis of these Passovers in John, it is clear that Jesus' ministry had to span two or three years at the least. However, nowhere is it suggested that it was limited to three years. John's references to Passover are quite incidental to his story; his focus is on Jesus' personal encounters with others in order to emphasize Messiah's redemptive work. No mention is made of the Feast of Pentecost, for instance, and the Feast of Tabernacles and Feast of Dedication are noted only in Jesus' third year. Also, though scholars generally admit that between Jesus' first cleansing of the temple and His feeding of the five thousand, a period of two years took place, John doesn't mention the Passover occurring in the middle of this period. His references to Passover were obviously not for chronological purposes.

While the three Passovers are a key to recognizing multiple years in Jesus' ministry, they do not restrict it to either two or three years. Jesus' ministry could have been as many as five years without disturbing John's consistency.

The Problem of Jesus' Final Period of Ministry

Although the three-year chronology is the popular, traditional view, many believe it has irreconcilable problems. Its most questionable feature is that it compresses too many events into the last six months of Jesus' ministry, especially the many events of Luke's "Travelogue" (in Lk 9:51–19:27). The usual approach is to tacitly assume that His departure from Galilee to attend the Feast of Tabernacles in John 7 is the same as the departure described in Luke 9:5. However, this overlooks the differing contexts in the two passages. Whereas John 7 describes Jesus going directly to Jerusalem within a few days to attend the feast, Luke 9:51 introduces the beginning of a long circuitous journey through several provinces that required at least several months to complete. The two journeys appear to have almost nothing in common.

Various attempts to harmonize these passages have been made. Because Luke says three times in this Travelogue (Lk 9:51; 13:22; 17:11) that Jesus is making His way to Jerusalem, some assume that Luke speaks of three trips to the city, rather than one. On this basis they attempt to fit the

Travelogue either between the Feast of Tabernacles and Dedication (October 22 to December 25), or to split it into several trips before the raising of Lazarus in late February.

Such an interweaving is highly unlikely because of the continuous nature of Luke's Travelogue. It is more likely Luke's three references speak of the same trip to Jerusalem, not three. Also, the many stops he describes have little relation to Jesus' journeys to the Feasts of Tabernacle and Dedication described by John. To interject them into those brief intervals before the episode with the rich ruler (Lk 18:18) is extremely difficult in view of their contexts.

For these reasons it is only proper that we explore acceptable alternatives to the three-year chronology. The most obvious, of course, is a four-year ministry, which indeed appears to harmonize with the historical facts noted above. A four-year ministry would also provide ample time to accommodate the many events in the final portion of Jesus' ministry and is more in keeping with Jesus' usual manner of confronting individuals. His final tour, on which He continued to search for penitent hearts, was hardly a feverish whirlwind campaign through the countryside, as though Jesus were driven by circumstances.

The Alternative Four-Year Ministry

If one assumes there was a fourth year (which the text arrangement in *The Greatest Life* strongly suggests), and allowing for several short periods of silence in that year (which was also true of each of the other ministry years), most chronological problems disappear and a unique gospel harmony unfolds. Let's review the evidences for such a four-year chronology and also note some events in the Synoptics that necessitate the two additional Passovers not mentioned by John.

The Second Passover Confirmed

The second-year Passover is strongly implied in Luke 6, just after Jesus called the twelve disciples. On that occasion Jesus and His disciples were sharply condemned for eating grain in the harvest fields on the Sabbath. This springtime event had to occur between the first and third Passovers. But further evidence of it being the second Passover is provided in a curious rendering of Luke 6:1 which has been all but lost in today's translations. In the phrase translated as "Jesus was passing through some grain fields on a Sabbath," many ancient texts read "the second First-Sabbath [*deutero-protosabbaton*]." This unusual phrase is footnoted in the United Bible Society's Greek text as having strong support in the Western and Byzantine texts. The words "second first" were probably left out by an early scribe who thought the phrase nonsensical and tried to simplify it (the tendency of scribes was not to make a simple phrase difficult, but to try to simplify a phrase they didn't understand).

Though long misunderstood, the phrase "second First-Sabbath" is very likely related to the Old Testament custom of counting seven Sabbaths from Passover to Pentecost (Lev 23:15-21 gives the regulations). The seven Sabbaths came to be known as First Sabbath, Second Sabbath, etc., as Israel moved through the early harvest season. According to former Hebrew University president Julian Morgenstern, this practice continued in Galilee until the time of Christ and is still observed by some groups in Palestine today.

This suggests that in Jesus' time there was an annual date known as First Sabbath just after Passover. And Luke, the careful historian, records that the event in the grain fields took place on the second First Sabbath of Jesus' ministry. It was Luke's way of fixing the time of that event at the beginning of Jesus' second year of ministry.

The Last Two Years of Jesus' Ministry

We have noted that the feeding of the five thousand took place at the same time as the third Passover season. John 6:4 shows that Jesus missed that Passover in Jerusalem. Though John does not mention another Passover before the final one (just as he did not mention the second Passover), both Matthew and Luke supply oblique evidences of another unnamed Passover, which would be the fourth in Jesus' ministry and the next to last.

The Temple Tax Collection

Matthew 17:24 records the occasion in Capernaum when Jesus was solicited for the annual temple tax. This tribute was usually collected before Passover to allow officers to take the proceeds to Jerusalem for the feast. Prior to this time Jesus and His disciples had been traveling in the north around Caesarea Philippi, and had not been around Capernaum for the collection of the tax.

This strongly suggests a fourth Passover season that is not specifically named in the Gospels. It could not apply to the third Passover at the time of the feeding of the five thousand, for Jesus had been in and out of Capernaum a number of times to pay the temple tax during that Passover season. This additional Passover would then have occurred coincidentally with the Transfiguration episode in the north.

Pilate's Slaughter of Galileans at Passover

Luke 13:1 refers to an incident in which Pilate "mingled" the blood of Galileans with their sacrifices. That would necessarily have been on one of the three major feasts, for only at such a time would Galileans journey to the temple in numbers to make animal sacrifices.

Luke also notes that this event was reported to Jesus as news. In other words, it occurred during a feast at which He was not present. Since Jesus attended the Feast of Tabernacles in the autumn of His third year, the event must be placed in the fourth year of His ministry, whether Passover, Pentecost, or Tabernacles. The implication of a fourth year involving one of those feasts is inevitable, for it had to be prior to the final Passover of His Passion Week.

Jesus' Parable of the Barren Fig Tree

After his note on Pilate's slaughter of the Galileans, Luke 13:6-9 records a parable of Jesus that further suggests a four-year ministry. Jesus had been emphasizing the need for repentance. To further portray God's concern over Israel's impenitence, He added this story:

"A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. So he said to the worker who tended the vineyard, 'For three years now, I've come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?'"

"But the worker answered him, 'Sir, leave it alone this year too, until I dig around it and put fertilizer on it. Then if it bears fruit next year, very well, but if not, you can cut it down.'"

In drawing truths from gospel parables, it is essential to recognize that Jesus emphasized one central truth in each parable. He put in details either to enforce this central truth or to give it realism. We must remember that Jesus intended to be understood by His hearers! Therefore if you see something in a parable which is obviously a symbol or allegory you

must ask, “Would a detail of the parable have symbolic meaning to those who heard Jesus speak?” If it does, then we should understand it symbolically.

In the context of this parable of the fig tree, it is obvious that the Lord was alluding to the impenitence of Israel. John the Baptist announced that “the axe is laid at the root of the tree” when he called for repentance to avert judgment. Jesus found the same condition, as He warned, “Unless you repent, you will all perish too” (Lk 13:5). The central truth of this parable relates to the Lord’s fruitless search for repentance, and His extension of grace for a final solicitation of fruit.

Some details of this parable do indeed cry out for interpretation as symbolic parts of the central truth. All His hearers knew how long Jesus had been ministering, for He was the talk of the nation. The detail of “three years” was the approximate length of His ministry to this time. And if the “three years” is to be taken literally, the phrase “this year also” begs a similar application.

Jesus’ final punch line for this parable came a year later. As He approached Jerusalem on Monday of His final week, He cursed a fig tree that bore leaves without bearing fruit. The ancient fig tree normally bore fruit when it produced leaves. But Jesus’ curse of barrenness was no fit of anger; it was a symbolic sign to His disciples of Israel’s impenitent condition and coming judgment. Before proceeding to Jerusalem to clear the temple that morning, Jesus reminded His disciples of the point He made in that previous parable of the barren fig tree: the nation was yet unproductive of spiritual fruit, and its final year of grace—the fourth year—was at an end.

The Final Tour

The structure of a four-year ministry allows ample time for the many events of Luke’s Travelogue to take place at a normal pace. Let’s recall some of the stages of that journey. After Jesus “set His face to go to Jerusalem,” He sent messengers to the province of Samaria to prepare His way. This venture was apparently without response, although a number of incidents occurred en route.

Following this, Jesus sent out seventy other disciples to at least thirty-five villages He planned to visit. The purpose of this mission was to make a final wide probe and give personal appeals to all individuals who might yet respond. It was a time of great practical experience for the seventy as they preached and performed many miracles themselves. At that time Jesus declared, “The harvest truly is great,” and He urged prayer that more laborers might be sent out.

This journey can hardly be seen as a hurried campaign compressed into a few weeks. Such a hectic schedule would be out of character with Jesus’ more leisurely manner of confronting individuals. This journey involved travel through Galilee, the upper border of Samaria, into Perea for a varied ministry, to parts of Ephraim, and into Judea. All this movement, of course, was done in sandals, requiring many stops in a slow-paced culture. Although Jesus was busy and His message was urgent, He was not disposed to being rushed by circumstances.

All these corroborating strands of evidence lend strong support to a four-year chronology of Jesus’ ministry. They also fit with previously noted historical data to suggest a ministry beginning in the spring of AD 29 and ending at the full moon of Passover in April of AD 33.

The following timeline shows key dates in Jesus' life and ministry:

5 BC Birth of John the Baptist, birth of Jesus six months later

4 BC Death of Herod the Great

3 BC

2 BC

1 BC

AD 1

AD 2

AD 3

AD 4

AD 5

AD 6

AD 7

AD 8 Jesus attends His first Passover as a boy

AD 9

AD 10

AD 11

AD 12

AD 13

AD 14 Death of Emperor Augustus, succeeded by Tiberius

AD 15

AD 16

AD 17

AD 18

AD 19

AD 20

AD 21

AD 22

AD 23

AD 24

AD 25

AD 26

AD 27

AD 28 John the Baptist begins his ministry in the wilderness

AD 29 Jesus' ministry begins; on the first Passover, He clears the temple in Jerusalem

AD 30 Second Passover of His ministry—controversy over His observance of the Sabbath

AD 31 Third Passover—Jesus feeds the five thousand in Galilee

AD 32 Fourth Passover—Jesus is transfigured on a mountain in the North

AD 33 Fifth Passover—Jesus' Passion Week—His death, burial, and resurrection

Repentance

The basic meaning of the Greek word (*metanoia*) is “a change of mind.” What is the relationship of repentance to obtaining eternal salvation? Good Bible scholars have held different opinions on this important issue. Some believe that John the Baptist’s and Jesus’ calls to repentance were calls to eternal salvation. Others feel that to interpret repentance in this way would contradict other passages of the New Testament which say that believing on Christ is the one, the only, and the sufficient agency by which we are connected with the saving work of Christ. The writer of this course shares the latter view. The student will have to make up his own mind on this very important matter but we would like to suggest several points which seem to indicate that when Jesus and John were speaking of repentance, it was probably not as a call to believe on Christ for eternal life.

John’s gospel, which was written that we might believe and as a result obtain eternal life, nowhere mentions repentance (see Jn 20:30-31). The only condition for salvation in John’s gospel is belief in Christ; trust in Him. If repentance is necessary for salvation, it is incredible that in the gospel specifically written to explain how we might find salvation never mentions it! This is not an argument from silence but an argument about silence. Why is John silent about such a major concept if it is so important or necessary to be saved?

Suppose for example, there was a proposed cure for cancer which was believed by many to work. Yet in a prominent book on cancer cures, the writer never even mentions it. This silence would demand an explanation. Assuming the writer of the book was a competent scientist; we must assume that he knew about this cure but had concluded that it was not significant. No competent scientist would write a book about cures for cancer and not mention this certain cure unless most other scientists and experts in the field had concluded that it was not a significant answer to the cancer problem.

Yet John does refer to repentance in the book of Revelation. The interesting thing is that it is usually applied to those who are already saved, not to the unsaved (Rev 3:14-22). Here, believers are told that they can avoid a divine chastening in time, if they repent. The same idea is expressed in Revelation 3:3; 2:4, 12-17. In Revelation 2:20 an unsaved false prophetess is warned about a judgment in **time** if she fails to repent. In other places God warns the unsaved of severe judgments in time if they refuse to repent of their sins (Rev 9:20-21; 16:9). In each case, a refusal to repent results in, temporal, not eternal, judgments.

A parallel thought is found in the book of Jonah. Here Jonah warns the people of Nineveh that if they do not repent, temporal judgment would fall upon the city (Jon 3:7-9) it was only when God saw that they, as a city, had turned from their sins that He relented and spared the city of temporal judgment.

If repentance is not presented as a call to eternal life in the Gospels, then what is its significance? Many scholars believe that the call to repent is an offer of the kingdom and a warning to the nation that if they reject this offer, a temporal national catastrophe will come in the form of the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

A clear example proving that repentance is connected with an escape from temporal (not eternal) punishment is how Jesus uses the word in Luke 13:1-5. Referring to the Galileans who at a feast in Jerusalem were slaughtered by Pilate, Jesus uses it as an example of the temporal destruction that may come upon the nation if they do not repent. They may have been involved in some

insurrection against the Roman government and Pilate had them slain right in the temple courts where the sacrifices were going on.

Jesus comments on the incident, but not as the reporters had expected. Instead of denunciation of Pilate he turned it into a parable for their own conduct in the uncertainty of life. Their “perishing” was temporal, not eternal. Jesus then follows this up with a reference to those upon whom the temple of Siloam fell (Lk 13:4-5). Some suppose that the tower is part of an aqueduct which Pilate constructed with money from the temple treasury. The people killed would then be workers who had wrongly accepted such wages. Others think the tower is part of the city wall. The Lord says that those casualties are not due to the unusual wickedness of those people. His warning is to the whole nation, who is as guilty as the few. Again, the consequence of their wickedness was not eternal damnation, but physical death. The calls to repentance in the Gospels are exhortations to the nation of Israel and to individuals within that nation to escape the judgment which soon would come upon that nation, temporal destruction, if they refused to repent.

Jesus follows the discussion in Luke 13:1-5 with a parable regarding the nation describing it as is often done in Scripture as a fig tree. That nation, Israel, is to be “cut down,” judged in time by the invasion of Titus in AD 70 if it does not bear fruit. Repentance saves them from temporal punishment; faith alone saves from eternal damnation.

When John the Baptist warned the nation that the ax has already been laid to the root of the tree (Mt 3:8; Lk 3:8), he was warning of imminent temporal judgment upon the nation in the impending disaster of the Roman invasion of AD 70. Fire is often used in the Bible, not of eternal damnation, but of temporal judgments in time (see Amos 1:4, 7, 10, 14; 2:2; Jer 21:12-14; 22:6-7; Ezek 15:1-8; Isa 9:19; Jer 48:45; Hos 8:14; Nah 1:6; Zeph 1:18).

The call to repentance found in the Gospels is primarily addressed to the nation. It is not a call by either Jesus or John to notorious sinners to mend their ways. Rather the call to repentance was what Israel must do if her current exile among the nations was to end; it was what the nation must do if Yahweh was to bring about the restoration of the Davidic theocracy predicted in all the prophets. The call to repentance was an offer of the kingdom to the nation.

The substance of the national call to repentance was to acknowledge that Israel’s time had come, the kingdom was being offered; it was Jesus Himself and His mission that all must embrace; and that Jesus had the right to determine on His own authority who was in fact a true son of Abraham and who was not. Salvation was not to be found in the temple and the sacrifices.

Furthermore it was not a personal, individual, moral repentance which was called for but a national turning. The personal, moral repentance was something which could have happened and had happened many times in Israel’s history. That was nothing new. What was radical is that Jesus was calling the nation to turn to Him instead of the temple or to radical insurrection in order to achieve a return from exile and the restoration of the Davidic theocracy. The way to bring in the promised kingdom was to turn the other cheek, be the salt of the earth, and become a disciple of Jesus Himself. That was what alienated Him from the leaders.

Turning to Jesus in this manner would result in “the forgiveness of sins” (Lk 3:3). However in the mind of a first-century Palestinian that phrase would have had nothing whatsoever to do with escape from eternal damnation. Forgiveness of sins was another way of saying, return from exile and restores the Davidic theocracy (see Amos 7:2; 2 Chr 7:14; 1 Kgs 8:50; Dan 9:9, 19). It was a national, not a personal forgiveness. Jesus had far more urgent business at hand than personal, moral reformation. That had been the subject of the message of the prophets for centuries.

Obviously this involved personal decisions among the people to join this national repentance. What was the effect on an unsaved Israelite who repented in this national sense? Did this result in spiritual rebirth? Of course not. Only faith in Christ for eternal life can do that. But while it is true that national repentance led to the nation's escape from the coming catastrophe, the individuals who repented made a first step toward fellowship with God, even if their repentance did not save them, faith alone does that. While repentance has nothing to do with obtaining eternal life, repentance can lead a person to faith. Repentance does not save a man, but repentance can lead to salvation. While repentance facilitates faith in Christ, it is not a requirement for eternal life. It is obvious that simple faith in Christ is more likely to spring from the good soil of a repentant heart than from one who has not repented.

We must be very careful when we present the gospel. We must never add to the simple requirement of faith alone.

“Then he brought them outside and asked, ‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’ They replied, ‘Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, you and your household’” (Acts 16:30-31).

Unit Two: Messiah's Work Begins

Jesus's Public Ministry Begins

April, AD 29—Jesus just performed His first miracle at Cana where He turned water into wine at a wedding feast. After this striking event, it appears that He withdrew for a brief period of time with His five new disciples to Capernaum on the northwest coast of the Sea of Galilee.

In Unit Two we will consider some of the extraordinary events that signaled to Israel that the dawn of a new era was coming. With one amazing sign after another, the Lord Jesus Christ burst upon the scene and began to establish His claim to be the long-awaited Messiah.

In Lesson 4 we will follow the Master's path from the Passover at Jerusalem, where He cleansed the temple for the first time, to His journey north, where He encountered a woman at a well in Samaria (see note at the end of lesson 4).

By the conclusion of His first year of public ministry, the Lord Jesus had made the final choice of His twelve disciples. In Lesson 5 we trace the Messiah's movement from Samaria northward again to Capernaum where, after a night of prayer, He selected His apostles.

Lesson 6 will lead us into a study of Christ's most famous sermon, the Sermon on the Mount. There are many important principles for life and ministry taught there, and this also contains difficult interpretive problems. We will be considering both.

Unit Outline

Lesson 4: His Work Begins

Lesson 5: The Final Twelve Are Chosen

Lesson 6: The Sermon on the Mount

Lesson 4: His Work Begins

Lesson Introduction

The Passover of April, AD 29, was upon Jesus, and He purposed to begin His life's work at this central feast of the Jews. So He turned south and went "up" to Jerusalem.

At the beginning and again at the end of His ministry, in righteous zeal for His Father's house, Jesus entered the temple areas and overturned tables and otherwise cleansed the corruption there brought on by the money changers and the merchants. These pivotal events not only marked the beginning and end of His earthly ministry, they were the precipitating events leading to His crucifixion.

In Topic 1 we will consider the first temple cleansing.

Perhaps the most well-known statement Jesus ever made was, "I tell you the solemn truth, unless a person is born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (Jn 3:3). In Topic 2 we will eavesdrop on the interaction between a leading Pharisee of Israel and Jesus.

Finally, in Topic 3, we will gain insight into Jesus' skill in engaging non-Christians in discussions of eternal issues. His promise to the woman at the well, that He could offer her a drink so satisfying that she would never thirst again, has always been a model of how to introduce others to Christ.

Lesson Outline

- Topic 1: The First Temple Cleansing
- Topic 2: Jesus Teaches the New Birth
 - Topic 3: The Woman at the Well
 - The Water of Life
 - The Fields Are Ready To Harvest
- Topic 4: Matching Events
- Topic 5: Knowing, Being, Doing

Lesson Objectives

When you have completed this lesson, you will be able to:

- Understand Jesus as the divine Messiah, the One who would bring about the end of the sacrificial system
- Defend Jesus' claim that the only way a man may enter the kingdom of heaven is by means of a spiritual rebirth, one that comes through faith in Christ
- Acquire principles of personal evangelism by observing how Jesus approached the Samaritan woman
- Apply the concepts learned in this lesson to your mind, character, and ministry

Topic 1: The First Temple Cleansing

April, AD 29

On two occasions, once at the beginning and once at the end of His public ministry, Jesus entered the outer court in Herod's temple and violently cleansed it. In holy indignation, Jesus overturned the tables of the money changers and swept the animals and shopkeepers from the temple area. At this first temple cleansing Jesus made the statement that if the temple were destroyed, He would raise it up in three days. He used the temple as a figure of speech to indicate His body. At His trial before the Sanhedrin council, two witnesses turned this statement into a threat to destroy the magnificent temple in Jerusalem.

When you have completed this topic, you will be able to understand Jesus as the divine Messiah, the One who would bring about the end of the sacrificial system.

Read the section in Farrar entitled "Jesus at the Passover," in the Textbooks section (at the end of this course)).

The Scripture related to this topic is John 2:13-22.

Jesus, being obedient to the Law, would certainly have attended all of the Passovers (see note at end of this lesson) between His first Passover at age twelve to His last on the eve of His death. Arriving at the temple area in Jerusalem, Jesus discovered a despicable site. Corrupt money changers had turned the Passover feast and the temple from a place of sacrifice and worship of God into an occasion of lust, greed, and dishonesty. Additionally, within the sacred precincts a myriad of animals with all of their accompanying filth had profaned the temple area. Cattle were being sold in the sacred court. Arriving from other lands, pilgrims who had no local currency were obliged to pay a foreign exchange charge to buy sacrifices to worship God!

This magnificent temple, built by Herod the Great (see note in Lesson 4 Notes), was to be the place where God and His people met. Because it had been corrupted, Jesus took out a whip made of cords and drove out those who had desecrated it. What a fiery scene that must have been; when an unknown Galilean man swept the tables clear and then overturned them. The onlookers stood silently and did nothing to stop Him.

QUESTION 1

Based upon your reading in Farrar, why do you think the Passover might have been a good time for Jesus to begin His ministry in Jerusalem?

QUESTION 2

How would you describe the temple Jesus found that day? What had become of the temple in Jerusalem in Jesus' evaluation?

QUESTION 3

Which purposes were served by Jesus' harsh behavior in cleansing the temple? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. He was putting His Father's house in order.
- B. He was fulfilling prophecy recorded in Psalm 69:9.
- C. He was helping the poor.
- D. He was saying that hypocrisy was inconsistent with the worship of God.
- E. He was assuming a messianic prerogative as stated in Daniel 9:24.

QUESTION 4

When Jesus said, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up again" (Jn 2:19), He meant the following: (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. The sacrificial system was passing away, and they would be the ones ending it.
- B. One day He would destroy the temple when God sent the Romans to destroy Jerusalem in AD 70.
- C. When they destroyed Him by crucifixion, He would rise again on the third day.
- D. Jesus was the true temple.
- E. One day the temple of God would no longer be made of bricks and mortar.

Topic 2: Jesus Teaches the New Birth

During this first Passover of Jesus' ministry, He apparently performed many signs (Jn 2:23). These miracles confirmed His authority to cleanse the temple and to be called the true Temple of Israel. No doubt these signs stirred up great interest, and His reputation began to spread. All this demanded comment from the legal ruling body of the Jews, the Sanhedrin. It was up to the Sanhedrin to make an official pronouncement regarding this young Galilean prophet. It is possible that they had sent Nicodemus to investigate.

A Nighttime Visit by Nicodemus

April, AD 29

When you have completed this topic, you will be able to defend Jesus' claim that the only way a man may enter the kingdom of heaven is by means of a spiritual rebirth, one that comes through faith in Christ.

Read about this encounter in the textbook excerpt "Nicodemus" by Farrar (at the end of the course).

The Scriptures related to this topic are John 2:23-25 and 3:1-21.

The Pharisees were a very prominent sect of Judaism. Nicodemus was a great teacher and a member of this group. You may want to read the article on the "Pharisees" (at the end of this lesson) before continuing.

QUESTION 5

Which best describes the central characteristic of the Pharisees?

- A. They were the purists and separatists who by their lifestyles and teaching promoted strict adherence to the Law of Moses.
- B. They were a rival party to the Sadducees, and although they disagreed in many ways, they did share a common belief that there is no resurrection of the dead.
- C. Unlike the Zealot party, they were not promoting the overthrow of the Roman governors to establish Jewish independence.
- D. They believed that one day a Teacher of Righteousness, the Messiah, would appear and deliver the Jews from Roman bondage.

QUESTION 6

Based upon your reading in Farrar, what do you think was Nicodemus's hidden question when he approached Jesus secretly at night?

- A. How good does one have to be to enter the kingdom of heaven?
- B. Is it possible for a Pharisee to enter this new kingdom?
- C. By what authority do You teach these things?
- D. Are You, in fact, the Messiah?

You Must Be Born Again

April, AD 29

QUESTION 7

Nicodemus asked, "How can a man be born when he is old?" Which of the following describe Jesus' answer? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Logical—The only way a living thing enters any kingdom is through birth. Plants enter the plant kingdom, animals enter the animal kingdom, and humans enter the human kingdom this way.
- B. Revolutionary—According to the Pharisees, all that was necessary for entrance into God's kingdom was to be a descendant of Abraham.
- C. New—Nothing like this had ever been taught in the Old Testament.
- D. Spiritual—Jesus asserted that entrance into God's kingdom can only come through a birth from above.

QUESTION 8

Jesus told Nicodemus that he must be born of water and the Spirit. Read the various interpretations of the phrase "Born of Water" in the lesson articles section. In your Life Notebook explain which view you believe to be correct and why.

QUESTION 9

Read John 3:16 and carefully reflect on it for a moment. In this very familiar verse, Jesus specifies the one condition for obtaining everlasting life: believing on His name. Note what is not mentioned: baptism, submission to the lordship of Christ, church membership, going to mass, repentance, and promising God that you will turn from your sin. In your Life Notebook explain why only believing is mentioned and why these other items are omitted. You might consider some of the following verses in your answer: Ephesians 2:8-9, Revelation 21:6, and Galatians 3:1-6.

QUESTION 10

According to our understanding of John 3:36, we might conclude that those who have never heard of Jesus Christ could find salvation based upon the revelation they have received. (You may want to read John 14:6 and Acts 4:12 before answering this question.) *True or False?*

John 3:36 and other verses make it clear that salvation comes only through personal faith in Christ. This is perhaps the greatest offense of Christianity to the modern mind. The modern challenge is: Do you mean to tell me that just because a person has not heard about Christ, God will send him to hell? The answer, of course, is: God does not send people to hell because they have not heard about Christ; in fact, God would never send an innocent person to hell. The problem is that no one is innocent; all have sinned against God. The reason people go to hell is not because they have not heard about Christ but because even though they know about the true God (see Rom 1:18-23), they reject the revelation about God that is evident to all through His handiwork. Thus, humans are justly condemned even if they never know the name of Christ. They have not responded to the information they possess.

In John 3 Jesus has just presented three great facts to Nicodemus. First, God loves the world. Second, God demonstrated His love when He sent His only Son. His love is not just expressed in words, but in actions. The third great fact is that mankind is under God's judgment. It was not the coming of Christ that condemned us; rather it was mankind's own disobedience. Christ came to remove this condemnation. It is important to remember that men are not judged because they refuse to believe in Christ; they are already guilty even if they never hear about Him or His gospel of forgiveness. Jesus did not come to judge the world, but to save it (Jn 3:17).

The Scripture related to this topic is John 3:22-36.

QUESTION 11

Read John the Baptist's summary statement regarding the direction of his life in John 3:30. In what ways do we sometimes put the focus on ourselves rather than on Christ?

The ministry of John the Baptist was beginning to subside, and the ministry of the Christ whom he announced was increasing.

QUESTION 12

The ministry of John the Baptist:

- A. Was, in large part, a failure because his movement died out and seemed to have no lasting impact.
- B. Was a success because he was faithful in doing what God told him to do.
- C. Was characterized by teaching that repentance was necessary for deliverance from hell.
- D. Was located primarily in the northern regions of Israel near Galilee.

Topic 3: The Woman at the Well

For unstated reasons, Christ now moved northward. Surprisingly, He went right through Samaria, a route which pious Jews would have avoided due to their belief that the Samaritans were religiously “unclean.”

It is possible that news of John’s imprisonment by King Herod (Mt 4:12) had come to Him. This may explain why John’s gospel states that Jesus “had” to travel through Samaria (Jn 4:4). Jesus wanted to avoid John’s fate because His time had not yet come; it was not yet time for the Son of Man to lay down His life for the sins of the world. His ministry was just beginning. He had much to teach and many to heal, and the Twelve had yet to be trained. For this reason it was expedient that He remove Himself from Herod’s territory.

The meeting with the Samaritan woman took place at Sychar (see lesson note) in Samaria. The locale appears to be about a mile from Jacob’s well and located on the shoulder of Mt. Ebal (see lesson note), opposite Mt. Gerizim. The well was over 100 feet deep. Tired and thirsty, Jesus found Himself there at noon.

The Water of Life

January, AD 30

It was nearly midnight when Pastor James heard a knock at the door. Awakened from a sound sleep he wondered who this could be. When he opened the front door, a disheveled and slightly inebriated man in his forties stood before him; James knew Bill well and had prayed for him often. Bill had ruined his life with alcohol; his wife had left him; he had lost his family, his job and his dignity. He now lived in a shack on the edge of town.

“Pastor, I need to talk with you,” Bill said.

“Come on in,” Pastor James replied and started brewing a pot of coffee.

A glance at Bill’s wrinkled clothes, unshaven face, and unkempt hair told the story. Bill was desperate. Sometimes God has to bring us to the end of ourselves before we will listen.

Bill recited at length his struggle with drinking and how it had enslaved him and destroyed his life. “But,” he said, “I cannot break the habit.”

“I know it is wrong, but it is the only way I can numb the pain inside.”

Pastor James understood. Many, many years ago he too had been addicted to alcohol. He knew the temporary relief it provided. He also knew that the thirst returned the next day, along with the inner turmoil and despair, which drove him to drink again.

With compassion in his eyes, Pastor James looked at this distraught man and said, “Bill I can identify with your struggle. You see, in my youth, I went through the same battle and like you was defeated time and again.”

“What did you do?” Bill wanted to know. “How did you find release from your bondage to drink?”

Pastor James recounted to him that a friend had introduced him to a drink so satisfying that he never thirsted again.

“Who brewed that?” Bill wanted to know.

At that, James opened the gospel of John and read to Bill the story of Jesus’ encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well. Jesus offered this woman living water which would permanently satisfy the dryness of her empty heart.

That night, Bill drank from that Living Water and his life was never the same. He began to attend church, gave up alcohol, repaired his relationships with his children, and asked forgiveness from his wife who had long since remarried.

Bill’s life change was a testimony to many but the physical damage to his body from years of drinking was irreversible. His liver was destroyed and cancer began to consume his wrecked physique.

One night, about midnight again, Pastor James received a phone call from Bill. Bill was on his deathbed and he wanted James to come over to pray with him as he prepared for eternity with Christ.

Entering Bill’s house, James went upstairs to the bedroom where Bill’s children had gathered to spend these last moments with their father.

“Pastor,” Bill began with a gasping and shaky voice. “The end has come for me, but I look forward with great joy to being with Christ. I want to thank you for introducing me to the most satisfying drink I have ever had. I want you to know that just like you promised, I have never thirsted again. I will get there before you do but I want you to know that when you arrive, I will be at the gates, with thankful arms outstretched, to welcome you in.”

This topic will introduce us to that Living Water. But we will also reflect on some parallels between Jesus’ approach to the Samaritan woman, and the lessons Pastor James learned from this encounter and employed in his conversation with Bill.

In this lesson you will learn some principles of personal evangelism by observing how Jesus approached the Samaritan woman.

The Scripture related to this topic is John 4:1-42.

In the discussion to follow, Jesus explained for the first time what the gospel was all about. The Messiah, He asserted, is the giver of the Holy Spirit who in turn imparts eternal life. This life is so satisfying that the one possessing it never thirsts again. As living water, working within the heart, the Spirit produces worshippers who are not concerned with external issues such as the proper

location for worship. They know that they can worship anywhere from the heart. Jesus claimed that He is the Messiah, the One who can impart this gift.

QUESTION 13

To understand the significance of the encounter Jesus had with the woman at the well, it is important to know something about the Samaritans. Read the article “Samaritans” at the end of this lesson. Which statements below apply to them? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. The Samaritans were a mixed population of Jews and Assyrians.
- B. The Samaritans were considered “unclean” by the Jews.
- C. The Samaritans held that one could worship at either the temple in Jerusalem or the temple on Mt. Gerizim.
- D. The Samaritans populated the land thirty miles north of Jerusalem.
- E. The Samaritans used the same Scriptures as the Jews; they just interpreted them differently.

For Jesus to speak to a woman, especially to a Samaritan, was a violation of all protocol. Samaritan women were regarded by the Jews as perpetually “unclean.” If Jesus drank from a vessel which this woman had touched, He would be regarded as ceremonially unclean. The rabbis taught that to speak to a woman, even one’s wife, was a waste of time and a diversion from the study of the Torah. By His action Jesus was rejecting this prevailing denigrating view of women and was elevating women to their rightful place as coheirs in the grace of life (1 Pet 3:7), full equals with men. Wherever Christianity has gone, the role, dignity, and status of women have been elevated.

QUESTION 14

What differences do you see between Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman? Match the characteristics of Nicodemus with the characteristics of the woman at the well.

<i>Characteristics of Nicodemus</i>	<i>Characteristics of the Woman at the Well</i>
Jew	No converts recorded
Learned	Poor, probably outcast
Morally upright	Witnessed to entire town
Wealthy upper class	Flippant and possibly boisterous
Serious and Dignified	Samaritan
Recognized Jesus’ merit and sought Him out	Ignorant
Indifferent to Him	Sinful adulteress

The Fields Are Ready to Harvest

QUESTION 15

In your Life Notebook, write down some principles of evangelism you learned from Jesus’ encounter with the woman in Samaria.

QUESTION 16

How did Jesus handle the inopportune return of His disciples, that is, their arrival just as He was about to give the woman at the well an invitation to receive eternal life?

Note that the first time Jesus openly declared Himself to be the Messiah He did so to a Samaritan woman! He used the forbidden words (by the Pharisees), “I AM,” which can only be applied to God (Ex 3:14), in reference to Himself.

After not being allowed to help, the Samaritans opposed building the temple in Jerusalem. They built a rival temple on Mt. Gerizim during the time of Alexander the Great, which was destroyed in 128 BC. The remains of the temple could be seen from Jacob’s well. This well was traditionally ascribed to Jacob and was in the area where he camped east of the city of Shechem (see lesson note) (Gen 33:18-19), about one kilometer out of town. It was three meters wide and thirty-two meters deep.

QUESTION 17

Jesus urged the disciples to reap a harvest that had already been planted. What principles of evangelism can we discern from this?

This incident teaches us that though one’s background may be questionable, the Spirit of God works in mysterious ways to prepare the soil of our hearts for His harvest. One of the errors Christians sometimes make in sharing their faith is “bruising the fruit.” When we pick ripe pears from a tree, a gentle tug will cause them to fall into our hand. However, if we jerk them, we often end up bruising them.

We can draw a parallel to spiritual harvesting. If the harvest is timely, that is, if God has been preparing a person to receive Christ, we do not need to press, argue, or cajole. Rather, we need to wait for the Spirit’s work to be evident. If we are sensitive to the Spirit’s leading, we will know when the person is ready.

QUESTION 18

When the Samaritan woman attempted to deflect the discussion into a theological debate regarding the proper place of worship, Jesus told her that a time was coming when true worshippers would worship in spirit and truth (Jn 4:22-24). Carefully consider the context of His words, and then select the answer below which most likely reflects His meaning.

- A. To worship in spirit is to worship with a sense of mystical connection between your spirit and God's Spirit. To worship in truth is to worship according to truth revealed to you by the ministry of the Spirit.
- B. To worship in spirit is actually to worship under the power and influence of the Holy Spirit. To worship in truth is to worship according to the teaching of the Jewish scholars and not the heretical Samaritan scholars.
- C. To worship in spirit is to worship spontaneously with no defined structure. To worship in truth is to worship according to the Scriptures.
- D. To worship in spirit is to worship from the heart, anywhere. To worship in truth is to worship according to the Scriptures.

Topic 4: Matching Events

QUESTION 19

To help you memorize these events, we have compiled a list of sixty-one important events in the life of Christ. Take a moment and review events 3-5, 8, and 10-12. You will find them at the end of this course. Hold your hand over the event descriptions on the left and see if you can identify the associated Scriptures on the right.

Topic 5: Knowing, Being, Doing

It is time now to reflect upon what you have learned in a more practical way. The next four questions will help you do this. This self-evaluation is intended to be a devotional time with the Lord; therefore, do not brush past this. If you are not able to spend at least a half-hour in prayer and reflection now, it might be better to put off answering these four questions until another time when your heart is prepared.

QUESTION 20: KNOWING

Open your Life Notebook and create an entry for Lesson 4 entitled "Knowing." One of the course objectives is for you to reflect upon the example of Christ and all that you learn about the nature of God by observing Him. Review the Scriptures discussed in this lesson (Jn 2:13--25; 3:1-21; 4:1-42). Ask God to reveal Himself through the Person of His Son. List all that you learn about God.

QUESTION 21: BEING

In this lesson we find many of examples of Jesus demonstrating love. Read the article "Love." In your Life Notebook record how you see Jesus manifesting love. Then discuss very concretely what His love means to you in your situation.

QUESTION 22: BEING

Take a moment for self-evaluation and reflection. In your Life Notebook rate yourself on the character trait “love” using the following scale of 1 to 4. Where do you think you are now? Also, evaluate your journey, your progress, and whether you are progressing up or down the scale and why.

Very Inconsistent

Somewhat Inconsistent

Somewhat Consistent

Very Consistent

QUESTION 23: DOING

Think for a moment now about how Jesus trained His men. Read the article by Robert Coleman on “Demonstration,” and then in your Life Notebook under “Doing,” record the principles you have learned from watching Jesus and His disciples in this lesson. Describe some specific situations where you could put these principles into practice. Write out in detail what you plan to do with the individuals in your group or the ones you are praying for about joining your group. Complete your Life Notebook discussion of “Knowing, Being, and Doing” by creating a prayer in which you praise God for who He is, ask Him to help you to develop godliness, then pray for Him to show you how you can implement Christ’s training strategy with some individuals you know.

Lesson 4 Self Check

QUESTION 1

When the Samaritan woman attempted to deflect the discussion into a theological debate regarding the proper place of worship, Jesus told her that a time was coming when true worshippers would worship in spirit and truth (Jn 4:22-24). Carefully consider the context of His words, and then select the answer which most likely communicates His meaning.

- A. To worship in spirit is to worship with a sense of mystical connection between your spirit and God's Spirit. To worship in truth is to worship according to truth revealed to you by the ministry of the Spirit.
- B. To worship in spirit is actually to worship under the power and influence of the Holy Spirit. To worship in truth is to worship according to the teaching of the Jewish scholars and not the heretical Samaritan scholars.
- C. To worship in spirit is to worship spontaneously and with no defined structure. To | worship in truth is to worship according to the Scriptures.
- D. To worship in spirit is to worship from the heart anywhere. To worship in truth is to worship according to the Scriptures.

QUESTION 2

Which of the following sentences best describes the central characteristic of the Pharisees?

- A. They were the purists and separatists who, by their lifestyles and teaching, promoted strict adherence to the Law of Moses.
- B. They were a rival party to the Sadducees, and although they disagreed in many ways, they did share a common belief that there is no resurrection of the dead.
- C. Unlike the Zealot party, they were not promoting the overthrow of the Roman governors to establish Jewish independence.
- D. They taught that one day a Teacher of Righteousness, the Messiah, would appear and deliver the Jews from the Roman bondage.

QUESTION 3

Based upon your reading in Farrar, what do you think Nicodemus's hidden question was when he approached Jesus secretly at night?

- A. How good does one have to be to enter the kingdom of heaven?
- B. Is it possible for a Pharisee to enter this new kingdom?
- C. By what authority do You teach these things?
- D. Are You, in fact, the Messiah?

QUESTION 4

According to our understanding of John 3:36, we might conclude that those who have never heard of Jesus Christ could find salvation based upon the revelation they have received. *True or False?*

QUESTION 5

The ministry of John the Baptist was:

- A. A failure because his movement died out and seemed to have no lasting impact.
- B. A success because he was faithful to do what God told him to do.
- C. Characterized by teaching that repentance was necessary for deliverance from hell.
- D. Located primarily in the northern regions near Galilee.

QUESTION 6

In John 2:19, when Jesus said, “Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up again,” He meant: *(Select all that apply.)*

- A. The sacrificial system was passing away, and they would be the ones ending it.
- B. One day He would destroy the temple when God sent the Romans to destroy Jerusalem in AD 70.
- C. When they destroyed Him by crucifixion, He would rise again on the third day.
- D. Jesus was the true temple.
- E. One day the temple of God would no longer be made of bricks and mortar.

QUESTION 7

After Jesus cleansed the temple, the priests and Pharisees asked Christ by what authority He did that (Jn 2:18). Christ replied, “Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up again” (Jn 2:19). According to Farrar, Scripture indicates that they understood that Jesus was talking about His body and not about the physical temple. *True or False?*

QUESTION 8

What purposes were served by Jesus’ harsh behavior in cleansing the temple? *(Select all that apply.)*

- A. He was putting His Father’s house in order.
- B. He was fulfilling prophecy recorded in Psalm 69:9.
- C. He was helping the poor.
- D. He was saying that hypocrisy was inconsistent with the worship of God.
- E. He was assuming a messianic prerogative as stated in Daniel 9:24.

QUESTION 9

Various views are given in the article “Born of Water” to explain Jesus' words about being born of water and the Spirit. Which of these views are most likely correct? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. The “water” refers to the natural birth, and the “Spirit” to the birth from above.
- B. The “water” refers to the Word of God.
- C. The “water” refers to baptism as an essential part of regeneration.
- D. The “water” is a symbol of the Holy Spirit.
- E. The “water” refers to the repentance ministry of John the Baptist, and the “Spirit” refers to the application by the Holy Spirit of Christ to an individual.

QUESTION 10

In John 3:4a Nicodemus asked, “How can a man be born when he is old?” Jesus’ answer was: (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Logical—The only way a living creature enters any kingdom is through birth. Animals enter the animal kingdom, and humans enter the human kingdom this way. Therefore, it makes sense that children of God would enter His kingdom in the same manner.
- B. Revolutionary—According to the Pharisees, all that was necessary for entrance into God’s kingdom was to be a descendant of Abraham.
- C. New—Nothing like this had ever been taught in the Old Testament.
- D. Spiritual—Jesus asserted that entrance into God’s kingdom can only come through a birth from above.

Answers to Questions:

QUESTION 1:

Check your answer to see that it includes the following: Vast crowds flocked to the Holy City at this great annual feast. Indeed, the whole nation, along with Jewish pilgrims from other nations, gathered for this central feast of the religious year. It was an appropriate time for Jesus to announce His ministry and begin it with a cleansing of the temple.

QUESTION 2:

Check your answer to see that it includes the following: Animals were in the holy precincts being sold as sacrifices, profaning the area with their filth. Money changers were making a profit out of the necessity imposed upon the pilgrims to buy sacrifices. Merchants set up shop in the temple itself. A house of prayer had been turned into a house of dishonest gain and profit.

QUESTION 3:

- A. He was putting His Father's house in order.
- B. He was fulfilling prophecy recorded in Psalm 69:9.
- D. He was saying that hypocrisy was inconsistent with the worship of God.
- E. He was assuming a messianic prerogative as stated in Daniel 9:24.

QUESTION 4:

- A. The sacrificial system was passing away, and they would be the ones ending it.
- C. When they destroyed Him by crucifixion, He would rise again on the third day.
- D. Jesus was the true temple.
- E. One day the temple of God would no longer be made of bricks and mortar.

QUESTION 5:

- A. They were the purists and separatists who by their lifestyles and teaching promoted strict adherence to the Law of Moses.

QUESTION 6:

- A. How good does one have to be to enter the kingdom of heaven?

QUESTION 7:

- A. Logical—The only way a living thing enters any kingdom is through birth. Plants enter the plant kingdom, animals enter the animal kingdom, and humans enter the human kingdom this way.
- B. Revolutionary—According to the Pharisees, all that was necessary for entrance into God's kingdom was to be a descendant of Abraham.
- D. Spiritual—Jesus asserted that entrance into God's kingdom can only come through a birth from above.

QUESTION 8: *Your answer*

QUESTION 9: *Your answer*

QUESTION 10: False

QUESTION 11:

Some might answer: We insist on our own way in interpersonal relationships; we draw attention to what we have done rather than acknowledging what Christ has done through us; we demand credit; or we talk too much about the "results" of our work and ministry.

QUESTION 12:

- B. Was a success because he was faithful in doing what God told him to do.

QUESTION 13:

- A. The Samaritans were a mixed population of Jews and Assyrians.
- B. The Samaritans were considered "unclean" by the Jews.
- D. The Samaritans populated the land thirty miles north of Jerusalem.

QUESTION 14:

<i>Characteristics of Nicodemus</i>	<i>Characteristics of the Woman at the Well</i>
Jew	Samaritan
Learned	Ignorant
Morally upright	Sinful adulteress
Wealthy upper class	Poor, probably outcast
Serious and dignified	Flippant and possibly boisterous
Recognized Jesus' merit and sought Him out	Witnessed to entire town
Indifferent to Him	No converts recorded

QUESTION 15: *Your answer***QUESTION 16:**

Rather than becoming frustrated, He trusted the timing to God's sovereignty. Rather than rebuking the disciples, He gave them a lesson on the "ripeness" of the spiritual harvest.

QUESTION 17:

The correct answer should include that evangelism is a process in which God uses many people, each fulfilling a vital role in the operation: "One sows and another reaps" (Jn 4:37).

QUESTION 18:

D. To worship in spirit is to worship from the heart, anywhere. To worship in truth is to worship according to the Scriptures.

QUESTION 19: *Your answer***QUESTION 20:** *Your answer***QUESTION 21:** *Your answer***QUESTION 22:** *Your answer***QUESTION 23:** *Your answer*

Lesson 4 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1:

D. To worship in spirit is to worship from the heart anywhere. To worship in truth is to worship according to the Scriptures.

QUESTION 2:

A. They were the purists and separatists who, by their lifestyles and teaching, promoted strict adherence to the Law of Moses.

QUESTION 3:

A. How good does one have to be to enter the kingdom of heaven?

QUESTION 4: False

QUESTION 5:

B. A success because he was faithful to do what God told him to do.

QUESTION 6:

A. The sacrificial system was passing away, and they would be the ones ending it.

C. When they destroyed Him by crucifixion, He would rise again on the third day.

D. Jesus was the true temple.

E. One day the temple of God would no longer be made of bricks and mortar.

QUESTION 7: True

QUESTION 8:

A. He was putting His Father's house in order.

B. He was fulfilling prophecy recorded in Psalm 69:9.

D. He was saying that hypocrisy was inconsistent with the worship of God.

E. He was assuming a messianic prerogative as stated in Daniel 9:24.

QUESTION 9:

A. The "water" refers to the natural birth, and the "Spirit" to the birth from above.

D. The "water" is a symbol of the Holy Spirit.

QUESTION 10:

A. Logical—The only way a living creature enters any kingdom is through birth. Animals enter the animal kingdom, and humans enter the human kingdom this way. Therefore, it makes sense that children of God would enter His Kingdom in the same manner.

B. Revolutionary—According to the Pharisees, all that was necessary for entrance into God's kingdom was to be a descendant of Abraham.

D. Spiritual—Jesus asserted that entrance into God's kingdom can only come through a birth from above.

Lesson 4 Notes

Passover

The Passover, the first of the three great annual festivals of the Israelites, is celebrated in the month Nisan (March/April), from the fourteenth to the twenty-first. (Strictly speaking the Passover only applied to the paschal supper, and the feast of unleavened bread followed, which was celebrated until the twenty-first.) The following are the principal passages in the Pentateuch relating to the Passover: Exodus 12:1-51; 13:3-10; 23:14-19; 34:18-26; Leviticus 23:4-14; Numbers 9:1-14; 28:16-25; Deuteronomy 16:1-6.

Why Instituted?

This feast was instituted by God to commemorate the deliverance of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage and the sparing of their firstborn when the destroying angel smote the firstborn of the Egyptians. The deliverance from Egypt was regarded as the starting point of the Hebrew nation.

The Passover as a Type

The Passover was not only commemorative but also typical. The deliverance it commemorated was a type of the great salvation it foretold. No other shadow of good things to come contained in the law can vie with the festival of the Passover in expressiveness and completeness. (1) The paschal lamb must of course be regarded as the leading feature in the ceremony of the festival. The lamb slain typified Christ, the "Lamb of God," slain for the sins of the world. Christ "our Passover lamb has been sacrificed" (1 Cor 5:7). According to the divine purpose, the true Lamb of God was slain at nearly the same time as "the Lord's Passover," at the same season of the year, and at the same time of the day as the daily sacrifice at the temple. The Crucifixion began at the hour of the morning sacrifice and ended at the hour of the evening sacrifice. That the lamb was to be roasted and not boiled has been supposed to commemorate the haste of the departure of the Israelites. It is not difficult to determine the reason of the command, "not a bone of him shall be broken." The lamb was to be a symbol of unity, the unity of the family, the unity of the nation, the unity of God with His people, whom He had taken into covenant with Himself.

Mt. Ebal

Mount Ebal was a mountain in the Promised Land, on which the Israelites were to "put" the curse which should fall upon them if they disobeyed the commandments of Jehovah. The blessing consequent on obedience was to be similarly localized on Mount Gerizim (Deut 11:26-29). Ebal and Gerizim are the mounts which form the sides of the fertile valley in which lies Nablûs, the ancient Shechem, Ebal on the north and Gerizim on the south. They are nearly in the center of the country of Samaria, about eight hundred feet above Nablûs in the valley, and they are so near that all the vast body of the people could hear the words read from either mountain.

W. Smith. (1997). *Smith's Bible Dictionary* (electronic ed. of the revised ed.). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Herod the Great

Herod was the Roman governor ruling Judea when Christ was born. The Romans often installed local rulers of the conquered people. Technically, the Herods were Iduemeans, nominal Jews. He

was a brutal and psychopathic ruler. His only real contribution to the nation was that he rebuilt the temple in Jerusalem. It was Herod the Great who commanded the execution of all the children in Jerusalem who were under two years of age.

He robbed his own people that he might give munificent gifts to the Romans; he did not even spare the grave of King David, which was held in almost idolatrous reverence by the people, but robbed it of its treasures. The last days of Herod were embittered by endless court intrigues and conspiracies, by an almost insane suspicion on the part of the aged king, and by increasing indications of the restlessness of the nation. Like Augustus himself, Herod was the victim of an incurable and loathsome disease. His temper became more irritable as the malady made progress, and he made both himself and his court unutterably miserable. In his last will and testament, he remained true to his lifelong submission to the Roman power. So great became his suffering toward the last that he made a fruitless attempt at suicide. But, true to his character, one of the last acts of his life was an order to execute his son Antipater, who had instigated the murder of his half brothers, Alexander and Aristobulus, and another order to slay, after his death, a number of nobles, who were guilty of a small outbreak at Jerusalem and who were confined in the hippodrome. He died in the thirty-seventh year of his reign.

J. Orr M.A., D.D. (1999). *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*: 1915 edition (J. Orr, Ed.). Albany, OR: Ages Software.

Samaria

The word “Samaria” is used in a twofold sense in Scripture. First it was the name of the capital of the Northern Kingdom (Israel), prior to the time it fell in 722 BC. Afterward it became the name of a district in which the city of Samaria was located. Often a province was named after its capital city.

Herod the Great repopulated the city with over 6,000 colonists to whom he gave rich farmland. It was, apparently, quite a beautiful city.

Palestine at the time of Jesus was divided into three provinces, Judea, Samaria, and Galilee. There was considerable hostility between the Samaritans and the Jews. They had built a rival temple to that in Jerusalem on Mt. Gerizim around 320 BC.

Shechem

This is an important city in central Palestine, in the valley between mounts Ebal and Gerizim, thirty-four miles north of Jerusalem and seven miles southeast of Samaria. The situation of the town is one of surpassing beauty. It lies in a sheltered valley, protected by Gerizim on the south and Ebal on the north. The feet of these mountains, where they rise from the town, are not more than five hundred yards apart. The bottom of the valley is about 1800 feet above sea level, and the top of Gerizim 800 feet higher still. The site of the present city, which was also that of the Hebrew city, occurs exactly on the water summit; and streams issuing from the numerous springs there flow down the opposite slopes of the valley, spreading greenness and fertility in every direction. The whole valley “was filled with gardens of vegetables and orchards of all kinds of fruits, watered by fountains which burst forth in various parts and flow westward in refreshing streams. It seems to appear suddenly like a scene of fairy enchantment. Many feel there is nothing to compare with it in all Palestine.”

Sychar

A village of Samaria where Jacob's Well was located, "near the plot of land that Jacob had given to his son Joseph" (Jn 4:5). This "field" is apparently the one at Shechem referred to in Genesis 33:18 and Joshua 24:32, called a "mountain slope" in Genesis 48:22. It was at Jacob's well that Jesus met the Samaritan woman at noon on a hot spring day.

G. W. Bromiley. (1988; 2002). *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Revised*; ISBE (Vol. 4, Page 674). Wm. B. Eerdmans.

Lesson 4 Articles

Born of Water

Various views are given to explain Jesus' words about being born of water and the Spirit:

1. The "water" refers to the natural birth, and the "Spirit" to the birth from above.
2. The "water" refers to the Word of God (Eph 5:26).
3. The "water" refers to baptism as an essential part of regeneration. (This view contradicts other Bible verses that make it clear that salvation is by faith alone; e.g., John 3:16, 36; Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:5.
4. The "water" is a symbol of the Holy Spirit (Jn 7:37-39).
5. The "water" refers to the repentance ministry of John the Baptist, and the "Spirit" refers to the application by the Holy Spirit of Christ to an individual.

In view of the fact that repentance as a condition for salvation is never mentioned in the gospel of John, it is unlikely that the fifth view is correct.

The first view has been argued by many and makes good sense of the context. When a baby is born, the sac in which it grew in the womb bursts and "water" spills out. While this may be the meaning, there are no known references to physical birth being called "born by water." Yet in support of the view it might be argued that it parallels the phrase "born of flesh" in John 3:6.

In view of the fact that elsewhere in the gospel of John water is made a symbol of the Spirit, it may be that birth by water is birth by the Holy Spirit. In this view to be born of water and the Spirit refers to one regenerating and cleansing act of the Spirit, not two different kinds of births.

View two seems improbable because nowhere else in the gospel of John does water refer to the Word of God.

Pharisees

The name means “separatists,” from *parash*, “to separate”—those who carefully kept themselves from any legal contamination, distinguishing themselves by their care in such matters from the common people.

When the New Testament records open, the Pharisees, who have supreme influence among the people, are also strong, though not predominant, in the Sanhedrin.

Doctrines of the Pharisees

Pharisees, a religious party or school among the Jews at the time of Christ, so called from *peréAshéEn*, the Aramaic form of the Hebrew word *PeruAshim*, “separated.” The chief sects among the Jews were the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Essenes, who may be described respectively as the Formalists, the Freethinkers, and the Puritans. A knowledge of the opinions and practices of the Pharisees at the time of Christ is of great importance for entering deeply into the genius of the Christian religion. A cursory perusal of the Gospels is sufficient to show that Christ’s teaching was in some respects thoroughly antagonistic to theirs. He denounced them in the bitterest language (see Mt 15:7, 8; 23:5, 13, 14, 15, 23; Mk 7:6; Lk 11:42-44, and compare Mk 7:1-5; 11:29; 12:19, 20; Lk 6:28, 37-42). To understand the Pharisees is by contrast an aid toward understanding the spirit of uncorrupted Christianity.

They Believed That the Oral Law, Called the Mishna, Had Been Passed Down from Moses and Was Equal in Authority to Scripture.

The fundamental principle of the Pharisees, common to them with all orthodox modern Jews, is that by the side of the written law regarded as a summary of the principles and general laws of the Hebrew people there was an oral law to complete and to explain the written law, given to Moses on Mount Sinai and transmitted by him by word of mouth. The first portion of the Talmud, called the Mishna or “second law,” contains this oral law. It is a digest of the Jewish traditions and a compendium of the whole ritual law, and it came at length to be esteemed far above the sacred text.

They Developed Minute Traditions Which Were Intended to Explain How to Obey the Law Fully but Resulted in a Burden.

While it was the aim of Jesus to call men to the Law of God itself as the supreme guide of life, the Pharisees, upon the pretence of maintaining it intact, multiplied minute precepts and distinctions to such an extent that the whole life of the Israelite was hemmed in and burdened on every side by instructions so numerous and trifling that the law was almost if not wholly lost sight of. These “traditions,” as they were called, had long been gradually accumulating. Of the trifling character of these regulations innumerable instances are to be found in the Mishna. Such were their washings before they could eat bread, and the special minuteness with which the forms of this washing were prescribed; their bathing when they returned from the market; their washing of cups, pots, brazen vessels, etc.; their fastings twice in the week, Luke 18:12; such were their tithings, Matthew 23:23; and such, finally, were those minute and vexatious extensions of the law

of the Sabbath, which must have converted God's gracious ordinance of the Sabbath's rest into a burden and a pain (Mt 12:1-13; Mk 3:1-6; Lk 13:10-17).

They Were Intolerant and Hypocritical.

With all their pretences to piety they were in reality avaricious, sensual, and dissolute (Mt 23:25; Jn 8:7). They looked with contempt upon every nation but their own (Lk 10:29). Finally, instead of endeavoring to fulfill the great end of the dispensation whose truths they professed to teach, and thus bringing men to the hope of Israel, they devoted their energies to making converts to their own narrow views, who with all the zeal of proselytes were more exclusive and more bitterly opposed to the truth than they were themselves (Mt. 22:15).

Some of Them Were Pure and Sincere.

It is proper to add that it would be a great mistake to suppose that the Pharisees were wealthy and luxurious, much more that they had degenerated into the vices which were imputed to some of the Roman popes and cardinals during the two hundred years preceding the Reformation. Josephus compared the Pharisees to the sect of the Stoics. He says that they lived frugally, in no respect giving in to luxury. We are not to suppose that there were not many individuals among them who were upright and pure, for there were such men as Nicodemus, Gamaliel, Joseph of Arimathæa, and Paul.

They Made the Sabbath a Burden and Said That Man Was Created for the Sabbath Rather Than the Other Way Around.

Less valuable, at times burdensome and hurtful, were the minute refinements they introduced into the Law. Sometimes the ingenuity of the Pharisaic doctors was directed to lighten the burden of the precept as in regard to the Sabbath. Thus a person was permitted to go much farther than a Sabbath day's journey if at some time previous he had deposited, within the legal Sabbath day's journey of the place he wished to reach, bread and water; this point was now to be regarded as the limit of his house, and consequently from this all distances were to be ceremonially reckoned (Jewish Encyclopedia, under the word "Erub"): The great defect of Pharisaism was that it made sin so purely external. An act was right or wrong according as some external condition was present or absent; thus there was a difference in bestowing alms on the Sabbath whether the beggar put his hand within the door of the donor or the donor stretched his hand beyond his own threshold, as may be seen in the first Mishna in the Tractate Shabbath. A man did not break the Sabbath rest of his ass, though he rode on it, and hence did not break the Sabbath law, but if he carried a switch with which to expedite the pace of the beast he was guilty, because he had laid a burden upon it.

Character of the Pharisees

Pharisees and People of the Land

Because the ideal of the Pharisees was high, and because they revered learning and character above wealth and civil rank they had a tendency to despise those who did not agree with them. We see traces of this in the Gospels; thus Jn 7:49: "This multitude that knoweth not the law are accursed." (ASV) The distinction between the Pharisees, the Puritans, and the *'am ha-'arets*, "the

people of the land,” began with the distinction that had to be kept between the Jews and the Gentiles who had entered the land as colonists or intruders. These would, during the Babylonian captivity, almost certainly speak western Aramaic, and would certainly be heathen and indulge in heathen practices. They were “the people of the land” whom the returning exiles found in possession of Judea.

Arrogance Toward Other Jews

Mingled with them were the few Jews that had neither been killed nor deported by the Babylonians, nor carried down into Egypt by Johanan, the son of Kareah. As they had conformed in a large measure to the habits of their heathen neighbors and intermarried with them, the stricter Jews, as Ezra and Nehemiah, regarded them as under the same condemnation as the heathen, and shrank from association with them. During the time of our Lord’s life on earth the name was practically restricted to the ignorant Jews whose conformity to the law was on a broader scale than that of the Pharisees. Some have, however, dated the invention of the name later in the days of the Maccabean struggle, when the ceremonial precepts of the Law could with difficulty be observed. Those who were less careful of these were regarded as *`am ha-`arets*.

Their Scrupulosity

We find traces of this scrupulosity in the Gospels. The special way in which the ceremonial sanctity of the Pharisees exhibited itself was in tithing, hence the reference to their tithing “mint and anise and cummin” (Mt 23:23, KJV). In the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican, one of the things that the Pharisee prides himself on is that he gives tithes of all he possesses (Lk 18:12). He is an example of the Pharisaic arrogance of those “who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and set all others at nought.” Their claiming the first seats in feasts and synagogues (Mt 23:6) was an evidence of the same spirit.

Their Hypocrisy

Closely akin to this is the hypocrisy of which the Pharisees were accused by our Lord. When we call them “hypocrites,” we must go back to the primary meaning of the word. They were essentially “actors,” posers. Good men, whose character and spiritual force have impressed themselves on their generation, have often peculiarities of manner and tone which are easily imitated. The very respect in which they are held by their disciples leads those who respect them to adopt unconsciously their mannerisms of voice and deportment. A later generation unconsciously imitates, “acts the part.” In a time when religion is persecuted, as in the days of Antiochus Epiphanes, or despised as it was in the Hellenizing times which preceded and succeeded, it would be the duty of religious men not to hide their convictions. The tendency to carry on this public manifestation of religious acts after it had ceased to be protest would be necessarily great. The fact that they gained credit by praying at street corners when the hour of prayer came, and would have lost credit with the people had they not done so, was not recognized by them as lessening the moral worth of the action. Those who, having lived in the period of persecution and contempt, survived in that, when religion was held in respect would maintain their earlier practice without any mental reservation. The succeeding generation, in continuing the practice, consciously “acted.” They were posers. Their hypocrisy was real even though it was reached by unconscious stages. Hypocrisy was a new sin, a sin only possible in a spiritual religion, a religion in which morality and worship were closely related. Heathenism, which lay in

sacrifices and ceremonies by which the gods could be bribed, or cajoled into favors, had a purely casual connection with morality; its worship was entirely a thing of externals, of acting, “posing.” Consequently, a man did not by the most careful attention to the ceremonies of religion produce any presumption in favor of his trustworthiness. There was thus no sinister motive to prompt to religion. The prophets had denounced the insincerity of worship, but even they did not denounce hypocrisy, i.e., religion used as a cloak to hide treachery or dishonesty. Religion had become more spiritual, the connection between morality and worship more intimate, by reason of the persecution of the Seleucids.

Talmudic Classification of the Pharisees:

The Talmud to some extent confirms the representation of the Gospels. There were said to be seven classes of Pharisees:

1. The “shoulder” Pharisee, who wears his good deeds on his shoulders and obeys the precept of the Law, not from principle, but from expediency
2. The “wait-a-little” Pharisee, who begs for time in order to perform a meritorious action
3. The “bleeding” Pharisee, who in his eagerness to avoid looking on a woman shuts his eyes and so bruises himself to bleeding by stumbling against a wall
4. The “painted” Pharisee, who advertises his holiness lest any one should touch him so that he should be defiled
5. The “reckoning” Pharisee, who is always saying “What duty must I do to balance any unpalatable duty which I have neglected?”
6. The “fearing” Pharisee, whose relation to God is one merely of trembling awe
7. The Pharisee from “love.” In all but the last there was an element of “acting,” of hypocrisy. It is to be noted that the Talmud denounces ostentation; but unconsciously that root of the error lies in the externality of their righteousness; it commands an avoidance of ostentation which involves equal “posing.”

Samaritans

Strictly speaking, a Samaritan would be an inhabitant of the *city* of Samaria; but the term was applied to all the people of the kingdom of Israel. After the captivity of Israel, 721 BC, and in our Lord's time, the name was applied to a peculiar people whose origin was as follows:

At the final captivity of Israel by Shalmaneser, we may conclude that the cities of Samaria were not merely partially but wholly depopulated of their inhabitants in 721 BC, and that they remained in this desolated state until, in the words of 2 Kings 17:24, (KJV), "the king of Assyria brought men from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Ava and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel: and they possessed Samaria, and dwelt in the cities thereof."

Thus the new Samaritans were Assyrians by birth or subjugation. These strangers, whom we will now assume to have been placed in "the cities of Samaria" by Esar-haddon, were of course idolaters, and worshipped a strange medley of divinities. God's displeasure was kindled, and they were annoyed by beasts of prey, which had probably increased to a great extent before their entrance upon the land. On their explaining their miserable condition to the king of Assyria, he dispatched one of the captive priests to teach them "how they should fear the Lord." The priest came accordingly, and henceforth, in the language of the sacred historian they "feared the LORD, and served their graven images, both their children and their children's children: as did their fathers, so do they unto this day" (2 Kgs 17:41, KJV).

A gap occurs in their history until Judah has returned from captivity. They then desire to be allowed to participate in the rebuilding of the temple at Jerusalem; but on being refused, the Samaritans throw off the mask, and become open enemies, frustrate the operations of the Jews through the reigns of two Persian kings, and are only effectually silenced in the reign of Darius Hystaspes, 519 BC.

The feud grew stronger and stronger every year. Matters at length came to a climax. About 409 BC, a certain Manasseh, a man of priestly lineage, on being expelled from Jerusalem by Nehemiah for an unlawful marriage, obtained permission from the Persian king of his day, Darius Nothus, to build a temple on Mount Gerizim for the Samaritans, with whom he had found refuge. The animosity of the Samaritans became more intense than ever. They are said to have done everything in their power to annoy the Jews.

Their own temple on Gerizim they considered to be much superior to that at Jerusalem. There they sacrificed a Passover. Toward the mountain, even after the temple on it had fallen, wherever they were they directed their worship.

To their copy of the law they falsely claimed an antiquity and authority greater than that attached to any copy in the possession of the Jews. The law (i.e., the five books of Moses) was their sole code, for they rejected every other book in the Jewish canon.

The Jews, on the other hand, were not any better in their treatment of the Samaritans. Certain other Jewish renegades had from time to time taken refuge with the Samaritans; hence by degrees the Samaritans claimed to partake of Jewish blood, especially if doing so happened to suit their interest.

The Jews, however, would not admit to any shared bloodlines (ancestry/geneology) with these people? Ecclesiasticus 50:25-26 expresses the traditional hatred Jews held toward Samaritans. Such were the Samaritans of our Lord's day; a people distinct from the Jews, yet living in the very midst of the Jews, preserving their identity. Seven centuries had rolled away since they had been brought from Assyria by Esar-haddon, and they had even abandoned their polytheism. They were a people whose rallying place of their religion on Mount Gerizim had been destroyed one hundred and sixty years before by John Hyrcanus (130 BC). Though Samaria (the city) had been repeatedly destroyed, they still preserved their nationality and still worshipped from Shechem. Through it all, the Samaritans still retained their peculiar religion and could not unite with the Jews.

William Smith; revised and edited by F.N. and M.A. Peloubet, *Smith's Bible dictionary* [computer file], *electronic ed.*, *Logos Library System*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997.

Lesson 5: The Final Twelve Are Chosen

Lesson Introduction

After staying two days in Samaria, ministering to the town in which the woman at the well lived, Jesus proceeded north to Galilee. He exploded on the scene with a number of healings that followed one after another in rapid fire.

First, Jesus healed the nobleman's son in Cana. Then, returning to Nazareth, Jesus' own hometown, He formally announced to the synagogue that His messianic ministry was beginning. He was immediately met with anger and rejection. Leaving Nazareth, Christ pressed on to Capernaum (see Lesson 5 Notes) where He preached the good news of the coming kingdom, invited the first four disciples to follow Him full time, and cast out an unclean spirit. As Jesus traveled through Galilee, the gospel writers recorded that He healed Peter's mother-in-law, created for Peter a miraculous catch of fish, healed a leper and a paralytic, and then enlisted Matthew, the tax collector, in His band of disciples.

It was an impressive time of ministry, and Jesus' fame spread far and wide. With the beginning of His second year of ministry in April, AD 30, Jesus proclaimed Himself Lord of the Sabbath, healed a man with a crippled hand, and after a night of prayer, made His final selection of the twelve men who were to be His disciples.

When such a dizzying array of miracles and events launched Jesus' ministry into the public eye, many were left wondering, "Could this be the Messiah?" The first rays of dawn were breaking across the horizon. The kingdom of God was near; the time of fulfillment had come!

Topic 1 opens with the unusual healing of the nobleman's son. Without even being present, Jesus pronounced the young man healed, and upon the nobleman's return home, the servants told him that his son revived at the precise time Jesus pronounced him well.

In stark contrast, Topic 2 leads us into the darkness of rejection. Rising to read in the synagogue, Jesus announced that the prophecy of Isaiah 61 was being fulfilled in His ministry. The crowd was so angered by this presumption that they attempted to hurl Him over a cliff.

Next, Topic 3 will discuss how the main subject of Christ's ministry was the offer of the kingdom of heaven to Israel. This topic will also address the following questions: What was that kingdom? What does it mean that it was "at hand"? How was repentance related to the kingdom offer?

Topic 4 examines how Jesus, having offered the kingdom, must establish His credentials as the one who has authority to restore the Davidic theocracy. This topic also examines how He proved that He was, in fact, sent from God by performing a new series of miracles including exorcisms and healings.

The final selection of the Twelve is discussed in Topic 5. It comes as a shock that Jesus was willing to include within the fellowship of His closest followers a hated tax collector named Matthew.

Topic 6 addresses the issue of how there was, perhaps, no issue more infuriating to the Pharisees than Jesus' seeming indifference to their legalistic and petty regulations regarding the Sabbath.

On numerous occasions, Jesus deliberately provoked them on the matter. In this case, He and His disciples picked grain on the Sabbath because they were hungry, thus violating the Pharisaic prohibition of work on the Sabbath.

Over a year later in May, AD 30, Jesus, after a night of prayer, selected twelve men to whom He would entrust the future of His earthly work. Who were these men? What principles did Jesus employ in selecting them in contrast to others? These questions will be the focus of Topic 7.

Lesson Outline

- Topic 1: The Nobleman's Son Is Healed
- Topic 2: Rejection at Nazareth
- Topic 3: Jesus Offers the Kingdom of Heaven
- Topic 4: The Authority of the King
 - The Second Call of the Disciples
 - Casting out a Demon
 - Healing the Paralytic
- Topic 5: The Call of Matthew
- Topic 6: The Sabbath Controversy Begins
- Topic 7: Choosing the Twelve Apostles
- Topic 8: Matching Events
- Topic 9: Knowing, Being, Doing

Lesson Objectives

When you have completed this lesson, you will be able to:

- Support through Scripture that Jesus can heal at a distance
- Recount the Lord's last visit to Nazareth and the rejection He experienced there
- Correlate Christ's statement that the kingdom of heaven was "at hand" with the relationship of repentance to that kingdom
- Support the notion that Jesus had the authority to offer the kingdom of God to Israel
- Identify with Matthew's experience of being welcomed by God in spite of personal failure and sin
- Explain how the opposition to Christ began to develop
- List some of Christ's principles for the training of the Twelve
- Apply the concepts learned in this lesson to your mind, character, and ministry

Topic 1: The Nobleman's Son Is Healed

January–February, AD 30

Departing from Capernaum, Jesus proceeded north to Cana where His first miracle had brought joy to His new friends. In John 4:43-54 we read that Christ had not been there long before an

officer from the neighboring court of Herod Antipas, hearing of His arrival, came and urgently entreated Him to descend to Capernaum and heal his dying son. Although our Lord had never set foot in Tiberias, Herod's capital city, the voluptuous court of the king had heard the voice of John the Baptist more than once with alarm and reverence.

Who was this nobleman? We know that Manaen (see lesson note), the foster brother of Herod (Acts 13:1), became a Christian. Also, among the women who ministered to Christ from their private means was Joanna, the wife of Chuza (see lesson note), Herod's steward (Lk 8:3). Because after the son was healed, this nobleman and his entire household believed in Christ, it has been conjectured that the royal official was none other than Chuza himself.

The urgency of the official's request, which appears at first to have had little root in spiritual conviction, needed a momentary check. Jesus decided to demonstrate that He was no mere benevolent physician, ready at any time to perform His supernatural powers at the beck and call of any sufferer who might come to Him as a desperate last resort. He at once rebuked the spirit which demanded signs as the sole foundation of faith.

Nevertheless, yielding to the father's passionate earnestness, the Lord dismissed him with the assurance that his son lived. The interview had taken place at the "seventh hour," or one o'clock in the afternoon. Even on a short February day there would have been enough light for the father to get to Capernaum by nightfall; Cana was not more than five hours from Capernaum. Nevertheless, the father's soul had been calmed by his faith in Christ's promise, and he slept that night at some intermediate spot upon the road.

The next day the nobleman's slaves met him and confirmed that, at the very hour when Jesus had spoken, the fever had left his son. This was the second time that Christ had signaled His arrival in Galilee by performing a conspicuous miracle. Because of the nobleman's status, this healing miracle of Jesus became widely known; this contributed, no doubt, to the joyous and enthusiastic welcome which our Lord received during that early period of His ministry, which has been called the "Galilean spring" (Farrar, chapter 17). This is the second sign John recorded in the gospel of John.

The healings performed by Jesus are astounding. Even at a distance and when not even present with the sick person, a word from his lips results in healing of a victim far away. Let your heart and your faith be encouraged as you witness the incredible healing of the nobleman's son and the great faith of this father who came to Jesus with a request.

The Scripture related to this topic is John 4:43-54.

QUESTION 1

What special lesson did Jesus teach the nobleman in John 4:45-48 before healing his son?

QUESTION 2

There are definite steps of progression in the nobleman's faith. In the exercise below, match the step of faith with the corresponding action.

<i>Step of Faith</i>	<i>Action</i>
Step 1	The nobleman trusted merely in a healing touch.
Step 2	The nobleman trusted without seeing.
Step 3	All of the nobleman's household believed.
Step 4	The nobleman's faith was based upon reports from Jerusalem.

Chronologically, this is the second of the thirty-five miracles of Jesus recorded in the Gospels, and it was built upon the first. It was in Cana that Christ first turned water into wine, showing His power to create. This second miracle demonstrates His power over distance and the preservation of life.

Topic 2: Rejection at Nazareth

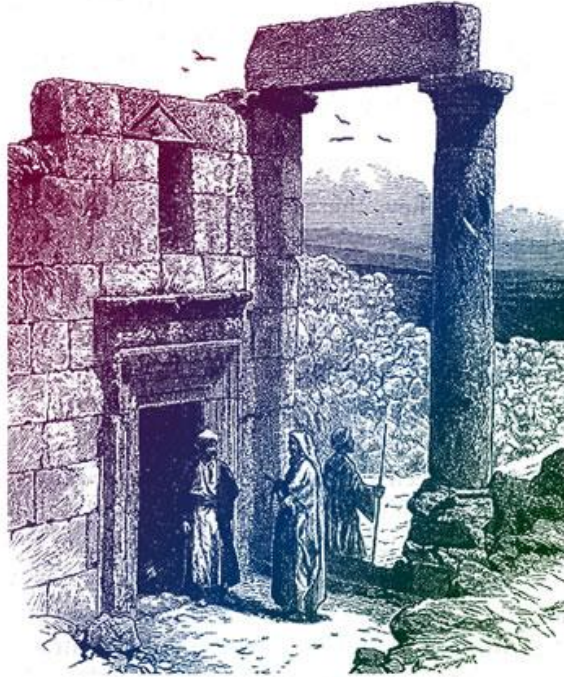
February, AD 30

After healing the nobleman's son, Jesus proceeded to Nazareth, His hometown. The events that transpired in this little village must have brought Him great sorrow. He came to His own, John recorded later, and His own received Him not (Jn 1:11).

In our world today, it is permissible to speak of spirituality without God or, specifically, without Jesus. It is the name of Jesus that brings animosity and division. This is nothing new. Even at the beginning of His ministry among those in His hometown, Nazareth, there was great resistance to His claim to be the Messiah.

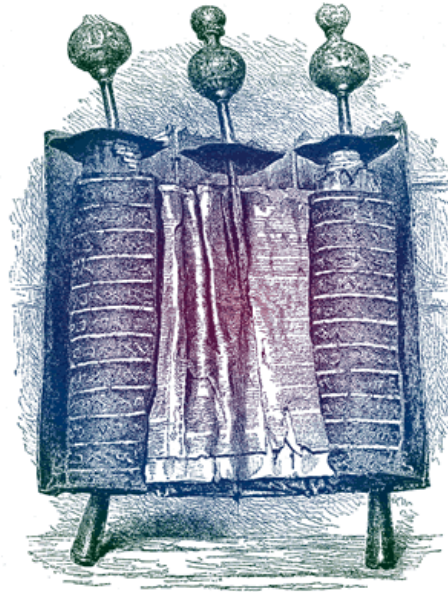
There is an excellent summary of this event by Farrar in chapter 16, entitled "Rejected by the Nazarenes," in the Textbook section at the end of this course.

The Scripture related to this topic is Luke 4:14-30.



On numerous occasions during His youth, Jesus had attended this very synagogue (read article on “Synagogue” at end of lesson).. After sitting down, Jesus rose to speak (Lk 4:16-30). This was an indication that as a member of the synagogue of Nazareth, He wanted to become the “reader from the prophets” for that day. Even though the ruler of the synagogue had not called upon Him to read, no doubt news about Jesus had spread throughout the whole region, and they were anxious to hear what He would say.

It appears that Isaiah 61:1-2 was the reading for that day. Assuming that Jesus followed the tradition, after reading the passage, He sat down and undertook the role of interpreter for the passage.



QUESTION 3

Why do you think Jesus only read the first phrase of Isaiah 61:2?

- A. He probably lacked enough time to give a full exposition of the passage.
- B. The second half of the verse referred to future events related to His Second Coming.
- C. He wanted to avoid being thought negative.
- D. He did not think His hearers would accept it.

Initially those attending the synagogue that day marveled at Jesus' gracious and persuasive words. Upon further reflection, however, they wondered: Is this not Joseph's son? How can it be that Jesus is claiming such things? For Jesus to be accepted as the Messiah in Nazareth, where He had lived and labored as a carpenter, was a phenomenon too impossible to believe. So the mood of wonder and praise quickly turned from whispers and nods to scowls, doubt, and hostility, a rapid and radical shift of emotions within the audience.

Jesus pointed out to them a disturbing pattern in Israel's history. This was not the first time a prophet was not honored among his own people. The Lord provided the example of Elijah and the widow of Zarephath (1 Kgs 17:8-16). There were many widows in Israel at that time who were in need, but God sent Elijah to a Gentile woman, where he found faith and acceptance. Likewise, it was Naaman, the Syrian whom Elisha healed of leprosy, though there were surely many lepers in Israel (2 Kgs 5:1-19).

QUESTION 4

In what ways did Jesus respond to the animosity of the people of Nazareth in the synagogue? *(Select all that apply.)*

- A. He promised to establish a kingdom.
- B. He graciously understood their concerns.
- C. He reminded them that His ministry was to the poor and oppressed.
- D. He pointed out that often in Israel's history the Gentiles had been more receptive than the Jews.

The rejection in Nazareth illustrates a continuing theme throughout the Lord's ministry, the failure of the nation to recognize its own Messiah. By illustrating that God's blessing once before had come upon those outside the nation, Jesus warned them that the nation was potentially at one of its lowest spiritual periods. This was one reason why Jesus said He must come and preach release. It was not just release from Rome that His people needed; they needed release from their sins. Their captivity was, in part, of their own doing and not the fault of Rome. Having called those within the nations sinners and having pointed to those outside as ones to be blessed, it was no wonder they wanted to throw Him over a cliff!

Topic 3: Jesus Offers the Kingdom of Heaven

February, AD 30

Having been rejected at Nazareth, Jesus apparently moved to the town of Capernaum where He made His new home. It was there that He first offered the kingdom of heaven to the nation, preaching that it was at hand. Immediately He performed many miracles throughout the region,

establishing His authority and credentials as the messianic son of David. Later, by the Sea of Galilee, the Lord called Peter, Andrew, James, and John for the second time to become His disciples and to accompany Him on a full-time basis.

One of the great interpretive problems of the Gospels revolves around the perplexing statements made by our Lord that the kingdom of heaven is “at hand” and yet, later in his ministry he refers to it as being in the future. How are these passages to be harmonized and what is the kingdom of heaven?

The Scriptures related to this topic are Matthew 4:13-17; Mark 1:14b-15; Luke 4:31a.

At this point in our study, we must pause to consider the nature of the kingdom which Christ offered as “at hand.” Read the article “The Identity of the Kingdom of Heaven” (at the end of this lesson).

QUESTION 5

Many Bible scholars believe that the kingdom that Jesus preached as “at hand” is the same one predicted by the Old Testament prophets. Read Micah 4:1-8 and Amos 9:11-15. What are some of the characteristics of this kingdom as predicted by the prophets? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. It will be a time of universal peace and prosperity.
- B. The kingdom of David will be reestablished.
- C. It is a spiritual kingdom in the hearts of men.
- D. Jerusalem will be the center of worldwide worship and a capital of the world.

QUESTION 6

The kingdom announced to Mary in Luke 1:33 and to Zechariah in Luke 1:68-79 was different from the one anticipated by the Old Testament prophets. *True or False?*

One of the problems in understanding the nature of this kingdom is Christ’s declaration that it is “at hand.” He seems to suggest that it is about to be established. Yet, in other places He says that this kingdom is in the distant future. Read Matthew 19:27-29 and Acts 1:3-6. Is the kingdom of heaven present (“at hand”), or is it still in the future? How is this apparent difficulty to be resolved? Scholars have given three interpretations of the Scriptures to handle this problem.

The first is that the kingdom is experienced in the present. In this view the kingdom “at hand” was established by Jesus in the first century. That means we are in the kingdom now. To say that we are living in the kingdom now, however, seems to require a redefinition of the traditional interpretation of the Old Testament prophecies as well as Acts 1:3-6.

The second view holds that the kingdom is both present and future. In this view Christ inaugurated the kingdom during His ministry but will consummate it in its predicted Old Testament form at the Second Coming. Thus, it exists in a spiritual form now but will be a literal reality in the future.

The third interpretation says the establishment of the kingdom is a future event only. This view understands the phrase *at hand* to mean the kingdom is “at hand” in the sense of contingency. In other words, the kingdom is being offered to the nation of Israel, and if the people accept this

offer, the kingdom will be ushered in its predicted form. If the nation rejects the kingdom, it will be postponed and established as predicted at the second coming of Christ.

In favor of the second or third view is Acts 1:3-6, where we learn that throughout the forty days of Christ's post-Resurrection appearance, He taught specifically about the kingdom of God. His disciples still understood Him to be referring to an immediate restoration of the kingdom to Israel.

QUESTION 7

Open your Life Notebook, and explain which view of the kingdom "at hand" makes the most sense to you and why.

Jesus said that because the kingdom of heaven/God is "at hand," His listeners must "repent" (Mt 4:17; Mk 1:15).

QUESTION 8

Reread the article "Repentance" at the end of Lesson 3. Does the viewpoint presented in this article describe your own viewpoint? Why or why not? Open your Life Notebook, and record your answer.

Topic 4: The Authority of the King

February, AD 30

Events now began to move very quickly. Jesus was rejected by the people of Nazareth with whom He grew up because He declared Himself the Messiah. He offered the kingdom predicted in the Old Testament to the nation of Israel by saying it was "at hand." If the nation of Israel accepted it, the Old Testament predictions of a national kingdom for Israel would begin to move toward fulfillment. According to the Old Testament prophecies (Ps 22:14-18; Isa 53:4-7) and Christ's own declared purpose, He must go to the cross to die for sins whether or not the nation accepted Him as Messiah and His offer of the kingdom. How this would have happened if the Jews had accepted the kingdom offer is speculative, but it is certain that it would have happened. A reasonable scenario is that upon acceptance of His Messiahship, the Romans would have crucified Him as a traitor to Rome, and upon His resurrection, He would have established the kingdom. However this might have happened, the cross was always in the mind of God; it was plan A—and not an afterthought.

It is one thing to claim to be the Messiah; it is another to give evidence of God's plan for the Messiah's ministry. In the following sections we will see how Christ did this. Moving from village to village throughout Galilee, He performed many miracles demonstrating that He indeed had the authority to offer the kingdom to Israel and was, in fact, their long-awaited Messiah.

It was critically important that the one claiming to be Messiah could demonstrate his credentials to offer the kingdom of heaven to the nation. What were Christ's credentials?

The Scriptures related to this topic are Matthew 4:18-23; 8:2-4, 14-17; 9:2-8; Mark 1:16-21, 23-45; 2:1-12; Luke 1:5-11; 4:31b, 33-44; 5:12-26.

QUESTION 9

In the section entitled “Fishing for People,” Jesus calls some of His disciples a second time. The first call, recorded in John 1:35-51, occurred almost a year earlier. In which ways did the second call differ from the first call? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. In the second call the disciples’ service and commission were specified. Jesus did not do this at the first call.
- B. In the first call John the Baptist told the disciples about Jesus, and they told one another. The second call came directly from Jesus.
- C. The first call was a general call to follow Him, but the second call outlined a particular task.
- D. In the first call they were appointed as apostles.

The selection of fishermen is significant. Jesus chose men from the everyday common occupations of life. Fishing was a major industry in Galilee, and these men even had hired servants, indicating that they were probably in the middle class (Mk 1:20).

Another point of interest is the words Jesus used when He called them. He called them to be “fishers of men.” This was very typical of His teaching style and one that we would do well to remember. He chose illustrations from everyday life and used them as metaphors for a deeper spiritual reality.

Casting Out a Demon

February, AD 30

The Scriptures related to this topic are Mark 1:21, 23-28; Luke 4:31b, 33-37.

It is no accident that the first miracle Mark and Luke record is a confrontation with the powers of evil. In Mark there are four demon exorcisms. The message is that at the outset of His ministry, the battle with Satan was engaged and Jesus had power over Lucifer’s minions.

QUESTION 10

Why did Jesus reject the testimony of the demon described in Luke 4:31-37 and what is the principle that applies to us today?

The Scriptures related to this topic are Matthew 4:23; 8:14-17; Mark 1:29-39; Luke 4:38-44.



Archaeological Remains of Peter's House in Capernaum. The ruins of what is believed to be Peter's house were discovered in 1960 by Franciscan archaeologists.

QUESTION 11

In the Scriptures mentioned above, we see Jesus going to the home of Simon Peter at the end of a long day of ministry. What does this passage reveal about our Lord's priorities? What does it say to us?

Note: This is the first of three incidents in which Jesus relates to Peter as an individual who has needs. In addition to the healing of Peter's mother-in-law, we read that Peter received encouragement through the miraculous catch of fish (Lk 5:6-9), and later he paid his temple tax with a coin he found in a fish (Mt 17:24-27).

The Scriptures related to this topic are Matthew 8:2-4; Mark 1:40-45; Luke 5:12-16.

QUESTION 12

Set aside at least ten minutes for prayerful meditation. What is God like? Since God is a spirit and unavailable to our senses, we must look to the One who came to reveal Him to gain insight into Him. Jesus is, according to Paul, the visible image of the invisible God (Col 1:15). Jesus Himself said to Philip, "The person who has seen me has seen the Father!" (Jn 14:9). For this exercise read Luke 5:12-16 and imagine yourself to be that leper. Also, read the article "Leprosy." Place yourself in that scene; imagine the roadside, the trees, the breeze on your face, the hills. See Jesus coming from a distance. What are you feeling? What are your painful memories from being a leper? What is the look on Christ's face? What are your feelings when He touches you? What is the look on His face when you are healed? What are you saying to Him, and what is He saying to you? This type of meditation has been practiced with great profit by many Christians throughout the centuries. Ask yourself these questions as you reflect upon His love and grace:

What have I done for Christ?

What am I now doing for Christ?

What should I do for Christ?

Take a moment and do this now. Then write in your Life Notebook any insights, feelings, or principles which come to your mind.

Jesus commanded the leper to "tell no one" (Lk 5:14a). Why did He do this? It seems obvious that the man would not obey this command. In his joy he would, and did, tell everyone. As a result of this man, Jesus' fame spread, and Mark notes that it hindered Jesus from entering some towns and teaching there (Mk 1:45). It is likely that this effect is precisely the reason Jesus did not want the man to talk.

Healing the Paralytic

February, AD 30

For several weeks Jesus had been going from village to village preaching the message about the kingdom of heaven, healing the sick, and ministering to the poor. Afterward, He returned to Capernaum.

The Scriptures related to this topic are Matthew 9:2-8; Mark 2:1-12; Luke 5:17-26.

QUESTION 13

It is easier to tell a paralytic, "Stand up and walk," than to say, "Your sins are forgiven" (Mt 9:5). *True or False?*

QUESTION 14

Jesus never claimed to be God. *True or False?*

Topic 5: The Call of Matthew

March, AD 30

Christianity differs from all other religions in general and from Jewish Rabbinism in particular in two fundamental claims: forgiveness of sin and acceptance of the sinner. Rabbinism knew nothing of definite forgiveness of sin. It could only point to a general hope in God, much like Islam does. Yet, in Christ, forgiveness becomes a concrete reality now, on earth, and not just a vague hope for the future. Jesus speaks of forgiveness of sin available here and now because He came to provide for it.

As to the second difference, the welcome of the sinner, all other religious systems require that the sinner must first cease to be a sinner and become penitent. The other systems bid the sinner to agree to change his life first and then see a welcome from God. God in Christ first welcomes the sinner and in so doing makes him repentant.

The story of the healing of the paralytic in Topic 4 and the call of Matthew vividly illustrate this uniqueness of Christ. It is fitting that the beginning of the opposition to Christ centers on one of these fundamental claims of His grace.

Tax collectors were hated by the people. They were usually corrupt and added a tax collection for themselves. If you were preparing to launch a movement that was to change history, would you have chosen such a despised outcast to be part of your inner circle?

After leaving the house in which He had been teaching, Jesus walked by the shore of the Sea of Galilee. Seeing a tax collector (see lesson note) named Matthew there, He called out, "Follow me" (Mt 9:9). Immediately Matthew got up and left "everything" and followed Christ.

The Scriptures related to this topic are Matthew 9:9-17; Mark 2:13-22; Luke 5:27-39.

QUESTION 15

It is clear that Jesus required repentance from Matthew before inviting him to follow Him. Just as Rabbinism was completely silent on the forgiveness of the sin, it also had no word of welcome for the sinner. *True or False?*

QUESTION 16

Read the article "Taxation" (at the end of the lesson). How do you explain Matthew's sudden decision to leave everything?

Topic 6: The Sabbath Controversy Begins

April–May, AD 30

At the beginning of the year in which Jesus enjoyed great public favor (April, AD 30) the seeds of His future death were sown. Few laws of rabbinical Judaism were esteemed more highly than

those relating to the Sabbath. To violate or treat these laws with contempt stirred up great anger in the Pharisees.

We will touch on this subject here and come back to it in greater detail in a future lesson.

Is opposition evidence that your plan of ministry is incorrect? If so, Jesus was clearly mistaken in His approach. From the beginning His teaching and actions often aroused animosity from the religious leaders. Why? What lessons are there for us in this when we face opposition?

The Scriptures related to this topic are Matthew 12:1-8; Mark 2:23-28; Luke 6:1-5.

QUESTION 17

Jesus and His disciples were clearly in violation of the Sabbath law by helping themselves to grain. *True or False?*

QUESTION 18

In which ways did Jesus' citation of 1 Samuel 21:1-7 completely refute the concerns of the Pharisees? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. The story showed that the rabbinical traditions were inconsistent with the Old Testament.
- B. The passage showed that even though the Old Testament did prohibit eating grain picked on the Sabbath, the Old Testament was more concerned about human need.
- C. The example revealed that the Pharisees had essentially nullified the Old Testament in favor of their traditions.
- D. Jesus' teaching showed that while this was taught in the Old Testament, He had come to supplement and enhance the Old Testament law.

QUESTION 19

Based upon Leviticus 26:33-45, why was the Sabbath law so important to rabbinical Judaism?

- A. They believed that if one did not obey the Sabbath law, terrible punishments could come upon him.
- B. They believed that the Babylonian Captivity had occurred, in part, due to the violation of the Sabbath law.
- C. They believed that man was created to serve the Sabbath.
- D. They believed that obedience to the law of the Sabbath was necessary to obtain eternal life.

The Scriptures related to this topic are Matthew 12:9-15; Mark 3:1-7; Luke 6:6-11.

QUESTION 20

What does the incident regarding the man with a crippled hand reveal about Christ and the Pharisees (see Lk 6:6-11)? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. It showed how Jesus was more concerned with mercy than He was with precise attention to rabbinical lore.
- B. It showed the utter indifference of the Pharisees to human need.
- C. It showed that Jesus was indifferent to the Old Testament law when it came in conflict with a human need.
- D. It showed that Jesus was willing to break the law.

Topic 7: Choosing the Twelve Apostles

We now come to a pivotal point in the life of Christ, the selection of the twelve apostles. This section merits detailed study. Jesus Christ had four years to launch a movement that would transform the history of civilization. How did He go about it? What were His priorities? Instead of spending time with the multitudes, He spent the last two years of His life with twelve men. He intended to entrust the future of His ministry to these men. They must be carefully selected. After a whole night in prayer with His Father, Jesus chose these Twelve. Why?

Selecting His Men

May, AD 30

The main thrust of the Great Commission was “to make disciples.” Yet, frequently the priority is pushed aside in the business of church life. A weary pastor in one country was responsible for fifteen churches. He spent much of his time on public transportation just traveling to and from the various locations. About all he had time for at each church was to marry, bury, and baptize people. What might this pastor learn from the strategy Jesus employed?

The Scriptures related to this topic are Matthew 4:24-25; Mark 3:7b-19; Luke 6:12-19; 12:2-4; 15b-21.

Here is a place to do some research to learn facts about the twelve men Jesus chose to be apostles. Read the article the “Twelve Apostles” (at the end of the lesson) and then answer the following questions.

QUESTION 21

Read the Scriptures above and refer to the names of the apostles below to read articles about them, and then match the apostle’s name with his surname or appellation.

<i>Apostle’s Name</i>	<i>Surname or Appellation</i>
Simon Peter	Cephas
James	Didymus
Thomas	Son of Thunder
James of Alphaeus	Matthew
Levi	Thaddaeus
Judas of James or Jude	Zealot
Simon	The Less

Who Were the Apostles?

May, AD 30

Refer again to the article the “Twelve Apostles” for help.

QUESTION 22

Like His disciples today, the Twelve had many weaknesses. Match their weakness in the column on the left with Jesus’ method of dealing with it on the right.

<i>Their Weakness</i>	<i>His Method of Teaching and Correction</i>
Mark 8:14-21	John 14:15-18
Matthew 20:20-28	Philippians 2:1-11
Mark 8:26	John 17:1-26
Mark 14:50	John 20:30
Mark 9:14-29	Acts 1:3

The Apostle’s Relations to Each Other

Refer to the article the “Twelve Apostles” for help.

QUESTION 23

Which of the following disciples were brothers? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Simon the Zealot and Matthew
- B. Philip and Nathanael (Bartholomew)
- C. Simon Peter and John
- D. Simon Peter and Andrew
- E. James Son of Alphaeus (James the Less) and Jude (Thaddaeus or Labbaeus).
- F. Thomas and Matthew

QUESTION 24

James “the Greater,” the brother of John and son of Zebedee, is the only apostle whose martyrdom is recorded in the New Testament. *True or False?*

How Did They Die?

QUESTION 25

How did the apostles meet their deaths? Match the apostle's name with how that apostle died.

<i>Apostle's Name</i>	<i>Kind of Death</i>
John	Crucified upside down
Jude	Run through by a spear
Matthew	Thrown from the pinnacle of a tower and beaten to death
Philip	Crucified
Simon Peter	Scourged and crucified
James the Less (Son of Alphaeus)	Slain by the sword
Thomas	Escaped death by boiling in oil

Refer to the article the "Twelve Apostles" for help.

QUESTION 26

Many are not aware of the fact that there were *four* calls of the disciples. Match the call on the left with the Scripture on the right.

<i>Call</i>	<i>Related Scripture</i>
First Call: Call to Conversion	Matthew 4:19; Luke 5:11
Second Call: Call to Ministry	John 1:35-51
Third Call: Call to Apostleship	Matthew 10:1-4
Fourth Call: Call to Martyrdom	Matthew 20:22-23

Christ selected a number of ordinary men who one day would become His apostles. These men would be the authoritative leaders of the early church representing Christ Himself. The Scriptures list several characteristics or requirements for one to have a claim to this position.

QUESTION 27

Match the Scripture passage with the requirement for apostleship.

<i>Scripture Passage</i>	<i>Requirement for Apostleship</i>
Mark 3:14	He must have performed an authenticating sign.
Acts 1:22	He must have seen Christ after His resurrection.
2 Corinthians 12:2	He must be appointed by Christ.

Topic 8: Matching Events

QUESTION 28

To help you memorize these events, we have compiled a list of sixty-one important events in the life of Christ. Take a moment and review events 2, 6, and 13-18. You will find them in the article

“Matching Events” the end of this course. Hold your hand over the event descriptions on the left and see if you can identify the associated Scriptures on the right.

Topic 9: Knowing, Being, Doing

This lesson is rich with insights as to the nature of God and Christ’s strategy for the selection and training of the Twelve. Before taking the Lesson Self Check, let us once again ask ourselves: What have we learned about God as seen in the life of Christ? What qualities exhibited in the ministry of Christ do we need to emulate? And what principles can we apply from our study of Christ as a teacher?

QUESTION 29: KNOWING

Reflect on several situations in the life and ministry of Christ. Open your Life Notebook, and write out what you learned about God from observing God in Christ.

QUESTION 30: BEING

Consider one character quality in the life of Christ which impressed you. Open your Life Notebook, and write out why it impressed you and how you might develop it in your life.

QUESTION 31: DOING

This lesson is rich in principles for discipleship. After reading the section entitled “Selection” in *The Master Plan of Evangelism* and the chapter on “Fishers of Men” in *The Training of the Twelve* (both at the end of the course), open your Life Notebook. Write out at least five principles regarding Jesus’ training and selection of His men. You have been praying about some individuals whom you think would benefit from this course. This week, take some time to talk to them and see if they might be interested in meeting with you to study this course together.

Lesson 5 Self Check

QUESTION 1

Why do you think Jesus only read the first half of the verse in Isaiah 61:2?

- A. He probably lacked time enough to give a full exposition of the passage.
- B. The second half of the verse referred to events far in the future related to His Second Coming.
- C. He wanted to avoid being negative.
- D. He did not think His hearers would accept it.

QUESTION 2

The kingdom announced to Mary in Luke 1:33 and to Zechariah in Luke 1:68-79 was different from that anticipated by the Old Testament prophets. *True or False?*

QUESTION 3

How did Jesus respond to the animosity of the people of Nazareth in the synagogue?

- A. He promised to establish a kingdom.
- B. He graciously understood their concerns.
- C. He reminded them that His ministry was to the rich.
- D. He pointed out that often in Israel's history the Gentiles had been more receptive than the Jews.

QUESTION 4

It seems certain that the kingdom "at hand" is the same one which was predicted by the Old Testament prophets. Based upon your reading in Micah 4:1-8 and Amos 9:11-15, what is one characteristic of this kingdom as predicted by the prophets?

- A. It will be a time of famine and pestilence.
- B. It is a spiritual kingdom in the hearts of men.
- C. The kingdom of David will be reestablished.
- D. Bethlehem will be the center of worldwide worship and a capital of the world.

QUESTION 5

In Matthew 4:18-22 and Mark 1:16-20 Jesus calls some of His disciples a second time. The first call, recorded in John 1:35-51, occurred almost a year earlier. In what way did the second call differ from the first one?

- A. In the second call the disciples' service and commission were specified.
- B. The second call came directly from John the Baptist.
- C. The second call outlined a particular task, whereas the first call was a general call to follow Him.
- D. In the first call they were appointed as apostles.

QUESTION 6

When He healed the nobleman's son, Jesus first gently rebuked the nobleman for basing his faith on signs. *True or False?*

QUESTION 7

As far as we know, the institution of the synagogue was instituted at the time of Christ to pass on the faith to others. *True or False?*

QUESTION 8

Was repentance in the New Testament a synonym for faith?

- A. The call to repentance issued by John and Jesus was a call to escape the temporal judgment coming upon the nation of Israel.
- B. Repentance is one of the conditions for receiving the gift of eternal life.
- C. To repent is to accept Jesus as savior.
- D. To repent is to submit to Christ's Lordship as a condition of receiving eternal life

QUESTION 9

It is easier to say to the paralytic, "Your sins are forgiven," than it is to say, "Get up and walk." *True or False?*

QUESTION 10

In what way did Jesus' citation of 1 Samuel 21:1-7 completely refute the concerns of the Pharisees?

- A. The story showed that the rabbinical traditions were inconsistent with the Old Testament.
- B. The passage showed that even though the Old Testament did prohibit eating grain picked on the Sabbath, the Old Testament was more concerned about human need.
- C. The example revealed that the Pharisees had essentially nullified the Old Testament in favor of their traditions.
- D. Jesus' teaching showed that while this was taught in the Old Testament, He had come to supplement and enhance the Old Testament law.

Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1:

Jesus gently rebuked the official for basing his faith on mere signs and wonders (scientific proofs) rather than upon Christ's word. Such faith often evaporates as the signs and wonders come and go.

QUESTION 2:

<i>Step of Faith</i>	<i>Action</i>
Step 1	The nobleman's faith was based upon reports from Jerusalem.
Step 2	The nobleman trusted merely in a healing touch.
Step 3	The nobleman trusted without seeing.
Step 4	All of the nobleman's household believed.

QUESTION 3:

B. The second half of the verse referred to future events related to His Second Coming.

QUESTION 4:

C. He reminded them that His ministry was to the poor and oppressed.

D. He pointed out that often in Israel's history the Gentiles had been more receptive than the Jews.

QUESTION 5:

A. It will be a time of universal peace and prosperity.

B. The kingdom of David will be reestablished.

D. Jerusalem will be the center of worldwide worship and a capital of the world.

QUESTION 6: False

QUESTION 7: *Your answer*

QUESTION 8: *Your answer*

QUESTION 9:

A. In the second call the disciples' service and commission were specified. Jesus did not do this at the first call.

B. In the first call John the Baptist told the disciples about Jesus, and they told one another. The second call came directly from Jesus.

C. The first call was a general call to follow Him, but the second call outlined a particular task.

QUESTION 10:

Even though the demon acknowledged Him as the Holy One of God, Jesus wanted no part of a testimony from such a source. The application for us today is that we should avoid endorsement from questionable sources.

QUESTION 11:

Jesus had two major priorities in His ministry: people and prayer. Even at the end of a very tiring day, He had time for both.

QUESTION 12: *Your answer*

QUESTION 13: False

QUESTION 14: False

QUESTION 15: False

QUESTION 16:

Jesus had been preaching and performing miracles in the area where Matthew worked for many months. He had had many opportunities to watch how Jesus loved and accepted people and to learn from His teaching. No doubt all this had a great impact upon Matthew; hence, when he was invited to follow Christ, his heart had already been prepared.

QUESTION 17: False

QUESTION 18:

- A. The story showed that the rabbinical traditions were inconsistent with the Old Testament.
 C. The example revealed that the Pharisees had essentially nullified the Old Testament in favor of their traditions.

QUESTION 19:

- B. They believed that the Babylonian Captivity had occurred, in part, due to the violation of the Sabbath law.

QUESTION 20:

- A. It showed how Jesus was more concerned with mercy than He was with precise attention to rabbinical lore.
 B. It showed the utter indifference of the Pharisees to human need.

QUESTION 21:

<i>Apostle's Name</i>	<i>Surname or Appellation</i>
Simon Peter	Cephas
James	Son of Thunder
Thomas	Didymus
James of Alphaeus	The Less
Levi	Matthew
Judas of James or Jude	Thaddaeus
Simon	Zealot

QUESTION 22:

<i>Their Weakness</i>	<i>His Method of Teaching and Correction</i>
Mark 8:14-21	Acts 1:3
Matthew 20:20-28	Philippians 2:1-11
Mark 8:26	John 20:30
Mark 14:50	John 17:1-26
Mark 9:14-29	John 14:15-18

QUESTION 23:

- B. Philip and Nathanael (Bartholomew)
 D. Simon Peter and Andrew
 E. James Son of Alphaeus (James the Less) and Jude (Thaddaeus or Labbaeus).
 F. Thomas and Matthew

QUESTION 24: True**QUESTION 25:**

<i>Apostle's Name</i>	<i>Kind of Death</i>
John	Escaped death by boiling in oil
Jude	Crucified
Matthew	Slain by the sword
Philip	Scourged and crucified
Simon Peter	Crucified upside down
James the Less (Son of Alphaeus)	Thrown from the pinnacle of a tower and beaten to death
Thomas	Run through by a spear

QUESTION 26:

<i>Call</i>	<i>Related Scripture</i>
First Call: Call to Conversion	John 1:35-51
Second Call: Call to Ministry	Matthew 4:19; Luke 5:11
Third Call: Call to Apostleship	Matthew 10:1-4
Fourth Call: Call to Martyrdom	Matthew 20:22-23

QUESTION 27:

<i>Scripture Passage</i>	<i>Requirement for Apostleship</i>
Mark 3:14	He must be appointed by Christ.
Acts 1:22	He must have seen Christ after His resurrection.
2 Corinthians 12:2	He must have performed an authenticating sign.

QUESTION 28: *Your answer***QUESTION 29:** *Your answer***QUESTION 30:** *Your answer***QUESTION 31:** *Your answer*

Lesson 5 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1:

B. The second half of the verse referred to events far in the future related to His Second Coming.

QUESTION 2: False

QUESTION 3:

D. He pointed out that often in Israel's history the Gentiles had been more receptive than the Jews.

QUESTION 4:

C. The kingdom of David will be reestablished.

QUESTION 5:

A. In the second call the disciples' service and commission were specified.

QUESTION 6: True

QUESTION 7: False

QUESTION 8:

A. The call to repentance issued by John and Jesus was a call to escape the temporal judgment coming upon the nation of Israel.

QUESTION 9: True

QUESTION 10:

B. The passage showed that even though the Old Testament did prohibit eating grain picked on the Sabbath, the Old Testament was more concerned about human need.

Lesson 5 Notes

Capernaum

Capernaum was located on the lakefront, just west of where the Jordan River enters the Sea of Galilee in the northwest corner of the lake. It was known for its lush environment, and a Roman garrison was housed there. Capernaum contained a population of about two thousand, and it was also a location where taxes were collected.

In Scripture Capernaum is not mentioned outside the Gospels. When Jesus finally departed from Nazareth, He dwelt in Capernaum (Mt 4:13) and made it the main center of His activity during a large part of His public ministry. Nearby He called the fishermen to follow Him (Mk 1:16), and the public from the receipt of custom (Mt 9:9). It was the scene of many “mighty works” (Mt 11:23; Mk 1:34). Here Jesus healed the centurion’s son (Mt 8:5), the nobleman’s son (Jn 4:46), Simon Peter’s mother-in-law (Mk 1:31), and the paralytic (Mt 9:1); cast out the unclean spirit (Mk 1:23); and here also, probably, He raised Jairus’ daughter to life (Mk 5:22). In Capernaum the little child was used to teach the disciples humility, while in the synagogue Jesus delivered His ever-memorable discourse on the bread of life (Jn 6).

It was a customs station and the residence of a high officer of the king (Mt 9:9; Jn 4:46). It was occupied by a detachment of Roman soldiers, whose commander thought the goodwill of the people was worth securing at the expense of building for them a synagogue (Mt 8:5; Lk 7:5). It stood by the sea (Mt 4:13), and from John 6:17 (compare Mt 14:34; Mk 6:53), we see that it was either in or near the plain of Gennesaret.

It was a poor village. None of the streets were paved, none had channels for running water, and sewage was simply tossed in alleyways made of packed dirt. The construction quality of the homes was poor. Very few of the homes had walls thick enough to support a second story. Those which did were quite frail. Most of the roofs were tiled with thatched reeds. Wooden ceiling beams supported thick beds of reeds that protected the timbers from dampness. Some of the homes apparently had tiled roofs, according to Luke. A typical home consisted of a central courtyard, not visible from the streets, surrounded by a number of rooms which opened into it. The courtyard was the “living room” and “dining room” and where the family congregated. One such home was excavated in 1906 which is believed to be the home of Peter. It was here that Jesus healed Peter’s mother in law.

The woe spoken by the Master against this great city has been fulfilled to the uttermost (Mt 11:23; Lk 10:15). So completely has it perished that the very site is a matter of dispute today.

In 1986 a fishing boat was excavated when the waters of the Sea of Galilee receded. This 8 x 26 boat was no doubt similar to the one in which Jesus traveled and Peter fished.

All in all it was a humble and rather poor village. In such a place, Jesus made His home after the rejection at Nazareth.

Chuza

He was a steward of Herod Antipas whose wife, Joanna, followed Jesus and supported Him with her means (Lk 8:3). Most likely, Chuza was Herod’s business manager, but he may have been some kind of political appointee since the Greek term for “steward” may refer to a political

office. The fact that the name “Chuza” occurs in Nabatean and Syrian inscriptions may mean that Chuza was a Nabatean married to a Jewish woman. Chuza may have been the royal officer who, along with his entire household, believed after Jesus healed his son from a distance (Jn 4:46, 53). If this were the case, it might help explain why Chuza permitted his wife to travel with Jesus and minister to His needs. The special knowledge of Herod and his court reflected in Luke may have come through Chuza. Luke’s mention of Chuza and his wife offers evidence of Christianity within the aristocracy from the very beginning.

Virgil R. L. Fry, Freedman, D. N. (1996, c1992). *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (Vol. 1, p. 1022). New York: Doubleday.

Manaen

He is mentioned in Acts 13:1 as one of the prophets and teachers in the church at Antioch who were present at the commissioning of Paul and Barnabas for missionary work. Manaen is called a “syntrophos” of Herod the Tetrarch, that is, Herod Antipas (4 BC–AD 37). Syntrophos means “nourished” or “brought up together with,” “foster brother,” “companion (from one’s youth), intimate friend.” The exact relation of Manaen to Antipas is not exactly known. It has been interpreted as “foster brother,” a boy of the same age as a royal prince who was brought up with him at court and retained the title in adulthood. It has been less restrictively interpreted as “courtier” or “intimate friend.” In any case it was a very special relationship of honor. Manaen may have been Luke’s source of information about Herod Antipas and his dynasty, information that is not found in the other Gospels. Manaen may have been related to an earlier Manaen, an Essene, who was a friend of Herod the Great, father of Herod Antipas, and predicted his ascension to the throne.

D. N. Freedman. (1996, c1992). *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (Vol. 4, p. 493). New York: Doubleday.

Tax Collector

The many taxes and custom tolls that the Romans exacted from the provinces necessitated a large corps of tax collectors. Since a major source of tax revenue was derived from the customs tolls placed upon the transportation of merchandise, tax collectors were concentrated at key points of entry, i.e., at sea ports and on the main caravan routes. The tax collectors who appear in the Gospels are mainly associated with Capernaum in Galilee and with Jericho. Both towns were located on major roads and near borders, where it was natural to levy tolls.

Tax collectors were especially despised by the Jewish population of Palestine for several reasons: (1) they collected money for the foreign power that occupied the land of Israel, thus indirectly giving support to this outrage; (2) they were notoriously unscrupulous, growing wealthy at the expense of others of their own people; and (3) their work involved them in regular contact with Gentiles, rendering them ritually unclean. Contempt for tax collectors is found both in the New Testament and the rabbinic literature. According to the latter, hatred was to be extended even to the family of the tax collector, and since tax collectors were universally regarded as no better than robbers or thieves it was not thought wrong to attempt to defraud them.

G. W. Bromiley. (1988; 2002). *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Revised; ISBE (Vol. 4, p. 742). Wm. B. Eerdmans.

Lesson 5 Articles

Leprosy

Leprosy was one of the most terrible diseases in the Ancient Near East. It might be compared to AIDS or Ebola today. Leprosy is a slowly progressing and intractable disease. It rendered its victims unclean so that contact with a leper defiled whoever touched him. Their burdens were needlessly increased. True, as, wrapped in mourners garb, the leper passed by, his cry “Unclean!” was to incite others to pray for him, but also to avoid him. No one was even to salute him; his bed was to be low, inclining towards the ground. If he even put his head into a place, it became unclean. No less a distance than four cubits (six feet) must be kept from a leper; or, if the wind came from that direction, a hundred were scarcely sufficient. Rabbi Meir would not eat an egg purchased in a street where there was a leper. Another rabbi boasted that he always threw stones at them to keep them far off, while others hid themselves or ran away.

It began with little specks on the eyelids, then on the palms of the hands, and gradually spread over different parts of the body, bleaching the hair white wherever it showed itself, crusting the affected parts with shining scales, and causing swelling and sores. From the skin it slowly ate its way through the tissues, to the bones and joints and even to the marrow, rotting the whole body piecemeal.

The lungs, the organs of speech and hearing, and the eyes were attacked in turn, till, at last, the disease brought a welcome death.

The emotional suffering was even more intense in that no human could ever touch him or come near him. It was into this situation that the Lord Jesus Christ brought His healing and compassionate touch.

Synagogue

Name

Synagogue, in Greek “gathering” (Acts 13:43), “gathering place” (Lk 7:5), was the name applied to the Jewish place of worship in later Judaism in and outside of Palestine. The oldest Christian meetings and meeting-places were modeled on the pattern of the synagogues, and, in Christian-Palestinian Aramaic the word *kenishta*’ is used for the Christian church.

Origin

That the synagogue was, in the time of our Lord, one of the most important religious institutions of the Jews is clear from the fact that it was thought to have been instituted by Moses. It must have come into being during the Babylonian exile. At that time the more devout Jews, far from their native land, having no sanctuary or altar, no doubt felt drawn from time to time, especially on Sabbath and feast days, to gather round those who were specially pious and God-fearing, in order to listen to the word of God and engage in some kind of worship. Ezekiel 14:1; 20:1 indicated such meetings were common. This would furnish a basis for the institution of the synagogue. After the Exile the synagogue remained and even developed as a counterbalance to the absolute power of the priests of the temple, and must have been felt absolutely necessary for the Jews of the Dispersion. Though at first it was meant only for the exposition of the Law, it was natural that in the course of time prayers and preaching should be added to the service. Thus these meetings, which at first were only held on Sabbaths and feast days, came also to be held on other days, and at the same hours with the services in the temple. The essential aim, however, of the synagogue was not prayer, but instruction in the Law for all classes of the people. Philo calls the synagogues “houses of instruction, where the philosophy of the fathers and all manner of virtues were taught” (compare Mt 4:23; Mk 1:21; 6:2; Lk 4:15, 33; 6:6; 13:10; Jn 6:59; 18:20).

The Officials

1. The Elders

These officials (Lk 7:3) formed the local tribunal, and in purely Jewish localities acted as a Committee of Management of the affairs of the synagogue. To them belonged, most probably, among other things, the power to excommunicate (compare Ezr 10:8; Lk 6:22; Jn 9:22; 12:42; 16:2).

2. The Ruler

Greek *archisynagogos* (Mk 5:35; Lk 8:41, 49; 13:14; Acts 18:8, 17), Hebrew *ro'sh ha-keneseth*, in some synagogues there were several rulers (Mk 5:22; Acts 13:15). They were most probably chosen from among the elders. It was the ruler's business to control the synagogue services. He would to decide who was to be called upon to read from the Law and the Prophets and to preach (Acts 13:15; compare Lk 13:14); he had to look after the discussions, and generally to keep order.

3. The Servant (or Servants)

Greek *huperetes*; Talmud *chazzan* (Lk 4:20). He had to see to the lighting of the synagogue and to keep the building clean. He wielded the scourge when punishment had to be meted out to

anyone in the synagogue (Mt 10:17; 23:34; Mk 13:9; Acts 22:19). It seems that the *chazzan* was also an elementary teacher.

4. Delegate of the Congregation

Hebrew *sheliach tsibbur*. This office was not permanent, but one was chosen at each meeting by the ruler to fill it, and he conducted the prayers. The man who was asked to read the Scriptures was also expected to read the prayers. He had to be a man of good character.

5. The Interpreter

Hebrew *methargeman*. It was his duty to translate into Aramaic the passages of the Law and the Prophets which were read in Hebrew (compare 1 Cor 14:28). This also was probably not a permanent office, but was filled at each meeting by one chosen by the ruler.

6. The Almoners

Alms for the poor were collected in the synagogue (compare Mt 6:2). The collecting was to be done by at least two persons, and the distributing by at least three.

The Service

1. Recitation of the "Shema`"

At least ten persons had to be present for regular worship. There were special services on Saturdays and feast days. In order to keep the synagogue services uniform with those of the temple, both were held at the same hours. The order of service was as follows: the recitation of the *shema`*, i.e., a confession of God's unity, consisting of the passages Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 11:13-21; Numbers 15:37-41. Before and after the recitation of these passages "blessings" were said in connection with the passages. This formed a very important part of the liturgy.

2. Prayers

The most important prayers were the *Shemoneh`esreh*, "Eighteen Eulogies," a cycle of eighteen prayers, also called "The Prayer." Like the *shema`* they are very old.

The following is the first of the eighteen: "Blessed art Thou, the Lord our God, and the God of our fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob: the great, the mighty and the terrible God, the most high God Who showest mercy and kindness, Who createst all things, Who rememberest the pious deeds of the patriarchs, and wilt in love bring a redeemer to their children's children for Thy Name's sake; O King, Helper, Saviour and Shield! Blessed art Thou, O Lord, the Shield of Abraham."

The prayers of the delegate were met with a response of Amen from the congregation.

3. Reading of the Law and the Prophets

After prayers the *parashah*, i.e., the pericope (selection or reading) from the Law for that Sabbath, was read, and the interpreter translated verse by verse into Aramaic. The whole Pentateuch was divided into 154 pericopes, so that in the course of three years it was read through in order. After the reading of the Law came the *HaphTarah*, the pericope from the Prophets for that Sabbath, which the interpreter did not necessarily translate verse by verse, but in paragraphs of three verses

4. The Sermon

After the reading from the Law and the Prophets followed the sermon, which was originally a scathing exposition of the Law, but which in process of time assumed a more devotional character. Anyone in the congregation might be asked by the ruler to preach, or might ask the ruler for permission to preach.

The following example of an old (first century AD) rabbinic sermon, based on the words, “He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation” (Isa 61:10, a verse in the chapter Jesus read to the synagogue of Nazareth), will serve as an illustration of contemporary Jewish preaching:

“Seven garments the Holy One—blessed be He!—has put on, and will put on from the time the world was created until the hour when He will punish the wicked Edom (i.e., Roman empire). When He created the world, He clothed Himself in honor and majesty, as it is said (Ps 104:1): ‘Thou art clothed in honor and majesty.’ Whenever He forgave the sins of Israel, He clothed Himself in white, for we read (Dan 7:9): ‘His raiment was white as snow.’ When He punishes the peoples of the world, He puts on the garments of vengeance, as it is said (Isa 59:17): ‘He put on garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloke.’ The sixth garment He will put on when the Messiah comes; then He will clothe Himself in a garment of righteousness, for it is said (same place): ‘He put on righteousness as a breast-plate, and a helmet of salvation upon His head.’ The seventh garment He will put on when He punishes Edom; then He will clothe Himself in *’adhom*, i.e., ‘red,’ for it is said (Isa 63:2): ‘Wherefore art Thou red in Thine apparel?’ But the garment which He will put upon the Messiah, this will shine afar, from one end of the earth to the other, for it is said (Isa 61:10): ‘As a bridegroom decketh himself with a garland.’ And the Israelites will partake of His light, and will say:

‘Blessed is the hour when the Messiah shall come!’

‘Blessed the womb out of which He shall come!’

‘Blessed His contemporaries who are eye-witnesses!’

‘Blessed the eye that is honored with a sight of Him!’

For the opening of His lips is blessing and peace;

His speech is a moving of the spirits;

The thoughts of His heart are confidence and cheerful-ness;

The speech of His tongue is pardon and forgiveness;

His prayer is the sweet incense of offerings;

His petitions are holiness and purity.

O how blessed is Israel, for whom such has been prepared!

For it is said (Ps 31:19):

“How great is Thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee.”

5. The Benediction

After the sermon the benediction was pronounced (by a priest), and the congregation answered “Amen.”

Taxation

One of the most hated aspects of Roman rule was the burdensome and corrupt system of taxation. Caesar would levy a tax on all the provinces. Various businessmen called Publicani at Rome bid for the right to collect the taxes for the emperor. They formed joint stock companies which bid for the rights to collect these taxes for a five-year period.

They, in turn, hired agents to collect the taxes. These agents were the provincial tax collectors. The provincial tax collectors hired "Mokhes," or customhouse officials to assess the tax from the people.

When the Publicani hired the Provincial tax collectors, they took a commission for themselves and passed it on to the provincial tax collectors to collect. These men then added a commission for themselves and passed on a higher tax to the customhouse officials who then tacked on a commission for themselves before extracting the tax from the people.

The system was obviously corrupt and by the time a fisherman like Peter or John was levied a tax by someone like Matthew, it had become so burdensome that it was virtually impossible to pay.

This corrupt procedure of overcharging the poor and then pocketing the extra created enormous anger. Often these officials would assign a ridiculously high value to a home or piece of property and then tax the people at this rate. If a person was unable to pay, the tax men would either throw him into prison and sell his wife and kids into slavery, or else loan him the money at a huge interest rate.

Every time a traveler entered a main road, a customhouse official was there to collect taxes. Every time he crossed a bridge, he was taxed. Every bale on his wagon had to be unloaded and all the contents tumbled out upon the ground and searched. Even letters were opened. They would then arbitrarily fix a tax. There was no use appealing, even though appeal was provided for by law, because the judges were supported by the tax money.

Matthew and the other local customhouse officials were considered traitors to Israel because they collected taxes for a foreign power. Therefore these Jews who hired out as customhouse officials were the most despised individuals in Jewish society and were often classed with sinners, highwaymen, murderers, and harlots. The question whether one should pay taxes to Caesar was obviously a sore spot and a very explosive issue.

It is this kind of man who, in the presence of the multitude, Jesus invites to join the growing band of disciples.

The Identity of the Kingdom of Heaven

In scores of passages in the Old Testament it was predicted that a “Greater” Son of David would one day establish Israel in a global kingdom covering the entire earth (Isa 2:1-5; 11:1-16). This prediction is connected with promises God made to David that one day he would have a house, a throne, and a kingdom forever (2 Sam 7:12-16). What was Jesus’ view of these promises? There are clearly differences of opinion on this issue. Some have felt that Jesus came to reinterpret this kingdom and instead offer a spiritual kingdom in the hearts of men or a future reign in heaven or on the new earth. Other Bible scholars believe that Jesus understood the promises in the same manner the Old Testament prophets probably did, as a literal kingdom of God upon the earth. Those holding this view suggest the following considerations in its support:

First of all, they point out, when Jesus first proclaimed His message that the kingdom was at hand, He never redefined it. Any Jewish person hearing Him would likely think in terms of the Old Testament promises of the restoration of the Davidic theocracy. If Jesus meant something else would He not have said so? Furthermore, had Jesus come to establish a spiritual kingdom in the hearts of men that would add nothing new. That kingdom had always been recognized by the people of God (Ps 37:31). If this is all He meant, why did He not say so? Instead, He connects His offer of the kingdom to the Old Testament expectation of the political reign of the Messiah.

Indeed, His favorite expression for Himself is “Son of Man,” a phrase lifted right out of Daniel 7:13-14. This passage describes the Son of Man as the Messiah coming on the clouds of heaven to set up His kingdom over all the nations.

Second, it has been observed that in the announcement of the angel Gabriel to Mary, he said that her Son, “will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end” (Lk 1:32-33). The same three promises of a throne, a house, and a kingdom forever, which were made to David, are repeated. Mary would have understood this as the predicted kingdom of the Messiah.

Third, when Peter asks the Lord what reward he and the other disciples will receive for following Christ, instead of rebuking them He gloriously affirms their future by saying, “I tell you the truth, you who have followed me, in the age when all things are renewed, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you also will sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Mt 19:28).

Finally, although much more could be said, consider Acts 1:6. After forty days of specific teaching on the subject of the kingdom of God, His disciples ask, “Lord, is this the time when you are restoring the kingdom to Israel?” After forty days of teaching on the subject of the kingdom of God they still understand Him to speaking of the restoration of the Davidic throne. Instead of correcting them, He says, “You are not permitted to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority.” If after forty days of teaching on this subject, Jesus was still unable to make clear to them that by kingdom He meant the spiritual reign of God in the heart, He would certainly be a poor communicator.

The Twelve Apostles

Andrew



Andrew was one of the first disciples Jesus called. He was Simon Peter's brother, the son of a man named John (or Jonas, Jn 1:42; 21:15-17), and, like Peter, a fisherman. He was born in Bethsaida of Galilee (Jn 1:44).

Andrew is sometimes called "the introducer" because he introduced his brother to Jesus. It was also Andrew who brought the little boy with the loaves and fish to Jesus when He fed the five thousand (Jn 6:8). It was Andrew who introduced the Greeks to Jesus (Jn 12:22).

Tradition says that Andrew spent his last years in Scythia, north of the Black Sea. But a small book entitled the *Acts of Andrew* (probably written about AD 260) says that he preached primarily in Macedonia and was martyred at Patras. Roman Catholic tradition says that Andrew was crucified on an X-shaped cross, a religious symbol that is now known as St. Andrew's Cross. It was believed that he was crucified on November 30, so the Roman Catholic Church and Greek Orthodox Church observe his festival on that date. Today he is the patron saint of Scotland. The Order of St. Andrew is an association of church ushers who make a special effort to be courteous to strangers.

Forgiving to the end, his last words, according to tradition were, "Would, Father that I had time to teach truth to my murderers."

C.M. Kerr. "Andrew," *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*. Edited by James Orr. 1973.

Bartholomew (Nathanael)



Bartholomew's name means "Son of Tolmai." It is probable that he is identical with Nathanael (Jn 1:45). They may have been brothers. When Philip sought to bring him to Jesus, Jesus noted he was a man of high character, describing him as a "true Israelite" and a man in whom there was no guile. Like his brother Philip, he lived in Bethsaida (Mk 1:16-20) and was a fisherman.

He is said to have preached the gospel in India, that is, probably, Arabia Felix, and according to some in Armeni.

It was Andrew who first expressed skepticism that Jesus could be the Messiah because he doubted that anything good could come out of Nazareth.

After Pentecost, he traveled with Philip throughout the East to Mesopotamia, Persia, Egypt, and to Armenia where he was beaten to death with clubs.

James



James, and his brother John, were sons of Zebedee and Salome (Mt 20:20; 27:56; Mk 15:40). They were both fishermen and lived in Galilee (Mk 1:16). James's father, Zebedee, was apparently somewhat wealthy in that he had hired servants (Mk 1:20). In the lists of the Twelve, his name is always the third. James, Peter, and John were among the "inner three" who seemed to be closest to Jesus.

According to Mark 3:17 Jesus gave the appellation "Boanerges" to James and John. The Aramaic name probably means "sons of thunder" or "sons of trembling." It is possible that this may indicate a somewhat volatile temperament of the brothers. Such a temperament is revealed in their suggestion that the unreceptive Samaritans be consumed by fire called down from heaven (Lk 9:54; Mk 9:38). Further evidence of a certain impetuosity on the part of the brothers may be seen in their extraordinary request to sit at the positions of honor on either side of Jesus when He came into His glory (Mk 10:35-37). In His response to their improper request, Jesus tells the brothers that they must be prepared to "drink the cup" that He is to drink and to be "baptized with the baptism" that he must accept, i.e., to be killed (Mk 10:38, Mt 20:22).

Some have speculated that Salome, the wife of Zebedee, was really the sister of the Virgin Mary and is named Mary in John 19:25. However, it is highly unlikely that two women named Mary would be in the same family. Thus there are four women, not three mentioned in John 19:25. The speculation is interesting because if it were true, that would mean that James and John were cousins of Jesus. However, few scholars accept this identification.

James of Zebedee preached in Judea and was beheaded by Herod Agrippa in AD 44 (Acts 12:1, 2). He was the first apostle to suffer martyrdom. The church historian, Eusebius, records a tradition from Clement of Alexandria that the guard (or possibly accuser) who brought James to the courts was so deeply affected by his witness that he became a believer on the spot and then went with James to be beheaded with him. Much later tradition (sixth or seventh century) alleges that James preached the gospel in Spain and accounts for the fact that James (St. Iago) was to become the patron saint of Spain.

James Son of Alphaeus (James the Less)



Also known as “James the Less,” which distinguished him from James, the Son of Zebedee, the brother of John. While some have suggested that this was James the Lord’s brother, this is not possible because as John 7:5 makes clear, Jesus’ brother did not believe until later in His ministry. James, the Lord’s brother (Mt 13:55), who later became a believer (1 Cor 15:7) was prominent in the church in Jerusalem (Acts 12:17; Gal 1:19; 2:9), and wrote the epistle of James (Jas 1:1). James, the Lord’s brother, was beheaded in Jerusalem in AD 44.

His appellation, “the Less” comes from the Greek word in Mark 15:4, *mikros*, which probably refers to his being little of stature. James the Less, and his brother Jude, were the sons of Alphaeus and Mary (Mk 3:18; Acts 1:3; Lk 6:15). There was another Alphaeus who was the father of Matthew and his twin brother Thomas (Mk 2:14).

According to tradition, James the Less preached in Palestine, where he had been elected bishop of Jerusalem. He was thrown from the pinnacle of the temple and stoned to death below.

John



John, the brother of James and the son of Zebedee and Salome (Mt 20:20; 27:56; Mk 15:40; 16:1), was called a “son of thunder” (Mk 3:17). John and his brother were both fishermen (Mt 4:21) and lived Bethsaida (Mk 1:16-20; Jn 1:44).

Much could be said about John; there are many references to him in the New Testament. Indeed books have been written about him. John labored in Jerusalem and then, basing in Ephesus, worked the churches in Asia Minor. While at Ephesus he was ordered by the Emperor Domitian (AD 81–96) to be bound and sent to Rome to be put into a caldron of boiling oil. Either the sentence was not carried out, or a miracle saved him from injury. He was banished to Patmos (Rev 1:9) in AD 95, a prison island where Roman criminals were often sent. Patmos is a small island. This desolate volcanic island (ten miles long by six miles wide) in the Aegean Sea just off the coast of Asia Minor was the place where he received the visions upon which the book of Revelation was based. He died a natural death there.

Judas



We can never be sure of Judas's motives in betraying his Master. Some have suggested that he was trying to force Jesus' hand, or that he was disillusioned by Christ's seeming indifference to political objectives. Whatever the reason, the man from Kerioth (Iscariot), a place ten miles from Hebron on the southern border of Judah, has gone down in the annals of infamy as the betrayer of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was the only member of the apostolic band who was not from Galilee.

He was the son of Simon Iscariot (Jn 13:2; 6:71; 13:26). He had been appointed as the keeper of the finances for the Twelve. Ignoring Christ's warning against greed and hypocrisy (Mt 6:20; Lk 12:1-3), he appropriated the funds for his own use by feigning concern for the poor and then stealing the money for himself (Jn 12:5-6; Mt 26:7-13).

Whatever the reason, he ultimately betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver, the price of a common slave. When he saw Jesus actually condemned, he felt guilt and threw the thirty pieces of silver on the floor of the temple, thus fulfilling the prophecy (Zech 11:12-14; Mt 27:3-10). He then went out and hanged himself (Mt 27:5). The rope apparently broke and he fell headlong and burst open (Acts 1:16-20).

Jude



In John 14:22, “Judas” (not Iscariot) asked Jesus a penetrating question, “But, Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?” Jesus had been speaking of a personal disclosure He would make to those whose hearts were fully His. Jude had misunderstood Him to refer to a public manifestation to the whole world.

Very little is said about Jude except that he was the brother of James the Less (Lk 6:16) and a son of Alphaeus and Mary (Mt 10:3). He is sometimes called the “three named” because in the Gospels he is referred to as Thaddaeus and Labbaeus (Mt 10:3).

He is not to be confused with Jude, the brother of the Lord who wrote the book of Jude.

According to tradition, he ministered in Persia and made many converts. As a result, the authorities were stirred up against him and he was crucified in AD 72.

Matthew (Levi)



Matthew, whose name means “gift of God,” is another name for Levi, the tax collector, a local customhouse official who worked collecting taxes along the shore to the Sea of Galilee (Mt 9:9-13). He was the son of Alphaeus, and may well have been the twin brother of Thomas, “the Twin.” (Mk 2:14). He was born in Nazareth but lived primarily in Capernaum (Mk 2:1, 14).

Matthew was despised by the Jews. He was viewed as a traitor to his people because he collected taxes for the Romans. Yet Jesus looked into Matthew’s heart and chose him. It reveals how utterly indifferent Jesus was to human priorities in the selection of his apostles. After deciding to follow Jesus, Matthew immediately threw a party for Him, inviting those whom the Pharisees considered sinners (Mt 5:29-32).

He was particularly interested in proving that Jesus came in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy and is the author of the gospel of Matthew which stresses this theme.

After the ascension of Christ he preached the gospel in Judea for nine years. He met his death in Parthia, being slain with the sword in AD 60.

John Foxe. *Book of Martyrs*. Whitaker House, 1981. Kensington, PA.

Philip



Philip was born in Bethsaida (Mk 1:16-20), the city of Andrew and Peter, and lived in Galilee as they did. It was he who introduced Nathanael (Bartholomew) to Jesus (Jn 1:45).

He apparently knew Greek well and was called “the Greek,” but he was fully Hebrew born in Bethsaida of Galilee. It was Philip who expressed doubt about feeding the five thousand when Jesus asked him where they might obtain bread (Jn 6:5-6). He seems to have had some contact with Greeks and it was to Philip that the Greeks came seeking an audience with Jesus. In the Upper Room Discourse, it was Philip who, still confused, asked Jesus to show the Father to them (Jn 14:8-9).

Philip and Bartholomew traveled together as far as Phrygia. After he won many to Christ, the local rulers became enraged and threw him into prison and then scourged and crucified him in AD 52.

John Foxe. *Book of Martyrs*. Whitaker House, 1981. Kensington, PA.

Simon Peter



In all the lists of the apostles, Peter is at the head. He was, perhaps, the most enthusiastic and volatile of the Twelve. Simon Peter and Andrew, his brother, were sons of Jonas (or John, Jn 1:42; 21:15). He was born in Bethsaida, a small fishing village on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, where he worked as a fisherman (Mk 1:16-20; Jn 1:44; 12:21).

His original name, Simon, was changed to Peter by Jesus (Mt 16:16). The Gospels present him as the most impulsive of the Twelve, and it is wonderful to see how Jesus viewed him in terms of what he could become, a Rock. His new name, Peter, means “rock” in Greek.

Peter is responsible for two epistles in the New Testament, 1 and 2 Peter, and also the gospel of Mark. Mark apparently took down Peter’s words. He became the chief of the apostles and the key leader in the church at Jerusalem.

Peter had been told by Jesus that he would deny him three times before the cock crowed twice (Mt 26:34; Mk 14:30). The failure of this great apostle was met with compassion and acceptance by Jesus, a fact which should be an encouragement to us all.

We know from 1 Peter 5:13 that Peter did come to Rome but it is doubtful that he had anything to do with founding the church there. However, during the pogrom launched by Nero, Peter perished. According to tradition, he was crucified upside down at his own request. He said he was not worthy to die in the same way as his Master.

Simon



In order to appreciate Jesus' selection of Simon to participate in the apostolic band, we need to understand the political context of Palestine. Simon was a member of the Cananean or Zealot party (Mt 10:4; Mk 3:18; Lk 6:15). This party, founded by Judas the Galilean in AD 6 was violently opposed to the payment of tribute by Israel to a pagan emperor on the grounds that this was treason to God, Israel's true King. It was the Zealots who fought the Romans all the way to AD 70 when Titus destroyed Jerusalem. The Zealots retreated to Masada near the Dead Sea, and when the Romans finally stormed the fortress, the entire population had committed suicide.

This choice supremely illustrates the complete indifference on the part of Jesus to worldly maxims. In choosing Simon Jesus risked having His movement identified with the rebellion against Rome. Furthermore, His choice of Matthew, the tax collector, to be in the same band as Simon, the tax hater, says much about what was important to Him. The Twelve thus modeled the new society He intended to establish, uniting differing political viewpoints under a common abandonment to Christ Himself.

According to tradition he ministered in Mauritania (in Northwest Africa) and journeyed as far as Britain. He was crucified there in AD 74.

Thomas



Thomas was a fisherman who worked with Peter and Andrew in Galilee. His surname, Didymus means “twin.” (Jn 11:16; 20:24; 21:2). Because both Thomas and Matthew are always mentioned together in the Synoptic Gospels, it has been speculated that they were twins. If so, Thomas was the son of Alphaeus. However, this is a different Alphaeus than the father of James the Less and Jude.

Thomas was highly committed and invited the other disciples to join him and die with Jesus (Jn 11:16). Yet he is often known as “the doubter” because he refused to believe in the Resurrection unless he could put his fingers into the nail prints on Jesus hands and side (Jn 20:24-25).

He organized the church in India and Parthia. Because he converted many to Christ, the local authorities killed him by running him through with a spear.

Lesson 6: The Sermon on the Mount

Lesson Introduction

The Sermon on the Mount is, perhaps, the most famous sermon ever preached. However, because it raises some difficult problems in both interpretation and application it merits careful study and, more importantly, careful application.

How are the apparent demands for works as a condition for salvation to be harmonized with Paul's assertion that salvation is by faith alone? And how do they relate to Jesus' teaching in the gospel of John that believing alone is necessary for entrance into the kingdom of heaven?

How can the extremely high ethical standards of the Sermon on the Mount be applied by readers today?

Are the ethical standards of the sermon even practical?

You will study the overall message and purpose of the sermon in Topic 1. To help you do this, you will construct an outline of the sermon on a chart and then consider many of the differing views of this passage held by various interpreters. An important question is to whom was the sermon addressed? Was it addressed to non-Christians, Christians, or both?

In Topic 2 Jesus begins the sermon with a nine-point description of the character qualities of those who would be His disciples. The Beatitudes provide a blueprint of fulfillment for human beings, which are without parallel in all of literature.

Next, in Topic 3, Christ solemnly announces that the righteousness required for entrance is higher than the highest standard of righteousness known to His hearers, the righteousness of the Pharisees. A major purpose of the sermon is to present the righteousness required of all those who want to enter the kingdom of heaven. How then can anyone enter? Jesus explains that He came to fulfill the law for this very reason, to open a way for all.

Christ then introduced the problem of how the Old Testament law related to the new ethic of the kingdom and what His personal relationship was to the law. In a series of six "antitheses," He contrasted the teachings of the scribes and the Pharisees regarding the law with His own more demanding interpretation.

Christ delivers a scathing denunciation of the hypocrisy of the Pharisees in Topic 4, illustrated by their practices of almsgiving, prayer, and fasting. Their righteousness was external and works oriented. They focused on appearances, thinking that by obedience to such rules as almsgiving and certain forms of prayer, they were pleasing God and earning His favor.

Jesus directs our attention in Topic 5 to the issues of heartfelt dedication, in contrast to the external righteousness of the Pharisees. The Pharisees laid up treasure on earth, thinking that material wealth was a sign of God's favor. The Lord, however, argued that our riches should be stored in heaven.

In Topic 6 the Lord proposes His cure for the worried heart in an extended section in Matthew 6. Humans try to gather wealth on earth because they are anxious and do not trust God. Illustrating applications of the Sermon on the Mount in human relationships, the Lord addressed our

tendency to judge others and issued one of the great moral guidelines of the centuries, the Golden Rule.

Finally in Topic 7, the Lord concludes the sermon, as He often does, by reminding His disciples that each one of us will be held accountable for obedience to what He taught. There are two paths a disciple can take as he journeys through life on his way to final entrance into the kingdom, the broad or the narrow way. He urges His followers in a ringing call to discipleship to take the narrow way and to build their house on a solid foundation of faith and obedience to the principles of the Sermon.

Outline of the Sermon on the Mount

- The Beatitudes (Mt 5:1-16)
- Christ and the Law (Mt 5:17-48)
- The Hypocrisy of the Pharisees (Mt 6:1-18)
- Dedication of the Heart (Mt 6:19-34)
- Conduct toward Men (Mt 7:1-12)
- Final Accountability (Mt 7:13-29)

Lesson Outline

Topic 1: Survey and Purpose of the Sermon on the Mount

Overview of the Sermon

The Purpose of the Sermon

Topic 2: The Character of the Blessed (Mt 5:1-16)

Topic 3: Christ and the Law (Mt 5:17-48)

Topic 4: The Hypocrisy of the Pharisees (Mt 6:1-18)

Topic 5: Dedication of the Heart (Mt 6:19-34)

Topic 6: Our Conduct Toward Others (Mt 7:1-12)

Topic 7: Final Accountability (Mt 7:13-28)

The Two Gates

The Danger of False Teachers

The Wise and Foolish Builders

Topic 8: Matching Events

Topic 9: Knowing, Being, Doing

Lesson Objectives

When you have completed this lesson, you will be able to:

- Demonstrate your grasp of the overview of the Sermon on the Mount and your understanding of its purpose and intended audience
- Understand the real meaning of the Beatitudes and begin to implement at least one of them in your life this week

- Understand Christ’s relationship to the Law of Moses and know the law’s true meaning and intent
- Comprehend the true attitudes necessary for any spiritual exercise to be acceptable to God or of value to yourself
- Be encouraged to develop an inward spirit of trust in God for your material and spiritual needs
- Be encouraged to focus first on the needs of others
- Be encouraged to apply the Sermon on the Mount by reflecting upon your own accountability to God
- Apply the concepts learned in this lesson to your mind, character, and ministry

Topic 1: Survey and Purpose of the Sermon on the Mount

We now begin our study of the most famous of Christ’s discourses, the Sermon on the Mount. This majestic moral treatise surpasses by far any other ethical manifesto ever spoken or written in its profundity and penetration to the heart. It is not the sort of thing a man could conceive; yet coming from the lips of Christ, it seems natural.

In this topic you will obtain an overview of the Sermon on the Mount and discern its purpose and intended audience.

In the sermon we find God’s blueprint for the complete and highest expression of our humanity; yet the sermon has been interpreted in many ways. Sometimes it appears as though its precise commands are impossible or at the very least impractical.

Overview of the Sermon

June, AD 30

Klaus was excited. Having completed his PhD in theoretical physics at the University of Vienna, he had a practical emphasis whenever he opened the Bible. “*What does it mean to me and how can I apply it today?*” were the questions ever on his mind. A friend of mine was beginning a new Bible study on the Sermon on the Mount and Klaus, knowing of its close connection with daily life, was very excited to attend. The first assignment given to the class was to read the sermon through in its entirety and come back the next week. A week later the class convened again and Klaus entered with his mind full of perplexities. As the group began to share the impact of the sermon, Klaus thoughtfully made the following comment, “This is impossible!” Klaus’s honesty was refreshing and his consternation after reading the sermon has been shared by many. Is the Sermon on the Mount really meant to be applied today? Can its high standards be applied in the modern world? If so, how?

While the choice of the twelve disciples was being made, a vast multitude began to gather. They came not only from the densely populated areas around the Sea of Galilee, but also from Judea to the south and even regions across the Jordan River. They had crowded around to hear Jesus’ words and possibly to touch His body and be healed.

From the peak of the mountain where He prayed and where He chose the Twelve, Jesus descended and stood on a level place, perhaps the flat summit plain between two hills. No doubt He first tended to the physical needs of the people gathered there.

After the multitude was seated on the grassy slopes of that natural amphitheater and listening attentively, He raised His eyes after praying. From His lips came the greatest sermon ever spoken, known in history as “The Sermon on the Mount.”

To begin our study, we will start with an overview of the message. Then we will be able to fit the individual sayings into their broader context.

In addition to securing an overview of the Sermon, we will answer two other questions before we study it in more detail: (1) To whom was it written and (2) What was its purpose?

The Scriptures related to this topic are Matthew 5:1-2 and Luke 6:20-21, 24-26.

Read through the entire Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5–7 at least once and then match the section titles found on the left to the appropriate place in the chart on the right.

QUESTION 1

Read through the entire Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5–7. In the columns of this chart, identify which title on the left is an appropriate description for the paragraphs in each section of the sermon. Write out the title at the top of the column.

The Sermon on the Mount

	Instructions											
Christ and the Law												
Final Judgment												
Hypocrisy of the Pharisees												
The Beatitudes												
Conduct towards Men												
Dedication of the Heart												
	Matt 5:1-6	16	17	48	6:1	18	19	34	7:1	12	13	29

The Purpose of the Sermon

June, AD 30

The Scriptures related to this topic are Matthew 5:1-2 and Luke 6:20-21, 24-26.

QUESTION 2

Based upon Matthew 5:1 and Luke 6:17, to whom was the Sermon on the Mount addressed primarily?

- A. A multitude of disciples
- B. The twelve disciples
- C. The Twelve and the multitude
- D. The multitude

What was the purpose of the sermon? Why did Christ give it? Because the ethical demands contained in the sermon seem difficult, if not impossible, to live out, there have been a number of views expressed as to why Christ gave this message and how it should be applied.

The Interim Ethic View: Some believe that the sermon is not really intended for today. Rather it was a temporary ethic which Christ announced during the time in which the kingdom of heaven was “at hand.” The urgency of the imminent arrival of the kingdom demanded utter commitment. Thus, those holding this view believe that the unyielding demands of this “interim ethic” must be dismissed as impossible for people today. Additionally, there are two variations on this theme. Those who deny the authority of the Bible believe that Jesus was mistaken about the arrival of the end, and therefore, the ethic is irrelevant. Others believe that during the future tribulation, this interim ethic will once again be the rule of life.

The Ethic for Today View: Those holding this view believe that the sermon is meant for this entire age and that it should be rigorously obeyed. It is to be heeded in private life and in the corporate life of a nation. This view holds that salvation is by grace alone. Nevertheless, the necessary evidence of being saved is that one’s life will conform to the Sermon on the Mount. Some who hold this view practice pacifism.

The Lutheran View: Orthodox Lutherans have often taken the view that the central purpose of the sermon is to prepare hearts for the gospel. These standards, which are impossibly high to achieve, demonstrate to those who believe they can earn salvation through good works how perfect they would have to be. In other words, if you are going to be saved by works, here is how good you must be. Through this sermon, Jesus taught that since no one can be this good, the salvation-by-works approach is invalid; mankind is forced to search for another way to salvation, the way of grace.

The View of Classical Liberalism: The liberalism of the early 1900s denied that the gospel is salvation through faith in the sacrificial death of Christ. Instead, they argued, the Sermon on the Mount is the real gospel. Salvation is the removal of injustice in society, and the sermon tells us how to do that.

The View of Classical Dispensationalism: Dispensationalists believe in the literal interpretation of Old Testament prophecy and that the church and Israel are two distinct peoples of God. The church, they say, is not the new Israel, nor does it fulfill the promises intended for Israel. According to Dispensationalists, when Jesus came announcing that “the kingdom of heaven is

near” (Mt 3:2; 4:17; 10:7). He was in effect offering to the nation the millennial kingdom promised to Israel in the Old Testament. The nation of Israel, however, rejected that offer; consequently, the kingdom was withdrawn from that generation but will be given to a future generation of believing Israelites living in the last days. The kingdom, therefore, has been postponed until the second coming of Christ. Some dispensationalists view the Sermon on the Mount as the charter for the millennial kingdom. While there may be application of it for today, its interpretation is specifically for the time period of the millennial kingdom when the fulfillment of such ethical demands would be achievable.

The View That the Sermon Is for the Training of Disciples: Those holding this view believe that the sermon is only directed toward those who are already saved and over whom the power of Satan has already been destroyed. They have accepted the gospel of grace and now need practical instruction on how to live. To assist them, Jesus has provided the ministry of the Holy Spirit whose indwelling presence makes living up to these high ethical standards possible.

The Eclectic View of the Sermon: Many modern scholars have embraced what might be called the “eclectic” view of the sermon. They select what appears to be best to them in all the other views, rejecting those aspects with which they disagree.

QUESTION 3

Review the various views discussed above. To test your grasp of the various options, match the interpretation with the correct description.

<i>Interpretation</i>	<i>Description</i>
Interim Ethic	Includes items from all the views
Ethic for Today	The sermon is the true social gospel
Lutheran	For the period immediately preceding the establishment of the millennial kingdom
Classical Liberalism	Should be rigorously obeyed in public and private life
Classical Dispensationalism	Intended only for the millennium
Training of the Twelve	Jesus is teaching the impossibility of salvation by works
Eclectic	For training all disciples or believers

QUESTION 4

Read through the sermon again and think through each of the views as you read it. Which one do you think is correct? Open your Life Notebook and write a brief discussion of why you made that choice.

Topic 2: The Character of the Blessed—Matthew

1:1-16

In the Beatitudes, Jesus described the quality of life which results in being “blessed.” This word speaks of deep contentment and not mere happiness. The beginning part of the sermon is, perhaps, the most famous. Let us take a closer look!

The Beatitudes

June, AD 30

A well-known psychiatrist once said that the Sermon on the Mount gives man a blueprint for optimum mental health and human happiness. The Beatitudes which open the sermon are one of the most beloved sections of this passage and have indeed resulted in great happiness for those who apply them. In this topic you will learn the real meaning of the Beatitudes and begin to implement at least one of them in your life this week.

The Beatitudes found in Luke 6:21-26 and Matthew 5:3-12 contain the most elevated definition of true character found in all literature. The word beatitude is not found in the sermon but comes from the Latin translation of the Greek word for “blessed.” The word refers not to an inner state of feeling such as “happy,” but to how those possessing the quality are viewed by others. It refers to the promise of reward to those who are characterized by these qualities.

QUESTION 5

Notice how the terms for poor (afflicted, needy, etc.) parallel key words in the following Old Testament passages (Ps 37:14; 40:17; 66:2; Isa 57:15). Based upon these key words, how do you think Christ’s audience interpreted “the poor”?

- A. They are the materially destitute and impoverished.
- B. They are spiritually weak and feeble.
- C. They are lacking in “spirit.”
- D. They are contrite, humble, and completely reliant upon God.

You might want to consider the following passages to help you understand each term:

Those who mourn (Ps 119:136; Ezra 9:4; Isa 61:1)

The meek (1 Pet 3:4; Jas 3:13)

Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness (Ps 42:2; 63:1; Phil 4:12)

The merciful (Mt 6:12; 9:13; 12:7; 18:32-33)

The pure in heart (Ps 24:4; 51:4-17; 1 Tim 1:5; 2 Tim 2:22)

The peacemakers (Isa 52:7; 9:6; Eph 2:14-17; 2 Cor 5:20-21)

QUESTION 6

Match the Beatitude with the appropriate definition. You may need to read the Scripture passages above.

<i>Beatitude</i>	<i>Definition</i>
Those who are poor in spirit	Those who trust God completely
Those who mourn	Those who are free from malice and a vengeful spirit
The meek	Those who want justice to be done everywhere
Those who hunger and thirst after righteousness	Those who are sorrowful for their sins and those of the nation
The merciful	Those who seek reconciliation between God and man and between persons
The pure in heart	Those who have compassion on others because they recognize their own sin
The peacemakers	Those who are single-minded in their pursuit of holiness

QUESTION 7

Based upon Matthew 5:12, 46 and 6:1, 5, 16, which words would you select to represent a central theme of the Sermon on the Mount? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Inheritance
- B. Salvation
- C. Reward
- D. Law

Topic 3: Christ and the Law—Matthew 5:17-48

June, AD 30

Jesus came offering the promised Davidic kingdom, the kingdom of heaven. Any Israelite listening to Him would immediately understand that the predicted messianic kingdom was at hand. During the last forty days of Jesus' sojourn on earth, while He was teaching, specifically regarding "the kingdom of God," the twelve apostles still understood Him to be speaking of the restoration of the kingdom to Israel (Acts 1:6). To argue that a kingdom different from this was being offered (such as a "spiritual kingdom in the hearts of men") denigrates Jesus as a teacher of truth. After forty days of teaching on this subject, was He still unable to make Himself clear? As a result of this offer of the kingdom, messianic fervor was sweeping the land. The questions on everyone's mind were: How do I enter the kingdom? What are the conditions for being part of the kingdom?

In the next section of our study on the Sermon on the Mount, we see Jesus addressing their unspoken questions.

Due to Christ's willingness to heal on the Sabbath and His apparent indifference to the details of Pharisaic tradition, many were asking what His relationship was to the Law of Moses. Did He come to abolish or annul the law?

Both of these questions are now answered.

Concerned that Jesus might in some way nullify the Old Testament law, some were wondering how the law was related to His kingdom message. In no uncertain terms, Christ affirmed the full validity of the entire Old Testament. While riding on an airplane one day, I sat next to a man who believed that God accepts us into heaven based upon our good works. I asked him, "How good do you think you would have to be?" He replied, "Well pretty good." I said, "Are you good enough?" He thought for a moment and replied, "I think so, you see God grades on the curve." I turned him to this section of the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus explained how good we must be if we are to enter the kingdom of God. But what does it mean in this sermon to "enter" the kingdom? Does it refer to initial salvation or, perhaps, a rich experience of the kingdom now? In this topic you will learn the true attitudes necessary for any spiritual exercise to be acceptable to God or of value to yourself.

QUESTION 8

Jesus said that He came to fulfill the law. Based upon the verses in Matthew 1:22; 2:15; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 21:4, what do you think He meant?

- A. He intended to teach a correct interpretation of the law.
- B. He intended to live the law perfectly and fulfill all that it predicted, including a sacrificial death for sin.
- C. He intended to preach the law fully.
- D. He intended to refute the Pharisaic interpretation of the law.

Read the article at the end of this lesson entitled the "Superior Righteousness" and then answer the questions to follow.

QUESTION 9

According to the article above, the superior righteousness refers to a life committed to living by the Sermon on the Mount. *True or False?*

QUESTION 10

At first glance it seems that Matt 5:19 and 20 contradict one another. Verse 19 says one can be a lawbreaker and teach others to break the law, yet still be in the kingdom of heaven in the last day. Verse 20, on the other hand, says that one cannot be a lawbreaker and "enter" the kingdom. How is the apparent contradiction to be explained? Based upon your own research and reading of the article the "Superior Righteousness," summarize your personal interpretation of this passage. Come prepared to discuss this at your accountability group.

In a series of six contrasts, Jesus explained the difference between the true intent of the law and the traditional interpretations of it by the religious teachers.

QUESTION 11

According to the discussion above, the most probable interpretation of Matthew 5:48 is that one who wants to enter the kingdom of heaven must:

- A. Be as perfect as God is
- B. Be mature as God is
- C. Set perfection as a goal realizing that it is not fully achievable
- D. Become a Christian by trusting in Christ

QUESTION 12

Go to your Life Notebook and write an explanation of how you might use Matthew 5:21-48 to persuade a non-Christian of his or her need for Christ.

QUESTION 13

Read Matthew 5:21-22 and Matthew 5:27-29. Based upon the discussion above, how would you explain these passages? Record your thoughts in your Life Notebook.

Topic 4: The Hypocrisy of the Pharisees—Matthew 6:1-18

June, AD 30

In this section of the Sermon on the Mount, our Lord further illustrated what He meant by righteousness that “goes beyond that of the experts in the law and the Pharisees” (Mt 5:20). With three convicting examples related to giving, praying, and fasting, He shows the utter hypocrisy of the religious leaders. He highlights the true inner disposition we must have for these spiritual practices to be of value.

What are the inward attitudes which must accompany any spiritual exercise in order for it to be acceptable to God or of value to you?

QUESTION 14

What principles are taught in Matthew 6:1-4 regarding our giving? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. We should not tell others how much we gave or to whom it was given.
- B. We should always get a receipt for our contribution.
- C. We should give in a way that does not call attention to our act of giving.
- D. We should seek a reward because of our giving.
- E. We will be rewarded by our Father if we give in secret.

The Lord’s Prayer in Matthew 6:5-15 is perhaps the most famous section in the Sermon on the Mount. Actually, it is not the Lord’s Prayer at all. It is the disciple’s prayer! If one were to look in the Gospels for the Lord’s Prayer, he would need to turn to John 17:1.

QUESTION 15

This simple model for prayer given by the Lord Jesus Christ contains many principles. We would do well to incorporate these principles into our prayer lives. Which of the following are taught in Matthew 6:5-15? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. We should not pray without understanding what we are saying.
- B. We should begin our prayers with worship.
- C. We should be more concerned with the Father's will than with getting what we want.
- D. We should ask God to protect us from temptation.
- E. We should acknowledge God as our provider and our complete reliance upon Him.
- F. We should end our prayer with worship.

In Matthew 6:7 our Lord commands us not to use “meaningless repetitions” (not to “babble repetitiously”) when we pray. The Greek word translated “meaningless repetitions” is *battalgeo*. This word describes a sound made much as we say “meow” to describe the sound of a cat or “moo” to imitate the sound of a cow. The verse could be rendered, “When you pray, do not say batta, batta, batta.” The essence of the word is “to pray without thinking,” to pray without understanding the words one is praying is to babble. The New International Version of the New Testament translates it this way: “And when you pray, *do not keep on babbling like pagans*, for they think they will be heard because of their many words” (emphasis added). This, says Jesus, is pagan prayer.

QUESTION 16

Go to your Life Notebook and write several paragraphs describing the ways we violate the teaching of Matthew 6:7 in particular and the principles of the Lord's Prayer in general.

Topic 5: Dedication of the Heart—Matthew 6:19-34

June, AD 30

A central theme of the Sermon on the Mount is the importance of our attitudes. The Pharisees had so emphasized external performance that the spirit of the Old Testament law had been lost to the people. Jesus, however, illustrated the importance of the heart in one's relationship to God.

Mary was worried. Her teenage daughter was running around with the wrong crowd and not following Christ. The more she worried, the more she tried to control the situation. This resulted in further rebellion which in turn caused Mary to worry more. As she turned to the New Testament for help, she read through the Sermon on the Mount. To her surprise, all the worry and “concern” for her daughter may actually have been evidence of a lack of trust in a loving God. Have you ever considered that worry might sometimes be sin?

The Scripture related to this topic is Matthew 6:19-24.

QUESTION 17

You can tell very little about a man by noting how he gives his money. *True or False?*

QUESTION 18

Go to your Life Notebook and record ways in which you might be serving two masters. What is the impact of this on your walk with God?

Anxiety is one of the greatest spiritual problems we face in life. We are anxious about money, about our work, about our relationships with others, about our spiritual lives, and about a host of other things.

The Scriptures related to this topic are Matthew 6:25-34 and Luke 12:22b-31.

QUESTION 19

Based upon Matthew 6:31, when we are anxious:

- A. We are demonstrating a normal and acceptable Christian weakness.
- B. We are often justified because of the circumstances.
- C. We are, in fact, sinning.
- D. We are confused.

We are all weak, but Jesus has compassion on us in spite of our weaknesses. He does not condemn us for our failures. Instead, He tells us to lift our vision toward our great God and trust Him.

QUESTION 20

According to Jesus' statements in the Sermon on the Mount, what do the skills for reducing anxiety include? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Making our quest for His kingdom our number one priority.
- B. Refusing to worry about what might happen tomorrow.
- C. Focusing on how we appear to others.
- D. Observing how God cares for His other creatures, those who are of less importance than we are.

Topic 6: Our Conduct Toward Others—Matthew 7:1-12

June, AD 30

In the previous topic Jesus focused our attention on our conduct toward God. His emphasis was on faith as the key to our relationship with God. In this section He teaches about how we are to relate to other humans as well as to God. He first warns us against the dangers of judging others and then sets forth what is known as "The Golden Rule."

Bill had recently been invited to become the pastor of a new and growing church. Excited about the new vision which he believed God had laid upon his heart, he began to share his dream with the leadership. To his surprise, many of them were not only indifferent but began to attack him. As a result, Bill realized that he needed to slow down and he did. Yet the attacks continued and gradually turned to slander and lies about his character. A leading elder in the church told him his sermons were poor and accused him of extortion. This abuse continued for over two years. As far as Bill knew his heart was right with God and he had done nothing wrong. He found himself becoming angry and bitter and was eventually destroyed emotionally by this experience. It took

him over two years to recover. The turning point was when he meditated on and applied Matthew 7:1-12. Let's take a look.

One of our greatest weaknesses is our tendency to judge others.

The Scriptures related to this topic are Matthew 7:1-11 and Luke 6:37-42.

QUESTION 21

Based upon Matthew 7:1-6, which statement below is correct?

- A. We are never to be critical of the actions of others.
- B. The first step in healing a relationship is to ask: What have I done wrong?
- C. To judge others is to make value judgments regarding their behavior.
- D. It is okay to consider others as “dogs.”

QUESTION 22

This passage (Mt 7:1-6) has often been misunderstood. Some believe it teaches that all negative evaluations of another are forbidden. Read it again and ask: What kind of judging is forbidden?

QUESTION 23

Based upon Matthew 7:6, we may conclude that not all judgment is forbidden. *True or False?*

Topic 7: Final Accountability—Matthew 7:13-28

Setting an example for excellence in preaching, Jesus ended the Sermon on the Mount by pressing home the practical application. He explained in no uncertain terms that there are eternal consequences for the choices we make. In particular, He stressed our obligation to heed His words, realizing that one day we will face Him at the final judgment.

The Two Gates

June, AD 30

Louis Talbot was one of the Lord's greatest servants of the twentieth century. He was the founder of Talbot Seminary and served as pastor of the Church of the Open Door in Los Angeles and as president of both Wheaton and Biola colleges. Few Bible teachers have been able to penetrate to the heart and to inspire such love. “Never question God's providences” was a motto of his life. At eighty he was struck down with viral pneumonia and became very ill. One night, everyone in the hospital, including Louie, thought he had only a few more hours. When he noticed the tears rolling down his wife's cheeks he looked at her and said, “What's the matter with you? For this I was born. For this I have lived all my life—to see my Savior face to face. It will all be glory; I can hardly wait.” Have you ever wondered why you were born? What is the final significance of your life? Throughout the Gospels Jesus answers this question and He does so very directly in

this closing section of the Sermon on the Mount. In this topic you will be challenged to apply the Sermon on the Mount by reflecting upon your own accountability to God.

Carefully study the article “Broad or Narrow Gate” at the end of this lesson.

The Scriptures related to this topic are Matthew 7:12-20 and Luke 6:31, 43-45.

In Matthew 7:13-14 Jesus described two gates through which one can enter into the kingdom. This passage takes us back to the question raised in Matthew 5:20 regarding entrance into the kingdom of heaven. The kingdom of heaven refers to the earthly kingdom, which Jesus had been offering, which will be established as predicted in the Old Testament, at His Second Coming.

A key to interpreting this parable is to understand what Jesus meant by “life” and what He meant by “destruction.”

It has been observed by many that Jesus was assuming the manner of a “wisdom teacher” in the sermon, as practiced in Old Testament times. The Sermon on the Mount is punctuated with brief and pungent moral statements and insights into righteous living characteristic of the book of Proverbs. Because He was speaking in “wisdom” terms, we might begin in the Proverbs to help us understand what is meant by “life” and “destruction.”

QUESTION 24

Read Proverbs 6:32; 11:3; 13:15; Deuteronomy 30:19; Matthew 26:8 (“waste” is the same word as “destruction” in Greek); and Acts 8:3. Open your Life Notebook and record your summary of what you think “destruction” and “waste” refer to in these verses. Apply your conclusions to Matthew 7:13 (additional help may be found in the note “Perishing in Hebrews” at the end of this lesson). Does it refer to temporal or eternal destruction in your opinion?

QUESTION 25

Read Proverbs 2:19; 3:18, 22; 4:4, 22; 5:6; 6:23; 8:35; 10:11; 14:30; 19:23; 22:4 and Psalms 34:12; 36:9; 91:16. Open your Life Notebook and record your reflections on the meaning of “life” in these verses. Apply your conclusion to your own personal interpretation of Matthew 7:14. What kind of “life” is referred to in Matthew 7:14?

QUESTION 26

Some have felt there is a difficulty with understanding “life” as “going to heaven when you die.” The problem is that this would appear to teach that one obtains eternal life (heaven when you die) by means of tribulation and by obedience (going through the narrow door, see note at end of lesson) to the precepts of the Sermon on the Mount. They feel that this appears to contradict passages like John 3:16, 36; 6:40; 11:25-27. Open your Life Notebook and explain why you either agree or disagree with their viewpoint. What Scriptures would you use to prove your point of view?

QUESTION 27

Reread the article “The Broad or Narrow Gate.” Open your Life Notebook and summarize the author’s main point. The author’s interpretation may be different from what you have previously considered. Do you feel he substantiated his points well? Did he ignore obvious passages of Scripture which would refute his point of view? Did he deal fairly with the point of view with which he differs? Do you feel he was persuasive? Why or why not?

The Danger of False Teachers

In this section you will be warned against the danger of teachers who appear to represent Christ but actually teach false doctrine.

Having set before His followers the “two ways,” Jesus then alerted them to a danger which could hinder their choice to pursue the narrow way: false teachers.

QUESTION 28

Read Matthew 7:15-20. One way to identify false prophets is by their fruit. Based upon Matthew’s usage of the term *fruit* in Matthew 12:33-37, fruit refers to a life of good works. *True or False?*

This passage has sometimes been misunderstood to teach that one can discern a false teacher by his lifestyle. While that could certainly be a valid criterion in some circumstances, this passage also teaches that one can discern a false teacher by what he teaches; what he says. In this context the false teachers appeared as gentle as sheep; they appeared as good people, not as wolves. In fact, they were not only gentle as sheep, but they performed many miracles in Christ’s name. Unlike some of the Pharisees, these false teachers did not look like hypocrites or evil people but appeared to be just the opposite!

Looking at their lives, one could not tell that they were false teachers at all. However, when one listened carefully to what they believed and taught, their true natures became obvious. In Matthew 12:33-37, Jesus explained that by “fruit” He was not referring to character, but to teaching and words. As Jesus explained, “For the mouth speaks from the overflow of the heart” (Mt 12:34).

The way fruit will be discerned as good or bad on the judgment day is not by how the false teachers behave, but, as Jesus put it, “On the day of judgment, people will give an account for every **worthless word** they speak. For by your words you will be justified and by your words you will be condemned” (Mt 12:36-37, emphasis added).

Fruit can certainly refer to moral character, as it does in Galatians 5:16. However, for Matthew, fruit refers to the teaching, not the character, of the false teachers.

In spite of the false teachers’ commendable lifestyles and their works in Christ’s name, there was one thing, according to Jesus, that they did not do. They did not do “the will of my Father in heaven” (Mt 7:21).

This phrase has led to considerable confusion. Is Jesus’ teaching in this passage contradicting what is recorded elsewhere (Jn 3:16, 36; 4:14; 5:24; 11:25), that is, that we are to obtain salvation by works? Is doing the will of the Father obeying the principles of the sermon? What does it mean to do “the will of my Father in heaven”?

QUESTION 29

In the parable in Matthew 21:28-32, Jesus teaches that doing the will of the Father is:

- A. Living a life of good works.
- B. Evangelism.
- C. Working in a vineyard.
- D. Believing in the way of righteousness.

The “way of righteousness” is the way of salvation announced by John the Baptist and accomplished by Jesus Christ. Doing the will of the Father is to believe in the way of righteousness. Jesus was not contradicting what was recorded in John’s gospel but was affirming that these false teachers never believed in Christ from the heart.

QUESTION 30

According to John 6:40, the will of the Father is that we should _____ in Christ.

The Wise and Foolish Builders

The disciples were exhorted to follow the difficult or narrow way and to persevere through trials and hardships on their journey to the kingdom of heaven. They were warned not to fall prey to false teachers who would try to derail their pursuit of righteousness. Now in a final parable, Jesus reminded them again of the consequences of not heeding His words.

QUESTION 31

Read the parable of the wise and foolish builders in Matthew 7:24-27. Based upon the study above, we are now in a better position to understand His meaning. Which of the following statements are correct? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Those who obey the words of the sermon are guaranteed entrance into heaven.
- B. The rock may refer to a life built upon the teachings of the sermon.
- C. The rain and storms refer to trials and tribulation in this life.
- D. The rain and the storms refer to the final judgment of God.
- E. The crash of the house refers to the ruin of our temporal lives as a result of failing to follow the teaching of the sermon.
- F. A life built on sand will eventually experience the judgment of hell.

Topic 8: Matching Events

QUESTION 32

To help you memorize these events, we have compiled a list of sixty-one important events in the life of Christ. Take a moment and review events 1-11. You will find them at the end of this course. Hold your hand over the event descriptions on the left and see if you can identify the associated Scriptures on the right.

Topic 9: Knowing, Being, Doing

Where do we begin to apply these magnificent principles to our lives? The scope of teaching is so vast that it covers all the key areas of human experience: belief in God, marriage, sex, lust, greed, money, perseverance, kindness to others, and many ethical issues of life. In this concluding section, we will focus on what the Sermon on the Mount teaches us about God and simplicity.

QUESTION 33: KNOWING

Go to your Life Notebook and list five things you have learned about God from your study of the sermon.

QUESTION 34: BEING

In the Scriptures the concept of being poor is defined as having an absolute dependence upon God. As you think about your life, how are you doing in the area of total dependence? Open your Life Notebook and, based on the options below, write the one that best indicates your progress. Then, based on how you rated yourself, write down why you evaluated yourself this way using a couple of examples.

QUESTION 35: DOING

Being “poor” has many advantages. Read the following list:

The poor feel a need for help.

The poor know not only their dependence upon but also their interdependence with one another.

Lacking material security, the poor tend to rest their security in relationships rather than things.

The poor have no exaggerated sense of their own importance and no exaggerated need of privacy.

The poor expect little from competition and much from cooperation.

The poor can more easily distinguish between necessities and luxuries.

The poor may have more patience, because they have acquired a persistence born of acknowledged dependence. They usually have less difficulty with delayed gratification.

The fears of the poor are more realistic and less exaggerated because they already know that one can survive great suffering and want. Furthermore, because of their reduced material circumstances, they often feel they have little to lose.

When the poor have heard the grace of God in the gospel preached to them, it sounds like good news.

The poor can respond to the call of the gospel with a certain abandonment and uncomplicated totality because they have so little to lose and are ready for anything.

After reading this list, go to your Life Notebook and rewrite the list substituting the word *I* for the word *poor*. What things did you learn about yourself? Do your own attitudes resemble those of the poor or the rich?

The point of this exercise is not to elevate poverty over riches but to help us see some of the dangers of being rich and how those dangers may affect our walks with Christ. Being “rich” is, of course, a relative term. From one perspective, anyone with more than I have is rich.

Lesson 6 Self Check

QUESTION 1

Based upon Matthew 5:1 and Luke 6:17, to whom was the Sermon on the Mount primarily addressed?

- A. A multitude of disciples
- B. The twelve apostles
- C. The apostles and the multitude
- D. The multitude

QUESTION 2

Based upon Matthew 7:1-6, which statement below is correct?

- A. We are never to be critical of the actions of others.
- B. The first step in healing a relationship is to ask: What have I done wrong?
- C. To judge others is to make value judgments regarding their behavior.
- D. It is okay to consider others as “dogs.”

QUESTION 3

What principles are taught in Matthew 6:1-4 regarding our giving?

- A. We should tell others how much we gave or to whom it was given.
- B. We should always get a receipt for our contribution.
- C. We should give in a way that does not call attention to our act of giving.
- D. We should seek a reward because of our giving.

QUESTION 4

Notice how the terms for poor (afflicted, needy, etc.) parallel key words in the following Old Testament passages (Ps 37:14; 40:17; Isa 57:15; Ps 66:2). Based upon these key words, how do you think Christ’s audience interpreted “the poor”?

- A. They are the materially destitute and impoverished.
- B. They are spiritually weak and feeble.
- C. They are lacking in “spirit.”
- D. They are contrite, humble, and completely reliant upon God.

QUESTION 5

Jesus said that He came to fulfill the law. Based upon Matthew 1:22; 2:15; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 21:4, what do you think He meant?

- A. He intended to teach a correct interpretation of the law.
- B. He intended to live the law perfectly and fulfill all that it predicted, including a sacrificial death for sin.
- C. He intended to preach the law fully.
- D. He intended to refute the Pharisaic interpretation of the law.

QUESTION 6

When Jesus said “for unless your righteousness is greater than the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees,” he meant:

- A. You should set their righteousness before you as a goal.
- B. You should strive to have an inner righteousness.
- C. You must be very good to enter the kingdom of heaven.
- D. Because perfection is required for kingdom entrance, I came to die for your sins.

QUESTION 7

Read Matthew 7:15-20. One way to identify false prophets is by their fruit. Based upon Matthew’s usage of the term *fruit* in Matthew 12:33-37, fruit refers to a life of good works. *True or False?*

QUESTION 8

According to the discussion above, the most probable interpretation of Matthew 5:48 is that if one wants to enter the kingdom of heaven he must:

- A. Be as perfect as God is.
- B. Be mature in his Christian life.
- C. Set perfection as a goal realizing that it is not fully achievable.
- D. Become a Christian by trusting in Christ.

QUESTION 9

The article you read on the parable of the broad and narrow gate explained that two choices are presented to a nonbeliever. He can choose the broad way and forfeit eternal life, or he can choose the narrow way and be saved. *True or False?*

QUESTION 10

Read Proverbs 6:32; 11:3; 13:15; Deuteronomy 30:19; Matthew 26:8 (“waste” is the same word as “destruction” in Greek); and Acts 8:3. What kind of “destruction” is referred to in these verses?

- A. Loss of reward at the judgment seat of Christ.
- B. Some kind of ruin or destruction in this life.
- C. Final condemnation to hell.
- D. Loss of salvation.

Unit Two Exam

QUESTION 1

The ministry of John the Baptist was:

- A. A failure because his movement died out and seemed to have no lasting impact.
- B. A success because he was faithful to do what God told him to do.
- C. Characterized by teaching that repentance was necessary for deliverance from hell.
- D. Located primarily in the northern regions near Galilee.

QUESTION 2

In John 2:19, when Jesus said, “Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up again,” He meant: *(Select all that apply.)*

- A. The sacrificial system was passing away, and they would be the ones ending it.
- B. One day He would destroy the temple when God sent the Romans to destroy Jerusalem in AD 70.
- C. When they destroyed Him by crucifixion, He would rise again on the third day.
- D. Jesus was the true temple.
- E. One day the temple of God would no longer be made of bricks and mortar.

QUESTION 3

After Jesus cleansed the temple, the priests and Pharisees asked Christ by what authority He did that (Jn 2:18). Christ replied, “Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up again” (Jn 2:19). According to Farrar, Scripture indicates that they understood that Jesus was talking about His body and not about the physical temple. *True or False?*

QUESTION 4

What purposes were served by Jesus’ harsh behavior in cleansing the temple? *(Select all that apply.)*

- A. He was putting His Father’s house in order.
- B. He was fulfilling prophecy recorded in Psalm 69:9.
- C. He was helping the poor.
- D. He was saying that hypocrisy was inconsistent with the worship of God.
- E. He was assuming a messianic prerogative as stated in Daniel 9:24.

QUESTION 5

Why do you think Jesus only read the first half of the verse in Isaiah 61:2?

- A. He probably lacked time enough to give a full exposition of the passage.
- B. The second half of the verse referred to events far in the future related to His Second Coming.
- C. He wanted to avoid being negative.
- D. He did not think His hearers would accept it.

QUESTION 6

The kingdom announced to Mary in Luke 1:33 and to Zechariah in Luke 1:68-79 was different from that anticipated by the Old Testament prophets. *True or False?*

QUESTION 7

How did Jesus respond to the animosity of the people of Nazareth in the synagogue?

- A. He promised to establish a kingdom.
- B. He graciously understood their concerns.
- C. He reminded them that His ministry was to the rich.
- D. He pointed out that often in Israel's history the Gentiles had been more receptive than the Jews.

QUESTION 8

It seems certain that the kingdom "at hand" is the same one predicted by the Old Testament prophets. Based upon your reading in Micah 4:1-8 and Amos 9:11-15, what is one characteristic of this kingdom as predicted by the prophets?

- A. It will be a time of famine and pestilence.
- B. It is a spiritual kingdom in the hearts of men.
- C. The kingdom of David will be reestablished.
- D. Bethlehem will be the center of worldwide worship and a capital of the world.

QUESTION 9

Various views are given in the article "Born of Water" to explain Jesus' words about being born of water and the Spirit. Which of these views are most likely correct? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. The "water" refers to the natural birth, and the "Spirit" to the birth from above.
- B. The "water" refers to the Word of God.
- C. The "water" refers to baptism as an essential part of regeneration.
- D. The "water" is a symbol of the Holy Spirit.
- E. The "water" refers to the repentance ministry of John the Baptist, and the "Spirit" refers to the application by the Holy Spirit of Christ to an individual.

QUESTION 10

In John 3:4a Nicodemus asked, “How can a man be born when he is old?” Jesus’ answer was:
(*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Logical—The only way a living creature enters any kingdom is through birth. Animals enter the animal kingdom, and humans enter the human kingdom this way. Therefore, it makes sense that children of God would enter His kingdom in the same manner.
- B. Revolutionary—According to the Pharisees, all that was necessary for entrance into God’s kingdom was to be a descendant of Abraham.
- C. New—Nothing like this had ever been taught in the Old Testament.
- D. Spiritual—Jesus asserted that entrance into God’s kingdom can only come through a birth from above.

QUESTION 11

Based upon Matthew 5:1 and Luke 6:17, to whom was the Sermon on the Mount primarily addressed?

- A. A multitude of disciples
- B. The twelve apostles
- C. The apostles and the multitude
- D. The multitude

QUESTION 12

Based upon Matthew 7:1-6, which statement below is correct?

- A. We are never to be critical of the actions of others.
- B. The first step in healing a relationship is to ask: What have I done wrong?
- C. To judge others is to make value judgments regarding their behavior.
- D. It is okay to consider others as “dogs.”

QUESTION 13

What principles are taught in Matthew 6:1-4 regarding our giving?

- A. We should tell others how much we gave or to whom it was given.
- B. We should always get a receipt for our contribution.
- C. We should give in a way that does not call attention to our act of giving.
- D. We should seek a reward because of our giving.

QUESTION 14

When the Samaritan woman attempted to deflect the discussion into a theological debate regarding the proper place of worship, Jesus told her that a time was coming when true worshippers would worship in spirit and truth (Jn 4:22-24). Carefully consider the context of His words, and then select the answer which most likely communicates His meaning.

- A. To worship in spirit is to worship with a sense of mystical connection between your spirit and God's Spirit. To worship in truth is to worship according to truth revealed to you by the ministry of the Spirit.
- B. To worship in spirit is actually to worship under the power and influence of the Holy Spirit. To worship in truth is to worship according to the teaching of the Jewish scholars and not the heretical Samaritan scholars.
- C. To worship in spirit is to worship spontaneously and with no defined structure. To worship in truth is to worship according to the Scriptures.
- D. To worship in spirit is to worship from the heart anywhere. To worship in truth is to worship according to the Scriptures.

QUESTION 15

Which of the following sentences best describes the central characteristic of the Pharisees?

- A. They were the purists and separatists who by their lifestyles and teaching promoted strict adherence to the Law of Moses.
- B. They were a rival party to the Sadducees, and although they disagreed in many ways, they did share a common belief that there is no resurrection of the dead.
- C. Unlike the Zealot party, they were not promoting the overthrow of the Roman governors to establish Jewish independence.
- D. They taught that one day a Teacher of Righteousness, the Messiah, would appear and deliver the Jews from the Roman bondage.

QUESTION 16

Based upon your reading in Farrar, what do you think Nicodemus's hidden question was when he approached Jesus secretly at night?

- A. How good does one have to be to enter the kingdom of heaven?
- B. Is it possible for a Pharisee to enter this new kingdom?
- C. By what authority do You teach these things?
- D. Are You, in fact, the Messiah?

QUESTION 17

According to our understanding of John 3:36, we might conclude that those who have never heard of Jesus Christ could find salvation based upon the revelation they have received. *True or False?*

QUESTION 18

The article you read on the parable of the broad and narrow gate explained that two choices are presented to a believer. He can choose the broad way and forfeit the true meaning of life, or he can choose the narrow way and find a rich experience of life now and an abundant entrance into the kingdom at the Second Coming. *True or False?*

QUESTION 19

Notice how the terms for poor (afflicted, needy, etc.) parallel key words in the following Old Testament passages (Ps 37:14; 40:17; 66:2; Isa 57:15). Based upon these key words, how do you think Christ's audience interpreted "the poor"?

- A. They are the materially destitute and impoverished.
- B. They are spiritually weak and feeble.
- C. They are lacking in "spirit."
- D. They are contrite, humble, and completely reliant upon God.

QUESTION 20

Jesus said that He came to fulfill the law. Based upon Matthew 1:22; 2:15; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 21:4, what do you think He meant?

- A. He intended to teach a correct interpretation of the law.
- B. He intended to live the law perfectly and fulfill all that it predicted, including a sacrificial death for sin.
- C. He intended to preach the law fully.
- D. He intended to refute the Pharisaic interpretation of the law.

QUESTION 21

When Jesus said "for unless your righteousness is greater than the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees," he meant:

- A. You should set their righteousness before you as a goal.
- B. You should strive to have an inner righteousness.
- C. You must be very good to enter the kingdom of heaven.
- D. Because perfection is required for kingdom entrance, I came to die for your sins.

QUESTION 22

Read Proverbs 6:32; 11:3; 13:15; Deuteronomy 30:19; Matthew 26:8 (“waste” is the same word as “destruction” in Greek); and Acts 8:3. What kind of “destruction” is referred to in these verses?

- A. Loss of reward at the judgment seat of Christ
- B. Some kind of ruin or destruction in this life
- C. Final condemnation to hell
- D. Loss of salvation

QUESTION 23

In the Beatitudes, those who “hunger and thirst after righteousness” are those who have compassion on others because they recognize their own sin. *True or False?*

QUESTION 24

“Doing the will of the Father,” refers to a lifelong obedience to the ethics of the sermon. *True or False?*

QUESTION 25

According to the Sermon on the Mount in the section on the Lord’s Prayer, praying without understanding the meaning of the words you are praying is one legitimate form of worship. *True or False?*

Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1:

<i>Scripture</i>	<i>Paragraph Title</i>
Matthew 5:1-16	The Beatitudes
Matthew 5: 17-48	Christ and the Law
Matthew 6:1-18	Dedication of the Heart
Matthew 6:19-34	Hypocrisy of the Pharisees
Matthew 7:1-12	Conduct towards Man
Matthew 7:13-29	Final Judgment

QUESTION 2:

A. A multitude of disciples

QUESTION 3:

<i>Interpretation</i>	<i>Description</i>
Interim Ethic	For the period immediately preceding the establishment of the millennial kingdom
Ethic for Today	Should be rigorously obeyed in public and private life
Lutheran	Jesus is teaching the impossibility of salvation by works
Classical Liberalism	The sermon is the true social gospel
Classical Dispensationalism	Intended only for the millennium
Training of the Twelve	For training all disciples or believers
Eclectic	Includes items from all the views

QUESTION 4: *Your answer*

QUESTION 5:

D. They are contrite, humble, and completely reliant upon God.

QUESTION 6:

<i>Beatitude</i>	<i>Definition</i>
Those who are poor in spirit	Those who trust God completely
Those who mourn	Those who are sorrowful for their sins and those of the nation
The meek	Those who want justice to be done everywhere
Those who hunger and thirst after righteousness	Those who have compassion on others because they recognize their own sin
The merciful	Those who are single-minded in their pursuit of holiness
The pure in heart	Those who are free from malice and a vengeful spirit
The peacemakers	Those who seek reconciliation between God and man and between persons

QUESTION 7:

A. Inheritance

C. Reward

QUESTION 8:

B. He intended to live the law perfectly and fulfill all that it predicted, including a sacrificial death for sin.

QUESTION 9: True

QUESTION 10: *Your answer*

QUESTION 11:

C. Set perfection as a goal realizing that it is not fully achievable

QUESTION 12: *Your answer*

QUESTION 13:

The Lord was illustrating the impossibility of entering the kingdom by our own good deeds. Anyone who has lusted or has been angry is excluded from heaven. Jesus concluded and summarized His argument in Matthew 5:48. Unless someone else fulfills the law for us, the only outcome is eternal hell. When a Christian sins, one is still “liable” or “guilty enough” to go to hell. It is the grace of God in Christ Jesus that meets the law’s requirements so that a Christian will not suffer eternal destruction.

QUESTION 14:

A. We should not tell others how much we gave or to whom it was given.

C. We should give in a way that does not call attention to our act of giving.

E. We will be rewarded by our Father if we give in secret.

QUESTION 15

A. We should not pray without understanding what we are saying.

B. We should begin our prayers with worship.

C. We should be more concerned with the Father’s will than with getting what we want.

D. We should ask God to protect us from temptation.

E. We should acknowledge God as our provider and our complete reliance upon Him.

F. We should end our prayer with worship.

QUESTION 16: *Your answer*

QUESTION 17: False

QUESTION 18: *Your answer*

QUESTION 19:

C. We are, in fact, sinning.

QUESTION 20:

A. Making our quest for His kingdom our number one priority.

B. Refusing to worry about what might happen tomorrow.

D. Observing how God cares for His other creatures, those who are of less importance than we are.

QUESTION 21:

B. The first step in healing a relationship is to ask: What have I done wrong?

QUESTION 22:

Hypocritical judging. The Lord’s point is that we have no right to judge someone else when we are full of sin.

QUESTION 23: True

QUESTION 24: *Your answer*

QUESTION 25: *Your answer*

QUESTION 26: *Your answer*

QUESTION 27: *Your answer*

QUESTION 28: False

QUESTION 29:

D. Believing in the way of righteousness.

QUESTION 30: Believe

QUESTION 31:

B. The rock may refer to a life built upon the teachings of the sermon.

C. The rain and storms refer to trials and tribulation in this life.

E. The crash of the house refers to the ruin of our temporal lives as a result of failing to follow the teaching of the sermon.

QUESTION 32: *Your answer*

QUESTION 33: *Your answer*

QUESTION 34: *Your answer*

QUESTION 35: *Your answer*

Lesson 6 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1:

A. A multitude of disciples

QUESTION 2:

B. The first step in healing a relationship is to ask: What have I done wrong?

QUESTION 3:

C. We should give in a way that does not call attention to our act of giving.

QUESTION 4:

D. They are contrite, humble, and completely reliant upon God.

QUESTION 5:

B. He intended to live the law perfectly and fulfill all that it predicted, including a sacrificial death for sin.

QUESTION 6:

D. Because perfection is required for kingdom entrance, I came to die for your sins.

QUESTION 7: False

QUESTION 8:

A. Be as perfect as God is.

QUESTION 9: False

QUESTION 10:

B. Some kind of ruin or destruction in this life.

Unit Two Exam Answers

QUESTION 1:

B. A success because he was faithful to do what God told him to do.

QUESTION 2:

A. The sacrificial system was passing away, and they would be the ones ending it.

C. When they destroyed Him by crucifixion, He would rise again on the third day.

D. Jesus was the true temple.

E. One day the temple of God would no longer be made of bricks and mortar.

QUESTION 3: True

QUESTION 4:

A. He was putting His Father's house in order.

B. He was fulfilling prophecy recorded in Psalm 69:9.

D. He was saying that hypocrisy was inconsistent with the worship of God.

E. He was assuming a messianic prerogative as stated in Daniel 9:24.

QUESTION 5:

B. The second half of the verse referred to events far in the future related to His Second Coming.

QUESTION 6: False

QUESTION 7:

D. He pointed out that often in Israel's history the Gentiles had been more receptive than the Jews.

QUESTION 8:

C. The kingdom of David will be reestablished.

QUESTION 9:

A. The "water" refers to the natural birth, and the "Spirit" to the birth from above.

D. The "water" is a symbol of the Holy Spirit.

QUESTION 10:

A. Logical—The only way a living creature enters any kingdom is through birth. Animals enter the animal kingdom, and humans enter the human kingdom this way. Therefore, it makes sense that children of God would enter His kingdom in the same manner.

B. Revolutionary—According to the Pharisees, all that was necessary for entrance into God's kingdom was to be a descendant of Abraham.

D. Spiritual—Jesus asserted that entrance into God's kingdom can only come through a birth from above.

QUESTION 11:

A. A multitude of disciples

QUESTION 12:

B. The first step in healing a relationship is to ask: What have I done wrong?

QUESTION 13:

C. We should give in a way that does not call attention to our act of giving.

QUESTION 14:

D. To worship in spirit is to worship from the heart anywhere. To worship in truth is to worship according to the Scriptures.

QUESTION 15:

A. They were the purists and separatists who by their lifestyles and teaching promoted strict adherence to the Law of Moses.

QUESTION 16:

A. How good does one have to be to enter the kingdom of heaven?

QUESTION 17: False

QUESTION 18: True

QUESTION 19:

D. They are contrite, humble, and completely reliant upon God.

QUESTION 20:

B. He intended to live the law perfectly and fulfill all that it predicted, including a sacrificial death for sin.

QUESTION 21:

D. Because perfection is required for kingdom entrance, I came to die for your sins.

QUESTION 22:

B. Some kind of ruin or destruction in this life.

QUESTION 23: True

QUESTION 24: False

QUESTION 25: False

Lesson 6 Notes

The Narrow Door

Jesus exhorted the disciples to “enter through the narrow gate,” and then He presented two reasons why they should choose this. First, if they took the wide gate that opens up onto the broad way, their temporal lives would be ruined. But, second, if they chose the narrow gate, which opens up onto the difficult way, they would obtain true life now and an enriched experience of life in the age to come.

All followers of Christ are confronted with these two choices. All believers in Christ will enter the kingdom. What is in question is the manner of entrance and our rewards. Will we choose the difficult way, that is, persevere through trial and tribulation and by many tribulations enter into the kingdom of God? Or will we choose the broad way and, like the seed which fell on rocky soil or among thorns, fail to persevere? (As we will see in Lesson 7, the rocky soil and the thorny soil both represent true Christians in the well-known parable of the sower in Mt 13:3-9, 18-23.) To choose the broad way, He warned them, would result in the destruction of their temporal lives and loss of reward at the judgment seat of Christ. As Paul put it, they would be saved but “as through fire” (1 Cor 3:15; 2 Cor 5:10).

“Perishing in Hebrews”

Consider the warning directed to the Christians addressed by the writer of Hebrews. He said, “But we are not among those who shrink back and thus perish, but are among those who have faith and preserve their souls” (Heb 10:39). In this context, these saved people were warned about the possibility of “perishing.” This is the same Greek word which is translated “destruction” in Matthew 7:13. Yet the kind of destruction or perishing referred to in Hebrews 10:39 is not eternal hell, but temporal judgment in time. This is clear from the fact that, in describing this destruction, the writer cites a passage from the Old Testament which speaks of God’s judgment on His people in time and not in eternity (see Deut 32:36 cited in Heb 10:30).

Lesson 6 Articles

The Broad or Narrow Gate

One of the most frequently quoted sections of the Sermon on the Mount contains Jesus' famous teaching regarding entering the kingdom of heaven by the broad gate or the narrow gate.

“Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it” (Mt 7:13-14, NASB).

This simple saying, when considered more carefully, raises a number of questions. Is this exhortation addressed to regenerate people or only those who are somewhat interested in Christ's teaching? What are they being exhorted to enter? When does this entrance occur, immediately or at the last day? What is meant by “life” and “destruction”? Is the gate at the beginning or end of the disciple's journey?

The saying seems to assert that in order to obtain entrance into heaven, one must enter by the narrow way, the way of obedient discipleship, the way of adherence to the words of the sermon. In other words, once again, Jesus appears to be teaching that salvation is obtained by good works. The condition of works for entrance, as argued above, strongly suggests that what Jesus has in mind here is not final entrance into heaven, but the degree of richness of kingdom life which is rewarded to the faithful believer.

Perhaps the best way to approach this passage is to discuss each of the above questions.

To whom is the exhortation given? As discussed above, the sermon was addressed to truly regenerate people. This assumption will now be applied to Matthew 7:13-14.

What are they being exhorted to “enter”? This entrance seems to be an entrance into the kingdom of heaven. It appears that Jesus is pointing back to Matthew 5:20 where He said that a surpassing righteousness was necessary to “enter the kingdom of heaven.”

When Does Entrance Occur?

There are two ways to view this metaphor. Jesus may have in mind two roads leading up to the gate and when one enters either the narrow or broad gate he has arrived at his destination. Some pointing to the similar passage in Luke 13:23-24 take this view. However, a door and not a road is mentioned in the Lukan passage, and most New Testament scholars, while recognizing the similarity of the sayings, feel they are addressing different concepts and are not the same saying.

The other option, suggests that the gate is entered in this life with roads broad and narrow stretching out before the pilgrim. Entrance into the narrow way begins now and issues in the future kingdom. There are two gates before the Christian by which he can enter the kingdom of heaven. One leads to life, an enriched experience of life and reward, and the other leads to destruction in this life, not hell.

Jesus may be speaking of an eschatological entrance parallel with his saying in Matthew 25:23, “His master answered, ‘Well done, good and faithful slave! You have been faithful with a few

things. I will put you in charge of many things. Enter into the joy of your master.” This entrance into the Master’s joy is a future event at the Second Coming and refers to entrance into the kingdom of heaven. That Jesus has this future entrance in mind seems clear from His reference in Matthew 7:21-22 where he connects this entrance with “that day,” the day of judgment at His return.

Therefore, we conclude that the passage refers to entering the kingdom in the future by entering either the broad or narrow gate now. There appear to be two gates, not one, which lead to the kingdom of heaven.

What Is Meant by “Life” and “Destruction”?

The broad and narrow gates seem to lead to two differing *consequences in this life* prior to one’s entering the kingdom of heaven.

The Wide Gate Leads to Destruction

The wide gate has been understood in many different ways. Some see it as a viewpoint consistent with postmodern pluralism. There were many types of religions being promoted in first-century Palestine and the person entering the broad gate is one who refuses to enter by the *way* (Jn 14:6). However, since entering by the narrow gate refers to entering by the hard way of persecution and commitment to the sayings of the sermon, it is possible that the broad way is the opposite of “hard” and refers to an easy way, a way of comfort which avoids the cost of serious discipleship.

But what is “destruction”? Are those who follow the broad way on the highway to hell? While it is common to understand this as a reference to hell, the use of the word “destruction” (Gk. *apoleia*) in Matthew’s gospel, it does not require this. The only other place it is used in Matthew is in 26:8 where it refers to the “waste” of perfume used to anoint Jesus’ feet (Mt 26:8). Elsewhere in the New Testament it can refer to the ruined lives of the rich who love money (1 Tim 1:9); the physical destruction of life (Acts 8:20).

It is important to note that the verbal form of this noun, “to destroy” (Gk. *apollumi*) is used nineteen times by Matthew and it never refers to hell. In each instance, a ruin or destruction in this life is in view. Peter was afraid of “perishing” by drowning (Mt 8:25), Herod wanted to “destroy” Jesus (Mt 2:13), and new wine put into old wineskins “ruins” them (Mt 9:17). (See also Mt 18:13-14, “to go astray”; Mt 10:6; 12:14; 15:24; 22:7; 26:51; 27:20.) The meaning of *perish* in Matthew 7:14 is very close to what it means in 16:25: “For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses [Gk *apollumi*] his life on account of me will find it.” Parallel, to ruining one’s life is to forfeit its final meaning and fullness, not go to hell. Otherwise the next phrase makes no sense, “for whoever goes to hell will find true life!”

Based upon this evidence, it seems likely that the road leading to destruction is the road leading to the ruin of one’s temporal life. It refers to one who has gone astray, not one who has gone to hell.

The Narrow Gate Leads to Life

There are two different Greek words for the narrow (Gk *stenos*) gate and the narrow (Gk. *thlibo*) way. The latter is similar to *thlipsis* (“tribulation”), which almost always refers to persecution. While *stenos* means “squeezed or pressed” (it is often found in topographical descriptions) the latter means “persecution,” or “to suffer affliction, to be troubled.”

Suffering for Christ is a common theme in the New Testament and Christ's disciples are frequently called upon to endure persecution (2 Cor 1:6; 4:8; 7:5; 1 Thess 3:4; 2 Thess 1:6). What is of particular interest is Acts 14:22, (NASB) "strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, 'Through many tribulations [Gk. *thilipsis*] we must enter the kingdom of God.'" That believers must go through tribulations (the narrow gate and way) on their way to their entrance to the eschatological kingdom is clear from this passage and possibly explains Matthew 7:14. A similar idea is taught in 2 Pet 1:10-11, (NIV) "*Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*"

Practicing "these things" refers to decisive application of Christ's teaching to life and leads to a "rich welcome" (i.e., reward or enhanced experience of the kingdom) into the kingdom of heaven. Entering by the narrow way and the narrow gate has the same result.

The fact that entering into life or into the kingdom in Matthew 7:13-14 is based upon works also suggests that it is not just the fact of entrance, but a vital experience of the kingdom, that is meant. The degree to which the kingdom will be experienced is based upon works.

But short of the disciple's final entrance into the kingdom he will also experience "life." The narrow way leads to "life." Does this refer to eternal life or a rich and meaningful life in time? If the wide gate leads to the ruining of one's personal life as argued above, then the opposite "leading to life" must refer to a rich and meaningful life. That initial impression is abundantly confirmed by the biblical evidence.

First we should note that "life" for the Hebrews means more than physical existence, it was the supreme good. It never means "eternal life" or "go to heaven when I die" in the Old Testament. Therefore one should not begin with the assumption that it does in the New Testament. Rather, one begins with the assumption that life for the Hebrew writers of the New Testament was a rich temporal life of fellowship with God, not entrance into heaven.

Another important consideration is that Jesus, in the sermon, seems to be teaching as a wisdom teacher. This is particularly noted in His use of many proverbial "one-liners," after the pattern of the book of Proverbs. We are safe then when we conclude that when Jesus speaks of "life" in the sermon he is thinking in Old Testament wisdom terms.

Consider these passages from Proverbs, (NIV, emphasis added), "None who go to her return or attain the *paths of life*" (2:19); "She gives no thought to the *way of life*; her paths are crooked, but she knows it not" (5:6); "For these commands are a lamp, this teaching is a light, and the corrections of discipline are the *way to life*" (6:23); "She is a *tree of life* to those who embrace her; those who lay hold of her will be blessed" (3:18).

The close parallel to Deuteronomy 30:15-16, (NIV) cannot easily be denied. "See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction. For I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws; then you will live and increase, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess." Jesus seems to have this passage in mind in Matthew 7:13-14 and if so, life and destruction refer to temporal, not eternal, experiences.

Jesus spoke of "life" in two senses elsewhere. "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full" (Jn 10:10, NIV). The teaching about saving one's life in Mark 8:35, (NIV) is commonly understood as finding a rich and meaningful life. "For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it."

Summary

When Jesus challenges these true disciples to enter by the narrow gate, he is not speaking of conditions for salvation, which is by faith alone. Rather, He **speaks of the way or manner of entrance**; he is referring to the path of discipleship or, on the other hand, the path of ease. These men have just heard an earth-shaking sermon. They are now exhorted to apply it even though our Lord knows that doing so will lead to persecution and affliction.

Before the disciples is a choice of two ways, the way of discipleship or the way of weak commitment. We may enter as men and women who have chosen the path of radical discipleship and in so doing obtain not only a rich, meaningful life here but a rich welcome when we enter His kingdom at He returns. Conversely, to shy away from this demand will result in temporal ruin and the loss of reward at that future day.

The Superior Righteousness

Jesus now presents the conditions necessary for entrance into the kingdom of heaven.

“For I say to you, that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 5:20, NASB).

With this simple statement, our Lord set in motion a sea of ink and a forest of paper. What is this superior righteousness necessary for entrance? To what kind of righteousness does Christ refer? Several suggestions have been made.

What Is the Greater Righteousness?

The Imputed Righteousness of Christ

Some feel that the “superior righteousness” refers to the imputed righteousness of Christ. Our Lord’s point then is that what is needed is not perfect obedience but a different kind of righteousness altogether. A righteousness reckoned to our account through faith in the active and passive obedience of Christ. Those holding this position suggested that Jesus was saying that if a man would get to heaven he must have a better and different kind of righteousness, the imputed righteousness of Christ. They say that Matthew 5:48 seems to define the quality of the righteousness needed—one must be as “perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.” The only righteousness meeting that requirement is the justifying righteousness of Jesus, the Christ.

Against this, however, is the fact that the word “righteousness” in Matthew’s gospel never means “imputed righteousness” but means “righteous living or behavior” (Mt 6:1, 33; 5:6). In fact this is what the whole Sermon on the Mount is about, righteous living.

An Ethical Lifestyle and Character

Most Bible scholars believe that the superior righteousness refers to an ethical lifestyle, a life of good works, a way of living characterized by the principles of the Sermon on the Mount. It appears that meaning of righteousness in Matthew 5:20 is determined by the paragraphs that follow. Right conduct is the issue, not justification.

That it means this seems clear from the fact that the preceding verses which Matthew 5:48 summarizes, all refer to moral actions impossible of doing and requiring judgment for failure (Mt 5:22, 26, 29-30, 39-40). Furthermore it seems evident that our Lord is thinking of the Old Testament demands for perfection.

A Salvation by Works?

If possessing this kind of ethical righteousness is necessary to enter the kingdom of heaven, this would seem to teach that works save, a view which contradicts the faith alone gospel taught elsewhere by the Lord Jesus (Jn 3:16). How can this be explained and harmonized with the rest of the New Testament?

A Test of Salvation?

One view is that we are to understand these words as a test of salvation. All true Christians have a righteousness higher than that of the Pharisees. In their view our Lord is teaching that the proof of

our having truly received the grace of God in Jesus Christ is that we are living a righteous life—it is faith showing itself by works which is the mark of a true Christian. Or, to say it another way, Jesus is not saying that entering the kingdom of heaven is based on what one does. He is saying, however, that by not obeying one will not enter.

Yet the immediate context seems to refute this view. The preceding verse (Mt 5:19) clearly states that it is possible for a believer to be *in the kingdom* and yet not be “living a righteous life.” He is the kind of person who breaks the least of these commandments (either the antitheses in Mt 5:21-47, or lesser parts of the law) and teaches others to do the same

Becoming Great in the Kingdom

At first glance it seems that verses 19 and 20 contradict one another. Verse 19 says one can be a lawbreaker and teach others to break the law yet still be in the kingdom of heaven in the last day. Verse 20 on the other hand says that one cannot be a lawbreaker and “enter” the kingdom. How is the apparent contradiction to be explained?

A possible solution is that one can “enter” the kingdom in two different senses. One enters the kingdom in the sense of personal salvation when he believes on Christ for eternal life (Jn 3:3-5, 16). Note that verse 19 is speaking of being great or least in the kingdom. Verse 20 begins with the word “for” explaining or clarifying something in verse 19.

“Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called **least** in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called **great** in the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 5:19, NASB, emphasis added).

“**For** I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 5:20, NASB, emphasis added).

Verse 20 appears to be explaining how one can become “great” in the kingdom of heaven in contrast to being “least.” One becomes great in the kingdom, or has an “abundant” entrance (2 Pet 1:11) by living out the Sermon on the Mount. Then and only then will he possess the superior righteousness necessary to enter. Because entering the kingdom is based upon works in this verse and because the verse is explaining how one can become great, we suggest that enter here means to “enter fully” or to enter into reigning with Christ there. All Christians will be in the kingdom, but only those who are faithful will reign with him there (2 Tim 2:12; Rom 8:17; Rev 2:26).

Unit Three: The Year of Great Public Favor

Introduction

The Messiah's popularity spread like wildfire. Voices in every village and along every roadway whispered, "Could this be the one?" From June, AD 30 to March, AD 31 Jesus continued to enjoy increasing public acclaim. However, an insidious counter movement was underway. The Pharisees, realizing the threat He posed to their personal power and popularity began plotting to kill Him. In this unit we will trace these two tendencies, which occurred during the pivotal year of ministry. Beginning with the rejection of the Pharisees, the Lord ends the year with the triumphal miracle of walking on water.

Unit Outline

Lesson 7: The Kingdom Offer Rejected

Lesson 8: Confirmation to the Twelve

Lesson 9: Closing Events of Jesus' Second Year of Ministry

Lesson 7: The Kingdom Offer Rejected

Lesson Introduction

The Sermon on the Mount has been completed; the requirements for discipleship have been explained. For eighteen months (January, AD 29–June, AD 30) Jesus had preached the gospel of the kingdom and told the nation that this kingdom was “at hand.” The offer of the kingdom has been made. What will the response of the leaders and common people be?

As Jesus continued His healing ministry, more and more attention was drawn to His kingdom offer. As His fame spread, the Pharisees sent a delegation to examine His claims.

In Topic 1 of this lesson we will consider, first of all, the faith displayed by a Gentile centurion. As the ministry of Christ unfolds, the gospel writers make it clear that often the Gentiles demonstrated the faith required for entrance into the kingdom while the rightful heirs of the kingdom, the Jews, remained unbelievers.

Next, in Topic 2, we see an incredible miracle. With just His words, Jesus raised the son of a widow from Nain from the dead. The impact on the crowd was immediate and far-reaching. They responded in fear and wonder, and Christ’s fame spread throughout the region.

An unanswered question has been lurking in the background of the gospel story. What became of John the Baptist? John had been cast into prison, and as he wasted away in a lonely cell, he began to wonder if Jesus really was the promised One. The kingdom had not been established; the Romans were still in control. Jesus did not seem to be acting as the Jews thought the Messiah foretold in the Old Testament would act. John, therefore, sent messengers to Jesus to ask, “Are you the One?”

In response, in Topic 3, Jesus not only affirmed that He was the Messiah, but that no prophet greater than John the Baptist had ever been sent to Israel.

One more incident occurred before the critical event in our lesson, in a tender scene at the house of Simon the Pharisee.

In Topic 4, a prostitute entered and fell at Christ’s feet anointing them with an expensive ointment. Jesus’ words of forgiveness to her flew in the face of the Pharisees’ hostility.

In Topic 5 due in part to the raising of the widow’s son and the subsequent fame this engendered, the leaders of the nation sent a delegation to examine Christ’s credentials. They concluded that He did His works by the power of Satan. Jesus called this an eternal sin that would never be forgiven.

Finally, in Topic 6, the view of this rejection and the question that naturally arose, “How is Jesus to explain the rejection of the kingdom offer if He is, in fact, the Promised One?” will be examined. Jesus responded to this question by teaching a series of parables documented in Matthew 13.

Lesson Outline

Topic 1: A Centurion's Faith

Topic 2: Raising the Widow of Nain's Son

Topic 3: Jesus and John the Baptist

Topic 4: Jesus Anointed by an Outcast Woman

Topic 5: An Eternal Sin

The Leaders Slander Jesus

What is the Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit?

Topic 6: Explanation of Rejection and the Parables

The Mystery Form of the Kingdom

The Parables of Matthew 13

Explaining the Parables

Topic 7: Matching Events

Topic 8: Knowing, Being, Doing

Lesson Objectives

When you have completed this lesson, you will be able to:

- Describe what Jesus Christ meant by “faith”
- Share your reflections upon the character of Christ as revealed in this incident
- Answer the questions of how to handle your doubts and to be encouraged to trust Christ even when your circumstances are troublesome
- Affirm the principle that the degree of our sin is often related to the degree of our love for Christ
- Clarify the meaning of blasphemy of the Holy Spirit and answer the question, “Can this sin be committed today?”
- Explain the kingdom program for the present inter-advent age in view of the national rejection of Christ as the Messiah
- Apply the concepts learned in this lesson to your mind, character, and ministry

Topic 1: A Centurion's Faith

June, AD 30

After completing the Sermon on the Mount, which was given on a hillside near Capernaum, Jesus entered the city. He was approached by messengers from a Roman centurion—a commander of one hundred soldiers, whose servant was ill. This particular centurion was well liked by the Jews because he loved them and built them a synagogue (Lk 7:4-5).

Knowing that a centurion should not approach a Jewish prophet regarding this matter because Gentiles were unclean in the eyes of the Jews, he sent some messengers. What follows is one of the greatest illustrations of faith Christ had seen in His ministry.

At the end of this topic you will be able to describe what Jesus Christ meant by “faith.”

To introduce the amazing faith of the Centurion, let’s first journey back to an incident which occurred during the Napoleonic wars.

It was a critical time for the British Empire. Napoleon’s armies had decimated and conquered Europe. Now the emperor, Napoleon, had set his sights on England. To meet this threat to the homeland, the British sent out the capable General Wellington to engage the Emperor’s army across the English Channel in France at Waterloo.

England’s future rested in the outcome of this battle and the country waited in hopeful agony for word of victory. A system of signal flares was set up all over the country. As soon as the battle had been decided, the signal of victory or defeat was to be flashed across the English Channel and read by a signal post atop the White Cliffs of Dover. Then the signal was to be relayed to another post several miles away, and then to another, and another, until all England heard the news.

As the two armies clashed at Waterloo, England waited with trepidation. Was this to be the end of their beloved homeland or would Wellington defeat Napoleon?

Finally the first messages were flashed across the English Channel: Wellington defeated.

Then a dense fog rolled across the channel. As the terrifying message was relayed all over the British Isles, a sense of despair gripped the land. England was gone. At any moment they expected the invasion of Napoleon’s armies to come storming across the channel.

But then the fog lifted and the complete story was flashed across the channel:

Wellington defeated THE ENEMY!

England had been saved!

Like England during the Battle of Waterloo, you and I stand on the other side of the fog. As we journey through the Valley of Weeping, we cannot see the entire picture. In this topic we meet a man who was willing to trust Jesus for what he could not see. Jesus called this “Great Faith.” Let’s take a look!

The Scriptures related to this topic are Matthew 8:1, 5-13 and Luke 7:1b-10.

QUESTION 1

What about this Gentile’s faith caused Jesus to marvel?

This Roman centurion was loved by the people of Capernaum (Lk 7:4-5). He appears to be a Gentile “God-fearer” like Cornelius (Acts 10:2). He did not see himself as worthy to go to Jesus in person, so he sent some Jewish elders to make the request regarding his servant.

QUESTION 2

What do we learn about the nature of faith from this episode? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Whenever we exercise faith, we always get results.
- B. “Great faith” is simple trust that Jesus is able to do whatever He wills.
- C. Just as it was not necessary for Jesus to be physically present with the servant, He does not need to be physically present with us to accomplish His will.
- D. True faith involves humility before God.
- E. True faith recognizes that God is so majestic that apart from His grace, He would be unapproachable.

Topic 2: Raising the Widow of Nain’s Son

June, AD 30

Soon after the healing of the centurion’s servant, Jesus entered the town of Nain (about twenty-five miles southwest of Capernaum). There He happened upon a widow whose son had died. Upon raising her son from the dead, Jesus’ fame spread throughout the land.

At the end of this topic you will share your reflections upon the character of Christ as revealed in this incident. As we have often stated in this course, the way the Holy Spirit desires to teach spiritual truth is to clothe it with flesh and blood. In this topic, the Spirit of God reveals two characteristics about Christ through his tender encounter with a widow whose son had died.

The Scripture related to this topic is Luke 7:11-17.

When Jesus saw this terrible situation in the city of Nain (see note at end of lesson), He felt compassion on the widow who, having already lost her husband, was now completely alone. A widow in this situation was completely dependent upon public charity for support.

As Christ saw the mourners bringing the dead body out of the city gate He was filled with compassion. Touching a coffin containing a dead body made one ceremonially unclean (Num 19:11, 16). By ignoring this rule, Jesus was demonstrating that One greater than the Law was present. This was not a closed coffin but a bier or litter used to carry the body outside the city to its burial place. When a person died in Israel and the funeral procession moved through the streets of the town, normally everyone dropped what they were doing and joined the procession. The bereaved mother, according to custom, would walk at the head of the coffin.

QUESTION 3

What attributes of Christ are revealed in this miracle? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. His compassion.
- B. His power over death.
- C. His ability to bring praise to God.
- D. His stature as a prophet and His much deserved fame among the people.
- E. His love and mercy is demonstrated before the needy person even asks.

Topic 3: Jesus and John the Baptist

June, AD 30

It was a difficult time for John the Baptist. Having been thrown into prison and his ministry seemingly over, he had questions regarding Jesus and His ministry. John was the forerunner who announced that the kingdom of heaven would be established; but now he was imprisoned in Judea by the Jewish leadership, and the leaders of the nation did not seem to be responding positively to the claims of Christ.

On Dec 18, 1995, *Time Magazine's* cover story was about the historical accuracy of the Bible. They cited scholar's who felt the Bible was mythological material. "As a Rabbi, I find religiously irrelevant the question of whether events described in the Bible represent historical fact. If it could be proved that every event portrayed in the Bible is absolutely and unequivocally historically false, my faith would remain unaltered because the Bible represents eternal spiritual and moral truth. The Jewish Bible represents a spiritual communication between the Jewish people and God and is not subject to historical analysis. I want to learn about historical facts, which may or may not corroborate the stories in the Bible. But that endeavor is of no consequence to my faith in the divine-human relationship as it is made manifest in the Bible." Think about this view of the Bible as you explore in this topic the doubts of John the Baptist. Would the rabbi's view have satisfied him? *At the end of this topic you will be able to answer the questions of how to handle your doubts and to be encouraged to trust Christ even when your circumstances are troublesome.*

The Scriptures related to this topic are Matthew 11:2-19 and Luke 7:18-35.

QUESTION 4

John had announced Jesus as the coming one. Read Luke 3:15-17. What John announced about the Christ and what was actually happening in Jesus' ministry were exactly the same. *True or False?*

How is the difference between what John predicted and Jesus' actual behavior to be explained? Is it possible that Jesus was not the One who is coming? Had John made a mistake?

Jesus answers John's doubts by quoting Isaiah 35:5 which is quite significant. The coming kingdom, unlike our current age, will be an era when miracles would be commonplace rather than the exception. Later, the writer to the Hebrews would declare that the miraculous powers are characteristic of the "coming age," rather than the current era (Heb 6:5).

During the ministry of Christ, that kingdom was breaking in. Whenever it burst upon the scene, miraculous events occurred. These events were the lightning on the horizon indicating that the kingdom was near in the person of the King.

However, whether or not the kingdom would actually be established at that time was dependant upon Israel's response to the kingdom offer. John's prediction that Jesus would purge and judge was accurate.

This raises the theoretical question of what would have happened if the nation had accepted the kingdom offer. Would Jesus still have gone to the cross? If so, why? Would He still rise from the dead? When would this kingdom be established?

The answer to questions one and three are clear from Scripture. Whether Israel accepted the kingdom offer or not, Jesus would still go to the cross to die for the sins of the world and, after

three days, rise from the dead. This is evident from the Old Testament prophecies that said this would happen (Ps 16:10; 22:12-18; Isa 53:4-9; Acts 2:31-32). Christ's own words predicted He would die for the sins of the world and on the third day rise again from the dead (Jn 2:19-22; Mk 8:31; 10:45).

As to the question, "Why would He go to the cross?" or, more precisely, "What event would necessitate this if Israel accepted Him?" We can only speculate. It may be that as He claimed to be the Messianic King, a Roman action would thereby be provoked. He would allow Himself to be arrested and crucified and then upon His resurrection, establish the kingdom.

QUESTION 5

Open your Life Notebook and reflect upon this question. John doubted Christ's messiahship because John had expectations of Jesus' behavior that were not being met. John, the Messiah's forerunner sent his disciples to Jesus to inquire if He was truly the One. Write about one instance in your life when you doubted Christ's authenticity because your circumstances were troublesome. Would Jesus condemn your doubts? Did He condemn John's? How did Jesus answer John's doubts?

QUESTION 6

How did Jesus answer John's doubts, and how is that an answer for our doubts?

QUESTION 7

Jesus identified John the Baptist as the messenger described in Malachi 3:1-2. How is this a warning for Israel, and what does it say about Christ's mission?

After answering John's messengers, Jesus affirmed John the Baptist. In contrast to the Jewish leaders, John was not a reed shaken in the wind (Mt 11:7); nor was he a man dressed in fine clothes like the rich, well-dressed prophets in the Old Testament who lived in the houses of Israel's leaders. In exchange for wealth and privilege, they told the leaders what they wanted to hear. Furthermore, by fulfilling Isaiah 40:3, John was not just any prophet; he was truly the direct herald of the Messiah.

QUESTION 8

In spite of Christ's enormous praise for John, Jesus makes a perplexing statement in Luke 7:28. What do you think he meant by this? All of the statements below that have been pulled from various commentaries are correct. Which one do you think most clearly explains the paradox?

- A. "Now the least in this kingdom, the meanest preacher of a *crucified, risen, and glorified* Savior, was *greater* than John, who was not permitted to live to see the *plenitude* of Gospel grace, in the pouring out of the Holy Spirit" (emphasis added) (Clarke, A. *Clarke's Commentary: Matthew*).
- B. "The privileges of Jesus' disciples sharing in the Kingdom will be far greater than anything anyone could experience on earth" (Walvoord, J.F. and Roy B. Zuck. *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*. Victor Books, 1983.)
- C. "John, the greatest of the prophets, brought the age of the Law and Prophets to an end, but, belonging to that age, he did not participate in the personal fellowship with the Messiah, nor in the realization of the blessings of the present age, which Christ's Kingdom has brought" (*New Geneva Study Bible*).
- D. "He surely means that John is greater than all others in character, but that the least in the Kingdom of Heaven surpasses him in privilege. John is the end of one age, 'until John' (Mt 11:14), and the beginning of the new era. All those that come after John stand upon his shoulders. John is the mountain peak between the old and the new" (Robertson, A. *Word Pictures in the New Testament*).
- E. "Thus from a human point of view no one greater than John has ever been born, i.e., no one of the old order supersedes John in importance. In effect, so glorious is the new reality dawning through the ministry of Jesus that the greatest of the era preceding him is yet inferior to the least in the new order of the Kingdom. The era of present fulfillment overshadows the era of promise by so much" (Hagner, D. A. (1998). *Vol. 33A: Word Biblical Commentary: Matthew 1-13*).

Topic 4: Jesus Anointed by the Outcast Woman

July, AD 30

Only Luke records the story of the immoral woman who anointed Jesus during a dinner at Simon's house (Lk 7:36-50). That Jesus was invited to the house of a prominent Pharisee was an indication of His high social standing as a well-known teacher. No greater contrast could be imagined. Simon, the educated Pharisee should have, of all people, been responsive to John's announcement and to Jesus' claims; yet he was not. The prostitute on the other hand is, as Luke presents her, one who is closer to the kingdom than the greatest religious leaders of the day. She is called a "sinner" which when applied to a woman in that culture was a euphemism for "prostitute." Traditionally this woman has been identified with Mary Magdalene (Lk 8:2; 24:10). However, the arguments for this conclusion are tenuous, and it seems best to let the immoral woman remain anonymous.

By the end of this topic you will grasp the principle that the degree of our sin is often related to the degree of our love for Christ

During the years of slavery in the United States an incident occurred during a slave auction in New Orleans. In these dehumanizing days, slaves stood upon an auction block and sold to the

highest bidder. On this particular day, a young mulatto woman was up for sale. She was beautiful and the bidding was furious. It was not uncommon for riverboat captains to attend such auctions looking for slaves which they could use as prostitutes on the riverboats which went up and down the Mississippi River.

One riverboat captain bid \$500, another bid \$600, another \$750, and on it went. As the bidding went higher and higher, a minister from a nearby church passed by this spectacle. When he saw what was happening his heart was moved and he thought to himself, "I cannot let this young woman fall into the hands of these degenerate men. I cannot bear to think of what they will do to her." He raised his hand and bid \$1,000. The audience turned around and the other bidders said in disgust, "If you want her that badly, she is yours."

The minister went to the auctioneer and secured her papers. He then went up to the young woman as she stood on the auction block and held out his hand to help her down. With rage on her face she spit in his eyes and said, "I want you to know that I hate you with all my heart and will never serve you!"

Wiping the spittle away from his eyes he looked up to her with compassion and said, "Miss, you do not understand. I did not buy you to bring you into my house as a slave; I bought you to set you free. Here are your papers, you are free to go."

He turned and walked away.

Stunned the mulatto woman stood there, unable to speak. It gradually dawned upon her what had happened. For the first time in her life, she was free! Overcome with gratitude she jumped off the auction block and ran after the young minister who was disappearing in the distance. When she caught up with him she fell down at his feet and said, "Master, my master, I will serve you for the rest of my life."

In this topic we meet an immoral woman, set free from the bondage of sin. Her gratitude is not understood by some, but valued by Christ, her liberator.

The Scripture related to this topic is Luke 7:36-50.

Jesus had been invited to the home of a wealthy Pharisee for dinner. As was the custom in Jewish homes, He was "reclining at the table." Normally when eating a meal, the guests would lie on their sides with their feet pointing away from a circular low table situated in the middle of the guests. This explains the curious statement that the prostitute, while anointing Him, stood behind Him "at his feet."

QUESTION 9

Which of the following comparisons made by Jesus between Simon and the woman is NOT true?

- A. Simon did not provide water so that Jesus could wash his feet, but the woman washed His feet with her tears.
- B. Simon and the woman welcomed Jesus with a kiss.
- C. Simon did not pour ointment on Jesus' head, but the woman poured ointment on His feet.
- D. Simon thought he had no need of forgiveness and offered Jesus little respect, but the woman wept for forgiveness and worshipped Him.

Simon took offense at the fact that Jesus allowed this immoral woman to continue to kiss His feet and anoint them with oil. If Jesus were really a prophet, he reasoned, He certainly would have known the nature of this woman and would never have allowed her to do this.

Note how tender Jesus was in His reply to Simon. He said, “Simon, I have something to say to you.” He then followed it with an illustration recorded in Luke 7:41-43.

QUESTION 10

The central principle taught in Luke 7:40-47 is:

- A. Those who have been forgiven much tend to love more.
- B. There was nothing wrong with receiving the repentant weeping of an immoral woman.
- C. Simon was acting self-righteously.
- D. Jesus had compassion for sinners.

QUESTION 11

Jesus’ statement, “Your sins are forgiven,” was a direct claim to be God. *True or False?*

Topic 5: An Eternal Sin

We now come to a turning point in the life of Christ. Matthew’s gospel revolves around this incident. In Matthew 1 to 11, Christ offers the kingdom to the nation of Israel and authenticates His credentials by numerous miracles. In Matthew 12, the leaders of the nation reject His offer and conclude that He does His miracles by the power of Satan. After refuting their claim, Jesus warns them that they have committed an “eternal sin,” the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit.

For the rest of Matthew’s gospel, the assumption is made that the nation has rejected the kingdom offer. In stark contrast to His teaching prior to this rejection, never again in Christ’s ministry does He say that the kingdom of heaven has drawn near or is “at hand.” Jesus, therefore, focuses His attention less on the multitudes and more on the training of the twelve disciples in anticipation of the official rejection at the crucifixion.

What is the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit? Why is it an “eternal sin”? Can this sin be committed today? We must now direct our attention to these questions.

The Leaders Slander Jesus

August, AD 30

In this topic we hear from the lips of Jesus one of the most frightening warnings he ever issued. He speaks of a certain sin that “can never be forgiven.” This sin, the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, has troubled the hearts of many. Sincere Christians who have fallen in some way often ask, “Have I committed this sin? Am I now eternally lost?” What about the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit? What is this sin and can this sin be committed today? *At the end of this topic you will be able to clarify the meaning of blasphemy of the Holy Spirit and answer the question, “Can this sin be committed today?”*

The Scriptures related to this topic are Matthew 12:22-50; Mark 3: 19b-35; Luke 8:1-4a, 19-21.

In Matthew 12:22-24 we read that Christ was confronted by a demon-possessed man, who was both blind and mute. Christ delivered the man from Satan’s bondage, and this caused the multitude to ask the question, “Could this be the Son of David?” The Pharisees quickly answered

the question by asserting that it was by the power of Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that Jesus delivered the man.

The Pharisees believed that the world of evil spirits was organized like an army with various divisions and subdivisions, all under the authority of Satan. Beelzebul, the “filth god” (literally, the god of dung), was the mocking name the Jews gave to the principal god of the Phoenicians, Beelzebub. This god had responsibility for afflicting men with disease, and they were implying that Jesus was playing a role under his direction.

Notice, the Pharisees did not attempt to deny that Jesus performed a miracle; they only denied that it was done by the power of God. Their conclusion was that Jesus did His miracles by the power of Satan. Jesus, they were asserting, was indwelt by Satan and served his purposes.

QUESTION 12

The destiny of the nation depended upon the religious leaders’ interpretation of the person of Christ. For this reason, Jesus outlines three propositions to demonstrate why their arguments could not possibly be true. What were those arguments?

What is the Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit?

August, AD 30

Thousands of sincere Christians have been filled with worry over whether or not at sometime in their lives they may have committed the sin of blasphemy. Can the unforgivable sin be committed today? In order to answer this, reflect on the following questions.

QUESTION 13

What is this sin called the “blasphemy of the Holy Spirit”?

- A. Rejection of Christ
- B. Disbelief in the Holy Spirit
- C. A disobedient life manifested by not following Christ
- D. Assigning the authenticating miracles done through Christ by the Holy Spirit to the power of Satan

The Greek word translated “blaspheme” is *blasphemia* which refers to “speech that denigrates or defames.” It refers to “reviling, denigration, disrespect, or slander” (Frederick William Danke based upon Walter Bauer, *A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed.).

By assigning the Holy Spirit’s works to Satan, they were slandering and denigrating Him. This amounted to rejection of His works that demonstrated the kingdom of God had come and that Jesus and His offer of the kingdom were authentic.

QUESTION 14

Jesus' own words in Matthew 12:28 confirm that the particular purpose of casting out demons at this particular time was to demonstrate that Jesus was the Messiah and the Son of God. *True or False?*

The kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven (see note at end of lesson) are synonymous in the opinion of a majority of New Testament scholars. This is evident from the fact that in one gospel the author will call the kingdom, the "kingdom of God", and in a passage precisely parallel in Matthew's gospel it will be called the "kingdom of heaven."

The Scripture indicates that many of the miracles of Christ were performed by the power of the Holy Spirit (Mt 12:28). The miracles worked by the Holy Spirit through Christ were tangible evidences that His offer of the kingdom was legitimate. To reject the miracles was to reject the offer of the kingdom and the messiahship of Jesus.

QUESTION 15

Who committed the sin of blasphemy?

QUESTION 16

Based upon the article "The Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit" (at the end of this lesson) the best explanation of the phrase "blasphemy of the Holy Spirit" is:

- A. To reject the gospel offer of salvation
- B. A national sin of the leaders of Israel in rejecting the offer of the kingdom of heaven made by the Messiah
- C. A sin which results in the loss of one's personal salvation
- D. A sin which can be committed today

Topic 6: Explanation of Rejection: The Parables

The blasphemous rejection of the kingdom offer by the Pharisees caused a major shift in Christ's ministry. Realizing that the nation would not accept Him as their Messiah, He began to prepare His disciples for the catastrophic events to come. While not neglecting the multitudes, He began to focus more and more attention on the training of the Twelve.

Read the article "The Postponement of the Kingdom of Heaven" (at the end of this lesson).

When the kingdom was rejected, Jesus said that the offer was being withdrawn from that generation of Jews and would be given to "a nation" producing fruit (Mt 21:43; Mic 4:6-9; Rom 11:25-32; Zech 2:9). The reference is not to the giving of the kingdom to the Gentiles, rather it refers to the giving of the kingdom to the future nation of Israel in which the nation has looked upon Him whom they pierced (Zech 12:10), that is, believed on Christ as their Messiah.

Israel was often referred to as God's nation in the Old Testament (Deut 4:6-7; Isa 51:4). Throughout the Old Testament it is predicted that in the last days a believing remnant of the nation will inherit the promises (Isa 2:1-5; 11:1-12; 65:17-25; Jer 30:1-10; 31:1-14, 31-34; Ezek 36:24-37; 37:21-28; Hos 2:16-20; 14:4-8; Joel 3:17-21; Amos 9:11-15; Mic 4:1-5; Zech 8:1-23; 14:1-20). In view of this, many conclude that the current nation of Israel is in no way an

illustration of these prophetic fulfillments because today's state of Israel is an unbelieving nation. Paul states that one day God will "take away their sins," and "all Israel will be saved" (Rom 11:26-27).

However, none of this was clear to the disciples or to the nation of Israel in general. The question loomed large, "If Jesus is truly the Messiah, why did the nation reject Him?" The disciples were searching for an answer to that question. Furthermore, the early church needed an answer in order to respond to the anti-Christian argument from the Jews.

That answer is found in parables contained in Matthew 13.

The Mystery Form of the Kingdom

September, AD 30

When you have completed this topic, you will be able to explain the kingdom program for the period between the first and second advent (inter-advent) age in view of the national rejection of Christ as the Messiah.

The Scriptures related to these topics are Matthew 13-1-52; Mark 4:1-34; Luke 8:4b-15.

The parables in Matthew 13 are, in some cases, difficult to understand; consequently, various interpretations have been suggested. In the study to follow, we will recommend what we believe to be a likely interpretation of each parable, but it is impossible to be dogmatic.

It is not possible to understand the parables of Matthew 13 without some understanding of the identity of the kingdom of heaven.

The Parables of Matthew 13

September, AD 30

Read the article at the end of this lesson entitled "Parables of Matthew 13" before you answer the following questions.



The famous parable of the sower in which Jesus explained that the reason for the rejection of His offer of the kingdom of heaven lay in the heart conditions of those to whom it was being offered.

QUESTION 17

Based upon the article “Parables of Matthew 13,” it is likely that the first three soils represent non-Christians (Mt 13:1-23). *True or False?*

QUESTION 18

Based upon the article “Parables of Matthew 13” which of the four possible definitions of “fruit” seems to be the most likely (Mt 13:22)?

- A. Fruit is obedient discipleship.
- B. Fruit is Christian character.
- C. Fruit is new Christians.
- D. Fruit is multiplying proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom.

Explaining the Parables

September, AD 30

QUESTION 19

Review the article on the “Parables of Matthew 13”, and then answer the following question.

Match the name of the parable on the left with its possible explanation on the right.

<i>Name of Parable</i>	<i>Possible Explanation</i>
Parable of the Soils	As the professing church expands, an evil within will grow, leading to a final apostasy.
Parable of the Wheat and the Tares	The reason for the rejection of the kingdom offer is simply that there are differing levels of receptivity to truth.
Parable of the Mustard Seed	During the inter-advent age, God will raise up a group of Christian teachers who will take the message of the kingdom to the whole world and will carefully balance Old Testament teaching with that of the New.
Parable of the Leaven	The message of the kingdom will be taken worldwide, far beyond the nation of Israel, and there will be believers and unbelievers “in” the mystery form of the kingdom.
Parable of the Hidden Treasure	Those who claim to be heirs of the kingdom will grow large in numbers.
Parable of the Costly Pearl	Some will discover, almost by accident, that the key to a full and meaningful life is in hearing Christ say, “Well done!”
Parable of the Householder	True seekers of the meaning of life will eventually find it in the act of total abandonment to Christ.

QUESTION 20

Reread the article “Postponement of the Kingdom of Heaven.” When Jesus says that He will teach the “mysteries” of the kingdom of heaven, He means that: *(Select all that apply.)*

- A. He will explain some mysterious things.
- B. He will introduce a mystery form of the kingdom not known in the Old Testament.
- C. He will explain things about the future kingdom of heaven which were unknown in the Old Testament.
- D. He will explain things which formerly were only understood by the Jews.
- E. He teaches that the essential nature of the kingdom He offered was different from the one expected by His contemporaries.

QUESTION 21

In light of the parables of the hidden treasure and the costly pearl, it is worth pausing to reflect on your own life and choices. Open your Life Notebook and answer these questions: What has your commitment to Christ cost you? Has your commitment made a significant difference in your lifestyle, your decisions, or the way you use your money? What would you sell in order to gain “treasure in heaven”?

This concludes a major section of the life of Christ. The rejection by the leaders of Israel and the subsequent postponement of the kingdom of heaven was a turning point in Jesus’ ministry. It became evident to our Lord that His offer of the kingdom and ministry to the nation would be rejected, and He adapted His ministry accordingly. He explained the reasons for the rejection and the nature of the universal kingdom of God during the inter-advent (time between the first and second advent) age during which the messianic kingdom of heaven, the restoration of the Davidic theocracy (Acts 1:6; 3:19-21), is postponed. A mystery form of the kingdom not revealed in the Old Testament was introduced in Matthew 13. This mystery form refers either to the church, or, perhaps, more likely, to Christendom. After this He appeared to shift focus in His ministry. For the next several years He spent less and less time with the multitudes and began special instruction of the twelve apostles. After this Matthew never again records that Jesus said the kingdom of heaven is “near” or “at hand.” It was to these humble, ordinary men that the King would entrust His life’s work and the destiny of the world.

Topic 7: Matching Events

QUESTION 22:

To help you memorize these events, we have compiled a list of sixty-one important events in the life of Christ. Take a moment and review events 4, 8, 11, 12, 17, and 22-24. You will find them in the article “Matching Events” at the back of this course. Hold your hand over the event descriptions on the left and see if you can identify the associated Scriptures on the right.

Topic 8: Knowing, Being, Doing

QUESTION 23: KNOWING

Open your Life Notebook and list five things that this lesson has taught you about the nature of God as demonstrated in the life of Christ.

QUESTION 24: BEING

One of the major character traits of Christ revealed in this lesson is His mercy and compassion. Open your Life Notebook and summarize the ways in which you have demonstrated mercy or compassion within the past week. What, upon reflection, would you have done differently?

QUESTION 25: DOING

Open your Life Notebook and describe one person you know who is in need of mercy and compassion. Then write out a way in which you could demonstrate mercy, compassion, or encouragement to that person. Next, act on what you wrote. Come back later to record what you did, how the person responded, and your feelings about your actions and his/her reactions.

Lesson 7: Self Check

QUESTION 1

What do we learn about the nature of faith from the episode about the Roman Centurion? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Whenever we exercise faith, we always get results.
- B. “Great faith” is simple trust that Jesus is able to do whatever He wills.
- C. Just as it was not necessary for Jesus to be physically present with the servant, He does not need to be physically present with us to accomplish His will.
- D. True faith involves humility before God.
- E. True faith recognizes that God is so majestic that apart from His grace, He would be unapproachable.

QUESTION 2

What is this sin called the “blasphemy of the Holy Spirit”?

- A. Rejection of Christ
- B. Disbelief in the Holy Spirit
- C. A disobedient life manifested by not following Christ
- D. Assigning the authenticating miracles done through Christ by the Holy Spirit to the power of Satan

QUESTION 3

Based upon the article on the “Parables of Matthew 13” which of the four possible definitions of “fruit” seems to be the most likely (Mt 13:22)?

- A. Fruit is obedient discipleship.
- B. Fruit is Christian character.
- C. Fruit is new Christians.
- D. Fruit is multiplying proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom.

QUESTION 4

When Jesus says that He will teach the “mysteries” of the kingdom of heaven, He means that:
(*Select all that apply.*)

- A. He will explain some mysterious things.
- B. He will introduce a mystery form of the kingdom not known in the Old Testament.
- C. He will explain things about the future kingdom of heaven which were unknown in the Old Testament.
- D. He will explain things which formerly were only understood by the Jews.
- E. He teaches that the essential nature of the kingdom He offered was different from the one expected by His contemporaries.

QUESTION 5

John had announced Jesus as the coming one, Luke 3:15-17. What John announced about the Christ and what was actually happening in Jesus’ ministry were exactly the same. *True or False?*

QUESTION 6

What would have happened if Israel had accepted Jesus’ offer of the kingdom?

- A. The leadership of the nation would have been converted.
- B. It would have suggested that God was waiting to find out what was going to happen.
- C. A spiritual kingdom in the hearts of men would have been established.
- D. Jesus would still have gone to the cross for the forgiveness of sins and upon His resurrection would have established the predicted kingdom.

QUESTION 7

When Jesus told the outcast woman that her sins were forgiven:

- A. He was making a claim to be God.
- B. He was acknowledging that as a Rabbi, He had authority to do such things.
- C. As a typical teaching rabbi, He was conferring blessing upon her.
- D. He was acknowledging her recognition of Him as the Rabbi.

QUESTION 8

When Jesus said that a person who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than John the Baptist, He probably meant:

- A. The person who was least was the person who was most humble and therefore the most humble is the greatest.
- B. The privileges of Jesus disciples in the kingdom will be greater than those shared by anyone on earth.
- C. John the Baptist was of the age of the law and the prophets and as such never did participate in personal fellowship with the Messiah.
- D. So glorious is the new reality of the coming kingdom that the greatest of the preceding era is least in the new order of the kingdom.

QUESTION 9

The interpretation of the parable of the costly pearl given in this lesson suggests that:

- A. It refers to an unbeliever who seeks and finds eternal life.
- B. The kingdom of heaven will be made up of people who seek and those who do not.
- C. It refers to a believer who has lost and hidden his salvation and then found it again.
- D. It refers to a believer who seeks and finds the true meaning of life.

QUESTION 10

A possible explanation of the parable of the leaven as presented in this lesson is that the professing church will grow during this age, but evil within it will expand, leading to final apostasy. *True or False?*

Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1:

He marveled at the implicit trust in the power of Christ's word, that He could speak from afar, and it would be accomplished.

QUESTION 2:

B. "Great faith" is simple trust that Jesus is able to do whatever He wills.

C. Just as it was not necessary for Jesus to be physically present with the servant, He does not need to be physically present with us to accomplish His will.

D. True faith involves humility before God.

E. True faith recognizes that God is so majestic that apart from His grace, He would be unapproachable.

QUESTION 3:

A. His compassion.

B. His power over death.

C. His ability to bring praise to God.

D. His stature as a prophet and His much deserved fame among the people.

E. His love and mercy is demonstrated before the needy person even asks.

QUESTION 4: False

QUESTION 5: *Your answer*

QUESTION 6:

Jesus pointed John to the Scriptures (Isa 35:5; 61:1) that corresponded with His actions. We can do the same. Our faith should rest upon the character of Christ as revealed in Scripture, and not in the evidence around us that everything is going well.

QUESTION 7:

Malachi 3:1-2 announced that judgment was close at hand. By quoting this passage and applying it to John, Jesus directly claimed to be the predicted Messiah.

QUESTION 8:

E. "Thus from a human point of view no one greater than John has ever been born, i.e., no one of the old order supersedes John in importance. In effect, so glorious is the new reality dawning through the ministry of Jesus that the greatest of the era preceding him is yet inferior to the least in the new order of the Kingdom. The era of present fulfillment overshadows the era of promise by so much" (Hagner, D. A. (1998). *Vol. 33A: Word Biblical Commentary: Matthew 1-13*).

QUESTION 9:

B. Simon and the woman welcomed Jesus with a kiss.

QUESTION 10:

A. Those who have been forgiven much tend to love more.

QUESTION 11: True

QUESTION 12:

(1.) If Jesus was doing this by the power of Satan, then Satan would be working against himself.

(2.) Since the Pharisees believed that the power to cast out demons comes from God, they should not charge Him with being demon-possessed when He drove out demons.

(3.) A robber cannot enter a citadel unless he has power to subdue the guard. The point is that if Christ can enter Satan's stronghold and deliver people from his control, then it is evident that He is stronger than Satan. Satan could not give Christ power greater than what he himself possessed.

QUESTION 13:

D. Assigning the authenticating miracles done through Christ by the Holy Spirit to the power of Satan.

QUESTION 14: False

QUESTION 15: The Pharisees. It was the leaders of the nation who blasphemed the Holy Spirit.

QUESTION 16:

B. A national sin of the leaders of Israel in rejecting the offer of the kingdom of heaven made by the Messiah.

QUESTION 17: False

QUESTION 18: D. Fruit is multiplying proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom.

QUESTION 19:

<i>Name of Parable</i>	<i>Possible Explanation</i>
Parable of the Soils	The reason for the rejection of the kingdom offer is simply that there are differing levels of receptivity to truth.
Parable of the Wheat and the Tares	The message of the kingdom will be taken worldwide, far beyond the nation of Israel, and there will be believers and unbelievers “in” the mystery form of the kingdom.
Parable of the Mustard Seed	Those who claim to be heirs of the kingdom will grow large in numbers.
Parable of the Leaven	As the professing church expands, an evil within will grow, leading to a final apostasy.
Parable of the Hidden Treasure	Some will discover, almost by accident, that the key to a full and meaningful life is in hearing Christ say, “Well done!”
Parable of the Costly Pearl	True seekers of the meaning of life will eventually find it in the act of total abandonment to Christ.
Parable of the Householder	During the inter-advent age, God will raise up a group of Christian teachers who will take the message of the kingdom to the whole world and will carefully balance Old Testament teaching with that of the New.

QUESTION 20:

B. He will introduce a mystery form of the kingdom not known in the Old Testament.

C. He will explain things about the future kingdom of heaven which were unknown in the Old Testament.

QUESTION 21: *Your answer*

QUESTION 22: *Your answer*

QUESTION 23: *Your answer*

QUESTION 24: *Your answer*

QUESTION 25: *Your answer*

Lesson 7 Self Check Answers:

QUESTION 1:

- B. "Great faith" is simple trust that Jesus is able to do whatever He wills.
- C. Just as it was not necessary for Jesus to be physically present with the servant, He does not need to be physically present with us to accomplish His will.
- D. True faith involves humility before God.
- E. True faith recognizes that God is so majestic that apart from His grace, He would be unapproachable.

QUESTION 2:

- D. Assigning the authenticating miracles done through Christ by the Holy Spirit to the power of Satan.

QUESTION 3:

- D. Fruit is multiplying proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom.

QUESTION 4:

- B. He will introduce a mystery form of the kingdom not known in the Old Testament.
- C. He will explain things about the future kingdom of heaven which were unknown in the Old Testament.

QUESTION 5: False

QUESTION 6:

- D. Jesus would still have gone to the cross for the forgiveness of sins and upon His resurrection would have established the predicted kingdom.

QUESTION 7: A. He was making a claim to be God.

QUESTION 8: B. The privileges of Jesus disciples in the kingdom will be greater than those shared by anyone on earth.

QUESTION 9: D. It refers to a believer who seeks and finds the true meaning of life.

QUESTION 10: True

Lesson 7 Notes

Kingdom of Heaven

The kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven are synonymous in the opinion of a majority of New Testament scholars. This is evident from the fact that in one gospel the author will call the kingdom, the “kingdom of God,” and in a passage precisely parallel in Matthew’s gospel it will be called the “kingdom of heaven.”

The kingdom of heaven in the Old Testament was both a spiritual and a material kingdom. One thing which will characterize kingdom life is that the miraculous will be commonplace. In that kingdom the wolf will dwell with the lamb; the nursing child will play by the hole of the cobra; the cow and bear will graze together (see Isa 11:6-9); the ears of the deaf will be unstopped; the lame will leap like deer; the eyes of the blind will be opened (Isa 35:5-6); longevity will be restored, and men will live much longer than a hundred years (Isa 65:20); and the plowman will overtake the reaper, that is, the land will be so fruitful that those reaping the harvest will be immediately followed by those planting the next harvest (Amos 9:13). The future kingdom will usher in a time in which the miraculous will be the norm and not the exception.

In the ministry of Christ and the apostles, the eschatological (dealing with last things: the end times) kingdom of God was coming “upon” them; it was breaking in. Had Israel accepted the kingdom of God, it would have been established. However, they did not accept it; therefore, the miracles associated with life in the kingdom are not yet manifest in the current era. This does not mean that God does not work miracles today, but that there is something radically different between first century and future kingdom of heaven miracles, and the extraordinary instances of miracles in our present age. This helps to explain the perplexing observation that the miracles and signs of the first century are not as common today as they were during the ministry of Christ and His apostles. It is not so much that the miracles of the first century have passed from the church; rather, it is that they have not yet begun. This clear teaching of the miraculous nature of the future kingdom is consistent with the statement made by the writer to the Hebrews where he refers to the powers of the “coming age” (Heb 6:5). Consistent with scores of Old Testament Scriptures, the miraculous powers are powers of the “coming age,” i.e., the future kingdom, and not the current inter-advent era.

Nain

The village of Nain was undoubtedly well-known to Jesus. It was only about nine miles (fourteen km) from Nazareth. The way from Capernaum to Nain was long, about twenty-five miles (forty km). But, even if it was all taken on foot, there could be no difficulty in reaching Nain before evening when funerals normally took place.¹

Recent archaeological digs have uncovered what is believed to be a circular wall around the city. Such a wall would have required a gate as was mentioned in Luke 7:11.

¹ A. Edersheim. (1896, 2003). *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (Vol. 1, Page 552). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

Lesson 7 Articles

Parables of Matthew 13

The Parable of the Soils (Mt 13:3-9)

Often called the parable of the sower, this parable is better called the parable of the soils. In it Jesus refers to four kinds of soil. These four kinds of soil represent four different responses to the kingdom offer.

In Matthew 12, Jesus and His kingdom offer have been rejected, the natural question arises: How can Jesus be the true Messiah? Christ's first answer is that there are always four kinds of responses to biblical truth.

The parable of the soils was given to the multitude (Mt 13:3-9) but was interpreted only for the disciples (Mt 13:18-23). In this parable, unlike the others, the kingdom of God is not likened to anything. This suggests that this parable reveals no new "mysteries," no truths not known in the Old Testament.

The four soils represent four kinds of response to the seed. The seed is the "word of the kingdom" being preached by Christ (Mt 13:18). The first soil, the soil by the "wayside" refers to people in whom the seed never took any root and never grew, to non-believers. This perfectly describes the Jewish leaders who blasphemed the Holy Spirit in the preceding chapter. The last three soils, however, all seem to refer to true believers each of whom produces varying amounts of fruit.

The second soil is described as "rocky places." This does not refer to soil mixed with rocks, but to a thin layer of soil with a rock-hard layer underneath, which no root can penetrate. Yet the evil one, Satan, does not take the seed away. In fact, they receive the word with "joy," a common expression for believing acceptance of the gospel resulting in salvation (1 Thess 1:6). They not only received the word with joy but roots form and life emerges. These things indicate that the individual described is a true believer. However, due to persecutions (Mt 13:21), his initial joy fades and he produces no fruit. He is like the believer in 1 Corinthians 3:15 who is saved but "as through fire." Both of these individuals enter eternity with no reward because there has been no fruit.

The individual pictured in the third soil is likewise a true believer. He also becomes unfruitful but his problem is the "worry of the world" and the "deceitfulness of riches" (Mt 13:22). Illustrations of such carnal Christians as those represented by the second and third soil would be the rulers who believed in Him but because of their fear of the Pharisees, they would not publicly confess Him (Jn 12:42-43) because they loved the approval of men more than the approval of God. Only the fourth individual represented by the "good" soil produces "fruit." He hears and understands and "brings forth" fruit, some one hundredfold, some sixtyfold and some tenfold.

A final question remains. "To what did Christ refer by the word 'fruit'?" As is the case in almost every one of these parables, many different answers have been given.

Obedient discipleship. Some view "fruit" as personal character or holiness similar to the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22. This is certainly possible but there is nothing in the context or in Matthew's gospel to suggest this meaning.

New Christians. Others have suggested that the fruit in view is new Christians. The faithful disciple shares his faith with many and as a result sees others come to Christ. While this is very attractive and makes good sense, there is no instance in the New Testament where new Christians are described as “fruit.”

Greater Understanding. A third option is to view the fruit as greater understanding of kingdom truths. This fits well with the purpose of parables (Mt 13:10-17) and with the emphasis upon understanding in Matthew 13:19, 23. The fruit in this view is a fuller comprehension of the kingdom. Because of the proverb, “seed produces seed,” it is also argued that the word of the kingdom received in the heart would yield more revelation and understanding, i.e., “fruit.” However, the seed here is the word of the kingdom and not the understanding of it so the proverb is not precise.

Greater proclamation. A final suggestion is that the fruit refers to the spread of the teaching of the kingdom through the lives of obedient disciples who understand its meaning. In favor of this view is the fact that “seed produces seed.” The seed is the teaching of Christ, and therefore the fruit would be hundredfold multiplication of that teaching through the life of the fruitful disciple. This would also be consistent with the other instance in Matthew where the word “fruit” is used of the teaching and doctrine of the false teachers. Their “fruit” refers to what they say (Mt 12:34) and is subject to the judgment on every “careless word” (Mt 12:36-37). Finally this view is consistent with the parable that closes the chapter, the parable of the householder. In this parable, the new Christian scribes and teachers of the Word are said to go into the storehouse and “bring forth” new and old teaching, balancing them carefully and explaining them clearly. While the underlying Greek word is different, the disciple represented by the good soil similarly “brings forth” enhanced and expanded multiplication of the kingdom message.

The Parable of the Wheat and the Tares (Mt 13:24-33)

This parable was given to the crowds but explained to the disciples privately (Mt 13:36-43). Jesus says the kingdom of heaven may be “compared” to a man who sowed good seed in his field. This does not mean that the kingdom of heaven is symbolized by the man, the mustard seed, the leaven, or any other single object in the parables. His expression simply introduces a narrative which represents a truth relative to the kingdom.

Three new truths are introduced by this parable. First, in the new age (the current one) the “sons of the kingdom” (true believers) will be spread out to the whole world. The field is the world and the sons of the kingdom are the seed (Mt 13:38). This notion of sending the sons of the kingdom to the world rather than to the Jews only (as in Mt 10:5-6; 15: 28) is a new truth unrevealed in the Old Testament but announced here and confirmed in the Great Commission (Mt 28:19-20).

The second mystery made known is that good and evil will coexist in this new age while the kingdom has been postponed (Mt 13:30). Furthermore, this evil will exist until the kingdom is established (Mt 13:39-43). That there would be a time period between the announcement of the kingdom and its final establishment in which evil men existed along side of the sons of the kingdom was not known in the Old Testament. If the “mystery form” of the kingdom refers to the church, then the tares “in the kingdom” would have to be interpreted to mean that they are only “in” the kingdom in the sense that they participate in kingdom activities along with those who are truly in the kingdom. If the mystery form of the kingdom is Christendom, then no special interpretation of this phrase is necessary. Christendom is composed of both true believers and professing believers who are not really saved.

The Parable of the Mustard Seed (Mt 13:31-32)

This parable teaches two things about the spread of the kingdom message and its reception in the age preceding the establishment of the kingdom. The first truth is that though the kingdom message has a small beginning, it will spread to become a tree. A mustard seed was proverbial for the smallest seed and yet it would expand into a huge tree. The message of the coming kingdom will be spread throughout the entire world. The fulfillment of the parable is found in Matthew 24:14, (KJV):

“And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.”

A second truth is the prosperous growth in the numbers of the heirs of the kingdom in the sight of men. The detail about the birds resting in the branches is often a symbol of prosperity (Dan 4:12, 21; Ezk 17:23, 31; Ps 104:12). This parable may suggest that the church will increase in numbers and influence and become quite large, which has surely happened.

The Parable of the Leaven and the Meal (Mt 13:33)

Although this parable consists of only nineteen words in the Greek text, many thousands of words have been written in an attempt to explain it. The key issue for interpretation is the meaning of the word “leaven.” While some have argued that is used in a good sense in this particular parable, it is hard to justify this from biblical usage. The leaven is not a picture of the spread of the gospel throughout the earth. Rather it refers to the growth of evil within the group professing to be reborn in the present age.

In the Old Testament rituals of the “the Feast of Unleavened Bread” and the Passover (Ex 23:15), leaven was prohibited (see especially Ex 12:34-39; 13:3; Ex 23:18; 34:25; Deut 16:3). The reason for the prohibition is that fermentation implied a process of corruption. Plutarch voices this ancient view of the matter when he speaks of leaven as “itself the offspring of corruption, and corrupting the mass of dough with which it is mixed.” For this reason it was excluded also from the offerings placed upon the altar of Yahweh, cakes made from flour without leaven, and these only, being allowed. Rabbinical writers regularly use leaven as a symbol of evil. In Scripture, leaven invariably pictures sin (Lev 2:11; Mt 16:12; Mk 8:15; Lk 12:1; 1 Cor 5:6-8; Gal 5:9).

The use of the word “to hide” in Matthew 13:33 also suggest something sinister and not something good. The way the woman hides the leaven in the meal parallels the manner in which Satan sowed the tares among the wheat at night.

What then does the parable teach? The central thought is that during the period in which the kingdom of heaven has been postponed (the current age), evil will run its course and will dominate the age. In particular, evil will become more and more pronounced among those who profess to be the heirs of the kingdom. The Scriptures teach in many places that the professing church in the last days will slide into apostasy, denying the Lord (1 Tim 4:1; 2 Tim 3:1-5; 2 Thess 2:3; 2 Pet 3:3-4). The parable teaches that when the meal is all leavened, then the kingdom of heaven will come.

If the parable of the mustard seed tells what the kingdom program in this age appears to be in the eyes of men, the parable of the leaven tells us what it is in the eyes of God.

The Hidden Treasure (Mt 13:44)

This parable and the one to follow are very difficult to interpret and many suggestions have been made. We understand the “man” in this parable to be a true believer. Based upon Matthew 19:21, we might be justified in interpreting the “treasure” as our treasure in heaven, our rewards.

Jesus said to him, “If you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.”

Often in the Gospels Jesus made radical calls for discipleship similar to this (Mt 6:24; 8:18-22; 10:37-39). The details of the parable should not be pressed. When we are told that the man “found” the treasure and “hid” it we understand only that one hides that which is very valuable. The hiding of the treasure, then, speaks of its great value. What then does it mean to “find” the treasure? If the parallel with Matthew 19:21 is correct, then to find this treasure is to discover the great joy that awaits those who are willing to renounce all for the sake of Christ. It refers to the joy of Christ and His companions as they reign together in the promised kingdom of heaven. To put it in different words, finding the treasure refers to the joy one has when he has discovered the final meaning of life and knows that he now lives to be faithful to his King, hoping to hear Him say, “Well done!”

The Costly Pearl (Mt 13:45)

The point of this parable is similar to the preceding one. The difference is that in this case it was the believer’s “business” to search for the pearl whereas in the preceding parable the peasant stumbled upon the treasure accidentally. Assuming that the pearl in this parable is the same as the treasure in the preceding, we see a man searching for true meaning in life. He looks at many “pearls” but when he finds the “one” true one, he experiences great joy. He discovers that the final meaning of life is found when one lives to please His King and, as a result, obtain treasure in heaven. This man is a spiritual seeker while the one in the parable of the hidden treasure seems, initially, not to be a seeker but stumbles on the glories of the treasures in heaven by accident. Christ is reaching out to both kinds of people, those initially indifferent and those who are spiritual seekers. Both will be evident throughout the current age.

Once again, the man gives up everything to obtain ownership of the pearl, “treasure in heaven.” Sometimes Christ calls his disciples to sell everything (Mt 19:21). If we are to reign in the coming Kingdom, i.e., “own” or “possess” it, we must be willing to do the same.

It is possible that both of these parables qualify the conclusion of Matthew 13:43 where Christ says that the righteous will “shine forth as the sun.” In these two parables He is making it clear that only those among the righteous who heed the call to discipleship, the invisible church or kingdom in mystery form, who are willing to abandon all to follow Him will in fact shine and be the owners and rulers of the future kingdom.

This theme of rewards and differing positions of rule in the kingdom was unknown in the Old Testament but is taught widely in the New. It was a “mystery,” an unrevealed thing about the kingdom of heaven (Lk 19:17-19; Mt 25:14-30; 19:28-30; 2 Tim 2:11-13; Rev 2:25-29; 2 Cor 5:10).

The Parable of the Dragnet (Mt 13:47-50)

This parable teaches a similar lesson to the parable of the Wheat and the Tares. The difference from the parable of the Wheat and the Tares seems to be the new truth that the kingdom will consist of “fish of every kind.” The blessings of the Messianic age will extend to all peoples, every ethnic group, both Jew and Gentile. But during the inter-advent age (the period of time between the first and second Coming of Jesus Christ), among these fish of every kind, there will be both the righteous and the wicked. It may be that this refers to what we might generally call “Christendom,” the sphere of those who profess to believe in Christ. Within this group some are truly saved and others are not. At the end of the age Christ will send His angels to separate the wicked from the righteous and only the righteous will be invited to enter the eschatological kingdom of heaven. The destiny of the wicked is eternal fire. This separation will occur when Jesus Christ returns to establish His kingdom (Mt 25:30). This was an unrevealed thing in the Old Testament, a “mystery” of the kingdom of heaven. Nowhere in the Old Testament is it said that all peoples of every kind would be heirs of the kingdom or that between the time of the offer of the kingdom by Messiah, and its final establishment there would be an inter-advent age in which the kingdom is postponed and in which those who claim to be its followers would actually be a mixed group of saved and unsaved people. Of course, if the mystery form refers to the church, then a problem of interpretation develops. This may be a reason to suggest that by mystery form of the kingdom, Jesus was referring to Christendom.

The Parable of the Householder (Mt 13:51-52)

Having finished His presentation of the parables of the kingdom, Jesus concludes with an analogy, which, technically, is not a parable. He asks, “Have you understood all these things?” (Mt 13:51). He wants to know if they understand the content of the whole discourse he has just completed. Earlier He had referred to the issue of “understanding” (Mt 13:10-17, 19, 23). He then says because of the complicated nature of these parables and the understanding of the disciples, there will be a new kind of scribe in the inter-advent age.

The scribe in Judaism was a scholar-teacher of the Torah. The new kind of scribe is a disciple of the kingdom of heaven. He lives for the coming kingdom and orders his life around it. Jesus seems to have in mind the Twelve who are likened to a householder who brings out of the storehouse things new and old. They must understand and teach the truths of the Old Testament as well as the new truths of the kingdom not revealed there in the parables. If they are to bring accurate understanding to their hearers, they must not throw out the Old, but bring them both together with perceptive understanding in order to apply the message of the gospel in the new age. The “new” things presuppose and are loyal to the “old” things (Mt 5:17-19). If we are to be true Christian scribes, we must teach and represent a Christianity encompassing both the Old and New Testaments.

The Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit

The definition of the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit has been a subject of much controversy. A common view is that this refers to the rejection of the gospel offer made by Christ and revealed to the person's heart by the Holy Spirit. For this reason a person is condemned. There is no forgiveness for one who rejects the One through whom forgiveness is offered! It refers to a highhanded and permanent rejection of His identity as Messiah and Savior. One problem with this view is that there is no mention of the gospel (the death and resurrection of Christ) in Matthew 12, nor is there any mention of the Holy Spirit revealing the truthfulness of the gospel offer. The work of the Holy Spirit here is external and refers to miracles. The focus is the kingdom of God (the restored Davidic theocracy, Acts 1:6), not the gospel. The miracles of Christ are to confirm, in this passage, that the kingdom of God has come upon them, it is "breaking in." Furthermore to say that the eternal sin is rejection of the gospel offer seems like a rather trite observation. It amounts to saying that anyone who rejects God's forgiveness will not be forgiven, which seems redundant and something any Pharisee knew well from the Old Testament.

Another view, limits this sin to the leaders of the nation in the first century. It is understandable, it is argued, that the human Jesus could not be fully comprehended because His humanity veiled His deity. However, the works of the Holy Spirit are not veiled and the Jewish leaders are deserving blame because of this. The blasphemy of the Holy Spirit in this view is the sin of the Pharisees ascribing the works of the Spirit done through Christ to Satan and nothing else. It has nothing to do with rejecting the gospel offer. The sin cannot be committed today because it requires the presence of Jesus upon the earth. (see *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, Victor Books). This view seems quite believable. However, it does not include the particular purpose for the works of the Holy Spirit through Christ, i.e., to demonstrate that the kingdom of God has come upon them. The blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is somehow related not only to ascribing to Him the works of Satan, but specifically rejecting what the works testify to, the evidence that the kingdom of God is near and upon them.

We prefer a third view. Many have argued that the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is the sin of the leaders of Israel rejecting the authenticating work of the Holy Spirit through Christ proving that His offer of the kingdom is valid, and that He is indeed the Messianic king promised in the Old Testament. In other words, it is the national rejection of Christ and His offer of the kingdom to Israel. When Jesus said, "But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come on you," He is specifically connecting the authenticating work of the Holy Spirit with His offer of the Kingdom. As discussed above, a main characteristic of the kingdom was its miraculous nature. It was breaking in, coming upon the people as evidenced by the miracles. To reject that testimony, was to reject the King and His offer. (J. Dwight Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), pp. 206–08).

If either the second or third interpretation above is correct, the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit could only be committed while Christ was personally present on earth. This was a sin which only the representative leaders of the nation of Israel could commit when they were being given evidence of the legitimacy of Christ's offer of the kingdom of heaven by means of the miraculous works of the Holy Spirit. Since those essential circumstances do not exist today, this same sin simply cannot be committed today.

The Postponement of the Kingdom of Heaven

In the teaching of Christ we find two seemingly contradictory strains of instruction regarding the kingdom of heaven. On the one hand there are many passages suggesting that the kingdom of heaven is “at hand” (e.g., Mt 1:15) and others saying it is future (e.g., Mt 19:28). Traditionally this has been reconciled in one of three ways. Amillennialists like Louis Berkhof (*Systematic Theology*) and O. T. Allis (*Prophecy and the Church*) spiritualize the future aspects of the kingdom and reinterpret them as a spiritual kingdom in the heart. Some premillennialists such as, George Ladd (*The Presence of the Future*) argue that the “at hand” passages refer to the inauguration of the kingdom in a spiritual sense but do not exhaust the predictions of a full consummation in the future in its literal Old Testament form. There are indeed passages in the New Testament which do speak of the kingdom as an experience into which the believer can enter (Lk 17:21).

In response to the first view, we prefer to take all Scripture in its normal or plain sense. When one does this, it is universally acknowledged, even by Allis and Berkhof, that Jesus spoke of a literal physical kingdom on earth.

The difficulty with the second view is that it requires two different definitions of the kingdom: (1) a present one which is spiritual in the heart, and (2) a future one which refers to the restoration of the Davidic theocracy. Also in view of the human race’s continuous slide into corruption for the past two thousand years, it is difficult to see how Christ can be regarded as reigning over a kingdom in the Old Testament sense.

The third possibility is that the references to the kingdom being “at hand” should be understood in the sense of contingency. In this view the kingdom of heaven might be called the predicted eschatological kingdom. The eschatological kingdom was “at hand,” and would have been established, if the Jewish nation accepted the offer. But they did not. As a result, Jesus introduced the idea of a mystery form of that kingdom in Matthew 13. The future kingdom exists today in this mystery form but the predicted eschatological form of the kingdom of heaven now has been postponed until the Second Advent.

This differs somewhat from the views of George Ladd. In this view the kingdom of heaven was not established at the first Advent. Rather a “mystery form” of that kingdom was established.

This view has extensive support in the four Gospels. For example, Jesus plainly said to Israel “The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof” (Mt 21:43, KJV). The Greek word translated nation (*ethnos*) can mean nation, race, or people. What is that nation? When the word is plural, it means “Gentiles.” However it is singular here and normally means either Israel or another nation. It cannot mean another nation because that would contradict the solemn promises in the Old Testament that the kingdom was to be given to the house of David; and it is specifically said that even if his descendants are disobedient, God would still establish his covenant with the house of David and not with the Gentiles (Ps 89:28-37; Lk 1:26-27). The covenant rights of Israel are irrevocable (Jer 33:24-26; Rom 9:3-5). The difference between the two nations is not political or racial; it is moral. The kingdom was being taken from the nation of Christ’s generation and given to the believing remnant of the last days. That is the “nation” which will bear fruit and to which the promises are made (Rom 11:25-27).

The idea of the postponement of the kingdom is seen in many of the parables. For example in the parable of the Ten Minas in Luke 19:11-28 the people thought the kingdom was going to appear “at once.” In this parable, Jesus explains that it will be postponed (Lk 19:14-15). The same idea is presented in the parable of the wedding banquet (Mt 22:1-14).

Lesson 8: Confirmation to the Twelve

Lesson Introduction

In the five months between October, AD 30, and March, AD 31, the disciples witnessed some of the most astounding manifestations of divine power in the Lord's ministry. Jesus performed one mighty deed after another. While we cannot be sure, it would appear that the reason for this rapid explosion of miracles was Christ's desire to bring assurance to His disciples. Because Jesus had been rejected by the nation of Israel as their likely Messiah, it must have occurred to the disciples that they were mistaken too. Therefore, Jesus had to make sure that His intimate followers were absolutely convinced of His deity and messianic role. Christ would be asking them to give their lives to and for Him, and they needed a strong foundation of faith to sustain them.

In Topic 1 we see a great demonstration of God's power over nature as Jesus calms the storm. In the evening after Jesus taught the disciples the parables of the kingdom, He invited them to leave the crowds behind and sail to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. When a violent storm threatened to swamp the boat, Jesus rebuked the winds; calm returned to the sea and to the hearts of the disciples.

We look at Jesus' power over evil in Topic 2, as He is able to conquer demons. As soon as they set foot on the other side of the lake near Gennesaret, the weary band was met with the frightening ravings of a man tortured by demons. Jesus cast out the evil spirits: a profound manifestation of His power over the devil's minions.

In Topic 3 we see the relationship between faith and healing. Chased away from Gennesaret by frightened townspeople, Jesus and His disciples sailed to Capernaum where they found a welcoming crowd. There He demonstrated His power over death and disease by restoring life to a dead girl and healing a woman with a twenty-year history of hemorrhaging.

Continuing the focus on healing, Topic 4 calls our attention to the healing power of Christ. Some time passed and Jesus made His way south, yet "up" to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles with His disciples. There Christ healed a man that had been crippled for thirty-eight years who was lying near the healing waters of the pool of Bethesda.

In Topic 5 there is a clear emphasis on Jesus being the Son of God. There is no doubt these astonishing miracles could only be performed by the Man who called God His own Father. Jesus drove this point home in an astonishing discourse by appealing to His many powerful deeds as evidence of His claims. Furthermore, He proclaimed that when dead people hear His voice they will move from death to life.

Finally, in Topic 6, we follow Jesus as He makes His final visit to His boyhood home of Nazareth and encounters rejection once again by those of His own town after preaching in the synagogue. Their refusal to believe in Him in the face of all the massive evidence astonished Him just as our unbelief amazes Him today.

Lesson Outline

Topic 1: Calming of the Storm

Topic 2: Conquering Demons

Topic 3: Faith and Healing

Topic 4: Do You Want to Get Well?

Topic 5: From Death to Life

Believe in Me

“I Am the Son of God”

Liar, Lunatic, or Lord?

Topic 6: Refusing to Believe

Topic 7: Matching Events

Topic 8: Knowing, Being, Doing

Lesson Objectives

When you have completed this lesson, you will be able to:

- Conclude that the only valid response to Christ’s teachings is total trust in His absolute sovereignty over all things
- Present Jesus Christ as One who has authority over demons
- Describe how Jesus sometimes waits to answer our prayers in order to bring our faith to a higher level
- Argue that mercy is the true intent of the Old Testament law
- Reiterate how Jesus presented the evidence for His deity
- Support the argument that familiarity will not necessarily lead to belief
- Apply the concepts learned in this lesson to your mind, character, and ministry

Topic 1: The Calming of the Storm

October, AD 30

It had been an eventful and tiring day for Jesus the Messiah. After the scribes from Jerusalem accused Jesus of being demon possessed, His family came to take custody of Him because they thought He was crazy. Next, He spent considerable time preaching to the multitudes and, privately with His disciples, explaining the mysteries of the kingdom of God. Weary beyond words, He suggested to His disciples that they all sail to the other side of the Sea of Galilee in a boat. Soon after their departure, the Lord fell into a deep sleep in the bow of the boat.

As night fell, a severe storm swept across the lake causing the disciples, filled with fear, to rouse Jesus from His sleep. Startled by what followed, they asked, “What kind of a man IS this?” With a word, Jesus demonstrated His power over nature as He stilled the tempest.

The apostle James once said, “But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for *once* he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the *law* of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man shall be blessed in what he does” (Jas 1:22-25, NASB). He says that the man who hears

but does not respond “deludes” himself. What is that delusion? Most often it is when after participation in a stirring sermon or Bible study and emotionally impacted by it, we tend to substitute an emotional response for a conscious decision. Because that sermon “meant a lot me,” was something “I could really identify with,” we deceive ourselves into thinking that our emotional response is action. Like all great teachers of the Word, Jesus faced the same problem with His disciples. How did He solve it? In this topic we will find out. *The object of this topic is to establish that the only valid response to Christ’s teachings is total trust in His absolute sovereignty over all things.*

The Scriptures related to this topic are Matthew 8:18, 23-27; Mark 4:35-41; Luke 8:22-25.

QUESTION 1

Why do you think the disciples waited so long to awaken the Lord? Read Luke 8:22-25.

Storms on the Sea of Galilee often arose swiftly and were horrible in their intensity.

After a day of teaching in parables, Jesus and His disciples crossed the Sea of Galilee toward Gadara (also known as the region of the Gerasenes) near the southeast shore. A violent storm arose providing an excellent lesson in faith for the Twelve.

QUESTION 2

According to Jesus, which of the following explains the disciples’ fear?

- A. Their lack of faith
- B. The waves pouring into the boat
- C. The apparent indifference of Christ
- D. The suddenness with which the storm arose

QUESTION 3

To learn an important principle for Christ’s training of the Twelve, review the parables of Jesus in Mark 4:1-33. After a long exhausting day, instead of ending the “Bible study” with a prayer “in Jesus’ name” and then departing for a good night’s sleep, Jesus suggested, “Let’s cross over to the other side.” After reading Mark 4:35-41, open your Life Notebook to record what you imagine Jesus’ motivation was for setting sail at night when they probably could have waited until the following day. Then reflect upon some specific ways you could have applied this principle to some Bible studies you have taught. Think about the purpose of crossing the Sea and how He ended the “Bible study.”

QUESTION 4

Open your Life Notebook to record the lessons about faith you gleaned from this incident. Consider the apparent indifference of Christ, the danger of the situation, and the disciples’ overpowering fear. Identify at least one troubling situation in your life; then write a brief paragraph summarizing your situation and how you can apply what you have learned from this biblical event.

Topic 2: Conquering Demons

October, AD 30

Finally, after a terrifying night on the lake, the weary band went ashore in the country of the Gerasenes on the southeastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. Rest at last, they must have thought. But instead of peace and quiet, they were met with a storm of even greater intensity than the one through which they had just come. A demon-possessed man accosted them as soon as they landed on the beach. Apparently he had been living in the tombs for many years. His strength was immense, and no one had been strong enough to subdue him. Immediately the disciples were confronted with another question, “Why does this man think Jesus has come to torture him?” Yes, He has power over nature, but does He also have power over the forces of evil?

Even though the apostle Paul makes it clear that our battle is not against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers, we often live like they do not exist. As Jesus walked the face of the earth, all the forces of hell were arrayed against the Son of God! Have you ever faced a demonic manifestation? If not, how would you handle it? In this topic we will learn from the Victor!

Read about “The Geresene Demoniac” in the textbook section (at the end of this course).

The Scriptures related to this topic are Matthew 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-20; Luke 8:26-39.

Imagine the scene which begins in Luke 8:26! Late at night, sometime between midnight and dawn, the little band lands on shore, utterly exhausted. As Jesus got out of the boat, there was a horrible shriek as a madman emerged from his home in the tombs, running furiously toward them. The cave-like rooms cut into the rocks of nearby hills served as tombs and sometimes as haunts for demented people.

QUESTION 5

List four characteristics of demonic activity after reading about this encounter with a man named Legion (see note at end of this lesson).

QUESTION 6

Based upon the example of Christ, if you were confronted with a person whom you believed to be demon possessed, what should you do?

- A. Prepare a lengthy statement about the power of the blood of Christ over demons and tell him/her.
- B. Secure the aid of a person who specializes in cases of demon possession.
- C. Address the demon directly and simply in the name of Jesus Christ and command him to depart from the person.
- D. Acquire a standard exorcism ceremony and implement it.

The “legion” of demons begged Christ not to send them into the abyss, but instead to send them into the herd of pigs (Mt 8:31). When the demons entered the pigs, they stampeded down the hillside and drowned. The townspeople became enraged at Jesus, no doubt, because the pigs were part of their livelihood. The economic loss (not the man’s welfare) was the people’s major concern. As a result, the townspeople asked Jesus to leave; we can only surmise what they feared would happen if He had stayed.

It is discouraging to think that such an incredible miracle produced no faith in their hardened hearts. This is a lesson for us today. Even though today Jesus works miracles through His people, it does not necessarily result in saving faith. Some time ago a minister had a discussion with an atheist who said he believed in the resurrection of Jesus but did not believe in God or that Jesus was divine. He simply stated that even though the resurrection occurred, he had no idea how it happened, and it meant nothing to him. This further illustrates the parable of the soil. The problem is not with the “seed,” the message of the gospel; the problem lies with the kind of “soil” on which it falls. Some hearts are so hard that no amount of evidence will persuade them.

There is no record that Jesus ever returned to that area again. In contrast to the townspeople, the healed demoniac wanted to follow Jesus, but He commanded the man to return home. This man became the first witness for Christ in this area of Palestine.

Topic 3: Faith and Healing

October, AD 30

Upon Jesus’ return to Capernaum, He was met by Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue, or chief elder of the congregation, upon whom the Jews looked with great respect. Jairus came to Jesus in an extremely agitated state. Jairus may have been part of the same synagogue deputation who had pleaded with Jesus for healing of the centurion’s servant in Luke 7:1-10. Jairus, flinging himself at Jesus’ feet, sobbed, “My daughter has just died, but come and lay your hand on her and she will live” (Mt 9:18). So with a tender heart, which was not deaf to a mourner’s cry, Jesus went with him, followed not only by His disciples, but also by a dense, expectant multitude eager to see the next great work of Jesus. (*Farrar*, Chapter 25).

One of the great difficulties we have in prayer is the problem of no answers. The heavens are silent and yet our heart screams for a reply. In this topic we will discover one of the reasons for unanswered prayer. Let’s begin.

Jairus’ complete faith in Christ may have been due to the consequence of knowing of His reputation or having heard Jesus preach in the synagogue in Capernaum or possibly having witnessed Him perform other miracles in the area.

The Scriptures related to this topic are Matthew 9:20-22; Mark 5:25-34; Luke 8:43-48.

Jairus filled two roles in this incident. On the one hand, he was the highly respected ruler of the local synagogue in Capernaum where Christ’s work was being criticized; on the other hand, he was demonstrating faith in Jesus by prostrating himself at His feet, acknowledging His supernatural power. This must have had a profound impact on the crowd.

QUESTION 7

As Jesus and Jairus walked toward the dying daughter (Mk 5:23), Jesus was interrupted by a woman who had been suffering from a hemorrhage for twelve years. Why do you think Jesus paused to speak with her knowing that Jairus’ daughter was about to die?

QUESTION 8

After reading Leviticus 15:19-29, what was the significance of the woman touching the hem of Christ's garment?

- A. Jesus was rendered ceremonially unclean and yet ignores the implications, indicating that One greater than the Law of Moses was here.
- B. Jesus was rendered ceremonially unclean.
- C. The woman demonstrated that there was actual power in Jesus' robe.
- D. The woman was most likely Jewish.

This woman had suffered for twelve years, and probably more at the hands of her physicians than from the disease itself. The Talmud lists eleven different remedies, six of which were complete superstitions.

QUESTION 9

Some persons today appeal to this incident to prove that prayer cloths, blessed by a healer, can bring healing just as Christ's robe did. How would you respond to their assertion after reading this story?

The Scriptures related to this topic are Matthew 9:23-26; Mark 5:35-43; Luke 8:49-56.

During the time Jesus lingered to interview the woman who touched His garment, news came that Jairus' daughter had died (Lk 8:49). Sensing Jairus' anxiety, Jesus comforted him with, "Do not be afraid; just believe, and she will be healed" (Lk 8:50). Jairus was challenged to believe that Jesus could do more than heal the sick; He could raise the dead.

QUESTION 10

Write in your Life Notebook about one or more personal experiences when it seemed that God delayed answering your prayers in order to increase your faith. Be prepared to share this with others.

QUESTION 11

Jesus often told those who were the recipients of His healing miracles not to publicize what had happened (Lk 8:56). What reasons could He have had for that command? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. His ministry would be hampered by the fame which would spread.
- B. People would seek Him for physical healing only rather than for the deeper spiritual healing.
- C. It might prematurely end His ministry because of the animosity of the Pharisees.
- D. He was concerned that His message of repentance and spiritual renewal would be overshadowed by His reputation for miraculous powers.

Topic 4: Do You Want to Get Well?

October, AD 30

After the stirring miracles on and around the Sea of Galilee, Jesus headed south to Jerusalem to participate in a Jewish feast (Jn 5:1). Scholars have debated to which Jewish feast John refers. If it were the Passover, the Greek text almost certainly would have read “*the* feast of the Jews,” instead, it says “*a* feast of the Jews.” Since John notes in John 5:3 the sick were lying outside near the pool of Bethesda, it makes Passover the unlikely celebration because it fell in wintertime, and the weather would not have been warm. I deduce that it must have been the Feast of Tabernacles instituted under Moses’ leadership (Lev 23:34).

At the northeast corner of Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate, there was a pool believed to possess remarkable healing properties. For this reason, in addition to its usual name, it had been called in Hebrew *Bethesda*, or “House of Mercy.” Under its porticoes lay a multitude of sufferers: the blind, lame, and atrophied, waiting to take advantage of the special bubbling, gushing water which revealed that its medicinal properties were at their highest.

Coming upon the scene, Jesus noted a man lying there who had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. Immediately Jesus healed him. Because it was on the Sabbath day, it infuriated the Pharisees who cared more for their petty laws than for the welfare of the lame man. This became a turning point in Christ’s life. Jesus had frequently interpreted the concepts of the Sabbath more compassionately than the Jewish religious leaders; consequently, this miracle became another occasion of their plotting to kill him.

In response to the Jew’s anger, Jesus was called before the Jewish leaders to be warned, and, instead, he turns the tables and warns them. In a clear assertion of His deity, he silenced his questioners.

In a compassionate act of healing in Jerusalem, Jesus proclaimed that the intent of the Sabbath was mercy. It was to serve man, not place him under a burden. Jesus heals a man on the Sabbath, and thus, according to the Pharisees, sinned against the law that said do not work on the Sabbath. Furthermore, the man who had lain paralyzed on his pallet for thirty-eight years and suddenly was walking sinned as well. He committed the sin of picking up his pallet! In this topic we will explore this incident and ask ourselves, “In what way are we like the Pharisees?”

The Scripture related to this topic is John 5:1-18.

QUESTION 12

What did Jesus reveal about Himself and about the Jewish leaders by telling the man to “Pick up your mat and walk”? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath.
- B. It is acceptable to break the Sabbath law.
- C. The Jewish leaders had misinterpreted the Law and placed legal obedience above mercy.
- D. The Law was made for man and not man for the Sabbath.

When Jesus said, “Take up your mat and walk,” a thrill like an electric shock might have flowed through the man’s limbs. In glad amazement he looked around to thank his unnamed benefactor, but Jesus had disappeared into the crowd and headed toward the temple.

QUESTION 13

When Jesus found the man in the temple area later and said, “Look, you have become well. Don’t sin any more, lest anything worse happen to you” (Jn 5:14). Jesus was:

- A. Implying that most illness is a product of sin.
- B. Implying that some illness is a product of sin.
- C. Teaching that whenever we ask forgiveness, our disease should gradually leave.
- D. Teaching that healing from disease is part of present salvation Christ offers.

QUESTION 14

Did Jesus break the Old Testament law regarding the Sabbath? If not, then how would you explain the concepts written in Exodus 20:10 and Jeremiah 17:19-27.

The Fourth Commandment (Ex 5:12-15) required the Jews to set apart the seventh day for sacred rest, a time of infinite value to the spiritual life of all. Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath, had commanded the paralytic man to take up his pallet so the man obeyed (Mt 7:29). While the Jews accused the man of violating Sabbath law, it was not God’s law, or Moses’, but their own interpretation that had been cast into rigid traditions that was broken. Their traditions stretched things to the limit of tyrannical absurdity. For example, they stated that on the Sabbath a nailed shoe must not be worn because it was a burden, but an unnailed shoe might be worn. They taught that a person might go out with two shoes on, but not with only one; and that one man might carry a loaf of bread, but that two men might not carry it between them, and so forth.

Topic 5: From Death to Life

The healing of the paralytic at the Pool of Bethesda on the Sabbath illustrated the serious conflict between the priorities of Jesus and the Jewish leaders. Jesus further infuriated them by claiming that God was His Father and that He Himself was in some unique way the Son of God. They began plotting to kill Him (Jn 5:18). He responded with a compelling discourse in which He claimed to be God.

We are not sure where the discourse recorded in John 5:19-47 took place, but it appears that Jesus is addressing a group of Pharisees, perhaps the Sanhedrin. He might have been summoned to appear before them and answer for His supposed breach of the Law by healing on the Sabbath.

This discourse in John 5 contains some of Christ’s most explicit claims to be God.

Believe in Me

October, AD 30

“All religions are various paths to God,” said an earnest inquirer regarding Christianity to me one day. In response I asked him if there are any differences between the various religions. “Oh, certainly,” he replied, “but they are not different in their central meanings.” “Oh,” I replied, “what is that central meaning that unites them all?” “Well,” he said, “you know: the golden rule, and doing no harm to others.” “If that is all Jesus taught, why did they crucify him? That was nothing new?” I asked. There was something about Jesus that aroused great animosity from the religious leaders and it was not his teaching of moral reform. His offense, his blasphemy, in their eyes was the astonishing claim that he was the God of the Old Testament. In this topic we’ll explore how Jesus, himself, substantiated his deity.

The Scripture related to this section is John 5:19-47.

QUESTION 15

Sometimes people state that Jesus never claimed to be God, only the Son of God. Those who say this believe that being the Son of God is to be less than God. Based upon John 5:18b, how would you answer this claim? You may want to read the article the “Son of God.” (at the end of this lesson). Record your thoughts in your Life Notebook.

QUESTION 16

In John 5:17-23 Jesus testifies concerning Himself. In John 5:31-47 He vindicates Himself by referring to the witness of John the Baptist and the Scriptures, proving that His statements are true and trustworthy. Match the verses on the left with the teaching on the right.

<i>Christ's Claim</i>	<i>Teaching</i>
John 5:17	Honor: Jesus is to be honored as God is honored.
John 5:20	Affection: The Father loves the Son; Jesus is the “beloved” Son.
John 5:21	Unity: Jesus called Himself Son of God.
John 5:23	Authority: Christ gives life to all whom He pleases.

QUESTION 17

There is a knock on your door. A Jehovah’s Witness missionary is there. Soon he engages you in a discussion of the deity of Christ. When you say that Jesus is God, he responds, “That is not true.” He quotes John 5:19 to prove that Jesus is less than God because Jesus has to obey God and only does what God tells Him. Which of the following Scriptures would you use to answer him? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. John 1:1-14
- B. John 8:57-58
- C. Philippians 2:5-11
- D. Colossians 1:13-19

During the years Jesus lived on earth, Paul says Christ “emptied himself” (Phil 2:7). During that time He gave up the independent use of His divine power and prerogatives. That is why Christ

did not know when He would return to earth again. He wanted to live before men as a *man*; a man as God intended Him to be, indeed, all humans to be, totally dependant upon God. But during the years of Jesus' humiliation (that is, His entire earthly existence) He grew as a man and acquired knowledge as a man, while at the same time Christ maintained His eternal co-equality with the Father. Christ chose to live in submission to the Father, modeling the life He desired for His followers.

"I Am the Son of God"

October, AD 30

The Scripture related to this section is John 5:19-47.

QUESTION 18

The Pharisees were enraged when Jesus claimed to be God (Jn 5:18). Jesus responded to their unbelief with five witnesses that testify to the fact that He is who He claimed to be: the unique Son of God and the Savior of the world. Match the Scripture on the left with the witness to His deity on the right.

<i>Scripture</i>	<i>Witness to His Deity</i>
John 5:21-24	The testimony of John the Baptist
John 5:32-33	Father has testified to Christ (Mt 3:17)
John 5:36	The witness of the works He performed
John 5:37-38	He makes the claim Himself

QUESTION 19

Open your Life Notebook to record how you would explain to a non-Christian why you believe that Jesus is God.

Liar, Lunatic, or Lord?

C. S. Lewis, one of the greatest literary scholars of the twentieth century, was a Cambridge Don and held the chair of renaissance English Literature there. Formerly an atheist, he was an associate of Bertrand Russell and was very skeptical of Christianity. He relates that there was something that bothered him greatly about the Christian faith that often confronted his skepticism, the claims which Christ made.

Reflecting on those claims led him to some unexpected conclusions and resulted, eventually, in his embracing Christ as God. He devoted the rest of his life to writing a number of books in which he set forth the intellectual basis for the validity of the Christian faith. In one of these books, *Mere Christianity*, he summarizes the line of thinking about Christ's claims, which led to his conversion.

“What I am trying to do here is to prevent anyone from saying the very foolish thing they often say about Him, “I am ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God.” That is the one thing we must not say. A man who is merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said, would not be a great moral teacher, he would either be a lunatic—on the level with a man who calls himself a poached egg—or else he would be the devil of hell.

Either this man was and is the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, or can spit at him and kill him as a demon; or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God. But let us not come up with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left this option open to us. He did not intend to.”

Jesus made astonishing claims, claims no man has ever made. He said He was the light of the world, “the resurrection and the life,” and claimed to have the authority to forgive sins. Most amazing were His direct claims to be God.

Now these claims are either true or false.

If they are true, then He is who He claimed to be, the Lord.

However let us consider with C. S. Lewis the possibility that these claims are false. If they are false claims, then there are only two possibilities: He either knew or did not know they were false.

If He knew they were false, then we have a man who falsely claims to be God, and knows it is a false claim. He would be, in other words, a liar. But worse, He would be a demon because He asked men to entrust their eternal destinies to a belief He knows is a fraud. He said, “Unless you believe that I AM, you will die in your sins.”

No one has seriously entertained the notion that Jesus was a liar.

But suppose He made a false claim and He really did not know it was false. He actually believed this delusion to be true. What would we then say about Him? We would normally conclude that such a man was mentally unstable; He would be a lunatic. But how can this be? Psychologist J. T. Fisher summarizes the problem well:

“If you were to take the sum total of all the authoritative articles ever written by the most qualified psychologists and psychiatrists on the subject of mental hygiene—if you are to confine them and refine them and cleave out the excess verbiage—if you are to take the whole of the meat and none of the parsley, and if you are to have these unadulterated bits of pure scientific knowledge concisely expressed by the most capable of living poets, you would have an awkward and incomplete summation of the Sermon on the Mount. For nearly 2,000 years the Christian world has been holding in its hand the complete answer to its restless and fruitless yearnings. Here rests the blueprint for successful human life with optimum mental health and contentment.”

But as it has been pointedly observed, one cannot very well have it both ways. If Jesus’ teachings provide the blueprint for successful human life with optimum mental health, then the teacher cannot be a lunatic who totally misunderstands the nature of his own personality.

We are confronted then with the shocking alternatives, Jesus is either a Liar, a Lunatic, or He is the Lord of Glory.

Which of these three options, given all we know of Him, is the most probable?

Topic 6: Refusing to Believe

March, AD 31

In Matthew 13:53-58 and the parallel section in Mark 6:1-6, we read that Jesus departed from Jerusalem to return for a final visit to His boyhood town of Nazareth with His disciples. Once again He preached in the synagogue which He attended as a boy and again He was met with astonishment and unbelief.

It is often those who know us best who hurt us the most. How painful it must have been for the loving Son of God to be rejected not just once, but twice by his neighbors in Nazareth. Rejection is not always justified.

The Scriptures related to this incident are Matthew 13:53-58 and Mark 6:1-6.

QUESTION 20

In this second rejection at Nazareth, Jesus once again says, “A prophet is not without honor except in his own hometown and in his own house” (Mt 13:57). Open your Life Notebook and describe a situation in your church or country illustrating this fact.

Topic 7: Matching Events

QUESTION 21

To help you memorize these events, we have compiled a list of sixty-one important events in the life of Christ. Take a moment and review events 3, 9, 13, 15, and 25-28. You will find them in the article “Matching Events” at the end of this course. Hold your hand over the event descriptions on the left and see if you can identify the associated Scriptures on the right.

Topic 8: Knowing, Being, Doing

In the month of October, AD 30, Jesus performed more miracles than at any other time in His ministry. It is possible that He did this because of the rejection of His kingdom offer by the Jewish leaders. He was giving confirmation to His disciples that He was indeed who He claimed to be. At the end of this lesson, we find Him back in Jerusalem in March, AD 31, claiming to be God and citing five witnesses who testify to that fact. After all these works and all these claims, it is shocking that the people in Nazareth are still in unbelief.

Let us consider some practical reflections regarding the nature of Christ, your own character, and your ministry.

QUESTION 22: KNOWING

Reflect upon one of the following incidents: the Gerasene demoniac (Mk 5:1-20), calming the storm (Mt 18:23-27; Mk 4:35-41; Lk 8:22-27), or the healings recorded in Matthew 9:18-34; Mark 5:21-43; Luke 8:40-46. Find a quiet, private place where you can visualize yourself in one of these situations. Let your imagination go: What are you feeling? What is the expression on Christ’s face? What kind of person is Jesus? Open your Life Notebook and record what you have imagined and the insights you gained from this exercise.

QUESTION 23: BEING

The faith of the people is one of the major themes in this lesson. Whether it was the calming of the storm or the healing of Jairus' daughter, Jesus was repeatedly teaching the importance of faith and illustrating how faith activates the power of God. Open your Life Notebook and list four things you have learned about faith from this lesson and then apply them to a specific situation in your life.

QUESTION 24: DOING

The most important thing to Jesus in the training of the twelve disciples was the continuing increase of their faith. In this lesson we see two situations where He taught this. Using your Life Notebook, compare and contrast Jesus' techniques for teaching faith with yours.

Lesson 8 Self Check

QUESTION 1

Based upon the example of Christ, if you were confronted with a person whom you believed to be demon possessed, what should you do?

- A. Prepare a lengthy statement about the power of the blood of Christ over demons and tell him/her.
- B. Secure the aid of a person who specializes in cases of demon possession.
- C. Address the demon directly and simply in the name of Jesus Christ and command him to depart from the person.
- D. Acquire a standard exorcism ceremony and implement it.

QUESTION 2

After reading Leviticus 15:19-29, what was the significance of the woman touching the hem of Christ's garment?

- A. Jesus was rendered ceremonially unclean and yet ignores the implications, indicating that one greater than the Law of Moses was here.
- B. Jesus was rendered ceremonially unclean.
- C. The woman demonstrated that there was actual power in Jesus' robe.
- D. The woman was most likely Jewish.

QUESTION 3

Jesus often told those who were the recipients of His healing miracles not to publicize what had happened (Lk 8:56). What reasons could He have had for that command? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. His ministry would be hampered by the fame which would spread.
- B. People would seek Him for physical healing only rather than for the deeper spiritual healing.
- C. It might prematurely end His ministry because of the animosity of the Pharisees.
- D. He was concerned that His message of repentance and spiritual renewal would be overshadowed by His reputation for miraculous powers.

QUESTION 4

When Jesus found the man in the temple area later and said, "Look, you have become well. Don't sin any more, lest anything worse happen to you" (Jn 5:14). Jesus was:

- A. Implying that most illness is a product of sin.
- B. Implying that some illness is a product of sin.
- C. Teaching that whenever we ask forgiveness, our disease should gradually leave.
- D. Teaching that healing from disease is part of the atonement and is promised to all who are truly saved.

QUESTION 5

One lesson we learn from the incident of the Gerasene demoniac is that normally a miracle will produce faith in those who witness it. *True or False?*

QUESTION 6

When Jesus claimed to be the “Son of God” He was in fact, claiming equality with God. *True or False?*

QUESTION 7

If a Jehovah’s Witness came to your door claiming that Jesus was not God, because according to John 5:19 he had to obey God, a good response would be?

- A. Turn to Philippians 2:5-10 and point out that Christ, for thirty-seven years, emptied Himself of the independent use of His divine attributes.
- B. Explain that Jesus is not exactly equal to God and is only the son of God.
- C. Explain that it was only Jesus’ human nature that had to obey.
- D. Explain that for thirty-seven years, Jesus was less than God.

QUESTION 8

When Jesus was before the Sanhedrin at His trial, He equated the term “Christ” with the term “Son of God.” *True or False?*

QUESTION 9

At the feast of Tabernacles, Jesus healed a lame man at the Pool of Bethesda.

- A. This event was done in violation of the Old Testament Sabbath law and infuriated the Pharisees.
- B. This event was designed to show that it is God’s intent to heal everyone who has enough faith.
- C. This event convinced the Pharisees that Jesus was the Messiah
- D. This event was a turning point in Christ’s life resulting in their plotting to kill Him.

QUESTION 10

According to C.S. Lewis, Jesus was a liar, a lunatic, or the Lord. *True or False?*

Answers to Questions:

QUESTION 1:

No doubt they thought they could handle the situation and did not believe that He had the power to do anything about it anyway. Better, they may have thought, let Him sleep. In desperation, they turned to Him as a last resort as we often do!

QUESTION 2:

A. Their lack of faith.

While the other items were all causes of their fear, Jesus perceives that the real issue is their lack of faith. Had their faith in Him been solid, their fear would have been conquered.

QUESTION 3: *Your answer*

QUESTION 4: *Your answer*

QUESTION 5:

Your list may include the following: great strength, the demons can speak through the vocal cords of the one they are possessing, self-mutilation, great fear of the name and authority of Christ

QUESTION 6:

C. Address the demon directly and simply in the name of Jesus Christ and command him to depart from the person.

QUESTION 7:

Jesus wanted to increase Jairus' faith and that of his disciples. They already believed He could heal the sick, but they needed to see that Jesus could raise the dead as well.

QUESTION 8:

A. Jesus was rendered ceremonially unclean and yet ignores the implications, indicating that One greater than the Law of Moses was here.

QUESTION 9:

Jesus makes it clear to her that her faith, not the hem of His garment, was the agent of healing.

QUESTION 10: *Your answer*

QUESTION 11:

- A. His ministry would be hampered by the fame which would spread.
- B. People would seek Him for physical healing only rather than for the deeper spiritual healing.
- C. It might prematurely end His ministry because of the animosity of the Pharisees.
- D. He was concerned that His message of repentance and spiritual renewal would be overshadowed by His reputation for miraculous powers.

QUESTION 12:

- A. Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath.
- C. The Jewish leaders had misinterpreted the law and placed legal obedience above mercy.
- D. The Law was made for man and not man for the Sabbath.

QUESTION 13:

B. Implying that some illness is a product of sin.

QUESTION 14:

The intent of these verses appears to be the control of income-producing activity since the Sabbath was set aside as a time for rest after six days of labor. This was pictured for the newly freed Israelites in the prohibition of gathering manna on the seventh day (Ex 16:23-30). There was no law prohibiting the carrying of one's mat on the Sabbath. The Pharisees had added their own interpretations to God's law often distorting His purposes.

QUESTION 15: *Your answer*

QUESTION 16:

<i>Christ's Claim</i>	<i>Teaching</i>
John 5:17	Unity: Jesus called Himself Son of God.
John 5:20	Affection: The Father loves the Son; Jesus is the "beloved" Son.
John 5:21	Authority: Christ gives life to all whom He pleases.
John 5:23	Honor: Jesus is to be honored as God is honored.

QUESTION 17:

- A. John 1:1-14
- B. John 8:57-58
- C. Philippians 2:5-11
- D. Colossians 1:13-19

QUESTION 18:

<i>Scripture</i>	<i>Witness to His Deity</i>
John 5:21-24	He makes the claim Himself
John 5:32-33	The testimony of John the Baptist
John 5:36	The witness of the works He performed
John 5:37-38	Father has testified to Christ (cf. Mt 3:17)

QUESTION 19: *Your answer***QUESTION 20:** *Your answer***QUESTION 21:** *Your answer***QUESTION 22:** *Your answer***QUESTION 23:** *Your answer***QUESTION 24:** *Your answer*

Lesson 8 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1:

C. Address the demon directly and simply in the name of Jesus Christ and command him to depart from the person.

QUESTION 2:

A. Jesus was rendered ceremonially unclean and yet ignores the implications, indicating that one greater than the Law of Moses was here.

QUESTION 3:

A. His ministry would be hampered by the fame which would spread.

B. People would seek Him for physical healing only rather than for the deeper spiritual healing.

C. It might prematurely end His ministry because of the animosity of the Pharisees.

D. He was concerned that His message of repentance and spiritual renewal would be overshadowed by His reputation for miraculous powers.

QUESTION 4:

B. Implying that some illness is a product of sin.

QUESTION 5: False

QUESTION 6: True

QUESTION 7:

A. Turn to Philippians 2:5-10 and point out that Christ, for thirty-seven years, emptied Himself of the independent use of His divine attributes.

QUESTION 8: False

QUESTION 9:

D. This event was a turning point in Christ's life resulting in their plotting to kill Him.

QUESTION 10: True

Lesson 8 Notes

Legion

Legion is, literally, a military unit of six thousand soldiers in the Roman army. In the New Testament the term is used to symbolize the immense power and numbers of spiritual forces: both the angelic hosts of the kingdom of God (Mt 26:53) and the demonic hosts that oppose the kingdom of God (Mk 5:9, 15 and Lk 8:30). As the Son of God, Jesus has the authority to command obedience from both the heavenly and the demonic legions.

Bromiley, G. W. (1988; 2002). *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Revised*; ISBE (Vol. 3, Page 101). Wm. B. Eerdmans.

Lesson 8 Articles

Son of God

Meanings in the Old Testament

While to the common mind “the Son of man” is a title designating the human side of our Lord’s person, “the Son of God” seems as obviously to indicate the divine side. In Scripture the title is bestowed on a variety of persons for a variety of reasons. First, it is applied to angels, as when in Job 2:1 it is said that “the sons of God came to present themselves before Yahweh”; they may be so called because they are the creatures of God’s hands or because, as spiritual beings, they resemble God, who is a spirit. Second, in Luke 3:38, it is applied to the first man; and from the parable of the Prodigal Son, it may be argued that it is applicable to all men. Third, it is applied to the Hebrew nation, as when, in Exodus 4:22, Yahweh says to Pharaoh, “Israel is my firstborn son,” the reason being that Israel was the object of Yahweh’s special love and gracious choice. Fourth, it is applied to the kings of Israel, as representatives of the chosen nation. Thus, in 2 Samuel 7:14, (NIV), Yahweh says of Solomon, “I will be his father, and he will be my son”; and, in Psalm 2:7, (KJV), the coronation of a king is announced in an oracle from heaven, which says, “Thou art my son; this day have I begotten thee.” Finally, in the New Testament, the title is applied to all saints, as in John 1:12, (NASB), “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe on His name.” What then does the term mean when it is applied to Jesus Christ?

Sense as Applied to Jesus

The term is applied to Jesus in the New Testament for several reasons.

Physical Reason

When we come to examine its use in the New Testament as applied by others to Jesus, the facts are far from simple, and it is not applied in a uniform sense. In Luke 1:35, the following reason for its use is given, “The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee: wherefore also the holy thing which is begotten shall be called the Son of God.”(ASV) This is a physical reason, similar to the way the angels or the first man received the title; but it is rather curious that this point of view does not seem to be adopted elsewhere, unless it be in the exclamation of the centurion at the foot of the cross, “Truly this was the Son of God!” (Mt 27:54, NASB).

Equivalence to Messiah: Personal Sense Implied

1. Baptism, Temptation.

It has been contended, not without plausibility, that for Jesus Himself the source of the title may have been the employment of it in the voice from heaven at His baptism, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased” (Mt 3:17, NASB). By these words, it is usually assumed, He was

designated as the Messiah; but in the adjective “beloved,” and the words “in whom I am well-pleased,” there is something personal, beyond the merely official recognition. The same may be said of the voice from heaven in the scene of the Transfiguration. Milton, in “Paradise Regained,” makes Satan become aware of the voice from heaven at the Baptism; but this is also implied in the terms with which he approached Him in the Temptation in the wilderness, “If thou be the Son of God” (Mt 4:3, etc., KJV); and, if this was the sense in which the prince of devils made use of the phrase, we may conclude that in the mouths of the demoniacs who hailed Jesus by the same title it must have had the same meaning.

2. At Caesarea Philippi.

When, at Caesarea Philippi, Jesus evoked from the Twelve their great confession, this is given by two of the synoptists in the simple form, “Thou art the Christ” (Mk 8:29; Lk 9:20, KJV); but Matthew adds, “the Son of the living God” (Mt 16:16, KJV). It is frequently said that Hebrew parallelism compels us to regard these words as a mere equivalent for “Messiah.” But this is not the nature of parallelism, which generally includes in the second of the parallel terms something in excess of what is expressed in the first; it would be quite in accordance with the nature of parallelism if the second term supplied the reason for the first. That is to say, Jesus was the Messiah because He was the Son of God.

3. Trial before Sanhedrin.

There is another passage where it is frequently contended that “the Christ” and “the Son of God” must be exactly parallel, but a close examination suggests that the term “Son of God” is an even higher title than “the Christ.”

In the account of the ecclesiastical trial in the gospel of Luke, He is charged, “If thou art the Christ, tell us”; and, when He replies, “If I tell you, ye will not believe: and if I ask you, ye will not answer. But from henceforth shall the Son of man be seated at the right hand of the power of God.”

Then they all say, “Art thou then the Son of God?” and, when He replies in the affirmative, they require no further witness (Lk 22:67-71, ASV), Matthew informs us that the high priest then rent his garments, and they all agreed that He had spoken blasphemy and was worthy of death (Mt 26:65).

When Jesus affirmed this, their angry astonishment knew no bounds, and their sentence was immediate and capital. It may be questioned whether it was blasphemy merely to claim to be the Messiah; but it was rank and undeniable blasphemy to claim to be the Son of God. This recalls the statement in John 5:18, “The Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only brake the Sabbath, but also called God his own Father, making himself equal with God” (ASV); to which may be added (Jn 10:33, KJV), “The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not, but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God.”

Higher Use by Jesus Himself

Naturally it is with the words of Jesus Himself on this subject that we are most concerned. He speaks of God as His Father, and to the disciples He speaks of God as their Father; but He never speaks to them of God as their common Father: what He says is, “My Father and your Father” (Jn 20:17).

But the most direct equation of the title “Son of God” and “God” is made by Jesus himself in John 5:18 where his opponents clearly understand the term “Son of God” to mean “God.” Here Jesus claims to be the very God of the Old Testament by calling himself the equivalent of the Son of God.

James Stalker. “Son of God.” *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*. Edited by James Orr. 1915

Lesson 9: Closing Events of Jesus' Second Year of Ministry

Lesson Introduction

The close of the second year of Christ's ministry on earth was marked by four significant events: the commissioning of the twelve disciples, the death of John the Baptist, the feeding of the five thousand, and the startling miracle—Jesus walking on the sea. All of these events seem to have occurred in March, AD 31.

Jesus sends out the Twelve in Topic 1, teaching them to trust God alone for their provisions. After the final rejection of Jesus in His hometown of Nazareth, He began another tour of the towns and villages of Galilee. The crowds followed Him everywhere, which signaled to Him that a rich harvest of souls was within reach. Therefore, He strategically sent His disciples out to proclaim the offer of the kingdom of heaven and gave them the authority to heal the sick.

During this period, Herod the tetrarch, who had thrown John the Baptist into prison, had him beheaded.

In Topic 2 we will study this sickening display of weakness, in which Herod complied with the request of his evil wife and her daughter to have John the Baptist murdered. Upon hearing of this, Jesus, no doubt saddened by the news of John's execution, left the area to be alone, realizing that the fate of His herald (forerunner) would soon fall upon Him as well.

As He thought about this, Jesus decided to retire with His disciples to a private place for some rest. The crowds, however, found Him. As the day wore on they became hungry and were in need of food. In Topic 3 Jesus performs one of His most well-known miracles, the feeding of the five thousand.

Finally in Topic 4 one of Christ's most amazing miracles occurs—walking on water. After sending His disciples alone across the lake, He sees from afar that they are in danger due to a sudden storm. He walks to them on the top of the sea startling them to believe, at first, that He was a ghost.

When the disciples returned from their mission, Jesus pulled them aside to review with them their successes and failures. Even though they tried to find a place to be alone together, the multitudes followed. Having compassion on the multitude because it was late in the day, Jesus directed the Twelve to feed the crowd of over five thousand with a few loaves and some fish.

As evening fell, before Jesus went up on a mountain to pray alone, He sent the disciples in a boat across the Sea of Galilee to Bethsaida in Galilee. That night a severe storm came up and they were in danger of capsizing. Then to their utter astonishment, Jesus appeared to them walking across the surface of the sea toward their boat! Peter answered the Lord's call to come out of the boat and step onto the surface of the water. At first Peter was successful, but as he looked at the tumultuous waves, his fear overcame his faith, and he began to sink. Jesus graciously held Peter up and then accompanied him into the boat where, with the other disciples, they continued on their journey to Capernaum.

Lesson Outline

Topic 1: Sending Out the Twelve

The Mission of the Twelve

Learning to Live by Faith

Topic 2: John the Baptist Murdered

Topic 3: The Feeding of the Five Thousand

Topic 4: Walking on the Sea

Topic 5: Matching Events

Topic 6: Knowing, Being, Doing

Lesson Objectives

When you have completed this lesson, you will be able to:

- Discuss Jesus' most prominent training technique: delegation
- Stand for Christ even when faced with dreadful consequences
- Commit yourself to withdrawing from your busyness to spend extended time focusing on Jesus and His mission
- Describe your confident trust in Jesus who enables you to triumph over difficulty
- Apply the concepts learned in this lesson to your mind, character, and ministry

Topic 1: Sending Out the Twelve

Over the past months of ministry Jesus had been struck by the similarities between the multitudes and sheep harassed by enemies, lying panting and neglected in fields because they have no shepherd. The crowds of people also called up the image of a field ready for harvesting, left standing because of a lack of laborers. Out of compassion Jesus impressed upon the apostles that they should pray for the Lord of the harvest to send workers to get the job done. Now after crisscrossing the Galilean countryside for more than a year, Christ sent the disciples in groups of two to confirm His teaching and perform works of mercy in His name.

Before sending the disciples, Jesus gave them instructions to guide their conduct. For the time being, they were to confine their ministry to the "lost sheep" of Israel, and not venture into the territory of the Samaritans or Gentiles. Their preaching was focused on offering the kingdom of heaven to Israel, and it was to be freely supported by those who benefited from the apostles' ministry. Jesus said, "Take nothing with you; no money for food, no purse for money; no change of clothes; and wear sandals." They were to procure a staff for the journey if they did not happen already to possess one. Their mission was to be simple and self-supporting.

The open hospitality of the Middle East, would have given them many opportunities to have their needs provided and to share new ideas about the kingdom. Upon entering a town the pair of disciples were to go to any household where they believed they would be welcomed. The disciples would have saluted the members with the blessing, "Shalom, peace be to you." If the disciples were welcomed there, the blessing would be effective; if not, the blessing would return to them. If the apostles were rejected, they were to shake the dust from their feet in witness that they had spoken faithfully; thus they symbolically cleared themselves of all responsibility for judgment.

The Mission of the Twelve

March, AD 31

Pastor Mihets was overwhelmed. He was responsible for fifteen churches in his area of Romania. He spent most of his time on public transportation just traveling to and from these various congregations. About all he had time to do when he arrived was to marry them, bury them, and baptize them. Like Moses in the wilderness, he had taken too much responsibility on himself. It takes time and commitment to raise up other leaders who can assume some of your responsibilities. A key principle in training them is to regularly delegate responsibility to them. In this topic we will see Jesus doing just that.

Please read the Scriptures related to this topic about the commissioning of the disciples found in Matthew 9:35-38; 10:1, 5-16, 24-42; 11:1; Mark 6:6b-13; Luke 9:1-6. The following questions relate to these Bible passages.

QUESTION 1

Based upon your reading of the previous stated scriptures and of the note, “Bag,” choose all that could be of possible significance. (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. They were to have only one set of clothes.
- B. They were to be offering service to the true temple.
- C. They were to leave immediately with no time to prepare.
- D. They were to depend upon God for everything.
- E. They were not to be like the robber priests.
- F. They were not to take any food supplies.

QUESTION 2

Based upon what we have studied about the kingdom of heaven in preceding lessons, what reasons did Jesus have for limiting their ministry to the lost sheep of the house of Israel?

- A. According to the Old Testament, Gentiles were to have no place in the kingdom.
- B. The promises of a kingdom were addressed to the believing remnant within Israel.
- C. The Gentiles were considered unclean by pious Jews.
- D. Because of their adherence to the temple and Torah, the Jews were promised that they alone would inherit the kingdom.

QUESTION 3

After reading the note “Dust,” at the end of this lesson, what do you think the significance was of shaking the dust off one’s feet?

QUESTION 4

From the notes you read on “dust” (see note at end of lesson) indicate which of the following are true. (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Dust of a heathen town produces defilement.
- B. To shake the dust off the feet was a way of cleansing the town.
- C. To shake dust off the feet indicated defilement of the city.
- D. The dust of interest is not necessarily bad.
- E. The dust of idolatry was a common problem with the Jews.
- F. To shake the lapel of one’s robe meant, “I have nothing to do with this shady business.”

QUESTION 5

Hospitality (see note at end of lesson) had such a high value in the Middle East that pious Jews would sometimes hang curtains in their windows to indicate that their homes were full. *True or False?*

Learning to Live by Faith

March, AD 31

Please read the Scriptures related to this topic about the commissioning of the disciples found in Matthew 9:35-38; 10:1, 5-16, 24-42; 11:1; Mark 6:6b-13; Luke 9:1-6. The following questions relate to these Bible passages.

QUESTION 6

What do you think Jesus meant in Matthew 10:34 when He said He came not to bring peace on the earth but a sword?

QUESTION 7

Read the article “Dedication and Leadership” from the book *Dedication and Leadership* by Douglas Hyde, at the end of this lesson. After reflecting upon what Mr. Hyde says, list all of the ways in which the disciples would have gained practical experience by being sent out on their mission trip.

QUESTION 8

What do you think it means to be “wise as snakes and as harmless as doves”?

- A. We should be both discerning and loving.
- B. We should be willing to be persecuted.
- C. We should be crafty in how we present the gospel.
- D. We should be academically competent and gentle at the same time.

QUESTION 9

What do you think was the most important lesson Jesus taught the Twelve by sending them out on this mission trip?

- A. How to heal
- B. How to live on little
- C. How to cast out demons
- D. How to live by faith

Topic 2: John the Baptist Murdered

March, AD 31

The miraculous activity of Christ throughout Galilee caught the attention of Herod Antipas I, the son of Herod the Great. The kingdom of Herod the Great was divided into four regions, one of which was ruled by the tetrarch, Herod Antipas. He governed Galilee and Perea (see note at end of lesson) from 4 BC to AD 39 under the authority of Rome. At this point the gospels record that Herod suspected Jesus was John the Baptist raised from the dead. In a brutal display of moral weakness, Herod had previously ordered John to be beheaded at the request of his evil wife and her daughter. Perhaps his guilty conscience led him to the notion that Jesus was John resurrected.

Telling the truth about a person in power can be dangerous, especially when that person is a brutal tyrant. Yet, John the Baptist fearlessly preached the moral truth that adultery was wrong, and paid for it with his life. Have you ever drawn back from proclaiming the truth for fear of what others would think?

The portrait of Herod Antipas (read article at the end of lesson) in the Gospels is not very flattering. He was a weak-willed and totally immoral tyrant.

Read the following passages of Scripture that relate to this topic to see how the writers describe this event in Jesus’ life: Matthew 14:1-13a; Mark 6:14-29; Luke 9:7-9.

QUESTION 10

What were the reasons Herod had John put to death? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. He feared a Jewish uprising.
- B. Believing that John was a miracle worker, he wanted to see what would happen.
- C. John boldly assumed the role of chaplain to the tetrarch and scolded the king for incest.
- D. He wanted to send a message to Jesus that he was to be feared.
- E. He made a rash promise and in the end was unwilling to suffer the embarrassment of retreat.

QUESTION 11

What do the circumstances of the execution of John the Baptist tell you about each of these individuals? Match the individual on the left with the proper characteristic on the right.

<i>Individual</i>	<i>Characteristics</i>
Herod	The instigator of John's death
Herodias	Unconcerned, immoral accomplice to John's death
Salome	Willing to pay any price
John the Baptist	Lacking moral fortitude and filled with pride

QUESTION 12

Open your Life Notebook and reflect upon a situation in your life when you needed to admit you were wrong. Can you think of a situation where your failure to admit an error might have resulted in negative consequences for an innocent party? What Scriptures come to mind that apply to a situation like that?

Topic 3: The Feeding of the Five Thousand

March, AD 31

The feeding of the five thousand is one of the few miracles of Christ that are narrated by all four of the gospel writers. This miracle is recorded immediately after the return of the Twelve from their mission trip and the execution of John the Baptist. When Jesus tried to pull the Twelve aside to discuss their mission, the crowds followed them.

Realizing that the mission journey, the news of John the Baptist's death, and the constant pressure of the crowds of needy people had taken its toll on their energies, Jesus invited His disciples, saying, "Come away by yourselves to a secluded place and rest a while." (Mk 6:31, NASB)

South of Bethsaida-Julias was a green and narrow plain, which, like the hills that surrounded it, was uninhabited. To reach the plain, the weary and saddened Teacher and his disciples climbed aboard a small sailing vessel on the Sea of Galilee.

However, the private departure had not passed unobserved. Their journey was six miles by sea from Capernaum to their destination, a secluded part of the shoreline. The little vessel, not far

from the shore and slowed by unfavorable winds, made its way gradually. By the time it reached its destination, the Master's plan for solitude was completely frustrated.

While Jesus and the Twelve sailed to Bethsaida-Julias the multitude followed on foot walking around the top shore of the Sea of Galilee (also known as the Sea of Tiberias).

Some of the multitude had already outrun the vessel; they thronged where the prow touched the pebbly shore. Jesus was touched with compassion, because they appeared as sheep not having a shepherd. Upon reaching the land He and His disciples climbed the hillside and waited a short time while the whole multitude assembled. From the hillside, the Teacher healed their sick and preached about the kingdom of God.

Bible scholars count the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand as the nineteenth of the thirty-five recorded in the Gospels.

With deliberate intent, Jesus confronted the values and the worldview of this culture. His miracles were not mere works of power; they were intended as audio/visual illustrations of significant spiritual realities. One of the most profound realities of the kingdom is that Christ desires to take what we have, even if it is a mere pittance, and multiply it for His glory. Yet, isn't our focus often on the need for big projects, big donations, and big plans? Of course there is nothing wrong with dreaming big things, but sometimes we forget that God can make something significant out of little. John Wesley once said, "Give me 100 men who love no one but God and who hate nothing but sin and I will change the face of the earth." Working with a few, he launched a movement that changed England and eventually led to the abolition of the slave trade. Have you ever felt that you had little to offer Christ? The message of this topic is that when we trust God and are obedient to Him, He can take the little we have to offer, and multiply it for His glory.

Read the Scriptures related to this topic: Matthew 14:13b-23a; Mark 6:30-46; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-15.

As soon as the Twelve gathered to rest and discuss their mission, the multitudes found them. The deserted place near Bethsaida-Julias to which Jesus had led them for rest was now filled with people. Their retreat plans were ruined; nevertheless, Jesus had compassion on the multitude whom He welcomed, taught, and healed.

It should be mentioned at this point that there is a problem with the identification of Bethsaida. It appears that Bethsaida-Julias on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee covered a region which extended over the top of the sea to the western side and was called Bethsaida of Galilee (Jn 12:21). It was a region of the shore about six miles (nine km) northeast of Capernaum.

A little study of the territory around Bethsaida-Julias will make this clear. On the northeastern shore of the sea, about a mile south of the town, there is a little plain of rich silt soil. As it was springtime when Jesus and His disciples landed here, we are not surprised to read that there was plenty of green grass here. A hill actually rises up just behind this plain, so that all the requirements of the account as found in the gospels are fully met. Accordingly, when the evangelist writes that Jesus *went up (into) the hill*, those acquainted with the surroundings would know exactly what hill was indicated; those unacquainted could easily guess that there was a hill behind a level stretch of territory along the sea-shore." (Hendrickson, *Gospel of John Baker Bible Commentary*).

Reflect upon the Scriptures which record this story found in Matthew 14:13-21; Mark 6:30-44; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-15.

QUESTION 13

Open your Life Notebook and record your reflection about a situation in your life when you were exhausted from ministry only to find many needy people approaching you for help. How did you respond? What does Christ's response tell you about Jesus?

QUESTION 14

Match the words of Jesus or the disciples on the left with the lesson the disciples might have learned from their involvement with this miracle.

<i>Words of Jesus/Disciples</i>	<i>Lessons Learned</i>
"Where can we buy bread?"	The disciples needed to learn to rely upon Jesus as the Son of God for material things and for compassion.
"You give them something to eat."	Jesus wanted them to see clearly that a genuine miracle had taken place.
"How many loaves do you have?"	Obedience sometimes requires a large amount of faith that conflicts with our common sense.
"Have the people sit down."	The disciples were about to see what Christ can accomplish with the small resources we have if we are totally surrendered to Him.
"Gather up the leftovers."	They could sense the magnitude of the problem and their total inability to solve it.

QUESTION 15

What does Jesus' response to the crowd's desire to make Him king tell us about His mission and purpose (Jn 6:15)? Consider Psalm 2:6-8; Isaiah 9:6-7; Mark 10:45; John 2:4; and Revelation 20:6 before you record your answer in your Life Notebook.

Topic 4: Walking on the Sea

March, AD 31

The miracle of the feeding of the five thousand produced a profound impression. The people in the crowds began to whisper to each other, "This is certainly *the Prophet who is to come into the world*" (Jn 6:14). Jesus noted their undisguised enthusiasm and intention to take Him by force to make Him king. The danger was that their enthusiasm might precipitate His death through an open rebellion against the Roman government. Jesus saw that His disciples seemed to share this politically motivated excitement. Jesus acted quickly (Mk 6:45) and ordered His disciples to get in their boat; He sent them to the other side of the lake to Bethsaida in Galilee in the direction of Capernaum (Jn 6:17) on the western shore. We may imagine that He used gentle constraint with the disciples, for they may have been unwilling to leave Him alone with the excited multitude and, if anything great was going to happen to Him, they would want to witness it. On the other hand, it was easier for Him to dismiss the multitude when they had seen that His own friends and disciples had been sent away.

So in the gathering dusk Jesus succeeded in persuading the multitude to leave Him, and when all but the most enthusiastic had streamed away, He left the rest, ascending the hilltop alone to pray. He was conscious that the solemn and awful crisis of His days on earth had come, and by communing with His heavenly Father, He would nerve His soul for the bitter conflict of the coming weeks.

This is the second time Jesus had spent a night of lonely prayer in the mountain solitudes. The first time he was preparing to make his choice of the twelve apostles, and it was early in the happiest times of His ministry. Now the feelings were far different as the Great High Priest climbed the rocky stairs of that great mountain altar. The murder of His beloved forerunner brought home to His soul more nearly the thought of death. The brief blaze of falsely founded popularity with the crowds did not deceive Christ into thinking He would be rescued from death. (Adapted from Farrar, Chapter 29)

A storm began to sweep over the barren hills, and the rushing winds howled down the ravines. The lake was beaten into tempestuous foam by the time Jesus saw the boat of the disciples in the boiling waves. The turmoil below was an emblem of the altered aspects of His earthly life. Nevertheless, on the desolate hilltop that stormy night, the Lord gained strength, peace, and joy during His moments alone with God.

If you are like most of us, you have occasionally faced serious trials, which have caused much anxiety about your future. Like the psalmist in Psalm 77, you may have found yourself up in the middle of the night mulling over the “What if’s.” Part of the answer is a shift of focus. In Psalm 77, the psalmist, filled with doubts because of God’s absence when he needed him most, began to think on the works of God in history. In another astounding miracle, it was evidently Jesus’ intent to teach us how to handle our anxiety and fear. Rather than give a sermon about this, He took His students into the middle of a storm. Read on!

Read the Scriptures related to this topic. They are found in the gospel accounts of Jesus’ walking on the water of the Sea of Galilee: Matthew 4:23-33; Mark 6:47-56; John 6:16-21.

Leaving His disciples, Jesus went up to a mountain to pray and the disciples set forth on a boat from Bethsaida-Julias to Bethsaida (see note at end of lesson) in Galilee near Capernaum (Mk 6:45; Jn 6:17).

Due to the force of the storm, they were blown off course and landed to the south in Gennesaret (see note at end of lesson).

During the “fourth watch” of the night (between 3:00 a.m. and sunrise), the disciples, still toiling against the waves, spot Jesus walking toward them on the surface of the sea.

QUESTION 16

Peter wanted to join the Lord on the surface of the water. Yet in a short time he began to sink, and the Lord needed to rescue him. List at least four lessons Peter might have learned from this incident.



QUESTION 17

The people pictured above are praying for rain. What lesson might you learn from this picture?

QUESTION 18

Open your Life Notebook and record a story of a particular time when you and others prayed for something, yet few of you really believed that anything would happen. Reflect upon where we get the faith to believe that God will answer us. How might this affect your prayer life?

Topic 5: Matching Events

QUESTION 19

To help you memorize these events, we have compiled a list of sixty-one important events in the life of Christ. Take a moment and review events 6, 14-17, and 29-31. You will find them in article “Matching Events” at the end of this course. Hold your hand over the event descriptions on the left and see if you can identify the associated Scriptures on the right.

Topic 6: Knowing, Being, Doing

This lesson is filled with practical issues. Here we learn much about faith, commitment, discipleship, and the nature of God. As you conclude this lesson, ponder the practical applications you have learned.

QUESTION 20: KNOWING

Open your Life Notebook and list five things you learned about God as a result of studying this lesson.

QUESTION 21: BEING

A major theme of this lesson has been faith. Open your Life Notebook and write down where you think you are now in your capacity to trust God based on the 1 to 5 scale listed below.

I cannot believe God cares for me enough to answer my prayers.

I struggle to have faith in God's provision.

I am growing in my faith because God has answered my prayers recently.

I can trust God most of the time.

I am firmly convinced that He intends only good for me and that He is in control of all things.

QUESTION 22: DOING

Use your Life Notebook to write out what you have learned about faith from this lesson. Then, consider one issue in your life for which you need to trust God. Write a prayer incorporating what you have learned and include a declaration of trust.

QUESTION 23: DOING

In Coleman's book entitled *The Master Plan of Evangelism* (at the end of this course in the textbook section), read the section on "Delegation." Create a summary of Coleman's critical principles and how you, your church, or your Sunday school class might consider implementing them.

Lesson 9 Self Check

QUESTION 1

Based upon reading “Taking No Bag,” choose all that could be of possible significance. (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. They were to have only one set of clothes.
- B. They were to be offering service to the true temple.
- C. They were to leave immediately with no time to prepare.
- D. They were to depend upon God for everything.
- E. They were to not to be like the robber priests.
- F. They were not to take any food supplies.

QUESTION 2

From the notes you read on “dust” indicate which of the following you know to be true. (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Dust of a heathen town produces defilement.
- B. To shake the dust off the feet was a way of cleansing the town.
- C. To shake dust off the feet indicated defilement of the city.
- D. The dust of interest is not necessarily bad.
- E. The dust of idolatry was a common problem with the Jews.
- F. To shake the lapel of one’s robe meant, “I have nothing to do with this shady business.”

QUESTION 3

What do you think it means to be “wise as snakes and as harmless as doves”?

- A. We should be both discerning and loving.
- B. We should be willing to be persecuted.
- C. We should be crafty in how we present the gospel.
- D. We should be academically competent and gentle at the same time.

QUESTION 4

What were the reasons Herod had John put to death? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. He feared a Jewish uprising.
- B. Believing that John was a miracle worker, he wanted to see what would happen.
- C. John boldly assumed the role of chaplain to the tetrarch and scolded the king for incest.
- D. He wanted to send a message to Jesus that he was to be feared.
- E. He made a rash promise and in the end was unwilling to suffer the embarrassment of retreat.

QUESTION 5

Which of the following people instigated the death of John the Baptist?

- A. Herod
- B. Herodias
- C. Salome
- D. John himself

QUESTION 6

Herod put John to death because he feared a Jewish uprising. *True or False?*

QUESTION 7

When Jesus told His disciples, “You give them something to eat,” what lesson did He want them to learn?

- A. Obedience sometimes requires a large amount of faith that conflicts with our common sense.
- B. Jesus wanted them to see clearly that a genuine miracle had taken place.
- C. The disciples needed to learn to rely upon Jesus as the Son of God for material things and for compassion.
- D. They could sense the magnitude of the problem and their total inability to solve it.

QUESTION 8

The central message that Jesus wanted to teach by the incident of walking on the sea was that if we, like Peter, fix our eyes on Jesus, we too may walk triumphantly over the swelling waves of disbelief, and be fearless amid the rising winds of doubt. *True or False?*

QUESTION 9

According to Coleman in the *Master Plan of Evangelism*, the best way to get people in the church involved in evangelism is to:

- A. Launch an evangelism-training program.
- B. Repeatedly emphasize evangelism in pulpit messages.
- C. Make regular evangelism a condition of church membership.
- D. Give them practical work assignments and expect them to carry them out.

QUESTION 10

It is probable that Jesus' intention in taking His disciples to Bethsaida was to lead them to a place for rest and a spiritual retreat. *True or False?*

Unit Three Exam

QUESTION 1

What would have happened if Israel had accepted Jesus' offer of the kingdom?

- A. The leadership of the nation would have been converted.
- B. It would have suggested that God was waiting to find out what was going to happen.
- C. A spiritual kingdom in the hearts of men would have been established.
- D. Jesus would still have gone to the cross for the forgiveness of sins and upon His resurrection would have established the predicted kingdom.

QUESTION 2

When Jesus told the outcast woman that her sins were forgiven:

- A. He was making a claim to be God.
- B. He was acknowledging that as a rabbi, He had authority to do such things.
- C. As a typical teaching rabbi, He was conferring blessing upon her.
- D. He was acknowledging her recognition of Him as the Rabbi.

QUESTION 3

When Jesus said that a person who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than John the Baptist, He probably meant?

- A. The person who was least was the person who was most humble and therefore the most humble is the greatest.
- B. The privileges of Jesus disciples in the kingdom will be greater than those shared by anyone on earth.
- C. John the Baptist was of the age of the law and the prophets and as such never did participate in personal fellowship with the Messiah.
- D. So glorious is the new reality of the coming kingdom that the greatest of the preceding era is least in the new order of the kingdom.

QUESTION 4

The interpretation of the parable of the costly pearl given in this lesson suggests that:

- A. It refers to an unbeliever who seeks and finds eternal life.
- B. The kingdom of heaven will be made up of people who seek and those who do not.
- C. It refers to a believer who has lost and hidden his salvation and then found it again.
- D. It refers to a believer who seeks and finds the true meaning of life.

QUESTION 5

A possible explanation of the parable of the leaven as presented in this lesson is that the professing church will grow during this age, but evil within it will expand, leading to final apostasy. *True or False?*

QUESTION 6

Based upon the example of Christ, if you were confronted with a person whom you believed to be demon possessed, what should you do?

- A. Prepare a lengthy statement about the power of the blood of Christ over demons and tell him/her.
- B. Secure the aid of a person who specializes in cases of demon possession.
- C. Address the demon directly and simply in the name of Jesus Christ and command him to depart from the person.
- D. Acquire a standard exorcism ceremony and implement it.

QUESTION 7

After reading Leviticus 15:19-29, what was the significance of the woman touching the hem of Christ's garment?

- A. Jesus was rendered ceremonially unclean and yet ignores the implications, indicating that one greater than the Law of Moses was here.
- B. Jesus was rendered ceremonially unclean.
- C. The woman demonstrated that there was actual power in Jesus' robe.
- D. The woman was most likely Jewish.

QUESTION 8

Jesus often told those who were the recipients of His healing miracles not to publicize what had happened (Lk 8:56). What reasons could He have had for that command? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. His ministry would be hampered by the fame which would spread.
- B. People would seek Him for physical healing only rather than for the deeper spiritual healing.
- C. It might prematurely end His ministry because of the animosity of the Pharisees.
- D. He was concerned that His message of repentance and spiritual renewal would be overshadowed by His reputation for miraculous powers.

QUESTION 9

When Jesus found the man in the temple area later and said, "Look, you have become well. Don't sin any more, lest anything worse happen to you" (Jn 5:14). Jesus was:

- A. Implying that most illness is a product of sin.
- B. Implying that some illness is a product of sin.
- C. Teaching that whenever we ask forgiveness, our disease should gradually leave.
- D. Teaching that healing from disease is part of present salvation Christ offers.

QUESTION 10

One lesson we learn from the incident of the Gerasene demoniac is that normally a miracle will produce faith in those who witness it. *True or False?*

QUESTION 11

When Jesus claimed to be the “Son of God,” He was, in fact, claiming equality with God. *True or False?*

QUESTION 12

If a Jehovah’s Witness came to your door claiming that Jesus was not God, because according to John 5:19 He had to obey God, a good response would be?

- A. Turn to Philippians 2:5-10 and point out that Christ, for thirty-seven years, emptied Himself of the independent use of His divine attributes.
- B. Explain that Jesus is not exactly equal to God and is only the Son of God.
- C. Explain that it was only Jesus’ human nature that had to obey.
- D. Explain that for thirty-seven years, Jesus was less than God.

QUESTION 13

When Jesus was before the Sanhedrin at His trial, He equated the term “Christ” with the term “Son of God.” *True or False?*

QUESTION 14

At the feast of Tabernacles, Jesus healed a lame man at the Pool of Bethesda.

- A. This event was done in violation of the Old Testament Sabbath law and infuriated the Pharisees.
- B. This event was designed to show that it is God’s intent to heal everyone who has enough faith.
- C. This event convinced the Pharisees that Jesus was the Messiah.
- D. This event was a turning point in Christ’s life resulting in their plotting to kill Him.

QUESTION 15

According to C.S. Lewis, Jesus was either a liar, a lunatic, or the Lord. *True or False?*

QUESTION 16

What do you think it means to be “wise as snakes and as harmless as doves”?

- A. We should be both discerning and loving.
- B. We should be willing to be persecuted.
- C. We should be crafty in how we present the gospel.
- D. We should be academically competent and gentle at the same time.

QUESTION 17

What were the reasons Herod had John put to death? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. He feared a Jewish uprising.
- B. Believing that John was a miracle worker, he wanted to see what would happen.
- C. John boldly assumed the role of chaplain to the tetrarch and scolded the king for incest.
- D. He wanted to send a message to Jesus that he was to be feared.
- E. He made a rash promise and in the end was unwilling to suffer the embarrassment of retreat.

QUESTION 18

Which of the following people instigated the death of John the Baptist?

- A. Herod
- B. Herodias
- C. Salome
- D. John himself

QUESTION 19

Herod put John to death because he feared a Jewish uprising. *True or False?*

QUESTION 20

When Jesus told His disciples, “You give them something to eat,” what lesson did He want them to learn?

- A. Obedience sometimes requires a large amount of faith that conflicts with our common sense.
- B. Jesus wanted them to see clearly that a genuine miracle had taken place.
- C. The disciples needed to learn to rely upon Jesus as the Son of God for material things and for compassion.
- D. They could sense the magnitude of the problem and their total inability to solve it.

QUESTION 21

The central message that Jesus wanted to teach by the incident of walking on the sea was that if we, like Peter, fix our eyes on Jesus, we too may walk triumphantly over the swelling waves of disbelief, and be fearless amid the rising winds of doubt. *True or False?*

QUESTION 22

What do we learn about the nature of faith from the episode about the Roman centurion? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Whenever we exercise faith, we always get results.
- B. “Great faith” is simple trust that Jesus is able to do whatever He wills.
- C. Just as it was not necessary for Jesus to be physically present with the servant, He does not need to be physically present with us to accomplish His will.
- D. True faith involves humility before God.
- E. True faith recognizes that God is so majestic that apart from His grace He would be unapproachable.

QUESTION 23

What is this sin called the “blasphemy of the Holy Spirit”?

- A. Rejection of Christ
- B. Disbelief in the Holy Spirit
- C. A disobedient living manifested by not following Christ
- D. Assigning the authenticating miracles done through Christ by the Holy Spirit to the power of Satan

QUESTION 24

Based upon the article on the parables “Parables of Matthew 13” which of the four possible definitions of “fruit” seems to be the most likely (Mt 13:22)?

- A. Fruit is obedient discipleship.
- B. Fruit is Christian character.
- C. Fruit is new Christians.
- D. Fruit is multiplying proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom.

QUESTION 25

When Jesus says that He will teach the “mysteries” of the kingdom of heaven, He means that: (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. He will explain some mysterious things.
- B. He will introduce a mystery form of the kingdom not known in the Old Testament.
- C. He will explain things about the future kingdom of heaven which were unknown in the Old Testament.
- D. He will explain things which formerly were only understood by the Jews.
- E. He teaches that the essential nature of the kingdom He offered was different from the one expected by His contemporaries.

Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1:

- B. They were to be offering service to the true temple.
- D. They were to depend upon God for everything.
- E. They were not to be like the robber priests.
- F. They were not to take any food supplies.

QUESTION 2:

- B. The promises of a kingdom were addressed to the believing remnant within Israel.

QUESTION 3:

Your answer should include the following idea: by shaking the dust off their feet, the disciples were declaring that judgment will fall on that city.

QUESTION 4:

- A. Dust of a heathen town produces defilement.
- C. To shake dust off the feet indicated defilement of the city.
- F. To shake the lapel of one's robe meant, "I have nothing to do with this shady business."

QUESTION 5: False

QUESTION 6:

Embracing Christ can result in being hated by those in your own household. The unity between parent and child, husband and wife, or brother and sister can be broken. Even if they remain friends, there is no possibility of intimacy because each shares a different priority and goal in life.

QUESTION 7: *Your answer*

QUESTION 8: A. We should be both discerning and loving.

QUESTION 9:

- D. How to live by faith.

QUESTION 10:

- C. John boldly assumed the role of chaplain to the tetrarch and scolded the king for incest.
- E. He made a rash promise and in the end was unwilling to suffer the embarrassment of retreat.

QUESTION 11:

<i>Individual</i>	<i>Characteristics</i>
Herod	Lacking moral fortitude and filled with pride
Herodias	The instigator of John's death
Salome	Unconcerned, immoral accomplice to John's death
John the Baptist	Willing to pay any price

QUESTION 12: *Your answer*

QUESTION 13: *Your answer*

QUESTION 14:

<i>Words of Jesus/Disciples</i>	<i>Lessons Learned</i>
“Where can we buy bread?”	They could sense the magnitude of the problem and their total inability to solve it.
“You give them something to eat.”	The disciples needed to learn to rely upon Jesus as the Son of God for material things and for compassion.
“How many loaves do you have?”	The disciples were about to see what Christ can accomplish with the small resources we have if we are totally surrendered to Him.
“Have the people sit down.”	Obedience sometimes requires a large amount of faith that conflicts with our common sense.
“Gather up the leftovers.”	Jesus wanted them to see clearly that a genuine miracle had taken place.

QUESTION 15:

No human beings would force Him to become a king. He would be installed as King only by His heavenly Father and only when His hour had come. While it is true that Jesus will one day reign over the earth; He would have not fulfilled His purpose unless He died for the sins of the world.

QUESTION 16:

Peter learned that when he stepped out in faith, Jesus would uphold him, and that fear paralyzes faith. He also learned that if one is to walk by faith, one must keep his eyes on Jesus and not on the difficulties that surround him. Finally, of course, he learned that Jesus answers sincere prayers.

QUESTION 17:

The only one who truly believed God would answer the prayer for rain was the little boy who brought an umbrella.

QUESTION 18: *Your answer*

QUESTION 19: *Your answer*

QUESTION 20: *Your answer*

QUESTION 21: *Your answer*

QUESTION 22: *Your answer*

QUESTION 23: *Your answer*

Lesson 9 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1:

- B. They were to be offering service to the true temple.
- D. They were to depend upon God for everything.
- E. They were to not to be like the robber priests.
- F. They were not to take any food supplies.

QUESTION 2:

- A. Dust of a heathen town produces defilement.
- C. To shake dust off the feet indicated defilement of the city.
- F. To shake the lapel of one's robe meant, "I have nothing to do with this shady business."

QUESTION 3:

- A. We should be both discerning and loving.

QUESTION 4:

- C. John boldly assumed the role of chaplain to the tetrarch and scolded the king for incest.
- E. He made a rash promise and in the end was unwilling to suffer the embarrassment of retreat.

QUESTION 5:

- B. Herodias

QUESTION 6: False

QUESTION 7:

- A. Obedience sometimes requires a large amount of faith that conflicts with our common sense.

QUESTION 8: True

QUESTION 9:

- D. Give them practical work assignments and expect them to carry them out.

QUESTION 10: True

Unit Three Exam Answers

QUESTION 1:

D. Jesus would still have gone to the cross for the forgiveness of sins and upon His resurrection would have established the predicted kingdom.

QUESTION 2:

A. He was making a claim to be God.

QUESTION 3:

B. The privileges of Jesus disciples in the kingdom will be greater than those shared by anyone on earth.

QUESTION 4:

D. It refers to a believer who seeks and finds the true meaning of life.

QUESTION 5: True

QUESTION 6:

C. Address the demon directly and simply in the name of Jesus Christ and command him to depart from the person.

QUESTION 7:

A. Jesus was rendered ceremonially unclean and yet ignores the implications, indicating that one greater than the Law of Moses was here.

QUESTION 8:

A. His ministry would be hampered by the fame which would spread.

B. People would seek Him for physical healing only rather than for the deeper spiritual healing.

C. It might prematurely end His ministry because of the animosity of the Pharisees.

D. He was concerned that His message of repentance and spiritual renewal would be overshadowed by His reputation for miraculous powers.

QUESTION 9:

B. Implying that some illness is a product of sin.

QUESTION 10: False

QUESTION 11: True

QUESTION 12:

A. Turn to Philippians 2:5-10 and point out that Christ, for thirty-seven years, emptied Himself of the independent use of his divine attributes.

QUESTION 13: False

QUESTION 14:

D. This event was a turning point in Christ's life resulting in their plotting to kill Him.

QUESTION 15: True

QUESTION 16:

A. We should be both discerning and loving.

QUESTION 17:

C. John boldly assumed the role of chaplain to the tetrarch and scolded the king for incest.

E. He made a rash promise and in the end was unwilling to suffer the embarrassment of retreat.

QUESTION 18:

B. Herodias

QUESTION 19: False

QUESTION 20:

A. Obedience sometimes requires a large amount of faith that conflicts with our common sense.

QUESTION 21: True

QUESTION 22:

- B. "Great faith" is simple trust that Jesus is able to do whatever He wills.
- C. Just as it was not necessary for Jesus to be physically present with the servant, He does not need to be physically present with us to accomplish His will.
- D. True faith involves humility before God.
- E. True faith recognizes that God is so majestic that apart from His grace He would be unapproachable.

QUESTION 23:

- D. Assigning the authenticating miracles done through Christ by the Holy Spirit to the power of Satan.

QUESTION 24:

- D. Fruit is multiplying proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom.

QUESTION 25:

- B. He will introduce a mystery form of the kingdom not known in the Old Testament.
- C. He will explain things about the future kingdom of heaven which were unknown in the Old Testament.

Lesson 9 Notes

Bag

Bag is used for a Hebrew word which means a shepherd's "bag," rendered "wallet" in some translations. This "bag" of the shepherd or "backsack" of the traveler was of a size sufficient for one or more day's provisions. It was made of the skin of animals, ordinarily undressed, as most of the other "bags" of ancient times were, and was carried slung across the shoulder. This is the "scrip for the journey" (*pera*) mentioned in Matthew 10:10 (KJV).

J. Orr. M.A, D.D. (1999). *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*: 1915 edition (J. Orr, Ed.). Albany, OR: Ages Software.

Dust

In the New Testament dust occurs five times with reference to shaking the dust off one's feet (Mt 10:14; Mk 6:11; Lk 9:5; 10:11; Acts 13:51) as an act symbolic of rejection. It was practiced by the Pharisees on passing from Gentile soil, since it was a rabbinical doctrine that the dust of a heathen land defiles. Along similar lines was the act of throwing dust into the air, which expressed condemnation. When David fled from Jerusalem, Shimei expressed his hatred not only by cursing the king but also by throwing stones at him and flinging dust (2 Sam 16:13). The crowd Paul addressed at Jerusalem demonstrated their wrath against him by waving their garments and throwing dust into the air (Acts 22:23).

G. W Bromiley. (1988; 2002). *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Revised; ISBE (Vol. 1, Page 998). Wm. B. Eerdmans.

Hospitality

Hospitality was regarded by most nations of the ancient world as one of the chief virtues. The Jewish laws respecting strangers (Lev 19:33, 34), and the poor (Lev 25:14; Deut 15:7), and concerning redemption (Lev 25:23) are framed in accordance with the spirit of hospitality. In the Law, compassion to strangers is constantly enforced by the words "for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Lev 19:34, KJV). And before the Law, Abraham's entertainment of the angels (Gen 18:1) and Lot's (Gen 19:1) are in exact agreement with its precepts, and with modern usage. Compare Exodus 2:20 to Judges 13:15; 19:17, 20-21. In the New Testament, hospitality is specifically commanded. The Good Samaritan stands for all ages as an example of Christian hospitality. The neglect of Christ is symbolized by inhospitality to our neighbors (Mt 25:43). The apostles urged the church to follow after hospitality (Rom 12:13; 1 Tim 5:10), to remember Abraham's example (Heb 13:2), to use hospitality one to another without grudging (1 Pet 4:9), while a bishop must be a lover of hospitality (Tit 1:8; 1 Tim 3:2). The practice of early Christians was in accord with these precepts. They had all things in common, and their hospitality was a characteristic of their belief. In the patriarchal ages we may take Abraham's example as the most fitting, as we have of it the fullest account. The account, says Mr. Lane, of Abraham's entertaining the three angels, related in the Bible, presents a perfect picture of the manner in which a modern Bedawee sheikh receives travelers arriving at his encampment. The Oriental respect for the covenant of bread and salt, or salt alone, certainly sprang from the high regard in which hospitality was held. (Smith, W. (1997). *Smith's Bible Dictionary* (electronic ed. of the revised ed.). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.)

Bethsaida

It is a city east of the Jordan, in a desert place (that is, uncultivated ground used for grazing) at which Jesus miraculously fed the multitude with five loaves and two fish (Mk 6:32-44; Lk 9:10-17). This is doubtless to be identified with the village of Bethsaida in Lower Gaulonitis which the Tetrarch Philip raised to the rank of a city, and called Julias, in honor of Julia, the daughter of Augustus. It lay near the place where the Jordan enters the Sea of Gennesaret

J.Orr, M.A., D.D. (1999). *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*: 1915 edition (J. Orr, Ed.). Albany, OR: Ages Software.

Galilee and Perea

Antipas was politically the ablest of Herod's sons. He governed **Galilee and Perea** in the interests of Rome for over forty years. He vigilantly checked any movement he suspected might lead to insurrection. He was the "Herod the tetrarch" of the gospel records. Jesus called him "that fox." His capital was the city of Tiberians on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee.

Gennesaret

Gennesaret was a very fertile costal plain just south of Capernaum on the sandy shores of the Sea of Galilee. In Hebrew, it means "Princely gardens." It was both an important agricultural as well a fishing center in northern Galilee during the time of Christ.

It was heavily populated and had a reputation of fabulous fertility. Jesus spent a significant portion of his ministry in this area. The chief city of this are was just to the south, Magdala.

The fruits of Gennesaret were considered to be of such high quality that the rabbis would not permit them in Jerusalem at the time of the feasts for fear that people would come to the feasts only for the enjoyment of these wonderful fruits.

When the disciples departed from Bethsaida-Julius on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee to go to Bethsaida in Galilee (Mk 6:45) at Capernaum, they were blown off course by a storm and landed in Gennesaret. It was during this storm that Jesus came to them walking on the surface of the sea (Jn 6:16-21).

Lesson 9 Articles

Dedication and Leadership by Douglas Hyde

In the late 1940s, Douglas Hyde was a leader of the Communist Party in England. He converted to Catholicism in 1949. He wrote a book called *Dedication and Leadership Techniques* describing techniques used by the Communists to produce leaders.

The Jesuits invited him to conduct seminars on how the Communists trained their new recruits. They seemed to be much more successful than the church had been. To the surprise of the Jesuits, Hyde said that the Communists had studied the training techniques of Jesus Christ.

One particular training method they used paralleled closely what Jesus did in sending out the Twelve. Once a new recruit was converted to the party, the leaders immediately gave him something to do. Often they would send him out to a street corner in London with a stack of Communist newspapers and other propaganda which he was supposed to distribute. As he stood on that corner and passed out literature, he was ridiculed and attacked with numerous objections to the Communist beliefs which he had no idea how to answer.

After about three months of this, the local trainer for the new comrade would approach him and say, "We are starting some seminars next week on how to answer the objections people often raise against the Communist philosophy of life. Would you be interested in attending these seminars?" Interested! Because he was tired of being intellectually demolished on that street corner, he could hardly wait for the seminars to begin!

The local comrade was creating a need before he gave the new recruit advanced information on the Communist system of thought.

Too often the church says, "Write this down, you may need it some day." When a man converted to Communism, he was immediately given something to do. The church rarely asks anything of a new convert.

By sending out the Twelve on a mission trip, Jesus was getting them involved and creating a need, so that they would come back with practical questions.

Herod Antipas

Herod Antipas was the son of Herod the Great and Malthace, a Samaritan woman. Half Idumean, half Samaritan, he had therefore not a drop of Jewish blood in his veins, and “Galilee of the Gentiles” seemed a fit dominion for such a prince. He ruled as “tetrarch” of Galilee and Peraea (Lk 3:1) from 4 BC till AD 39. The gospel picture we have of him is far from prepossessing. He is superstitious (Mt 14:1), fox like in his cunning (Lk 13:31) and wholly immoral. John the Baptist was brought into his life through an open rebuke of his gross immorality and defiance of the laws of Moses (Lev 18:16), and paid for his courage with his life (Mt 14:10).

On the death of his father, although he was younger than his brother Archelaus, he contested the will of Herod, who had given to the other the major part of the dominion. Rome, however, sustained the will and assigned to him the “tetrarchy” of Galilee and Peraea, as it had been set apart for him by Herod.

Educated at Rome with Archelaus and Philip, his half brother, son of Mariamne, daughter of Simon, he imbibed many of the tastes and graces and far more of the vices of the Romans. His first wife was a daughter of Aretas, king of Arabia. But he sent her back to her father at Petra, for the sake of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip, whom he had met and seduced at Rome. Since the latter was the daughter of Aristobulus, his half brother, and therefore his niece, and at the same time the wife of another half brother, the union between her and Antipas was doubly sinful.

Aretas repaid this insult to his daughter by a destructive war. Herodias had a baneful influence over him and wholly dominated his life (Mt 14:3-10). He emulated the example of his father in a mania for erecting buildings and beautifying cities. Thus, he built the wall of Sepphoris and made the place his capital. He elevated Bethsaida to the rank of a city and gave it the name “Julia,” after the daughter of Tiberius. Another example of this inherited or cultivated building mania was the work he did at Betharamphtha, which he called “Julias.” His influence on his subjects was morally bad (Mk 8:15). If his life was less marked by enormities than his father’s, it was only so by reason of its inevitable restrictions.

The last glimpse the Gospels afford of him shows him to us in the final tragedy of the life of Christ. He is then at Jerusalem. Pilate in his perplexity had sent the Savior bound to Herod, and the utter inefficiency and flippancy of the man is revealed in the account the Gospels give us of the incident (Lk 23:7-12; Acts 4:27). It served, however, to bridge the chasm of the enmity between Herod and Pilate (Lk 23:12), both of whom were to be stripped of their power and to die in shameful exile. When Caius Caligula had become emperor and when his scheming favorite Herod Agrippa I, the bitter enemy of Antipas, had been made king in AD 37, Herodias prevailed on Herod Antipas to accompany her to Rome to demand a similar favor. The machinations of Agrippa and the accusation of high treason preferred against him, however, proved his undoing, and he was banished to Lyons in Gaul, where he died in great misery.

Henry E. Dosker. “Herod,” *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*. Edited by James Orr. Blue Letter Bible, 1913.

Unit Four: Crucial Rejections

Jesus' Third Year of Public Ministry Begins

It is now approximately April, AD 31. The first two years of Jesus' public ministry were marked by astounding teachings, wonderful works of power and healing, and growing popularity. Yet the seeds of opposition had already been sown. The hatred of Jesus by the Pharisees now intensifies. His doctrine was not the irritating bursts of prophetic bombast of the Baptist. Rather He demanded personal submission to Himself and spoke of an entirely new religion. Instead of the hypocritical and external ceremonies of the Pharisees, He demanded a total inward transformation. Such teaching had never been heard and the populace loved it.

This could not be tolerated. The entire hierarchical system of the Pharisees was at stake. If Jesus continued to rise in popularity, their authority and position was doomed. To crush this carpenter from Nazareth and his band of peasants must have seemed easy.

For months He had perceived the terrible outcome of His time on earth and had been preparing His disciples accordingly.

This year begins with the famous discourse in which Jesus claims to be the bread of life and ends with an attempt to stone Him to death after he directly asserts His deity by claiming to be the "I AM" who appeared to Moses.

A major focus of this year is that Jesus begins more directly to assert His claims to divinity all the while continuing to perform many more wonderful works.

During this year He feeds four thousand Gentiles, forgives a woman taken in adultery, claims to be the Light of the world while restoring sight to the blind, and faces the growing hatred and jealousy of the Pharisees.

Two pivotal discourses occur during this time, the discourse on the Bread of Life and the discourse on the Good Shepherd. We will study these two incidents in Lessons 10 and 11.

Unit Outline

Lesson 10: Bread of Life

Lesson 11: The Rivers of Living Water, The Light of the World, and the Great "I Am"

Lesson 12: The Great Confession and the Final Teaching Tour

Lesson 10: The Bread of Life

Lesson Introduction

We last left Jesus when He walked upon the sea. The miracle of the feeding of the five thousand amazed the crowd which was still on the eastern shore of the sea. They saw Jesus compel His disciples to get into the one boat that was there. But since Jesus did not get into this boat, the crowd supposed that He had stayed in the area. After some time they realized He was no longer there. Some boats from Tiberias landed, so the people decided to seek Jesus in the Capernaum region and got into the boats. The people's question, "When did You get here?" (referring to the western shore of the Sea of Galilee, Capernaum), introduces one of the pivotal discourses in his ministry: The Bread of Life. Jesus did not explain how or when He crossed the lake, for His walking on the water was a private sign for the disciples only. In Topic 1 we will study this central discourse.

Jesus was continually concerned to confront the hypocritical external legalism of the Pharisees. Because of this He often deliberately provoked them by violating their traditions. In Topic 2 Jesus exposes the hypocritical practice of Corban, whereby one could be excused from the responsibility for caring for his parents through a specious religious technicality.

Leaving the Galilee, Jesus traveled northwest to the region of Tyre and Sidon. This Gentile territory was off limits to the Jews, but not to the Messiah who came to save all men and to fold them all into His loving embrace.

Jesus may have retired to this Gentile area in order to escape the clamor and crowds, we do not know. But if He did, it seems evident that His aim was frustrated. His fame had spread to this area as well. Learning of His presence a desperate Gentile woman approaches Jesus and pleads with Him to heal her demon-possessed daughter saying, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David! My daughter is horribly demon-possessed!" (Mt 15:22).

Topic 3 is juxtaposed beautifully with Topic 2. Where, in Topic 2, we see Jewish hypocrisy, in Topic 3 we see sincerity of faith in a Syrophenician woman.

While the nation to whom the promises were made persists in rejecting Him, Jesus continues to minister to the Gentiles. Proceeding east to Gentile Decapolis, in Topic 4 He restores hearing to a deaf man and heals many others.

Finally, in Topic 5, several miracles are linked together beginning with the feeding of the four thousand Gentiles and ending with the healing of a blind man in an unusual two step procedure. As we will see, there was a crucial spiritual message intended by this unique healing; the only time Jesus did not heal completely and instantaneously.

Lesson Outline

Topic 1: I Am the Bread of Life

The Bread of Life

The Benefits of the Heavenly Bread and the "I AM" Statements

Can Salvation Be Lost?

Heavenly Manna

Characteristics of the Heavenly Bread

Why Did They Turn Away?

Topic 2: Man's Traditions Versus God's Commands

The Washing of Hands

Corban: Devoted to God

Topic 3: Crumbs from the Table

Topic 4: Open Up!

Topic 5: I Can See!

Feeding the Four Thousand

The Leaven of the Pharisees

A Second Touch

Topic 6: Matching Events

Topic 7: Knowing, Being, Doing

Lesson Objectives

When you have completed this lesson, you will be able to:

- Establish Jesus as the source of a full and satisfying life
- Move us away from an external focus on what we do as a way of pleasing God to the internal focus: who we are
- Illustrate that God's grace is always extended to the undeserving.
- Show that Jesus' healing power comes from the Father
- Urge us to seek a full and clear spiritual connection with the Lord Jesus Christ

Topic 1: I Am the Bread of Life

Having just fed five thousand people on the eastern shore of the lake, it is appropriate that Jesus emphasize the spiritual message of that healing. He now claims to offer more than physical bread, indeed, He offers Himself to us all as "the bread of life" (John 6:35). What does this mean? Let's dig in!





The Bread of Life

April, AD 31

Scripture related to this topic is John 6:22-71.

QUESTION 1

In light of Christ's statement in John 6:29 how might we explain the apparent contradiction between Paul's claim that salvation is by faith apart from works in Ephesians 2:8-9 and Jesus' apparent statement to the contrary (Mt 7:21)?

QUESTION 2

When Jesus says that the Father put His “seal of approval” on Him, what do you think He was referring to (see Mt 3:17)?

The Benefits of the Heavenly Bread and the “I AM” Statements

April, AD 31

Scripture related to this topic is John 6:22-71.

QUESTION 3

In this discourse, the Lord says, “I am the bread of life” (Jn 6:35-40). What is characteristic of those who eat this bread? Look carefully at the key words, “never,” “do the will of the father,” “not lose one person.” Select all that are mentioned in the text. (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. They will never be hungry again.
- B. They will never lose salvation.
- C. They will have eternal life.
- D. They will have their sin forgiven.

QUESTION 4

In the gospel of John, our Lord uses the phrase “I AM” twenty-one times. In seven of these “I AM” statements, He joins this statement with some revealing metaphors. Match the verse on the left with the matching metaphor on the right. Read each verse first.

<i>Verse</i>	<i>Metaphor</i>
John 6:35	Door
John 8:12	Way
John 10:7	Vine
John 10:14	Shepherd
John 11:25	Life
John 14:6	Bread
John 15:1	Light

Can Salvation Be Lost?

April, AD 31

Scripture related to this topic is John 6:22-71.

QUESTION 5

Open your Life Notebook. Augustine once said, “You have made us for yourself, Oh God, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you.” Read John 6:22-71. Take some time to search this passage. In this passage Jesus claims to satisfy that restlessness. How does He make this claim? List five ways in your life that illustrate how He has met your need for a full and satisfying life.

QUESTION 6

Put down your pen for a moment. Do you realize the astounding things you have just read! No man who ever lived has made these kinds of claims. What made them so amazing is that they are made calmly, with dignity, and come from a man who is the most mentally healthy man in history. These are not the claims of a madman but the claims of a man who demonstrated noble character, incredible compassion, selfless service to others, dramatic courage, and complete integrity. Reflect on each of the I AM statements for a moment and write in your Life Notebook how Jesus is to you a vine (Jn 15:5), bread (Jn 6:35), life (Jn 11:25), shepherd (Jn 10:11), light (Jn 8:12), way (Jn 14:6), and a door (Jn 10:7) (see notes at the end of lesson). Then thank Him for the wonderful gift He is to you.

QUESTION 7

Based upon John 6:39 it could legitimately be taught that it may be possible for a born-again believer to lose his salvation. *True or False?*

One of the more troubling questions which believers often ask is, “Is it possible that if I stopped believing or fell into some serious sin, that I could lose my salvation?” This fear is often grounded in passages such as Hebrews 6:1-4 which refer to a falling away from the path leading to maturity and subsequent loss of rewards, not loss of salvation. If our ultimate salvation depends upon us or upon our ability or choices not to sin, then it is certain that we are in jeopardy. Fortunately according to Jesus, He will “not lose one person.” Our ultimate arrival in heaven does not depend upon us. Instead, it depends upon the promise of Christ (Jn 6:39), the love of the Father (Rom 8:31-39), and the guarantee of the Holy Spirit (Eph 1:13-14). It depends upon God and that is why it is secure! Other passages which confirm that salvation cannot be lost are Romans 5:9-10 and John 10:28-29.

The Heavenly Manna

April, AD 31

Scripture related to this topic is John 6:22-71.

QUESTION 8

In the question about manna, what is Jesus teaching about His Father and Himself? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. The Father, not Moses, supplied the manna from Heaven.
- B. The Father has sent Jesus from heaven as the bread of life.
- C. The crowds were seeking Him for the wrong thing.
- D. Eating the bread of life results in inner satisfaction.

The Jews knew about bread from heaven. During the Exodus, God had fed the people with manna (see note at end of lesson).

Yet that bread was physical and in fact accorded with the Jewish expectations of the kingdom. To them it was exclusively Jewish, a sumptuous eternal feast like the Moslem paradise, and a rather sensual eternal experience. Jesus, while not denying that the kingdom had physical aspects, emphasized it was not a sumptuous physical feast but an eternal and spiritual one. The spiritual dimensions are what He stressed most.

The manna that came down from heaven in the Old Testament prefigures and illustrates the true bread, which came down from heaven. While the manna sustained physical life, the true bread sustained spiritual life.

Characteristics of the Heavenly Bread

April, AD 31

Scripture related to this topic is John 6:22-71.

QUESTION 9

Jesus says four things about this bread He offers (read Jn 6:22-71). Match the term on the left with the matching explanation on the right.

<i>Term</i>	<i>Explanation</i>
Source John 6:32	Heaven
Resurrection John 6:40	Satisfaction of the heart
Effect John 6:35	Never ends
Where found John 6:48	In a person, not in a religion

QUESTION 10

What was it that offended many of His disciples and caused them to turn away?

- A. His claim that He came from heaven.
- B. His claim that He was the bread of life.
- C. His claim that a full and satisfying life would be found in the bread He gives.
- D. His claim that they must eat His flesh and drink His blood in order to have life.

Why Did They Turn Away?

April, AD 31

Scripture related to this topic is John 6:22-71.

When Jesus told them that unless they fed on Him, they could not have life, many were offended. It is significant that many who believed on Him, some of His disciples (not the Twelve) also turned away.

QUESTION 11

Earlier in His ministry Jesus warned against this division which would come among His disciples. What passage which we have already studied might illustrate this? You might want to review Matthew 7:13-14.

QUESTION 12

Don't dismiss the disciples who left. Imagine their disappointment. Not only does Jesus refuse to allow Himself to be established as King, but He says things which are incomprehensible, even disturbing to them. At one time or another, most believers have been seriously disappointed in what Jesus seems to be doing in their lives. He does not seem to be acting the way He should and His teachings do not seem to work. This is what has happened to them. Open your Life Notebook and describe a time when you have been disappointed with Jesus Christ. How did you deal with it? What did you learn? Why did the Twelve decide to say with Him? What did they say when He asked them if they would like to leave with the others?

Topic 2: Man's Traditions Versus God's Commands

Jesus continued His ministry around Galilee in April, AD 31. Knowing that the Jews were anxious to kill Him, He avoided going to Jerusalem because His work was not finished, His hour had not yet come.

The Pharisees sent representatives to Galilee from Jerusalem to spy on His behavior, hoping that He would do something against their traditions so they could accuse Him. Jesus did not disappoint them and hoping to provoke them on another issue, the washing of hands (see note at end of lesson), He permitted His disciples to eat food with hands which had not been ceremonially cleansed. Needless to say, the Pharisees took the bait and Jesus used it as an opportunity to rebuke external hypocrites and declare that it is not what goes into a man's mouth that makes him unclean, rather it is the corrupt issues of the heart that defile him.

The Washing of Hands

April, AD 31

Jesus wanted to move us away from an external focus on what we do as a way of pleasing God to the internal focus: who we are.

Scriptures related to this topic are Matthew 15:1-20; Mark 7:1-23; John 7:1.

Why does Christ deliberately provoke the Pharisees regarding a matter of total indifference to Him? Hand washing was a mere trifle. However, a vital issue was at stake. The rabbis said “give more attention to the words of the Rabbis, than to the words of the law.” This attitude of Judaism toward their traditions needed to be confronted directly, and Christ challenges two aspects related to (1) hand washing and (2) vows in order to show the utter incompatibility of rabbinism with the true religion of the heart He came to bring.



QUESTION 13

What are the implied charges brought against the Pharisees by Christ when He quoted Isaiah 29:13? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. They placed tradition above the Scriptures.
- B. Their religion consisted of external religious practices rather than internal devotedness to God.
- C. They were hypocrites.
- D. They worshiped God in vain.

Corban: Devoted to God.

April, AD 31

Scriptures related to this topic are Matthew 15:1-20; Mark 7:1-23; John 7:1.

One of the most offensive evasions of obedience to the law was the trick of pronouncing a possession as corban (see note at end of lesson) or “devoted to God.” This was used, for example, to exempt one from caring for his parents because he could say that all his possessions were corban. Supposedly, with this pronouncement, God released them from the obligation to obey the fifth commandment, “honor your father and mother.”

In concluding his attack on externalism, Jesus emphasizes that it is not external practices which render a man clean or unclean; rather it is a matter of the heart.

QUESTION 14

According to Jesus, what is one way we can tell what is going on in a person’s heart?

- A. By observing his religion
- B. By talking with his friends
- C. By observing his past
- D. By listening to what he says

QUESTION 15

Which one of the following passages of Scripture does NOT belong with the others?

- A. Romans 10:4
- B. Ephesians 2:8-9
- C. Romans 14:3
- D. Acts 10:15

Topic 3: Crumbs from the Table

April, AD 31

Leaving the Galilee, Jesus traveled northwest to the region of Tyre and Sidon (see note at end of lesson). This Gentile territory was off limits to the Jews, but not to the Messiah who came to save all men and to fold them all into His loving embrace.

This is the only recorded instance of our Lord’s visiting heathen territories. A striking and perplexing encounter with a Syrophonecian woman whose daughter was demon possessed now ensues.

This example is used to illustrate that God’s grace is always extended to the undeserving.

Scriptures related to this topic are Matthew 15:21-28 and Mark 7:24-30.

Jesus may have retired to this Gentile area in order to escape the clamor and crowds, we do not know. But if He did, it seems evident that His aim was frustrated. His fame had spread to this area as well. Learning of His presence a desperate Gentile woman approaches Jesus and pleads with Him to heal her demon-possessed daughter saying, “Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David! My daughter is horribly demon-possessed!” (Mt 15:22).

Yet He who always showed compassion, who was ever ready to heal, and who never turned anyone away, for the first and only time in His recorded ministry, seemed to ignore her plea; “he did not answer her a word” (Mt 15:23).

What held him back? He told her that He was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. It was certainly, in part, pity for his own nation that stayed his compassionate hand. For Him to heal this woman's daughter would, no doubt, embitter the nation He loved and for whom He came, against him. But a mother's love was not to be ignored. She persisted, following him into the house.

QUESTION 16

What are some possible reasons why Jesus first said nothing and then answered her in the way he did?

When He finally broke the silence, His response seemed harsh and indifferent. Mark tells us that He said, "Let the children be satisfied first, for it is not right to take the children's bread and to throw it to the dogs."

With trembling lips, gentleness of voice, and a compassionate countenance, He softly reminded her that it was not proper for others to be fed before the children, the nation of Israel was first satisfied.

Yet he could not wear out a mother's love and she immediately replied that even the dogs are permitted to eat the crumbs from the table. Seeing her great faith and her suffering heart, the one called Wonderful could only respond, "Because you said this, you may go. The demon has left your daughter" (Mk 7:29).

QUESTION 17

Read the note "Dogs" (at the end of the lesson). The harshness of this term is very perplexing from the lips of one so full of compassion. *True or False?*

Topic 4: Open Up!

April, AD 31

Jesus now moves east across the slopes of Mount Hermon and turns south towards Gentile Decapolis (see note at end of lesson), a Roman province composed of ten Greek free cities. His fame had spread here also and a deaf man was brought to Him.

This miracle is to show that Jesus' healing power comes from the Father.

Scriptures related to this topic are Matthew 15:29-31 and Mark 7:31-37.

QUESTION 18

What do you think are some possible reasons why Jesus used such elaborate methods to heal the man who was deaf and who had a speech impediment?

Topic 5: I Can See!

The next three events in this lesson are all united under a single theme—sight. With an unusual series of miracles Jesus communicates the dramatic need we all have for full spiritual sight.

Feeding the Four Thousand

April, AD 31

The message of this miracle is to urge us to seek a full and clear spiritual connection with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Scriptures related to this topic are Matthew 15:32-38 and Mark 8:1-9.

While ministering in the region of Gentile Decapolis the crowds continued to flock to listen to Jesus' teaching. On one occasion they remained with Him for three days, going without food. Jesus, concerned about their strength, refused to send them home without food. The stage was now set for a repeat of the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand. Yet, surprisingly, the disciples are still perplexed as to how they can feed this large crowd even though they saw Him feed five thousand on an earlier occasion. One possible explanation of this is that this crowd was composed entirely of Gentiles, while the preceding incident in Capernaum involved only Jews. It may not have occurred to them that the Jewish Messiah would perform such a feat for four thousand Gentiles as well.

QUESTION 19

When had Jesus been in Gentile Decapolis before and why was the reception at this second visit so positive?

The Leaven of the Pharisees

Scriptures related to this topic are Matthew 16:1-12 and Mark 8:11-21.

After dismissing the crowd, Jesus and His disciples again boarded a boat and headed once again for the region of Magadan or Magdala (see note at end of lesson), not far from Capernaum to the south. When the sailing party lands, the Pharisees and Sadducees (read article on the Sadducees) arrive and immediately challenge Him asking for a sign. Sighing deeply, Jesus rebukes them saying that they are unable to recognize the signs of the times (see note at end of lesson).

QUESTION 20

What was the leaven (see note at end of lesson) of the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herod? See Matthew 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-17; Luke 8:26-37.

- A. The demand for a sign
- B. The vicious attacks they made on Christ
- C. Their joint conspiracy
- D. Their teaching

Knowing that the worth of proof depended upon the openness to conviction, Jesus had no intention of casting pearls before these swine. The tempter has already been defeated in his attempts to get Jesus to make vain displays of power. He was not about to satisfy the wants of such men filled with a spirit of hatred.

He rebukes their hypocrisy by noting that while they are able to discern signs which indicate weather patterns, and even though they diligently study the Scriptures seeking for signs of the Messiah, they are completely unable to see that a multitude of compelling signs had already been given.

The Pharisees had sallied forth, hoping to engage him in controversy. They had demanded a sign but Jesus refused, turned upon them, and left them embarrassed in the eyes of the multitude. They had hoped to disparage him as an unauthorized religious teacher, but turning the tables, his modest, dignified, and perceptive retort had put them to shame.

Jesus and his little band now set sail toward the head of the lake, where the Jordan flowed from it, to the village of Bethsaida. His departure that spring evening must have saddened His weary heart. It was becoming clearer and clearer that the nation He loved “despised and rejected” Him (Isa 53:3.)

As they crossed the lake, the disciples misunderstand His warning regarding to avoid the “leaven” of the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herod. Thinking that He was referring to literal bread, they wonder, “where will we find bread”?

QUESTION 21

While it may be understandable that the Pharisees had no understanding and did not “see,” why is it so unusual that the disciples did not see?

- A. Because Jesus had never taught them about yeast
- B. Because they had seen him perform the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand
- C. Because they have had ample time to grasp the meaning of yeast
- D. Because they were simple men

QUESTION 22

When Jesus warned about the leaven of the Pharisees, the disciples took him literally, thinking he referred to bread. *True or False?*

QUESTION 23

Since the Pharisees demanded a sign, why didn't Christ accommodate them and provide one like a show of lightening or thunder? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. They did not respond to his previous signs.
- B. They had no spiritual understanding so it would do little good.
- C. Confronted with their unbelief He was unable to perform signs.
- D. One day, at His Second Coming, they will see a sign from heaven.

A Second Touch

April, AD 31

Scriptures related to this topic are Matthew 15:32-39 and Mark 8:1-29, note particularly Mark 8:22-26.

As the little boat approached the pebbly shore near the village of Bethsaida Jesus and his men disembarked and intended to press on. There was no warm reception here even though He had lived in their houses and performed wonderful miracles in their streets. Yet their rejection could not quench His pity for a blind man that some of the believers in the town brought to him. Wishing to avoid attention, He led the man outside of the village to the fields where He restored his sight.

In this exercise we want to introduce you to the concept of a synthetic chart. This is a very helpful method of Bible study. In this simple five-step method you will learn how to achieve an overview of a particular passage.

We will use Mark 8 as an example of this procedure.

In order to answer the questions below, you will need to read the article on the "Five-Step Bible Study" (at the end of this lesson). Please do that now.

Step 1

Read the passage through carefully at least two times. Think about what you are reading. Answer questions like: Why? How? What for? What difference would it make if this particular paragraph were missing? How is this paragraph related to what follows and what precedes it?

Step 2

The second step is to divide the passage up into paragraphs and then give a title to the paragraph. There is no "right" title. Just think of one that describes for you what is happening in that paragraph. You will need to refer to the article "Five-Step Bible study" to view the chart.

QUESTION 24

A good title for Mark 8:11-13 might be:

QUESTION 25

A good title for Mark 8:14-15 might be:

QUESTION 26

A good title for Mark 8:16-21 might be:

QUESTION 27

A good title for Mark 8:22-26 might be:

QUESTION 28

A good title for Mark 8:25-26 might be:

QUESTION 29

A good title for Mark 8:27-30 might be:

Step 3

Think about relationships BETWEEN the paragraphs. Consider some of the following examples:

Cause and effect: Are the events in one paragraph caused by something in preceding paragraphs.

Repetition: Are there themes, ideas or words that are repeated? This will often give you a clue to what the author is trying to emphasize.

Climax: Is there a movement from the lesser to the greater?

Contrast: Are there things in one paragraph that are clearly contrasted in the preceding or following ones.

Similarity: What things in this paragraph are similar to or the same as concepts, words, or ideas in the preceding and following paragraphs.

These relationships are the “glue” which holds a passage together. By naming them you are beginning the process of “ungluing” the passage so you better understand the author’s intended meaning.

Step 4

See if you can group certain paragraphs together and give them a common name.

View the article “Five-Step Bible Study” procedure.

QUESTION 30

BEFORE you look at the arrow on the chart for the Five-Step Bible Study, try to answer this next question yourself. What names would you give for Mark 8:1-13; Mark 8:14-26; and Mark 8:25-30?

Step 5

Reflect upon the spiritual lessons taught in this passage. Ask questions like: What does this passage tell me about God, Christ, and faith? What examples are there to follow? What sins do I need to confess? What one action could I do today to practice what I have learned in this passage?

QUESTION 31

Look at the long arrow that covers the chart. What structural relationship do you think this illustrates?

- A. Cause and Effect
- B. Climax
- C. Repetition
- D. Contrast

Topic 6: Matching Events

QUESTION 32

To help you memorize these events, we have compiled a list of sixty-one important events in the life of Christ. Take a moment and review events 10, 16, 20, and 32-35. You will find them in the article “Matching Events” at the end of this course. Hold your hand over the event descriptions on the left and see if you can identify the associated Scriptures on the right.

Topic 7: Knowing, Being, Doing

QUESTION 33: KNOWING

The study of the Second Touch contains a message for all of us. Open your Life Notebook and ask yourself “*Do I see men as trees walking, or do I see clearly?*” Developing spiritual understanding is a growth process. What specific things could you do to enhance your “sight”? How about doing one of them today?

QUESTION 34: BEING

Review once again Mark 8:22-26 where Jesus heals the blind man. Ask yourself “*Do I need a second sight, or am I still viewing men as trees walking?*” Developing spiritual understanding is a growth process. What specific things could you do to enhance your “sight”? Choose one area to work on today.

QUESTION 35: DOING

Read the chapter in *The Master Plan of Evangelism* (at the end of this course) on “Supervision.”

It is not enough to teach someone how to do something or even send him out to do it. We also must supervise. Given an example from this lesson on how Jesus used the principle of supervision in the training of the Twelve. Is there a specific relationship you have in which you need to give more supervision? Family? Ministry? Work?

QUESTION 36: DOING

Select two character qualities you think are illustrated in Jesus' life in this lesson. Open your Life Notebook and write out *how you see each character quality demonstrated in Jesus' life* and some practical ways you might work toward developing one of those qualities in your life.

Lesson 10 Self Check

QUESTION 1

In light of Christ's statement in Matthew 7:21, there seems to be a contradiction between Paul (Eph 2:8-9) and Jesus on the issue of salvation by faith alone. *True or False?*

QUESTION 2

In this discourse, the Lord says, "I am the bread of life" (Jn 5:35). What is characteristic of those who eat this bread? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. They will never be hungry again.
- B. They will never lose salvation.
- C. They will have eternal life.
- D. They will have their sin forgiven.

QUESTION 3

When Jesus warned about the leaven of the Pharisees, the disciples took Him literally, thinking He referred to bread. *True or False?*

QUESTION 4

Remember the long green arrow on the chart of Mark 8? What structural relationship do you think it illustrated?

- A. Cause and Effect
- B. Climax
- C. Repetition
- D. Contrast

QUESTION 5

Based upon John 6:39 it could legitimately be taught that it may be possible for a born-again believer to lose his salvation. *True or False?*

QUESTION 6

The specific charge brought against the Pharisees by Christ from Isaiah 29:13 is that: (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. They placed tradition above the Scriptures.
- B. Their religion consisted of external religious practices rather than internal devotedness to God.
- C. They were hypocrites.
- D. They worshiped God in vain.

QUESTION 7

What was the leaven of the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herod?

- A. The demand for a sign
- B. The vicious attacks they made on Christ
- C. Their joint conspiracy
- D. Their unbelief

QUESTION 8

In His conversation with the Syrophenician woman, Jesus refers to her countrymen as “dogs.” The harshness of this term is very perplexing from the lips of one so full of compassion. *True or False?*

QUESTION 9

In the question about manna, what is Jesus teaching about His Father and Himself? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. The Father, not Moses, supplied the manna from heaven.
- B. The Father has sent Jesus from heaven as the bread of life.
- C. The crowds were seeking Him for the wrong thing.
- D. Eating the bread of life results in inner satisfaction.

QUESTION 10

According to Jesus, what is one way we can tell what is going on in a person’s heart?

- A. By observing his religion
- B. By talking with his friends
- C. By observing his past
- D. By listening to what he says

Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1:

In Matthew 7:21 Jesus declares that only those who do the will of His Father in heaven will be saved. In John 6:29 He explains that the will of His Father is that we believe, precisely the teaching of Paul. Another possibility held by many Bible scholars is that “to enter the kingdom” may be a challenge to those who are already saved to enter into an experience of the kingdom by becoming God’s partner in the spread of the kingdom principles throughout the earth. In other words, sometimes the call to enter the kingdom is a call to Christians to become disciples.

QUESTION 2:

This probably refers to the Father’s pronouncement from heaven at Jesus’ baptism, “This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased.”

QUESTION 3:

- A. They will never be hungry again.
- B. They will never lose salvation.
- C. They will have eternal life.

QUESTION 4:

<i>Verse</i>	<i>Metaphor</i>
John 6:35	Bread
John 8:12	Light
John 10:7	Door
John 10:14	Shepherd
John 11:25	Life
John 14:6	Way
John 15:1	Vine

QUESTION 5: *Your answer*

QUESTION 6: *Your answer*

QUESTION 7: False

QUESTION 8:

- A. The Father, not Moses, supplied the manna from heaven.
- B. The Father has sent Jesus from heaven as the bread of life.
- C. The crowds were seeking Him for the wrong thing.
- D. Eating the bread of life results in inner satisfaction.

QUESTION 9:

<i>Term</i>	<i>Explanation</i>
Source John 6:32	Heaven
Resurrection John 6:40	Never ends
Effect John 6:35	Satisfaction of the heart
Where found John 6:48	In a person, not in a religion

QUESTION 10:

- D. His claim that they must eat His flesh and drink His blood in order to have life.

QUESTION 11:

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus noted that there were two ways of entrance into the kingdom of heaven, the broad and narrow ways (Mt 7:13-14, Lesson 6). The narrow way was difficult and led through hardship and persecution; the broad way was the easy way. Both ways led to the kingdom, both groups will be saved. The disciples in John 6:60-65 chose the broad and easy way, a way which would lead to the ruin of their temporal lives.

QUESTION 12: *Your answer*

QUESTION 13:

- A. They placed tradition above the Scriptures.
- B. Their religion consisted of external religious practices rather than internal devotedness to God.
- C. They were hypocrites.
- D. They worshiped God in vain.

QUESTION 14:

- D. By listening to what he says

QUESTION 15:

- B. Ephesians 2:8-9

QUESTION 16:

It is possible that he was putting obstacles to her faith, wanting to see if she would persist.

QUESTION 17: False

QUESTION 18:

Jesus appears to be using sign language in order to communicate to the man what he was going to do. He looked to heaven indicating to the man that this was the source of the healing.

QUESTION 19:

At His previous visit to this area, He had healed the man with a demon and cast the demons into a herd of pigs. It is likely that the testimony of the demoniac created intense interest in the ministry of the Jewish Messiah.

QUESTION 20:

- D. Their teaching.

QUESTION 21:

- B. Because they had seen him perform the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand.

QUESTION 22: True

QUESTION 23:

- A. They did not respond to his previous signs.
- B. They had no spiritual understanding so it would do little good.
- D. One day, at His Second Coming, they will see a sign from heaven.

QUESTION 24: Demand for a sign or Pharisees demand a sign

QUESTION 25: The Leaven of the Pharisees

QUESTION 26: The disciples ask for bread or We have no bread!

QUESTION 27: Men like trees walking or Walking Trees

QUESTION 28: A Second Touch

QUESTION 29: Peter's Confession or "You are the Christ!"

QUESTION 30:

Some possible answers might be: Mark 8:1-13—No Sight; Mark 8:14-26—Some Sight; Mark 8:25-30—Full Sight.

QUESTION 31:

- B. Climax

QUESTION 32: *Your answer*

QUESTION 33: *Your answer*

QUESTION 34: *Your answer*

QUESTION 35: *Your answer*

QUESTION 36: *Your answer*

Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1: True

QUESTION 2:

- A. They will never be hungry again.
- B. They will never lose salvation.
- C. They will have eternal life.

QUESTION 3: True

QUESTION 4:

- B. Climax

QUESTION 5: False

QUESTION 6:

- A. They placed tradition above the Scriptures.
- B. Their religion consisted of external religious practices rather than internal devotedness to God.
- C. They were hypocrites.
- D. They worshiped God in vain.

QUESTION 7:

- D. Their unbelief.

QUESTION 8: False

QUESTION 9:

- A. The Father, not Moses, supplied the manna from Heaven.
- B. The Father has sent Jesus from heaven as the bread of life.
- C. The crowds were seeking Him for the wrong thing.
- D. Eating the bread of life results in inner satisfaction.

QUESTION 10:

- D. By listening to what He says.

Lesson 10 Notes

Bread

In Palestine, as everything depended upon the wheat and barley harvest, bread was in a peculiar sense sacred. The psychology of the matter seems to be about this: all life was seen to be dependent upon the grain harvest, this in turn depended upon rain in its season, and so bread, the product at bottom of these Divine processes, was regarded as peculiarly a gift of God, a daily reminder of his continual and often undeserved care (Mt 5:45) consider in this connection the Lord's Prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread," in Matthew 6:11; compare Luke 11:11.

J. Orr. M.A., D.D. (1999). *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* : 1915 edition (J. Orr, Ed.). Albany, OR: Ages Software.

Corban

Literally translated it means a gift, a sacrificial offering, that which is brought near, (namely, to the altar): An expression frequently used in the original text of the Old Testament; in the English Bible it occurs in Mark 7:11; compare also Matthew 15:5. It is the most general term for a sacrifice of any kind. In the course of time it became associated with an objectionable practice. Anything dedicated to the temple by pronouncing the word "Corban", immediately belonged to the temple, but only ideally; actually it might remain in the possession of him who made the vow. So a son might be justified in not supporting his old parents simply because he designated his property or a part of it as a gift to the temple, that is, as corban. There was no necessity of fulfilling his vow, yet he was actually prohibited from ever using his property for the support of his parents. This shows clearly why Christ singled out this queer regulation in order to demonstrate the sophistry of tradition and to bring out the fact of its possible and actual hostility to the Scripture and its spirit.

J.Orr. M.A., D.D. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*: 1915 edition (J. Orr, Ed.). Albany, OR: Ages Software.

Decapolis

Decapolis was the name given to a district east of the Jordan, extending as far north (apparently) as Damascus, and as far south as the river Jabbok, which formed the northern limit of Perea. It was a confederacy of ten free cities, in a district which, on their return from exile, the Jews had never been able to recover, and which was therefore mainly occupied by Gentiles, who formed a separate section of the Roman province.

These cities were largely Greek and therefore very distinct from the surrounding area. They produced many scholars, poets, and lawyers. Greek religion also flourished here but it had an eastern flavor.

The name given to the region occupied by a league of "ten cities" (Mt 4:25; Mk 5:20), which was in Perea. Such combinations of Greek cities arose as Rome assumed dominion in the East, to promote their common interests in trade and commerce, and for mutual protection against the peoples surrounding them. This particular league seems to have been constituted about the time of Pompey's campaign in Syria, 65 BC, by which several cities in Decapolis dated their eras. They were independent of the local tetrarchy and answerable directly to the governor of Syria.

They enjoyed the rights of association and asylum; they struck their own coinage, paid imperial taxes, and were liable to military service. The Greek inhabitants were never on good terms with the Jews, and the herd of swine (Mk 5:11) indicates contempt for what was probably regarded as Jewish prejudice. (James Orr, *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 1915)

Dogs

Probably the little children purposely dropped a few little crumbs for the little dogs. These are household dogs, pets of and loved by the children. It's a unique combination of faith and wit. Instead of resenting Christ's words about giving the children's bread to the dogs (Gentiles) in verse 27, the Syrophenician woman instantly turned it to the advantage of her plea for her little daughter.

A. Robertson. (1997). *Word Pictures in the New Testament*. Vol.V c1932, Vol.VI c1933 by Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. (Mk 7:28-29). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems.

Leaven

The figurative uses of leaven in the New Testament, no less than with the rabbis, reflect the ancient view of it as corrupt and corrupting, in parts at least, e.g., Matthew 16:6 and especially the proverbial saying twice quoted by Paul, "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" (1 Cor 5:6; Gal 5:9, KJV). But as Jesus used it in Matthew 13:33, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven," it is clearly the hidden, silent, mysterious but all-pervading and transforming action of the leaven in the measures of flour that is the point of the comparison.

Orr, J., M.A., D.D. (1999). *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*: 1915 edition (J. Orr, Ed.). Albany, OR: Ages Software.

Manna

The Hebrew word for manna is literally translated "what is this?" During their sojourn in the wilderness, God fed His people with this mysterious substance. The most important passages of the Old Testament on this topic are the following: Exodus 16:14-36; Numbers 11:7-9; Deuteronomy 8:3, 16; Joshua 5:12; Psalm 78:24, 25. From these passages we learn that the manna came every morning except the Sabbath, in the form of a small round seed resembling the hoar frost; that it must be gathered early, before the sun became so hot as to melt it; that it must be gathered every day except the Sabbath; that the attempt to lay aside for a succeeding day, except on the day immediately preceding the Sabbath, failed by the substance becoming wormy and offensive; that it was prepared for food by grinding and baking; that its taste was like fresh oil, and like wafers made with honey, equally agreeable to all palates; that the whole nation, of at least 2,000,000, subsisted upon it for forty years; that it suddenly ceased when they first got the new corn of the land of Canaan; and that it was always regarded as a miraculous gift directly from God, and not as a product of nature.

Magdala

This name appears only in Matthew 15:39. In the parallel passage, Mark 8:10, its place is taken by Dalmanutha. From these two passages it is reasonable to infer that the borders of Magadan and the parts of Dalmanutha were contiguous. We may perhaps gather from the narrative that they lay on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. After the feeding of the four thousand, Jesus and His disciples came to these parts. Thence they departed to the other side (Mk 8:13), arriving at

Bethsaida. This is generally believed to have been Bethsaida-Julias, northeast of the sea, whence He set out on His visit to Caesarea Philippi. In this case we might look for Dalmanutha and Magadan somewhere south of the Plain of Gennesaret, at the foot of the western hills.

J., Orr, M.A., D.D. (1999). *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*: 1915 edition (J. Orr, Ed.). Albany, OR: Ages Software.

Shepherd

The office of the eastern shepherd, as described in the Bible, was attended with much hardship, and even danger. He was exposed to the extremes of heat and cold, Genesis 31:40; his food frequently consisted of the precarious supplies afforded by nature, such as the fruit of the sycamore or Egyptian fig, Amos 7:14, the husks of the carob tree, Luke 15:16, and perchance the locusts and wild honey which supported the Baptist, Matthew 3:4; he had to encounter the attacks of wild beasts, occasionally of the larger species, such as lions, wolves, panthers, and bears, 1 Samuel 17:34; Isaiah 31:4; Jeremiah 5:6; Amos 3:12; nor was he free from the risk of robbers or predatory hordes, Genesis 31:39. To meet these various foes the shepherd's equipment consisted of the following articles: a mantle, made probably of sheepskin with the fleece on, which he turned inside out in cold weather, as implied in the comparison in Jeremiah 43:12; a scrip or wallet, containing a small amount of food, 1 Samuel 17:40; a sling, which is still the favorite weapon of the Bedouin shepherd, 1 Samuel 17:40; and lastly, a staff, which served the double purpose of a weapon against foes and a crook for the management of the flock, 1 Samuel 17:40; Psalm 23:4; Zechariah 11:7.

The routine of the shepherd's duties appears to have been as follows: In the morning he led forth his flock from the fold, John 10:4, which he did by going before them and calling to them, as is still usual in the East; arrived at the pasturage, he watched the flock with the assistance of dogs, Job 30:1, and should any sheep stray, he had to search for it until he found it, Ezekiel 34:12; Luke 15:4; he supplied them with water, either at a running stream or at troughs attached to wells, Genesis 29:7; 30:38; Exodus 2:16; Psalm 23:2; at evening he brought them back to the fold, and reckoned them to see that none were missing, by passing them under the rod as they entered the door of the enclosure (Lev 27:32; Ezek 20:37), checking each sheep, as it passed, by a motion of the hand (Jer 33:13); and, finally, he watched the entrance of the fold throughout the night, acting as porter (John 10:3). [See Sheepfold, under Sheep.] The shepherd's office thus required great watchfulness, particularly by night (Luke 2:8; Nah 3:18). It also required tenderness toward the young and feeble (Isa 40:11), particularly in driving them to and from the pasturage (Gen 33:13). In large establishments there are various grades of shepherds, the highest being styled rulers (Gen 47:6), or chief shepherds (1 Pet 5:4); in a royal household the title of abbir, mighty, was bestowed on the person who held the post (1 Sam 21:7).

W.Smith. (1997). *Smith's Bible Dictionary* (electronic ed. of the revised ed.). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Signs of the Times

In the book of Daniel 9:24-27, Daniel received a prophecy which said that from the going forth of the command to restore and rebuild Jerusalem under the Persian Artaxerxes I (March 5, 444 BC) until the coming of the Messiah would be sixty-nine sevens of 360-day years or 173,880 days. This period ended on March 30, AD 33, the date of the Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem where Jesus officially presented himself to Israel as the Messiah. The Pharisees should have known that the hour was near.

Light

The phenomena of natural light have their counterpart in the inner life of man. Few words lend themselves with such beauty and appropriateness to the experiences, conditions, and radiance of the spiritual life. For this reason the Scriptures use light largely in the figurative sense. Borrowed from the natural world, it is, nevertheless, inherently suited to portray spiritual realities. In secular life a distinct line of demarcation is drawn between intellectual and spiritual knowledge and illumination. Education that enlightens the mind may leave the moral man untouched. This distinction rarely obtains in the Bible, which deals with man as a spiritual being and looks upon his faculties as interdependent in their action.

a. A few passages, however, refer to the light that comes chiefly to the intellect or mind through Divine instruction, e.g., Psalm 119:130, (KJV): “The entrance of thy words giveth light”; so Proverbs 6:23, (KJV), “The law is light.” Even here the instruction includes moral as well as mental enlightenment.

b. Morality (Job 24:13, 16, KJV) has to do exclusively with man’s moral attitude to truth: “rebel against the light; . . . know not the light.” Isaiah 5:20 describes a moral confusion and blindness, which cannot distinguish light from darkness.

c. For the most part, however, light and life go together. It is the product of salvation: Yahweh is my light and my salvation (Ps 27:1). Light, figuratively used, has to do preeminently with spiritual life, including also the illumination that floods all the faculties of the soul: intellect, conscience, reason, will. In the moral realm the enlightenment of these faculties is dependent wholly on the renewal of the spirit. “In thy light...we see light” (Ps 36:9, KJV); The life was the light of men (Jn 1:4, KJV).

J.Orr. M.A., D.D. (1999). *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*: 1915 edition (J. Orr, Ed.). Albany, OR: Ages Software.

Tyre and Sidon

This Gentile city in the far northwest of Palestine had a long history and many connections with Israel. The city was a center for paganism and the King of Tyre was used as a type of Satan in Ezekiel in the sixth century BC.

Because of the excessive pride of the city, Ezekiel pronounced its doom, predicting that it would be scraped bare like the top of a rock (Ezek 26:4). Over two hundred years later, Alexander the Great fulfilled the prophecy to the letter, scraping the debris of the mainland city into the sea to make a causeway out to the island city of Tyre. He sacked the city. The immediate results of the capture by Alexander were most disastrous to Tyre, as its brave defenders were put to death; and in accordance with the barbarous policy of ancient times, 30,000 of its inhabitants, including slaves, free females, and free children, were sold as slaves. It gradually, however, recovered its prosperity through the immigration of fresh settlers.

Tyre was extremely prosperous at the time of Christ. Its great wealth was due in part to the dyes of the celebrated Tyrian purple, which, as is well-known, were extracted from shellfish found on the coast. When visited by Christ (Mt 15:21; Mk 7:24), Tyre was perhaps more populous than Jerusalem. If so, it was undoubtedly the largest city the Savior is known to have visited.

A Christian community flourished there, and Paul visited it on his journey from Asia to Jerusalem (Acts 21:6-7).

In the second century, this pagan Gentile city became a minor center of Christian influence, long after Jerusalem, the rightful heir, had been destroyed by the Romans in AD 70.

Vine

The metaphor of the vine is very common in the Scriptures. When Christ refers to Himself as the true vine He refers to the fact that it is through close fellowship with Him (not mere organic connection) that we have a source of life and power to produce the fruit of obedient discipleship.

Washing

It was the practice to draw water out of these jars with a measure equal to one and a half “egg-shells.” For, no less quantity than this might be used for washing. The water was poured on both hands, which must be free of anything covering them, such as gravel, mortar, etc. The hands were lifted up, so as to make the water run to the wrist, in order to ensure that the whole hand was washed, and that the water polluted by the hand did not again run down the fingers. Similarly, each hand was rubbed with the other (the first), provided the hand that rubbed had been washed. Otherwise, the rubbing might be done against the head, or even against a wall. But there was one point on which special stress was laid. In the “first washing,” which was all that originally was required when the hands were ceremonially “defiled,” the water had to run down to the wrist. If the water remained short of the wrist, the hands were not clean.

Lesson 10 Articles

A Five-Step Bible Study

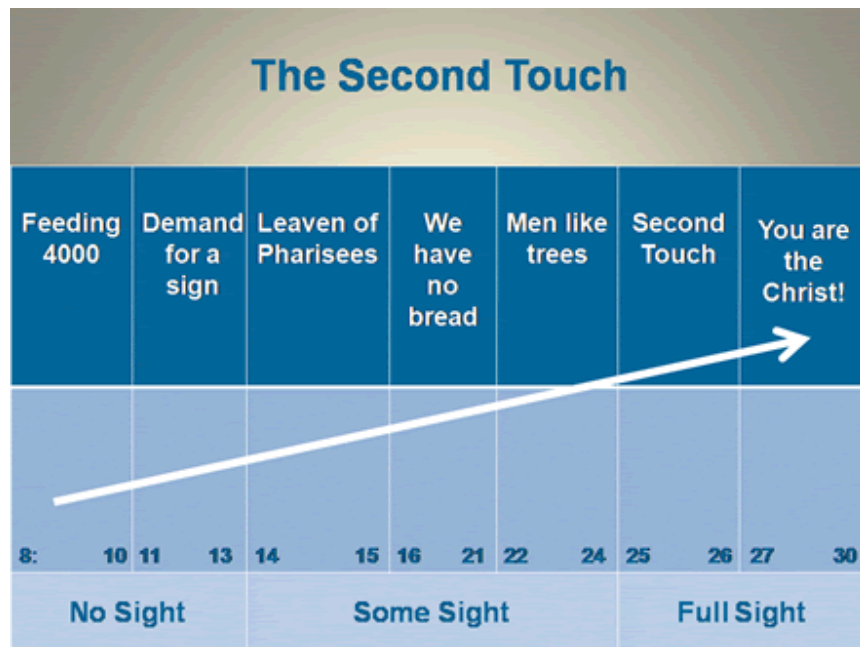
Step 1

Read the passage through carefully at least two times. Think about what you are reading. Answer questions like: Why? How? What for? What difference would it make if this particular paragraph were missing? How is this paragraph related to what follows and what precedes it?

Step 2

The second step is to divide the passage up into paragraphs and then give a title to the paragraph. There is no “right” title. Just think of one that describes for you what is happening in that paragraph.

To help you visualize this look at the chart below. The first paragraph in Mark 8:1-9 is named for you. We called it The Second Touch.



Step 3

Think about relationships BETWEEN the paragraphs. Consider some of the following examples:

Cause and effect: Are the events in one paragraph cause by something in preceding paragraphs?

Repetition: Are there themes, ideas, or words which are repeated? This will often give you a clue to what the author is trying to emphasize.

Climax: Is there a movement from the lesser to the greater?

Contrast: Are there things in one paragraph which are clearly contrasted in the preceding or following ones?

Similarity: What things in this paragraph are similar to or the same as concepts, words, or ideas in the preceding and following paragraphs?

These relationships are the “glue” which holds a passage together. By naming them you are beginning the process of “ungluing” the passage so you better understand the author’s intended meaning.

Step 4

See if you can group certain paragraphs together and give them a common name.

Step 5

Reflect upon the spiritual lessons taught in this passage. Ask questions like: What does this passage tell me about God, Christ, and Faith? What examples are there to follow? What sins do I need to confess? What one action could I do today to practice what I have learned in this passage?

Lesson 11: The Rivers of Living Water, The Light of the World, and the Great "I AM"

Lesson Introduction

The events of the preceding months had not only inflamed Jesus' reputation, but further hardened the opposition against Him. The Jewish Feast of Tabernacles was at hand and Jesus' brothers felt it was time that He publicly present Himself as the Messiah. His unwillingness to fulfill the Jewish hopes of a Jewish kingdom and, perhaps, elevate His brothers to a high position in it, left them skeptical and full of doubt.

This lesson begins with their unbelief in Topic 1 and proceeds with a series of incredible claims and ends with the Pharisees threatening to stone him. Juxtaposed between these two negative events, are two of his most startling discourses.

At the Feast of Tabernacles in Topic 2, Jesus takes his message directly into the temple and startled the scholars with his amazing knowledge of the Scriptures. Yet his claims offended them and many people doubted. On the last day of the feast, Jesus stood and exclaimed to their utter astonishment that He was the source of and the inner spiritual water with which the Holy Spirit would flood their inner beings.

In Topic 3 the famous story of the woman who was caught in the act of adultery will be considered. Thinking they could play on his compassion to get him to deny the law of stoning for this sin, the Pharisees thrust the woman before him. We will study his curious response and how it completely silenced them.

Then in Topic 4 Christ makes His famous claim to be the Light of the world. He continues His assertions of His deity and directly accuses the Jews of their unbelief and its terrible consequences.

One of our Lord's most direct claims to be God is found in Topic 5. In His claim to exist before Abraham, He asserted that He was "I AM," a Greek form for the Hebrew word, "Yahweh," the Old Testament name of God. In response they picked up stones to kill Him.

One of the most interesting encounters between Jesus and the Pharisees is the subject of Topic 6, a man born blind. Jesus deliberately provoked the Pharisees by healing the man on the Sabbath; they rose to the bait and were made to look foolish in the eyes of the people when they confronted the man whom Jesus healed. Jesus tells them that just as this man was physically blind, they are spiritually blind.

Finally, the discourse on the Good Shepherd will be considered in Topic 7. Referring to the people of Israel as sheep, Jesus claims to be both the door to the sheepfold (to salvation) and the Good Shepherd who can lead them there. His startling claims to be the Good Shepherd and that He and the Father are one, resulted in another failed attempt to arrest and stone him.

Jesus has now taken His ministry into the heart of the religious system of Israel, the temple in Jerusalem. During the last two years of His ministry, He spends more and more time there. If He is Israel's Messiah, His credentials must be directly presented to her leaders and to the directors of the temple religious system.

Lesson Outline

Topic 1: His Unbelieving Brothers

Topic 2: Rivers of Living Water

How to know the Truth

Waters from Within

Topic 3: A Woman Caught in Adultery

Topic 4: I Am the Light of the World

The Light of the World

The Truth Shall Set You Free

Topic 5: Before Abraham Was, I AM.

Topic 6: I Came That the Blind Might See

The Healing of the Man Born Blind

The Steps of Faith

The Steps into Darkness

The Effect of the Light of the World

Topic 7: I Am the Good Shepherd

The Call to Follow

My Sheep Hear My Voice

The Security of the Sheep

Topic 8: Matching Events

Topic 9: Knowing, Being, Doing

Lesson Objectives

- At the completion of this lesson, you will be able to:
- Show that God's timetable for the events in our lives can often differ from ours for good and hidden reasons
- Explain how, according to Jesus, we can come to a knowledge of "Truth"
- Comprehend and personally apply the incredible forgiveness of Christ
- Set forth the Lord's claim that He is the one who gives spiritual sight to those who believe on Him
- Clearly establish that Jesus directly claimed to be God
- Explain that to hear and to follow is a metaphor for hearing and believing

Topic 1: His Unbelieving Brothers

April, AD 31

The Jewish Feast of Tabernacles was one of the three great feasts every Jew was required to attend. As a result, every October (Tisri on the Jewish calendar), thousands of pilgrims made their way to the Holy City in obedience to the Law of Moses. The first and last days occurred on the Sabbath, and the second Sabbath was known as the Great Day of the Feast. This feast commemorated the tent life of Israel in the wilderness and in celebration of this; Jewish families lived in tents (tabernacles) for seven days. These tabernacles were erected everywhere, in court and on housetop, in street and square, for the lodgment and entertainment of that vast multitude. These leafy dwellings reminded all Israel of the wilderness journey, and now of the good land God had given.

Jesus' brothers felt this would be an excellent time for Christ to declare Himself and urged Him to go. Bidding them to go on ahead, he journeyed to the feast in secret. This was, no doubt, to avoid the notoriety He would arouse if He traveled at the same time as the other Pilgrims, meeting them on the roads. As he said, "my hour is not yet come," and He had no intention of being prematurely forced into something ahead of His Father's divinely appointed schedule.

His brothers were very skeptical of His claims and felt that if He were truly the Messiah, this would be the time to prove it.

Jesus actions are to show that God's timetable for the events in our lives can often differ from ours for good and hidden reasons.

The Scripture related to this topic is John 7:2-10.

QUESTION 1

What motivated Jesus' brothers to suggest Jesus go to the feast? Choose the best answer.

- A. They wanted Him to proclaim Himself as King.
- B. They were hoping for places in the kingdom.
- C. They thought it would be best for Him to take advantage of this opportunity.
- D. They were not convinced of His Messiahship and were seeking another sign.



QUESTION 2

What did Jesus mean by saying “My time has not yet come”?

As mentioned in the previous lesson, it is certain that Jesus intended to fulfill, to the day, Daniel’s great prophecy of the Seventy Weeks (see note at end of lesson).

QUESTION 3

God’s timetable for the events in our lives may not be the same as ours or seem to be the best. Often there are hidden reasons why God does not act according to our schedule. *Describe a specific incident where you wanted to rush God about an issue or situation and then later saw His good timing in your life. What did you learn through this?*

Topic 2: Rivers of Living Water

After arriving at the feast, Jesus was, apparently, immediately noticed by the people and considerable debate developed as to His real identity. Is He the Messiah? Is He a deceiver? Who is He, really?

The Jews, that is, the Pharisees, began looking for Jesus at the feast, hoping to provoke another debate and possibly arrest Him for some violation of their traditions.

How to Know Truth

September, AD 31

This section is to explain how, according to Jesus, we can come to a knowledge of “Truth.”

Scripture related to this topic is John 7:11-36.

QUESTION 4

According to Jesus (Jn 7:16-17), how can a person prove to himself whether or not Christ’s teaching is from God?

- A. By study
- B. By doing it
- C. By interaction with others
- D. By listening to sermons

Enraged, the Jews assert that he must be demon possessed (Jn 7:20). Jesus did not notice their coarse insolence. He reminded them of that one work of healing on the Sabbath day at which they were all still marveling. He explained that one who has the power to perform such a deed should do it on the Sabbath. Jesus loved to teach the lesson that love and not literalism is the fulfilling of the Law. So he showed them, even on their own purely ritualistic and Levitical principles, that His word of healing had in no respect violated the Sabbath at all (Jn 7:21-24).

For instance, Moses had established, or rather reestablished, the ordinance of circumcision on the eighth day (Jn 7:22). However, if that eighth day happened to be a Sabbath, they would not hesitate to sacrifice the one ordinance to the other, and in spite of the labor involved, performed the rite of circumcision on the Sabbath day.

If the law of circumcision superseded that of the Sabbath, did not the law of mercy? If it was right by a series of actions to inflict that wound, was it wrong by a single word to effect a total cure?

And then He summed His self-defense in the one calm word, “Do not be ever judging by the mere appearance, but judge a righteous judgment;” (Jn 7:24) instead of being permanently content with a superficial mode of criticism, come once for all to some principle of righteous decision. (Adapted from Farrar.)

Waters from Within

September, AD 31

Scripture related to this topic is John 7:37-53.

QUESTION 5

The Pharisees’ assertion that no prophet can come from Galilee is false. *True or False?*

By saying that no prophet can come from Galilee, the Pharisees revealed their ignorance of Scripture. Jonah was from Gath-helper (2 Kgs 14:25), Elijah came from Gilead (1 Kgs 17:1), and Nahum was from Elkosh (Nah 1:1).

On the last day, the “great day” of the feast, Jesus arose in the midst of the crowd and asserted that those who were thirsty should come to Him to drink.

On each of the seven feast days, there was a significant and joyous ceremony. Early in the morning the people went to the temple. When the morning sacrifice had been laid on the altar, one of the priests went down with a golden pitcher to the Pool of Siloam.

There, with great solemnity, he drew one-third of a liter of water, which was then carried in triumphant procession through the water gate into the temple. As he entered the temple courts the sacred trumpets breathed out a joyous blast, which continued till he reached the top of the altar slope, and there poured the water into a silver basin on the western side, while wine was poured into another silver basin on the eastern side. Then the great Hallel (see note at end of lesson) was sung, and each of the gaily clad worshippers would end the ceremony quoting Psalm 118:29, (KJV), “Oh give thanks unto the LORD; for He is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.” In the evening they abandoned themselves to such rejoicing, that the rabbis say that the man who has not seen this “joy of the drawing water” does not know what joy means.

It was on this day, and no doubt, at that moment, that Jesus appropriately stood in the temple and said “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. Just as the scripture says, ‘**From within him will flow rivers of living water**’” (Jn 7:37-38).



QUESTION 6

Read the key verse in which Jesus makes His astounding claim (Jn 7:37-39). Some wonderful things are said here. Check all of the items in the following list which, in your opinion, are taught in this verse. (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. It is the thirsty who would want the water and it was to them that the offer was made.
- B. There is only one requirement to receive this water, believing on Him,
- C. In making this claim, Jesus is apparently fulfilling Isaiah 12:1-5; 44:3; 55:1.
- D. These waters will flow from the inner being of a man.

Later, Paul would refer to this experience of drinking as something which has happened to “all” Christians and is not just the privilege of a few (1 Cor 12:13.). It therefore seems to refer to the moment of salvation when the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in us.

QUESTION 7

Open your Life Notebook and write out all your thoughts on the relationship between “water” and the Holy Spirit (Jn 7:37-39). Why did Jesus use the metaphor of water to describe the work of the Holy Spirit? What does it mean that this water “flows” from one’s “inner being”? How, according to this passage, can we experience this wonderful ministry of the Holy Spirit?

Topic 3: The Woman Caught in Adultery

September, AD 31

At dawn the next morning, Jesus returns to the temple to teach. Abruptly, the teaching ministry of Jesus was rudely disrupted. A group composed of scribes and Pharisees thrust a woman into the midst of the circle of people who had assembled around Jesus and they stridently accused her of the sin of adultery. Their purpose in doing so, John informs his readers, had little to do with moral indignation on their part and much to do with their desire to entrap and accuse Jesus Himself.

They did this, in fact, to tempt him! (Zane Hodges, Professor New Testament, Dallas Theological Seminary).

This illustration is to teach us to comprehend and personally apply the incredible forgiveness of Christ.

The Scripture related to this topic is John 8:1-9.

Read the chapter in the textbook section (at the end of this course) by Farrar on the “The Woman Caught in Adultery.”

Farrar aptly describes the dilemma the hostile Pharisees hoped to trap Jesus in. The Pharisees hoped to catch Jesus with a question for which there was no acceptable answer.

If Jesus insisted upon the execution of the Mosaic penalty, then this would be twisted into an illegality. Capital punishment was illegal for the Jews (Jn 18:31).

If on the other hand, Jesus stood against stoning the woman, he would be in direct contradiction to the Mosaic Law (Lev 20:10; Deut 22:22).

This in turn would disgrace his authority as a teaching rabbi and severely reduce His popularity with the people.

In His response, Jesus stoops to write in the sand. This is the only mention of writing by Jesus. If we only knew what He wrote! Certainly Jesus knew how to write. And yet more books have been written about this one who wrote nothing that is preserved than any other person or subject in human history.

QUESTION 8

According to Farrar, when Jesus stooped to write, it was:

- A. An indirect claim to be God
- B. A wise refusal to fall into the Pharisees’ trap
- C. An expression of His total indifference to them, He was not even going to listen
- D. A symbol of forgiveness

If the content of the writing was important, it is certain that John would have recorded it. This leaves us with the conclusion that it was not the content but the act of writing which was important.

One suggestion, based upon Exodus 31:18 seems quite likely. The only other reference to God writing with His finger was when God wrote the Ten Commandments. Jesus, by writing with His finger in the sand may be pointing out the fact that One greater than the law is here. There is a new law where forgiveness based upon His sacrificial death will reign.

If Jesus were no more than a rabbi, all He could do would be to assent to the Mosaic Code. But if He is the one who wrote the Mosaic Code, He then has the authority to change it.

One of the wonderful things about knowing Christ is, no matter how far we have fallen, no matter how great our sin, forgiveness and restoration is possible. Like the woman caught in adultery, the world is drowning in guilt, so are many Christians. How about you? Read and remember the wonderful promise of 1 John 1:9.

QUESTION 9

Have you ever done something that created great guilt in your life and felt that God could never forgive you? Does this still linger with you? Write a prayer to God confessing your unbelief in this area and thank Him for the forgiveness He has already provided through His death and resurrection. Record your response in your Life Notebook.

Topic 4: I Am the Light of the World

As the morning rose in the east, banishing the darkness, the incident of the woman taken in adultery fades in the background. While standing in the Court of the Women (see note at end of lesson) in the temple, that rising sun lent emphasis to His claim. Having just forgiven a woman who had fallen into the depths and darkness of sin, the Lord Jesus Christ now claims to be the true light, the Light of the world.

The whole incident, which had begun, it would seem, amid the last shadows of a departing night, was then being played out under a rapidly brightening sun. And somehow they stood in the glare of a Light that was greater than the sun—and was itself more hopelessly revealing than natural sunlight could ever be. As the woman caught in adultery walked out the east gate into the blinding light of the morning sun, Jesus saw an opportunity to use the rising sun as a metaphor for the true light which He came to bring.

This is the second great “I AM” declaration in John’s gospel.

The Light of the World

September, AD 31

This part of the study is to set forth the Lord’s claim that He is the one who gives spiritual sight to those who believe on Him.

Read the material in Farrar (at end of course) on the “Light of the World” (a subtopic under the “Woman Caught in Adultery”).

The Scripture related to this topic is John 8:12-29.

The sun was rising in the east and its warm rays were rapidly dispelling the shadows from the Court of the Women (see note at end of lesson). Since Jesus had entered the temple at “deep dawn” (Jn 8:2), all of the incidents John has reported could well have transpired in but a few short moments of time. The rising sun may have become the background for His claim to be the Light of the world.

QUESTION 10

Based upon John 1:12-13; 3:15-16; 7:38; 3:36; 11:25 we may say with certainty that those who “believed on Him” in John 8:30 were born again. *True or False?*

After listening to the exchange between Jesus and His questioners, many “believed on His name.” Read the article “Discipleship in John 8:32-33” at the end of the lesson.

Jesus now turns aside from His accusers and addresses in John 8:31-32 these new believers who have believed on Him and exhorts them to discipleship.

QUESTION 11

What, according to Jesus, is the key responsibility for being a disciple and what is the key for becoming a Christian.

The Truth Shall Set You Free

September, AD 31

After a brief aside in which He addressed those new believers and exhorted them to discipleship, Jesus now returns to His accusers. In the exchange which follows, Jesus makes the stupendous claim that He is the great I AM, Yahweh of the Old Testament.

The Scripture related to this topic is John 8:30-47.

QUESTION 12

Based upon John 8:33-38, what kind of freedom is Christ referring to?

Testimonies regarding deliverance from the web of sin are expressed upon the lips of millions throughout history. The truth of Christ, His forgiveness and enablement, have released many from former bondage.

QUESTION 13

Open your Life Notebook. Reflect for a moment on how Christ has set you free. Jesus is Light and Truth. How has this impacted you? Come prepared to share your thoughts with your accountability group.

Topic 5: Before Abraham Was, I AM

September, AD 31

In John 8:48 the controversy between Jesus and the Pharisees intensifies. Jesus' assertion that they were children of the devil (Jn 8:44) falls upon deaf ears. Instead of repenting and turning from their wickedness, jealousy, and pride, they counter by ridiculing Jesus and saying He is the child of the devil; He has a demon. They could think of no meaner things to say.

As the exchange continues, Jesus makes a strong claim to be God.

The I AM statements are to clearly establish that Jesus directly claimed to be God.

Scripture related to this topic is John 8:48-59.

QUESTION 14

Read John 8:48-56. Upon what did Jesus base his claims? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. The Father glorifies Him.
- B. Abraham spoke of Him (Gen 12:3).
- C. He knows God and keeps His word.
- D. He worked many miracles.

As their anger increases, the Pharisees ridicule Jesus by calling Him a Samaritan (see note at end of lesson).

QUESTION 15

Based upon Exodus 3:14 and Isaiah 41:4; 43:11-13, what did Jesus mean when he said, “Before Abraham was, I AM”?

Claiming eternal existence and equality with God, the Jews pick up stones to stone him for blasphemy. Jesus quietly, boldly walked out of the temple. His hour had not yet come.

Topic 6: I Came That the Blind Might See

Either on His departure from the temple or on a later return, Jesus saw a man who had been blind since birth. The Jews regarded special misery such as this a direct consequence of some sin. Immersed in this way of thinking, the disciples look upon him and view him as an object of theological speculation, “Rabbi, who committed the sin that caused him to be born blind, this man or his parents?” (Jn 9:2). Jesus, touched by the man’s infirmity, however, announces that this man was born blind so that the works of God may be displayed in him.

With this word, Jesus pulls back the curtain on one of the most perplexing mysteries of the Christian faith, the problem of suffering. His statement by no means solves the problem, but it does suggest that the Father in heaven knows, cares, and has a solution we will one day see when there is a righting of all wrong.

Because the healing was done on the Sabbath, once again the Pharisees are incensed. A rather amusing interchange follows in which these haters of the truth reveal their blindness and pride.

The Healing of the Man Born Blind

September, AD 31

This story is to explain the steps of faith we must take to move from spiritual blindness to sight.

Scripture related to this topic is John 9:1-41.

It illustrates for us the blindness of the Pharisees in the face of the true Light of the world.

There are no instances in the Old Testament of sight being restored to a man born blind. But the Messiah was expected to do that (Isa 35:5). Of the thirty-five major miracles recorded in the

Gospels, Jesus performed seven of them on the Sabbath. This miracle comes immediately after his claim to be the Light of the world (Jn 8:12).

QUESTION 16

Which Old Testament book refuted the disciples' view of suffering?

- A. Psalms
- B. Proverbs
- C. The Prophetic Books
- D. Job

The disciples thought that the man's blindness was caused either by his own sin or of some sin his parents committed or even of the man's sin while in the womb! Jesus taught them that this instance of blindness was not the result of sin at all, but that the glory of God might be demonstrated.

QUESTION 17

This is a very interesting and amusing chapter. In your own words write out the sequence of events in a mini-play (several paragraphs—unless you are highly motivated!), using your own words for some of the dialogue as well as the words recorded in John 9. Then summarize the lesson related to faith, evangelism, and the nature of God. Record your answers in your Life Notebook.

The Steps of Faith

September, AD 31

Scripture related to this topic is John 9:1-41.

QUESTION 18

Trace steps the blind man made in response to the light Jesus gave him by matching the steps on the left with their matching description on the right.

<i>Steps</i>	<i>Description</i>
Step 1	He challenged the Pharisees' concern for Jesus, "Do you want to become His disciples too?"
Step 2	He confessed that he did not know if Jesus was a sinner, but declared that he was once blind and now he could see.
Step 3	He refuted the denials of the Pharisees, testifying that Jesus could not have given him his sight if He were not from God.
Step 4	He called Jesus a prophet.
Step 5	After his initial obedience to wash, he told the Pharisees how he had been healed.

The Steps into Darkness

September, AD 31

Scripture related to this topic is John 9:1-41.



QUESTION 19

Trace the steps into greater darkness made by the Pharisees by matching the steps on the left with the description on the right.

<i>Steps</i>	<i>Description</i>
Step 1	They asked him to repeat the story of how he was healed, looking for a flaw.
Step 2	After they were divided over whether sinners could do miracles, they demanded the healed man tell them what he said about Him.
Step 3	They ridiculed the healed man, claiming to be disciples of Moses.
Step 4	Unable to refute his witness or his logic, they attacked the healed man personally.
Step 5	They tried to persuade the man that Jesus could not have healed him because they “know he was a sinner.”
Step 6	They threw him out.
Step 7	They found the man’s parents hoping to disprove the miracle.

The Effect of the Light of the World

Scripture related to this topic is John 9:1-41.

QUESTION 20

Open your Life Notebook and reflect upon any contrasts you see between Jesus’ declaration that he is the Light of the world in John 8:12 and John 9:5. What was the result of this claim in the life of the blind man, the Pharisees, and yourself?

Topic 7: I Am the Good Shepherd

One of the warmest and most personal metaphors Jesus uses in describing His care and protection of His follows is that of the shepherd. Like a shepherd protects and provides for his sheep so Jesus cares for His disciples.

The sheep are called and respond by following. What does it mean to “follow” the shepherd? Jesus also states that the sheep can never perish. That encouraging statement has important practical application for our daily lives.

Is it really true that one of Christ’s sheep is eternally protected from perishing and can never be snatched out of the Father’s hand? These are questions which have received different answers.

In this topic we will study this issue for ourselves. Let’s dig in!

The Call to Follow

September, AD 31

Jesus’ call to follow is to explain that to hear and to follow is a metaphor for hearing and believing.

Scripture related to this topic is John 10:1-42.

QUESTION 21

In John 10:27-28 the call to “follow” describes the believer’s experience after receiving eternal life. *True or False?*

Jesus says that “following” results in eternal life, it precedes it. If the word “follow” signifies “obedience,” then the sequence of follow and then receive eternal life would contradict Christ’s teaching elsewhere that salvation comes through faith, by believing (Jn 3:16), and not by obedience or works. This leads us to conclude that “follow” does not mean “obey” but must mean “believe.”

QUESTION 22

How does John 5:24 validate this conclusion? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. In this passage faith precedes receiving eternal life.
- B. In John 5:24, eternal life is the result of following.
- C. In John 5:24, hearing precedes faith, as in John 10:27.
- D. In John 5:24 and in John 10:27-28 there are two conditions for receiving eternal life, faith and obedience.

Jesus often uses various metaphors to describe faith and it appears that the metaphor of a sheep following is simply another way of saying that sheep believe on Him, trusting themselves to Him and to His care.

QUESTION 23

Match with Scripture on the right with the metaphor for faith on the left.

<i>Scripture</i>	<i>Metaphor for Faith</i>
John 1:12	Following
John 4:14	Receiving
John 6:37	Eating bread
John 6:35	Coming
John 6:54	Drinking
John 10:27	Drinking blood
John 5:24	Hearing

QUESTION 24

In what way do the preceding verses, John 10:25-26, confirm the conclusion that “follow” means “believe” and not “obey”?

This digression is important because we must always be clear that salvation comes to us through the agency of faith alone, and not through obedience as this verse has sometimes been misinterpreted to mean. The passage does not apply to the issue of discipleship.

My Sheep Hear My Voice

September, AD 31

Scripture related to this topic is John 10:1-42.



In the cool of the day, the sheep gather with their shepherd. The sheep, upon hearing the voice of a shepherd, would only entrust their lives to the shepherd whose voice they knew.

The sheep were afraid of any voice other than the shepherd's. But the sheep that truly belonged to the shepherd would hear and then believe. What does it mean that the sheep "hear" the voice of the shepherd? This has been understood in two ways. Some feel that this refers to an experience of ongoing communion between the believer and Christ subsequent to saving faith. Others feel that this "hearing" refers to the call of salvation, not communion.

To decide between these two options let's study the context.

In John 10:4, 5 we are told that the fearful sheep, when they hear the shepherd's voice, will follow him. This refers to entrusting their lives into his hands in contrast to following, or entrusting their lives into the hands of the false shepherd, whose voice they do not know and are afraid of.

QUESTION 25

When Jesus refers to himself as the "door into the sheepfold" in John 10:9, He is saying that the sheep who hear and believe can be saved. *True or False?*

QUESTION 26

In John 10:16 Jesus speaks of sheep not of the Jewish fold which must also hear and listen to His voice—to what is he referring (consider Acts 28:28 in answering this question)?

- A. Hearing His voice is to hear, listen to, and believe the voice in which He calls us to enter the sheepfold and be saved.
- B. Hearing His voice refers to a personal communion with Christ where He communicates thoughts, words, and impressions to the heart of the believer.
- C. Hearing His voice is the response of obedience to a life of works.
- D. Hearing His voice is none of the above.

The Security of the Sheep

September, AD 31

Scripture related to this topic is John 10:1-42.

Read the article "Security of the Sheep" at the end of this lesson.

QUESTION 27

The author of the article on the "Security of the Sheep" represents a positive view of eternal security. Not all would agree with his conclusions but we believe it is important for all of us to understand what we believe and why. Open your Life Notebook and reflect upon these questions: What is the author's strongest point? Does he substantiate it well? Why or why not? How would you argue, biblically, against what he says? Do you believe the author is correct? Why or why not?

QUESTION 28

We recognize that godly men and women have differed on this issue throughout the history of the church and will continue to do so. An important question to ask ourselves is this: How does my understanding on this issue of eternal security impact my view of God and how I live my life each day? Take time to write out your thoughts.

Topic 8: Matching Events

QUESTION 29

To help you memorize these events, we have compiled a list of sixty-one important events in the life of Christ. Take a moment and review events 7, 10, 20, and 36-40. You will find them at the end of this course. Hold your hand over the event descriptions on the left and see if you can identify the associated Scriptures on the right.

Topic 9: Knowing, Being, Doing

This lesson is full of significant themes, applications, and insights into spiritual living. In this topic, let us pause for a moment and reflect on what we have studied.

QUESTION 30: KNOWING

Jesus said he came to reveal the Father to us and that if we have seen Him, we have seen the Father also. Write down what you have learned about the Father from observing Jesus' life in this lesson. How does this understanding impact your life of faith with Jesus?

QUESTION 31: BEING

As you observed Jesus' manner of life and how he interacted with friends and enemies, select one character quality which impressed you and write several paragraphs about how Christ manifested this quality and then relate it to a concrete situation in your life.

Lesson 11 Self Check

QUESTION 1

What motivated Jesus' brothers to suggest Jesus go to the feast? Choose the best answer.

- A. They wanted Him to proclaim Himself as King.
- B. They were hoping for places in the kingdom.
- C. They thought it would be best for Him to take advantage of this opportunity.
- D. They were not convinced of His Messiahship and were seeking another sign.

QUESTION 2

According to Jesus, how can a person prove to himself whether or not Christ's teaching is from God?

- A. By study
- B. By doing it
- C. By interaction with others
- D. By listening to sermons

QUESTION 3

In John 10:16 Jesus speak of sheep not of the Jewish fold which must also hear and listen to His voice—to what is he referring (consider Acts 28:28 in answering this question)?

- A. Hearing His voice is to hear, listen to, and believe the voice in which He calls us to enter the sheepfold and be saved.
- B. Hearing His voice refers to a personal communion with Christ where He communicates thoughts, words, and impressions to the heart of the believer.
- C. Hearing His voice is the response of obedience to a life of works.
- D. Hearing His voice is none of the above.

QUESTION 4

According to Farrar, when Jesus stooped to write, it was:

- A. An indirect claim to be God
- B. A wise refusal to fall into the Pharisees trap
- C. An expression of his total indifference to them, he was not even going to listen
- D. A symbol of forgiveness

QUESTION 5

Based upon John 1:12-13; 3:15-16, 36; 7:38; 11:25, we may say with certainty that those who "believed on him" in John 8:30 were born-again. *True or False?*

QUESTION 6

Which Old Testament book refuted the disciples' view of suffering?

- A. Psalms
- B. Proverbs
- C. The Prophetic Books
- D. Job

QUESTION 7

In John 10:27-28 the call to "follow" describes the believer's experience after receiving eternal life. *True or False?*

QUESTION 8

When Jesus refers to Himself as the "door into the sheepfold" in John 10:9 He is saying that the sheep who hear and believe can be saved. *True or False?*

QUESTION 9

To say that no one can take a believer out of the Father's hand except by the believer himself removing himself from the Father's hand is the same as saying, "you can never fall, unless, of course, you do." *True or False?*

QUESTION 10

To suggest that we can lose our salvation is to imply that we can become less worthy of being saved by additional sin than we were when we first believed. *True or False?*

Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1:

D. They were not convinced of His Messiahship and were seeking another sign.

QUESTION 2:

It was not yet time to give Himself up to the Jews. It is possible that He was also referring to Daniel 9:24-27 which predicted the precise date of the Triumphal Entry, March 5, AD 33, which was two years away.

QUESTION 3: *Your answer*

QUESTION 4:

B. By doing it

QUESTION 5: True

QUESTION 6:

A. It is the thirsty who would want the water and it was to them that the offer was made.

B. There is only one requirement to receive this water, believing on Him,

C. In making this claim, Jesus is apparently fulfilling Isaiah 12:1-5; 44:3; 55:1.

D. These waters will flow from the inner being of a man.

QUESTION 7: *Your answer*

QUESTION 8:

D. A symbol of forgiveness.

QUESTION 9: *Your answer*

QUESTION 10: True

QUESTION 11:

Disciples must “abide” and non-Christians must “believe.” Salvation is by faith but discipleship is by faith plus works, believing and abiding.

QUESTION 12: Freedom from the slavery to sin.

QUESTION 13: *Your answer*

QUESTION 14:

A. The Father glorifies Him.

B. Abraham spoke of Him (Gen 12:3).

C. He knows God and keeps His word.

QUESTION 15:

He was claiming to be the God of the Old Testament, Yahweh. I AM is a title of deity.

QUESTION 16:

D. Job

QUESTION 17: *Your answer*

QUESTION 18:

<i>Steps</i>	<i>Description</i>
Step 1	After his initial obedience to wash, he told the Pharisees how he had been healed.
Step 2	He called Jesus a prophet.
Step 3	He confessed that he did not know if Jesus was a sinner, but declared that he was once blind and now he could see.
Step 4	He challenged the Pharisee’s concern for Jesus, “Do you want to become His disciples too?”
Step 5	He refuted the denials of the Pharisees, testifying that Jesus could not have given him his sight if He were not from God.

QUESTION 19:

<i>Steps</i>	<i>Description</i>
Step 1	After they were divided over whether sinners could do miracles, they demanded the healed man tell them what he said about Him.
Step 2	They found the man's parents hoping to disprove the miracle.
Step 3	They tried to persuade the man that Jesus could not have healed him because they "know he was a sinner."
Step 4	They asked him to repeat the story of how he was healed, looking for a flaw.
Step 5	They ridiculed the healed man, claiming to be disciples of Moses.
Step 6	Unable to refute his witness or his logic, they attacked the healed man personally.
Step 7	They threw him out.

QUESTION 20: *Your answer***QUESTION 21:** False**QUESTION 22:**

A. In this passage faith precedes receiving eternal life.

C. In John 5:24, hearing precedes faith, as in John 10:27.

QUESTION 23:

<i>Scripture</i>	<i>Metaphor for Faith</i>
John 1:12	Receiving
John 4:14	Drinking
John 6:37	Coming
John 6:35	Eating bread
John 6:54	Drinking blood
John 10:27	Following
John 5:24	Hearing

QUESTION 24:

These verses show that the fundamental issue in Christ's discussion with the Pharisees is faith. When John 10:27 is read in connection with its immediate context, we see that Jesus is saying that these Jews are not His sheep because they have not believed on Him.

QUESTION 25: True**QUESTION 26:**

A. Hearing His voice is to hear, listen to, and believe the voice in which He calls us to enter the sheepfold and be saved.

QUESTION 27: *Your answer***QUESTION 28:** *Your answer***QUESTION 29:** *Your answer***QUESTION 30:** *Your answer***QUESTION 31:** *Your Answer*

Lesson 11 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1:

D. They were not convinced of His Messiahship and were seeking another sign.

QUESTION 2:

B. By doing it

QUESTION 3:

A. Hearing His voice is to hear, listen to, and believe the voice in which He calls us to enter the sheepfold and be saved.

QUESTION 4:

D. A symbol of forgiveness.

QUESTION 5: True

QUESTION 6:

D. Job

QUESTION 7: False

QUESTION 8: True

QUESTION 9: True

QUESTION 10: True

Lesson 11 Notes

Court of the Women

Herod's temple in Jerusalem had several partitions. One of them was called the Court (area) of the Women. There was also a Court of the Men and an area reserved for Gentiles called the Court of the Gentiles. The Court of the Women was also the place where the temple treasury was located. Here contribution boxes were placed.

Hallel

In the fifth book of the Psalms (107–150) there are several groups of Hallelujah Psalms: Psalms 111 through 113; Psalms 115 through 117; Psalm 135; Psalms 146 through 150. In the worship of the synagogue, Psalms 135–136 and 146–150 were used in the daily morning service. Psalms 113–118 were called the “Egypt Hallel,” and were sung at the feasts of the Passover, Pentecost, Tabernacles, and Dedication. At the Passover, Psalm 113 and Psalm 114 (according to the school of Shammai only Ps 113) were sung before the feast, and Psalms 115–118 after drinking the last cup. The song used by our Lord and the disciples on the night of the betrayal (Mt 26:30), just before the departure for the Mount of Olives, probably included Psalms 115–118.

J.Orr. M.A., D.D. (1999). *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*: 1915 edition (J. Orr, Ed.). Albany, OR: Ages Software.

Samaritans

Samaritans were a mixed race with a religion the Jews considered apostate. To call Jesus a Samaritan was to use a term of abuse, referring to a heretic or one with a faulty worship.

Seventy Weeks Prophecy

In the book of Daniel 9:24-27, Daniel received a prophecy which said that from the going forth of the of the command to restore and rebuild Jerusalem under the Persian Artaxerxes 1 (March 5, 444 BC, until the coming of the Messiah would be sixty-nine sevens (sixty-nine weeks) of 360 day years or 173,880 days. In an additional week, making a total of seventy weeks, a great tribulation would come upon the earth. This period of sixty-nine weeks ended on March 30, AD 33, the date of the Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem where Jesus officially presented himself to Israel as the Messiah. The Pharisees should have known that the hour was near.

Lesson 11 Articles

Discipleship in John 8:32-33

In the passage Jesus draws a clear distinction between being a Christian by faith, and being a disciple by abiding.

In this controversial section Jesus is in conflict with the Pharisees in the temple in Jerusalem. Some of His hearers believed on Him and were born-again. Jesus, in these verses, speaks to these who have believed and challenges them to discipleship.

After listening to Him for a time, some of the Jews, according to v. 30, “believed on Him.” The expression in Greek is *episteusan eis auton*. In every other place in John’s gospel where it is used, it always refers to genuine, not spurious (false or deceitful), faith. It is virtually a technical term John uses for being saved. Consider these verses from the NIV, emphasis added:

“Yet to all who received him, to those who **believed in his name**, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God” (Jn 1:12-13).

“Everyone who **believes in him** may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever **believes in him** shall not perish but have eternal life” (Jn 3:15-16).

“Whoever **believes in me**, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him” (Jn 7:38).

Examples could be multiplied (see also Jn 2:11; 3:17, 18, 36; 6:29, 35, 40, 47; 7:39; 9:35, 36; 10:42; 11:25-26, 45; 12:44). Since these men in John 8 **believed on Him**, on the authority of Jesus Himself, we may say they are born-again and have eternal life.

Now in John 8:31, Jesus turns to the “Jews who had believed in Him” (those mentioned in the preceding verse who had **believed on Him**) and says, “If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine” (NASB).

This “aside” is used by John to help explain how Jesus’ words were being misconstrued. John did this often in his gospel, and these other examples illustrate what he is doing here (see Jn 2:21; 8:22; 11:13).

Abiding in the Word of Christ is the condition for being a disciple. He basically says in an aside to these new believers, “It is good that you have believed and are born-again. Now, abide in My words and be a disciple!” It is to those who have already believed that He introduces a conditional relationship with Himself. Later in John 15 Jesus will expand on the concept of abiding and explain that it is the condition of fruit bearing in the Christian life and that it is characterized by obedience to His commands and love for the brothers in Christ.

The Lord now turns back to His critics in verse 33. They, having heard His aside to these new Christians, respond in anger. They claim they are children of Abraham, but they are not willing to believe on Him as these others did. It is to these critics, not to those who have just believed that Jesus addresses the stinging rebuke, “You belong to your father the devil” (Jn 8:44, NIV). It is these critics, not the believers of verse 30, who “picked up stones to stone Him” (Jn 8:59, NIV).

The Security of the Sheep

In John 10:27-29, Jesus makes the startling claim that the sheep cannot ever perish, salvation cannot be lost. This is consistent with the rest of the New Testament. If we can lose salvation, then we must conclude that there is some sin sufficiently serious to cause us to forfeit it—perhaps adultery, drunkenness, or denial of Christ.

This assumes that we were less worthy of salvation after having committed this sin than before, and it reduces salvation down to human ability to merit it. Our eternal security does not depend upon our moral worthiness. If it did, none of us would be saved. Rather, it depends upon the fact that Christ's death has set God free to save us in spite of moral imperfection, and that God's power is capable of keeping us saved.

No one claims that normal sins are sufficient to “unsave” a man. Only very wicked sins are adequate. Which ones? How long must they be persisted in order to forfeit salvation?

Because Christ is the sacrifice for our sins (1 Jn 2:2), God is not only able to keep us saved, but also He is free to do so in spite of the moral problem of the imperfection in each Christian.

We all have imperfections. If salvation can be lost because of a high decree of imperfection, then we have to draw arbitrary lines of difference between damning sins and those that are not. Who therefore is worthy? Not Augustine, Paul, you, or this writer.

He has purposed to keep us saved. In no uncertain terms our Lord declares:

“And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day” (Jn 6:39-40, NIV).

It is not God's will that Christ will lose any of all the Father gave to Him. Consider:

“My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of the Father's hand” (Jn 10:27-29).

Some teach that all gospel promises have an implied condition. That is, it is to be understood that the promises will be fulfilled only if the believer remains faithful to the final hour. This, however, is simply an assertion not supported by the texts. One can read all kinds of conditions into these precious promises, but the promises themselves, as stated, are unconditional, and one is dangerously close to adding words to the Scripture when he argues this way.

Some have pointed out that verse 27 must be included in the promise. Only those who hear and follow will never perish. They assume that “follow” refers to a life of obedience.

“But you do not believe because you are not of My sheep (v. 26, NASB).

The opposite of not believing is found in verse 27, to hear and follow. To follow is not to obey but to trust and believe. This is suggested by the fact that sheep will not follow the voice of an unknown shepherd. They fear the voice of strangers (Jn 10:4-5). The act of “following” is the act of reliant trust. This is supported by the fact that eternal life is the result of following. It would therefore seem unlikely that “follow” is a metaphor for obedience because elsewhere in John eternal life is the result of faith alone.

Those who teach that Lordship is a condition of salvation are similarly confounded by the passage. Their doctrine states that He first gives eternal life, and, as a result, the sheep follow. Here it is the reverse! Furthermore, if “follow” means to obey Christ all one’s life, then it is not possible to obtain eternal life until one has obeyed all his life. In other words, it cannot be received as a gift now, contrary to the gospel promise (Jn 17:3).

The use of “hear and believe” in John 5:24 seems to further support this interpretation:

Truly, truly, I say to you, he **who hears My word, and believes** Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life (Jn 5:24, NASB, emphasis added).

Hearing and believing in John 5:24 result in eternal life. Hearing and following in John 10:27 result in eternal life. Therefore “hearing and believing” equals “hearing and following.” This means that “to follow” is simply another of John’s metaphors for “to believe.” He has also used “look,” “taste,” “eat,” and “drink.” Are literal eating, looking, tasting, and drinking necessary for eternal life? Hardly! Neither is literal following. To follow the shepherd is to believe on Him and entrust ones safety into his care.

The phrase “shall never” is a double negative in Greek. It is very emphatic. It is often claimed that the text only promises that someone else cannot snatch the believer out of the Father’s hand. The believer, it is said, can snatch himself out of the Father’s hand, however, by unbelief or sin. But is that all these precious words mean? If so, then they mean nothing. To any man who really knows his own heart, these implied conditions would nullify the promises. What kind of security is it that offers no security against our own weakness?

If our enjoyment of the promises of eternal security is dependant upon our continued ability to persevere, as Armenians maintain, then the loss of our justification is not only possible but probable. Are we to suppose that Christ’s meaning is that no one can snatch us out of the Father’s hand provided we do not choose to allow ourselves to be snatched away? Are we to suppose that Christ did not know the common biblical truth that the only way any spiritual danger can attack a soul successfully is by persuasion, that unless the adversary can get the consent of the believer’s free will, he cannot harm him? Is there any other way a soul can be snatched away other than by the consent of the soul itself? Surely Jesus knew this; and if this supposed condition is to be understood, then this precious promise would be a worthless and pompous truism. It would then mean only this:

You can never be snatched away except by the only way anyone can be snatched away.

or

No one can take you out of the Father’s hand except, of course, by the only means anyone can take you out of the Father’s hand.

or

You can never fall unless, of course, you do.

or

You can never fall as long as you stand up.

Lesson 12: The Great Confession and the Final Teaching Tour

Lesson Introduction

The staggering claims to be God, which Jesus made in Lesson 11, generated immense hatred and opposition from the religious elite. Blinded in sin, they had attempted again to stone David's "Greater Son," their own Messiah!

Jesus left Jerusalem and traveled north again. It appears that His purpose was to enjoy a time of solitude and special training with the Twelve. He needed time to interact with His disciples regarding the claims He made, and He determines to elicit from them their own views regarding His identity.

With this in mind, the gospel writers now take us to Caesarea Philippi (see note at end of lesson) and we find the Savior alone praying, when His disciples approach him.

It was here that Peter makes his great confession, "You are the Christ," and Jesus begins for the first time to speak of the church, which He plans to build, the body of Christ.

As discussed in Topic 1, this event becomes pivotal in the life of Christ. From this point on Jesus began speaking often of His coming death and resolutely begins His final teaching tour as He moves toward His appointment with destiny in Jerusalem.

In Topic 2 we will consider the amazing transfiguration in which a brilliant white glory radiated out from Christ as He stood on Mount Hermon with Elijah and Moses.

Topic 3 will bring us from the glory of the mountain to the valley of reality. Here we meet a father in tears whose son the disciples are unable to heal. The boy was demon possessed, and with a word, Christ commands the demon to depart.

Jesus then directly predicts His death in Topic 4, filling the disciples with grief although they seem to be confused and were afraid to ask Him exactly what He meant.

In Topic 5, we find the Lord again in Capernaum, and His disciples are confronted with the question of paying the temple tax. Jesus sends Peter fishing, and miraculously Peter catches a fish with a silver coin in its mouth of sufficient value to pay the tax.

The great question of future rewards and the requirements for obtaining them is the subject of Topic 6. The disciples are focused on greatness in the kingdom, and Jesus tells them that only the simple trust of a little child makes one great.

In Topic 7 the famous teaching on sin and forgiveness startles Peter. Thinking that he was being generous in agreeing to forgive someone seven times, Jesus informs him that it should be as often as the person sins.

Lesson Outline

Topic 1: “Who Do You Say That I Am?”

Building on the Rock of Peter’s Confession

The Keys to the Kingdom

The Value of a Soul

Topic 2: The Transfiguration

Topic 3: A Father in Tears

Topic 4: Predicting His Death

Topic 5: Paying the Temple Tax

Topic 6: Who is the Greatest?

The Greatest Is the Servant of All

Rebuking Party Spirit

Eternal Destiny

Topic 7: Sin and Forgiveness

If Your Brother Sins Against You

Seventy Times Seven

Topic 8: Matching Events

Topic 9: Knowing, Being, Doing

Lesson Objectives

At the conclusion of this lesson, you will be able to:

- Explain the relationship between Peter’s confession and our Lord’s promise to build His church upon a rock
- Establish that Jesus is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy and Law and that He will certainly come again
- Show that faith alone is insufficient for some healing and that prayer and fasting must be included
- Demonstrate that Jesus is totally in control of His own destiny and that He chose to give His life as a ransom for many
- Demonstrate that even though He is the rightful heir of the temple, He does not insist upon claiming all His rights
- Establish that if one is to become great in the kingdom and be richly rewarded, he must be the servant of all now
- Explain a proper approach for resolving interpersonal conflicts

Topic 1: Who Do You Say That I Am?

We now find our Lord and His twelve disciples walking amid the valleys near Mount Hermon. Caesarea Philippi was a magnificent site, 1,147 feet above sea level. While on this retreat from

the multitudes, Peter makes his confession and Jesus, for the first time speaks of building a church upon a rock. He promises to Peter the keys to the kingdom and the authority to bind and loose. What do these things mean? Let's begin.

We want to study the relationship between Peter's confession and our Lord's promise to build His church upon a rock.

Building on the Rock of Peter's Confession

March, AD 32

Scriptures related to this topic are Matthew 16:13-20; Mark 8:27-30; Luke 9:18-21.

It is approximately March, AD 32. Jesus has now completed three years of ministry.

QUESTION 1

Why do you think Jesus waited three years before beginning to discuss the establishment of the church?

The conflict with the Pharisees described in the last lesson, naturally raised questions in the minds of the disciples. If Jesus was indeed the Messiah, why, then, were the leaders of the nation continually rejecting His claim? No doubt they understood the Pharisees' hardness of heart, but it was time for discussion. As they walked along one of the three valleys at Caesarea Philippi they passed an ancient castle made of rock. That may have been the occasion of our Lord's response to Peter's confession.

The response is interesting because two different words for rock are used. Although the Lord spoke in Aramaic, the Greek speaking Matthew translated the word "rock" with two different Greek words.

And Jesus answered him, "You are blessed, Simon son of Jonah, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but my Father in heaven! And I tell you that you are Peter, [**petros, (masculine)**], and on this rock, [**petra, (feminine)**] I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on the earth will have been bound in heaven, and whatever you release on earth will have been released in heaven." (Mt 16:17-19)

The word "petra" refers to a bedrock, a rock upon which a foundation can be laid. The word *Petros* is not only Peter's Greek name but also refers to a stone in contrast to a layer of bedrock. Had our Lord intended to signify that He was going to build the church upon Peter, He would most likely have said: "You are *Petros* and upon this *petros* I will build my church."

QUESTION 2

When Jesus says He will build His church upon “this” rock (*petra*), what is the most likely thing in the context this could refer to? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. The revelation to Peter
- B. Flesh and blood
- C. The Father in heaven
- D. Jesus Christ

The Keys to the Kingdom

March, AD 32

Scriptures related to this topic are Matthew 16:13-20; Mark 8:27-30; Luke 9:18-21.

After announcing to Peter that He would build His church upon the rock, the Lord tells him that he would be given the “keys to the kingdom,” (seen note “Keys” at end of lesson) and the authority to “bind and loose” (see note at end of lesson).

QUESTION 3

It is clear from Matthew 16:19 and 18:18 the gift of the keys was given only to Peter. *True or False?*

The Value of a Soul

March, AD 32

Having elicited from the Twelve a firm confession regarding His person, our Lord now informs them that He will be killed and on the third day rise from the dead.

Scriptures related to this section are Matthew 16:21-28; Mark 8:31-9:1; Luke 9:22-27.

Peter, still not fully understanding the plan of God, asserts that “this will never happen to You.” In doing this he was unwittingly acting the part of Satan, tempting the Lord to turn away from His destiny spelled out before the foundations of the world.

At this point Jesus instructs the disciples regarding discipleship. Having just explained that He will suffer and die, He warns them that they, too, may suffer a similar fate.

Then Jesus called the crowd with His disciples and said to them, “If anyone wants to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life [soul] will lose it, but whoever loses his life [soul] for me and the gospel will save it. What advantage is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? What can a person give in exchange for his soul? (Mk 8:34-36,)

There are four clauses, in this statement:

- Clause 1—Whoever wants to save his life (**soul**)
- Clause 2—Will lose it
- Clause 3—Whoever loses his life (**soul**)
- Clause 4—Will save it

All four clauses cannot refer to spiritual salvation (deliverance from hell). If they did, then in clause 1 He is saying that the man who wants to save his soul will lose it (clause 2), or the man who wants to be saved will not be saved. Similarly clauses 3 and 4 would contradict one another saying that the man who goes to hell (clause 3) will go to heaven (clause 4).

It is of critical importance then, that we first discern the meaning of “save his soul.” What does it mean to “save a soul”?

If it refers to some kind of physical loss in clause 1, then it must refer to a physical loss in clause 3. This in turn requires that the losing and saving of a soul in clauses 2 and 4 must not be physical but refer to some kind of spiritual loss or gain.

The phrase “save a soul” is used ten times in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the LXX or Septuagint. Let’s look at each one of them in the next two questions. Study the context of each verse carefully, reading what goes before and what follows. To help you clarify which word in these verses is the verb “to save” or the noun “soul,” we have listed the verses after question 5 with those words in parenthesis. The words in bold in parenthesis are the English translation of the actual Greek word in the LXX.

QUESTION 4

Which of the following verses refer to a spiritual salvation from hell? (Select the single best answer.)

- A. Genesis 19:17 (“flee for your lives” = “save your souls”)
- B. Genesis 32:30 (“I have been delivered” = “my soul has been saved”)
- C. 1 Samuel 19:11
- D. Psalm 72:13
- E. Psalm 86:2
- F. None of the above

QUESTION 5

Which of the following verses refers to a spiritual salvation from hell?

- A. Job 33:28
- B. Amos 2:14
- C. Amos 2:15
- D. Jeremiah 48:6
- E. Psalm 6:4
- F. None of the above

The phrase of the combination of words is found eleven times in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament). Ten of those instances are in the Bible, and one is in the book of 1 Maccabees in the Apocrapha.

“And when they had brought them outside, they said, ‘Flee [**save**] for your lives [**souls**]; do not look behind you; do not stop anywhere in the region; flee to the mountains lest you be swept away” (Gen 19:17).

“So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel, ‘Because I have seen God face to face and I [**my soul**] have been delivered [**saved**]’” (Gen 32:30).

“Then Saul sent messengers to David’s house to guard it and to put him to death in the morning. But David’s wife Michal told him saying, ‘Unless you escape [**save your soul**] tonight, tomorrow you are going to be killed!’” (1 Sam 19:11).

“He will take pity on the poor and needy, the lives [**souls**] of the needy he will **save**” (Ps 72:13).

“Protect me [**my soul**] for I am loyal! O my God, deliver [**save**] your servant, who trusts in you!” (Ps 86:2).

“He redeemed [**saved**] my life [**soul**] from going down to the place of corruption, and my life sees the light!” (Job 33:28).

“Fast runners will find no place to hide, strong men will have no strength left, warriors will not be able to **save** their lives [**souls**]” (Amos 2:14).

“Archers will not hold their ground, fast runners will not **save** their lives [**souls**]” (Amos 2:15).

“They will hear, ‘Run! **save** yourselves [**souls**]! Even if you have to be like a lonely shrub in the desert!’” (Jer 48:6).

“Come back, LORD, rescue me [**my soul**]! Deliver [**save**] me because of your faithfulness!” (Ps 6:4).

The phrase is also found in 1 Maccabees 9:9 in the sense of saving one’s physical life.

The words “salvation of a soul” in various combinations are found two times in the Septuagint.

“I [**my soul**] desperately long for your deliverance [**salvation**]. I find hope in your assuring word” (Ps 119:81).

The notion of the salvation of a soul referring to the salvation of one’s physical life is also found in Psalm 61:2 in the LXX, however the verse is translated differently into Hebrew and as a result, it does not appear in the English versions.

It remains for students of the history of interpretation to explain how the term “to save a soul” was ever translated “to deliver from hell.” That is the most unlikely meaning in view of the fact that it is NEVER used that way in the Bible used by Jesus and his disciples, the LXX. It ALWAYS refers to some kind of physical salvation or deliverance from a temporal difficulty.

It seems likely that that the references to losing and saving a life in clauses 2 and 4 refer not to the gaining or losing of salvation, but rather to the gaining and losing of a rich and full quality of life. Life is often used in Scripture to refer to “abundant life” (Jn 10:10)—intimacy with Christ (Jn 17:4).

For further discussion of this important theme, read the article on “Saving Your Soul” at the end of this lesson.

QUESTION 6

Based upon the discussion above, the most likely meaning of the phrase, “What advantage is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?” is:

So the danger is that, if a man does not become a disciple, he will lose his soul. That is, he will forfeit true life now and reward in eternity. The fact that the context is referring to rewards, and not deliverance from hell, is suggested by Matthew 16:27, “[He] will then recompense every man according to his deeds.” Clauses 2 and 4 therefore refer to the losing or gaining of rewards for discipleship.

Topic 2: The Transfiguration

The call to discipleship in the preceding verses is followed by a warning:

“For the Son of Man will come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then *he will reward each person according to what he has done*. I tell you the truth, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom” (Mt 16:27-28).

It is evident from the next verse that this startling prediction was fulfilled six days later to Peter, James, and John on the Mount Hermon when our Lord was transfigured before them.

“And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, his brother, and led them up a high mountain, by themselves” (Mt 17:1).

There is little doubt that Mount Hermon, not Mount Tabor, is the actual site of the Transfiguration. Here Jesus was transformed so that His inner glory burst through His earthly tent.

We are not told what went on during those six days leading up to the Transfiguration. No doubt it included new teaching and reflection upon the stupendous events surrounding Peter’s confession.

The events in Jerusalem, where Christ’s claims were soundly rejected by the leaders of the nation, necessitated, again, that the disciples have a confirmation that Jesus was indeed who He claimed to be. Furthermore, in His human nature, our Lord Himself was surely discouraged and needed encouragement from His heavenly Father. The Transfiguration on Mount Hermon met these needs.



It was apparently evening when the Master and three of His closest disciples climbed the path which led to the heights of Mount Hermon. Like many of God's solemn dealings with men, this event, too, would take place on a mountain.

This event and Peter's confession preceding it are pivotal events around which the entire life of Christ revolves. Everything before leads up to it, and everything after leads to the cross.

On Mt. Hermon with Elijah and Moses

April, AD 32

The Transfiguration was to establish that Jesus is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy and law and that He will certainly come again.

Scriptures related to this topic are Matthew 17:1-13; Mark 9:2-13; Luke 9:28-36.

According to Luke, Jesus went up the mountain to pray (Lk 9:28). The Sabbath sun had set and the cool of a spring evening hung upon the graceful slopes as they made their ascent. It was April, AD 32.

We do not know which path Jesus and his disciples took nor do we know how far their journey went. But there is only one road which connects Caesarea Philippi to Mt. Hermon. It is a very scenic route. The travelers would have seen vine covered hill and many mulberry and apricot and fig-tree. As they passed through the corn-fields and ascended up the rocky mountain side, they would no doubt have observed patches of snow.

The Transfiguration

Jesus had just promised that there would be some standing who would not see death before they saw the Son of Man coming in His glory. The fulfillment of that promise occurred six days later in the Transfiguration.

This event was a prophetic picture of the coming of Christ in His kingdom. It provided confirming evidence to Peter, James, and John that Jesus was the Messiah. Peter never forgot it and at the end of his life remarked:

“For we did not follow cleverly concocted fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; no, we were eyewitnesses of his grandeur. For he received honor and glory from God the Father, when that voice was conveyed to him by the Majestic Glory: ‘This is my dear Son, in whom I am delighted.’ When this voice was conveyed from heaven, we ourselves heard it, for we were with him on the holy mountain” (2 Pet 1:16-18).

Peter's response was to build three tabernacles: one for Moses, one for Elijah, and one for the Lord Jesus. It is possible that he saw the event as the prophetic fulfillment of the Feast of Tabernacles. The prophetic significance of this feast was that it spoke of Israel, at rest in prosperity in the Messianic kingdom.

On the Mount of Transfiguration, Moses and Elijah appeared, risen from the dead, conversing with the Lord Jesus about His coming death and resurrection.

QUESTION 7

What do you think was the significance of the presence of Moses and Elijah?

QUESTION 8

What purposes were fulfilled by the revelation of the Transfiguration?

- A. It confirmed to the disciples that Jesus was indeed the Christ.
- B. It fulfilled the prophecy that Christ would come before some then alive tasted death.
- C. It gave a prophetic picture and confirmation of the certainty of the coming of the kingdom.
- D. All of the above.

QUESTION 9

Based upon Malachi 4:5 and the experience they had just had, what seemed to be the problem they raised about Elijah?

- A. They understood that the kingdom had come and yet Elijah was supposed to appear before the coming of the kingdom.
- B. If Elijah was to come before the establishment of the kingdom, why did he disappear on the Mount?
- C. How can Elijah come at all since the leaders have rejected the kingdom?
- D. If Jesus is Messiah, why hasn't Elijah come to prepare the way?

QUESTION 10

To discern how Christ answered their question about Elijah, match the Scripture on the left with the correct sentence on the left.

<i>Scripture</i>	<i>Explanation</i>
Luke 1:7	Elijah was indeed to come as predicted.
Matthew 11:14	John came in the spirit and power of Elijah.
Malachi 4:5	Had they accepted His kingdom offer, then John would have been the Elijah to come.

Topic 3: A Father in Tears

From the glory of the Transfiguration, the band of apostles descended the mountain, returning to the world of pain and trial. On the next day the disciples were apparently unable to cast a demon out of a young boy. The boy's father approaches Jesus, weeping.

“I Believe, Help My Unbelief”

April, AD 32

This section is to show that faith alone is insufficient for some healing and that prayer and fasting must be included.

Scriptures related to this topic are Matthew 17:14-21; Mark 9:14-29; Luke 9:37-43.

The rebuke of Matthew 17:17 is possibly not directed toward the father or the crowd, rather toward the disciples. Three of them have just witnessed the Transfiguration and the others have observed Him for three years. Surely, their faith should have grown much more by now!

QUESTION 11

What reasons did Christ give for their failure to heal the boy? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. They lacked experience in this kind of thing.
- B. This particular task was simply too difficult.
- C. They lacked faith.
- D. This type of situation requires prayer and fasting.

“Removing mountains” was a common Jewish expression for doing something considered extremely difficult or impossible. Mountains are, of course, the most stable item imaginable and hence cannot be moved (Ps 46:2; Isa 54:10). Mustard seeds were used to define a proverbially small quantity. Jesus is telling the disciples that nothing God asks them to do will be impossible if they trust Him (Zech 4:7).

QUESTION 12

The unbelief of the disciples was a great grief to Christ. Reflect upon your own faith for a moment. In what ways have you been unbelieving recently? Take some time to bring the terrible sin of unbelief before the Lord. Record your thoughts in your Life Notebook.

Topic 4: Predicting His Death

April, AD 32

The theme of His coming sacrifice was now always on the mind of the Lord. Even though all were astounded at His works, in private to His disciples He again foretells His passion and death.

Jesus keeps reminding His followers of the coming events to demonstrate that He is totally in control of His own destiny and that He chose to give His life a ransom for many.

Scriptures related to this topic are Matthew 17:22-23; Mark 9:30-32; Luke 9:43-45.

QUESTION 13

In this second specific instruction (Mt 17:22-23) concerning His coming death, what new detail does Jesus add and what promise did He repeat?

QUESTION 14

According to Mark 9:32 even after explaining twice that He must go to Jerusalem and die (Mk 9:31; 8:31-32), the disciples still do not understand. Why was this so difficult to grasp? Before you are too harsh on them, reflect upon actions of our Lord in your life which seem totally irrational and incomprehensible. Take some time to pray about your own faith and confusion.

Topic 5: Paying the Temple Tax

April, AD 32

The solitary time with His disciples is now over. The multitude, realizing that He is back in Capernaum, surrounds Him. It was well-known that every male in Israel from age twenty and up was to pay an annual temple tax, a contribution to the temple treasury in the amount of one-half shekel (Ex 30:13).

This tax was payable at the time of the preceding Passover (March, AD 32) and is now overdue. Jesus had been alone with His disciples in the preceding weeks. This half-shekel amount had apparently been increased to two drachmas at the time of Christ, roughly two days wages.

To demonstrate that even though He is the rightful heir of the temple, Jesus does not insist upon claiming all His rights.

Scriptures associated with this topic are Matthew 17:24-27 and Mark 9:33.

Because the payment of the temple tax was overdue, the scribes approach Peter in a rather challenging manner and ask “Doesn’t your teacher intend to pay the half-shekel?” Jesus had not been in Capernaum for almost a year and He was no longer a citizen of distinction. They may have feared He would leave the district without paying.

It is interesting that the scribes are still in so much awe of Jesus that they fear to approach Him directly and instead approach one of His disciples.

Peter, without consulting His master impulsively responds, “He does.”

Without thinking as to how this amount would be paid from their scanty store and probably now aware that he should not have answered for Jesus without talking to Him first, Peter returns to Jesus. Saving him embarrassment, Jesus asks him a question.

“What do you think, Simon? From whom do earthly kings collect tolls or taxes—from their sons or from foreigners?” (Mt 17:25).

QUESTION 15

The purpose of Christ’s question was to explain to Peter that He was the Son of the Great King whose temple this was and as such He was not obligated to pay the temple tax. *True or False?*

QUESTION 16

Put yourself in Peter's place for a moment. What lesson do you think he should have learned from this incident?

- A. Meekness, because even though He was not obligated and He was actually their King, Jesus humbled Himself and paid the tax.
- B. That, being a son, Peter need not pay the temple tax.
- C. Christians are not obligated to pay taxes.
- D. The church of Christ has a right to require contributions from her people.

QUESTION 17

Read the section in *The Training of the Twelve* (at the end of this course) on "Paying the Temple Tax". What three reasons did Jesus give for paying the temple tax?

Topic 6: Who Is the Greatest?

It seems appropriate that the one who was servant of all, who was the great King who had humbled Himself, who suffered the indignity of paying a tax to His own Father's house, would now address His disciples in a discourse on humility.

It is ironic, too, that having just illustrated by His own life the principle of humility, His disciples so quickly forgot what they observed.

Apparently, in anticipation of the coming kingdom, the disciples had been discussing which one of them would be the greatest in the coming Messianic partnership.

The experience of the Transfiguration and the healing of the demonic boy aroused their sleepy minds to sense that some great moment in the coming of the kingdom had happened. Unfortunately, it produced in them the one thing it should not have: ambition.

Instead of producing the self-denial they had seen in the payment of the temple tax, it spawned selfish ambition. Instead of rekindling their love and commitment to each other, it resulted in jealousy.

The Greatest Is the Servant of All

April, AD 32

Jesus repeated that if one is to become great in the kingdom and be richly rewarded, he must be the servant of all now.

Scriptures related to this topic are Matthew 18:1-14; Mark 9:33b-50; Luke 9:46-50.

The disciples, no doubt remembering the preference shown to Peter at Caesarea Philippi and to Peter, James, and John at the Transfiguration, disputed among themselves: "Who will be the greatest?" Saying nothing, Jesus apparently maintained His silence until they reached Capernaum and sat together in the house.

QUESTION 18

We have all been in the difficult situation of having to correct someone who was in the wrong. While no one approach fits all circumstances, what three principles do you learn from Jesus about correcting those who are wrong? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. It is usually best to confront them with direct statements.
- B. It is good to give time for their consciences to work before saying anything.
- C. Ask a probing question which highlights the problem but does not directly challenge them.
- D. Give a concrete illustration in real life of the truth you want to communicate.

QUESTION 19

Jesus introduces the subject of rewards again in this parable. Here the subject is how to become great in the kingdom. In order to acquaint yourself briefly with some of the New Testament teaching on rewards, match the passage on the left with the corresponding truth it teaches regarding eternal rewards on the right.

<i>Scripture</i>	<i>Truth</i>
Matthew 18:4	The key to greatness in the kingdom is humility.
Luke 19:11-27	It is possible that some Christians will enter the kingdom with no reward at all.
Matthew 18:8	There will be degrees of reward in the kingdom.
1 Corinthians 3:15	Some Christians will feel a sense of shame when they stand before Christ at His coming.
Matthew 5: 11-12	Rewarded Christians are those who have dealt radically with sin.
1 John 2:28	One day we will all face accountability for both the good and the bad things we have done.
2 Corinthians 5:10	Those who endure under persecution will be rewarded.

A child in Hebrew culture was particularly identified as one who had no status. “The social insignificance, if not the innocent lack of self-consciousness of the little child, was the very antithesis of the disciples’ interest in power and greatness¹.” To enter the kingdom we must change our ways and the content of that change is “become like a little child” (Mt 18:3).

The root of true faith is the realization that one has no status before God. Until we recognize that we have nothing of our selves to commend ourselves, we will be approaching God with the arrogance (often unconscious) which assumes the opposite of faith. Unless the disciples embrace the childlike indifference to the issues of greatness before God, they cannot enter because they cannot trust. They were concerned about their status in the kingdom, Jesus is saying that they must give up all thought of status and be like this child.

¹ D. A. Hagner. (1998). Vol. 33B: *Word Biblical Commentary: Matthew 14–28* (electronic ed.). Logos Library System; Word Biblical Commentary (Mt 18:2). Dallas: Word, Incorporated.

This is virtually the same thing as coming to God with no claims, no work by which to commend one's self. It means to come with humility, or as Jesus said it elsewhere, with believing reliance upon Christ alone for salvation (Jn 6:40). While it takes more than humility to enter the kingdom, without it we can never rise to the one necessary condition, believing on Christ.

Some have also suggested that a key characteristic of a child was his or her total dependence upon the parents for food and life. A person seeking entrance into the kingdom of heaven must similarly become totally dependent upon Christ for access.

Rebuking Party Spirit

Scriptures related to this topic are Matthew 18:1-14; Mark 9:33b-50; Luke 9:46-50.

QUESTION 20

Read Mark 9:38-39. How many times have you heard variations of Peter's statement in your own experience with other Christians? What was Jesus' response? Are there concrete situations in your life right now where you have manifested a party spirit? Open your Life Notebook and reflect upon some of these issues.

Eternal Destiny

April, AD 32

Scriptures related to this topic are Matthew 18:1-14; Mark 9:33b-50; Luke 9:46-50.

QUESTION 21

The description of hell in Mark 9:47-48 is terrible to contemplate. Some have argued that in the afterlife there is only annihilation or that hell is not eternal. Read the article "The Biblical Doctrine of Hell" (at the end of this lesson), and then in your Life Notebook list the three alternative theories to eternal punishment and discuss which one you believe and why. Be sure and interact with the Scriptures in the article.

Having set forth the awful consequences for the unsaved, Jesus now turns to His disciples and challenges them. Read Mark 9:49-50. This is an extremely perplexing verse and over fifteen interpretations have been suggested. We prefer the following one:

"Every one" probably means "every follower of mine", and the "fire" with which he "must be salted" probably means "a fiery trial" to season him. (Compare Mal 3:2.) The reference to salting the sacrifice is of course to that maxim of the Levitical law, that every acceptable sacrifice must be sprinkled with salt, to express symbolically its soundness, sweetness, wholesomeness, acceptability. But as it had to be roasted first, we have here the further idea of a salting with fire. In this case, "every sacrifice," in the next clause, will mean, "every one who would be found an acceptable offering to God"; and thus the whole verse may perhaps be paraphrased as follows: "Every disciple of Mine shall have a fiery trial to undergo, and everyone who would be found an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable and well-pleasing to God, must have such a *salting*, like the Levitical sacrifices."²

² R. Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, & D. Brown. (1997). A Commentary, Critical and Explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments. On spine: *Critical and explanatory Commentary*. (Mk 9:49). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

Topic 7: Sin and Forgiveness

Jesus continues His ministry to the Twelve and introduces one of the most significant concepts in the New Testament. The discussion regarding their prideful ambition for status in the kingdom has focused on the terrible matter of the sin of competition with each other for position. This naturally led to a discussion regarding what happens when a brother sins against you. What follows is a teaching pregnant with wisdom regarding the handling of interpersonal conflicts and forgiveness.

If Your Brother Sins Against You

April, AD 32

This teaching is to explain a proper approach for resolving interpersonal conflicts.

The scripture related to this topic is Matthew 18:15-35.

In the preceding discussion regarding offense in interpersonal relationships, Jesus addressed the disciples as possible offenders. Now the disciples want to know what they should do when they are offended. They have been with Jesus long enough to know that the first response is to forgive. However, they had no idea of the depth of forgiveness which Jesus demanded.

Before explaining the nature and extent of forgiveness, Jesus addresses the problem of how one should deal with a person who has committed an offense against them.

QUESTION 22

What four steps did Jesus command for dealing with an offender?

QUESTION 23

Obviously a certain concept of the church is assumed in order for these four points to be implemented. What kind of church would be necessary for this kind of discipline to be effective?

- A. The church is a kind of “hotel” where people come on Sunday morning with no particular relationship to each other.
- B. The church is a family of people committed to each other and to having a witness in the community.
- C. The church is a place where people can come and experience wonderful worship to music without necessarily becoming involved.
- D. The church is a highly structured place where the primary model is teaching and the members of the congregation are interested listeners.

QUESTION 24

The promise in Matthew 18:18 was given uniquely to Peter. *True or False?*

QUESTION 25

It is commonly believed that Matthew 18:18-20 is a promise that Christ is with us in a special way when we gather for prayer and that He will agree to give us whatever we agree together on. Based upon your study of the context, do you think that is what these verses mean? If not, what do they mean?

Seventy Times Seven

April, AD 32

The scripture related to this topic is Matthew 18:15-35.

Of course if someone who offends you, even after the four steps mentioned above, does not repent, then the issue of forgiveness becomes even more important.

QUESTION 26

Peter, in saying that he should forgive seven times, thinks he is being generous. He exceeded the Pharisees who said you should forgive up to three times. When Christ says, “No, seventy times seven,” He means that there should be no end to our forgiveness. Yet forgiveness when we are wounded is often very difficult. Read Matthew 18:23-35. Think of a concrete situation in your life or in the life of someone you know where granting forgiveness is needed. What lesson do you discern in this parable to make it easier? What other insights into forgiveness have you learned from Scripture or experience that you would want to apply? What insights would you want to share with others on how to forgive? Record your thoughts in your Life Notebook.

QUESTION 27

Read Matthew 18:35. Some have used this verse as proof that a believer can lose his salvation. Which of the following passages below may help explain this verse in a different way? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Hebrews 12:4-13
- B. John 6:37-40
- C. 2 Timothy 3:16
- D. 1 Corinthians 11:32
- E. Revelation 3:19

Topic 8: Matching Events

QUESTION 28

Let's practice matching events in Christ's life with the book and chapter in which they occur. Go to the article entitled "Matching Events" at the end of this course. Review events 1, 5, 12-13, 18, and 41-43. Keep working at it until you can look at the event in the right column and connect it with the related Scripture in the left.

Topic 9: Knowing, Being, Doing

This lesson is full of significant themes, applications, and insights into spiritual living. In this topic, let us pause for a moment and reflect on what we have studied.

QUESTION 29: KNOWING

Jesus said He came to reveal the Father to us and that if we have seen Him, we have seen the Father also. Write down what you have learned about the Father from observing Jesus' life in this lesson. *How does this understanding impact your life of faith with Jesus?*

QUESTION 30: BEING

A key character quality manifested by Christ in this lesson is humility. Write several paragraphs describing how Christ demonstrated this quality and think through a specific issue in your life where you have failed. Write out a prayer to God to correct this situation.

Lesson 12 Self Check

QUESTION 1

The church is a place where people can come and experience wonderful worship to music without necessarily becoming involved. *True or False?*

QUESTION 2

Had our Lord intended to signify that He was going to build the church upon Peter He would most likely have said, “You are *Petra* and upon this *petra* I will build My church. *True or False?*”

QUESTION 3

When Jesus says he will build his church upon “this” rock, what is the most likely thing in the context this could refer to?

- A. Upon Peter
- B. Upon flesh and blood
- C. Upon God the Father
- D. Upon the Revelation given to Peter

QUESTION 4

The keys to the kingdom seem to be a unique privilege and authority assigned to Peter to allow entrance into the kingdom or to deny it. *True or False?*

QUESTION 5

The authority to “bind and loose” was unique legislative and judicial authority granted to all the apostles which included the authority invested in their writings, the New Testament. *True or False?*

QUESTION 6

In the Bible, the phrase, “save a soul” usually means

- A. Deliverance from some temporal danger
- B. Deliverance from hell
- C. Go to heaven when I die
- D. Experience physical healing

QUESTION 7

When Jesus said that the condition of gaining the whole world was to forfeit one’s soul, He meant:

- A. Gaining the riches and pleasure of this world may cost you a rich and meaningful life.
- B. Gaining the riches and pleasures of this world will result in loss of your eternal salvation.
- C. To obtain what the world has to offer, one must be willing to deny oneself.
- D. To obtain entrance into eternal life, one must be willing to deny oneself.

QUESTION 8

A major purpose of the Transfiguration was to:

- A. Show that we will survive death in real bodies as evidenced by the appearance of Moses and Elijah.
- B. To fulfill the prophecy Jesus had made a few days earlier that some standing there would not taste death until they saw the kingdom coming in glory.
- C. To prove there will be a resurrection at the last day.
- D. To show that the Feast of Tabernacles will be celebrated when Jesus returns.

QUESTION 9

The purpose of Christ's question was to explain to Peter that He was the Son of the great King whose temple this was and as such He was not obligated to pay the temple tax. *True or False?*

QUESTION 10

Jesus said that in order to enter the kingdom, one must become like a little child.

- A. He meant that one must become obedient like a child.
- B. Here is clear teaching that submission to Christ's Lordship is a condition for obtaining eternal life.
- C. He meant that one must adopt the trusting reliant disposition of a child if he is to have true saving faith.
- D. He meant that faith plus obedience is necessary to enter into heaven.

Unit Four Exam

QUESTION 1

In light of Christ's statement in Matthew 7:21, there seems to be a contradiction between Paul (Eph 2:8-9) and Jesus on the issue of salvation by faith alone. *True or False?*

QUESTION 2

In this discourse, the Lord says, "I am the bread of life" (John 5:35). What is characteristic of those who eat this bread? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. They will never be hungry again.
- B. They will never lose salvation.
- C. They will have eternal life.
- D. They will have their sin forgiven.

QUESTION 3

When Jesus warned about the leaven of the Pharisees, the disciples took Him literally, thinking He referred to bread. *True or False?*

QUESTION 4

Remember the long arrow on the chart of Mark 8? What structural relationship do you think it illustrated?

- A. Cause and Effect
- B. Climax
- C. Repetition
- D. Contrast

QUESTION 5

Based upon John 6:39 it could legitimately be taught that it may be possible for a born-again believer to lose his salvation. *True or False?*

QUESTION 6

The specific charge brought against the Pharisees by Christ from Isaiah 29:13 is that: (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. They placed tradition above the Scriptures.
- B. Their religion consisted of external religious practices rather than internal devotedness to God.
- C. They were hypocrites.
- D. They worshiped God in vain.

QUESTION 7

What was the leaven of the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herod?

- A. The demand for a sign
- B. The vicious attacks they made on Christ
- C. Their joint conspiracy
- D. Their unbelief

QUESTION 8

In his conversation with the Syrophenician woman, Jesus refers to her countrymen as “dogs.” The harshness of this term is very perplexing from the lips of one so full of compassion. *True or False?*

QUESTION 9

In the question about manna, what is Jesus teaching about His Father and Himself? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. The Father, not Moses, supplied the manna from Heaven.
- B. The Father has sent Jesus from heaven as the bread of life.
- C. The crowds were seeking Him for the wrong thing.
- D. Eating the bread of life results in inner satisfaction.

QUESTION 10

According to Jesus, what is one way we can tell what is going on in a person’s heart?

- A. By observing his religion
- B. By talking with his friends
- C. By observing his past
- D. By listening to what he says

QUESTION 11

What motivated Jesus’ brothers to suggest Jesus go to the feast? (Choose the best answer.)

- A. They wanted Him to proclaim Himself as King.
- B. They were hoping for places in the kingdom.
- C. They thought it would be best for Him to take advantage of this opportunity.
- D. They were not convinced of His Messiahship and were seeking another sign.

QUESTION 12

According to Jesus, how can a person prove to himself whether or not Christ’s teaching is from God?

- A. By study
- B. By doing it
- C. By interaction with others
- D. By listening to sermons

QUESTION 13

In John 10:16 Jesus spoke of sheep not of the Jewish fold which must also hear and listen to His voice—to what is He referring (consider Acts 28:28 in answering this question)?

- A. Hearing His voice is to hear, listen to, and believe the voice in which He calls us to enter the sheepfold and be saved.
- B. Hearing His voice refers to a personal communion with Christ where He communicates thoughts, words, and impressions to the heart of the believer.
- C. Hearing His voice is the response of obedience to a life of works.
- D. Hearing His voice is none of the above.

QUESTION 14

According to Farrar, when Jesus stooped to write, it was:

- A. An indirect claim to be God
- B. A wise refusal to fall into the Pharisees' trap
- C. An expression of His total indifference to them, He was not even going to listen
- D. A symbol of forgiveness

QUESTION 15

Based upon John 1:12-13; 3:15-16, 36; 7:38; 11:25, we may say with certainty that those who “believed on him” in John 8:30 were born-again. *True or False?*

QUESTION 16

Which Old Testament book refuted the disciples' view of suffering?

- A. Psalms
- B. Proverbs
- C. The Prophetic Books
- D. Job

QUESTION 17

In John 10:27-28 the call to “follow” describes the believer's experience after receiving eternal life. *True or False?*

QUESTION 18

When Jesus refers to Himself as the “door into the sheepfold” in John 10:9, He is saying that the sheep who hear and believe can be saved. *True or False?*

QUESTION 19

To say that no one can take a believer out of the Father's hand except by the believer himself, removing himself from the Father's hand is the same as saying, “you can never fall, unless, of course, you do.” *True or False?*

QUESTION 20

To suggest that we can lose our salvation is to imply that we can become less worthy of being saved by additional sin than we were when we first believed. *True or False?*

QUESTION 21

Had our Lord intended to signify that He was going to build the church upon Peter he would most likely have said, “You are *Petra* and upon this *petra* I will build my church.” *True or False?*

QUESTION 22

In the Bible, the phrase, “save a soul” usually means

- A. Deliverance from some temporal danger
- B. Deliverance from hell
- C. Go to heaven when I die
- D. Experience physical healing

QUESTION 23

When Jesus said that the condition of gaining the whole world was to forfeit one’s soul, He meant: (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Gaining the riches and pleasure of this world will actually cost you a true and meaningful life.
- B. Gaining the riches and pleasures of this world will result in loss of your eternal salvation.
- C. To obtain what the world has to offer, one must be willing to deny oneself.
- D. To obtain entrance into eternal life, one must be willing to deny oneself.

QUESTION 24

A major purpose of the Transfiguration was to:

- A. Show that we will survive death in real bodies as evidenced by the appearance of Moses and Elijah.
- B. Fulfill the prophecy Jesus had made a few days earlier that some standing there would not taste death until they saw the kingdom coming in glory.
- C. Prove there will be a resurrection at the last day.
- D. Show that the Feast of Tabernacles will be celebrated when Jesus returns.

QUESTION 25

The purpose of Christ’s question was to explain to Peter that He was the Son of the great King whose temple this was and as such He was not obligated to pay the temple tax. *True or False?*

Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1:

There are at least two reasons: First he wanted to give the nation adequate time to consider His claims and commit to Him as their Messiah. But also He wanted to gradually prepare the disciples for a firm conviction that He was indeed the Messiah. This was best done not just by claims, but by providing them with extensive opportunities to observe His matchless life. If God were man, we would expect Him to be the kind of person Jesus was.

QUESTION 2:

- A. The revelation to Peter
- D. Jesus Christ

QUESTION 3: False

QUESTION 4:

- F. None of the above

QUESTION 5:

- F. None of the above

QUESTION 6:

“Gaining the whole world” refers to obtaining the joys and pleasures of this world. This “gain,” however, can only be accomplished if a man is willing to “forfeit his soul.” To “forfeit the soul” is metaphorical for “forfeit true life now and reward in eternity.” The verse is an explanation and expansion of clause 2 above which was shown to be metaphorical, not literal. As mentioned above, it cannot be physical because clause 1 is physical in all other uses in the Bible.

QUESTION 7:

We may conceive that the law in the person of Moses, the great Jewish legislator, and the prophets in the person of Elijah, the chief of the prophets, came now to do homage to Jesus Christ, and to render up their authority into His hands; as He was the END of the law, and the grand subject of the predictions of the prophets. This appears more particularly from what Luke says, (Lk 9:31), that Moses and Elijah conversed with our Lord on His death, which He was about to accomplish, or to fulfill, because in it, all the rites, ceremonies, and sacrifices of the law, as well as the predictions of the prophets, were fulfilled. (Adam Clark)

QUESTION 8:

- D. All of the above.

QUESTION 9:

- A. They understood that the kingdom had come and yet Elijah was supposed to appear before the coming of the kingdom.

QUESTION 10:

<i>Scripture</i>	<i>Explanation</i>
Luke 1:7	John came in the spirit and power of Elijah.
Matthew 11:14	Had they accepted His kingdom offer, then John would have been the Elijah to come.
Malachi 4:5	Elijah was indeed to come as predicted.

QUESTION 11:

- A. They lacked experience in this kind of thing.
- C. They lacked faith.
- D. This type of situation requires prayer and fasting.

QUESTION 12: *Your answer*

QUESTION 13: He will be betrayed into the hands of men. He will be raised on the third day.

QUESTION 14: *Your answer*

QUESTION 15: True

QUESTION 16:

A. Meekness, because even though He was not obligated and He was actually their King, Jesus humbled Himself and paid the tax.

QUESTION 17: *Your answer*

QUESTION 18:

B. It is good to give time for their consciences to work before saying anything.

C. Ask a probing question which highlights the problem but does not directly challenge them.

D. Give a concrete illustration in real life of the truth you want to communicate.

QUESTION 19:

<i>Scripture</i>	<i>Truth</i>
Matthew 18:4	The key to greatness in the kingdom is humility.
Luke 19:11-27	There will be degrees of reward in the kingdom.
Matthew 18:8	Rewarded Christians are those who have dealt radically with sin.
1 Corinthians 3:15	It is possible that some Christians will enter the kingdom with no reward at all.
Matthew 5:11-12	Those who endure under persecution will be rewarded.
1 John 2:28	Some Christians will feel a sense of shame when they stand before Christ at His coming.
2 Corinthians 5:10	One day we will all face accountability for both the good and the bad things we have done.

QUESTION 20: *Your answer*

QUESTION 21: *Your answer*

QUESTION 22:

(1) Go to the person privately. (2) If there is no response bring two or three others to verify that the offense had occurred. (3) If he refuses to listen, then tell it to the congregation. (4) If he refuses to listen even to them, then remove him from the fellowship of the church.

QUESTION 23:

B. The church is a family of people committed to each other and to having a witness in the community.

QUESTION 24: False

QUESTION 25:

No. The context is talking about apostolic discipline in the local church. As the authoritative representatives of Christ, when the church agreed upon an excommunication, it would “have been bound in heaven.” It is not that they are determining this punishment; they are only confirming what has already been bound in heaven. The presence of Christ in their midst is assurance that when they seek God for the right punishment for an offender, He will be guiding them. It is doubtful that the passage has anything to do with some kind of special presence of Christ in group prayer.

QUESTION 26: *Your answer*

QUESTION 27:

- A. Hebrews 12:4-13
- B. John 6:37-40
- C. 2 Timothy 3:16
- D. 1 Corinthians 11:32
- E. Revelation 3:19

QUESTION 28: *Your answer*

QUESTION 29: *Your answer*

QUESTION 30: *Your answer*

Lesson 12 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1: False

QUESTION 2: False

QUESTION 3:

D. Upon the revelation given to Peter

QUESTION 4: False

QUESTION 5: True

QUESTION 6:

A. Deliverance from some temporal danger.

QUESTION 7:

A. Gaining the riches and pleasure of this world may cost you a rich and meaningful life.

QUESTION 8:

B. To fulfill the prophecy Jesus had made a few days earlier that some standing there would not taste death until they saw the kingdom coming in glory.

QUESTION 9: True

QUESTION 10:

C. He meant that one must adopt the trusting reliant disposition of a child if he is to have true saving faith.

Unit Four Exam Answers

QUESTION 1: True

QUESTION 2:

- A. They will never be hungry again.
- B. They will never lose salvation.
- C. They will have eternal life.

QUESTION 3: True

QUESTION 4:

- B. Climax

QUESTION 5: False

QUESTION 6:

- A. They placed tradition above the Scriptures.
- B. Their religion consisted of external religious practices rather than internal devotedness to God.
- C. They were hypocrites.
- D. They worshiped God in vain.

QUESTION 7:

- D. Their unbelief.

QUESTION 8: False

QUESTION 9:

- A. The Father, not Moses, supplied the manna from Heaven.
- B. The Father has sent Jesus from heaven as the bread of life.
- C. The crowds were seeking Him for the wrong thing.
- D. Eating the bread of life results in inner satisfaction.

QUESTION 10:

- D. By listening to what He says.

QUESTION 11:

- D. They were not convinced of His Messiahship and were seeking another sign.

QUESTION 12:

- B. By doing it

QUESTION 13:

- A. Hearing His voice is to hear, listen to, and believe the voice in which He calls us to enter the sheepfold and be saved.

QUESTION 14:

- D. A symbol of forgiveness.

QUESTION 15: True

QUESTION 16:

- D. Job

QUESTION 17: False

QUESTION 18: True

QUESTION 19: True

QUESTION 20: True

QUESTION 21: False

QUESTION 22:

- A. Deliverance from some temporal danger.

QUESTION 23:

- A. Gaining the riches and pleasure of this world will actually cost you a true and meaningful life.
- B. Gaining the riches and pleasures of this world will result in loss of your eternal salvation.

QUESTION 24:

B. To fulfill the prophecy Jesus had made a few days earlier that some standing there would not taste death until they saw the kingdom coming in glory.

QUESTION 25: True

Lesson 12 Notes

Caesarea Philippi

The city of Caesarea Philippi, located at the southwest foot of Mount Hermon, was the northernmost reach of Jesus' ministry. It is about forty km (twenty-five miles) north of the Sea of Galilee. It is 1,150 feet (370 m) above sea level, and the main source of the Jordan River is in a nearby cave.

In 20 BC, the district was given by Augustus to Herod the Great, who erected at Paneas a splendid temple of white marble in honor of the emperor. After the death of Herod in 4 BC the area became part of the tetrarchy of Philip, who rebuilt and beautified the town, naming it Caesarea as a compliment to the emperor, Augustus. Philip added his own name in order to distinguish the city from Caesarea on the coast of Sharon.

As Jesus and the Twelve climbed its slopes they no doubt passed the worship center for the god named Pan, the half-goat, half-man, flute-playing, Greek deity. Recently, a magnificent white stone temple was discovered at the base of the cliff, at the front of the cave.

It was in this region that Jesus posed the question to his disciples, "Who do you say that I am?" and Peter answered, "You are the Christ" (Mt 16:13–20; Mk 8:27–30; Lk 9:18–22).

Binding and loosing

In a sense, it is a common saying among the Jews, of forbidding or allowing. No other terms were in more constant use in rabbinic canon law than those of binding and loosing. They represented the legislative and judicial powers of the rabbinic office. These powers Christ now transferred to His apostles. All the apostles (Mt 18:18) had this authority, not just Peter. These apostles became the authoritative foundation of the church (Eph 2:20), and it was through them that the new revelations of the New Testament were given (Jn 16:12-13).

Keys

Some have suggested that the background of the term "keys of the kingdom" is Isaiah 2:15-25 where Eliakim is installed as the new prime minister of King Hezekiah and on whose shoulder God places "the key of David; he shall open[...] and he shall shut." The prime minister is given the power to allow or refuse entrance to the palace, that is, access to the king. Matthew, then, would be portraying Peter in a similar way and also giving to him a broad power of the keys—allowing or refusing entrance into the kingdom.

The "keys to the Kingdom" were given to Peter and later to the rest of the apostles. It seems to refer to the authority uniquely granted to them to open the gates of the kingdom to all. The book of Acts traces this movement when Peter opened the gates to the Jews (Acts 2:14), then to the Samaritans (Acts 8:14), and, finally, to the Gentiles (Acts 10:25).

Lesson 12 Articles

Saving Your Soul

The phrase “save a soul” (Gk. *sozo psyche*) seems to have a technical meaning of “preserve your physical life.” Jesus used it in Matthew:

“Then Jesus **said to his disciples**, ‘If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life [**psyche**] will lose it; but whoever loses his life [**psyche**] for my sake shall find it. For what will a man be profited, if he gains the whole world, and forfeits his soul [**psyche**]? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul [**psyche**]?’” (Mt. 16:24-26, NASB).

Save Your Soul

It remains for scholars of historical theology to discern how this phrase ever became connected with the idea of deliverance from hell. It is never used that way in the Bible, and such an idea would have been foreign to any Jewish reader of the New Testament. Furthermore, the context requires that works, suffering, and taking up one’s cross are necessary conditions for the saving of the soul. This creates obvious problems with the rest of the New Testament where works such as this are distanced as far as possible from the gospel offer (Eph 2:8-9; Jn 3:16).

This phrase is found eleven times in the LXX, and in each case it has the notion of preserving one’s physical life. In Genesis 19:17 it means to “escape with your life”; and in Genesis 32:30 Jacob, after his struggle with the Angel of the Lord, exclaims, “My life has been preserved.” In one passage it seems to refer to delivering the needy from social injustice (Ps. 72:13) by preserving their lives. Even the warrior, declares Amos, will “not save his life” in the coming invasion (Amos 2:14).

However, it is not certain that the issue here in saving a life is preservation of one’s physical life. A similar saying in Matthew 10:39 (NKJV) brings out an enriched meaning.

“He who has found his life shall lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake shall find it.”

If there is a correspondence between finding life and saving a soul, then saving a soul is more than escaping martyrdom. To find life in this passage refers to the self-centered seeking of personal satisfaction apart from Christ. The one, who seeks to find his life in this sense, will lose the very thing he is seeking. On the other hand, the great paradox is that the disciple who loses his life for Christ’s sake will find the very thing he lost, a true and meaningful life. To lose one’s life is to take up one’s cross in self-denial and follow Christ. In doing this one finds true life. It is evident that literal martyrdom is not required to “find life.” This suggests that losing life and finding life should be understood here in the sense of meaningful existence, fulfillment, purpose, or identity.”

The Great Paradox

Returning to Matthew 16:24, it is clear that the saying in question was addressed to believers, and therefore, Christ is not preaching the gospel to unbelievers to come to salvation but challenging Christians to a life of discipleship. The fact that unbelievers may have heard the message does not mean they were the ones addressed. The message was specifically directed toward and applied to the disciples.

The message can conveniently be broken down into four clauses:

Clause 1: For whoever should want to save his life (Matt 16:25) (Gk. **psyche**)

Clause 2: will lose it.

Clause 3: But whoever should lose his life (Gk. **psyche**) for my sake

Clause 4: he will find it.

Let us consider each of these clauses more carefully.

Clause 1: “he who has found his life [soul]”

Life, for this man is found by avoiding persecution and pursuing security, material well-being, and personal happiness.

Clause 2: “*will lose it.*”

This person will, in the end, lose the very thing he seeks, a full and meaningful life. To lose one’s life (“soul”) does not mean to go to hell when one dies. It refers to losing true life now.

Clause 3: “he who has lost his life [soul] for my sake.”

The great paradox is that the one who is willing to lose his life in the sense of self denying discipleship and obedience to Christ even to the point of physical death under threat of persecution will find the true life he always wanted.

Clause 4: “*will find it.*”

This man will find what he was really seeking in clause one, personal fulfillment and a meaningful significant life.

The paradox Jesus used has great meaning. What He appears to be saying is this:

“Whoever desires to preserve himself from the hardships of God’s will of self-denial and cross-bearing will in fact forfeit the essential quality [true spiritual value] of the present life he is trying to preserve. On the other hand, whoever forfeits himself to God’s will of self-denial and hardships will discover the greater essential quality [spiritual value] of the present life he was willing to forfeit.” This interpretation would therefore not describe eternal salvation, but a higher quality of experience with God in this life, with implications for the eschatological life, as the next section will show.

This is precisely the point He makes in Matthew 16:26, “For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?” (NASB). Forfeiting one’s soul refers not to final damnation, but to the loss of the final significance of one’s life. Like the carnal Christian in 1 Corinthians 3:15, (NASB), all his life work is burned up and comes to nothing but the man himself is saved, “If any man’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.”

Similarly, in Luke 17:32-33, (NASB), Jesus says, “Remember Lot’s wife. Whoever seeks to keep his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it.”

It is obvious that Jesus is not saying everyone who tries to avoid persecution will be killed and everyone who dies will live! Rather, he is using the situation of Lot and his wife as a metaphor for a deeper spiritual reality. Just as Lot’s wife looked back at the destruction of Sodom and was judged by God with physical death, so the believer who fails to persevere in faith, will be judged in a spiritual sense, he will lose the final meaning and significance of his life. Conversely, the

believer who is willing to lose his life for Christ will preserve true life, an inheritance in the kingdom.

The result of this “saving of the soul” is, according to Jesus, the finding of real life now as well. In fact, in the LXX the Hebrew word **shalom** (peace, prosperity, well, health, completeness, safety) is often translated by the word **soterios** (saving). Jesus seems to have merged the ideas of physical preservation of life and the finding of a meaningful and blessed life.

Summary

Saving one’s life (clause 1) means what it means every place else in the Bible, “to preserve one’s physical life.” There was a temptation among Christ’s followers to avoid martyrdom and suffering to save their lives. The phrase is enriched in the New Testament to mean not only the preservation of one’s personal life, but also the finding of worldly happiness apart from discipleship.

Paradoxically, when a man schemes to preserve his own life, he will lose the very thing he really wants, happiness and blessing (clause 2). The paradox, however, is that a man who is willing to even die for Christ (clause 3) will find the very pleasures and blessings he really sought and an eternal reward as well (clause 4).

The Biblical Doctrine of Hell

Survival after Death

Whatever view may be taken of the development of the doctrine of immortality in the Old Testament, it will scarcely be doubted that it is throughout assumed in the New Testament that the souls of men, good and bad, survive death.

Two passages only need be referred to in proof: one, Christ's saying in Matthew 10:28: "Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell [Gehenna]" (NASB). The other passage is the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31. Lazarus is carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom; the rich man lifts up his eyes in *Hades*, being in torment. The whole doctrine of the future judgment in the New Testament presupposes survival after death.

Retribution for Sin

Retribution for sin is a cardinal point in the teaching of both the Old Testament and New Testament. The doctrine of judgment, again, in the New Testament, with Christ as judge, turns on this point. The following passages are decisive: Isaiah 3:10-11; Matthew 11:22-24; 12:41-42; Romans 2:5-12; Galatians 6:7-8.

Conscious Suffering in Future

The conscious endurance of punishment for sin in the future state is already implied in the preceding. The parable of the Rich Man speaks of it as following immediately on death in Hades; all the descriptions of the judgment imply pain and anguish as the result of condemnation. This does not settle the nature or duration of the punishment; but it excludes the idea that physical death is the extinction of being, or that annihilation follows immediately upon death or judgment.

These things being assumed, the questions that remain are: Is the period of suffering for sin eternal, or is it terminable? May it be cut short by repentance or by annihilation? Is there any final solution of the discord it implies in the universe? It is maintained here that the punishment of sin, in the case of the finally impenitent, is everlasting.¹

Gradation of Punishment

The fullest weight must further be given to what the Scripture so expressly says of gradation of punishment, even of the unsaved. It is not the case that the lot of all who fail of the eternal life in Christ is all of one grade. There are the "few stripes" and the "many stripes" (Lk 12:47-48); those for whom it will be "more tolerable" than for others in the day of judgment (Mt 11:20-24).

Universal Salvation

Over the centuries various unscriptural theories have been developed to understandably try to evade these horrible passages.

The most comprehensive solution propounded is that of universal salvation—of a final restitution of all souls to God's favor and to blessedness.

The main objection to this theory is that, springing not from real knowledge, but from men's hopes and wishes, it has the tremendous stress of Scripture testimony against it, nor do the

¹J. Orr, M.A., D.D. (1999). *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia : 1915 edition* (J. Orr, Ed.). Albany, OR: Ages Software.

passages commonly cited as favoring it really bear the weight put upon them. We read, for example, “of a restoration of all things”—the same that Christ calls the palingenesia—but, in the same breath, we are told of those who will not hearken and will be destroyed (Mt 19:28; Acts 3:21-23). We read of Christ drawing all men unto Him (Jn 12:32); but we are also clearly told that at His coming Christ will pronounce on some a tremendous condemnation (Mt 7:23; 25:41).²

Annihilation

The second argument against eternal suffering comes from those who believe that the soul is annihilated after death. Personal existence ceases, and only the redeemed enjoy a resurrection.

To clear the way, the Annihilationist may be easily refuted by all those passages which speak of future punishment, even though we grant it not eternal (Mark 9:44-46). The resurrection extends to the wicked, as well as the righteous (Dan 12:2; Jn 5:28-29). Nor does the argument work that the phrase “everlasting destruction,” or such-like, implies annihilation. If this consisted in reducing the sinner forever to nothing, it would be instant destruction, not everlasting. How can punishment continue, when the subject of it has ceased to exist?

Eternal Punishment Refers Only to Punishment for a Limited Period of Time

Another theory used to explain away eternal punishment is the notion that the biblical terms for “eternal” only mean “for a period of time.”

But these words are as strong as any in the Greek language . They are the same words (*aionios*) used to express the eternity of God. Thus the punishments are as eternal as God is. Furthermore the duration of heaven is said also to be eternal (Mt 25:46). If the word means forever in regard to God and the bliss of the saved, on what basis does it not mean that when applied to the duration of eternal punishment for the damned? (See Rev 14:11; 20:10; 2 Thess 1:9).

Is God’s Love Inconsistent with Eternal Punishments?

Finally, we must comment on the chief argument used by those who try to reduce the severity of hell.

The most common of these is that construction of the text, “God is Love,” which makes Him pure benevolence, denying to Him all other moral attributes and resolving them into phases of benevolence. But we reply; other texts say, “God is Light”; “Our God is a consuming Fire.” Is He nothing but pure intelligence? Is He nothing but punitive justice? We see the absurd contradictions into which such a mode of interpretation would lead us. Infinite benevolence, intelligence, justice, and truth are coordinate and consistent attributes, acting harmoniously. That God is not benevolent in such a sense as to exclude punitive justice, is proved thus: “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Heb 10:31, NKJV). Again, God is not too benevolent to punish devils, once His holy children, eternally (see Rev 20:10). Nor can this ruinous fact be evaded by denying the personality of the devils; the usual resort of the Universalists. The marks of the real personality of devils are as clear as for Judas Iscariot’s.

²J. Orr. M.A., D.D. (1999). *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia : 1915 edition* (J. Orr, Ed.). Albany, OR: Ages Software.

Matching Events

Event #	Scripture	Description
1	Luke 1:26	Angel foretells Jesus' birth
2	Luke 2	Jesus is born in Bethlehem
3	Matthew 2:1-12	Wise men visit Jesus
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The Training of the Twelve

A. B. Bruce

Chapter 1: Beginnings

John 1:29-51

All beginnings are more or less obscure in appearance, but none were ever more obscure than those of Christianity. What an insignificant event in the history of the church, not to say of the world, this first meeting of Jesus of Nazareth with five humble men, Andrew, Peter, Philip, Nathanael, and another unnamed!

It is not surprising that to his latest hour John remembers with emotion the first time he saw the Incarnate Word, and deemed the minutest memorials of that time unspeakably precious. First meetings are sacred as well as last ones, especially such as are followed by a momentous history.

That John, the writer of the fourth gospel, really was the fifth unnamed disciple, may be regarded as certain. It is his way throughout his gospel, when alluding to himself, to use a periphrasis, or to leave, as here, a blank where his name should be. One of the two disciples who heard the Baptist call Jesus the Lamb of God was the evangelist himself, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, being the other.

The impressions produced on our minds by these little anecdotes of the infancy of the gospel must be feeble, indeed, as compared with the emotions awakened by the memory of them in the breast of the aged apostle who recorded them. It would not, however, be creditable either to our intelligence or to our piety if we could peruse this page of the evangelic history unmoved, as if it were utterly devoid of interest. We should address ourselves to the study of the simple story with somewhat of the feeling with which men make pilgrimages to sacred places; for indeed the ground is holy.

John the Baptist Had Prepared His Disciples for This Moment.

The scene of the occurrences in which we are concerned was in the region of Peræa, on the banks of the Jordan, at the lower part of its course. The persons who make their appearance on the scene were all natives of Galilee, and their presence here is due to the fame of the remarkable man whose ministry was to be the forerunner of the Christ. John, surnamed the Baptist, who had spent his youth in the desert as a hermit, living on locusts and wild honey, and clad in a garment of camel's hair, had come forth from his retreat and appeared among men as a prophet of God. The burden of his prophecy was, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mt 3:2, NASB). In a short time many came from all around to see and hear him. Of those who flocked to his preaching, the majority went home unchanged; but many were deeply impressed, and, confessing their sins, underwent the rite of baptism in the waters of the Jordan. Of those who were baptized, a select number formed themselves into a circle of disciples around the person of the Baptist, among whom were at least two, and most probably all, of the five men mentioned by the evangelist. Previous talks with the Baptist had awakened in these disciples a desire to see Jesus, and prepared them for believing in Him. In his preaching to the people around him, John made frequent references to One who should come after himself. He spoke of this coming One with great expectation. He called himself, with reference to the coming One, a mere voice in the wilderness, crying, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord." At another time he said, "I baptize with water; but there stands One among you whom you know not: He it is who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose shoe latchet I am not worthy to unloose." This great One was none other than the Messiah, the Son of God, the King of Israel.

Such discourses were intended to cause the disciples of the Baptist to leave him and go over to Jesus. And we see here the process of transition actually commencing. We do not affirm that Andrew, Peter, Philip, Nathanael, and John left the Baptist's company at this time and become regular followers of Jesus. But an acquaintance now begins which will end in that. The bride is introduced to the Bridegroom, and the marriage will come in due season, not to the chagrin but to the joy of the Bridegroom's friend.

These Men Were Men of Great Personal Character, Looking for the Messiah.

It is natural that we should scan the evangelical narrative for indications of character with reference to those who, in the way so quaintly described, for the first time met Jesus. Little is said of the five disciples, but there is enough to show that they were all pious men. What they found in their new friend indicates what they wanted to find. They evidently belonged to the select band who waited for the consolation of Israel, and anxiously looked for Him who should fulfill God's promises and realize the hopes of all devout souls. Besides this general indication of character supplied in their common confession of faith, a few facts are stated respecting these first believers in Jesus that tend to make us a little better acquainted with them. Two of them certainly, all of them probably, had been disciples of the Baptist. This fact is decisive as to their moral earnestness. From such a quarter none but spiritually earnest men were likely to come. For if the followers of John were at all like himself, they were men who hungered and thirsted after real righteousness, being sick of the righteousness then in vogue. They said Amen in their hearts to the preacher's withering exposure of the hollowness of current religious profession and of the worthlessness of fashionable good works, and sighed for a sanctity other than that of pharisaic superstition and pretentiousness. Their conscience acknowledged the truth of the prophetic oracle: "We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousness are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf, and our iniquities like the wind have taken us away." They prayed fervently for the reviving of true religion, for the coming of the divine kingdom, for the advent of the Messianic King with fan in His hand to separate chaff from wheat, and to put right all things which were wrong. Such, without doubt, were the sentiments of those who had the honor to be the first disciples of Christ.

Simon Peter Would Become a Man of Steady Character, a Rock.

Simon, best known of all the Twelve under the name of Peter, is introduced to us here, through the prophetic insight of Jesus, on the good side of his character as the man of rock. When this disciple was brought by his brother Andrew into the presence of his future Master, Jesus, we are told, "beheld him and said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas"—*Cephas* meaning in Syriac, as the evangelist explains, the same which *Petros* signifies in Greek. The penetrating glance of Christ discerned in this disciple latent capacities of faith and devotion, the rudiments of ultimate strength and power.

Philip Was a Deliberate Man, Slow in Arriving at Decisions.

What manner of man Philip was the evangelist does not directly tell us, but merely that he came from Bethsaida. From the present passage, and from other notices in the Gospels, the conclusion has been drawn that he was characteristically deliberate, slow in arriving at decisions. Everything else that we read about him suggests to us an earnest inquirer after truth, who has thoroughly searched the Scriptures and made himself acquainted with the Messiah of promise and prophecy, and to whom the knowledge of God is the supreme value in life. In the solicitude manifested by this disciple to win his friend Nathanael over to the same faith, we recognize that generous sympathetic spirit, characteristic of earnest inquirers, which afterwards revealed itself in him when he became the bearer of the request of devout Greeks for permission to see Jesus (Jn 12:22).

Nathanael Was a Man Who Was without Guile.

The notices concerning Nathanael, Philip's acquaintance, are more detailed and more interesting than in the case of any other of the five. It is a little surprising that we are told so much here about one whom we know almost nothing else about. It is probable, that he is to be identified with the Bartholomew of the synoptic lists of the Twelve, his full name in that case being Nathanael, the son of Tolmai. It is strongly in favor of this supposition that the name Bartholomew comes immediately after Philip in the lists of the apostles. Be this as it may, we know on the best authority that Nathanael was a man of great moral excellence. No sooner had Jesus seen him than He exclaimed, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" The words suggest the idea of one whose heart was pure; in whom was no double mindedness, impure motive, pride, or unholy passion; a man of gentle, meditative spirit, in whose mind heaven lay reflected like the blue sky in a still lake on a calm summer day. He was a man much addicted to habits of devotion; he had been engaged in spiritual exercises under cover of a fig tree just before he met with Jesus. So we are justified in concluding, from the deep impression made on his mind by the words of Jesus, "Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee." Nathanael appears to have understood these words as meaning, "I saw into your heart, and knew how you were occupied, and, therefore, I pronounced you to be an Israelite indeed." He accepted the statement made to him by Jesus as an evidence of preternatural knowledge, and therefore, he made the confession, "Rabbi! Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the *King* of Israel"—the King of that sacred commonwealth whereof you say I am a citizen (Jn 1:48-49, KJV, emphasis added).

It is remarkable that this man, so highly endowed with the moral dispositions necessary for seeing God, should have been the only one of all the five disciples who manifested any hesitancy about receiving Jesus as the Christ. When Philip told him that he had found the Messiah in Jesus of Nazareth, Nathanael asked incredulously, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" One hardly expects such prejudice in one so meek and amiable; and yet, on reflection, we perceive it to be quite characteristic. Nathanael's prejudice against Nazareth sprung not from pride, as in the case of the people of Judea who despised the Galileans in general, but from humility. He was a Galilean himself, and as much an object of Jewish contempt as were the Nazarenes. His inward thought was, "*Surely the Messiah can never come from among a poor despised people such as we are—from Nazareth or any other Galilean town or village!*" He timidly allowed his mind to be biased by a current opinion he didn't even believe; a fault common to men whose piety, though pure and sincere, defers too much to human authority, and who thus become the slaves of sentiments utterly unworthy of them.

While Nathanael was not free from prejudices, he showed his guilelessness in being willing to have them removed. He came and saw. This openness to conviction is the mark of moral integrity. The guileless man dogmatizes not, but investigates, and therefore always comes right in the end. The man of bad, dishonest heart, on the contrary, does not come and see.

Why Did These Men Follow Jesus with No Seeming Forethought or Preparation?

Such were the characters of the men who first believed in Jesus. What, now, was the amount and value of their belief? On first view the faith of the five disciples, leaving out the brief hesitation of Nathanael, seems unnaturally sudden. They believe in Jesus on a moment's notice.

The haste which seems to characterize the faith of the five disciples only appears superficial. These men believed that the Messiah was to come some time, and they wished much it might be then, for they felt He was greatly needed. They were men who waited for the consolation of Israel, and they were prepared at any moment to witness the advent of the Comforter. Then the Baptist had told them that the Christ was

come, and that He was the person whom he had baptized, and whose baptism had been accompanied with such remarkable signs from heaven. What the Baptist said they implicitly believed. Finally, the impression produced on their minds by the bearing of Jesus when they met, tended to confirm John's testimony, being altogether worthy of the Christ.

The faith of these brethren was, therefore, just as we should expect in beginners. In substance it amounted to this: they recognized in Jesus the Divine Prophet, King, Son of Old Testament prophecy. Their faith's value lay not in its maturity, or accuracy, but that it brought them into contact and close fellowship with Him, in whose company they were to see greater things than when they first believed—one truth after another assuming its place in the firmament of their minds, like the stars appearing in the evening sky as daylight fades away.

Chapter 2: Fishers of Men

Stages of Intimacy

The Twelve arrived at their final intimate relationship to Jesus only by degrees: three stages in the history of their fellowship with Him being distinguishable. In the first stage they were simply believers in Him as the Christ, and His occasional companions at convenient, particularly festive, seasons. Of this earliest stage in the intercourse of the disciples with their Master we have some memorials in the four first chapters of John's gospel. These records tell how some of them first became acquainted with Jesus, and represent them as accompanying Him at a marriage in Cana, at a Passover in Jerusalem, on a visit to the scene of the Baptist's ministry, and on the return journey through Samaria from the south to Galilee.

In the second stage, fellowship with Christ became uninterrupted time with Him, which involved leaving their jobs. Of the four persons named in this second stage, we recognize Peter, Andrew, and John, as old acquaintances, who have already passed through the first stage of discipleship. The fourth one, James the brother of John, we meet for the first time; a fact which suggests that the first and second stages may have been blended together—professions of faith in Jesus as the Christ being immediately followed by the renunciation of secular work for the purpose of joining His company. Such cases, however, were probably exceptional and few.

The Twelve entered on the last and highest stage of discipleship when they were chosen by their Master from the mass of His followers, and formed into a select band, to be trained for the great work of the apostleship. This important event probably did not take place till all the members of the apostolic circle had been with Jesus for some time.

The Selection of the Apostles

From the evangelic records it appears that Jesus began at a very early period of His ministry to gather around Him a company of disciples, with a view to preparing them to carry on the work of the divine kingdom. The two pairs of brothers received their call at the commencement of the first Galilean ministry, when Capernaum by the seaside was chosen as the center of operations and ordinary place of abode. And when we think what they were called to, we see that the call could not come too soon. The Twelve were to be Christ's witnesses in the world after He Himself had left it; it was to be their peculiar duty to give to the world a faithful account of their Master's words and deeds, a just image of His character, a true reflection of His spirit. This service obviously could be rendered only by persons who had been, as nearly as possible, eye witnesses and servants of the Incarnate Word from the beginning. Except in the cases of Peter, James, John, Andrew, and Matthew, we have no details in the Gospels about the calls of those who afterward became apostles; we must assume that they all occurred in the first year of the Savior's public ministry.

From the beginning Jesus was clear about what He wanted from these men. “Follow Me,” said Jesus to the fishermen of Bethsaida, “and I will make you fishers of men.” These words (whose originality stamps them as a genuine saying of Jesus) show that the great Founder of the faith desired not only to have disciples, but to have about Him men whom He might train to make disciples of others: to cast the net of divine truth into the sea of the world, and to land on the shores of the divine kingdom a great multitude of believing souls. Both from His words and from His actions we can see that He attached supreme importance to training the Twelve. In the intercessory prayer, for example, He speaks of the training He had given these men as if it had been the principal part of His own earthly ministry. And in one sense, it really was. The careful, painstaking education of the disciples secured that the Teacher’s influence on the world should be permanent. His kingdom would be founded on the rock of deep and indestructible convictions in the minds of the few, not on the shifting sands of superficial impressions on the minds of the many. Regarding that kingdom, as our Lord Himself has taught us in one of His parables to do, as a thing introduced into the world like a seed cast into the ground and left to grow according to natural laws, we may say that, but for the Twelve, the doctrine, the works, and the image of Jesus might have perished from human remembrance, nothing remaining but a vague mythical tradition, of no historical value and of little practical influence.

Their Qualifications

Those on whom so much depended must possess very extraordinary qualifications. The mirrors must be finely polished that are designed to reflect the image of Christ! The apostles of the Christian religion must be men of rare spiritual endowment. It is a catholic religion, intended for all nations; therefore, its apostles must be free from Jewish narrowness and have sympathies as wide as the world. It is a spiritual religion, destined to replace Jewish ceremonialism; therefore, its apostles must be free in conscience from the yoke of ordinances. It is a religion that is to proclaim the Cross, previously an instrument of cruelty and badge of infamy, as the hope of the world’s redemption and the symbol of all that is noble and heroic in conduct. Therefore its heralds must be superior to all conventional notions of human and divine dignity, capable of glorying in the cross of Christ, and willing to bear a cross themselves. The apostolic character, in short, must combine freedom of conscience, enlargement of heart, enlightenment of mind, and all in the superlative degree.

The humble fishermen of Galilee had much to learn before they could satisfy these high requirements; so much, that the time of their apprenticeship for their apostolic work, even reckoning it from the very commencement of Christ’s ministry, seems all too short. They were godly men, who had already shown the sincerity of their piety by forsaking all for their Master’s sake. But at the time of their call they were exceedingly ignorant, narrow-minded, superstitious, full of Jewish prejudices, misconceptions, and animosities. They had much to unlearn of what was bad, as well as much to learn of what was good, and they were slow to do both. Old beliefs made the communication of new religious ideas a difficult task. Men of good honest heart, the soil of their spiritual nature was fitted to produce an abundant harvest, but it was stiff and needed much laborious tillage before it would yield its fruit. They were poor men, of humble birth, low station, mean occupations, who had never felt the stimulating influence of a liberal education or of social intercourse with persons of cultivated minds.

We shall meet with abundant evidence of the crude spiritual condition of the Twelve, long after they were called to follow Jesus, as we proceed with our studies. Meantime we may discover significant indications of the religious immaturity of at least one of the disciples—Simon, son of Jonas—in Luke’s account of his call. Pressed by the multitude who had assembled on the shore of the lake to hear Him preach, Jesus got into Simon’s ship, and requesting him to thrust out a little from the land, sat down and taught the people from the boat. Having finished speaking, Jesus said to Simon, “Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught.” Their previous efforts to catch fish had been unsuccessful, but Simon and

his brother did as Jesus directed and were rewarded by an extraordinary take, which appeared to them and their fishing companions, James and John, nothing short of miraculous. Simon, the most impressible and the most demonstrative of the four, gave utterance to his feelings of astonishment by characteristic words and gestures. He fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!"

This exclamation opens a window into Peter's inner man so we can see his spiritual state. We observe in Peter that mixture of good and evil, of grace and nature, which so frequently reappears in his character. Among the good elements are reverential awe in the presence of Divine Power, a prompt calling to mind of sin betraying tenderness of conscience, and an unfeigned self-humiliation on account of unmerited favor. These were valuable character traits, but they did not exist in Peter without unfavorable ones. Along with them were associated superstitious dread of the supernatural and a slavish fear of God. The presence of the former element is implied in the reassuring exhortation addressed him by Jesus, "Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men." Slavish fear of God is even more apparent in his own words, "Depart from me, O Lord." Powerfully impressed with the super-human knowledge revealed in connection with the great catch of fish, he regards Jesus, for the moment, as a supernatural being, and as such dreads Him as one whom it is not safe to be near, especially for a poor sinful mortal like himself. This state of mind shows how utterly unfit Peter is, as yet, to be an apostle of a gospel which magnifies the grace of God even to the chief of sinners. His piety, sufficiently strong and decided, is not of a Christian type; it is legal, one might almost say pagan, in spirit.

With all their imperfections, both numerous and great, these humble fishermen of Galilee had, at the very outset of their career, one grand distinguishing virtue: They were animated by a devotion to Jesus and to the divine kingdom which made them capable of any sacrifice. Believing Jesus to be the Christ come to set up God's kingdom on earth, they "straightway" left their nets and joined His company, to be thenceforth His constant companions in all His wanderings. The act was acknowledged by Jesus Himself to be meritorious; and we cannot, without injustice, seek to disparage it by ascribing it to idleness, discontent, or ambition as its motive. The gospel narrative shows that the four brethren were not idle, but hard-working, industrious men. Neither were they discontented, if for no other reason than that they had no cause for discontent.

Their Background and Economic Status

The family of James and John at least seems to have been in circumstances of comfort; for Mark relates that, when called by Jesus, they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after Him. But did ambition have any place among their motives? Well, we must admit that the Twelve, and especially James and John, were by no means free from ambitious passions, as we shall see hereafter. But to whatever extent ambition may have influenced their conduct at a later period, it was not the motive causing them to leave their nets. Ambition needs a temptation. It does not join an obscure and struggling cause whose success is doubtful; it strikes when success is assured and the movement it patronizes is on the eve of its glorification. The cause of Jesus had not gotten to that stage yet.

Their Devotion to the Master

One charge only can be brought against those men, and it can be brought with truth and without doing their memory any harm. They were enthusiasts: their hearts were fired, and, as an unbelieving world might say, their heads were turned by a dream about a divine kingdom to be set up in Israel, with Jesus of Nazareth for its king. That dream possessed them and imperiously ruled over their minds and shaped their destinies, compelling them, like Abraham, to leave their kindred and their country and to go forth on what might well appear beforehand to be a fool's errand. Well for the world that they were possessed by the idea of the kingdom! For it was no fool's errand on which they went forth, leaving their nets behind. The kingdom they sought turned out to be as real as the land of Canaan, though not altogether as they had

imagined. The fishermen of Galilee did become fishers of men on a most extensive scale, and, by the help of God, gathered many souls into the church as should be saved. In a sense they are casting their nets into the sea of the world still and, by their testimony of Jesus in the Gospels and the Epistles, are bringing multitudes to become disciples of Him among whose first followers they had the happiness to be numbered.

The four, the Twelve, forsook all and followed their Master. Did the “all” in any case include wife and children? It did in at least one instance—that of Peter, for the Gospels tell how Peter’s mother-in-law was healed of a fever by the miraculous power of Christ (Mt 8:14-15). From a passage in Paul’s first epistle to the Corinthian church, it appears that Peter was not the only one among the apostles who was married. From the same passage we also learn, that forsaking wives for Christ’s sake did not mean literal desertion. Peter, the apostle, led his wife about with him, and Peter, the disciple, may sometimes have done the same. The likelihood is that the married disciples, like married soldiers, took their wives with them or left them at home, as circumstances might require or allow. Women, even married women, did sometimes follow Jesus; and the wife of Simon, or of any other married disciple, may occasionally have been among the number. At an advanced period in the history, we find the mother of James and John in Christ’s company far from home; and where mothers were, wives, if they wished, might also be. The infant church, in its original nomadic or itinerant state, seems to have been a motley band of pilgrims, in which all sorts of people as to sex, social position, and moral character were united, the bond of union being ardent attachment to Jesus.

This church itinerant was not a regularly organized society, of which it was necessary to be a constant member in order to experience true discipleship. Except in the case of the Twelve, following Jesus from place to place was optional, not compulsory; and in most cases it was probably also only occasional. It was the natural consequence of faith, when the object of faith, the center of the circle, was Himself in motion. Believers would naturally desire to see as many of Christ’s works and hear as many of His words as possible. When the object of faith left the earth, and His presence became spiritual, all occasion for such nomadic discipleship disappeared. To be present with Him thereafter, men needed only to forsake their sins.

Chapter 4: Paying the Temple Tax

Matthew 17:24-27

This story is a nut with a dry, hard shell but a very sweet kernel. Superficial readers may see in it nothing more than a curious anecdote of a single fish with a piece of money in its mouth turning up opportunely to pay a tax. This record is told only by Matthew, not because of its intrinsic importance, but simply because, as an ex-tax gatherer, he took kindly to the tale. Devout readers, though unwilling to acknowledge it, may be secretly scandalized by the miracle related, as not merely a departure from the rule which Jesus observed of not using His divine power to help Himself, but as something very like a piece of sport on His part, or an expression of a humorous sense of incongruity, reminding one of the grotesque figures in old cathedrals, in the carving of which the builders delighted to show their skill, and find for themselves amusement.

The Humility of Christ

Breaking the shell of the story, we discover its kernel: a most pathetic exhibition of the humiliation and self-humiliation of the Son of man, who appears exposed to the indignity of being dunned for temple dues, and so oppressed with poverty that He cannot pay the sum demanded, though its amount is only fifteen pence. He neither pleads poverty nor insists on exemption on the score of privilege, but quietly

meets the claims of the collectors in a manner which, if sufficiently strange, as we admit, was at all events singularly meek and peaceable.

This incident is an admirable illustration of Jesus' teachings on humility. The greatest in the kingdom here exhibits the lowliness He impressed on His disciples and shows them, by example, a holy, loving solicitude to avoid giving offense not only to the little ones within the kingdom, but even to those without. He stands not on His dignity as the Son of God, though the voice from heaven uttered on the holy mount still rings in His ears, but consents to be treated as a subject or a stranger; desiring to live peaceably with men whose ways He does not love, and who bear Him no goodwill, by complying with their wishes in all things lawful. We regard this curious scene at Capernaum (with the Mount of Transfiguration in the distant background!) as a historical introduction to the sermon we have been studying. We think ourselves justified in taking this view, because, though the scene occurred before the sermon was delivered, it happened after the dispute which supplied the preacher with a text. The disciples began arguing on the way home from the Mount of Transfiguration, while the visit of the tax gatherers took place on their arrival in Capernaum. Of course Jesus knew of the disagreement at the time of the visit, though He had not yet said anything. Is it too much to assume that His knowledge of the disciples' arguments influenced His conduct in the affair of the tribute money? He used this opportunity as a teachable moment on humility rather than waiting to lecture later.

This assumption is, we believe, quite necessary in order to understand Christ's actions regarding the tax. Those who leave out the dispute by the way are not at the right point of view for seeing the incident at Capernaum in its natural light, and they fall inevitably into misunderstandings. They are forced to regard Jesus as arguing seriously against payment of the temple tax, as something not legally obligatory, or as lying out of the ordinary course of His humiliation as the Son of Man. Now it was neither one nor other of these things. The Law of Moses ordained that every man above twenty years should pay the sum of half a shekel as an atonement for his soul and to meet the expenses connected with the service of the tabernacle rendered to God for the common benefit of all Israelites. Jesus, as a Jew, was just as much under obligation to comply with this particular law as with any other. Nor was there any peculiar indignity, either in kind or degree, involved in obeying that law. Doubtless it was a great indignity and humiliation to the Son of God to be paying taxes for the maintenance of His own Father's house! All that He said to Peter, pointing out the incongruity of such a state of things, was sober truth. But the incongruity does not meet us here alone; it runs through the whole of our Lord's earthly experience. His life, in all respects, departed from the analogy of kings' sons. Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience; though He were a Son, yet came He not to be ministered unto, but to minister; though He were a Son, yet became He subject to the law, not merely the moral but the ceremonial, and was circumcised and took part in the temple worship and frequented the sacred feasts and offered sacrifices, though these were all only shadows of good things, whereof He Himself was the substance. Surely, in a life containing so many indignities and incongruities—which was, in fact, one grand indignity from beginning to end—it was a small matter to be obliged to pay annually, for the benefit of the temple, the paltry sum of fifteen pence! He, who with marvelous patience went through all the rest, could not possibly mean to stumble and scruple at so trifling a matter. He, who did nothing toward destroying the temple and putting an end to legal worship before the time, could not be a party to the mean policy of starving out its officials or grudging the funds necessary to keep the sacred edifice in good repair. He might say openly what He thought of existing ecclesiastical abuses, but He would do no more.

Why Pay the Tax?

The truth is that the words spoken by Jesus to Simon were not intended as an argument against paying the tax, but as an explanation of what was meant by His paying it, and of the motive guiding Him in paying it. They were a lesson for Simon, and through him for the Twelve, on a subject wherein they had great

need of instruction, not a legal defense against the demands of the tax gatherer. But for the disciples' argument, Jesus would probably have taken the quietest means for getting the tax paid, without making any remarks on the subject. That He had already acted thus on previous occasions, Peter's prompt affirmative reply to the question of the collectors seems to imply. The disciple said "yes," knowing what his Master had done in past years, and assuming His practice would be the same now. But Jesus did not deem it, in present circumstances, a good idea to let His disciples regard His action with respect to the tax as a mere matter of course; He wanted them to understand and reflect on the moral meaning and the motive of His action for their own instruction and guidance.

He wished them to understand that for Him to pay the temple dues was a humiliation and an incongruity, similar to that of a king's son paying a tax for the support of the palace and the royal household. It was not a thing that He should pay, any more than it was a thing of course that He should become man and leave His royal state behind and assume the rank of a peasant. It was an act of voluntary humiliation, forming one item in the course of humiliation to which He voluntarily submitted, beginning with His birth and ending with His death and burial. He wanted His disciples to think about these things in the hope that meditation on them would help rebuke the pride, pretension, and self-assertion which had given rise to that petty dispute about places of distinction. He would say to them, in effect: "Were I, like you, covetous of honors and bent on asserting My importance, I would stand on My dignity and haughtily reply to these collectors of tribute: Why trouble Me about temple dues? Don't you know who I am? I am the Christ, the Son of the living God. The temple is My Father's house; and I, His Son, am free from all servile obligations. But, take note; I do nothing of the kind. With the honors heaped upon Me on the Mount of Transfiguration fresh in My recollection, with the consciousness of who I am, and where I came from, and where I will go, abiding deep in my soul, I submit to be treated as a mere common Jew, suffering My honors to fall into abeyance and making no demands for a recognition which is not voluntarily conceded. The world knows Me not; and while it knows Me not, I am content that it should do with me, as with John, whatsoever it wants. If the rulers knew who I am, they would be ashamed to ask Me for temple dues; but since they do not, I accept and bear all the indignities consequent on their ignorance."

All this Jesus said in effect to His disciples, by first teaching how a refusal to pay the didrachmon might plausibly be defended, and then by paying it. The manner of payment also was so contrived by Him as to reinforce the lesson. He didn't simply say to Simon: "Go and catch fish, that with the proceeds of their sale we may satisfy our creditors." He gave him directions as the Lord of nature, to whom all creatures in land or sea were subject, and all their movements familiar, while yet so humbled as to need the services of the meanest of them. By drawing on His omniscience in giving these instructions to His disciple, He did, in a manner, what He never did either before or after: used a miracle for His own need. The exception, however, had the same reason as the rule, and therefore proved the rule. Jesus abstained from using His divine faculties for His own benefit so that He might not impair the integrity of His humiliation; that His human life might be a real bona fide life of hardship, unalleviated by the presence of the divine element in His personality. But what was the effect of the lightning flash of divine knowledge emitted by Him in giving those directions to Peter? To impair the integrity of His humiliation? No, but only to make it glaringly conspicuous. It said to Simon, and to us, if he and we had ears to hear: "Behold who pays this tax, and who is reduced to such straits in order to pay it! It is He who knows all the birds of the mountain and the fish of the sea!"

The other point Jesus wanted to impress on His disciples was they needed to avoid giving offense: "Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them." This was not, of course, the only reason for His conduct in this case, but it was the point he wanted to emphasize at this time. He was about to talk to them on the subject of giving and receiving offenses, and He wished them, specially Peter, to observe how very

careful He Himself was not to offend—what a prominent place the desire to avoid giving offense occupied among His motives.

Christ's declared reason for paying the tribute is strikingly expressive of His lowliness and His love. The mark of His lowliness is that there is no word here of taking offense. How easily and plausibly might He have taken up the position of one who had the right to be angry! "I am the Christ, the Son of God," He might have said, "and have substantiated My claims by a thousand miracles in word and deed, yet they willfully refuse to recognize Me. I am a poor homeless wanderer, yet they, knowing this, demanded the tribute, as if more for the sake of annoying and insulting Me than of getting the money. And for what purpose do they collect these dues? For the support of a religious establishment thoroughly effete, to repair a temple doomed to destruction, to maintain a priesthood scandalously deficient in the cardinal virtues of integrity and truth, and whose very existence is a curse to the land. I cannot in conscience pay a didrachmon, no, not even so much as a farthing, for any such objects."

The lowly One did not assume this attitude, but gave what was asked without complaint, grudging, or railing; and His conduct conveys a lesson for Christians in all ages, and in our own age in particular. It teaches the children of the kingdom not to murmur because the world does not recognize their status and dignity. The world knew not when He came, even God's eternal Son—what wonder if it does not recognize His younger brethren! The kingdom of heaven itself is not believed in, and its citizens should not be surprised at any lack of respect toward them individually. The manifestation of the sons of God is one of the things for which Christians wait in hope. For the present they are not the children, but the strangers. Instead of exemption from burdens, they should rather expect oppression; and they should be thankful when they are put on a level with their fellow creatures and get the benefit of a law of toleration.

As the humility of Jesus was shown by His not taking, so His love was manifested by His solicitude to avoid giving offense. He desired, if possible, to conciliate persons who, for the most part had treated Him all along as a heathen and a publican, and who soon, as He knew well, would treat Him even as a felon. How like Himself was the Son of man in so acting! How thoroughly in keeping His procedure here with His whole conduct while He was on the earth! For what was His aim in coming to the world, what His constant endeavor after He came, but to cancel offenses and to put an end to enmities—to reconcile sinful men to God and to each other? For these ends He took flesh; for these ends He was crucified. His earthly life was all of a piece—a life of lowly love.

"Lest we should offend," said Jesus, using the plural to hint that He meant His conduct to be imitated by the Twelve and by all His followers. How happy for the world and the church were this done! How many offenses might have been prevented had the conciliatory spirit of the Lord always reigned in those called by His name! How many offenses might be removed were this spirit abundantly poured out on Christians of all denominations now! If this motive, "Notwithstanding, lest we should offend," loomed largely in all minds, what conflicts might be healed, what unions might come! A national church morally, if not legally, established in unity and peace might be realized in Scotland in the present generation. Surely a consummation devoutly to be wished! Let us wish for it; let us pray for it; let us cherish a spirit tending to make it possible; let us hope for it against hope, in spite of increasing tendencies on all sides to indulge in an opposite spirit.

The Life of Christ

by Frederick Farrar

Chapter 1: The Nativity

One mile from Bethlehem is a little plain, in which, under a grove of olives, stands the bare and neglected chapel known by the name of “the Angel to the Shepherds.” It is built over the traditional site of the fields where, in the beautiful language of Luke—more exquisite than any idyll to Christian ears—“there were shepherds keeping watch over their flock by night, when, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and, the glory of the Lord shone round about them,” and to their happy ears were uttered the good tidings of great joy, that unto them was born that day in the city of David a Savior, which was Christ the Lord.

The associations of our Lord’s nativity were all of the humblest character, and the very scenery of His birthplace was connected with memories of poverty and toil. On that night, indeed, it seemed as though the heavens must burst to disclose their radiant minstrelsy; and the stars, and the feeding sheep, and the “light and sound in the darkness and stillness,” and the rapture of faithful hearts, combine to furnish us with a picture painted in the colors of heaven. But in the brief and thrilling verses of the evangelist we are not told that those angel songs were heard by any except the wakeful shepherds of an obscure village—and these shepherds, amid the chill dews of a winter night, were guarding their flocks from the wolf and the robber, in fields where Ruth, their Savior’s ancestress, had gleaned, sick at heart, amid the alien corn, and David, the despised and youngest son of a numerous family, had followed the ewes great with young.

“And suddenly,” adds the sole evangelist who has narrated the circumstances of that memorable night in which Jesus was born, amid the indifference of a world unconscious of its Deliverer, “there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men of good will.”

It might have been expected that Christian piety would have marked the spot by splendid memorials and enshrined the rude grotto of the shepherds in the marbles and mosaics of some stately church. But, instead of this, the Chapel of the Herald Angel is a mere rude crypt; and as the traveler descends down the broken steps leading from the olive grove into its dim recess, he can hardly persuade himself that he is in a consecrated place. Yet a half-unconscious sense of fitness has, perhaps, contributed to this apparent neglect. The poverty of the chapel harmonizes well with the humble toil of those whose radiant vision it is intended to commemorate.

“Come now! Let us go unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which has come to pass, which the Lord made known to us,” said the shepherds, when those angel songs had ceased to break the starry silence. Their way would lead them up the terraced hill and through the moonlit gardens of Bethlehem, until they reached the summit of the grey ridge on which the little town is built. On that summit stood the village inn. The khan (or caravanserai) of a Syrian village, at that day, was probably identical in its appearance and accommodation with those still existing in modern Palestine. A khan is a low structure, built of rough stones, and generally only a single story in height. It consists for the most part of a square enclosure, where the cattle can be tied up in safety for the night, and an arched recess for the accommodation of travelers. The *leewan*, or paved floor of the recess, is raised a foot or two above the level of the courtyard. A large khan—like the ruins that may still be seen at Khan Minyeh, on the shore of the Sea of Galilee—might contain a series of such recesses, which are, in fact, low small rooms with no front wall to them. They are, of course, perfectly public; everything that takes place in them is visible to every person in the

khan. They are also totally devoid of even the most ordinary furniture. The traveler may bring his own carpet if he likes, may sit cross-legged upon it for his meals, and may lie upon it at night. As a rule, too, he must bring his own food, attend to his own cattle, and draw his own water from the neighboring spring. He would neither expect nor require attendance and would pay only the merest trifle for the advantage of shelter, safety, and a floor on which to lie. But if he chanced to arrive late, and the *leewans* were all occupied by earlier guests, he would have no choice but to be content with such accommodation as he could find in the courtyard below, and secure for himself and his family such small amounts of cleanliness and decency as are compatible with an unoccupied corner on the filthy area, which must be shared with horses, mules, and camels. The litter, the closeness, the unpleasant smell of the crowded animals, the unwelcome intrusion of the pariah dogs, the necessary society of the very lowest hangers-on of the caravanserai, are adjuncts to such a position which can only be realized by any traveler in the East who happens to have been placed in similar circumstances.

In Palestine often the entire khan, or the portion of it where the animals are housed, is one of those innumerable caves which abound in the limestone rocks of its central hills. Such seems to have been the case at the little town of Bethlehem-Ephrathah, in the land of Judah. Justin Martyr, the Apologist, who, from his birth at Shechem, was familiar with Palestine, and who lived less than a century after the time of our Lord, places the scene of the nativity in a cave. This is, indeed, the ancient and constant tradition both of the Eastern and the Western churches, and it is one of the few to which, though unrecorded in the gospel history, we may attach a reasonable probability. Over this cave has risen the Church and Convent of the Nativity, and it was in a cave close beside it that one of the most learned, eloquent, and holy of the Fathers of the Church—that great St. Jerome to whom we owe the received Latin translation of the Bible—spent thirty of his declining years in study, and fasting, and prayer.

From their northern home at Nazareth, in the mountains of Zabulon, Joseph, the village carpenter, had made his way along the wintry roads with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. Fallen as were their fortunes, they were both of the house and lineage of David, and they were making a journey of eighty miles to the village which had been the home of their great ancestor while he was still a ruddy shepherd lad, tending his flocks upon the lonely hills. The reason for their trip was to enroll their names as members of the house of David in a census ordered by the Emperor Augustus. In the political condition of the Roman Empire, of which Judæa then formed a part, a single whisper of the Emperor was sufficiently powerful to secure the execution of his mandates in the remotest corners of the civilized world. Great as are the historic difficulties in which the census is involved, there seems to be good independent grounds for believing that it may have been originally ordered by Sentius Saturninus, that it was *begun* by Publius Sulpicius Quirinus, when he was for the first time legate of Syria, and that it was completed during his second term of office. In deference to Jewish prejudices, any infringement of which was the certain signal for violent tumults and insurrection, it was not carried out in the ordinary Roman manner at each person's place of residence, but according to Jewish custom at the town to which their family originally belonged. The Jews still clung to their genealogies and to the memory of long-extinct tribal relations; and though the journey was a weary and distasteful one, the mind of Joseph may well have been consoled by the remembrance of that heroic descent which would now be authoritatively recognized, and by the glow of those Messianic hopes to which the marvelous circumstances of which he was almost the sole depositary would give a tenfold intensity.

Traveling in the East is a very slow and leisurely affair, and was likely to be still more so if, as is probable, the country was at that time agitated by political animosities. Beeroth, which is fifteen miles distant from Bethlehem, or possibly even Jerusalem, which is only six miles off, may have been the resting place of Mary and Joseph before this last stage of their journey. But the heavy tiredness, or even the commencing pangs of labor, must necessarily have slowed the progress of the maiden-mother. Others,

who were traveling on the same errand, would easily have passed them on the road, and when, after toiling up the steep hillside by David's well, they arrived at the khan—probably the very one which had been known for centuries as the House of Chimham, and if so, covering perhaps the very ground on which, one thousand years before, had stood the hereditary house of Boaz of Jesse and of David—every *leewan* was occupied. The enrolment had drawn so many strangers to the little town that “there was no room for them in the inn.” In the rude limestone grotto attached to it as a stable, among the hay and straw spread for the food and rest of the cattle, weary with their day's journey, far from home, in the midst of strangers, in the chilly winter night—in circumstances so devoid of all earthly comfort or splendor that it is impossible to imagine a humbler nativity—Christ was born.

A few miles away, on the plateau of the abrupt and singular hill now called *Jebel Fureidis*, or “Little Paradise Mountain,” towered the palace fortress of the Great Herod. The magnificent houses of his friends and courtiers crowded around its base. The humble wayfarers, as they passed near it, might have heard the hired and voluptuous minstrelsy with which its feasts were celebrated, or the shouting of the rough mercenaries whose arms enforced obedience to its despotic lord. But the true King of the Jews—the rightful Lord of the Universe—was not to be found in palace or fortress. They who wear soft clothing are in king's houses. The cattle stables of the lowly caravanserai were a more fitting birthplace for Him who came to reveal that the soul of the greatest monarch was no dearer or greater in God's sight than the soul of his meanest slave; for Him who had not where to lay His head; for Him who, from His cross of shame, was to rule the world.

Guided by the lamp which usually swings from the center of a rope hung across the entrance of the khan, the shepherds made their way to the inn of Bethlehem and found Mary, Joseph, and the Babe lying in the manger. The fancy of poet and painter has reveled in the imaginary glories of the scene. They have sung of the “bright harnessed angels” who hovered there, and of the stars lingering beyond their time to shed their sweet influences upon that smiling infant. They have painted the radiation of light from his manger-cradle, illuminating the place till the bystanders are forced to shade their eyes from that heavenly splendor. But all this is wide of the reality. Such glories as the simple shepherds saw were seen only by the eye of faith; and all which met their gaze was a peasant of Galilee, already beyond the prime of life, and a young mother, of whom *they* could not know that she was wedded maid and virgin wife, with an Infant Child, whom, since there were none to help her, her own hands had wrapped in swaddling clothes. The light that shined in the darkness was no physical, but a spiritual beam; the Dayspring from on high, which had now visited mankind, dawned only in a few faithful and humble hearts.

And the Gospels, always truthful and bearing on every page the simplicity which is the stamp of honest narrative, indicate this fact without comment. There is in them nothing of the exuberance of marvel, and mystery, and miracle, which appear alike in the Jewish imaginations about their coming Messiah, and in the apocryphal narratives about the Infant Christ. There is no more decisive criterion of their absolute credibility as simple histories, than the marked and violent contrast they offer to all the spurious gospels of the early centuries, and all the imaginative legends which have clustered about them. Had our Gospels been unauthentic, they, too, must inevitably have partaken of the characteristics which mark, without exception, every early fiction about the Savior's life. To the unilluminated fancy it would have seemed incredible that the most stupendous event in the world's history should have taken place without convulsions and catastrophes. In the gospel of St. James there is a really striking chapter, describing how, at the awful moment of the nativity, the pole of the heaven stood motionless, and the birds were still, and there were workmen lying on the earth with their hands in a vessel, “and those who handled did not handle it, and those who took did not lift, and those who presented it to their mouth did not present it, but the faces of all were looking up; and I saw the sheep scattered and the sheep stood, and the shepherd lifted up his hand to strike, and his hand remained up; and I looked at the stream of the river, and the mouths of

the kids were down, and were not drinking; and everything which was being propelled forward was intercepted in its course.” But of this sudden hush and pause of awestruck Nature, of the parhelions and mysterious splendors which blazed in many places of the world, of the painless childbirth, of the perpetual virginity, of the ox and the ass kneeling to worship Him in the manger, of the voice with which immediately after His birth He told his mother that He was the Son of God, and of many another wonder which rooted itself in the earliest traditions, there is no trace whatever in the New Testament. The inventions of man differ wholly from the dealings of God. In His designs there is no haste, no rest, no weariness, no discontinuity; all things are done by Him in the majesty of silence, and they are seen under a light that shines quietly in the darkness, “showing all things in the slow history of their ripening.” “The unfathomable depths of the Divine counsels,” it has been said, “were moved; the fountains of the great deep were broken up; the healing of the nations was issuing forth; but nothing was seen on the surface of human society but this slight rippling of the water; the course of human things went on as usual, while each was taken up with little projects of his own.”

How long the Virgin Mother and her Holy Child stayed in this cave, or cattle enclosure, we cannot tell, but probably it was not for long. The word rendered “manger” in Luke 2:7, is of very uncertain meaning, nor can we discover more about it than that it means a place where animals were fed. It is probable that the crowd in the khan would not be permanent, and common humanity would have dictated an early removal of the mother and her child to some more appropriate resting place. The Magi, as we see from Matthew, visited Mary in “the house.” But on all these minor incidents the Gospels do not dwell. The fullest of them is Luke, and the singular sweetness of his narrative, its almost idyllic grace, its sweet, calm tone of noble reticence, seem clearly to indicate that he derived it, though but in fragmentary notices, from the lips of Mary herself. It is, indeed, difficult to imagine from whom else it could have come, for mothers are the natural historians of infant years; but it is interesting to find, in the actual style, that “coloring of a woman’s memory and a woman’s view,” which we should naturally have expected in confirmation of a conjecture so obvious and so interesting. To one who was giving the reins to his imagination, the minutest incidents would have claimed a description; to Mary they would have seemed trivial and irrelevant. Others might wonder, but in her all wonder was lost in the one overwhelming revelation—the one absorbing consciousness. Of such things she could not lightly speak; “she kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.” The very depth and sacredness of that reticence is the natural and probable explanation of the fact, that some of the details of the Savior’s infancy are fully recorded by Luke alone.

"The Hidden Years"

We may be thankful that the word "carpenter" remains. It is all we know of His eighteen hidden years. The word is full of meaning, and has exercised a very noble and blessed influence over the fortunes of mankind. It has tended to console and sanctify the estate of poverty, to ennoble the duty of labor, to elevate the entire conception of manhood

He Assumed the Lowly Status Which Characterizes the Lot of Mankind Whom He Came to Save.

It shows, for instance, that not only during the three years of His ministry, but throughout the whole of His life, our Lord was poor. In the *cities* the carpenters would be Greeks and skilled workmen; the carpenter of a provincial village—and, if tradition is true, Joseph was "not very skilful"—can only have held a very humble position and secured a very moderate living. In all ages there has been an exaggerated desire for wealth, an exaggerated admiration for those who possess it, an exaggerated belief of its influence in producing or increasing the happiness of life, and from these errors a flood of cares and jealousies and meannesses have devastated the life of man. And therefore Jesus chose voluntarily "the low estate of the poor"—not, indeed, an absorbing, degrading, grinding poverty, which is always rare, and almost always remediable, but that commonest lot of honest poverty, which, though it necessitates self-denial, can provide with ease for all the necessaries of a simple life. While the elite of the corrupt Roman empire might indulge in the gilded vices of a corrupt Hellenism and display the gorgeous gluttonies of a decaying civilization; He who came to be the Friend, Savior, and King of All, sanctioned the purer, better, simpler traditions and customs of His nation, and chose the condition in which the vast majority of mankind have ever, and must ever live.

He Was Demonstrating the Dignity of Manual Labor.

Again, there has ever been, in the unenlightened mind, a love of idleness: a tendency to regard it as a stamp of aristocracy, a desire to delegate labor to the lower and weaker and to brand it with the stigma of inferiority and contempt. But our Lord wished to show that labor is a pure and a noble thing; it is the salt of life. And therefore Christ labored, working with His own hands to fashion ploughs and yokes for those who needed them.

He Was Demonstrating That Real Significance in the Sight of God Is Based Upon Our Inner and Not Our Outer Life.

Once more, from this deep obscurity, we were meant to learn that our real existence in the sight of God consists in the inner and not in the outer life. The world hardly attaches any significance to any life except those of its heroes and benefactors, its mighty intellects, or its splendid conquerors. But these are, and must ever be, the few. One raindrop of myriads falling on desert or mountain—one snowflake out of myriads melting into the immeasurable sea—is, and must be, for most men the symbol of their ordinary lives. They die, and barely have they died, when they are forgotten; a few years pass, and the creeping lichens eat away the letters of their names upon the churchyard stone, but even if those crumbling letters were still decipherable, they would recall no memory to those who stand upon their graves.

A relative insignificance, then, is, and must be, the destined lot of the immense majority, and many a man might be led to think that since he fills so small a space—since, for the vast masses of mankind, he is of as little importance, there is nothing better than to eat and drink and die. But Christ came to convince us that a *relative* insignificance may be an *absolute* importance. He came to teach that continual excitement,

prominent action, distinguished services, brilliant success, are no essential elements of a true and noble life, and that myriads of the beloved of God are to be found among the insignificant and the obscure.

He Developed Intellectually Under Joseph's Guidance and the Elders in the Synagogue.

And while they were occupied manually, we have positive evidence that these years were not neglected intellectually. It is probable that Jesus received His early teaching at home, and in accordance with the injunctions of the Law (Deut 11:19), from His father. He would also have often heard in the daily prayers of the synagogue all that the elders of the place could teach respecting the Law and the Prophets. That He had not been to Jerusalem for purposes of instruction, and had not frequented any of the schools of the Rabbis, is certain from the indignant questions of jealous enemies, "From whence hath this man these things?" "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?"

He Developed a Thorough Knowledge of Scripture.

And this testimony of His enemies furnishes us with a convincing and fortunate proof that His teaching was not, as some would insinuate, a mere eclectic system borrowed from the various sects and teachers of His times. It is certain that He was never enrolled among the scholars of those scribes who made it their main business to teach the traditions of the fathers. The schools in which Jesus learned were the schools of holy obedience, of sweet contentment, of unalloyed simplicity, of stainless purity, of cheerful toil. The lore He studied was not the lore of rabbinism, in which to find one just or noble thought we must wade through masses of puerile fancy and cabalistic folly, but the books of God around Him, in Scripture, in nature, and in life; and the book of God within Him, written on the fleshly tables of the heart.

He Grew Academically in the Education System Common to All Jewish Boys of His Class.

The education of a Jewish boy of the humbler classes was almost solely scriptural and moral, and his parents were, as a rule, his sole teachers. We can hardly doubt that the child Jesus was taught by Joseph and Mary to read the Shema (Deut 6:4), and the Hallel (Ps 114–118), and the simpler parts of those holy books, on whose pages His divine wisdom was hereafter to pour such floods of light.

But He had evidently received a further culture than this.

1. The art of writing is by no means commonly known, even in these days, in the East; but more than one allusion to the form of the Hebrew letters, no less than the stooping to write with His finger on the ground, show that our Lord could write.
2. That His knowledge of the sacred writings was deep and extensive—that, in fact, He must almost have known them by heart—is clear, not only from His direct quotations, but also from the numerous allusions which He made to the Law and to Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Joel, Hosea, Micah, Zechariah, Malachi, and, above all, to the book of Psalms. This profound and ready knowledge of the Scriptures gave more point to the half-indignant question, so often repeated, "*Have ye not read?*"
3. The language of our Lord was Aramaic; and at that period, Hebrew was completely a dead language, known only to the more educated, and only to be acquired by labor: yet it is clear that Jesus was acquainted with it, for some of His scriptural quotations directly refer to the Hebrew original. Greek, too, He must have known, for it was currently spoken in towns near His home. Greek was, indeed, the common language, and without it Jesus could have had no conversation with strangers—with the centurion, for instance, whose servant He healed, or with Pilate, or with the Greeks who desired an

interview with Him in the last week of His life. Some, too, of His scriptural quotations are taken directly from the Greek version of the Septuagint, even where it differs from the Hebrew original.

He Was Trained Spiritually by His Direct Contact with His Father in Heaven.

But whatever the boy Jesus may have learned as child or boy in the house of His mother, or in the school of the synagogue, we know that His best teaching was derived from immediate insight into His Father's will. In the depths of His inmost consciousness did that voice of God, which spoke to the father of our race as he walked in the cool evening under the palms of Paradise, commune—more plainly, by far—with Him. He heard it in every sound of nature, in every occupation of life, in every instance of solitary thought. His human life was “an ephod on which was inscribed the one word God.” Written on His inmost spirit, written on His most trivial experiences, written in sunbeams, written in the light of stars, He read everywhere His Father's name. The calm, untroubled seclusion of the happy valley, with its green fields and glorious scenery, was eminently conducive to a life of spiritual communion. We know how from its every incident—the games of its innocent children, the buying and selling in its little marketplace, the springing of its perennial fountain, the glory of its mountain lilies in their transitory loveliness, the hoarse cry in their wind-rocked nest of the raven's callow brood—he drew food for moral illustration and spiritual thought.

He Was Preparing Himself in All Ways for His Life Mission.

We must not lose sight of the fact that it was in these silent, unrecorded years that a great part of His work was done. He was not only “girding His sword upon His thigh,” but also wielding it in that warfare which has no discharge. That noiseless battle, in which no clash of weapons sounds, but in which the combatants against us are none the less terrible because they are not seen, went on through all the years of His redeeming obedience. In these years He “began to do” long before He “began to teach.” They were the years of a sinless childhood, a sinless boyhood, a sinless youth, a sinless manhood, spent in that humility, toil, obscurity, submission, contentment, and prayer to make them an eternal example to all our race. We cannot imitate Him in the occupations of His ministry, nor can we even remotely reproduce in our own experience the external circumstances of His life during those three crowning years. But the vast majority of us are placed, by God's own appointment, amid those quiet duties of a commonplace and uneventful routine which are most closely analogous to the thirty years of His retirement; it was during these years that His life is for us the main example of how we ought to live.

His mere presence in that home of His childhood must have made it a happy one. The hour of strife, the hour of the sword, the hour when many in Israel should rise or fall because of Him, the hour when the thoughts of many hearts should be revealed, the hour when the kingdom of heaven should suffer violence, and the violent take it by force, was not yet come. In *any* family circle the gentle influence of one loving soul is sufficient to breathe around it an unspeakable calm; it has a soothing power like the shining of the sunlight, or the voice of doves heard at evening.

The home of Jesus was no ordinary home. With Joseph to guide and support, with Mary to hallow and sweeten it, with the youthful Jesus to illuminate it with the very light of heaven, we may well believe that it was a home of trustful piety, of angelic purity, of almost perfect peace; a home for the sake of which all the earth would be dearer and more awful to the watchers and holy ones, and where, if the fancy be permitted us, they would love to stay their waving wings.

He Assumed the Headship of His Family When Joseph Died.

Who were those in the Gospels so often called “the brethren of the Lord”? The natural supposition is that, after the miraculous conception of our Lord, Joseph and Mary lived together in the married state, and that James, and Joses, and Judas, and Simon, with daughters, whose names are not recorded, were subsequently born to them. According to this view, Jesus would be the eldest and, on the death of Joseph, which, if we may follow tradition, took place when He was nineteen, would assume the natural headship and support of the orphaned family. It is clear that our Lord, from His earliest infancy, must have been thrown into close connection with several kinsmen, or brothers, a little older or a little younger than Himself, who were men of marked individuality, of burning zeal, of a simplicity almost bordering on Essenic ascetism, of overpowering hostility to every form of corruption, disorder, or impurity, of strong devotion to the Messianic hopes, and even to the ritual observances of their country. We know that, though afterward they became pillars of the infant Church, at first they did not believe in our Lord’s Divinity, or at any rate held views counter to the divine plan of His self-manifestation. Not among these, in any case, did Jesus during His lifetime find His most faithful followers, or His most beloved companions. There seemed to be in them a certain strong opinionativeness, a Judaic obstinacy, a lack of sympathy, a deficiency in the elements of tenderness and reverence. Peter, affectionate even in his worst weakness, generous even in his least controlled impulse; James the son of Zebedee, calm and watchful, reticent and true; above all, John, whose impetuosity lay involved in a soul of the most heavenly tenderness, as the lightning slumbers in the dewdrop—these were more to Him and dearer than His brethren or kinsmen according to the flesh. A hard aggressive morality is less beautiful than an absorbing and adoring love.

He Spent Hours Alone Developing Intimacy with His Father in heaven.

It has been implied that there are only two spots in Palestine where we may feel an absolute moral certainty that the feet of Christ walked—the well side at Shechem, and the turning of that road from Bethany over the Mount of Olives from which Jerusalem first bursts upon the view. But to these I would add at least another: the summit of the hill on which Nazareth is built. Certainly there is no child of ten years old in Nazareth now, however dull and unimpressionable he may be, who has not often wandered up to it; and certainly there could have been no boy at Nazareth in olden days who had not followed the common instinct of humanity by climbing up those thorny hill slopes to the lovely and easily accessible spot which gives a view of the world beyond. The hill rises six hundred feet above the level of the sea. Four or five hundred feet below lies the happy valley. The view from this spot would in any country be regarded as extraordinarily rich and lovely; but it receives a yet more indescribable charm from our belief that here, with His feet among the mountain flowers, and the soft breeze lifting the hair from His temples, Jesus must often have watched the eagles poised in the cloudless blue, and having gazed upwards as He heard overhead the rushing plumes of the long line of pelicans, as they winged their way from the streams of Kishon to the Lake of Galilee. And what a vision would be spread out before Him as He sat at springtime on the green-and-thyme-sprinkled turf! To Him every field and fig tree, every palm and garden, every house and synagogue, would have been a familiar object; and most fondly of all, amongst the square flat-roofed houses, would His eye single out the little dwelling place of the village carpenter. To the north, just beneath them, lay the narrow and fertile plain of Asochis, from which rose the wood-crowned hills of Naphtali; beyond these, on the far horizon, Hermon upheaved into the blue the huge splendid mass of his colossal shoulder, white with eternal snows. Eastward a few miles, rose the green and rounded summit of Tabor, the Mount on which He would be transfigured, clothed with terebinth and oak. To the west He would gaze through that clean air on the purple ridge of Carmel, among whose forests Elijah had found a home. Southward, broken only by the graceful outlines of Little Hermon and

Gilboa, lay the entire plain of Esdraelon, so memorable in the history of Palestine and of the world; across which lay the southward path to the city which had ever been the murderess of the prophets, and where it may be that even now, in the dim foreshadowing of prophetic vision, He foresaw the agony in the garden, the mockings and scourgings, the cross and the crown of thorns.

The Temptation of Christ

His human spirit filled with overpowering emotions, Jesus sought for retirement, to be alone with God, and once more to think over His mighty work. From the waters of the Jordan He was led—according to the more intense and picturesque expression of Mark (Mk 1:12), He was “driven”—by the Spirit into the wilderness.

And here Jesus, according to that graphic and pathetic touch of the second evangelist, “was with the wild beasts” (Mk 1:13). They did not harm him. “Thou shalt tread upon the lion and the adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet” (Ps 91:13).

He was in the wilderness forty days. The number occurs again and again in Scripture, and always in connection with the facts of temptation or retribution. It is clearly a sacred and representative number, and independently of other associations, it was for forty days that Moses had stayed on Sinai and Elijah in the wilderness. In moments of intense excitement and overwhelming thought the ordinary needs of the body seem to be modified, or even for a time superseded; and unless we are to understand Luke’s words, “He did eat nothing,” (Lk 4:2) as being absolutely literal, we might suppose that Jesus found all that was necessary for His bare sustenance in such scant fruits as the desert might afford; but however that may be—and it is a question of little importance—at the end of the time He hungered. And this was the tempter’s moment. The whole period had been one of moral and spiritual tension. During such high hours of excitement men will sustain, without succumbing, an almost incredible amount of labor and soldiers will fight through a long day’s battle unconscious or oblivious of their wounds. But when the enthusiasm is spent, when the exaltation dies away, when the fire burns low, when nature, weary and overstrained, reasserts her rights—in a word, when a mighty reaction has begun, which leaves the man suffering, spiritless, exhausted—then is the hour of extreme danger, and that has been, in many a fatal instance, the moment in which a man has fallen a victim to insidious allurements or bold assault. It was at such a moment that the great battle of our Lord against the powers of evil was fought and won.

And Jesus was tempted. The “Captain of our salvation” (Heb 2:10) was “made perfect through sufferings.” “In that He Himself *hath suffered being tempted*, He is able to succor them that are tempted” (Heb 2:18, emphasis added). The wilderness of Jericho and the Garden of Gethsemane—these witnessed His two most grievous struggles, and in these He triumphed wholly over the worst and most awful assaults of the enemy of souls; but during no part of the days of His flesh was He free from temptation, since otherwise His life had been no true human life at all, nor would He in the same measure have left us an example that we should follow His steps.

The First Temptation

The exhaustion of a long fast would have acted more powerfully on the frame of Jesus from the circumstance that with Him it was not usual. It was with a gracious purpose that He lived, not as a secluded ascetic in hard and self-inflicted pangs, but as a man with men. After His hunger would be the more severe, then the tempter came.

“If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made loaves” (Mt 4:6). So spoke the Tempter first. Jesus was hungry, and “these stones” were perhaps those siliceous accretions, sometimes known under the name of *lapides judaici*, which assume the exact shape of little loaves of bread, and which were represented in legend as the petrified fruits of the Cities of the Plain. The pangs of hunger work all the more powerfully when they are stimulated by the added tortures of a quick imagination; and if the

conjecture is correct, then the very shape and aspect and traditional origin of these stones would give an added force to the temptation.

It was a temptation to the senses—an appeal to the appetites—an impulse given to that lower nature which man shares with all the animal creation. But so far from coming in any coarse or undisguisedly sensuous form, it came shrouded in a thousand subtle veils. Israel, too, had been humbled, and suffered hunger in the wilderness, and there, in his extreme need, God had fed him with manna, which was as angels' food and bread from heaven. Why did not the Son of God thus provide Himself with a table in the wilderness? He *could* do so if He liked, and why should He hesitate?

How deep is the wisdom of the reply! Referring to the very lesson which the giving of the manna had been designed to teach, and quoting one of the noblest utterances of Old Testament inspiration, our Lord answered, "It standeth written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God'" (Mt 4:4). And what a lesson for us—a lesson enforced by how great an example—that we are not to be guided by the wants of our lower nature; that we may not misuse that lower nature for the purposes of our own sustenance and enjoyment; that we are not our own. He who thinks that we live by bread alone will make the securing of bread the chief object of his life—will determine to have it at whatever cost. But he who knows that man does not live by bread alone, will not lose all that makes life dear—will, when he has done his duty, trust God to provide—will seek earnestly the bread from heaven and that living that satisfies all thirst.

The Second Temptation

Jesus had conquered and rejected the first temptation by the expression of an absolute trust in God. Then he brought Him to the Holy City and set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, perhaps the roof of the *Stoa Basilikè*, or Royal Porch, on the southern side of the temple, which looked down into the Kidron valley below. From that height, if anyone ventured to look down, he *would become dizzy*.

"If" (Mt 4:6)—again that doubt, as though to awake a spirit of pride, in the exercise of that miraculous display to which He is tempted—"If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down" (Mt 4:6). This temptation was deep and subtle. Since Jesus had appealed to Scripture, so did the devil. There was nothing vulgar, nothing selfish, nothing sensuous in this temptation. It was an appeal, not to natural appetites, but to perverted spiritual instincts.

Does not the history of sects, and parties, and churches, and men of high religious claims, show us that thousands who could not sink into the slough of sensuality, have yet thrust themselves arrogantly into needless perils and been dashed into headlong ruin from the pinnacle of spiritual pride? And how calm, yet full of warning, was that simple answer, "It is written again, 'Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.'" The word in the original (*ékpeiráseis*—Mt 4:7; Deut 6:16) is stronger and more expressive. It is, "Thou shalt not *tempt to the extreme* the Lord thy God" (Farrar, *The Life Of Christ*, 1884. p. 62); you shall not, as it were, presume on all that He can do for you; you shall not claim His miraculous intervention to save you from your own presumption and folly.

The Third Temptation

Foiled in his appeal to natural hunger, or to the possibility of spiritual pride, the tempter appealed to "the last infirmity of noble minds," and staked all on one splendid cast. He makes up for the want of subtlety by the magnificence of the issue. From a high mountain he showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, and as the "prince of this world," he offered them all to Him who had lived as the village carpenter, in return for one expression of homage, one act of acknowledgment.

“The kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them!” “It was only with such a magnificent offer that Christ could be tempted. He was of such purity that he could not be tempted with small matters. But with us it is nothing so, for we esteem more basely of ourselves. We set our wares at a very easy price; he may buy us even dagger cheap. He need never carry us so high as the mount. The pinnacle is high enough; yea, the lowest steeple in all the town would serve the turn. Or let him but carry us to the leads and gutters of our own houses; nay, let us but stand in our windows or our doors, if he will give us so much as we can there see, he will tempt us thoroughly; we will accept it, and thank him too. . . . A matter of half-a-crown, or ten goats, a pair of shoes, or some such trifle, will bring us on our knees to the devil.” (Farrar, Frederic. *The Life of Christ*, p. 68)

But Christ taught, “What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?”

This temptation was not very subtle. Satan was offering to Jesus the kingdoms of this world. Jesus never challenges his right to do so. Indeed, Jesus would later acknowledge him as the “God of this world”(Jn 14:30). Furthermore, the kingdoms of this world had been promised to Christ (Ps 2) and would one day be His. Satan, however, is offering Him the kingdoms now. He offers the kingdom without the cross, without the pain and humiliation, without dying for the sins of the world. He was offering an alternative plan.

This is often Satan’s way. He offers men an alternative to God’s plans for our lives. He offers salvation without the cross; he offers happiness without obedience and trust.

But He who is an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven answered, “Get thee behind me Satan: for it is written, ‘Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.’”

“Then the devil leaveth Him”—Luke adds, “till a fitting opportunity”—“and, behold, angels came and ministered unto Him.”

The First Miracle

Marriage Feasts for the Poor Usually Lasted Two Days

Whether the marriage festival lasted for seven days, as was usual among those who could afford it, or only for one or two, as was the case among the poorer classes, we cannot tell; but at some period of the entertainment the wine suddenly ran short. None but those who know how sacred in the East is the duty of lavish hospitality, and how passionately the obligation to exercise it to the utmost is felt, can realize the gloom which this incident would have thrown over the occasion, or the misery and mortification which it would have caused to the wedded pair. They would have felt it to be, as in the East it would still be felt to be, a bitter and indelible disgrace.

The Disciples May Have Been a Cause of the Lack of Enough Wine

Now the presence of Jesus and his five disciples may well have been the cause of this unexpected deficiency. The invitation, as we have seen, was originally intended for Jesus alone, nor could the youthful bridegroom in Cana of Galilee have been in the least aware that during the last four days Jesus had won the allegiance of five disciples. It is probable that no provision had been made for this increase of numbers, and that it was their unexpected presence which caused the deficiency in this simple household. Moreover, it is hardly probable that, coming from a hasty journey of ninety miles, the little band could, even had their means permitted it, have conformed to the common Jewish custom of bringing with them wine and other provisions to contribute to the mirthfulness of the wedding feast.

Under these circumstances, therefore, there was a special reason why the mother of Jesus should say to Him, "They have no wine." The remark was evidently a pointed one, and its import could not be misunderstood.

Jesus Was very Tender in His reply to His Mother

"*Woman, what have I to do with thee?*" The words at first sound harsh, and almost repellent in their roughness and brevity; but that is the fault partly of our version, partly of our associations. He does not call her "mother," because, in circumstances such as these, she was His mother no longer; but the address "Woman" was so respectful that it might be, and was, addressed to the queenliest, and so gentle that it might be, and was, addressed at the tenderest moments to the most fondly loved. And "what have I to do with thee?" is a literal version of a common Aramaic phrase which, while it sets aside a suggestion and waives all further discussion of it, is yet perfectly consistent with the most delicate courtesy and the most feeling consideration.

Nor can we doubt that even the slight check involved in these quiet words was still more softened by the look and accent with which they were spoken, and which are often sufficient to prevent far harsher utterances from inflicting any pain. For with undiminished faith, and with no trace of pained feeling, Mary said to the servants—over whom it is clear she was exercising some authority—"Whatever He says to you, do it at once."

This Miracle Created Many Gallons of Wine

The first necessity after a journey in the East is to wash the feet, and before a meal to wash the hands; and to supply these wants there were standing (as still is usual), near the entrance of the house, six large stone water jars, with their openings filled with bunches of fresh green leaves to keep the water cool. Each of these jars contained two or three *baths* of water (a bath is about five gallons), and Jesus told the servants

at once fill them to the brim. They did so, and He then ordered them to draw out the contents in smaller vessels and carry it to the guest who, according to the festive custom of the time, had been elected “governor of the feast.” Knowing nothing of what had taken place, he mirthfully observed that in offering the good wine last, the bridegroom had violated the common practice of banquets. This was Christ’s first miracle, and *thus*, with a definite and symbolic purpose, did He manifest His glory, and His disciples believed on Him.

The Miracle Was Unobtrusive

It was His first miracle, yet how unlike all that we should have expected, how simply unobtrusive, how divinely calm! The method, indeed, of the miracle—which is far more wonderful in character than the ordinary miracles of healing—transcends our powers of conception; yet it was not done with any pomp of circumstance, or blaze of adventitious glorification. Men in these days have presumptuously talked as though it were God’s duty—the duty of Him to whom the sea and the mountains are a very little thing, and before whose eyes the starry heaven is but as one white gleam in the “intense inane”—to perform His miracles before a circle of competent *savants*!

The Miracle Revealed How Unselfish God Is

One is its divine unselfishness. His ministry is to be a ministry of joy and peace. His sanction is to be given not to a crushing asceticism, but to a genial innocence. His approval, not to a compulsory celibacy, but to a sacred union. He who, to appease His own sore hunger, would not turn the stones of the wilderness into bread, gladly exercises, for the sake of others, His transforming power; and but six or seven days afterwards, relieves the perplexity and sorrow of a humble wedding feast by turning water into wine. The first miracle of Moses was, in stern retribution, to turn the river of a guilty nation into blood; the first of Jesus’ miracles was to fill the water jars of an innocent family with wine.

The Miracle Symbolized All That Christ Came to Do

And the other is its symbolic character. Like nearly all the miracles of Christ, it combines the characteristics of a work of mercy, an emblem, and a prophecy. The world gives its best first, and afterward all the dregs and bitterness; but Christ came to turn the lower into the richer and sweeter, the Mosaic law into the perfect law of liberty, the baptism of John into the baptism with the Holy Ghost and with fire, the self-denials of a painful isolation into the self-denials of a happy home, sorrow and sighing into hope and blessing, and water into wine. And thus the “holy estate” which Christ adorned and beautified with His presence and first miracle in Cana of Galilee, foreshadows the mystical union between Christ and His Church; and the common element which he thus miraculously changed becomes a type of our life on earth transfigured and ennobled by the anticipated joys of heaven—a type of that wine which He shall drink new with us in the kingdom of God, at the marriage supper of the Lamb.

Jesus at the Passover

The stay of Jesus at Capernaum on this occasion was very short, and it is probable that He simply awaited there the starting of the great caravan of the pilgrims, who, at this time, were about to wend their way to the great feast at Jerusalem.

The main event which occurred at Jerusalem was the purification of the temple—an act which He repeats at the close of His ministry, and only four days before His death.

The Feast of the Passover

Vast crowds flocked to the Holy City at this great annual feast. Indeed the whole nation gathered for this central feast of the religious year. It was an appropriate time for Jesus to announce His ministry and begin it with a cleansing.

Buyers and sellers choked the avenues leading to the temple selling oxen and sheep and doves. On both sides of the eastern gate—the gate Shusan—as far as Solomon’s porch, there had long been established the shops of merchants and the banks of money changers. The latter were almost a necessity; for, twenty days before the Passover, the priests began to collect the old sacred tribute of half a shekel paid yearly by every Israelite, whether rich or poor, as atonement money for his soul, and applied to the expenses of the Tabernacle service. Now it would not be lawful to pay this in the coinage brought from all kinds of governments, sometimes represented by wretched counters of brass and copper, and always defiled with heathen symbols and heathen inscriptions. It was lawful to send this money to the priests from a distance, but every Jew who presented himself in the temple preferred to pay it in person. He was therefore obliged to procure the little silver coin in return for his own currency, and the money changers charged him 5 percent.

The Money Changers

Had this trafficking been confined to the streets immediately adjacent to the holy building, it would have been excusable though not altogether seemly. But the mischief had not stopped here. The vicinity of the Court of the Gentiles, with its broad spaces and long arcades, had been too tempting to Jewish greed. We learn from the Talmud that a certain Babha Ben Buta had been the first to introduce “3,000 sheep of the flocks of Kedar into the Mountain of the House”—i.e., into the Court of the Gentiles, and therefore within the consecrated precincts.

The profane example was eagerly followed. The exchange booths of the shopkeepers and the usurers gradually crept into the sacred enclosure. There, in the actual Court of the Gentiles, steaming with heat in the burning April day and filling the temple with stench and filth, were penned whole flocks of sheep and oxen, while the drovers and pilgrims stood bartering and bargaining around them.

There were the men with their great wicker cages filled with doves, and under the shadow of the arcades, formed by quadruple rows of Corinthian columns, sat the money changers with their tables covered with piles of various small coins, while, as they reckoned and wrangled in the most dishonest of trades, their greedy eyes twinkled with the lust of gain. And this was the entrance court to the temple of the Most High! The court which was a witness that that house should be a House of Prayer for all nations had been degraded into a place which, for foulness, was more like shambles, and for bustling commerce more like a densely crowded bazaar; while the lowing of oxen, the bleating of sheep, the babel of many languages, the huckstering and wrangling, and the clinking of money and of balances (perhaps not always just), might be heard in the adjoining courts, disturbing the chant of the Levites and the prayers of priests!

Jesus Drives Out the Money Changers and Cleanses the Temple

Filled with a righteous scorn at all this mean irreverence, burning with irresistible and noble indignation, Jesus, on entering the temple, made a scourge of the rushes that lay on the floor; and in order to cleanse the sacred court of its worst pollutions, first drove out, indiscriminately, the sheep and oxen and the low crowd who tended them.

Then going to the tables of the money changers He overthrew them where they stood, upsetting the carefully arranged heaps of heterogeneous coinage, and leaving the owners to grope and hunt for their scattered money on the polluted floor.

And His disciples, seeing this transport of inspiring and glorious anger, recalled to mind what David had once written “to the chief musician upon Soshannim,” for the service of that very temple, “The zeal of thine house shall even devour me.”

Because of Their Guilt, the Money Changers Do Not Resist

Why did not this multitude of ignorant pilgrims resist?

Why did these greedy chafferers content themselves with dark scowls and muttered maledictions, while they suffered their oxen and sheep to be chased into the streets and themselves ejected, and their money flung rolling on the floor, by One who was then young and unknown, and in the garb of despised Galilee?

Because sin is weakness; because there is in the world nothing so abject as a guilty conscience, nothing so invincible as the sweeping tide of a Godlike indignation against all that is base and wrong. How could these paltry sacrilegious buyers and sellers, conscious of wrongdoing, oppose that scathing rebuke, or face the lightnings of those eyes that were enkindled by an outraged holiness? Vice cannot stand for one moment before Virtue’s uplifted arm. Base and groveling as they were, these money-mongering Jews felt, in all that remnant of their souls which was not yet eaten away by infidelity and avarice, that the Son of Man was right.

Jesus Explains by What Authority He Does This

Nay, even the Priests and Pharisees, and Scribes and Levites, devoured as they were by pride and formalism, could not condemn an act which might have been performed by a Nehemiah or a Judas Maccabaeus, and which agreed with all that was purest and best in their traditions. But when they had heard of this deed, or witnessed it, and had time to recover from the breathless mixture of admiration, disgust, and astonishment which it inspired, they came to Jesus, and though they did not dare to condemn what He had done, yet half indignantly asked Him for some sign that He had a right to act thus.

Our Lord’s answer in its full meaning was far beyond their comprehension, and in what appeared to be its meaning filled them with a perfect stupor of angry amazement. “Destroy,” He said, “this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.”

Destroy This Temple!

The temple for the construction of which one thousand wagons had been required, and ten thousand workmen enrolled, and a thousand priests in sacerdotal vestments employed to lay the stones which the workmen had already hewn;

The temple which was a marvel to the world for its colossal substructions of marble, its costly mosaics, its fragrant woods, its glittering roofs, the golden vine with its hanging clusters sculptured over the entrance door, the embroidered veils, enwoven with flowers of purple, the profuse magnificence of its silver, gold, and precious stones.

It had been already forty-six years in building, and was yet far from finished; and this unknown Galilean youth bade them destroy it, and *He* would raise it in three days! Such was the literal and evidently false construction which they chose to put upon His words, though the recorded practice of their own great prophets might have shown them that a mystery lay hidden in this sign which He gave.

Years Later this Statement Was Falsely Twisted and Used Against Him in His Trial

That this statement made a profound impression is proved by the fact that more than three years afterward it was this, more than all His other discourses, which His accusers and false witnesses tried to pervert into a constructive evidence of guilt.

They entirely distorted His words into “*I am able to destroy* the temple of God,” or “*I will* destroy this temple made with hands, and in three days will build another.”

He had never used these expressions, and here also their false witness was so self-contradictory as to break down. But they were well aware that this attempt of theirs to infuse a political and seditious meaning into what He said was best calculated to madden the tribunal before which He was arraigned; indeed, so well adapted was it to this purpose that the mere distant echo, as it were, of the same words was again the main cause of martyrdom to His proto-martyr Stephen.

When Christ Spoke of Destroying the Temple He Was Referring to the Temple of His Body

“But he spake,” says John, “of the temple of His body,” and he adds that it was not until His resurrection that His disciples fully understood His words. Nor is this astonishing, for they were words of very deep significance. Hitherto there had been but one temple of the true God, the temple in which He then stood—the temple which symbolized, and had once at least, as the Jews believed, enshrined that Shechinah, or cloud of glory, which was the living witness to God’s presence in the world.

But now the Spirit of God abode in a temple not made with hands, even in the sacred body of the Son of God made flesh. He tabernacled among us; “He had a tent like ours, and of the same material.” Even this was to be done away. At that great Pentecost three years later, and thenceforward forever, the Holy Spirit of God was to prefer “Before all temples the upright heart and pure.”

Although they acted like they thought He was referring to the temple in Jerusalem, after His death they reveal that they knew he was referring to a deeper meaning, the temple of His body.

And in point of fact there is an incidental but profoundly significant indication that they *had* a deeper insight into Christ’s real meaning than they chose to reveal. For, still brooding on these same words—the first official words which Christ had addressed to them—when Jesus lay dead and buried in the rocky tomb, they came to Pilate with the remarkable story, “Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while He was yet alive, after three days I will rise again.”

Now there is no trace that Jesus had ever used any such words distinctly to them and unless the “we remember” was a distinct falsehood—they could have been referring to no other occasion than this. How then came these Pharisees and Priests to understand better than His own disciples what our Lord had meant? Because they were not like the apostles, loving, guileless, simple-hearted men; because, in spite of all their knowledge and insight, their hearts were even already full of the hatred and rejection which ended in Christ’s murder, and which drew the guilt of his blood on the heads of them and of their children.

By Destroying Him, They Would Mark the End of the Temple and the Sacrificial System Forever

But there was yet another meaning which the words involved, not, indeed, less distasteful to their prejudices, but none the less full of warning, and more clearly within the range of their understandings. The temple was the very heart of the whole Mosaic system, the headquarters, so to speak, of the entire Levitical ceremonial.

In profaning that temple, and suffering it to be profaned they were destroying that temple, abrogating that system, bearing witness by their very actions that for them its real significance had passed away? He was implying they were already destroying the temple and that the whole levitical system which it symbolized was about to be done away.

“Finish, then,” he might have implied, at once by way of prophecy and of permission, “finish without delay this your work of dissolution: in three days will I, as a risen Redeemer, restore something better and greater; not a material temple, but a living church.” Such is the meaning which Stephen seems to have seen in these words. Such is the meaning which is expanded in so many passages by the matchless reasoning and passion of Paul. But to this and every meaning they were deaf, and dull, and blind. They seem to have gone away silent indeed, but sullen and dissatisfied; suspicious of, yet indifferent to, the true solution; ignorant, yet too haughty and too angry to inquire.

What great works Jesus did on this occasion we cannot tell. Whatever they were, they caused some to believe on Him, but it was not as yet a belief in which He could trust. Their mere intellectual witness to His claims He needed not; and their hearts, untouched as yet, were, as He knew by divine insight, cold and barren, treacherous and false.

Nicodemus

His Background

A caste or a sect may consist for the most part of haughty fanatics and obstinate bigots, but it will be strange indeed if there are no exceptions to the general characteristics; strange if honesty, candor, sensibility are utterly dead among them all. Even among rulers, scribes, Pharisees, and wealthy members of the Sanhedrin, Christ found believers and followers. The earliest and most remarkable of those was Nicodemus, a rich man, a ruler, a Pharisee, and a member of the Sanhedrin.

Such was the rabbi who, with that mingled candor and fear of man which characterize all that we know of him, came indeed to Jesus, but came cautiously by night. He was anxious to know more of this young Galilean prophet whom he was too honest not to recognize as a teacher come from God; but he thought himself too eminent a person among his sect to compromise his dignity, and possibly even his safety, by visiting him in public.

His Question

His question for Jesus is not stated directly, but it is obvious from our Lord's reply that he asks, "What must I do?"

Our Lord saw deep into his heart, and avoiding all formalities or discussion of preliminaries, startles him at once with the solemn uncompromising address, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again (or 'from above'), he cannot see the kingdom of God." The question is not of doing or not doing but of *being*.

Christ's Answer

That answer startled Nicodemus into deep earnestness; but like the Jews in the last chapter (Jn 2:20), he either could not, or would not, grasp its full significance. He prefers to play, with a kind of querulous surprise, about the mere literal meaning of the words he chooses to interpret in the most physical and unintelligible sense. Mere quibbling over words like this Jesus did not pause to notice; He only sheds a fresh ray of light on the reiteration of his former warning. He spoke, not of the fleshly birth, but of that spiritual regeneration of which no man could predict the course or method, any more than they could tell the course of the night breeze that rose and fell and whispered fitfully outside the little tabernacle where they sat, but which must be a birth by water and by the Spirit "a purification, that is, and a renewal" an outward symbol and an inward grace, a death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness.

Nicodemus could only answer by an expression of incredulous amazement. A Gentile might need, as it were, a new birth when admitted into the Jewish communion; but he, a son of Abraham, a rabbi, a zealous keeper of the Law, could *he* need that new birth? How could such things be?

"Art thou *the* teacher of Israel," asked our Lord, "and knowest not these things?" Art thou the third member of the Sanhedrin, the wise man, and yet know not the earliest, simplest lesson of the initiation into the kingdom of heaven?

The question was half sorrowful, half reproachful; but He proceeded to reveal to this Master in Israel things greater and stranger than these; even the salvation of man rendered possible by the sufferings and exaltation of the Son of Man; the love of God manifested in sending His only begotten Son, not to judge, but to save; the deliverance for all through faith in Him; the condemnation which must fall on those who willfully reject the truths He came to teach.

These were indeed the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, truths once undreamed of, but now fully revealed. And although they violated every prejudice, and overthrew every immediate hope of this aged inquirer, though to learn them he must unlearn the entire intellectual habits of his life and training, yet we know from the sequel that they must have sunk into his inmost soul. Doubtless in the further discussion of them, the night deepened around them; and in the memorable words about the light and the darkness with which the interview was closed, Jesus gently rebuked the fear of man which led this great rabbi to seek the shelter of midnight for a deed which was not a deed of darkness needing to be concealed, but which was indeed a coming to the true and only Light.

Chapter 16: Rejected by the Nazarenes

After healing the Nobleman's son, it appears that Jesus went to Nazareth. On His way He taught continuously, and with general admiration and acceptance, in the synagogues of Galilee. In this way He arrived at Nazareth, and according to His usual custom, for He had doubtless been a silent worshipper in that humble place Sabbath after Sabbath from boyhood upward, He entered into the synagogue on the Sabbath day.

The Synagogue in Nazareth Was a very Humble and Typical Building

There was but one synagogue in the little town. It was simply a rectangular hall, with a pillared portico of Grecian architecture, of which the further extremity (where the "sanctuary" was placed) usually pointed toward Jerusalem, which, since the time of Solomon, had always been the consecrated direction of a Jew's worship, as Mecca is of a Mohammedan's. In wealthier places it was built of white marble, and sculptured on the outside in alto-relieve, with rude ornaments of vine leaves and grapes, or the budding rod and the pot of manna. On entering there were seats on one side for the men; on the other, behind a lattice, were seated the women, shrouded in their long veils. At one end was the *tebhah* or ark of painted wood, which contained the sacred Scriptures; and at one side was the *bîma*, or elevated seat for the reader or preacher. Clergy, properly speaking, there were none. In the chief seats were the ten or more *batlanîm*, "men of leisure," or leading elders and pre-eminent among these the chief of the synagogue, or *rôsh hakkenéseth*. Inferior in rank to these were the *chazzân*, or clerk, whose duty it was to keep the sacred books; the *shelîach*, corresponding to our sacristan or verger; and the *parnasîm*, or shepherds, who in some respects acted as deacons.

The Order of Service in the Synagogue Gave Visitors an Opportunity to Speak or to Read from the Scriptures

The service of the synagogue was not unlike our own. After the prayers two lessons were always read, one from the Law and one from the Prophets. As there were no ordained ministers to conduct the services—for the office of priests and Levites at Jerusalem was wholly different—these lessons might not only be read by any competent person who received permission from the leader of the synagogue, but he was even at liberty to add his own *midrash*, or comment.

The reading of the lesson from the Pentateuch was apparently over when Jesus ascended the steps to the podium. Recognizing His claim to perform the honorable function of a reader, the leader drew aside the silk curtain of the painted ark which contained the sacred manuscripts, and handed Him the roll of the prophet Isaiah, which contained the reading of the day. Our Lord unrolled the volume, and found the well-known passage in Isaiah 61. The whole congregation stood up to listen to Him. The length of the reading might be from three to twenty-one verses; but Jesus only read the first and part of the second, stopping short before the stern expression, "The day of vengeance of our God." This was no doubt to signify that the first part of the verse was fulfilled in His person on that day. However there was to be a gap between the day of Grace and the day of Judgment described in the second half, and thus it was not read. He wanted the gracious words, "The acceptable year of the Lord," to rest upon their ears and form the text of His discourse. He then rolled up the scroll of Isaiah, handed it back to the leader, and, as was customary among the Jews, sat down to deliver His sermon.

Their Initial Response Was Likely to Be One of Awe and Wonder

The passage which He had read, whether part of the ordinary lesson for the day or chosen by Himself, was a very remarkable one, and it must have derived additional grandeur and solemnity from the lips of Him in whom it was fulfilled. Every eye in the synagogue was fixed upon Him with a gaze of intense earnestness, and we may imagine the thrill of awful expectation and excitement which passed through the hearts of the listeners, as, in a discourse of which the subject only is preserved for us by the evangelist, He developed the theme that He was Himself the Messiah, of whom the great prophet had sung seven hundred years before.

His words were full of a grace, an authority, a power which was at first irresistible, and which commanded the involuntary astonishment of all. But as He proceeded He became conscious of a change.

When They Realized What He Was Claiming to Be, They Became Angry

The spell of His wisdom and sweetness was broken, as these rude and violent Nazarenes began to realize the full meaning of His divine claims. It was customary with the Jews in the worship of their synagogue to give full vent to their feelings, and it was not long before Jesus became sensible of indignant and rebellious murmurs. He saw that those eager glittering eyes, which had been fixed upon Him in the first excitement of attention, were beginning to glow with the malignant light of jealousy and hatred. “Is not this *the carpenter*? is He not the brother of workmen like himself—James and Joses and Simon and Judas—and of sisters who live among us? Do not even his own family disbelieve in him?”

Such were the whispers which began to be buzzed about among the audience. This was no young and learned Rabbi from the schools of Gamaliel or Shammai, and yet He spoke with an authority which not even the great scribes assumed! Even a Hillel, when his doctrines failed to persuade, could only secure conviction by appealing to the previous authority of a Shemaia or an Abtalion. But *this* teacher appealed to no one—this teacher who had been their village carpenter! What business had *he* to teach? Whence could he know letters, having never learned?

Their Anger Increased and They Wanted a Sign to Prove His Stupendous Claims

Jesus addressed the change which was passing over the feelings of His audience. He at once told them that He *was* the Jesus whom they described, and yet with no abatement of His Messianic grandeur. Their hardness and unbelief had already depressed His spirit before He had even entered the synagogue. The implied slur on the humility of His previous life He passes by; it was too essentially provincial and innately vulgar to need correction, since any Nazarene of sufficient honesty might have reminded himself of the yet humbler origin of the great herdsman Amos. Nor would He notice the base hatred which weak and bad men always contract for those who shame them by the silent superiority of noble lives.

But He was aware of another feeling in their minds; a demand upon Him for some stupendous vindication of His claims; a jealousy that He should have performed miracles at Cana, and given an impression of His power at Capernaum, to say nothing of what He had done and taught at Jerusalem—and yet that He should have vouchsafed no special mark of His favor among them. He knew that the taunting and skeptical proverb, “Physician, heal thyself,” was in their hearts, and all but on their lips. But to show them most clearly that He was something more than they—that He was no mere Nazarene, like any other who might have lived among them for thirty years, and that He belonged not to them but to the world—He reminds them that miracles are not to be limited by geographical relationships—that Elijah had only saved the Phœnician widow of Sarepta, and Elisha only healed the hostile leper of Syria.

Their Anger Bursts Forth and They Drag Him Out of the City with the Intent to Throw Him Over a Precipice

What then? Were they in *His* estimation (and He but the “carpenter!”) no better than Gentiles and lepers? This was the climax of all that was intolerable to them, as coming from a fellow townsman whom they wished to rank among themselves, and at these words their long-suppressed fury burst into a flame. The speaker was no longer interrupted by a murmur of disapprobation, but by a roar of wrath. With one of those bursts of sanguinary excitement which characterized that strange, violent, impassioned people—a people whose minds are swept by storms as sudden as those which in one moment lash into fury the mirror surface of their lake—they rose in a body, tore Him out of the city, and then dragged Him to the brow of the hill above. The little town of Nazareth nestles in the southern hollows of that hill; many a mass of precipitous rock lies imbedded on its slopes, and it is probable that the hillside may have been far more steep and precipitous two thousand years ago. To one of these rocky escarpments they dragged Him, in order to fling Him headlong down.

Awestruck by His Charisma, They Stepped Aside and He Quietly Walked Right Through Them

But His hour was not yet come, and they were saved from the consummation of a crime which would have branded them with everlasting infamy. “He passed through the midst of them, and went on his way.” There is no need to suppose an actual miracle; still less to imagine a secret and sudden escape into the narrow and tortuous lanes of the town. Perhaps His silence, perhaps the calm nobleness of His bearing, perhaps the dauntless innocence of His gaze overawed them. Apart from anything supernatural, there seems to have been in the presence of Jesus a spell of mystery and of majesty which even His most ruthless and hardened enemies acknowledged, and before which they involuntarily bowed. It was to this that He owed His escape when the maddened Jews in the temple took up stones to stone Him; it was this that made the bold and bigoted officers of the Sanhedrin unable to arrest Him as He taught in public during the Feast of Tabernacles at Jerusalem; it was this that made the armed band of His enemies, at His mere look, fall before Him to the ground in the Garden of Gethsemane. Suddenly, quietly He asserted His freedom, waived aside His captors, and overawing them by His simple glance, passed through their midst unharmed. Similar events have occurred in history, and continue still to occur. There is something in defenseless and yet dauntless dignity that calms even the fury of a mob. “They stood—stopped—inquired—were ashamed—fled—separated.”

As Jesus Left Nazareth, Never to Return Again, Surely His Emotions Were Torn and He Was Full of Sorrow

And so He left them, never apparently to return again; never, if we are right in the view here taken, to preach again in their little synagogue. Did any feelings of merely human regret weigh down His soul while He was wending His weary steps down the steep hill toward Cana of Galilee? Did any tear start in His eyes unbidden as he stood, perhaps for the last time, to gaze on the rich plain of Esdraelon, and the purple heights of Carmel, and the white sands that fringe the blue waters of the Mediterranean? Were there any from whom He grieved to be severed, in the green secluded valley where His manhood had labored, and His childhood played? Did He cast one longing, lingering glance at the humble home in which for so many years He had toiled as the village carpenter? Did no companion of His innocent boyhood, no friend of His sinless youth, accompany Him with awe, and pity, and regret? Such questions are not, surely, unnatural; not, surely, irreverent—but they are not answered. Of all merely human emotions of His heart, except so far as they directly affect His mission upon earth, the Gospels are silent. We know only that other friends awaited him away from boorish Nazareth, among the gentle and noble-

hearted fishermen of Bethsaida; and that His home, so far as He had a home, was in the little city of Capernaum, beside the sunlit waters of the Galilean Lake

The Gerasene Demoniac

Not even on the farther shore was Jesus to find peace or rest. No sooner had He reached that part of Peræa called the “country of the Gergesenes,” than He was met by an exhibition of human fury and madness and degradation, even more terrible and startling than the rage of the troubled sea. Barely had He landed when, from among the rocky cavern tombs, there burst into His presence a man troubled with the most exaggerated form of raging madness attributed to demoniacal possession. Amid all the boasted civilization of antiquity, there existed no hospitals, no penitentiaries, and no asylums to care for people like this. These unfortunates, considered too dangerous and desperate for human contact to be in society, were driven out from among their fellowmen and restrained from mischief by inadequate and cruel measures. Under such circumstances they could only take refuge in those holes along the rocky hillsides which abound in Palestine and were used by the Jews as tombs. It is clear that the foul and polluted nature of such dwelling places, with all their associations of gruesomeness and terror, would tend to aggravate the nature of the illness. This man, who had long been afflicted, was beyond even the possibility of control. Attempts had been made to bind him, but in the fit of his mania he had always succeeded in freeing himself of the ropes and twisting away or shattering his chains. Now he had been abandoned to the lonely hills and unclean solitudes which, night and day, rang with his yells as he wandered among them—dangerous to himself and to others—raving and gashing himself with stones.

Instead of falling upon the disciples, he ran to Jesus from a distance and fell down before Him in an attitude of worship. Mingling his own disturbed individuality with that of the multitude of unclean spirits which he believed to be in possession of his soul, he entreated the Lord, in loud and terrified accents, not to torment him before the time.

It is well-known that to recall a maniac’s attention to his name, to awake his memory, to touch his sympathies by past association, often produces a lucid interval, and perhaps this may have been the reason why Jesus said to the man, “What is thy name?” (Mt 5:9). But this question only receives the wild answer, “My name is Legion, for we are many.” The man had, as it were, lost his own name; it was absorbed in the hideous tyranny of that multitude of demons under whose influence his own personality was destroyed. The presence of Roman armies in Palestine had rendered him familiar with that title of multitude, and as though six thousand evil spirits were in him, he answers by the Latin word which had now become so familiar to every Jew. And still agitated by his own disturbed fancies, he entreats, as though the thousands of demons were speaking by his mouth, that they might not be driven into the abyss, but be suffered to take refuge in the swine.

The demoniac was healed. That the whole scene was violent and startling appears in the fact that the keepers of the swine “fled and told it in the city and in the country” (Mk 5:14). The people of Gergesa, and the Gadarenes and Gerasenes of all the neighboring districts, flocked out to see the Mighty Stranger who had visited their coasts. What livelier or more decisive proof of His power and His beneficence could they have had than the sight which met their eyes? The filthy and frantic demoniac who had been the terror of the country, so that none could pass that way—the wild-eyed dweller in the tombs who had been accustomed to gash himself with cries of rage, and whose untamed fierceness broke away all fetters—was now calm as a child. Some charitable hand had flung an outer robe over his naked figure, and he was sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind.

“And they were afraid” (Mk 5:15) —more afraid of that Holy Presence than of the previous furies of the possessed. The man indeed was saved; but what of that, considering that some of their two thousand unclean beasts had perished! Their precious swine were evidently in danger; the greed and gluttony of

every apostate Jew and low-bred Gentile in the place were clearly endangered by receiving such a one as they saw that Jesus was. With disgraceful and urgent unanimity they entreated Him to leave their coasts. Both heathens and Jews had recognized already the great truth that God sometimes answers bad prayers in His deepest anger. Jesus Himself had taught His disciples not to give that which was holy to the dogs, neither to cast their pearls before swine, “lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you” (Mt 7:6). He had gone across the lake for quiet and rest, desiring, though among lesser multitudes, to extend to these semi-heathens also the blessings of the kingdom of God. But they loved their sins and their swine, and with a perfect energy of deliberate preference for all that was base and mean, rejected such blessings and entreated Him to go away. Sadly, but at once, He turned and left them. Gergesa was no place for Him, better the lonely hilltops to the north of it, better the crowded strand on the other side.

And yet He did not leave them in anger. One deed of mercy had been done there; one sinner had been saved; from one soul the unclean spirits had been cast out. And just as the united multitude of the Gadarenes had entreated for His absence, so the poor saved demoniac pleaded to be with Him. But Jesus wanted to leave one more, one last opportunity for those who had rejected Him. On others for whose sake miracles had been performed He had commanded silence; on this man—since He was now leaving the place—he commanded publicity. “Go home to your people and tell them what the Lord has done for you, that he had mercy on you” (Mk 5:19). And so the demoniac of Gergesa became the first great missionary to the region of Decapolis, bearing in his own person the confirmation of his words.

The Woman Caught in Adultery

When the day dawned, and the Feast of Tabernacles was over, Jesus' duties lay once more within the city walls, and in that part of the city where, almost alone, we hear of His presence—in the courts of His Father's house. And with the very dawn, His enemies contrived a fresh plot against Him, the circumstances of which made their malice even more actually painful than it was intentionally dangerous.

It is probable that the merriment and abandonment of the Feast of Tabernacles, which had grown to be a kind of vintage festival, would often degenerate into acts of license and immorality, and these would find more numerous opportunities in the general disturbance of ordinary life caused by the dwelling of the whole people in their little leafy booths. One such act had been detected during the previous night, and the guilty woman had been handed over to the Scribes and Pharisees.

The Hypocritical Hatred of the Scribes and Pharisees

The spirit which moved these Scribes and Pharisees was not by any means the spirit of a sincere and outraged purity. In the decadence of national life, in the daily familiarity with heathen degradations, in the gradual substitution of a Levitical Law keeping for a heartfelt religion, the morals of the nation had grown utterly corrupt. The death by stoning as a punishment for adultery had long since fallen into disuse. Not even the Scribes and Pharisees—for all their external religiosity—had any genuine horror of an impurity with which their own lives were often stained. They saw in the accident which had put this guilty woman into their power nothing but a chance of annoying, entrapping, possibly even endangering this Prophet of Galilee, whom they already regarded as their deadliest enemy.

The Demise of Death by Stoning

It was a curious custom among the Jews to consult distinguished rabbis in cases of doubt and difficulty, but there was no doubt or difficulty here. It had been a long time since the Mosaic law of death to the adulteress had been demanded or enforced; and even if this had not been the case, the Roman law would, in all probability, have prevented such a sentence from being executed. On the other hand, the civil and religious penalties of divorce were open to the injured husband, nor did the case of this woman differ from that of any other who had similarly transgressed. Nor, again, even if they had honestly and sincerely desired the opinion of Jesus, could there have been the slightest excuse for hauling the woman herself into His presence, and thus subjecting her to a moral torture which would be rendered all the more insupportable from the close seclusion of women in her culture.

And, therefore, to subject her to the unnecessary horror of this hateful publicity—to drag her, fresh from the agony of detection, into the sacred areas of the temple; to subject this unveiled, disheveled, terror-stricken woman to the cold and sensual curiosity of a malignant mob; to make her, with total disregard to her own sufferings, the mere passive instrument of their hatred against Jesus; and to do all this, not under the pressure of moral indignation, but in order to gratify a calculating malice—showed on their parts a cold, hard cynicism and a graceless, pitiless, barbarous brutality of heart and conscience, which proved, in every particular, revolting and hateful to One who alone was infinitely tender, because He alone was infinitely pure.

And so they dragged her to Him, and set her in the midst—flagrant guilt subjected to the gaze of stainless Innocence, degraded misery set before the bar of perfect Mercy. And then, just as though their hearts were not full of outrage, they glibly begin, with ironical deference, to set before Him their case: "Teacher, this

woman was caught in the very act of adultery. In the Law, *Moses commanded us to stone to death* such women. What then do you say?" (Jn 8:4-5, NET).

The Dilemma

They thought that now they had caught Him in a dilemma. They knew the divine trembling pity which had loved where others hated, and praised where others scorned, and encouraged where others crushed; and they knew how that pity had won for Him the admiration of many, the passionate devotion of not a few. They knew that a publican was among His chosen, that sinners had sat with Him at the banquet, and that harlots unreprieved had bathed His feet and listened to His words. Would He then acquit this woman, and so make Himself liable to an accusation of heresy, by placing Himself in open disagreement with the sacred and fiery Law? Or, on the other hand, would He contradict His own compassion, and be ruthless, and condemn? And, if He did, would He not at once shock the multitude, who were touched by His tenderness, and offend the civil magistrates by making Himself liable to a charge of sedition? How could He possibly get out of the difficulty? Either alternative—heresy or treason, accusation before the Sanhedrin or delation to the Procurator, opposition to the orthodox or alienation from the many—would serve equally well their unscrupulous intentions. And one of these, they thought, *must* follow. What a happy chance this weak, guilty woman had given them!

Christ Escapes the Dilemma

Not yet. A sense of all their baseness, their hardness, their malice, their cynical parade of every feeling which pity would temper and delicacy repress, rushed over the mind of Jesus. He bent his face forward from His seat, as though He did not, or would not, hear them, and stooped and wrote with His finger on the ground.

For any others but such as these it would have been enough. Even if they failed to see in the action a symbol of forgiveness—a symbol that the memory of things thus written in the dust might be obliterated and forgotten—still any but these could hardly have failed to interpret the gesture into a distinct indication that in such a matter Jesus would not mix Himself. But they saw nothing and understood nothing and stood there unabashed, still pressing their brutal question, still holding, pointing to, jeering at the woman, with no compunction in their cunning glances, and no relenting in their steeled hearts.

The scene could not last any longer; and, therefore, raising Himself from His stooping attitude, He, who could read their hearts, calmly passed upon them that sad judgment involved in the memorable words—“Let him that is without sin among you, first cast the stone at her.”

It was not any abrogation of the Mosaic Law; it was, on the contrary, an admission of its justice, and doubtless it must have sunk heavily as a death warrant upon the woman's heart. But it acted in a manner wholly unexpected. The terrible law stood written; it was not the time, it was not His will, to rescind it. But, on the other hand, they themselves, by not acting on the Law, by referring the whole question to Him as though it needed a new solution, had practically confessed that the Law was at present valid in theory alone, that it had fallen into desuetude, and that even with His authority they had no intention of carrying it into action. Since, therefore, the whole proceeding was on their part illegal and irregular, He transfers it by these words from the forum of law to that of conscience. The judge may sometimes be obliged to condemn the criminal brought before him for sins of which he has himself been guilty, but the position of the self-constituted accuser who eagerly demands a needless condemnation is very different. To condemn her would have been in God's sight most fatally to have condemned themselves; to have been the first to cast the stone at her would have been to crush themselves.

And so, with burning cheeks and cowed hearts, from the eldest to the youngest, one by one gradually, silently, they slunk away. He would not add to their shame and confusion of face by watching them; He

had no wish further to reveal His knowledge of the impure secrets of their hearts; He would not tempt them to brazen it out before Him and to lie against the testimony of their own memories; He had stooped down once more and was writing on the ground.

The Forgiveness of Christ

And when He once more raised His head, all the accusers had melted away: only the woman still covered before Him on the temple floor. She, too, *might* have gone: none hindered her, and it might have seemed but natural that she should fly anywhere to escape her danger and to hide her guilt and shame. But remorse, and, it may be an awful trembling gratitude, in which hope struggled with despair, fixed her there before her Judge. His look, the most terrible of all to meet, because it was the only look that fell on her from a soul robed in the unapproachable majesty of a stainless innocence, was at the same time the most gentle, and the most forgiving. Her stay was a sign of her penitence; her penitence, let us trust, a certain pledge of her future forgiveness. “Two things,” as Augustine finely says, “were here left alone together—Misery and Mercy.”

“Jesus straightened up and said to her, ‘Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?’” (Jn 8:10).

“No one, Lord” (Jn 8:11). It was the only answer which her lips could find power to frame, and then she received the gracious yet heart-searching permission to depart: “I do not condemn you either. Go, and from now on do not sin any more” (Jn 8:11).

However painful this scene must have been to the holy and loving heart of the Savior, it was at least alleviated by the sense of that compassionate deliverance—deliverance, we may trust, for eternity, no less than time—which it had wrought for one guilty soul. But the scenes that followed were a climax of perpetual misunderstandings, fluctuating impressions, and bitter taunts, which caused the great and joyous festival to end with a sudden burst of rage, and an attempt of the Jewish leaders to make an end of Him—not by public accusation, but by furious violence.

I Am the Light of the World

He was seated at that moment in the treasury—either some special building in the temple so called, or that part of the Court of the Women which contained the thirteen chests with trumpet-shaped openings—called *shopherôth*—into which the people, and especially the Pharisees, used to cast their gifts. In this court, and therefore close beside Him, were two gigantic candelabra, fifty cubits high and magnificently overlaid, on the summit of which, nightly, during the Feast of Tabernacles, lamps were lit which shed their soft light over all the city. Round these lamps the people, in their joyful enthusiasm, and even the stately priests and Pharisees, joined in festal dances, while, to the sound of flutes and other music, the Levites, drawn up in array on the fifteen steps which led up to the court, chanted the beautiful Psalms which early received the title of “Songs of Degrees.”

In allusion to these great lamps, on which some circumstance of the moment may have concentrated the attention of the hearers, Christ exclaimed to them, “I am the Light of the world.” It was His constant plan to shape the illustrations of His discourses by those external incidents which would rouse the deepest attention and fix the words most unforgettably on the memories of His hearers. The Pharisees who heard His words charged Him with idle self-glorification; but He showed them that He had His Father’s testimony, and that even were it not so, the Light can only be seen, only be known, by the evidence of its own existence; without it, neither itself nor anything else is visible. They asked Him, “Where is your Father?” He told them, that, not knowing *Him*, they *could* not know His Father; and then He once more sadly warned them that His departure was nigh, and that *then* they would be unable to come to Him. Their only reply was a taunting inquiry whether, by committing suicide, He meant to plunge Himself in the darkest regions of the grave?

No, He made them understand, it was *they*, not *He*, who were from below—*they*, not *He*, who were destined, if they persisted in unbelief of His eternal existence, to that dark end. “Who art thou?” they once more asked, in angry and faithless perplexity. “Altogether that which I am telling you,” He calmly answered. They wanted Him to announce Himself as the Messiah, and so become their temporal deliverer; but He will only tell them the far deeper, more eternal truths, that He is the Light, and the Life, and the Living Water, and that He came from the Father—as they, too, should know when they had lifted Him up upon the cross. They were looking solely for the Messiah of the Jews: He would have them know Him as the Redeemer of the world, the Savior of their souls.

Before Abraham Was, I AM

Jesus now shows His hostile critics that they were still the slaves of sin, and in name only, not in reality, the children of Abraham, or the children of God. They were absorbed with pride when they thought of the purity of their ancestral origin and the privilege of their exclusive monotheism; but He told them that in very truth they were, by spiritual affinity, the attraction of cruelty and falsehood, children of him who was a liar and a murderer from the beginning—children of the devil.

That home rebuke stung them to fury. They repaid it by calling Jesus a Samaritan and a demoniac. Our Lord gently put the taunt aside and once more held out to them the gracious promise that if they will but keep His sayings, they not only shall not die in their sins, but shall not see death. Their dull, blind hearts could not even imagine a spiritual meaning in His words. They could only charge Him with demoniac arrogance and insolence in making Himself greater than Abraham and the prophets, of whom *they* could only think as dead. Jesus told them that in prophetic vision, perhaps too by spiritual intuition, in that other world, Abraham, who was not dead, but living, saw and rejoiced to see His day.

Such an assertion appeared to them either senseless or blasphemous. “Abraham has been dead for seventeen centuries; Thou art not even fifty years old; how are we to understand such words as these?” Then very gently, but with great solemnity, and with that formula of asseveration which He only used when he announced His most solemn truths, the Savior revealed to them His eternity, His divine pre-existence before He had entered the tabernacle of mortal flesh:

“Jesus said to them, ‘I tell you the solemn truth, before Abraham came into existence, I am!’” (Jn 8:58).

Then, with a burst of impulsive fury—one of those outbursts of sudden, uncontrollable, frantic rage to which this people has in all ages been liable upon any collision with its religious convictions—they took up stones to stone Him. But the very blindness of their rage made it easier to elude them. His hour was not yet come. With perfect calmness He departed unhurt out of the temple.

The Master Plan of Evangelism

by Robert Coleman

Demonstration:

He Showed Them How to Live

Jesus saw to it that His disciples learned His way of living with God and man. He recognized that it was not enough just to get people into His spiritual communion. His disciples needed to know how His experience was to be maintained and shared if it was to be perpetuated in evangelism. Of course, in a technical sense, life precedes action, but in a thoroughly practical point of view, we live by what we do. One must breathe, eat, exercise, and carry on work normally if he is to grow. Where these functions of the body are neglected, life will cease to be. That is why the effort of Jesus to get across to His followers the secrets of His spiritual influence needs to be considered as a deliberate course of His master strategy. He knew what was important.

The Practice of Prayer

Take, for example, His prayer life. Surely it was no accident that Jesus often let His disciples see Him conversing with the Father. They could see the strength which it gave to His life, and though they could not understand fully what it was all about, they must have realized that this was part of His secret of life. Note that Jesus did not force the lesson upon them, but rather He just kept praying until at last the disciples got so hungry that they asked Him to teach them what He was doing.

Seizing His opportunity when it did come, Jesus proceeded to give them a lesson which their hearts were prepared to receive. He explained to them some of the more basic principles of prayer, and then before He finished, He illustrated what He meant by repeating before them a model prayer (Lk 11:1-11; Mt 6:9-13). One might possibly think that such a practice was below the capabilities of these disciples—the idea of having to put words in their mouths to get them to pray—but Jesus would not take such an important matter as this for granted. Indeed, such elementary methods of teaching are often necessary to get people started in this discipline. But whatever it took, Jesus was determined to get this lesson across.

Thereafter He emphasized the life of prayer again and again when talking with His disciples, continually enlarging upon its meaning and application, as they were able to comprehend deeper realities of His Spirit. It was an indispensable part of their training, which in turn they would have to transmit to others. One thing is certain. Unless they grasped the meaning of prayer, and learned how to practice it with consistency, not much would ever come from their lives.

Using Scripture

Another aspect of Jesus' life which was vividly portrayed to the disciples was the importance and use of the Holy Scriptures. This was evident both in maintaining His own personal devotion and in winning others to the Way. Often He would take special pains to impress upon His followers the meaning of some passage in the Bible, and He never ceased to use the Scriptures in His conversation with them. Altogether there are at least sixty-six references to the Old Testament in His dialogues with the disciples in the four Gospels, to say nothing of the more than ninety allusions to it in His speaking with others.

All this served to show the disciples how they too should know and use the Scriptures in their own lives. The principles of Bible exhortation were practiced before them so repeatedly that they could not help but

catch on to at least some of the rules for basic scriptural interpretation and application. Moreover, the ability of Jesus to recall so freely Old Testament passages must have impressed the disciples with the necessity of learning the Scriptures by heart and letting them become the authority for their pronouncements.

In everything it was made abundantly clear that the Word written in the Scriptures and the Word spoken by Christ were not in contradiction, but rather complemented each other. That which Jesus believed was also to be cherished by His disciples. Hence, the Scriptures, coupled with His own utterances, became the objective basis of their faith in Christ. Furthermore, it was made clear to them that if they were to continue in His fellowship by the Spirit after He was gone from them in the flesh, they would have to abide in His Word (Jn 15:7).

Supremely Soul Winning

Through this manner of personal demonstration, every aspect of Jesus' personal discipline of life was bequeathed to His disciples, but what perhaps was most important in view of His ultimate purpose was that all the while He was teaching them how to win souls.

Practically everything that Jesus said and did had some relevance to their work of evangelism, either by explaining a spiritual truth or revealing to them how they should deal with men. He did not have to work up teaching situations, but merely took advantage of those about Him, and thus His teaching seemed perfectly realistic. In fact, for the most part, the disciples were absorbing it without even knowing that they were being trained to win people under like conditions for God.

Teaching Naturally

This point, already alluded to several times, cannot be emphasized too much. Jesus was so much the Master in His teaching that He did not let His method obscure His lesson. He let His truth call attention to itself, and not the presentation. His method in this respect was to conceal the fact that He even had a method. He was His method.

This may be hard to imagine in this day of professional techniques and sure-fire gimmicks. In some quarters, it would almost appear we would be unable to proceed without a well-illustrated handbook or multicolored chart showing us what to do. The least we might expect is a class in soul winning. Yet, strange as it may seem, the disciples never had any of these things now considered so essential for the work.

All the disciples had to teach them was a Teacher who practiced with them what He expected them to learn. Evangelism was lived before them in spirit and in technique. Watching Him they learned what it was all about. He led them to recognize the need inherent in all classes of people and the best methods of approaching them.

They observed how He drew people to Himself; how He won their confidence and inspired their faith; how He opened to them the way of salvation and called them to a decision. In all types of situations and among all kinds of people, rich and poor, healthy and sick, friend and foe alike, the disciples watched the Master Soul Winner at work. It wasn't outlined on the blackboard of a stuffy classroom nor written up in a "Do It Yourself" manual. His method was so real and practical that it just came naturally.

Classes Always in Session

This was as true in His approach to the masses as His way of dealing with individuals. The disciples were always there to observe His Word and deed. If the particular approach was not clear, all they had to do was ask the Master to explain it to them. For example, after Jesus told the story of the sower to "a very

great multitude” (Mk 4:1-8; Mt 13:1-9; Lk 8:4-8), His disciples “asked Him what this parable might be” (Lk 8:9; Mk 4:10; Mt 13:10). Whereupon Jesus proceeded to explain to them in detail the meaning of the analogies used in the illustration. In fact, judging from the printed Text, He spent three times the amount of time explaining this story to the disciples than He did in giving the initial lesson to the crowd (Mt 13:10-23; Mk 4:10-25; Lk 8:9-18).

When the disciples seemed reluctant to confess their bewilderment, then Jesus often would have to take the initiative in clearing up the problem. The story of the rich young ruler is a typical incident. After Jesus dealt with him rather sternly, and the young ruler went away sorrowful because he loved his riches more than the kingdom of God, Jesus turned to His disciples and said: “It is hard for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 19:23; Mk 10:23; Lk 18:24, NASB). “The disciples were amazed at His Words” (Mk 10:24, NASB). This led to an extended conversation in which Jesus explained the reason for His approach to this good moral man, while also using the opportunity to apply the principle to their own profession of faith (Mk 10:24-31; Mt 19:24–20:16; Lk 18:25-30).

The Principle in Focus

The method of Jesus here was more than a continuous sermon; it was an object lesson as well. This was the secret of His influence in teaching. He did not ask anyone to do or be anything which first He had not demonstrated in His own life, thereby not only proving its workability but also its relevance to His mission in life. And this He was able to do because He was constantly with His disciples. His training classes were never dismissed. Everything which He said and did was a personal lesson in reality, and since the disciples were there to notice it, they were learning practically every moment of their waking day.

How else will His Way ever be learned? It is well enough to tell people what we mean, but it is infinitely better to show them how to do it. People are looking for a demonstration, not an explanation.

The Principle Applied Today

When it is all boiled down, those of us who are seeking to train men must be prepared to have them follow us, even as we follow Christ (1 Cor 11:1). We are the exhibit (Phil 3:17; 1 Thess 2:7-8, 11; 2 Tim 1:13). They will do those things they hear and see in us (Phil 4:9). Given time, it is possible, through this kind of leadership, to impart our way of living to those who are constantly with us.

We must take this truth to our lives. There can be no shirking or evading of our personal responsibility to show the way to those we are training, and this revelation must include the practical outworking in life of the deeper realities of the Spirit. This is the Master’s method, and nothing else will ever suffice to train others to do His work.

Yet, as we know, mere knowledge is not enough. There comes a time for action. To disregard this privilege can nullify all that has been acquired in the process of learning. Indeed, knowledge unapplied to living can become a stumbling stone to further truth. No one better understood this than the Master. He was training men to do a job, and when they knew enough to get started He saw to it that they did something about it. The application of this principle is so pronounced that it needs to be considered as another part of His strategy of conquest through trained and spiritually alert men.

Selection:

Luke 6:13

Men Were His Method

It all started by Jesus calling a few men to follow Him. This revealed immediately the direction His evangelistic strategy would take. His concern was not with programs to reach the multitudes, but with men whom the multitudes would follow. Remarkable as it may seem, Jesus started to gather these men before He ever organized an evangelistic campaign or even preached a sermon in public. Men were to be His method of winning the world to God.

The initial objective of Jesus' plan was to enlist men who could bear witness to His life and carry on His work after He returned to the Father. John and Andrew were the first to be invited as Jesus left the scene of the great revival of the Baptist at Bethany beyond the Jordan (Jn 1:35-40). Andrew in turn brought his brother Peter (Jn 1:41-42). The next day Jesus found Philip on His way to Galilee, and Philip found Nathaniel (Jn 1:43-45). There is no evidence of haste in the selection of these disciples, just determination. James, the brother of John, is not mentioned as one of the group until the four fishermen are recalled several months later by the Sea of Galilee (Mk 1:19; Mt 4:21). Shortly afterward Matthew is bidden to follow the Master as Jesus passed through Capernaum (Mk 2:13-14; Mt 9:9; Lk 5:27-28). The particulars surrounding the call of the other disciples are not recorded in the Gospels, but it is believed that they all occurred in the first year of the Lord's ministry.

As one might expect, these early efforts at soul winning had little or no immediate effect upon the religious life of His day, but that did not matter greatly. For as it turned out these few early converts of the Lord were destined to become the leaders of His church that was to go with the gospel to the whole world, and from the standpoint of His ultimate purpose, the significance of their lives would be felt throughout eternity. That's the only thing that counts.

Men Willing to Learn

What is more revealing about these men is that at first they do not impress us as being key men. None of them occupied prominent places in the synagogue, nor did any of them belong to the Levitical priesthood. For the most part they were common laboring men, probably having no professional training beyond the rudiments of knowledge necessary for their vocation. Perhaps a few of them came from families of some considerable means, such as the sons of Zebedee, but none of them could have been considered wealthy. They had no academic degrees in the arts and philosophies of their day. Like their Master, their formal education likely consisted only of the synagogue schools. Most of them were raised in the poor section of the country around Galilee. Apparently the only one of the twelve who came from the more refined region of Judea was Judas Iscariot. By any standard of sophisticated culture, then and now, they would surely be considered as a rather ragged aggregation of souls. One might wonder how Jesus could ever use them. They were impulsive, temperamental, easily offended, and had all the prejudices of their environment. In short, these men selected by the Lord to be His assistants represented an average cross section of the lot of society in their day. Not the kind of group one would expect to win the world for Christ.

Yet Jesus saw in these simple men the potential of leadership for the kingdom. They were indeed "unlearned and ignorant" according to the world's standard (Acts 4:13), but they were teachable. Though often mistaken in their judgments and slow to comprehend spiritual things, they were honest men, willing to confess their need. Their mannerisms may have been awkward and their abilities limited, but with the exception of the traitor, their hearts were big. What is perhaps most significant about them was their sincere yearning for God and the realities of His life. The superficiality of the religious life about them

had not obsessed their hope for the Messiah (Jn 1:41, 45, 49; Lk 6:69). They were fed up with the hypocrisy of the ruling aristocracy. Some of them had already joined the revival movement of John the Baptist (Jn 1:35). These men were looking for someone to lead them in the way of salvation. Such men, pliable in the hands of the Master, could be molded into a new image. Jesus can use anyone who wants to be used.

Concentrated upon a Few

In noting this fact, however, one does not want to miss the practical truth of how Jesus did it. Here is the wisdom of His method, and in observing it, we return again to the fundamental principle of concentration upon those He intended to use. One cannot transform a world except as individuals in the world are transformed, and individuals cannot be changed except as they are molded in the hands of the Master. The necessity is apparent not only to select a few laymen but also to keep the group small enough to be able to work effectively with them.

Hence, as the company of followers around Jesus increased, it became necessary by the middle of His second year of ministry to narrow the select company to a more manageable number. Accordingly Jesus “called His disciples . . . and He chose from them twelve, whom also He named apostles” (Lk 6:13-17, NASB; Mk 3:13-19). Regardless of the symbolical meaning one prefers to put upon the number twelve, it is clear that Jesus intended these men to have unique privileges and responsibilities in the kingdom work.

This does not mean that Jesus’ decision to have twelve apostles excluded others from following Him, for as we know, many more were numbered among His associates, and some of these became very effective workers in the church. The seventy (Lk 10:1); Mark and Luke, the gospel revelators; James, His own brother (1 Cor 15:7; Gal 2:9, 12; Jn 2:12; 7:2-10), are notable examples of this. Nevertheless, we must acknowledge that there was a rapidly diminishing priority given to those outside the Twelve.

The same rule could be applied in reverse, for within the select apostolic group, Peter, James, and John seemed to enjoy a more special relationship to the Master than did the other nine. Only these privileged few are invited into the sick room of Jarius’ daughter (Mk 5:37; Lk 8:51); they alone go up with the Master and behold His glory on the Mount of Transfiguration (Mk 9:2; Mt 17:1; Lk 9:28); and amid the olive trees of Gethsemane casting their ominous shadows in the light of the full Passover moon, these members of the inner circle waited nearest to their Lord while He prayed (Mk 14:33; Mt 26:37). So noticeable is the preference given to these three that had it not been for the incarnation of selflessness in the Person of Christ, it could well have precipitated feelings of resentment on the part of the other apostles. The fact that there is no record of the disciples complaining about the preeminence of the three, though they did murmur about other things, is proof that where preference is shown in the right spirit and for the right reason offence need not arise.

The Principle Observed

All of this certainly impresses one with the deliberate way that Jesus proportioned His life to those He wanted to train. It also graphically illustrates a fundamental principle of teaching: that other things being equal, the more concentrated the size of the group being taught, the greater the opportunity for effective instruction.

Jesus devoted most of His remaining life on earth to these few disciples. He literally staked His whole ministry upon them. The world could be indifferent toward Him and still not defeat His strategy. It even caused Him no great concern when His followers on the fringes of things gave up their allegiance when confronted with the true meaning of the kingdom (Jn 6:66). But He could not bear to have His close disciples miss His purpose. They had to understand the truth and be sanctified by it (Jn 17:17), else all would be lost. Thus He prayed “not for the world,” but for the few God gave Him “out of the world” (Jn

17:6, 9, NASB). Everything depended upon their faithfulness if the world would believe on Him “through their word” (Jn 17:20).

Not Neglecting the Masses

It would be wrong, however, to assume that Jesus neglected the masses. Such was not the case. Jesus did all that any man could be asked to do and more to reach the multitudes. The first thing He did when He started His ministry was to identify Himself boldly with the great mass revival movement of His day through baptism at the hands of John (Mk 1:9-11; Mt 3:13-17; Lk 3:21-22), and He later went out of His way to praise this work of the great prophet (Mt 11:7-15; Lk 7:24-28). He Himself continuously preached to the crowds that followed His miracle-working ministry. He taught them. He fed them when they were hungry. He healed their sick and cast out demons among them. He blessed their children. Sometimes the whole day would be spent ministering to their needs, even to the extent that He had no time to eat (Mk 6:31). In every way possible Jesus manifested to the masses of humanity a genuine concern. These were the people that He came to save—He loved them, wept over them, and finally died to save them from their sin. No one could think that Jesus shirked mass evangelism.

Multitudes Aroused

In fact, the ability of Jesus to impress the multitudes created a serious problem in His ministry. He was so successful in expressing to them His compassion and power that they once wanted to “take Him by force, to make Him king” (Jn 6:15, NASB). One report by the followers of John the Baptist said that all men were clamoring for His attention (Jn 3:26). Even the Pharisees admitted among themselves that the world had gone after Him (Jn 12:19), and bitter as the admission must have been, the chief priests concurred in this opinion (Jn 11:47-48). However one looks at it, the gospel record certainly does not indicate that Jesus lacked any popular following among the masses, despite their hesitating loyalty, and this condition lasted right on down to the end. Indeed, it was the fear of this friendly mass feeling for Jesus that prompted His accusers to capture Him in the absence of the people (Mk 12:12; Mt 21:26; Lk 20:19).

Had Jesus given any encouragement to this popular sentiment among the masses, He easily could have had all the kingdoms of men at His feet. All He had to do was to satisfy the temporal appetites and curiosities of the people by His supernatural power. Such was the temptation presented by Satan in the wilderness when Jesus was urged to turn stones into bread and to cast Himself down from a pinnacle of the temple that God might bear Him up (Mt 4:1-7; Lk 4:1-4, 9-13). These spectacular things would surely have excited the applause of the crowd. Satan was not offering Jesus anything when he promised Him all the kingdoms of the world if the Master would only worship him (Mt 4:8-10). The arch deceiver of men knew full well that Jesus automatically would have this if He just turned His concentration from the things that mattered in the eternal kingdom.

But Jesus would not play to the galleries. Quite the contrary! Repeatedly He took special pains to allay the superficial popular support of the multitudes which had been occasioned by His extraordinary power (e.g., Jn: 2:23; 3:3; 6:26-27). Frequently He would even ask those He healed to say nothing about it in order to prevent mass demonstrations by the easily aroused multitudes. Likewise, with the disciples, following His transfiguration on the Mount, He told them to tell no one what they had seen until after His resurrection (Mk 9:9; Mt 17:9). On other occasions when applauded by the crowd, Jesus would slip away with His disciples and go elsewhere to continue His ministry.

His practice in this respect sometimes annoyed His followers who did not understand His strategy. Even his own brothers and sisters, who yet did not believe on Him, urged Him to abandon this policy and make an open show of Himself to the world, but He refused to take their advice (Jn 7:2-9).

Few Seemed to Understand

In view of this policy, it is not surprising to note that few people were actually converted during the ministry of Christ; that is in any clear-cut way. Of course, many of the multitudes believed in Christ in the sense that His divine ministry was acceptable, but comparatively few seemed to have grasped the meaning of the gospel. Perhaps His total number of devoted followers at the end of His earthly ministry numbered little more than the 500 brethren to whom Jesus appeared after the resurrection (1 Cor 15:6), and only about 120 waited in Jerusalem to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:15). Though this number is not small considering that His active ministry extended only over a period of three years, yet if at this point one were to measure the effectiveness of His evangelism by the number of His converts, Jesus doubtless would not be considered among the most productive mass evangelists of the church.

His Strategy

Why? Why did Jesus deliberately concentrate His life upon comparatively so few people? Had He not come to save the world? With the glowing announcement of John the Baptist ringing in the ears of multitudes, the Master easily could have had an immediate following of thousands if He wanted them. Why did He not then capitalize upon His opportunities to enlist a mighty army of believers to take the world by storm? Surely the Son of God could have adopted a more enticing program of mass recruitment. Is it not rather disappointing that one with all the powers of the universe at His command would live and die to save the world, yet in the end have only a few ragged disciples to show for His labors?

The answer to this question focuses at once the real purpose of His plan for evangelism. Jesus was not trying to impress the crowd, but to usher in a kingdom. This meant that He needed men who could lead the multitudes. What good would it have been for His ultimate objective to arouse the masses to follow Him if these people had no subsequent supervision nor instruction in the Way? It had been demonstrated on numerous occasions that the crowd was an easy prey to false gods when left without proper care. The masses were like helpless sheep wandering aimlessly without a shepherd (Mk 6:34; Mt 9:36; 14:14). They were willing to follow almost anyone who came along with some promise for their welfare, be it friend or foe. That was the tragedy of the hour—the noble aspirations of the people were easily excited by Jesus, but just as quickly thwarted by the deceitful religious authorities who controlled them. The spiritually blind leaders of Israel (Jn 8:44; 9:39-41; 12:40; Mt 23:1-39), though comparatively few in number, completely dominate the affairs of the people. For this reason, unless Jesus' converts were given competent men of God to lead them on and protect them in the truth, they would soon fall into confusion and despair, and the last state would be worse than the first. Thus, before the world could ever be permanently helped, men would have to be raised up who could lead the multitudes in the things of God.

Jesus was a realist. He fully realized the fickleness of depraved human nature as well as the satanic forces of this world amassed against humanity, and in this knowledge He based His evangelism on a plan that would meet the need. The multitudes of discordant and bewildered souls were potentially ready to follow Him, but Jesus individually could not possibly give them the personal care they needed. His only hope was to get men imbued with His life who would do it for Him. Hence, He concentrated Himself upon those who were to be the beginning of this leadership. Though He did what He could to help the multitudes, He had to devote Himself primarily to a few men, rather than the masses, in order that the masses could at last be saved. This was the genius of His strategy.

The Principle Applied Today

Yet, strangely enough, it is scarcely comprehended in practice today. Most of the evangelistic efforts of the church begin with the multitudes under the assumption that the church is qualified to conserve what good is done. The result is our spectacular emphasis upon numbers of converts, candidates for baptism,

and more members for the church, with little or no genuine concern manifested toward the establishment of these souls in the love and power of God, let alone the preservation and continuation of the work.

Surely if the pattern of Jesus at this point means anything at all it teaches that the first duty of a pastor, as well as the first concern of an evangelist, is to see to it that a foundation is laid in the beginning to build an effective and continuing evangelistic ministry to the multitudes. This will require more concentration of time and talents upon fewer men in the church while not neglecting the passion for the world. It will mean raising up trained leadership “for the work of ministering” with the pastor (Eph 4:12). A few people so dedicated in time will shake the world for God. Victory is never won by the multitudes.

Some might object to this principle when practiced by the Christian worker on the ground that favoritism is shown toward a select group in the church. But be that as it may, it is still the way that Jesus concentrated His life, and it is necessary if any permanent leadership is to be trained. Where it is practiced out of a genuine love for the whole church, and due concern is manifested toward the needs of the people, objections can at least be reconciled to the mission being accomplished. However, the ultimate goal must be clear to the worker, and there can be no hint of selfish partiality displayed in his relationships to all. Everything that is done with the few is for the salvation of the multitudes.

A Modern Demonstration

This principle of selectivity and concentration is engraved in the universe and will bring results no matter who practices it, whether the church believes it or not. It is surely not without significance that the Communists, always alert to what works, adopted in a large measure this method of the Lord as their own. Using it to their own devious end they have multiplied from a handful of zealots seventy-five years ago to a vast conspiracy of followers that enslave nearly half the peoples of the world. They have proved in our day what Jesus demonstrated so clearly in His day that the multitudes can be won easily if they are just given leaders to follow. Is not the spread of this vicious Communistic philosophy, in some measure, a judgment upon the church, not only upon our flabby commitment to evangelism, but also upon the superficial way that we have tried to go about it?

Time For Action

It is time that the church realistically faces the situation. Our days of trifling are running out. The evangelistic program of the church has bogged down on nearly every front. What is worse, the great missionary thrust of the gospel into new frontiers has largely lost its power. In most lands the enfeebled church is not even keeping up with the exploding population. All the while the satanic forces of this world are becoming more relentless and brazen in their attack. It is ironic when one stops to think about it. In an age when facilities for rapid communication of the gospel are available to the church as never before, we are actually accomplishing less in winning the world for God than before the invention of the horseless carriage.

Yet in appraising the tragic condition of affairs today, we must not become frantic in trying to reverse the trend overnight. Perhaps that has been our problem. In our concern to stem the tide, we have launched one crash program after another to reach the multitudes with the saving Word of God. But what we have failed to comprehend in our frustration is that the real problem is not with the masses—what they believe, how they are governed, whether they are fed a wholesome diet or not. All these things considered so vital are ultimately manipulated by others, and for this reason, before we can resolve the exploitation of the people we must get to those whom the people follow.

This, of course, puts a priority on winning and training those already in responsible positions of leadership. But if we can't begin at the top, then let us begin where we are and train a few of the lowly to become the great. And let us remember, too, that one does not have to have the prestige of the world in

order to be greatly used in the kingdom of God. Anyone who is willing to follow Christ can become a mighty influence upon the world, providing, of course, this person has the proper training himself.

Here is where we must begin just like Jesus did. It will be slow, tedious, painful, and probably unnoticed by men at first, but the end result will be glorious, even if we don't live to see it. Seen this way, though, it becomes a big decision in the ministry. One must decide where he wants his ministry to count—in the momentary applause of popular recognition or in the reproduction of his life in a few chosen men who will carry on his work after he has gone. Really it is a question of which generation we are living for.

But we must go on. It is necessary now to see how Jesus trained His men to carry on His work. The whole pattern is part of the same method, and we cannot separate one phase from the other without destroying its effectiveness.

Delegation:

Matt 4:19

Jesus was always building up in His ministry to the time when His disciples would have to take over His work and go out into the world with the redeeming gospel. This plan was progressively made clear as they followed Him.

The patience with which Jesus brought this out to His disciples reflects His consideration for their ability to learn. He was never premature in His insistence upon action. The first invitation to the disciples to follow Him said nothing about going out and evangelizing the world, although this was His plan from the beginning. His method was to get the disciples into a vital experience with God, and to show them how He worked, before telling them they had to do it.

On the other hand, Jesus did not discourage their spontaneous reactions to bear witness to their faith, and in fact, He seemed delighted that they wanted to bring others to know what they had found. Andrew got Peter, Philip found Nathaniel, Matthew invited his friends to a feast in his house, and Jesus responded to these new introductions with gladness. It is well, also, to note that on several occasions Jesus specifically asked those who were helped by His ministry to say something about it to others. However, in none of these early instances is the real purpose of their life of witnessing made a matter of explicit command.

He used His disciples in other ways to help along His work, such as caring for the manual burdens of getting food and arranging accommodations for the group as they followed Him. He also let them baptize some people who were aroused by His message (Jn 4:2). Outside of this, however, it is rather startling to observe in the Gospels that these early disciples really did not do much more than watch Jesus work for a year or more. He kept the vision before them by His activity, and in His call again to the four fishermen He reminded them that in following Him they were to be fishers of men (Mk 1:17; Mt 4:19; Lk 5:10), but it does not seem that they did much about it. For that matter, even after they were formally ordained to the ministry a few months later (Mk 3:14-19; Lk 6:13-16), they still showed no evidence of doing any evangelistic work on their own. This observation perhaps should cause us to be more patient with new converts who follow us.

First Evangelistic Message of the Twelve

But as Jesus was beginning His third general tour of Galilee (Mk 6:6; Mt 9:35), He doubtless realized that the time had come when His disciples could join Him more directly in the work. They had seen enough at least to get started. They needed now to put into practice what they had seen their Master do. So “He called unto Him the twelve, and began to send them forth” (Mk 6:7, KJV; 10:5; Lk 9:1-2). Like a mother eagle teaching her young to fly by pushing them out of the nest, Jesus pushed His disciples out into the world to try their own wings.

Before letting them go, however, Jesus gave them some briefing instructions on their mission. What He said to them on this occasion is very important to this study because, in a sense, He outlined for them explicitly what He had been teaching implicitly all the time.

He first reaffirmed His purpose for their lives. They were to go and “proclaim the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick” (Lk 9:1-2; see Mt 10:1; Mk 6:7). Nothing was new in this commission, but it did serve to further clarify their task. However, their new instructions did emphasize more the immediacy of their task with the announcement that the “kingdom of heaven is near” (Mt 10:7). It also spelled out more completely the scope of their authority by telling them not only to heal, but also to “raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons” (Mt 10:8).

But Jesus did not leave it at this. He went on to tell them who to see first. “Do not go to the Gentile regions and do not enter any Samaritan town. Go instead to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Mt 10:5-6). It was as though Jesus was telling His disciples to go where they would find the most susceptible audience to hear their message. This is the way that Jesus proceeded in His ministry, although as time went on He did not bind Himself by it. Since kinsmen were those most like them in cultural and religious background, it is only natural that they start with them. Interestingly enough, a few months later, when the seventy are sent out, this parting injunction was not repeated, perhaps indicating it was time then to go beyond these natural ties in pressing the claims of Christ.

As to their support, they were to trust God to supply their needs. They were told to render their services freely remembering how they had also freely received from their Lord (Mt 10:8). Consequently, Jesus instructed them not to burden themselves unnecessarily with a lot of excess baggage and provisions (Mt 10:9-10; Mk 6:8-9; Lk 9:3). As they were faithful to God, He would see to it that they were supplied their needs. “The worker is worthy of his provision” (Mt 10:10).

Follow His Method

The plan of Jesus is even more specific to His disciples in His instructions to find some friendly person in each town they visited and to live there as long as they continued their evangelistic work in the area. “Whatever town or village you enter, find out who is worthy there and stay with them until you leave” (Mt 10:11; Mk 6:10; Lk 9:4). In effect, the disciples were told to concentrate their time upon the most promising individuals in each town who would thereby be able to follow up their work after they had gone. This was to receive priority over everything else. In fact, if they could not find someone who would take them in, they were specifically instructed to shake off the dust on their feet as a testimony against them. It would be “more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city” (Mt 10:14-15, NASB; Lk 9:5; Mk 6:11). This principle of establishing a beachhead in a new place of labor by getting with a potentially key follow-up leader is not to be minimized. Jesus had lived by it with His own disciples, and He expected them to do the same. His whole plan of evangelism depended upon it, and those places that refused the disciples opportunity to practice this principle actually brought the judgment of utter darkness upon themselves.

Expect Hardship

The fact that some men would refuse the disciples’ ministry only accentuated Jesus’ warning of the treatment they could expect to receive. “Beware of people, because they will hand you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues. And you will be brought before governors and kings on account of me, as a witness to them and the Gentiles” (Mt 10:17-18). This was only natural, since “a disciple is not above the teacher master, nor a slave above his master” (Mt 10:24). The rulers had called Jesus Beelzebub, and those of His household could not expect any less abuse (Mt 10:25). This was to say again that His way was contrary to the accepted pattern of worldly wisdom. Therefore they would be hated of all men (Mt 10:22-23). Nevertheless, Jesus told them to “fear not.” God would never desert them. And though their witness was wrought with grave danger to their lives, the Holy Spirit would enable them to meet emergencies (Mt 10:20-21). No matter what happened to them, Jesus assured them that everyone who confessed Him before men would be remembered before His Father in heaven (Mt 10:32).

One cannot help being impressed with the realistic way that Jesus never let His disciples underestimate the strength of the enemy, nor the natural resistance of men to His redeeming gospel. They were not looking for trouble. Indeed, His admonition to them to be “as wise as serpents, and innocent as doves” (Mt 10:16) underscored the need for propriety and tactfulness, but in spite of all their precautions, the fact remained that the world was not likely to receive the disciples with favor when they faithfully preached the gospel. They were sent “as sheep in the midst of wolves” (Mt 10:16, NASB).

A Dividing Gospel

It is significant, too, that Jesus reminded them of the decisive nature of the gospel invitation. There could be no compromise with sin, and for this reason, anyone holding out on God was sure to be disturbed by their preaching. They were not hand-shaking emissaries maintaining the status quo of complacency. Rather Jesus said: “Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to set *a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, and a man’s enemies will be the members of his household.* Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And whoever does not take up his cross and follow me, is not worthy of me” (Mt 10:34-38). If the disciples had any notions prior to this time about the easy nature of their work, it was certainly dispelled now. They were going forth with a revolutionary gospel, and when it was obeyed, it effected a revolutionary change in people and their society.

One with Christ

The point Jesus made in all these instructions was that the mission of His disciples was not different in principle or method from His own. He began by giving them His own authority and power to do His work (Mk 6:7; Mt 10:1; Lk 9:1), and He closed by assuring them that what they were doing was as though He was doing it Himself. “He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me” (Mt 10:40, KJV; Jn 13:20). Think of this identity! The disciples were to be the actual representatives of Christ as they went forth. So clear was this association that if someone even gave a child a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, that act of mercy would be rewarded (Mt 10:42).

Two by Two

These were the instructions that Jesus gave to His disciples. But before they went out, He teamed them up in pairs of two (Mk 6:7). Doubtless this plan was intended to provide for His disciples needed companionship along the way. Together they could help one another, and when adverse circumstances greeted them, as surely often would be the case, they could still find solace among themselves. It reflects again the characteristic concern of Jesus for togetherness.

“And they departed, and went throughout the towns, preaching the gospel, and healing everywhere” (Lk 9:6, KJV; Mk 6:12). The little group of disciples was finally started in the active ministry of Christ on their own.

Of course, this was no excuse for Jesus neglecting His own work. He never asked anyone to do something He was unwilling to do. So as the disciples went out, the Master likewise “departed thence to teach and preach in their cities” (Mt 11:1, KJV).

The Mission of the Seventy

Not many months after this “seventy others” were sent out again two by two to witness for their Lord (Lk 10:1). It is not known for sure just who these other disciples were, but the indications are that they included the original twelve. The size of the group also indicates that this was due in measure to the increased activity of the Twelve in witnessing for Christ.

Again the instructions given to this larger group were essentially the same as those delivered earlier to the Twelve (Lk 10:2-16). One addition in this new commission was the reminder that they were going “into every city and place, whither he himself would come” (Lk 10:1, KJV). That is, the disciples were forerunners for their Lord, setting things up for His ministry. This detail had been impressed upon them a few weeks before while they were on a trip to Samaria (Lk 9:52), so actually it was not something new. It

merely indicated again that they all were to practice what they had learned to be their Master's strategy of evangelism.

Post Resurrection Commands

The principle of giving evangelistic work assignments to His disciples was conclusively demonstrated just before He returned to Heaven after His crucifixion and resurrection. On at least four occasions as He met with His disciples He told them to go out and do His work. It was first mentioned to the disciples, with the exception of Thomas, on that first Easter evening as they were assembled in the Upper Room. After Jesus had showed the astonished disciples His nail-scarred hands and feet (Lk 24:38-40), and had partaken of the meal with them (Lk 24:41-43), He then said: "Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you" (Jn 20:21, KJV). Whereupon Jesus assured them again of the promise and authority of the Holy Spirit to do the work.

A little later as Jesus had breakfast with His disciples by the Sea of Tiberias, He told Peter three times to feed His sheep (Jn 21:15-17). This admonition was interpreted to the big fisherman as the proof of his love to the Master.

On a mountain in Galilee He gave His great commission to not only the eleven disciples (Mt 28:16) but also to the whole church, numbering then about 500 brethren (1 Cor 15:6). It was a clear proclamation of His strategy of world conquest. "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Mt 28:18-20; Mk 16:15-18).

Finally, before He ascended back to the Father, Jesus went over the whole thing again with His disciples for the last time, showing them how things had to be fulfilled while He was with them (Lk 24:44-45). His suffering and death, as well as His resurrection from the dead the third day, was all according to schedule (Lk 24:46). Jesus went on to show His disciples "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Lk 24:47, KJV). And for the fulfillment of this divine purpose, the disciples were no less a part than their Master. They were to be the human instruments announcing the good tidings, and the Holy Spirit was to be God's personal empowerment for their mission. "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8, KJV; Lk 24:48-49).

The Principle Is Clear

Clearly Jesus did not leave the work of evangelism subject to human impression or convenience. To His disciples it was a definite command, perceived by impulse at the beginning of their discipleship, but progressively clarified in their thinking as they followed Him, and finally spelled out in no uncertain terms. No one who followed Jesus very far could escape this conclusion. It was so then; it is so today.

Christian disciples are sent men—sent out in the same work of world evangelism to which the Lord was sent, and for which He gave His life. Evangelism is not an optional accessory to our life. It is the heartbeat of all that we are called to be and do. It is the commission of the church, which gives meaning to all else that is undertaken in the name of Christ. With this purpose clearly in focus, everything which is done and said has glorious fulfillment of God's redemptive purpose—educational institutions, social programs, hospitals, church meetings of any kind—everything done in the name of Christ has its justification in fulfilling this mission.

The Principle Applied Today

But it is not enough to make this an ideal. It must be given tangible expression by those who are following the Savior. The best way to be sure that this is done is to give practical work assignments and expect them to be carried out. This gets men started, and where they already have seen their work demonstrated in the life of their teacher, there is no reason why the assignment cannot be completed. When the church takes this lesson to heart, and gets down to business with evangelism, then those in the pews will soon start moving out for God.

However, the fact that one starts the work is no assurance that he will keep it up. Once inertia is overcome, it is still necessary to keep moving and going in the right direction. Certainly the assignments that Jesus gave His disciples, at least at first, were no discharge from His school of training. They had much more to learn before they could be considered ready for graduation, and until that time came, He had no intention of turning them loose from His personal direction. His concern at this point was so explicit and His method of dealing with it so pronounced that it needs to be considered as another step in His strategy of ultimate victory.

Supervision:

Mark 8:17

He Kept Check On Them

Jesus made it a point to get with His disciples following their tours of service to hear their reports and to share with them the blessedness of His ministry in doing the same thing. In this sense, one might say that His teaching rotated between instruction and assignment. What time He was with them, He was helping them understand the reason for some previous action or getting them ready for some new experience. His questions, illustrations, warnings, and admonitions were calculated to bring out those things that they needed to know in order to fulfill His work, which was the evangelization of the world.

Accordingly, not long after the Twelve were sent out, they gathered themselves “around Jesus” to tell “everything they had done and taught” (Mk 6:30; Lk 9:10). It would appear from the Bible that this reunion was prearranged, and hence, the initial solo excursion of the disciples was merely a field assignment as they continued training with the Master.

The regrouping of the disciples following their evangelistic tour, of course, provided them some needed rest in body and soul. As to how long the disciples had been out, the Scripture does not say—perhaps a few days, even a week. The time element here is not the important thing. What does matter though, as the Record shows, is that after the disciples were sent out to work, they were expected to share their experiences, later, with the group.

Similarly, after the seventy went out, Jesus called them back to report on their work during the visitation. “And the seventy returned with joy, saying, ‘Lord, even the devils are subject unto us in Your name’” (Lk 10:17, NASB). On the previous mission of the Twelve, no mention is made of any spectacular success in their work, but on this occasion they had a rousing report of triumph. Perhaps the difference was the additional experience they had gained.

Nothing could have given Jesus more joy than this. Visualizing the victory ultimately assured by their work, Jesus said: “I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven” (Lk 10:18, KJV). “On that same occasion Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit” and then lifted up His voice in praise to God for what had been done (Lk 10:21-22). This was what Jesus had been working for all these long months, and now He was beginning to see His labors show fruit. Yet, to show how Jesus was alert to make experiences teach truth, even this occasion was used to caution the disciples against pride in their accomplishments. As he put it, “Nevertheless, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you; but rejoice that your names stand written in heaven” (Lk 10:20).

Continuous Review and Application

What is seen so vividly in these checkup sessions following the disciples’ visitation merely brings into bold relief a strategy of Jesus throughout His ministry. As He reviewed an experience the disciples had, He would bring out some practical application of it to their lives.

Take, as an illustration, the way He responded to the futile efforts of some of His disciples to heal an afflicted boy. This incident was precipitated while Jesus was on the Mount of Transfiguration with Peter, James, and John. In His absence, the other disciples had tried to heal a demon-possessed boy brought to them by the father. The case was too much for their faith, and when Jesus returned to see how things were getting along, He found the distraught father with the sick child having a fit before the helpless disciples. Jesus, of course, took care of the boy, but He did

not let the occasion pass without giving the frustrated disciples a much needed lesson on how they, through more prayer and fasting, should have laid hold upon God's faithfulness (Mk 9:17-29; Mt 7:14-20; Lk 9:37-43).

Or, again, think of the way He recalled their part in feeding the multitude to impress upon them His power to do all things while also teaching them a vital lesson concerning spiritual discernment (Mk 6:30-44; 7:31-8:9, 13-21; Mt 14:13-21; 15:29-38; Lk 9:10-17; Jn 6:1-13). It came about as they were going across the Sea of Galilee in a boat immediately following the Master's severe denunciation of the chronic sign-seeking attitude of the religious sects of His day (Mk 8:10-12; Mt 15:39-16:4). Jesus, doubtless feeling a great heaviness because of the incident on the other side of the lake, turned to His disciples and said: "Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees." But the spiritually dull disciples, growing hungry for food, and having only one loaf of bread with them, thought that they should not buy bread from these unbelieving people, and therefore wondered where their next meal was coming from. Realizing that they had missed completely the spiritual lesson of His remarks intended to warn them against unbelief, Jesus said: "O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves because ye have no bread? Do ye not yet perceive, neither understand? Have ye your heart hardened? Having eyes, see ye not? And having ears, hear ye not? And do ye not remember? When I broke the five loaves among the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces took ye up?" The disciples answered, "Twelve" (Mk 8:19). Doubtless this brought clearly to mind that day when the disciples seated the multitudes for dinner, and then saw Jesus perform the miracle of the loaves. They remembered, too, how He employed them to distribute the provisions so that everybody had enough, and then to gather up what was left. Indeed, it was a vivid recollection, for each one of the Twelve had a basket full of food when it was all over. Similarly, they remembered how that they had seven baskets left over from feeding the four thousand. With this evidence of Jesus' miraculous power there could be no doubt about His ability to feed them with their loaf of bread if it was necessary. "Then they understood how that He bade them, not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and the Sadducees" (Mt 16:12, KJV).

Lessons on Patience

One of the most penetrating of the Lord's correctional lectures following the disciples' activity was in connection with their attitude toward others in the work who were not members of the apostolic company. It seems that in the course of their travels they had run across some people casting out demons in Jesus' name, but since these persons were not of their denomination, the disciples had severely rebuked them for it (Mk 9:38; Lk 9:49). Doubtless Jesus' disciples felt they were doing the right thing, but when it was reported to the Master, He felt constrained to give them an extended discourse on the dangers of discouraging any sincere work on His behalf (Mk 9:39-50; Mt 18:6-14). "Do not prevent him," Jesus said, "for the one that is not against you is for you" (Lk 9:50). Then making His point apply more generally to all innocent people, especially children, He went on to say, "Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone tied around his neck and to be thrown into the sea" (Mk 9:42). "It is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones perish" (Mt 18:14, NASB).

On another excursion, the disciples encountered some resistance to their work while on an assignment for their Lord in Samaria. Reacting impulsively to destroy the people, they wanted to call down fire from heaven (Lk 51-54). But Jesus, who was standing nearby, "turned and rebuked them," adding, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to

destroy men's lives, but to save them" (Lk 9:55-56, KJV). And then showing His disciples how they might solve this kind of problem, "they went to another village" (Lk 9:56, KJV).

The Principle Observed

Many other illustrations could be cited to show how Jesus checked up on the actions and reactions of His disciples as they faced various difficult situations. He kept after them constantly, giving them increasingly more attention as His ministry on earth came to a close. He would not let them rest in success or in failure. No matter what they did, there was always more to do and to learn. He rejoiced in their success, but nothing less than world conquest was His goal, and to that end He always superintended their efforts.

Here was on-the-job training at its best. Jesus would let His followers have some experience or make some observation of their own, and then He would use this as a starting point to teach a lesson of discipleship. The fact that they tried to do His work, even though they may have failed at it, gave them greater awareness of their deficiencies and hence they were more disposed to the Master's correction. Moreover, their encounter with life situations enabled Jesus to pinpoint His teaching upon specific needs and to spell it out in the concrete terms of practical experience. One always appreciates an education more after he has had the opportunity to apply what he knows.

The important thing about all this supervisory work of Jesus was that He kept the disciples going on toward the goal He had set for them. He did not expect more from His disciples than they could do, but He did expect their best, and this He expected always to be improved as they grew in knowledge and grace. His plan of teaching, by example, assignment, and constant check-up, was calculated to bring out the best that was in them

The Principle Applied Today

No less patient yet determined supervision is needed today among those who are seeking to train others for evangelism. One dare not assume that the work will be done merely because he has shown a willing worker how to do it and then sent him out with a glowing expectation of results. Innumerable things could happen to frustrate and sidetrack the work, and unless these matters are dealt with realistically by competent and understanding people, the worker may easily become discouraged and defeated. Likewise, many experiences of grace, which bring delight to the soul, need to be clarified and deepened as their meaning is interpreted in the light of the total world mission of Christ. It is crucial that those engaging in the work of evangelism have personal supervision and guidance until they are matured enough to carry on alone.

Keep the Vision Clear

We must always remember, too, that the goal is world conquest. We dare not let a lesser concern capture our strategy of the moment. All too many times one has been brought to the place of service only to be discharged with no further training or inspiration. The result is that his activity becomes localized in a feverish round of excitement. There is no growth. The potential ability resident in the worker is not developed, and before long a promising leader is spoiled for want of supervision. Success is lost on the eve of victory. What once looked so good eventually becomes a stumbling stone to the best.

Undoubtedly much of our effort for the kingdom is dissipated for this reason. We fail, not because we do not try to do something, but because we let our little efforts become an excuse for not doing more. The result is that we lose by default the advantage of years of hard work and sacrifice.

When will we learn the lesson of Christ not to be satisfied merely with the first fruits of those who are sent out to witness? Disciples must be brought to maturity. There can be no substitute for total victory, and our field is the world. We have not been called to hold the fort, but to storm the heights. It is in this light that the final step in Jesus' strategy of evangelism can be understood.