

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

BIBLE STUDY TEXTBOOK SERIES

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

by

Paul T. Butler

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This volume is dedicated to

Paul Maynard Jordan

God did not give me a brother in the flesh,
but He gave me Paul, my precious
brother in the faith, and he has blessed
my life and ministry with
encouragement and example. . . .

with special thanks to Mrs. Elizabeth Johnston and
Mrs. Penny Skaggs without whose help this volume
would have been impossible

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Chapter One (1:1-80)

THE GOSPEL OF THE SON OF MAN

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. If others had already been compiling narratives of the life of Jesus, why did Luke feel it necessary for him to do so too (1:1-4)?
2. Why did God need to precede the birth of the Messiah with a "fore-runner" (1:17)?
3. Why was Mary upset with the announcement from the angel about Jesus' birth (1:29)?
4. Should Mary be venerated in some special way because she was the mother of our Lord (1:42)?
5. Why was it so important to name the "forerunner" John (1:60)?
6. Who are the "enemies" the Messiah's people are to be saved from (1:71)?
7. Isn't it rather strange to let the child John grow up all by himself in "the wilderness" (1:80)?

SECTION 1

The Precise Record (1:1-4)

1 Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things which have been accomplished among us, ²just as they were delivered to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word, ³it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴that you may know the truth concerning the things of which you have been informed.

1:1-4 The Author: The author of this historical record of the life of Jesus was Luke (also the author of Acts of the Apostles) "the beloved physician" (Col. 4:14) and traveling companion of the apostle Paul. He was a Greek by race and the only Gentile writer in the New Testament. He was probably one of Paul's converts and tradition says his home was in Syria in the city of Antioch. Being a physician, he would be thoroughly trained and highly motivated toward skillful scientific research. Most doctors of that day were respected, well-paid practitioners. Historical records

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indicate physicians of that era were more skilled than we sometimes think. Amputations, surgery on the skull, surgery for "stones" (gall and kidney), suturing of blood vessels and tracheotomies were performed. Surgical instruments were so well designed that it has hardly been possible to improve on some of them even at the present day. There were probes, cauterizers, scalpels, needles for suturing, clamps, forceps, elevators for lifting up depressed portions of the skull (much like those used today), catheters, scissors, throat spatulas and other complicated instruments for dilating passages in the body and internal examinations.

Paul picked up Luke at Troas on his second missionary journey (Acts 16:10; note, "we") and then left Luke at Philippi (about 51 A.D.). Six years later Luke was in Paul's missionary troupe again sailing back to Troas (about 58 A.D.) (note "we" used again in Acts 20:1-6). Luke probably accompanied Paul from then on through the third missionary journey, the return to Jerusalem, two years imprisonment at Caesarea (58-60 A.D.), and finally, the trip to Rome and Paul's imprisonment there (60-63 A.D.).

Luke's travels with the apostle Paul, especially the two or three years spent in Palestine, gave him ample opportunity to complete his detailed research and interrogation of "eyewitnesses" and write his gospel record. Most scholars date the writing of Luke's gospel about 58-60 A.D., coincidental with Paul's incarceration at Caesarea. External evidence abundantly testifies to the early existence and use of Luke's gospel. Justin Martyr (100-165 A.D.), a student of Polycarp (who was in turn, a student of the apostle John), quotes from Luke's gospel; Hegesippus (110-180) quotes from it; Tatian's *Diatessaron* (120 A.D.) quotes it; The Muratorian Fragment (170 A.D.) cites it as Luke's gospel; the Syriac manuscripts (some of the oldest mss. of the N.T.) (100-200 A.D.) contain the gospel according to Luke.

Although Luke was not an apostle (like Matthew and John), he was a co-laborer and long-time companion of the apostle Paul. Paul had the power to lay his hands on his co-laborers and impart to them special, miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit (2 Tim. 1:6). We believe Paul must have imparted to Luke the miraculous gift of the Holy Spirit to guide him in producing an inerrant record of the life of Jesus (and Acts of the Apostles). In other words, we believe Luke's gospel is "inspired" by the Holy Spirit as surely as Matthew's or John's. His gospel has been received as canonical by the church from the end of the first century until now.

Luke's gospel has often been characterized as "the gospel with the Gentile world in mind." Beginning in 1:68, Luke emphasizes the *redemptive* work of Jesus. Thiessen, in his *Introduction to The New Testament*, points out the following peculiarities of Luke's account:

1. This is the Gospel of the perfect humanity of Christ. Our Lord is seen as having the development, feelings, sympathies and powers of a man. Luke gives us the fullest account of the birth, childhood, growth, domestic and social life of Jesus.
2. Luke makes much of Prayer. Christ is represented as praying 15 times in the four Gospels, 11 of which are found in Luke's Gospel, 3 in Matthew's, and 4 in both Mark and John. Luke has a good deal of teaching on prayer not found in the other Gospels, 11:5-13; 18:1-8; 21:36; cf. 18:11-13.
3. The Third Gospel also makes much of Praise and Thanksgiving. It begins and ends with worship in the temple (1:9; 24:52). He alone gives us the words of the great hymns which have since been set to music; The Ave Maria (1:28); the Magnificat (1:46-56); the Benedictus (1:68-79); the Gloria in Excelsis (2:14); and the Nunc Dimitis (2:29-32).
4. Women and children are prominent in this Gospel; Elizabeth and Mary; Anna; the widow of Nain; woman bound by Satan; women who ministered to Jesus; sinner woman; widow appealing to unrighteous judge; Martha and Mary; infants (18:15); Jairus' daughter, etc.
5. The Gospel of Luke is the most literary and beautiful of the gospels. Its introduction is classic and its vocabulary is that of an educated man.
6. He uses many medical terms and shows special interest in sickness and in the sick. He shows the compassion of Jesus.
7. Luke records 20 miracles of Christ, of which 6 are peculiar to him, and 23 parables, of which 18 are peculiar to him.
8. He traces Christ's genealogy back to Adam, showing Christ's kinship with all of mankind in His work of redemption.

SECTION 2

1:1-4 The Authentication: The tenses of the Greek verbs in Luke's "prologue" indicate he wrote his introduction *after* he had completed the body of the account itself. William Barclay says, "Luke's introduction is unique . . . It is the best bit of Greek in the New Testament." The physician-historian uses the classic form of introduction which the great Greek historians all used. He wants to assure those who read his account of the life of Jesus that it is the product of the most careful and accurate research. An example of Luke's diligence for historical accuracy is that he dates it by reference to no fewer

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than six contemporary political personages: "Now in the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar (1); Pontius Pilate being governor of Judaea (2); Herod being tetrarch of Galilee (3); and his brother Philip being tetrarch of Ituraea and of the regions of Trachonitis (4); and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene (5); Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests (6); the word of God came to John (the Baptist)." (Luke 3:1-2)

The Greek word *anataxasthai* (Lk. 1:1) is translated *compile* and was really a military term referring to the lining up of soldiers in orderly rank and file. There were thousands of people who had seen and heard the miracles and sermons of Jesus. The Greek word referring to these things is *peplerophoremēnon* and is in the perfect tense, meaning, "things having been accomplished with a continuing result." Jesus was God Incarnate. He had died as a final and complete atonement for man's sins. He had conquered death and the grave and promised eternal life to all who believed and obeyed Him. The good news was sweeping through the Roman empire like wildfire. Churches were being formed and were wanting desperately an orderly, detailed account of Christ's life in permanent written form. Evidently, there were many Christians attempting to gather the oral and written fragments of the Jesus-story into one complete, orderly account. None of these suited Luke's purpose, so he set about to write his own account.

It is not that these earlier attempts were inaccurate or spurious for they were from "eyewitnesses." The Greek word for *eyewitnesses* here is *autoptai* from which we get the English word *autopsy*. It is a Greek medical term. Physicians perform an *autopsy* so they may see with their own eyes conditions which may have caused death. The word means literally, "seeing for oneself." Luke's sources for his gospel account were *eyewitnesses*. As a scientist-physician and historian, he would never be satisfied with hearsay material. The student should be impressed with the fact that the gospel accounts (and especially Luke's) are pure *history*. They make no attempts to interpret meanings—they are records of what Jesus said and did, purely and simply, and modern-day news reporters would do well to follow their example. The Gospel writers had confidence that honest, clear-thinking men and women who read their historical accounts of Jesus could form their own conclusions about who Jesus is and what they should do about their conclusions. (See John 20:30-31)

It is inconceivable that a man of Luke's training could be satisfied with only fragmentary and disconnected portions of the life of Jesus. He would be challenged to make a scientific investigation of every bit of true historical information he could gather. A.T. Robertson reminds us that Luke was the first "critic" of the life of Christ whose criticism has been preserved for posterity. With his training and sources it is

unlikely that he would be fooled. He had nothing to gain by misrepresenting the facts. He got his facts first hand from eyewitnesses. Shouldn't honest-minded people today give more credence to Luke than modern-day critics, almost 2000 years away from the events, who are trying to impugn their accuracy?

Luke evidently does not mean to say that each one of his sources had been with Jesus during every event of His life. No doubt Luke received his account of the birth narratives from Mary, mother of Jesus. He tells much about Mary's part in the history of Christ that others leave out. During his stay in Palestine for two years it is altogether possible that he talked with a number of the first apostles of Christ. Paul told of 500 brethren, most of whom were alive when he wrote I Corinthians, who were eyewitnesses. Luke probably interviewed a number of these people. He definitely met James and "all the elders" at Jerusalem with Paul (Acts 21:18). Nowhere does Luke claim to have written everything Jesus said and did, but his account is the most complete and orderly account of all four gospel accounts.

Graphically, Luke describes the work he put into his gospel record. The Greek word *parekolouthokoti* is translated *having followed* and means, literally, *to follow alongside* a thing which one has in mind, or *to trace* a thing carefully. Galen, famous Greek physician, used this word for the tracing-out of medical symptoms. Luke applies the exact science of his medical training to the careful investigation of events surrounding Jesus' life. He traced every account for accuracy and order. The word *closely* in the English text is *akribos* in Greek and means *minutely*. Nor was he satisfied until he had traced all things to their source. The Greek word is *anohen* and means, *source* or *beginning*. The translation, "for some time past," in RSV is not a good translation. Luke's method of scientific-historical research is in no way inferior to any method used today.

Luke is not only an expert researcher, he is also an expert communicator. He is not satisfied just to trace every bit of material on the life of Jesus which comes his way to its source with minute accuracy, he must also put it in logical order. The Greek word is *kathexes*. G. Campbell Morgan says the word is that of the artist. Luke gathered his material, established its accuracy and then gave it artistic order so that his friend, Theophilus, would get the whole "picture" of Jesus. Hobbes notes, Luke's "historical genius expresses itself in the words *inquiry, accuracy, and order.*"

Theophilus is a Greek name meaning, "one who loves God." Luke addresses him as "most excellent" or "your excellency." He uses the same Greek word *kratiste* which is used twice in Acts to address important government officials (cf. Acts 23:26; 24:3). Many ancient writers were supported by "patrons" or men of wealth who wished to benefit by the research done by these experts. Luke also mentions Theophilus in

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his introduction to Acts. Theophilus was probably an important government official of considerable wealth, a convert to Christianity, who wished to know as many details about Jesus' life as possible and have them written down in orderly, permanent form so that he could establish himself and others more firmly in the faith. Theophilus had been taught the good news about Christ. In fact, the Greek word translated informed is *katechetes* and is the word from which we get *catechism* in English. The Greek word *asphaleian* is translated *truth* (*certainty* in KJV). It means "without tottering or falling." Plummer comments that "Theophilus shall know that the faith which he has embraced has an impregnable historical foundation."

Through the work of modern archaeologists and historians like Sir William Ramsay, Luke's Gospel (and Acts) has been thoroughly authenticated as to its historical accuracy. Herschel H. Hobbs summarizes it beautifully:

The fires of criticism have burned about the whole of the Bible. Yet it has stood the test. And central in this test has been the Gospel of Luke. It is really no wonder that this Gospel stands triumphant in the field of battle. It has stood the stern test of scientific analysis where science is qualified to speak. And where it cannot speak with authority this Gospel itself can. For before this scientist-historian allowed any single item to be honored with a place in his account, he first subjected it to the most critical analysis in every detail. This man of science who possessed a keen appreciation for history surrendered his personality and powers to the Holy Spirit. The result is not only the world's most beautiful story, but one which gives to us the full knowledge of "the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed."

And for this dual reason we are indebted to Luke beyond measure, a debt which the faithful can never repay.

from *An Exposition of The Gospel of Luke*, by H.H. Hobbs, pg. 23, pub. Baker

STUDY STIMULATORS:

1. Some have led us to believe that physicians of 2000 years ago were little more than ignorant, superstitious witchdoctors—what about Luke?
2. Does the academic and social position of Luke and the political status of Theophilus tell you anything about the cutting-edge of the Gospel as it penetrated all strata of first century society? Can you

- name other people of position and erudition converted by the Gospel?
3. Since Jesus never promised Luke the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, nor does Luke claim it in his own statements, do you have any difficulty accepting Luke's Gospel as an authentic part of the Bible?
 4. Did you know that some modern religious leaders claim most of what is recorded of Jesus in the gospel accounts is mythological—that is, made-up stories like fairy-tales? How does that compare with Luke's claim to historical accuracy?
 5. Since Jesus was crucified about 34 A.D. and Luke was interviewing eyewitnesses in Palestine about 58-60 A.D., what famous persons might have been alive then for Luke to interview about Jesus' life?
 6. Why do you think the Holy Spirit guided the gospel writers to refrain from making interpretations of the meaning of the events they recorded? Does this give any indication about right and wrong in the "psychology" of the proclamation of the Gospel? In other words, should we try to push people into responding by manipulative methods, or simply proclaim the gospel story with conviction and compassion and leave men as free as possible to make their own choice?
 7. Is it important to you that Luke has emphasized his goal of minute and orderly accuracy?
 8. Are you convinced that Luke's historical account can stand the test of modern scientific and historical investigation?
 9. Do you think an honest-minded unbeliever could be converted by studying Luke's gospel? Or would it take something else?

SECTION 3

Preparing for the Redeemer (1:5-25)

5 In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, of the division of Abijah; and he had a wife of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. ⁶And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. ⁷But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were advanced in years.

8 Now while he was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty, ⁹according to the custom of the priesthood, it fell to him by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense. ¹⁰And the whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of incense. ¹¹And there appeared to him an angel of

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the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. ¹²And Zechariah was troubled when he saw him, and fear fell upon him.

¹³But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer is heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John.

¹⁴And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth;

¹⁵for he will be great before the Lord, and he shall drink no wine nor strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb.

¹⁶And he will turn many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God, ¹⁷and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,

and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared."

¹⁸And Zechariah said to the angel, "How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years." ¹⁹And the angel answered him, "I am Gabriel, who stand in the presence of God; and I was sent to speak to you, and to bring you this good news.

²⁰And behold, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things come to pass, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time." ²¹And the people were waiting for Zechariah, and they wondered at his delay in the temple.

²²And when he came out, he could not speak to them, and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple; and he made signs to them and remained dumb. ²³And when his time of service was ended, he went to his home.

²⁴ After these days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and for five months she hid herself, saying, ²⁵"Thus the Lord has done to me in the days when he looked on me, to take away my reproach among men."

1:5-12 Persons: God chose the days of Herod (the Great) to send the Redeemer of mankind to the world. Herod was made "king of the Jews" by the Roman emperor. He was not a Jew but an Idumean (Edomite) a descendant of Esau. Ethnically he was what we would think of today as an Arabian. The Roman conquest of Palestine was repugnant to most Jews to begin with. But their bitterness was even more agitated when the Romans appointed an Arab to rule over them. Herod was an able administrator, promoter of extravagant public building projects (which required exorbitant taxation), and a crafty politician. He was also cruel, sadistic and suspicious. He had ten wives and many children. He nearly succeeded in obliterating the Jewish royal family (Hasmoneans) through assassinations and executions. He ordered the execution of the wife

he loved most, Mariamne (a Hasmonean princess). Then he had her two sons slain along with five sons of his by various other wives. He heard rumors they were trying to wrest his throne from him. The Roman emperor Augustus (Octavian) said, "It is better to be Herod's pig than his son." He was joking that Herod would have more scruples against violating Jewish tradition than murdering his relatives! When Herod was about to die, he ordered that all the most important men of the kingdom be executed to insure that there would be mourning during his funeral. He was the Herod who ordered the slaughter of the babies of Bethlehem (Mt. 2:16-23). He reigned from 37 B.C. to 4 B.C.

Herod was the personification of the condition of the world when God began to make preparations for His Redeemer to be sent. Herod's world was cruel, materialistic, hateful, exploitative, cynical and filled with despair. The Jewish people suffered much at the hands of their rulers. When Herod and the Romans were not oppressing them, their own religious leaders were. The religious life of the Jews (an integral part of their social and political life) had lost its vitality and helpfulness. The Pharisees had made their traditions a burden almost impossible to bear; the Sadducees were using religion to amass personal fortunes.

The prophets of the Old Testament had spoken concerning an age of glorious righteousness and abundant spirituality for the Jewish people. But the last prophet had spoken 400 years earlier and Jehovah had not said anything to His people since then. The days of Herod were most unlikely days for God to begin preparations for the Redeemer! Modern man with his "Madison Avenue" techniques would not have planned it so. But God's ways are higher than men's. It is all the more significant that in such a condition and time God chose to act in history for the accomplishment of His eternal redemptive purpose. God was ready to demonstrate His sovereignty. The "time" (Gal. 4:4) had come! And despite a people and a religion saturated with materialism, cynicism and despair, there was still a faithful remnant, a few godly, obedient, believing people Jehovah could use to be the instruments of His will.

An aged priest and his wife were chosen by Jehovah to become parents of a son who would later be called the greatest of all those born of woman (Mt. 11:11), and he would be the Way-Preparer for the Messiah. Zechariah means, "Jehovah remembers," and Elizabeth means, "the oath of God." God had solemnly promised to send the Redeemer, and He remembered His oath. Zechariah was a priest and his wife, Elizabeth, was a daughter of a priest.

There were twenty-four "courses" (shifts) of priests, that of Abijah was the eighth "shift." There were some twenty thousand priests altogether taking turns at officiating at the temple in Jerusalem. This would mean there were about 900 priests in each shift. Each shift served

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for a week twice a year burning incense, sacrificing, caring for the showbread and scores of other duties. Not all the priests lived in Jerusalem. Some lived in villages and cities scattered throughout Judea and came to Jerusalem only when they were "on duty." The various duties were rotated among the shifts and on Sabbaths the whole shift served. During the three great feasts, Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles, all 24 shifts served.

Zechariah and Elizabeth had taken the law of the Lord seriously all their lives. They loved it and obeyed it. Undoubtedly they had been reared in godly homes. The Greek word for *blameless* is *amemptoi* and literally means, "unblamed ones." It is the same word the apostle Paul used of himself in Phil. 3:6. There is another word translated *unblemished* and that is *amomos*, used in Eph. 5:27. Of course, these two were not sinless. Any man who says he is without sin (Romans 3:23; I John 1:10) contradicts the Word of God. But this good man and his wife believed the sweet singer of Israel (Psa. 119) and delighted to walk in the law of the Lord. Yet in spite of their superlative spiritual qualifications, how will God be able to use them as His instruments for the birth of the Way-Preparer? Elizabeth was barren and they were both beyond the normal age for child-bearing. The Greek word for barren is *steira* from which the English word *sterile* comes. Elizabeth's sterility cannot thwart the Lord God Almighty. God has two willing, obedient people and He can carry out His will through them. He is sovereign Lord of all that is. The Bible is a historical record of Jehovah's countless supernatural interventions in His creation to carry on redemption's work. The whole Jewish nation came into being when God gave Abraham and the barren Sarah a child.

It was Zechariah's turn to burn incense. The inside of the Temple-building was exactly like the inside of the Tabernacle. The Holy Place contained the Table of Showbread, the Menora (candelabra), and the Altar of Incense. Outside the Temple-building was the Altar of Burnt Offering and the Laver. Inside the Holy of Holies was where the Ark of the Covenant was supposed to be. Only the High Priest could enter there and only once a year on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur). Incense was burned on this altar (which stood just in front of the veil which separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies) every morning and every evening so that it was literally, perpetual (cf. Ex. 30:8). It was customary for the Jews to stop whatever they were doing each day at these times of burning the incense in the temple and pray. Many made a special trip to the Temple courts to pray at those hours. It was one of the greatest experiences in the life of an ordinary priest of the Jews to be chosen to burn the incense. But this day was going to be much greater than Zechariah expected.

Suddenly there appeared to him an angel of the Lord, standing at the right side of the altar. Zechariah's reaction was trouble and fear (*phobos*, in Greek). What would you do if an angel appeared to you? Daniel fainted (Dan. 10:8-9). God used angels many times in ages past to assist Him in His redemptive work. Sometimes they appeared as men (Gen. 18). God is able to make His angels wind and fire (Heb. 1:7), and sends them forth as "ministering spirits to serve for the sake of those who are to obtain salvation (Heb. 1:14). Angels do not necessarily have to take human form to do God's service. Some, entertaining strangers, have entertained angels unawares (cf. Heb. 13:2). Perhaps God still sends angels occasionally to protect or serve His saints. The book of Revelation seems to indicate angels were active in the service of God to bring about the downfall of the Roman empire (the "great harlot, Babylon"). Luke, cautious, discriminating and diligent scientist-historian was convinced of the reality of angels. There is no valid reason for us to dispute Luke's research. Thus the scene is set for God's first announcement concerning the Redeemer since the days of Malachi the prophet, 400 years ago.

1:13-17 Pronouncement: Zechariah may have feared the angel was to signal some judgment from God. But the angel had news that would bring great joy to Zechariah and his wife—their prayers for a child were to be answered with a Yes! Their child would be no ordinary child. His whole life was to be totally dedicated to God's service. First, they were to give the child a name already selected in heaven. *John* means "gift of God," or "God's grace." This child was the gift of God's grace to more people than Zechariah and Elizabeth. He would cause "many" to "rejoice at his birth." The ministry of John the Baptist was cause for great excitement in the Jewish nation (cf. Mt. 3:5; Mk. 1:5; Lk. 3:15; Jn. 1:19-28). He was fearless in his attacks upon ungodliness in places both high and low. He preached with authority and eloquence. He lived a life of righteous austerity quite unlike the indulgent, self-serving living common among the religious leaders of that day. But more important, he heralded the coming of the Messiah! He was "filled with the Holy Spirit," from the day of his birth. It is interesting that John the Baptist, so far as the inspired record goes, worked no miracles. He healed no one's illnesses, he spoke in no foreign language (tongues), he raised no one from the dead, and worked no miracles upon nature, yet he was "filled" with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit "filled" John to give him divine guidance in identifying and testifying to the work of the Messiah (cf. Jn. 1:6; 1:29-42). God distributed His miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His will (cf. Heb. 2; I Cor. 12:4-6). And John the Baptist proves conclusively that being filled with the Spirit does not necessitate speaking in tongues!

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This child to be born of these aged, godly people would begin the fulfillment of Malachi's prophecies (cf. Mal. 3:1-5; 4:5). Malachi predicted both the Messiah (Messenger of the Covenant) and the Way-Preparer (Elijah). The prophecies of Malachi (and Isaiah 40:1-8) should be read in connection with this lesson. John's mission was much broader than merely reuniting families. He would aim at reuniting the whole nation of Israel with the doctrines and practices of its godly forefathers (Abraham, Moses, David, the prophets). The prophecy of Luke 1:17 must be understood in this sense. Godet says, "It will be John's mission . . . to reconstitute the moral unity of the people by restoring the broken relation between the patriarchs and their degenerate descendants." G. Campbell Morgan states it, "In other words, he will come to restore primal ideals . . . to turn these renegade people back to the patriarchs . . . and to the things for which they stood." The "heart" of Abraham, "friend" of God (Rom. 4:1-25; Jas. 2:21-26), the "heart" of Moses, in fact, the "heart" of all the faithful (Heb. 11:1-40) is what John would try to put within the children of Israel. The Greek word *epistrepsoi* is translated *turn* and is sometimes translated *converted*. It means literally, "to turn toward, to turn oneself around, to return." Another interesting word in the Greek text is *kateskeuasmēnon*, translated *prepared*. It is a perfect tense verb meaning, *already having been prepared*. In other words, John is to prepare a people who have already been prepared to some extent. Their entire history was that of preparation for one great event—the producing of the world's Savior. The birth of one "in the spirit and power of Elijah" signals that event is imminent! An aged priest and his barren wife from a little village of the hills of Judea are announced as the instruments of Jehovah to give birth to "Elijah"!

1:18-25 Phenomenon: Zechariah cannot believe all this. A son, perhaps, but the "Elijah" predicted by Malachi—that is too much! Hobbs notes, "And it has ever been thus when men look at God through their problems rather than to view their problems through the power of God." If we have seed-like faith (living, germinating faith) no obstacle is too overpowering to keep us from doing the will of God. It is not quantity but quality of faith that Jesus seeks (Mt. 17:20; 21:20-22). After all, the power is not in us or even in our faith, but in the object of our faith, Almighty God.

G. Campbell Morgan does not believe the angel intended to punish Zechariah in making him deaf and dumb for a season, but merely gave him the "sign" he asked for. Gabriel is one of two angels named in the Bible (cf. Lk. 1:26; Dan. 8:16; 9:21), the other is Michael (Jude 9; Rev. 12:7; Dan. 10:13, 21; 12:1). There appears to be some rebuke in the words, ". . . because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time," so we believe Zechariah was being chastened, at least, while also being given proof that this messenger is declaring the word

of God and what he says will indeed come to pass! The affliction of Zechariah was also a "sign" to the worshipping crowd that he had "seen a vision." Zechariah had been in the temple longer than usual. The Talmud says that even the high priest did not tarry long in the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement. The people customarily waited in the outer court for the priest burning incense to come out and dismiss them with a blessing. Zechariah apparently signaled the blessing with his hands only or indicated that the blessing would not be said that day. Zechariah continued ministering in the temple until his "shift" was over unable to hear or speak, then he and Elizabeth returned to their village in the hills of Judea.

Shortly after their trip home, Elizabeth conceived. Zechariah probably found some way to communicate to Elizabeth what had happened to him in the temple. While the conception took place by natural means and was quite different than Mary's conception by the Holy Spirit, Elizabeth's was still supernatural in the contravening of her sterility. Elizabeth "hid" herself from the public (known to Mary, of course) until time for the birth of her son. Some think her reticence was due to embarrassment over pregnancy at her advanced age. Others think she wanted solitude due to the sanctity of the entire experience. Still others think she was afraid to let it be known until she was sure she could "prove" it. We don't really know why she hid herself.

Morgan summarizes, "Human failure everywhere, but the Divine victory is clearly seen . . . in the midst of human failure, God needed, and He found, loyal souls as His vantage ground . . . all members of an elect remnant, living in the remembrance and truth of the past. There God found vantage ground, set down His foot, and marched on toward the great event; the coming into human life in the Person of His Son, and all that followed thereupon."

STUDY STIMULATORS:

1. Is it important to know the historical background of cultural, political and social events and persons surrounding the birth of John the Baptist and Jesus? What were they?
2. Do you think it was coincidence or providence that Zechariah was chosen to burn incense during his "course" at the temple?
3. Why didn't God choose a younger priest whose wife was not sterile to give birth to the Way-Preparer for the Messiah?
4. Did Zechariah really see an angel? How can we be sure?
5. What is so unique about John the Baptist's being filled with the Holy Spirit?

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6. How is John to “turn the hearts of the fathers to the children”? Did he do it? How many and what kind of people gave attention to John’s preaching?
7. Did Zechariah believe the angel? How did the angel help him believe? How much faith does one need to overcome and be powerful?
8. What do you think Luke’s purpose was in tracing the gospel all the way back to this experience of Zechariah and Elizabeth?

SECTION 4

Predictions of the Redeemer (1:26-56)

26 In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, ²⁷to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin’s name was Mary. ²⁸And he came to her and said, “Hail, O favored one, the Lord is with you!” ²⁹But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and considered in her mind what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰And the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus.

³²He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David,

³³and he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there will be no end.”

³⁴And Mary said to the angel, “How shall this be, since I have no husband?”

³⁵And the angel said to her,

“The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High overshadow you;

therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God.

³⁶And behold, your kinswoman Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. ³⁷For with God nothing will be impossible.” ³⁸And Mary said, “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her.

39 In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a city of Judah, ⁴⁰and she entered the house of Zechariah. and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit ⁴²and she exclaimed with a loud cry, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! ⁴³And why is

this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?
⁴⁴For behold, when the voice of your greeting came to my ears, the babe in my womb leaped for joy. ⁴⁵And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her from the Lord."

⁴⁶And Mary said,

"My soul magnifies the Lord,

⁴⁷and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

⁴⁸for he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden.

For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed;

⁴⁹for he who is mighty has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.

⁵⁰And his mercy is on those who fear him
from generation to generation.

⁵¹He has shown strength with his arm, he has scattered the proud
in the imagination of their hearts,

⁵²he has put down the mighty from their thrones,
and exalted those of low degree;

⁵³he has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich he has sent empty away.

⁵⁴He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy,
⁵⁵as he spoke to our fathers,

to Abraham and to his posterity for ever."

⁵⁶And Mary remained with her about three months, and returned to her home.

1:26-38 Mother: In the days of Herod the land of the Jews was divided into about six regions (Judea, Samaria, Galilee, Idumea, Decapolis and Perea) each with their own cultural, racial and religious distinctives. The word Galilee means, "circuit of the Gentiles." It was more Gentile in character and culture than Judea, and as a result Galilean Jews were considered "less holy" by their Judean countrymen. The village of Nazareth was in the hill country of Galilee, sheltered in a little valley all its own, about 20 miles from the plain of Esdralon. Although an important Roman road ran near the ancient village making it a widely known place, its people had established a rather poor reputation. Nathaniel questioned, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" as if its reputation were proverbial (cf. Jn. 1:46). Again, viewed from the human perspective, this would be a most unlikely place to find a woman God might use to bear His precious, sinless Son into the world.

But the Lord knew there was a godly young woman, a virgin, betrothed to a godly man, upon whom He could depend for his momentous, spectacular mission. Hebrew betrothals were much more serious than

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modern engagements. A betrothed woman suspected of unfaithfulness could be divorced and even put to death (cf. Mt. 1:18-20); she could not be divorced without a "bill" of divorcement; if her fiance died she was counted as a widow; and a child born during the betrothal was held to be legitimate. In Matthew 1:19, Joseph is called Mary's "husband" while still in the betrothal stage of their relationship (that is, before he "knew" her as a wife). But, in the light of the binding requirements of betrothal it is not unusual for Joseph to be called her husband before the consummation of the marriage. Most Jewish girls were betrothed when very young. Few of them spent much time at formal education. One rabbi wrote in the Talmud that "teaching a girl was the same as starting her upon the road to moral depravation." However the Talmud also says, "Every man is required to teach his daughter the Torah." Mary knew the Scriptures; for her Magnificat (Lk. 1:46-55) contains at least 30 words or phrases echoed from the Old Testament.

Mary was a virgin. Her marriage had not been consummated with sexual intercourse. Therefore, she was "greatly troubled" when the angel announced she would conceive and bear a child. It was beyond her comprehension as to how this could take place (1:34). There was nothing supernatural in the fact that Mary could give birth. Medical history has noted a few cases of conception in women where the virginal-hymen was intact after intercourse with a man; However, history has never recorded the conception of a woman without the implantation of male sperm within her womb. The miracle is technically not a "virgin birth" but *conception without the implantation of male sperm in her womb*. Mary was a virgin; she was betrothed and old enough to give birth. But she had "not known a man." The Greek word *ginosko* is used often for mental knowledge, but in this verse (34) means sexual intercourse (as in Gen. 4:1, etc.).

The fact that Luke was highly trained in medicine and research and that his accuracy in recording history is unimpeachable lends importance to this account beyond measure. Everything in Luke's training would lead him to be highly skeptical of such a claim. To record it for the world of his day to read would subject him to criticism by his colleagues, ridicule by the general public, mockery by the pagan myth-religions which were built on bizarre tales of parthenogenesis by their gods, and the animosity of the Jewish world of his day. But Luke traced all things accurately and was so convinced of its truth he boldly and beautifully recorded it.

Luke is not recording parthenogenesis. Parthenogenesis involves "the development of eggs from virgin females without fertilization by spermatozoa . . . it occurs chiefly in certain insects, crustaceans, and worms." History has never recorded such a thing of the human race. But Luke

records the angel's statement that the conception of Jesus would take place through the direct action of the Holy Spirit of God in the womb of Mary. Science cannot legitimately speak for or against the Biblical teaching of the virgin conception. The conception of Christ in Mary's womb was a biological miracle. A modern scientist may say that *he* has never observed a virgin conception but just because he has never observed one does not mean one did not occur. Harold Fowler writes in, *The Gospel of Matthew, Vol. I*, pg. 46, College Press, "The question of the virgin birth, then, remains, will we accept the testimony of the eye-witnesses and the universal acknowledgment of the early Church as recorded in the documents of the Church, or, rejecting this, will we adhere to a mistaken view of natural law, a view which decides *a priori* that all miraculous events are impossible?"

Some theologians today say it is not important to our Christian faith that we believe in the virgin conception. But the fundamental integrity of both Matthew and Luke as historians is impugned if we do not. How can we believe anything else they recorded if we do not believe the accuracy and historicity of this event? The honesty of God is brought into question if we do not believe it, for He directed His prophet Isaiah to predict the event (Isa. 7:14). The virgin conception is, "the keystone which supports the arch of logical connection between the incarnation of God and the Messiah's necessary identification with humanity . . ." (Fowler, *ibid*, pgs. 45).

And so the godly young maiden from Nazareth, Mary, continued to "cast about" (*dielozizeto*, in Gr.) for answers to these astounding things she was being told by the angel. This child to be conceived in her womb by the miraculous power of God's Spirit was to be called Jesus, or *Yeshua* (Joshua) in Hebrew, which means, *Jehovah-is-salvation*.

While Mary was still trying to figure out how she could conceive without "knowing" a husband, the angel gave Mary further proof that it would come to pass. The angel told Mary of the conception of her barren cousin, Elizabeth. If God could accomplish this, why could He not cause Mary to conceive without "knowing" a man. Mary did not need the proof. She immediately surrendered to the will of the Lord as announced by the angel. The word for handmaid is *doule*. It is the same word the apostle Paul uses to call himself a *bond slave* of Jesus Christ. Mary willingly acknowledged herself as a female slave of Jehovah, surrendering to what she undoubtedly knew would cause consternation in her fiance Joseph, jeopardize her social status in Nazareth should any neighbors find out, and endanger her very life should she be accused of infidelity to Joseph.

Although Mary was only a mortal and not to be elevated above another, and surely not to be given the title "Queen of Heaven," yet the

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glory of all motherhood was her lot. Among all women she was afforded the greatest privilege—to give birth to the Savior of the world. The beautiful song *Ave Maria* was written under the inspiration of these verses. The first two parts of the hymn are purely biblical and date from earliest times. The third portion was added around the fifteenth century and is not at all biblical. Surely Mary was highly favored because of her faith and godliness. Her submission to the revealed will of God is a great example and challenge to all who would be used of God in His work of redeeming the world.

1:39-56 Magnificat: Two women, chosen by God to be instruments of His in the divine redemption of mankind, burst forth in rapturous praise and thanksgiving to Him. Within a few short hours of the visit of the angel, Mary went to visit her cousin Elizabeth. Elizabeth lived in the hill country of Judea (probably south of Jerusalem) so Mary's trip took at least four days. What a spectacular thing was going to happen to Mary! The miracle of the conception was nothing compared to the identity of the Child to be conceived! He would be the Messiah; the Savior and the Son of David whom the Jewish people had longed for for centuries. Nearly every act of their religious and civil life was in typical anticipation of this Messiah. Great and famous women of the nation had lived and died hoping they would give birth to *the* Son of David. God chose a Galilean peasant girl, the fiancée of a lowly carpenter, to be that mother. In addition, Mary's cousin Elizabeth was going to be blessed with a baby after all these years of praying for one. Mary could not stay in Nazareth! She had to go visit her cousin and share with her in the good news that had come to both of them. It is nothing short of amazing that Mary could restrain herself from telling everyone she knew. Perhaps the circumstances we mentioned earlier caused her to be cautious. Perhaps Mary already had a mother's intuition of the jeopardy she might place her future Child in should she make too much publicity of the angel's announcement. Whatever the case, Mary had to tell someone so she went "with haste" to Elizabeth's home.

Two more miracles occurred when Mary arrived at her cousin's house. Elizabeth's baby "leaped" in her womb. Hobbs says, "The intended forerunner responded to the prenatal presence of Him whom he should proclaim." At that moment, Elizabeth was "filled with the Holy Spirit" and began to pronounce a blessing upon Mary and Mary's child. The Holy Spirit did not leave the identity of Mary's Child up to Elizabeth's human knowledge. Elizabeth could not have known who this Child was. Deity taking human flesh, being born as a baby and conceived by a virgin is completely outside human experience and therefore, outside human comprehension. The Holy Spirit *revealed* to Elizabeth the identity of Mary's Child—He is her Lord! Elizabeth also proclaims the blessing

that Mary is to have because she believed and surrendered herself to become the handmaiden of God. While Elizabeth praises Mary, she does so because Mary is going to give birth to Christ, the Savior and Lord, not because there was any inherent divinity in Mary. Certainly Elizabeth was not worshipping Mary—nor should anyone else. The Bible expressly forbids man to worship anyone except God (Ex. 34:14; 20:4-5; Dt. 6:13-14; Isa. 45:20; Rev. 22:8-9). Mary cannot be a “mediatrix” between God and man for there is only One Mediator (I Tim. 2:5).

The word *magnificat* is Latin for “doth magnify.” The Greek word Luke used is *megalunei* which means “to amplify, exalt, extol and enlarge.” Mary was moved deeply, emotionally and spiritually to praise the Lord with words of Scripture she had learned and stored in her heart. Her prayer of thanksgiving is very similar to that of Hannah (I Sam. 2:1-10). We think Mary was guided by the Holy Spirit in the selection (perhaps some from Psalms) and utterance of the words of this great psalm of praise. She makes some statements concerning herself and her Child that she could not make with human knowledge alone. Mary first rejoices in her own experience (v. 46-49). She prophesies that all generations will henceforth call her blessed. Then she rejoices in the blessings that are coming to the world as a result of her experience (v. 50-55). She predicts that her Child will fulfill all the redemptive events of the long history of God’s dealings with men. Mary is not simply reviewing God’s actions in the past, but she is announcing that the Child to be borne of her comes to consummate all those promises God made to Abraham and his “posterity” (*spermati* in Greek which means *seed*). Mary is using what is called “predictive present” tense in her statement. The Lord “baring His arm” is a messianic figure of speech (see Isa. 40:10; 51:4-5; 52:7-10; 53:1). The Messiah is coming to give mercy to those who fear Him, defeat to those who arrogantly rebel against Him, exalt those of low degree, fill the hungry with good things, send the self-satisfied away empty, and fulfill His promise to the children of Abraham, forever. These phrases are echoes of the prophets of Israel. They remind us that most of what the Old Testament prophets predicted of the glorious messianic age in agricultural, physical terminology, was intended to be fulfilled in Jesus Christ and His spiritual kingdom.

Mary remained with Elizabeth about three months. She arrived for her visit in the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy. Did Mary remain until after the birth of John the Baptist? Plummer reminds us that “cousins” in Luke 1:58 could include Mary. Luke does record Mary’s return to Nazareth immediately before he records John’s birth, but he may have simply been completing one story before beginning another. It is strange to think, in view of the long and difficult journey she made

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to get to Elizabeth's and the significance of the child to be born to Elizabeth, that she would leave when the baby was just about to be born.

At any rate, Mary returned to her home in Nazareth. It was probably at this point Joseph learned of her condition (see Mt. 1:18-25). Luke's account tells us nothing about Mary for six more months. Matthew infers that Joseph, after the message to him from the angel, protected her from the shame and social confrontations that might have come her way if he had not kept her secret.

STUDY STIMULATORS:

1. What would the fact that Jesus was born of a young woman of Nazareth do to His reputation? Does it make any difference to you where His mother was from?
2. Why would Joseph's first reaction to Mary's pregnancy be to "divorce" her? What would your reaction have been if you had known only what Joseph knew?
3. Can we really believe Luke that a virgin could conceive without the implantation of male sperm in her womb?
4. Wouldn't it be more accurate to explain it by the phenomenon of parthenogenesis?
5. What differences are there between Luke's account of Mary's virgin-conception and both ancient and modern occult stories of supernatural conceptions?
6. Are those who pray to Mary as a "mediatrix" right or wrong?
7. Why did Mary make the long, dangerous, difficult trip from Nazareth to the hill country of Judea to visit Elizabeth?
8. What purpose is served by the preservation of Elizabeth's and Mary's "songs of praise"? What good do they do for your Christian life? What would you think of Mary and Elizabeth if these songs weren't recorded?

SECTION 5

Paean of Redemption (1:57-80)

57 Now the time came for Elizabeth to be delivered, and she gave birth to a son. ⁵⁸And her neighbors and kinsfolk heard that the Lord had shown great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her. ⁵⁹And on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child; and they would have named him Zechariah after his father, ⁶⁰but his mother said,

“Not so; he shall be called John.” ⁶¹And they said to her, “None of your kindred is called by this name.” ⁶²And they made signs to his father, inquiring what he would have him called. ⁶³And he asked for a writing tablet, and wrote, “His name is John.” And they all marveled. ⁶⁴And immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, blessing God. ⁶⁵And fear came on all their neighbors. And all these things were talked about through all the hill country of Judea; ⁶⁶and all who heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, “What then will this child be?” For the hand of the Lord was with him.

⁶⁷ And his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying,

⁶⁸“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people,

⁶⁹and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David,

⁷⁰as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old,

⁷¹that we should be saved from our enemies,
and from the hand of all who hate us;

⁷²to perform the mercy promised to our fathers,
and to remember his holy covenant,

⁷³the oath which he swore to our father Abraham, ⁷⁴to grant us
that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies,
might serve him without fear,

⁷⁵in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life.

⁷⁶And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High;
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,

⁷⁷to give knowledge of salvation to his people
in the forgiveness of their sins,

⁷⁸through the tender mercy of our God, when the day shall dawn
upon us from on high

⁷⁹to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

⁸⁰And the child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness till the day of his manifestation to Israel.

1:57-66 Birth of the Forerunner: Not much excitement ever came to break the monotony of daily routine in the little town where Zechariah and Elizabeth lived. But when Elizabeth gave birth to a baby boy the whole town was excited. Neighbors and relatives came to help them celebrate. At last Elizabeth and Zechariah knew the fulfillment of parenthood. Now they would have someone upon whom they might shower parental love.

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On the eighth day after his birth, friends and kinfolk came to the child's circumcision. Circumcision of male children (Gen. 17:12; Lev. 12:3; Ex. 4:25) and keeping the Sabbath were the two most distinguishing practices that set the Hebrew people off from all the other people of the earth. They were the two most important signs of covenant relationship to Jehovah. Originally the father performed the circumcision (*peritemein* in Greek, meaning literally, "a cutting round."). In exceptional cases any adult could perform the rite, even a woman (Ex. 4:25). The child was named at the time of the circumcision ceremony. It made the Hebrew male-child an official member of the covenant and ideally guaranteed him (and his wife and family) his portion of the material blessings Jehovah promised the nation. Old Testament prophets often reminded the Israelites that the outward rite, to have any real efficacy with God, must be accompanied by a "circumcision of the heart" (meaning faith in God and obedience to His commandments; see Dt. 30:6; Lev. 26:41; Ezek. 44:7; Jer. 9:25-26).

Some of the kinfolk were just about to officially declare the baby's name Zechariah in honor of its godly father, but the Lord had already told the parents the name was to be *Yokhanan* (Hebrew) or *Ioannes* (Greek) or *John* (English). The name has been a favorite of all languages (Jean, Fr.; Juan, Sp.; Ivan, Russian; Giovanni, It.). It means "God has given; God is gracious." Elizabeth stopped the well-meaning kinfolk and insisted the baby must be named John. Not taking her word for it, they made signs to the mute father who confirmed his wife's instructions by writing on a tablet (probably of wax or clay), "His name is *Yokhanan*." There was no doubt in the father's mind that he had better follow God's instructions about this child, for it was now evident to him that the direct hand of the Almighty was involved in every aspect of the baby's birth (cf. Lk. 1:18ff). So Zechariah's written instruction proved that he now believed God could do the impossible. Immediately Zechariah's speech was restored and he began blessing God. The mysterious, miraculous happenings struck awe into the hearts of the kinfolk and neighbors gathered. Is God so rigid that when He tells a father and mother exactly what name to give their child, He expects implicit obedience? Indeed, He is! Man may not always understand God's explicit commands (and God probably does not want man to understand), but God expects man to trust Him enough to obey to the letter. Man certainly has enough recorded evidence that God's rigid commands are all for man's good. Of course, God has not told all parents what to name their children, but He has told all parents how to *rear* their children!

The miracles surrounding the birth of John were talked about through all the hill country of Judea. Those who witnessed the miracles agreed,

“. . . the hand of the Lord was with him.” No doubt there were many who remembered these testimonies when John began preaching 30 years later and repeated them to the younger generation so that great multitudes (Mt. 3:5) went out into the uninhabited Jordan river valley to hear him. After all, there had not been a *bona fide* prophet of God among the Hebrew people for over 400 years.

1:67-80 Benediction of the Father: A benediction is a solemn blessing and dedication to God. This is what Zechariah, inspired by the Holy Spirit, pronounced upon his son, John. This beautiful benediction furnishes one of the most significant keys in the New Testament to understand that much of the messianic language of the Old Testament is “times-coloring.” In other words, Zechariah shows that when an Old Testament prophet predicted the Israelites would be “saved from their enemies” in the distant future, the prophet was probably referring to the days of the Messiah (whose forerunner was Zechariah’s son).

The Lord “visiting” His people to redeem them is messianic language (cf. Isa. 29:6; Zeph. 2:7; Psa. 8:4-6; Heb. 2:6; Acts 15:14). The “horn of salvation” is messianic (cf. Psa. 132:17; 148:14; Ezek. 29:21); horn is symbolic of power, so the Lamb is pictured with seven horns in Revelation 5:6. Of course, “the house of David” is messianic (cf. Amos 9:11; Acts 15:15-18; etc.). It is interesting to tabulate the figurative phrases which according to Zechariah are to be fulfilled in a spiritual way in the Messiah and His kingdom:

- a. “visited and redeemed his people . . .”
- b. “raised up a horn of salvation for us . . .”
- c. “we should be saved from our enemies, . . . and the hand of all who hate us . . .”
- d. “perform the mercy promised to our fathers . . .”
- e. “remember his holy covenant . . . which he swore to our father Abraham . . .”
- f. “being delivered from . . . our enemies . . . we might serve him without fear and righteousness . . .”

Now note especially that Zechariah’s son is to be the “prophet of the Most High” in order to prepare the way of the Lord (Messiah) who will come and accomplish all the above. Whereas the above promises in the Old Testament appear to be future physical blessings, Zechariah makes it plain they will actually be spiritual blessings such as, (a) knowledge of salvation; (b) forgiveness of sins; (c) mercy of God; (d) light; (e) peace. Peter made it plain that the blessings to come through the Messiah predicted by the O.T. prophets found fulfillment in “turning every one of you from your wickedness” (Acts 3:17-26), and not in physical battles,

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enemies, warfare, crops, lands and temples. Alfred Plummer notes that as the Magnificat of Mary (Lk. 1:46-55) was modelled on the psalms, so the Benedictus of Zechariah was modelled on the prophecies.

The Greek aorist *epeskepsato* translated "visited" is from the verb *episkeptomai* and is the word from which we get the English, *episcopacy*, which means literally, "over-sight, government, rule." The same Greek word, *episkopos*, (Acts 20:28; Phil. 1:1; I Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:7; I Pet. 2:25) is translated "overseer, bishop, elder." The word is used by Zechariah again in 1:78 and might be literally translated, ". . . by the passionate mercies of our God, there will visit (*episkepsetai*) us a Dayspring (or Branch) from the height . . ." The Greek word *anatole* means literally, "a rising up of the sun or stars" or "east" (Mt. 2:1). The Greek *anatole* word is used in the Septuagint for the Hebrew word *Tzemach* and is translated *Branch* or *Shoot* (see Jer. 23:5; Zech. 3:8; 6:12). Zechariah is definitely predicting that his son, John, is to be the prophet and way-preparer for The Branch (the Messiah) who is coming to deliver His people from their enemy, set up His kingdom, fulfill Jehovah's covenant, and rule. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit speaking through this aged Hebrew priest, predicts that the dawning of this messianic age will bring "light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death" which is undoubtedly a paraphrased quotation of Isaiah 9:1-7 (cf. Mt. 4:12-15). Zechariah's prophecy goes beyond the provincial confines of the Jewish people and includes the Gentiles. All men who are prisoners of the enemy (Satan) and who walk in darkness are going to be given a Ruler (Micah 5:2) who will deliver them and guide them into the way of peace. Isaiah said this Ruler was to be the Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6). Isaiah also said people of his day did not know the way of peace (Isa. 59:8; see comments, *Isaiah, Vol. 3*, Butler, College Press). *Peace* in the Hebrew language (*shalom*) means *wholeness, prosperity, usefulness, soundness, harmony*. It probably has the same meaning in Greek (*eirene*) (see the connection between *eirene* and *wholeness* in I Thess. 5:23). In the Septuagint *shalom* is often translated *soteria* (*salvation*) (Gen. 26:31; 41:16, etc.). The "peace-offering" of the Old Testament is often called the "salvation-offering." So the son of Zechariah, John the Baptizer, was born to be the prophet and way-preparer to the Visitor from Heaven, the Ruler-Prince of Peace. No wonder Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has risen no one greater than John the Baptist," (Mt. 11:11).

John the Baptist lived in the "wilderness" until the day of his "manifestation" to Israel. He began his ministry about 26 A.D. in the 15th year of Tiberius Caesar (cf. Lk. 3:1-3). The Greek word *eremois* ("deserts") is like the Hebrew word *midhbar* which means "a place for the driving

of cattle." The wilderness of Judea is not totally arid. The area in John's day was simply uncultivated and mostly uninhabited, yet suitable for pasturage. John's parents probably died when he was a youngster and from then on he lived a very solitary life. Evidently he had little contact with other people until he was over 30 years of age. He lived an austere and ascetic life, eating locusts and wild honey, drinking no wine or strong drink, and wearing a garment of camel's hair with a leather girdle (Lk. 1:14-17; Mt. 3:1-6). He was descended from Aaron, but there is no evidence that he ever practiced priestly duties. Some think he belonged to the sect of the Essenes, an ascetic, communal group of Jews who lived in the Qumran community just west of the Dead Sea. There is no evidence for that whatsoever. As Hobbs says, "Other than his ascetic life and his opposition to the *status quo* of Judaism there is no resemblance between them. Indeed, in many ways they were quite the opposite of one another. Plummer notes two vital differences: John preached the kingdom of God; the Essenes preached isolation. The Essenes abandoned society; John the Baptist sought to reform it." Luke infers that John lived and roamed through these uninhabited hills from "childhood" and there he kept on growing stronger and stronger in both physique and spirit. It is *not* said of John, like Jesus, that he grew in favor with man! John did have "disciples," however the picture we get of John (Mt. 3:1-6; Lk. 3:1-3; Mk. 1:1-8; Jn. 1:6-8; 1:19-36; 3:22-26; Mt. 11:2-19; Lk. 7:18-35; Mt. 14:1-12; Mk. 6:14-20; Lk. 9:7-9) is of a tough, austere, hermit-like, fiery-tempermented, booming-voiced, righteously-indignant preacher, with no close friends. People were awed by his demeanor and swayed by his preaching. Many followed him trying to learn (disciples) all they could from him. His light burned brightly and penetratingly, but only for a moment. It quickly faded in favor of the Sun of Righteousness (Mal. 4:1-6) and was then extinguished by the wicked Herodias. This child born to Zechariah and Elizabeth was a true child of destiny!

STUDY STIMULATORS:

1. Why were Elizabeth and Zechariah so insistent that their child should be named "John"? What difference would it have made if they had called him "Zechariah"?
2. Does God really intend that men follow His directions minutely when He specifies details?
3. Would the miracles surrounding John's birth be of benefit to anyone other than his aged parents?

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4. Does the figurative language of Zechariah's Benedictus help you understand the way Old Testament prophets used figurative language? It should!
5. How do you know that the "visit" of the Lord to man is more than a social thing?
6. Do "clothes make the man"? Would John the Baptist be turned down by most modern pulpit committees because he tended to be a "loner" and had no out-going personality? Is his behavior and personality really the pattern for preachers? (See Mt. 11:16-19.)

Chapter Two (2:1-52)

THE BIRTH OF THE SON OF MAN

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. Is there really a need to tell which Roman Caesar and which Syrian governor was ruling when Jesus was born (2:1-2)?
2. How could Jesus be of the lineage of David since Joseph was not His real father (2:4)?
3. Did the angels really "sing" at Jesus' birth (2:13)?
4. Why did Mary keep to herself all the miraculous things about her baby's birth (2:19)?
5. How could an old Jewish man acknowledge that the birth of Jesus was a light for revelation to the "Gentiles" (2:32)?
6. Wouldn't it be precocious and disobedient for Jesus to stay behind at Jerusalem when his parents left for Nazareth (2:43)?
7. How is it possible that the Divine Son of God could "increase" in wisdom and in favor with God and man (2:52)?

SECTION 1

Portents (2:1-21)

2 In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be enrolled. ²This was the first enrollment, when Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³And all went to be enrolled, each to his own city. ⁴And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, ⁵to be enrolled with Mary his betrothed, who was with child. ⁶And while they were there, the time came for her to be delivered. ⁷And she gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

⁸ And in that region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear. ¹⁰And the angel said to them, "Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people; ¹¹for to you is born this day in the city of David

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a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ¹²And this will be a sign for you: you will find a babe wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." ¹³And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of heavenly host praising God and saying,

¹⁴"Glory to God in the highest,

and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased!"

¹⁵When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us."

¹⁶And they went with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. ¹⁷And when they saw it they made known the saying which had been told them concerning this child; ¹⁸and all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹But Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart. ²⁰And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

²¹And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

2:1-7 Swaddling Cloths: A little under six months passes between chapters 1 and 2 of Luke's record. Mary returned to her home in Nazareth after visiting with Elizabeth about 3 months (1:56). About six months later Mary's time for delivering her first born arrives. Micah the prophet (5:2) had predicted the Messiah's birth would be in Bethlehem of Judea, but Mary was at her home in Nazareth of Galilee—80 or 90 miles apart. God works in mysterious ways, His wonders to perform. Caesar Augustus, emperor of the Roman Empire, made a decree for a world-wide census to be taken. This census evidently required Jews to travel to the hometown of their tribal ancestors; probably because genealogical records and property titles were kept there. Bethlehem was the city of Joseph's ancestors since he was from the lineage of David, (see Ruth 1:10; 2:4; I Sam. 16:1-4; 17:58, etc.).

Caesar Augustus (born Gaius Octavius, Sept. 23, 63 B.C.) had been adopted by his great-uncle, Julius Caesar, as his heir. Octavian's grandmother, Julia, was the younger sister of Julius Caesar. When his uncle Julius was assassinated, March 15, 44 B.C., Octavian was a young man of 19. By skillful political manipulation of friends and family in high places he was able to become one of the three most powerful men in the empire. At the battle of Actium, Sept. 2, 31 B.C., Octavian defeated Mark Antony his only remaining rival to complete political control of the empire. Octavian pretended at first that he wished the republican form of government to be restored. He kept certain formalities of the

republic outwardly and at first declined the titles *rex* (king) and *dictator*. By adoption he had the famous name "Caesar" and after his victory over Antony the Roman Senate declared him "Augustus." He soon consolidated all the power of rule into his hands and became in fact, Emperor. He reigned until his death in A.D. 14. Augustus married Livia Drusilla in 38 B.C. She had previously been married to her cousin Tiberius Claudius Nero but Augustus compelled her to divorce her husband and marry him. She and Augustus had no children but Livia had a son, Tiberius, by her first husband. Livia was noted for her beauty and powerful political influence—even over Augustus. Some historians believe Livia poisoned her emperor-husband so that her son, Tiberius, could become emperor.

The reign of Augustus, and especially the *census* mentioned by Luke is one of the critical points relating to the historical accuracy of this Gospel. If Luke is inaccurate about this census in the reign of Augustus, then his entire record is suspect. For a long time enemies of the Bible pointed to this "enrollment" as an example of its inaccuracies, for there were no Roman records to substantiate Luke's claim that a world-wide census took place in the days of Augustus. However, Sir William Ramsay (and others) investigated and found that Clement of Alexandria (200-300 A.D.) made reference to such a system of enrollment in the Roman empire. Recent archaeological discoveries have remarkably confirmed and illuminated Luke's record, attesting his reliability *in detail*: (1) a number of papyrus documents have been discovered showing that a census was made every 14 years and also pointing back to one taken about 9-6 B.C. Josephus shows that these "enrollments" (one in 6 A.D. specifically) often caused rebellious uprisings in Palestine and that Jewish rulers often delayed carrying out these orders of Rome as long as they could in order to placate the people. The census ordered 9-6 B.C. in Syria was undoubtedly delayed by Herod in Palestine until 5-4 B.C. and so Luke's accuracy is verified, (2) early historical records *seemed* to show that Quirinius (Cyrenius) was governor of Syria in 6 A.D., 10 years too late for the birth of Christ. However, an inscription was found in Rome in 1828 by archaeologists indicating that Quirinius was also governor in Syria in 10-7 B.C. Ramsay found a monument in Asia Minor which confirmed the discovery in Rome, so Quirinius was twice governor in Syria and he was occupying this office when Augustus ordered the first enrollment, which is exactly what Luke says, (3) and last, historians found an edict made in 104 A.D. by the governor of Egypt (which was under the Roman rule just like Palestine) which showed that at the time of the census people were to return to their ancestral homes. Luke's gospel record is accurate in minute detail! The critics are wrong!

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G. Campbell Morgan focuses on the apparent insignificance of these two peasants, Joseph and Mary, down in a remote and despised corner of the Roman Empire bending their necks to the decree of the great and powerful Augustus. Two individuals amid the massed millions of the Roman world, as unknown to Caesar as you and I to the rich, powerful and famous today. But things are oftentimes not what they seem. Look at this scene from God's perspective through Luke's record. Look at Mary—her womb is the residence of the Son of God as she travels. Look at the edict of Augustus—was it really the only sovereign edict being fulfilled? Almost 700 years before Augustus, the sovereign Creator decreed that His Son would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). Morgan writes, "When I read that (prophecy), uttered six hundred and fifty years before these events, I see that the really insignificant person in the drama is the little puppet in the city on the seven hills, called Caesar Augustus; and the significant personalities are the woman in whose womb tabernacles the Son of God, and the man who is guarding her."

While in Bethlehem, Mary delivered the Child conceived in her womb by the Holy Spirit and she wrapped Him in swaddling cloths. *Swaddling* is from the Hebrew word *chethullah* and the Greek word *sparganoo*. These are bands of cloth in which new born babies were wrapped (cf. Ezek. 16:4; Job 38:9; Ezek. 30:21—bandages). The child was placed diagonally on a square piece of cloth which was folded over the infant's feet and sides. Around this bundle swaddling bands were wound. The idea that the word *sparganoo* means "rags" is without foundation.

The Greek word for *hotel* (as we think of it) is *pandocheion*, but that is not the word Luke uses for *inn*. That word is *kataluma* which was merely an enclosure, just walls into which travellers might drive their cattle for the night, and in which sometimes there were apartments where the travellers themselves might rest; but no traveller could obtain food there. There was water, always water, but no food, no host, no entertainment. *There was no room even there* for Mary and Joseph. So Jesus was literally born in some shed or lean-to where only cattle were tethered. His crib was a *phatne* (manger), a feeding-trough for animals. What humiliating pathos! The Lord of All That Is, born in a smelly, insect-infested barn!

Someone has observed that most of us have inherited a Christmas story purged of some of its "uglies" and transformed and beautified by the Christian *traditions* surrounding it rather than having seen it according to the facts. Note the following:

- a. A poor, pregnant, unmarried (virgin) woman of Nazareth
- b. rode and/or walked 60-70 miles from Nazareth to Bethlehem while in the last stages of pregnancy;

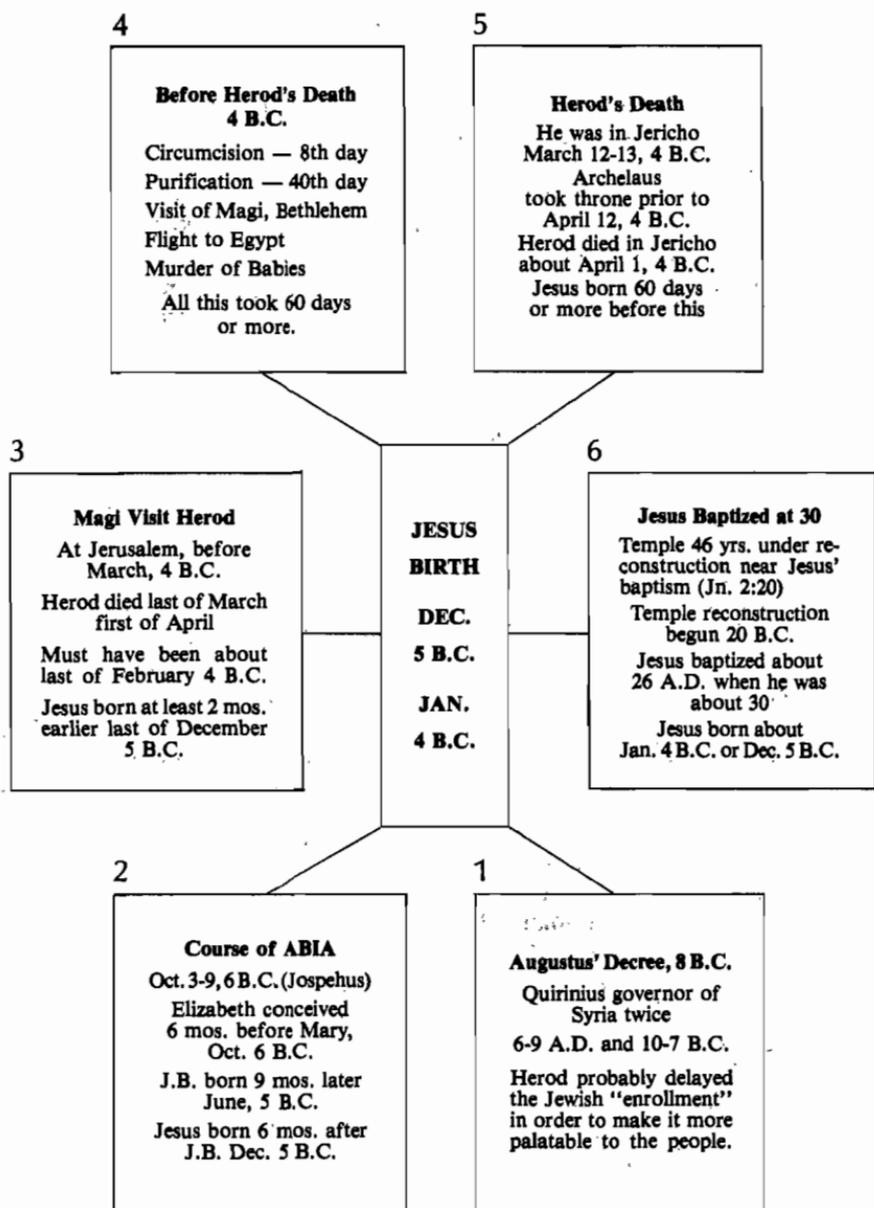
- c. had her baby delivered in a smelly, unsanitary barn
- d. without doctors, anesthesia, nurses or midwives; in fact, with only her husband present.
- e. There was no baked-turkey and dressing, carols, tinsel, or family reunion at this first "Christmas."
- f. First visitors were rough, smelly shepherds who had been out in the fields for weeks with their flocks.
- g. Forty days later an old man in the Temple predicted dark, ominous words about the baby.

Our tendency at Christmas time is to take away all these "uglies" so believing in Christmas becomes the easiest thing in the world. All that is asked is that we accept a beautiful and touching story as it is presented in carols, nativity dolls, and pageants. It is easy for most of the world to get misty-eyed over a sweet little baby surrounded by so much glitter. Everyone sees himself as a believer at Christmas time. Perhaps the real Christmas event was filled with "uglies" just so serious-minded men would have to "grapple with it and agonize over it—and in the very process of that grappling have their faith tested, exercised, strung taut, and made strong."

The question always arises, "When was Jesus born—what day is really Christmas?" In the first place, Christmas (the birth of Christ) apparently was not celebrated by the first century church. There is no record in the N.T. of Christians making the birth of Christ a special day of worship or celebration. About the earliest Christian celebration of Christmas is the order of Bishop Liberius of Rome in 354 A.D. that December 25th should be celebrated as Christ's birthday. It is, of course, impossible to determine the precise day of Jesus' birth. The exact date is not essential to any man's salvation. (See Rom. 14:1-23; Col. 2:16-23.) However, with all the data available, it may be said with historical accuracy that Jesus was born sometime between December, 5 B.C. and January, 4 B.C. The birth dates of some moderns cannot be determined as accurately! The chart on the next page summarizes the cumulative historical data upon which we base our conclusion. "But when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons," (Gal. 4:4-5).

2:8-14 Seraphim: Actually the Hebrew word *seraphim* is found only once in the Bible (Isa. 6:2ff). The Greek word used by Luke here is *aggelos*, transliterated *angel*, meaning literally, *messenger*. Angels are created beings, essentially spiritual and invisible, given powers that transcend the natural order of creation, and sometimes they are sent by the Creator in forms visible to men to carry the Creator's messages. Angels have intellectual and moral capacities. Some chose at one time or another to

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disobey their Creator's will and were cast out of His presence (cf. II Pet. 2:4; Jude 6). Although angels are said to continue to "minister" to the saved (Heb. 1:4), God does *not* now *speak* to men through angels (Gal. 1:8-12; Heb. 1:1-4; Acts 9:5) as to what to do to be saved. (See the author's Special Study on angels in *Daniel*, pg. 386-403, pub. College Press.)

An angel prophesied the conception and birth of Christ; an angel named Him, Jesus; angels heralded His birth to shepherds; angels directed Joseph about the Child's safety; angels ministered to Christ after His temptation; an angel strengthened Christ after His agony in Gethsemane; angels were witnesses and messengers of His resurrection; angels attended Him at His ascension; and angels will attend Him at His Second Coming.

After the angel's message was delivered to the shepherds, there appeared suddenly a *plethos stratias ouraniou*, that is, "a multitudinous army from heaven." The Greek word *stratias* is translated *host* and is related to the word *stratiotes* which is translated *soldier* in Mt. 8:9; 27:27, etc. The Hebrew for *heavenly host* is *tzeva hashamayim* and denotes sometimes *stars* (Dt. 4:19; 17:3, etc.) and sometimes *angels* (I Kings 22:19; II Chron. 18:18; Neh. 9:6; Psa. 103:21, etc.). God's word does not tell us how many angels exist. Jesus said he could call for more than twelve "legions" to aid Him (Mt. 26:53) and a Roman army legion contained approximately 6000 men. John saw (*muriades muriadon*) "myriads of myriads" of angels and other beings around the throne of God (Rev. 5:11). We do not know how many heavenly beings appeared with the angel to the shepherds. Luke uses the word *plethos* which simply means a multitude.

The glory (*doxa*) of the Creator, in one degree or another, usually accompanied angels when they appeared to men. This glory often caused men to be overcome with fear (cf. Isa. 6:1ff; Dan. 10:2-21; Rev. 22:8-9). When the glory of the Lord surrounded these shepherds they "feared a great fear" (*ephobethesan phobon megan*). This glorious creature from heaven did not hover over the shepherds, but came near and stood right by them (*epeste autois*). God announced other births by angelic messengers but only the birth of His Son was praised by the angelic army. The point of the angelic appearance to the shepherds does not have to do with the glory or the number of the angels themselves, but the glory of the One whose birth they announce and praise. "Glory" in Hebrew means "heavy," or "abundance."

Angels were sometimes messengers of bad news and sometimes messengers of good news. This angel had a message (*euaggelizoma*) of *good news*; the same Greek word is also translated *evangelize*. To *evangelize* is simply to announce with compassion and persuasion the *good news* concerning Christ and let men decide their own response. The angel's announcement is the gospel in miniature: (1) to man is born

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the Anointed Savior (atonement); (2) He is Lord (incarnation); (3) joy to all people (reconciliation).

Why did God send His messenger to shepherds? Why not tell the theologians and politicians first about the birth of the Messiah? Most of the theologians and politicians would be emotionally, intellectually and morally opposed to such a Messiah. No amount of supernatural signs and angelic announcements would bring Herod or the Pharisees to a cattle-shed to *worship* a baby whose crib was a cattle-trough! These shepherds had learned from the hard and humble life they lived to guard against the pride and arrogance that causes men to deny reality. When they were visited by an angel and an army of heavenly beings, they were honest-minded enough to realize God had spoken and they should respond with obedience to the divine message.

The shepherds were told how to recognize the Anointed Baby—He would be newly-born (wrapped in swaddling), His birthplace would be an animal-stall and His crib a manger. This would be unique! How many newly-born babies in Bethlehem would be lying in an animal feed-trough? This sign was not to convince the shepherds of the deity of the Baby—it was simply a sign by which they might find the one baby out of all the others that might be in Bethlehem that night. The appearance of the angel and the acclamation of the heavenly host proved the supernatural character of the Child.

The heavenly host praised God. The Greek phrase is, *ainounton ton teon kai legonton*. The verb *ainounton* is related to the noun *ainos* which means primarily a *tale, narration, spoken praise*. The word *legonton* is from *lego* which means, *to speak, to say*. We usually think of the heavenly host singing praise to God here, but this was definitely a “verse choir.” There are three Greek words which mean to praise God through singing (*ado, psallo, humano*) but none of these words are used by Luke here. Perhaps, as with so much modern “church music,” the impact of the message the host spoke might have been lost had it been sublimated to the tune and the rhythm, so the heavenly “host” was really a “verse choir.” A dramatic technique known as “choral speaking” was employed by the Greeks hundreds of years before Christ. It is sometimes referred to as “choric reading” or “verse choir” and when such a group stood and spoke as one compelling voice, with shades of meaning and color that not even music commanded, its audience was totally captured!

The host said: “Glory in the highest places to God, and upon earth, peace in men of good will.” The KJV translates, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.” The earliest and best Greek manuscripts indicate the former rendering to be more accurate. The peace of God is promised to men through their good-willed response to The Savior. Robertson translates the phrase, “among men in whom

He is well pleased." The will of man must be good in its relationship to God's will if man expects to have true peace. The angelic message has been saturated with a mushy humanism proclaimed profusely once a year in Christmas cards and songs: "If there is good will among men on earth, there will be peace." Humanism refuses to accept the truth that there can be true good will from man to man *only* when men are first good-willed toward God.

2:15-21 Shepherds: The angel and the host returned to heaven. The shepherds decided among themselves to go to Bethlehem to verify the announcement of the angels. *Bethlehem*, the town where the Bread of Life came to earth, is a Hebrew name meaning "House of bread." The English versions represent the shepherds as saying, "Let us go see the *thing* . . ." The word translated thing is *rhema* in Greek and literally means, *word*. The shepherds said, "Let us go see the *word* . . ." All they had so far was the angel's *word* that a Savior had been born. They quickly decided they would all go *see* if these words had really happened! They hurried (*speusantes*, hastening) to Bethlehem and found Mary and Joseph and the baby wrapped in swaddling lying in a feed-trough, just as the angel had said. They told Mary and Joseph about the angel standing by their side, the message he gave them about the Child, the message of the heavenly "verse choir" and their hurried and excited trip to Bethlehem to find them. These shepherds were so impressed with the literal, physical encounter they had with the supernatural and with its meaning concerning the Child in Bethlehem, they told everyone they met about it all. Those who heard the story of the shepherds marvelled (*ethaumasasan*) but apparently were not interested enough themselves to go to the inn and see the Child. At least Luke does not record any other visitors to the Bethlehem cattle-shed. Perhaps the shepherd's story seemed rather far-fetched to everyone who heard it. After all—a Savior and Lord born in a cattle-shed?!

Mary did not go about telling all the wonderful, supernatural things she knew about her baby boy. She hid them in her heart (*suneterei* means an intense, protective keeping), and set each event and thing she knew about Him side by side in her mind so she could compare (*sumballousa*, ponder) one with the other. While a number of people were given momentary glimpses of the wonderful nature of the Child, Mary gathered *all* the glimpses comparing them and keeping her thoughts about them all to herself. Any other course of action would most certainly have endangered the life of Jesus long before the time God had appointed for Him to begin His public ministry. Apparently, Mary was also aware of the danger to her baby boy should she make a determined effort to publicize all the things she knew about Him.

The shepherds returned to their flocks speaking praises (*ainountes*)

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to God for the supernatural, heavenly things they had seen and heard. Eight days later, Mary and Joseph performed the God-ordained rite of circumcision on the baby Jesus (see comments on Lk. 1:59). Circumcision took place in the home where the baby was born. It was at this time the Hebrew child was given a name. Mary's Child had already been given a name from heaven (Mt. 1:21), Jesus, or *Yeshua* in Hebrew, which means, "The Lord Saves."

STUDY STIMULATORS:

1. What was the most significant event that occurred in the reign of Caesar Augustus? Are there things happening right now known only by Christians which are more important than "headline" news events? What are they?
2. Can Luke's historical accuracy be verified or must we accept the accusations of destructive critics that "we can now know almost nothing concerning the life and personality of Jesus"?
3. What do you think and feel when you learn that the Lord of Glory was born in a barn?
4. Do you think all the importance placed on Christmas coincides with what the N.T. teaches about observing it? What does the N.T. teach about it?
5. Can you suggest ways Christians might enter more into the "spirit" of Christmas than is currently done?
6. When was Christ born? Does it make any difference?
7. What is an angel? Would you know one if you saw it?
8. God's choice of shepherds to receive the angel and the heavenly host is not the way man would have announced to the world the birth of God in the flesh. How would man have done it? Why didn't God do it that way?
9. Why doesn't the Christmas cliché, "Peace on earth, good will toward men," carry through in other seasons of the year?
10. Would you have "kept" all these wonderful things about the baby Jesus secretly in your heart as Mary did, had you been Mary or Joseph?

SECTION 2

Prophecies (2:22-38)

22 And when the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him

to the Lord ²³(as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every male that opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord") ²⁴and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons." ²⁵Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. ²⁶And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. ²⁷And inspired by the Spirit he came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the law, ²⁸he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, ²⁹"Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word;

³⁰for mine eyes have seen thy salvation

³¹which thou hast prepared in the presence of all peoples,

³²a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to thy people Israel."

³³And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him; ³⁴and Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother,

"Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is spoken against

³⁵(and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed."

³⁶And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher; she was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years from her virginity, ³⁷and as a widow till she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. ³⁸And coming up at that very hour she gave thanks to God, and spoke of him to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

2:22-24 Homage: For forty days after childbirth, a Hebrew mother was considered ceremonially unclean by the Law of Moses (Lev. 12:1-8). The regulation was for hygienic reasons to start with. If the mother and child are isolated from everyone else (as those who were ceremonially unclean must be) for forty days the chances for survival are greatly increased. This regulation had nothing to do with making the mother sinful because she had given birth. The really fundamental purpose of all the Levitical laws of ceremonial purification was to develop the sensitivity of the human being to his sinfulness and God's holiness and to also develop the habit of obedience to the laws of God whether man understood them or agreed with them or not. When a Hebrew became ceremonially unclean he was unable to worship God or have

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fellowship with God's covenant people until he purified himself according to the rituals of the Law. This emphasized to him the necessity for the grace of God in providing a way for him to be restored to covenant relationship. For Mary to be declared ceremonially clean again, she was required to offer to the priest for sacrifice a lamb and a young pigeon. If she were poor she could offer two pigeons or two turtledoves (costing about sixteen cents). So, about the first week in February, Mary, with her husband Joseph, traveled the five or six miles from Bethlehem to Jerusalem and presented herself with two turtledoves to receive cleansing from the priest.

The Law of Moses also required that each first-born male, animal or child, must be "set apart" or "called holy" to the Lord. The Hebrew word *avar* (Ex. 13:12) means literally, "to pass over." The first-born were also to be "Redeemed" (Heb. *padah*), that is, a "ransom" payment had to be made to the temple of five shekels (about \$5.00 now) (Num. 18:15-16). "Redeeming the firstborn" was (1) a memorial to Israel's redemption from Egypt; (2) and a *response* and repayment to God for sparing the firstborn of Israel in Egypt (see comments by Wilbur Fields, *Exodus*, pgs. 277-284, College Press). Christians are all called "first-born" in Hebrews 12:23, thus all Christians are redeemed and set apart unto the Lord.

The word "homage" means to "honor with submission and obedience." This is exactly what Mary and Joseph were doing when they took the baby Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem to observe these two laws of the Old Testament. They were devout and God-fearing people. Besides, this Child was *special*. They both knew He had some kind of uniquely divine mission. He must be set apart unto the Lord according to the Lord's revealed will. They would do all in their power to dedicate Him to Jehovah's service. It was predicted that the Messiah would be obedient to the Law of Jehovah (cf. Psa. 45:6-7; Heb. 1:8-9; Isa. 50:4-9; Phil. 2:5-7; Gal. 4:4). Although the Messiah was the Incarnate God and the One who was the Lawgiver Himself, He humbly observed His own law (cf. Mt. 17:24-27; Heb. 5:7-9).

2:25-35 Heraldry: Simeon, or *Shime'on* in Hebrew, is from the word *shama'* which means "to hear, to obey." He was righteous and devout, filled with faith and hope that he would see the Messiah because the Holy Spirit had revealed to him that before he died he would see the "consolation of Israel." Consolation in Greek is *paraklesin* from the word which may also be translated comforter. *Comfort*, *consolation* in Hebrew is *menuchach* (from the root *nacham*) from which also the proper names *Nahum*, *Menahem*, and *Menachem* are formed. This is the Hebrew word used in many messianic passages of the Old Testament (cf. Isa. 40:1; 49:13; 51:3; 52:9; 54:11; 61:2; 66:13; Jer. 31:13). Simeon, the obedient,

was obeying the prophecies of God's Old Testament and the revelation he had from the Holy Spirit. He was eagerly looking (every day) for the Christ (*kristos*, "anointed") of the Lord. The Messiah is called *mashiyach*, "anointed" in Daniel 9:26. The aged Simeon was directed by the Holy Spirit to go to the Temple and when Mary and Joseph and the baby Jesus arrived there, he was guided by the Spirit to take Mary's baby into his arms and pronounce what is called the *Nunc Dimittis* (Latin for, "Now dismiss . . .").

Simeon's righteous and devout character is manifested by his attitude toward the Lord. His salutation, "Lord," is *despota* in Greek and is the word from which we get *despot* in English; he accepted the Lord as the *absolute sovereign* of his life. Simeon referred to himself as *doulon*, or slave, absolute servant. Simeon had been promised by the Holy Spirit that when he saw the Anointed One (the Messiah), he would be "loosed from" (*apolueis*, Greek) this life. Simeon had been told that he would be the Lord's bond-slave in this life until the coming of the Anointed One. This Christ, whom Simeon would live to see with his own eyes, would be not only the Consoler of Israel, He would also be the Light to those who sat in darkness (the Gentiles). This Christ would bring salvation to the whole world. Now Simeon is ready to be released from this life, apparently looking forward to "peace" and "glory" in the next life because God's Anointed One has come. Simeon's phraseology echoes the prophecy of Isaiah 61:1-2 (cf. Lk. 4:16-19). There the Messiah is predicted as coming to usher in the Jubilee of God when all the slaves will be set free (see our comments, *Isaiah, Vol. III*, pgs. 410-411, College Press). Simeon has come to his own Jubilee and now asks permission from his Master to be set free. Paul was anxious to leave this life and be with the Lord in the next life (cf. Phil. 1:19-26; II Cor. 5:1-10), and so should we. But we must also be ready and willing to serve the Lord here in this world so long as He provides us the life to do so. If we do so devoutly, obediently and faithfully, we will someday be released and hear the trumpet signal our own Jubilee. Simeon announced that the Babe in his arms was Savior of the whole world. He was the Revelation (*apokalupsin* in Greek; the word from which we get the English, *apocalypse*) to the Gentiles. The Gentiles had tried to discover God in their philosophies and other cultural disciplines (cf. I Cor. 1:18-31), but man cannot discover God—God reveals Himself to man, in order that no man should boast! That is just as true today as it was then. God has chosen to reveal Himself in Nature and in His Word (for the purpose of salvation, in His Son alone). If any man wishes to know God in a saving relationship, he must know His Son through the agency of His Spirit, in the Bible!

Simeon was a herald of bad news too. While Joseph and Mary were

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caught up in a reverie contemplating the marvelous things said about this Baby, the old man brought a sudden chill upon the mother's heart with a prediction of the dark clouds of persecution and suffering that would characterize this Child's life. It would all end in a soul-piercing tragedy for the mother. The shadow of the cross fell across the life of this Child even before He was born. Isaiah the prophet indicated in no uncertain terms that the Messiah-Servant of God would suffer and die (and be raised from the dead) (cf. Isa. 52:13—53:12). Daniel, too, had predicted that the Anointed Prince of God would be "cut off" (cf. Dan. 9:24-27).

The Temple courts were always crowded with worshipers, sight-seers and priests. How many were within hearing of the aged Simeon we are not told. Those who would have believed his predictions about the Baby Jesus would have been very few, if any! Most Jews (even including Jesus' apostles) stumbled over any prediction that their Messiah would be of such humble origins or suffer such an ignominious death. Mary could hardly be expected to comprehend the full impact of these words then. But the day would come (33 years later) when the terrible reality of Simeon's predictions would stab her heart as she saw her first-born nailed to a cross.

The phrase ". . . set for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is spoken against. . ." echoes the prophecies of the Psalmist and Isaiah concerning the despising and rejection of the Messiah (Isa. 53:1-12; Psa. 22:1-18, etc.). It was also predicted that the Messiah would become a stumbling block over which many in Israel would fall (cf. Isa. 8:14; Psa. 118:22; Lk. 20:18; Rom. 9:32-33; I Cor. 1:23; I Pet. 2:8, etc.), and The Cornerstone upon which many *true* Israelites (Christians) would build (Isa. 28:16; I Pet. 2:5; I Cor. 3:11, etc.). All of the "good and bad" to come to and through this Child was in order ". . . that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed." The Incarnation (God coming in flesh in Christ), the Atoning Death and the Resurrection was witnessed historically by some, believed by many, and has brought millions to a mental and emotional confrontation with the reality of God. It has caused multitudes to repent and come into saving, regenerating fellowship with God through the completed work of Christ. What people think of Christ reveals the true thoughts of their hearts! Men in rebellion against the Creator take a relativistic, self-centered attitude toward everything. Once men are confronted with the historical Christ and His Absolute Deity, they are compelled to make a decision. They must either deny His historicity and lordship (which would reveal intellectual and moral dishonesty of heart) or they must accept both (which is repentance and salvation). Confronted with the truth of Christ, men cannot hide from God, from themselves or from others.

2:36-38 Hope: Another aged Israelite who had maintained hope that God would send His Messiah as He promised was Anna daughter of Phanuel (which means "face of God"), a prophetess. After a marriage of seven years she had lived in widowhood eighty-four years. If she married at 15 she would have been 106 years old and born about 110 B.C. Julius Caesar was born about 100 B.C. Anna had lived through the declining years of the Maccabean rule of Israel which brought relative freedom for the Jews for the first time in over 200 years since the days of Ezra and Nehemiah; she grew up in the days when Alexander Jannaeus (once pelted by his own people with rotten fruit and vegetables) was king and high priest; she lived when a woman, Alexandra, the widow of Alexander Jannaeus, ruled Palestine; she would have been about 40 years old when the illustrious Roman general, Pompey, conquered the mid-East for the Roman empire; she saw the Romans appoint the hated Idumeans (Edomites) of the Herodian family rulers of Palestine; during all this she saw the development of two strong religious factions (Pharisees and Sadducees) and two antagonistic political parties (Herodians and Zealots) within her own people. These factions with their legalisms on one hand and libertinisms on the other plus political compromise versus political fanaticism caused many of the common people, oppressed by heavy taxation and religious legalism, to wish for messianic redemption. It appears that this aged saint never missed a service in the Temple night and day! Coming into the Temple at the very time Simeon was heralding the birth of the Messiah, she gave thanks to God and *kept on speaking (elalei, Greek imperfect tense)* to all who were looking for the redemption of Israel.

After these experiences in the Temple in early February, Mary and Joseph returned to Bethlehem with the Baby. They were lodging in a "house" when the wise men from the East came and presented their gifts and worshiped Him (Mt. 2:1-12). The wise men had stopped in Jerusalem to ask about the birth of the "king of the Jews." The cruel and crafty Herod sent them to Bethlehem hoping they would find Jesus so he might kill Him. The wise men returned to their homes in the East without reporting to Herod the whereabouts of the Child. Immediately, an angel appeared to Joseph and directed him to flee with the Child to Egypt (Mt. 2:13-23). The trip to Egypt would be about 100 miles but Mary and Joseph fled there with Jesus. Back in Bethlehem Herod was having every baby two years old and under slain, hoping to eliminate this announced "king of the Jews" as a threat to his throne. When Herod died, an angel of the Lord spoke again to Joseph telling him it was safe to return to Israel, so they began their return. Hearing that a son of Herod (Archelaus) reigned over Judea, they did not return to Bethlehem or Jerusalem but went directly to Nazareth in Galilee their original home.

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Herod the Great died at the end of March or during the first few days of April, 4 B.C. Jesus was, therefore, about three or four months old when He was brought back to live in Nazareth.

STUDY STIMULATORS:

1. Why were women declared "unclean" for 40 days after childbirth?
2. What is involved in the "dedication" of the Hebrew child after 40 days?
3. How does that Hebrew ritual relate typically to the Christian experience?
4. What did Simeon mean by calling the baby Jesus, "the consolation of Israel"?
5. What did Simeon mean by calling God, "despot"?
6. If man cannot discover God, how is man to know God?
7. Why did Simeon tell Mary a sword would pierce her heart?
8. How does Christ reveal the thoughts of man's hearts to them?
9. What had the aged prophetess Anna lived through in history that would cause her to wish for a Messiah?
10. After their presentation of Jesus in the Temple, where did Mary and Joseph reside with the Child?

SECTION 3

Puzzles (2:39-52)

39 And when they had performed everything according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city, Nazareth. ⁴⁰And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.

41 Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover. ⁴²And when he was twelve years old, they went up according to custom; ⁴³and when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it, ⁴⁴but supposing him to be in the company they went a day's journey, and they sought him among their kinfolk and acquaintances; ⁴⁵and when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking him. ⁴⁶After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions; ⁴⁷and all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. ⁴⁸And when they saw him they were

astonished; and his mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been looking for you anxiously."

⁴⁹And he said to them, "How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" ⁵⁰And they did not understand the saying which he spoke to them. ⁵¹And he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them; and his mother kept all these things in her heart.

52 And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man.

2:39-40 Progress: Luke omits the trip to Egypt, since Matthew had duly recorded it, and follows the progress of the Divine Infant from His presentation in the Temple directly to His boyhood home in Nazareth. It was more important to Luke's purpose to record certain information about the Baby's boyhood. He uses some interesting Greek grammar to describe the first twelve years of Jesus' boyhood. The verbs "grew" and "became strong" are both in the imperfect tense which indicates continued development, or, action in progress. As a youngster Jesus grew gradually but continuously in physique and strength. The present passive participle *pleroumenon* (filled) may be translated literally, "And the child . . . was being filled with wisdom." In other words, His learning was concurrent with His physical development. Hobbs aptly says, "We should not be shocked by these statements about Jesus. They do not in any sense detract from His deity. Rather they emphasize His complete humanity. Apart from sin, He completely identified Himself with man. He grew, gained strength, and learned as did any other child. It is just as great an error to deny Jesus' humanity as to deny his deity."

Nazareth of Galilee was about 15 miles west and slightly south of the Sea of Galilee. Sepphoris, capital of Herod Antipas and the strongest military center in Galilee, was only five miles to the northwest. Many traders, soldiers, and emissaries of the Roman government were to be found in the stream of travelers going back and forth on this road. It was about fifteen miles to Tiberias, the city named in honor of the Roman emperor the "Riviera" of Palestine, and about as heathen as its namesake. Nazareth was nestled on the side of a Galilean hill in an area known for its fertility and beauty. It is estimated that some three million people lived in the surrounding cities and villages. The more learned and orthodox Jews of Jerusalem were contemptuous of Galileans considering them to be *am-ha-eretz* (Hebrew for "people of the land") or "ignorant hillbillies" because of their colloquialisms, lack of formal education, cultural crudities, and questionable genealogical background. Most of the Galileans were, in fact, a genetic mixture of Jew and Gentile (a result of the importation of Gentiles into Galilee at the captivity of the Ten Northern Tribes by Assyria, see II Kings 17:24). They

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were a vigorous, homey, hard-working, liberty-loving people, however, and Jesus grew up in their midst. Jesus' hometown was located at the cross-roads of commerce and politics. At the foot of Mt. Tabor (across the valley and only about 5 miles east of Nazareth) passed the Roman road, "the Way of the Sea," connecting Damascus (capital of Syria) with Palestine's sea-ports. Another road near Nazareth ran southward to Egypt. Circling round the eastern base of Mt. Tabor was the caravan route to Jerusalem. Perhaps Jesus spent some of His boyhood hours watching the travelers on these roads, maybe even talking to them. From such observations and daily experiences He later drew illustrations for His divine message. Jesus did not isolate Himself from life as it was lived by man when He was an adult and we may assume He did not do so in His youth.

2:41-50 Precociousness: The word *precocious* is from Latin, *prae* and *coquere* which means to "ripen beforehand" or "exceptionally early in development." Jesus astounded the adult scholars in the temple and His mother and step-father later with His *precocity*.

In verse 40 Luke calls Jesus *paidion*, "little child"; in verse 43 he calls Him *pais*, "boy" or "lad." Jesus is now twelve years of age. At that age all Jewish male children became *barmitzvahs* (*bar* means "son" and *mitzvah* means "commandment"). They were declared "men" and required to know the law and keep it, learn a trade, and attend the greatest of the Jewish festivals (Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles). This was probably Jesus' first visit to Jerusalem since being taken there as a baby for "presentation."

What an exciting experience for a lad of twelve. The journey from Nazareth to Jerusalem would take about three or four days. They would come in large groups or caravans of Jewish pilgrims from all over the Roman empire headed toward the holy city. Jerusalem would be jammed with almost two million people, laughing, talking, buying, selling; sleeping on the flat roof-tops of the houses, in the alleys, in the animal shelters or anywhere safe lodging might be found. There would be the sights and smells of the temple court where thousands of animals poured out rivers of blood at sacrifice and the smell of burning flesh as the columns of black smoke floated to the sky. Family reunions with heated conversations of politics, economics and religion would permeate the city. We can imagine the wonder of it all to Jesus as He gathered with His family and listened as Joseph told the story of the Passover observance and the history of Israel. He would experience for the first time the roasted lamb and the bitter herbs (see comments on Luke 22:1ff for more details on the Passover feast). As impressive as all this might have been to Him, Jesus was deeply interested in another aspect of the goings on in Jerusalem—the *didaskalon* ("teachers").

After seven days the feast ended and Mary and Joseph began the journey back to Nazareth. At the end of the first day's journey, when they stopped for the night, they realized Jesus was not with the caravan. How could they have missed Him all day? In such caravans the men and women usually traveled separately. A boy who has become *barmitzva* should be capable of caring for himself during a day's travel. Mary probably presumed He was with Joseph and Joseph thought He was with Mary. But Jesus, fascinated by the aged scribes and teachers of the Law, and so immersed in listening and questioning about God's Word, chose to "be about His Father's business" rather than leave Jerusalem at that particular time. It is doubtful that Jesus forgot or made a mistake about the time of departure, for when chided by His mother, He indicated His actions were deliberately chosen and exercised. One day traveling from Jerusalem; one day traveling back; and one day looking throughout the city for Him; after three days absence they found Him in the temple courts (*kathezomenon*) "sitting down" at the feet of the teachers. The twelve-year-old Jesus was *hearing, questioning* and answering the teachers. The word *eperotonta* is an intensified form of a Greek word (*questioning*) suggesting that the one asking is on a footing of equality with the person whom he is questioning. It is the word used of a king in making request from another king, (Lk. 14:32). Jesus always uses this word in making request to His Father. The usual reaction of learned men toward a precocious lad would be at best amusement, if not scorn. Here they cannot conceal their amazement. Luke uses the Greek word *sunesei* to describe His "understanding" answers to the questions of the teachers. The word means "to join the skills of perception to that which is perceived." At twelve Jesus had a grasp and comprehension beyond anything these teachers had ever seen. Mary and Joseph were also astonished when they found Him amazing the scholars.

Mary uses tenderness to rebuke Jesus. *Teknon* is a Greek word for "child" but it is different from the word *huios* ("son") in that *teknon* emphasizes the special mother-child relationship of birth. Mothers always think of their children as their "babies." Yet, there was probably a chiding note in Mary's voice too. Literally translated, Mary said, "Child, why did you to us thus?" She also reminded Him of the sorrow (*odunomenio* "pain") He had caused them when they thought they had lost Him.

Jesus' reply shows surprise that His parents did not understand His uniqueness. He implies they knew or should have known He had a special mission; that His life was not going to be that of an ordinary person of His age. He was surprised they were surprised that He would be more interested in discussing God's Law than in returning to Nazareth. They already had many signs about Him. Jesus expected the Jews to recognize in Him a uniqueness not to be found in other people and was disturbed when they did not (cf. for example, Lk. 24:25ff).

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The first recorded words from the lips of Jesus are these: "Why is it that you sought me? Do you not know that in the things (affairs) of my Father it is necessary for me to be?" The word "house" is not in the Greek text. For a twelve-year-old boy to say, "I *must* be involved in the affairs of My Father" is unique among all twelve-year-old boys. And, further, Jesus used here, as He always did, the definite article when speaking of God as His Father. He never used the definite article when speaking of God as the Father of anyone else. The Sonship of Jesus is uniquely different than that of any one else. John calls Jesus the *monogenes* (Jn. 1:14, 18; 3:16). *Monogenes* is translated "only begotten" but means more precisely, "*only unique*" Son of God. We may *become* sons by being born again; He *is* Son from eternity.

Did Jesus disobey His parents when He stayed behind to question the teachers? Hobbs makes it plain that He did not: "In the first place, there is no evidence that either Mary or Joseph had told Him not to remain behind in Jerusalem. . . . In the second place, the record does not show that they had told Him to come with them. . . . In the third place, as a 'Son of the law' Jesus was responsible within Himself for His religious obligations. . . . If there was any error here, it was that of Mary and Joseph, not that of Jesus." The Bible makes it plain that children are to obey their parents "in the Lord." In other words, submission to parental authority can never mean a child must *disobey* the Lord. The will of God, when plainly revealed, is sovereign in every human life. There is no higher authority than that, and every human being capable of making moral choices rejects it at the peril of eternal damnation.

2:51 Pliancy: Jesus returned to His village home with Mary and Joseph in Nazareth of Galilee. There He lived in obedience to them until He began His ministry at about the age of 30. The Greek word translated *obedience* is *hupotassomenos* and is usually translated *subjection* (Eph. 5:21; Col. 3:18). *Hupotasso* was primarily a military term meaning, "to rank under; to subordinate." It is a term which stresses the "chain of command relationship." G. Campbell Morgan says, ". . . the perfect response of the Boy to the will of God meant for Him natural correspondence to ordinary conditions." Although Jesus was uniquely the Son of God, He was also son of Mary. It was God's will that The Son should experience the full gamut of human subordination (cf. Heb. 2:14-18; 4:14-16; 5:7-9; Phil. 2:5-11). In obedience to the will of God, He subordinated His life to the authority of the home. As we pointed out before, His obedience to the home was qualified by His obedience to God's authority whenever it was clearly revealed that it was proper to do so. This is evident also from two other parental confrontations (cf. Jn. 2:4; Mt. 12:46-50; Mk. 3:31-35; Lk. 8:19-21).

2:52 Perfection: The word *increased* is the Greek word *proekopten* and

means literally, "a striking or cutting forward, like a pioneer cutting his way through brush." Thayer says the word "means to lengthen out by hammering as a smith forges metals." The word means to go forward chopping one's way by struggle or strenuous activity. It certainly does not infer a passive development. Jesus' young manhood was a daily hammering out of His human life in the crucible of God's will. Each day He chopped through the jungle of human experience, the divine Way, Truth and Life so that all who follow might find God. Jesus "hacked out" of the wilderness of human sinfulness a life of perfect sinlessness and walked completely in the will of God. He did so in boyhood, young manhood and adulthood. He did so mentally, physically and spiritually. He mastered all of life as He pioneered the Way in human flesh. The Greek preposition *para* (translated "with") means, "along side." Jesus did not start as a youngster with less favor and, growing up, become more and more a favorite with God and man. The preposition *para* indicates that as He "cut his way forward" each day He was constantly "along side" dwelling in the favor ("grace") of God and man. The development of Jesus from Boyhood to Manhood was constantly "along side" or within the will of God and in proper relationship to man. This is manhood as God intends it for all men! Jesus demonstrated it is possible to live life in the flesh as God intended it. He suffered and experienced obedience to the will of God to bring us to the same glorious ideal manhood (cf. Heb. 2:10-18; 5:7-10). He is the "pioneer" and "author" of our salvation. Incidentally, the phrase "and being made perfect," in Hebrews 5:9 does not mean Jesus was less than perfect in the area of obedience to God. He was sinless in His relationship to God and man always. The word *teleiotheis* ("perfect") means in His case, that at His crucifixion and resurrection He "brought to completion" the will of God as far as His temporary human experience was concerned. In His human experience Jesus progressed or advanced in a forward manner toward a God-appointed goal. He was born as a baby, developed as a child, "cut forward" along side the grace of God as a young man, and completed the goal for which God sent Him at the cross and the empty tomb. Thus He "perfected" His incarnation.

STUDY STIMULATORS:

1. Do you think God had any specific purpose in Jesus' living His young manhood (about 30 years) in the village of Nazareth in Galilee?
2. What is a "barmitzvah"?
3. Should we expect children of 12 or 13 years of age today to be held accountable for obeying the commands of the N.T. about becoming a Christian and living the Christian life?

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4. Did Jesus get lost in Jerusalem from childish inattention, or did He plan to stay and question the teachers in the temple?
5. Did He disobey His parents in staying in Jerusalem?
6. Did Jesus always do everything His parents thought He should do?
7. Was Jesus a little less than He should have been in relation to God and men as He grew up?
8. How did Jesus *increase* and become *perfected*?

Chapter Three (3:1-38)

THE FORERUNNER OF THE SON OF MAN

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. To what history are we alerted by the listing of the Roman and Jewish rulers (3:1-2)?
2. How could there be a baptism for the forgiveness of sins before Pentecost (3:3)?
3. Did John get his idea to immerse people in water from Isaiah (3:4-6)?
4. Why did the Jews put so much emphasis on their descent from Abraham (3:7-9)?
5. What is the baptism of the Holy Spirit (3:16)? Is it for all believers?
6. If Jesus was perfect, why was He baptized by John the Baptist (3:21-22)?
7. Why trace Jesus' ancestry back to Adam (3:38)?

The Baptizer's Mission (3:1-6)

3 In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Iturea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, ²in the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness; ³and he went into all the region about the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁴As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness:

Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

⁵Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low,

and the crooked shall be made straight,

and the rough ways shall be made smooth;

⁶and all flesh shall see the salvation of God."

3:1-2 Context: Tiberius (cf. Lesson 1, sec. 3) was joint emperor with his step-father Augustus (Octavian) from 11 A.D. until 14 A.D. when Augustus died and he became emperor alone. He was an able administrator but cruel and suspicious. He conducted countless treason trials

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and executed scores of people he considered dangerous to his power. He died in senile debauchery on the island of Capri, March 16, A.D. 37. He was the reigning emperor at the time of Christ's death.

A number of political changes had taken place in Judea since Luke's first historical references to Herod, king of Judea (1:5) and Caesar Augustus (2:1). Those men had ruled thirty years ago. Since that time, Herod the Great had died and his kingdom had been divided between his three sons; Herod Antipas, *tetrarch* of Galilee; Herod Philip, tetrarch of Ituraea and Trachonitis; Archelaus, tetrarch of Judea. Archelaus had been deposed of his throne in Judea in A.D. 6 by the Roman emperor for mismanagement (at the request of the Jews). The Roman emperor had placed Judea under the rule of a Roman Procurator. Pontius Pilate, whom tradition says was the son of famous army general and married to the granddaughter of Augustus, was the fifth procurator, having been appointed in 26 A.D. Annas, Jewish high priest appointed by Quirinius the legate of Syria in A.D. 6, had been deposed by Gratus, the first Roman procurator of Judea, in A.D. 15, and now Caiaphas, Annas' son-in-law was High Priest. Luke does not mention all these changes because he is not writing a history of the Roman empire or of Judea, but a biography of Jesus Christ. And so far as Luke is concerned, the real significance of these "great" people (7 of them) is that the beginning of Jesus' ministry (and that of John the Baptist) dates from this time in their lives.

3:3-6 Content: The region of John's ministry was the area around the Jordan valley known as the "wilderness of Judea" (cf. Mt. 3:1; Mk. 1:4). It was a barren, uninhabited, insect-infested, sultry-hot region from the Dead Sea area on the south to Succoth on the north (cf. II Chron. 4:17). Most of his ministry was spent along the western banks of the river Jordan, but John notes (10:40) that he also preached on the eastern side. He did all his preaching near water since response to his message required immersion (baptism).

He preached an immersion of "repentance for the forgiveness of sins." John the Immerser was a unique, supernaturally-commissioned, God-sent *link* between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. John's ministry was to announce the imminent abrogation of the Law and the Prophets because the "kingdom of God" which they symbolized and predicted had arrived (in the person of the King). "The law and the prophets were until John. . . ." (Lk. 16:16). What John preached was authoritative; it was from God. He was sent to prepare the people of Israel to turn *away* from the Old system *to* the New Kingdom. He intended that they not only repent of their ethics but also of their theology. They would have to turn *from* the "type and shadow" system by which no flesh could be justified, to justification by faith in a Person, The Son of God! Those who did prepare themselves for the imminent coming of

the New Kingdom by repenting as John preached were immersed for the remission of their sins. In that state they awaited the establishment of the New Kingdom. John's immersion was performed under the authority of God and was valid until God transferred that authority to the Son. After Christ ascended to the right hand of the Father in heaven authority in the area of covenant terms was assumed by Him. He subsequently poured out His Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) and announced that immersion must be in His name (Jesus Christ) that is, in recognition of His Lordship over all. Because the lines of communication in the first century A.D. were not as well coordinated and established as they are in our day, it took some time for everyone who had been immersed with John's immersion to get the inspired word that John's immersion was no longer authoritative (cf. Acts 18:24, 25; 19:4).

But from the day of John's preaching until the day of Pentecost, John's immersion was valid. Those who believed and were immersed by John and died before the day of Pentecost would as surely be saved as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and all the other Old Testament saints who, having put their trust in the promises of God, were "justified by their faith" (cf. Rom. 1:ff; Gal. 3:1ff). No man today could say he is in proper covenant relationship to God if he knows what the New Testament says about immersion into Christ and refuses to obey it, any more than those who heard John's message and refused it could be said to be right with God (cf. Lk. 7:29-30). The believer's trust must be in Jesus Christ. The believer surrenders in obedience to immersion because Jesus commanded it, not because the ritual itself has some magic in it. Those who submitted to John's immersion did so because they "justified" God (Lk. 7:29); that is, they put God in the right place; they made Him sovereign, they believed John spoke by the authority of God. Their faith was in God, not in immersion *per se*. Those Pharisees whose faith was in their own traditions and self-righteousness, "rejected the purpose of God for themselves, and would not be immersed by John because they believed they had no need of repentance and immersion in the muddy Jordan River. Many religious people who profess faith in God today refuse to be immersed in water for the remission of sins for the same fundamental reason—they have put their faith in a church's tradition and not in the sovereign Word of Christ.

Some Bible students have taught that John's baptism was not really a unique practice of his age. Some have said that his baptism had its roots in Jewish "proselyte baptism" while others imply that he was copying the rites of the Essenes. John's baptism did not come from Jewish "proselyte baptism" for the following reasons:

- a. History has no record of Jewish "proselyte baptism" prior to John the Baptist—in fact not until the 3rd century A.D.

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- b. The Old Testament has only one word that would resemble New Testament immersion (*baptizo*) and that is the Hebrew word *taval*. All other Hebrew words (*kavas*, *rachatz*, *shataph*, *duach*) mean "to wash or bathe for religious purposes."
- c. The Hebrew word *taval* is the only specific word meaning, "immerse, dip, plunge." The Septuagint (Greek version of the Hebrew text translated about 300 B.C.) uses the Greek word *baptizo* only once for the Hebrew word *taval* and that is in II Kings 5:14. The word *baptizo* appears in only one other place in the Septuagint (Isa. 21:4) and there it is a translation of the Hebrew word *ba'ath* which means to "overwhelm." Everywhere else the Hebrew word *taval* is used in the Septuagint, the word *bapto* or a derivative is used.
- d. The Greek word *baptizo* appears only twice in the Hebrew Apocrypha (in the LXX), Judith 12:7; Sirach 34:25; in neither case does it appear in connection with any "proselyte baptism."
- e. Proselyte baptism (immersion) is not mentioned anywhere in the Old Testament, the Jewish Apocrypha, the New Testament, Josephus, Philo, Jewish Targums or the Mishna.
- f. None of the early Christian writers such as Barnabas, Justin Martyr or Tertullian, all of whom discussed both Jews and Christian baptism, mention Jewish proselyte baptism.

John's baptism could not have come from the Essenes (Qumranians) for the following reasons:

- a. The "water of impurity" used by the Qumranians (IQS 3:4-9) was not an initiatory rite but was reserved for the practice of "cleansing" those already in the "covenant."
- b. There really is no textual proof (from the Dead Sea Scrolls) that these Essene "washings" were by immersion.
- c. Josephus in his, *Wars*, II:8:5, writes about the Essenes, ". . . they assemble themselves together . . . into one place, and when they have clothed themselves in white veils, they then bathe their bodies in cold water . . ." No mention of immersion, specifically.

The scriptures say John's immersion came directly from God by revelation (cf. Lk. 1:13-17; 1:76-79; Jn. 1:33). The multitudes believed his ministry came from God (Mt. 21:23-27). The Jewish rulers considered it something different than anything then being practiced religiously, and something that only Elijah or the Messiah would have the authority to institute (Jn. 1:24-28). Even Jesus, through His disciples, practiced the pre-Christian baptism of John (cf. Jn. 3:26-27; 4:1-2). John's immersion came from God; it was efficacious as an expression of repentance and for the remission of sins until Jesus commanded all men to be immersed in His (Jesus') name.

John's ministry was no accident! It was foreknown and foretold some 700 years before by Isaiah (cf. Isa. 40:3-4). John's ministry was second in importance only to the ministry of the Messiah Himself. Jesus would later say that of all those born of human parentage not one would be greater than John the Baptist (cf. Mt. 11:11). For four hundred years (since the days of Malachi) God had been silent. There had been no revelation from God about that "kingdom" and that "King" He had foretold by the prophets. Suddenly John the Baptizer burst upon the scene. Many recognized that John had been sent from God—he was a prophet! He was a "voice" from God. When an Oriental monarch was preparing to visit an area of his kingdom, he usually sent a herald ahead of him, announcing his coming and commanding his subjects to prepare a roadway over which he might pass free of all obstacles, smooth, level and straight. So John was the "herald" commanding the subjects of the King of kings to make an obstacle-free, smooth, level and straight road into their hearts where He wishes to travel and abide.

SECTION 2

The Baptizer's Message (3:7-14)

7 He said therefore to the multitudes that came out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ⁸Bear fruits that befit repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. ⁹Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."

10 And the multitudes asked him, "What then shall we do?" ¹¹And he answered them, "He who has two coats, let him share with him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise." ¹²Tax collectors also came to be baptized, and said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?" ¹³And he said to them, "Collect no more than is appointed you." ¹⁴Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Rob no one by violence or by false accusation, and be content with your wages."

3:7-9 Admonition: Matthew and Mark (Mt. 3:5-6; Mk. 1:5) indicate that thousands of people came out from the cities and villages and farms of Judea and were immersed by John. The word *baptizo* in Greek means *immerse*; it can only mean immerse. There is a Greek word for sprinkle, *rantizo*; there is a Greek word for pour, *cheo*. Neither of these

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words are used in the Greek text for the action of baptism—only the word *baptizo*. All Greek lexicons, ancient and modern, give the definition of *baptizo* to be, “dip, plunge, immerse.” The practice of sprinkling for baptism was not officially sanctioned by Christendom until the fourteenth century! To make changes in the mode of baptism is nowhere sanctioned in the Bible!

Among the thousands coming out to where John was immersing were some of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Matthew uses the Greek preposition *epi* which could be translated, “. . . many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to (or toward) baptism . . .” The preposition may also be translated “for” baptism. Were they really coming *for* baptism (cf. Lk. 7:29-30)? Harold Fowler suggests, “they may have feared the loss of their leadership of the people if they did not join it (John’s baptism) . . .” (cf. *Matthew*, Vol. I, by Harold Fowler, College Press, pgs. 98-104). John did not mince words. He addressed his remarks to the multitudes, but more specifically (as Matthew points out, Mt. 3:7) to the Pharisees and Sadducees, calling them “offspring of poisonous snakes.” It was a title well placed for their teachings and their hypocrisy had poisoned the spiritual life of the covenant people (cf. Mt. 16:6, 12; 23:1-39). Jesus also called them “offspring of poisonous snakes” (Mt. 12:34). John’s question, “Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?” was probably couched in irony and sarcasm in an attempt to expose the sham and hypocrisy of their hearts so they might be brought to true repentance.

The Greek word for repentance, *metanao*, means literally, “change of mind; change of direction.” It was a military term used in drilling soldiers and meant, “about face, to the rear march.” True repentance is inward and is a state of thinking and being—it is the nature of a person who is going in the direction of the will of God. But true repentance must express itself in actions and deeds—in all the issues of life. There must be “fruits that befit true repentance,” (cf. Acts 17:30-31; 26:20). True repentance involves confessing our sin (Prov. 28:13; Psa. 32:5-6; Jer. 2:35; 3:13); restitution of the damage of our sin (insofar as possible) (cf. Nu. 5:6-7); resolution that we shall not willingly sin again, (cf. Heb. 10:26-27; I Jn. 3:9).

John’s next admonition is that genetic or biological relationships, racial or national heritages and family ties have nothing fundamentally to do with our relationship to God. God is interested in character, not color of skin or cultural circumstances. All these things may have some bearing on the formation of our character, but they count for nothing in themselves concerning our future life. The Jews believed that inasmuch as God once chose Abraham and blessed him, they automatically, by reason of physical descent, must stand in the exact same favor with God as Abraham had. If God wanted only physical descendants from

Abraham, He could multiply them from stones of the ground. After all, God made the original man from the dust of the earth. But God cannot and will not overwhelm the autonomous will and spirit of man to make him a child of faith. God wants children of Abraham by *faith* (cf. Rom. 4:1ff; 9:6-7; 11:13-24; Gal. 4:21-31), and good works (Jas. 2:18-26). God is not partial for any nationality or culture; He *is* partial toward anyone anywhere who believes and obeys His Word (cf. Acts 10:34-35). God saves individuals, not nations or races. God takes repenting, obedient individuals from every nation and tribe and tongue and makes them a kingdom of His own (cf. Rev. 7:9). Jewish apocryphal traditions taught that Abraham had accumulated more merit with God than was necessary for his own salvation. All Jews in good standing with the *torah* and the traditions could draw on this excess merit for their salvation.

The final admonition of John was that the axe of God's judgment was already laid to the root of the trees (the people of the Jewish nation). John himself had come in partial fulfillment of that great prediction of judgment upon the nation in Malachi 3:1-5. Jesus' coming to judge was the other part of that prophecy (cf. Jn. 9:39-41; 3:19, 36; 5:22, 27; 12:40). The question is, when was the axe to cut down the trees? John may be warning of the imminent destruction of the Jewish system, as Jesus often did (cf. Mt. 21:33-43; 22:1-14; 23:37-39; 24:1-35; Lk. 19:41-44, etc.). The book of Hebrews warns of judgment to come upon the Jewish system (cf. Heb. 8:13; 10:25; 12:25-29). The Jewish system was ready to be done away with—it had served its purpose (cf. Jer. 3:15). All who did not repent and prepare to meet God on a new basis would be cast off. John is warning of the danger of being hewn down and thrown "into the fire" of eternal damnation. Even now, with the coming of Jesus Christ, the axe of judgment falls. Without acceptance of the Messiah there is nothing left but inevitable judgment. The Messiah is God's last message of grace and salvation to the world (Heb. 1:1-3). The One whom John is to introduce to the world is man's *only* hope. In effect, the good news becomes bad news. It is good news to the humble who surrender in faith and repentance—but it is bad news to the proud, self-righteous and impenitent. Christ is God's final touchstone of judgment—henceforward God will categorize and separate all men as to their eternal destinies according to their response to Christ's covenant. Thus, even at the beginning of John's preaching, the axe of judgment was poised, ready to fall upon mankind.

3:10-14 Application: John the Baptist has his method in the correct order to bring about the proper result. People must first repent of improper theology. Man must first obey the revealed covenant terms and come into right relationship to God. Then he acts according to God's revelation concerning right relationships toward other men. Those who repented

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and were immersed with John's baptism, having redirected their attitudes with respect to God's coming kingdom, asked how this new attitude was to affect their daily lives.

True repentance will manifest itself in sharing one's worldly goods with others less fortunate and in need. John does not qualify the necessity of sharing by asking why the one is without a coat or without food. Need is all the motivation a New Kingdom person requires. Right relationship to needy humanity is necessary in order to be in right relationship to God (cf. I Jn. 3:16-18; 4:20; James 1:27; 2:14-17; Heb. 13:16; Mt. 25:31ff). Tax-collectors (publicans) were told they should not cheat or be dishonest and take more taxes than allowed. Soldiers were told they were not to use their power and influence to extort or defraud others and to be content with their wages. G. Campbell Morgan says, ". . . the height of morality is the love-mastered life . . ." The New Kingdom person does not live his life or do his job for mercenary reasons. He keeps his life free from *love* of money (cf. Heb. 13:5; I Tim. 6:6-8). He does not have to give up a perfectly normal and socially useful vocation to come into right relationship to God—he just has to let God's revealed will give sovereign direction to whatever vocation or avocation he chooses in life. Tax-collectors did not have to quit their jobs, soldiers did not have to be discharged from the army—they simply had to do their jobs according to God's guidance. These words from John the Baptist are both timely and timeless. The apostle Paul's advice is, "Whatever your task, work heartily, as serving the Lord and not man, Knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward . . ." (Col. 3:23-24; Eph. 6:5-9, etc.). Craftsmen, professional men, housewives, even children doing "chores" should remember God's ideal is that we do our tasks with excellence, not haphazardly, and not for mercenary purposes. Anyone who does otherwise cannot please God!

SECTION 3

The Baptizer's Meekness (3:15-20)

15 As the people were in expectation, and all men questioned in their hearts concerning John, whether perhaps he were the Christ, 16John answered them all, "I baptize you with water; but he who is mightier than I is coming, the thong of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. 17His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor, and to gather the wheat into his granary, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

18 So, with many other exhortations, he preached good news to the people. ¹⁹But Herod the tetrarch, who had been reproved by him for Herodias, his brother's wife, and for all the evil things that Herod had done, ²⁰added this to them all, that he shut up John in prison.

3:15-17 Subordination: The fervor and frankness of John's preaching excited the multitudes of Judea. No religious teacher for hundreds of years had so effectively stirred individual consciences and so thoroughly exposed religious hypocrisy. John stirred up a revival! He was saying things and doing things (immersing for the forgiveness of sins) that only "Elijah" or the "Messiah" would have authority to do (cf. Jn. 1:24-28). John the Baptizer might have been tempted to bask in the limelight of fame and popularity, but he overcame it and subordinated himself to the One Coming after him, the Messiah. One of the things that made John the Baptist such a *great* man was his unfeigned humility. He was great because he was a servant. John answers the expectations of the multitudes that no matter how important his preparatory works may seem, they are very much subordinate to the ultimate work of the One Coming—the Messiah. The Messiah will immerse some in the Holy Spirit and some in fire. This statement of John does not mean that all believers are to be immersed in the Holy Spirit, for the following reasons:

- a. The context does not demand such an interpretation. We do not know who the "you" is in either the case of the Holy Spirit or fire. It is altogether possible that he simply means "some" of you. Peter and John were very early disciples of John the Baptist and were probably standing there at that moment.
- b. John's primary purpose in this statement is to make a contrast between himself and the Messiah in importance of ministries.
- c. There are only four distinct references to the "baptism of the Holy Spirit" in the N.T.

John's first prediction (with parallels); Mt. 3:11; Mk. 1:8; Lk. 3:16

John's second prediction, Jn. 1:33

Jesus' promise, Acts 1:5 (Acts 2:1-21 is the stated fulfillment of this).

The experience of Cornelius and his household, Acts 11:15-17. This lone event upon Gentiles seems to indicate the phrase "all flesh" of Joel 2:28 and Acts 2:17 was intended as *representative* or *general*, (i.e., the baptism of the Holy Spirit upon some Jews and some Gentiles signified God was opening the kingdom to the whole world).

- d. *Baptizo* means "immerse, overwhelm." The supernatural powers exercised by the apostles (cast out demons, raise the dead, punish some with judgments) were never exercised by any others.

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(This has caused some to think Cornelius did not receive the "baptism of the Holy Spirit," but only a miraculous "gift" momentarily in order to signify something—not to empower him—certainly not to save him.)

If we are going to call Bible things by Bible names, it is readily apparent that John's announcement that the Messiah would immerse in the Holy Spirit did not infer that all believers were to receive the "baptism in the Holy Spirit."

The "immersion with fire" is very evidently (from v. 17) the eternal judgment since it is an "unquenchable fire." As *Fowler* points out in *Matthew, Vol. I*, pg. 107, John has done here what many Old Testament prophets do; he views great, widely-separated events in the scheme of God's redemptive program without giving any of the historical details between such events. John the Baptist predicts the immersion in the Holy Spirit (the day of Pentecost) and the immersion in unquenchable fire (the final judgment) without regard to the great time interval between these events, (see our comments, *Minor Prophets*; Butler, College Press, pg. 32, and 184-188).

3:18-20 Suffering: It is clear from v. 18 that we do not have all the words or sermons preached by John the Baptist recorded for us. There are a few typical exhortations preserved in the gospel records. Verses 19 and 20 are Luke's brief account of the results of some of John's preaching. Luke digresses here from chronological order. Matthew and Mark give account in more detail and in chronological order (Mk. 6:17ff; Mt. 14:3ff). Some of John's exhortations had to do with the adulterous living of Herod Antipas and Herodias. John the Baptist "condemned *all* the evils Herod had done." And they were many! Herod imprisoned him. Josephus says that Herod imprisoned John the Baptist because of his popularity with the multitudes. The very fact that Josephus records the event serves to give historical confirmation to the accuracy and authenticity of the gospel records.

SECTION 4

The Baptizer's Master (3:21-38)

21 Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, ²²and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form, as a dove, and a voice came from heaven, "Thou art my beloved Son; with thee I am well pleased."

23 Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about thirty years of

age, being the son (as was supposed) of Joseph, the son of Heli, ²⁴the son of Mathat, the son of Levi, the son of Melchi, the son of Jannai, the son of Joseph, ²⁵the son of Mattathias, the son of Amos, the son of Nahum, the son of Esli, the son of Naggai, ²⁶the son of Maath, the son of Mattathias, the son of Semein, the son of Josech, the son of Joda, ²⁷the son of Joanan, the son of Rhesa, the son of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, the son of Neri, ²⁸the son of Melchi, the son of Addi, the son of Cosam, the son of Elmadam, the son of Er, ²⁹the son of Joshua, the son of Eliezer, the son of Jorim, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, ³⁰the son of Simeon, the son of Judah, the son of Joseph, the son of Jonam, the son of Eliakim, ³¹the son of Melea, the son of Menna, the son of Mattaha, the son of Nathan, the son of David, ³²the son of Jesse, the son of Obed, the son of Boaz, the son of Sala, the son of Nahshon, ³³the son of Amminadab, the son of Hezron, the son of Perez, the son of Judah, ³⁴the son of Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham, the son of Terah, the son of Nahor, ³⁵the son of Serug, the son of Reu, the son of Peleg, the son of Eber, the son of Shelah, ³⁶the son of Cainan, the son of Arphaxad, the son of Shem, the son of Noah, the son of Lamech, ³⁷the son of Methuselah, the son of Enoch, the son of Jared, the son of Mahalaleel, the son of Cainan, ³⁸the son of Enos, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.

3:21-22 Goodness: Jesus came when he was about 30 years of age to submit to John's immersion. The date would have been approximately December, 26 A.D. or January, 27 A.D. It was more than 40 days before He went to the Passover recorded in John 2:13-22. He was led of the Spirit into the wilderness immediately after His baptism to be tempted by the devil. After His temptation He was pointed out by John the Baptist to some of his disciples, He traveled to Canan of Galilee for a wedding feast, spent a few days in Capernaum (Jn. 1:19—2:12) and then went to the Passover. The place He was baptized was probably "Bethany beyond the Jordan" (Jn. 1:28) also known as Bethabara ("house of the ford").

John objected; Jesus insisted. It would be a natural reaction for John to insist that he was unworthy to baptize the Messiah. John had already declared that the One Coming was so much greater than he. It is a clear doctrine of the New Testament that Jesus Christ was without sin. Why then did He need to be immersed with John's baptism? We suggest the following reasons:

- a. Acquiescence: The message God gave John the Baptist was that anyone who wished to be of the true Israel of God must acquiesce to a righteousness from an obedient

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heart. Matthew states that Jesus said, “. . . it is fitting . . .” (Mt. 3:15). The Greek word *prepon* might be translated, “proper.” It was *proper* for Jesus to acquiesce to any revealed commandment of the Father and fulfill righteousness from an obedient heart.

- b. Association: Jesus, to serve as our “pathfinder,” “redeemer,” and “faithful High Priest,” tested and tried in all points as we are tried, must “be made like His brethren in every respect” (Heb. 2:14-18). Jesus in His flesh, has traveled every road we have traveled, been tried in every way we have been tried, and submitted to every command we have been commanded.
- c. Authentication: God’s initial signal that this Person was His Son and the Messiah was at Jesus’ baptism. It was here Jesus was anointed by the Holy Spirit (Jn. 1:33-34) and approved by the verbal, audible announcement of the Father (Mt. 3:17).

Jesus acquiesced to John’s immersion to demonstrate that the man who wishes to be acclaimed “good” by God must have an obedient heart. Even the Son, who condescended to an incarnate experience, felt it was necessary to obey the Father’s will no matter who the messenger might be (cf. Mt. 17:24-27; Mt. 23:1-2; Heb. 5:7-9). If the sinless Son of God felt the necessity of walking 60-70 miles to submit in obedience to the Father’s revealed will to be immersed in the Jordan River, how can any believer today feel that it is *not* necessary to be immersed in obedience to the Son’s command?

3:23-38 Genealogy: Genealogies are “family trees.” The ancient Jews were very zealous to keep genealogical records (cf. Ezek. 13:9; Ezra 2:59, 62). These records were necessary for adjudicating inheritances of tribal lands and for succession of royal and priestly families. They were legal documents. Matthew’s genealogy traced Jesus’ lineage through Joseph because it was only through Joseph as His “father-of-record” that He had claim to David’s throne. Luke, probably not primarily interested in Jesus’ legal heritage, gives the parenthetical (“as was supposed, the son of Joseph”) explanation as he traces Jesus’ lineage back to Adam and God. Luke was more interested for the sake of his Gentile readers to trace Jesus’ ancestry to the original man Adam and thence to God. Luke’s genealogy would be a documented rebuttal to the mythological genealogies of the pagan gods. Joseph is distinctly declared by Matthew to be from David through Solomon, back to Abraham (Mt. 1:1-17; see also Mt. 1:20;

Lk. 2:4). But Joseph was connected to two lines of descent if you compare Luke's list with Matthew's. How could Joseph be the son of both Jacob (in Matthew) and Heli (in Luke)? As sometimes happened a man and his wife could not produce male heirs to their tribal heritage. God provided in the Old Testament economy what came to be known as the Levirate Law (Gen. 38:8ff; Deut. 25:5-10) whereby a deceased man's brother or nearest male kin was required to marry his brother's widow and raise up seed in his brother's name. Ruth's marriage to Boaz recognized this law (Ruth 4:1-17). This ancient custom was also applied in the practice of adoption. Orphaned children were often adopted (Esther 2:7) and thus became legal heirs through kinsmen. It is altogether possible that Heli was Joseph's first father and, upon his death, Joseph was adopted by Jacob and became legal heir to Jacob's heritage.

A comparison of Luke's genealogical record of Jesus' ancestry with that of Matthew will show Zerubbabel as the son of Shealtiel. But according to I Chronicles 3:19 Zerubbabel is the *nephew* of Shealtiel and the son of Pedaiiah. Zerubbabel is at one and the same time heir, and, legally son of two men. In Matthew's list Shealtiel is the son of Jechoniah, and in Luke he is the son of Neri. How do we resolve this problem? According to Jeremiah 22:30, Jechoniah was to have no children to succeed him in a legal sense on the throne (he was to be "prophetically" childless). Shealtiel became legal heir through his father's cousin Neri (see chart, pg. 62). The only place Neri is mentioned is in Luke's list. We assume then that Neri had no sons but when Jechoniah died, Shealtiel, the blood son of Jechoniah, was adopted by Neri (son of David through Nathan). What is true of Shealtiel is also true of Zerubbabel. He became the heir through Shealtiel because Shealtiel had no sons (Pedaiiah and his other brothers had probably died) so Zerubbabel was adopted by Shealtiel who was already legal heir through the Levirate Law. Thus God's prophecy concerning Jechoniah (legally childless) and the David lineage were both preserved.

The main aspect of the genealogical record of Christ's ancestry is to establish God's faithfulness, wisdom, and power to carry out His redemptive plan through the Divine-Man in spite of all obstacles and enemies. Imagine the difficulties that would arise if we did not possess proof that Jesus was the descendant of David! But even more importantly, the genealogies tracing Jesus' ancestry back to the original man, Adam, prove that God's plan was to save man by a Man. Man's redeemer must be a man; it was necessary that the power of the devil (the fear of death, Heb. 2:14-15) be conquered in the flesh. Man's sacrifice must be a man; a sinless, perfect man (cf. Heb. 10:4-10). Man's mediator must be a man (cf. I Tim. 2:5; Heb. 2:17-18). Jesus was The Man who redeemed man

STUDY STIMULATORS:

1. What do you think of the historical context in which John the Baptist carried out his mission? Would you be able to maintain an optimistic attitude if you were called to serve God in a similar historical context?
2. How did John the Baptist serve as a "link" between the Old and New covenants? What was the response God expected from all who heard his message?
3. Were people's sins forgiven when they submitted to John's immersion?
4. Why is it incorrect to state that John's baptism originated in "Jewish proselyte baptism"?
5. Why is it incorrect to state that John's baptism originated in the practice of Essene (Qumranian) washings?
6. Where did John's immersion originate? How did Jesus verify that?
7. What is the correct New Testament mode of baptism?
8. Has the Bible given any man or group of men sanction to change the mode of baptism?
9. Why did John call the Pharisees and Sadducees "a brood of vipers"? Would this same categorization apply to any contemporary religious teachers?
10. What is repentance? Is it to be accomplished only once in our lives?
11. Why is it necessary to repent of erroneous theology before repentance in ethics?
12. May one continue to be a soldier and please God?
13. Are all believers to be immersed in the Holy Spirit?
14. Why did Jesus insist on being baptized by John?
15. Why is it important that the genealogical record of Jesus' ancestry be a part of the gospel record?

Chapter Four (4:1-44)

TESTING THE SON OF MAN

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. What was the point in Jesus going forty days and nights without food (4:1-2)?
2. Since Jesus was Divine; perhaps temptation was not really a problem for Him (4:1-13)?
3. Isn't it too simplistic to deal with temptation by only quoting scripture (4:1-13)?
4. Why did the people of Nazareth become enraged enough to kill Jesus over a couple of stories about old prophets (4:16-30)?
5. How did Jesus get away from this enraged mob (4:30)?
6. Isn't it possible that "demon possession" was just mental illness (4:31-43)?
7. Why didn't Jesus let the demons continue to say who He was (4:41)?

SECTION 1

Victory of the Son of Man over Temptation (4:1-13)

4 And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan, and was led by the Spirit ²for forty days in the wilderness, tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing in those days; and when they were ended, he was hungry. ³The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread." ⁴And Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone.'" ⁵And the devil took him up, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, ⁶and said to him, "To you I will give all this authority and their glory; for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. ⁷If you, then, will worship me, it shall all be yours." ⁸And Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.'"

⁹And he took him to Jerusalem, and set him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here; ¹⁰for it is written,

'He will give his angels charge of you, to guard you,'

¹¹and

‘On their hands they will bear you up,
lest you strike your foot against a stone.’”

¹²And Jesus answered him, “It is said, ‘You shall not tempt the Lord your God.’” ¹³And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time.

4:1-8 Over Appetite and Ambition: The Son of Man came to defeat the devil. He came to do so in a fleshly body, subject to the tests and trials all men know. He not only defeated the devil in the flesh, He also established forever the strategy that will enable mankind to defeat the devil. First, one must realize the devil is a real being. The devil is not a creation of man’s imagination. We must trust only what the Bible says about the devil. To trust any other data about him is to risk being deceived by the very one we are trying to escape:

- a. He fell from heaven (Lk. 10:18).
- b. He pretends to rule the world (II Cor. 4:4).
- c. He rules a kingdom of rebellious demons (II Pet. 2:4; Jude 6).
- d. He is called tempter, adversary, accuser.
- e. He may fashion himself into an angel of light (II Cor. 11:14).
- f. He is able to work lying signs and wonders through human helpers (II Thess. 2:9; Rev. 13:13-14).
- g. He is bound to some limitations by God and Christ (Job 1:12; 2:6; Mt. 12:29).
- h. He is feared by angels of God (Jude 6).
- i. He seeks to destroy the church of Christ (Rev. 12:13-17).
- j. Pride was his snare (I Tim. 3:6).
- k. He is the father of liars and murderers (Jn. 8:44).
- l. He prowls around like a roaring lion seeking those who will stray so that he may devour them (I Pet. 5:8).

This is some of the biblical data which keeps us from being “ignorant of his devices” (II Cor. 2:11). Here in the temptations of Jesus we have an exposé of the devil’s basic strategems. There are three fundamental vulnerabilities of man which Satan attacks. Man was created by God to have these vulnerabilities. If man had no vulnerability between right and wrong, he could not believe, love, enjoy or be in the image of his Creator. The first of these is human appetite. All men need food, clothing, shelter, sex, rest, work, life and health. Satan takes advantage of these needs and tries to get men to make these human needs first in priority.

Jesus had a human body. His body needed food. He had fasted for forty days and nights. Fasting was not dieting—it was for the specific purpose of clearing the mind and concentrating it wholly on spiritual

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matters. Jesus had His priorities right. Food was secondary to His communion with the Father. But the devil attacked the physical part of Him which undoubtedly cried out for satisfaction after forty days of deprivation. But Jesus trusted in the Father's word: "Man shall not live by bread alone." In other words, a man's life does not consist in the things he possesses (cf. Lk. 12:15). There is a food which perishes (cf. Jn. 6:27); those who trust God are to labor for the food which does not perish. Jesus was tempted to distrust the Father's promise to provide everything necessary. Jesus had the power to provide for Himself. Why didn't He? Had He done so He would have provided no way for victory for us—we do not have such power. We may think we do, but we don't. We *must* trust God. It is through trust in His very great promises that we escape the corruption in the world because of passion, and become partakers of the divine nature (II Pet. 1:4). There is no other escape than to *trust* God's Word; which means to put it to practice in our daily living. Temptations must come (Mt. 18:7; Lk. 17:1); they come through man's own desires (James 1:14); God will not allow any man to be tested beyond his strength to overcome (I Cor. 10:13); God provides the way of escape (I Cor. 10:13; II Pet. 2:9); self-control helps guard against temptation (I Cor. 7:5) and so does prayer (Mt. 6:13; 26:41; Mk. 14:38; Lk. 11:4; 22:40, 46). Remember, the next time you are tempted to satisfy a God-given physical appetite above and beyond the guidelines of the Scriptures that you do not have to. God's Word has given man principles and precepts within which he may satisfy his physical nature to its greatest potential and most profitable use. The body is a means to an end. Man should use it to *glorify God for in glorifying God man lives!* Jesus proved the flesh did not have to have first priority! Jesus proved there was something higher. Jesus proved that by trusting God's Word, the flesh need not be vulnerable to Satan's attempts to control it. The life of the Christian does not consist in making provisions to gratify the desires of the flesh (Romans 13:14).

The next attack of the devil was upon ambition or the vulnerability of the human ego. Now human ego is God-given but it is intended to be held in check. Man needs an ego to give the initiative, creativity, correct amounts of ambition and the drive to find satisfaction in a job well done. Without the drive to do and be man would be a listless, lethargic drifter—totally passive. The crucial issue is whether man will surrender that God-given ego or ambition to divinely revealed goals. God has a purpose for all the drives and aspirations of the human ego. That purpose is to aspire to goodness, righteousness, truth, faithfulness and love. God's great ambition for all men is that they be conformed to the image of His Son (cf. Rom. 8:28-30; II Cor. 3:18; Phil. 3:8-16). He wants us to have the drive and ambition to seek after that. But the devil will attack us

at this point and try to convince us that our ambitions should be for ourselves and not for God. The devil will tempt us with human fame and human power to get us to direct our loyalty toward him and away from God. The devil will try to convince us that we can be “kings” of certain areas or portions of that which God created. He tempts us into believing that we can actually usurp God’s sovereignty in some areas where we seem to have special expertise or charisma. What the devil really means is that he will help us deceive ourselves that we can be “kings” if we will follow his way and do obeisance to him. Of course, it was a great temptation to Jesus. He knew He was a king, but He knew most of His subjects would not acknowledge His kingship because they were looking for a king of power, fame and political-mindedness. The devil was tempting Jesus to establish God’s kingdom on the same basis as worldly kingdoms. The enticement was to conduct God’s business like the world conducts its business. This is still a strong temptation for leaders in the church today. The way of God’s kingdom is servanthood, suffering and persuasion—not in being served in ease and comfort and worldly fame. Once again, Jesus overcame the temptation by trusting in God’s Word. The greatest of all must be servant of all. If we are faithful and suffer with Him, we shall reign with Him. For the glory that was set before Him, Jesus endured defamation, persecutions, misunderstanding and the cross. There is nothing physical, incomprehensible, emotional, esoteric or impossible in Jesus’ parry of the devil’s thrust. He simply said, “It is written. . . .” Only total commitment to God’s Word will furnish the power to survive the deceitful power of the devil.

4:9-13 Over Audacity: The devil’s final attack was upon the tendency of man to be audacious. Audacity is a daring that shows contempt for restraints of common sense and law; it is effrontery. It is the tendency to be proud and arrogant. The devil took Jesus to the “pinnacle” of the temple and dared Him to throw Himself down. The devil even quoted Scripture to Jesus (see Psa. 91:11). Satan is urging Jesus to do what seems to be the quickest, most spectacular way to accomplish His purpose. Jesus wants to be recognized as the Messiah. Jewish tradition said the Messiah would come “suddenly” in a spectacular way, to the temple. This would seem to be a plausible (at least spectacular) way to get the attention of the masses. Furthermore, says the devil, God’s word says, “. . . He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone” (Psa. 91:11-12). But Satan *misquoted* Scripture by omitting one very important phrase, “. . . to keep thee *in all thy ways.*” Jesus’ way was God’s way. To have done what Satan suggested would have put Him out of the *Messiah’s* way into the devil’s way. The Messiah’s way was the humble, serving, slow, painstaking way. For Jesus to have cast Himself down from the temple would

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have been to show contempt for the will of God concerning His mission. This was the old "end justifies the means" temptation. To do as Satan suggested would have been to audaciously go beyond the guidelines of God's way and put Him on trial. The way of the Messiah was to be suffering (Isa. 53).

Human beings are still vulnerable to such a suggestion by the devil today. Man is constantly enticed with the idea that he can fulfill God's purpose in his life by doing it his own way. Men still do not want the humble, serving, painstakingly slow way of God. Jesus warned that His kingdom must be built slowly and gradually like the planting of a seed and bringing it painstakingly to fruition first through the "blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear" (Mk. 4:28). The devil tempted Jesus to audaciously circumvent the way of the Cross and take matters into His own hands and gain His following by the quick, spectacular, showy way. Followers of Christ are vulnerable to the same temptation. The only defense against it is to know what God has revealed about His way, trust God that His way is the only way to life, and walk in it. To walk any other way is to go beyond the patience of God. Luke quotes Jesus' reply to the devil and uses the Greek word *ekpeiraseis* which literally means, "overtempt." This is the same Greek word used in the Septuagint version of Deut. 6:16. God wants us to trust His goodness, but He does not want us to "overtempt" Him and go beyond His goodness. God's patience is not inexhaustible (cf. I Cor. 10:6-13; Heb. 3:7-19, etc.). Because God is patient and long-suffering; not wishing that any should perish (II Pet. 3:9), man grows audacious and arrogant. Jesus, in the flesh, tempted strongly to dare God's way, resisted. We can resist that temptation too!

Jesus' temptations were strong. They were stronger than any other human will know. A shrewd man once said: "The man who has no problems with temptations is the man who always yields!" Temptation in the Lord's case was strengthened from the very fact that He possessed the supernatural powers the devil tried to get Him to misuse. Having failed to seduce Jesus into sinning against God, the devil left Him. Luke notes that the devil's intention was to resume his attack. The Greek word *kairou* means literally "season" but is translated in the RSV, "an opportune time." "In season" means "opportune time." Jesus was constantly tempted throughout His human existence. One of the most crucial hours of temptation came in the Garden of Gethsemane (cf. Mt. 26:39; Mk. 14:35; Lk. 22:41). His own disciples became channels through which the devil tempted Him (cf. Mt. 16:23).

The devil is malicious, hateful, evil and murderous. He will use our emotions, our physical nature, our friends, even our sub-consciousness to tempt us to disobey or distrust God. The only protection we have is

to deeply engrave the word of God on our thresholds (our conscious minds), so that he cannot slip inside our houses (our hearts, our subconscious minds) and rob us of our souls.

SECTION 2

Visitation of the Son of Man in Time (4:14-30)

14 And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee, and a report concerning him went out through all the surrounding country. 15 And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all.

16 And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up; and he went to the synagogue, as his custom was, on the sabbath day. And he stood up to read; 17 and there was given to him the book of the prophet Isaiah. He opened the book and found the place where it was written,

18 "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives

and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed,

19 to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."

20 And he closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him.

21 And he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." 22 And all spoke well of him, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth; and they said, "Is not this Joseph's son?"

23 And he said to them, "Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, 'Physician, heal yourself; what we have heard you did at Capernaum, do here also in your own country.' "

24 And he said, "Truly, I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in his own country. 25 But in truth, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when there came a great famine over all the land; 26 and Elijah was sent to none of them but only to Zarephath,

in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. 27 And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha; and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian." 28 When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath. 29 And they rose up and put him out of the city, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw him down headlong. 30 But passing through the midst of them he went away.

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4:14-20 Text: The victory Jesus won over the flesh and the devil gave Him great spiritual power. He left Judea and returned to Galilee where He went from village to village teaching in the synagogues. His wisdom and holiness were recognized by all who heard and observed Him and He became increasingly famous throughout Galilee. His name was on the lips of people wherever they gathered.

The Jewish Synagogue probably originated during the Babylonian Exile (606-536 B.C.). It was never really intended as a substitute for their Temple, but it did provide every Jewish community in exile a place to meet, hear their scriptures read, and pray. The Synagogue remains today as the strongest factor in the preservation of Jewish culture and religion. Synagogues could be found in Jesus' day in every city of the world where there were enough Jews to support them. The chief purpose of the synagogue was not public worship but instruction in the scriptures and the regulation of Jewish social and civil life (insofar as the country in which they lived might allow civil control by the synagogue). In Jesus' day the Temple in Jerusalem was the chief place of worship. The Pharisees and the Scribes controlled the synagogues in the first century A.D. Each synagogue was ruled by the elders of the community but they usually appointed a "president" or chief ruler in each one who was responsible for its properties and services, and presided at its meetings. A "minister" or "attendant" was also appointed to carry out the rulings of the "president" and acted as his subordinate. The "attendant" handled the scrolls, instructed the children, administered the scourgings, sounded the trumpet on Sabbath, etc.

Services were held every Sabbath. The congregation filed in and the men seated themselves on one side of the building while the women took seats on the other side. Prominent members of the community, especially the elders, took seats at the front of the building facing the audience. Jesus characterized the Pharisees as hypocrites who competed with one another for the best seats in the synagogues in order to be seen of men (Mt. 23:6). The best historical information available indicates the synagogue service probably went as follows:

- a. Service began with a congregational recitation of the "Shema" (*shema* means, "hear" or "obey") which was the Jewish confession of faith quoted from Deut. 6:4-5.
- b. This was followed by a congregational prayer called the Tefillah.
- c. A scripture lesson from the Law (the Pentateuch) was read. (Any member or visitor could be called upon, even a lad of 12 or more, to read the Law.)
- d. Next a scripture lesson from the Prophets was read (again any Jewish male could be asked to do so). The lesson from the Prophets was always restricted to less verses than the one from the Law.

- e. A sermon was preached on the scriptures read. Again any adult Jewish male could give the sermon although that was usually reserved for the elders, rabbis or rulers of the synagogue. Visiting rabbis were often invited to preach.
- f. A blessing was pronounced or a prayer was recited and the service was concluded.
- g. The congregation gave alms for the poor as they filed out of the meeting house.

Attendance at synagogue was not legislated in the Law of Moses. It was custom and tradition. It was a good custom and Jesus made it His "custom" to attend synagogue on the Sabbath. It afforded Jesus (and later the apostles) ready audiences assembled for the very purpose of religious pursuits. Jesus observed the customary ritual of the synagogue in standing to read and sitting down to preach.

Jesus took the scroll of Isaiah from the "attendant" and began to read. His text was Isaiah 61:1-2. He rolled up the scroll and returned it to the "attendant" and sat down. To understand why there was such expectation and anticipation by the audience as they stared at Jesus, one should read the entire 61st chapter of Isaiah. Undoubtedly most of the adult men present knew the whole context from which Jesus had read only two verses. The whole 61st chapter of Isaiah is gloriously messianic. It predicts the messianic era as one of freedom, fortune and fame for the messianic people (cf. comments in Isaiah, Vol. III, by Butler, College Press). The intent of Isaiah 61 is *spiritual*, as Jesus plainly indicates, but it is replete with highly figurative language describing the victorious vengeance, superfluity of wealth, subjugation of "aliens," and national renown God's messianic people are to have. For centuries Jewish rabbis in their apocryphal writings and traditions had been interpreting the messianic prophecies literally and physically. This Sabbath-day audience anticipated some such literal and materialistic rendering from Jesus, the widely acclaimed hometown boy.

4:21-30 Teaching: They heard more than they expected. Rather than give the usual rabbinical interpretation of this passage, Jesus made a startling claim, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." The Greek text makes it emphatic—*this* day, *this* scripture. The Greek word *peplerotai*, translated "fulfilled," is in the perfect tense. Greek perfect tense denotes an action accomplished with a continuing result. A good translation would be, "This day this scripture *stands fulfilled* in your presence."

Jesus was the Servant of Jehovah (Isa. 61) anointed by the Holy Spirit to proclaim liberty to the captives and release to those bound. The Hebrew word used in Isaiah 61 for liberty is *deror* and is also used in

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connection with the Year of Jubilee (Lev. 25:10; Ezek. 46:17) when bond-slaves were set free and land taken in payment for debts was returned to its original owners. The Mosaic Year of Jubilee was intended to typify the messianic liberation. Christ came to bind our jailor (the devil) and free us (cf. Mt. 12:25-30; Heb. 2:14-15; I Jn. 3:8-9; Rev. 20:1-6).

Jesus was also anointed to bring recovery of sight to the blind. He did physically heal a few blind people, but that was not the ultimate fulfillment of this prophecy from Isaiah. He came to give all who believe in Him the recovery of spiritual sight! (cf. Jn. 9:39-41).

He came to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. In Isaiah 61, the Hebrew word *ratzah* is translated *favorable* or *acceptable*. It means literally, delightful, pleasurable, gracious. The Servant (Jesus) came to announce the precise time God chose in His divine schedule of redemption to accomplish His *graciousness* toward man. God, through Jesus Christ, summoned all men to His pleasurable, conciliating time. The messianic age is the age of God's grace. *Now* is the acceptable time, today is the day of salvation (cf. II Cor. 6:1-2). (See our comments, *Isaiah, Vol. III*, College Press, pgs. 409-413).

The Jews in this synagogue at Nazareth expected Jesus to interpret Isaiah 61 physically and materially. When Jesus talked of "food" the Jews wanted bread and fish; when He talked of "wholeness" (peace) they wanted limbs restored; when He talked of "freedom" they wanted foreign rulers driven from their land. But physical circumstances are not what constitute the kingdom of God—it is character which does (Rom. 13:14; 14:17). Jesus intended the prophecy to be understood as having a spiritual fulfillment. His audience was momentarily caught up in dreams and reveries of a physical fulfillment. They all complimented Jesus on His masterful exposition of the prophet Isaiah. He aroused the feelings of national pride and eagerness for the messianic age in their hearts. Emotion welled up inside the listeners. Suddenly someone said, "Is not this Joseph's son?" Abruptly it dawned on them they had known this young man for thirty years as he grew up in Nazareth and he had not done one great thing there.

Jesus anticipated their reasoning. He knew they wanted to shout at him the proverbial, "Physician, heal yourself." They were reasoning, "If this son of Joseph is the Messiah, charity begins at home!" He speaks eloquently to us, they thought, but he does his great beneficent miracles in other places; his own home town folks should come first. Their reaction graphically exposes the unbelief of their hearts. Jesus was offering them Himself; they clamored for things! They also betray themselves as greedy, jealous and prejudiced. They should have rejoiced that Jesus had done miracles and helped needy people in other places, but they were envious.

The Lord had a proverb of His own. It is a truth proven by history that one generation persecutes and slays its prophets, and the next builds monuments to them. Their forefathers killed the prophets of old and these people of Nazareth adorned their tombs (cf. Mt. 23:29-36). It is the tragedy of one generation after another that so many wilfully reject opportunities to know God through His messengers. Now these faithless people are rejecting the One of whom all the other prophets spoke. They do not see and would not see even if a miracle were worked in their midst.

Thank God, there are those who will receive God's messengers and trust their word in spite of unpleasant circumstances. Jesus cites two cases from the sacred history of Israel itself to bring the people of Nazareth to their senses. Israel rejected Elijah, but a woman of Sidon who suffered through the same three and one-half years of drought, and was about to starve, believed the prophet, took him in and fed him and received a great blessing (cf. I Kings 17:9ff). The lepers of Israel did not believe Elisha, but a Syrian army captain named Naaman did and was cleansed (cf. II Kings 5:1ff).

Jesus got His point across. God is no respecter of persons, but men and women of every race, culture, generation or social level who trust God and receive His messengers will, in turn, receive His approval. But the people of Nazareth would have none of this doctrine! Jewish apocryphal traditions held that God had created the Gentiles to be "fuel for the fires of hell." Here this son of Joseph, a local boy who does nothing for his own home town, spouting messianic promises and claiming their fulfillment in Him, has the audacity to infer that God might favor Gentiles above Jews. Their reaction simply proves the people did not believe the prophet Isaiah either. Isaiah predicts in many places in his writings that God is going to bless men of all nations in the messianic age. In addition to the doctrine of the cross, the doctrine of the universality of the gospel was a stumbling-block to the Jews.

The people became violent. They rose up as one mob and took Jesus bodily and put Him out of the town. Outside the village they took Him to the brow of a steep hill upon which Nazareth was built and there tried to push Him off a cliff to His death. Jesus escaped. We are not told exactly how this was accomplished. John records similar escapes in Jerusalem (cf. Jn. 7:30; 10:39). Some think He simply walked through the crowd by the very power of His righteous personality. Others think something miraculous happened to allow Him to escape. Whatever the case, it was not His hour to die. He had full control of His destiny. He would lay down His life at the precise time appointed by God and He would take it up again—none would take it from Him!

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SECTION 3

Validation of the Son of Man's Authority (4:31-44)

31 And he went down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee. And he was teaching them on the sabbath; ³²and they were astonished at his teaching; for his word was with authority. ³³And in the synagogue there was a man who had the spirit of an unclean demon; and he cried out with a loud voice, ³⁴“Ah! What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God.” ³⁵But Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be silent, and come out of him!” And when the demon had thrown him down in the midst, he came out of him, having done him no harm. ³⁶And they were all amazed and said to one another, “What is this word? For with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits, and they come out.” ³⁷And reports of him went out into every place in the surrounding region.

38 And he arose and left the synagogue, and entered Simon's house. Now Simon's mother-in-law was ill with a high fever, and they besought him for her. ³⁹And he stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her; and immediately she rose and served them.

40 Now when the sun was setting all those who had any that were sick with various diseases brought them to him; and he laid his hands on every one of them and healed them. ⁴¹And demons also came out of many, crying, “You are the Son of God!” But he rebuked them, and would not allow them to speak, because they knew that he was the Christ.

42 And when it was day he departed and went into a lonely place. And the people sought him and came to him, and would have kept him from leaving them; ⁴³but he said to them, “I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other cities also; for I was sent for this purpose.” ⁴⁴And he was preaching in the synagogues of Judea.

4:31 Pronouncements: Luke has a different chronology of this early Galilean ministry than that of Matthew and Mark. Matthew and Mark list the healing of the demoniac, Peter's mother-in-law, and the masses *after* the miracle of the fishes and the call to discipleship of the fishermen (cf. Mt. 4:13-22; Mk. 1:14-20). Luke places the healing ministry *before* the call of the fishermen (cf. Lk. 5:1-11). We believe Luke had some reason for varying from the chronological order. Perhaps Luke did so to offer an explanation for the basis of such ready acceptance of Jesus' call by the fishermen. Whatever the case, after leaving the unbelieving,

murderous mob at the hills of Nazareth Jesus went down to the coast of the Sea of Galilee and the city of Capernaum. Jesus followed His custom of going to synagogue services on the Sabbath and finding opportunities there to teach. People were astounded at His teaching. The Greek participle *exeplessonto* is from the verb *plesso* which means "to be struck." The people were exceedingly mentally stricken with His teaching!

In both manner and content Jesus continually astounded people by His teaching (cf. Lk. 2:48; Jn. 4:29; 7:14-15; 7:46; Mt. 7:29). Mark 1:21, parallel to Luke 4:31, adds, ". . . for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes." Prophets said, "Thus saith the Lord." Rabbis and scribes said, "Thus saith the Rabbis and the traditions." Jesus said, "I say unto you!" The endless human traditions and officious pronouncements of the rabbis, which they elevated above the Scripture (cf. Mt. 15:1-20; Mk. 7:1-23), were monotonously and wearily repeated. But rather than bring men the mercy and forgiveness of God such teaching bound on them a burden they were unable to bear. The practical heart-searching words of Jesus were in direct contrast with the pointless minutiae and hair-splitting arguments of the rabbis. When men listened to Jesus, they said: Yes, He is right, that is so! The truth Jesus uttered was authoritative and men knew it. This is still true! Even though this period of the ministry of Jesus is marked by the working of many miracles, it does not seem that His *ordinary* preaching and teaching needed any such supernatural testimony to enable it to stand on its own merits as being authoritative. Today, take any teaching of Jesus and proclaim it anywhere in the world, and the common consciousness of humanity knows the teaching is true. That is because the teachings of Jesus are absolute truth.

4:32-41 Powers: This is the first confrontation of Jesus and demons in the record of Luke. There are interesting things to learn from this event. First, it is significant that Luke, the physician, does not question the reality of demon possession. Next, we observe some interesting things about the demon: (a) he was attending synagogue service; (b) he was called an *akathartou* ("unclean") demon which means religiously unclean or unholy—demons are beings who wish to have nothing to do with holiness, purity, goodness or righteousness but whose sole desire is evil and hurtfulness; (c) he was compelled to acknowledge the fact that Jesus was God's "Holy One"; (d) he was terrified of Jesus—the Greek expletive *ea* ("Ah!") is an oath or shriek of fear; (e) he convulsed the man he possessed—Greek, *rhipto*, meaning, "throw with a sudden jerking motion" (Mark 1:26, Gr. has *sparaxan*, from which we get the English words spasm and spastic); (f) the demon obeyed Jesus immediately.

Jesus' actions toward the demon manifest His complete sovereignty over evil spiritual beings: (a) Jesus charged (Gr. *epetimesen*, meaning

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literally, exercised His "honorship" upon) the demon to come out of the man; (b) Jesus forced the demon to be silent (Gr. *phimotheti*, "be muzzled"); (c) The people testified that with authority (*exousia*) and power (*dunamei*) Jesus commanded (*epitassei*—the same Greek word which may also be translated, subjected or subordinated) the evil spirit; Mark (1:27) adds testimony that the evil spirit *obeyed* Jesus. Reports (Greek, *echos*) of Jesus' fame echoed throughout all the surrounding region. The people said, This is a new teaching! (Mk. 1:27). Jesus' absolute authority over demons was so superior to the ineffectual superstitions of the exorcists it was totally unique.

Exorcists of that day believed the air was populated by evil spirits, and that on certain occasions they entered into men through food and drink. The Egyptians held that there were thirty-six parts of the human body, any of which might be entered and controlled by evil spirits. Some of the rabbis believed that since demons were invisible if one put sifted ashes on the threshold of the house, their footprints might be seen in the morning, prints like those that a chicken might leave. One rabbi, in order to protect himself against demons, always took a lamb with him every time he went to the bathroom since they attacked animals as well as human beings. Such superstitions are used by modern critics to attack the credibility of the biblical record of demon possession. They say Jesus was a victim of these superstitions of His day.

One of the following conclusions must be true concerning the reality of demons as mentioned in the Gospel accounts. No other possibilities exist, and only one of these may be true: Either,

- a. Jesus did cast out real demons as the texts represent, or,
- b. Jesus did no such thing and the accounts are entirely false, or,
- c. Jesus did go through the motions and the pretense of casting demons out, while He knew there were no real demons—He was a charlatan, or;
- d. Jesus was as ignorant and superstitious on this subject as the people and honestly thought He cast out spirits in healing sicknesses.

Which of these views fits the facts and the testimony? Jesus never made a statement in connection with demons which has been discredited by the progress of human knowledge. Modern thought is now not so certain that demon-possession is a mere superstition. There is no apparent organic reason for many illnesses (as attested by psychiatry and psychosomatic medicine). We know far too little about the relationship between the spiritual and physical realms to arbitrarily deny the historicity of the Gospel accounts of demon possession.

The New Testament discusses demons under the following headings: (a) Demons are Satan's messengers (angels), Mt. 25:41; I Cor. 6:3; II Cor. 12:7;

II Pet. 2:4; Jude 6; Rev. 9:11; 12:7; (b) Demons are "unclean spirits" Mt. 8:16; Mt. 8:28; 12:45; 10:1; Mk. 5:1, 2, 13; Mk. 1:23-28; 3:11-30; 6:7; 7:25; 9:14-20; Lk. 8:27-30; 4:33-36; 10:17-20; Mk. 9:17-25 (dumb spirit); Acts 16:16 (spirit of divination). Demons have these personality traits:

- a. They are knowledgeable; Mt. 8:29; Mk. 1:34; Jas. 2:19.
- b. They can speak; Lk. 4:33-41; Mk. 3:11-12; 5:7.
- c. They are fierce; Mt. 8:28; Mt. 17:14-21; Mk. 9:14-29; Lk. 9:37-43.
- d. They did great harm to people; Mt. 12:27ff; Mt. 9:32; Mk. 9:14-29.
- e. They did no good at all; Jn. 10:21.
- f. They need a body to inhabit; Mt. 8:28ff; Mt. 17:14-21; Mk. 9:14-29; Lk. 9:37-43.
- g. They may be many in number; Mk. 5:9.
- h. They fear Christ; Mk. 1:24; Lk. 4:34; Mt. 8:28-33; Mk. 5:1-20; Lk. 8:26-39.
- i. They often lead men to indulge in speculations about demons and inspire division within Christianity; I Tim. 4:1; Jas. 3:13-18; I Jn. 4:1-3; I Cor. 10:19-22; Rev. 16:14, etc.

We know from the divine record that demons abide:

- a. In heavenly places (Eph. 6:12).
- b. In the air (Eph. 2:2).
- c. In the earth (Job 1:7).
- d. In the sea (Mt. 8:32).
- e. In bodies of men (Mt. 12:43; Eph. 2:2).
- f. In kings and potentates of the world (Dan. 10:13-20; Rev. 16:14).
- g. In bodies of animals (Mk. 5:13).
- h. In waterless places (Lk. 11:24).
- i. Reserved in chains under darkness (II Pet. 2:4; Jude 6).
- j. In the abyss (Lk. 8:31).

Where does the Christian stand in relation to demons? First, Satan and his demons have been conquered by Christ (Lk. 10:18; Jn. 12:31; 16:11; Col. 2:15; Heb. 2:14; I Jn. 3:8; Mt. 12:29). Satan and his angels have been bound and limited by Christ who brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. But, like an insane army general who is defeated but will not quit until he is slain, Satan and his messengers are still active in the lives of men who love darkness (Acts 10:38; Eph. 4:27; 6:11, II Tim. 2:26; Jas. 4:7; I Pet. 5:8; I Jn. 3:8; 2:13-16; I Cor. 7:5; II Cor. 4:4; I Tim. 5:15; I Jn. 4:1; I Tim. 4:1; Jas. 3:15; Acts 5:16; 8:7; 16:16; Rom. 8:15; II Tim. 1:7; I Cor. 2:12; Eph. 6:12; 3:10; Rom. 8:38). Demons do exist! They cannot live in Christians because the *Holy Spirit* dwells in them. Christians are engaged in a cosmic struggle with the hosts of wickedness and the kingdom of darkness from which they have been transferred. Christians need

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the whole armor of God (Eph. 6:10ff; II Cor. 10:3-5). Greater is He that is in Christians than he that is in the world (I Jn. 4:4; 5:18-19; 2:14).

The New Testament is quite clear—demon possession was a reality. Ignorance on this matter is not in the mind of God or Christ but in ours.

Immediately after the incident with the demon-possessed man Jesus left the synagogue and went to Peter's home in Capernaum. Peter's mother-in-law lay sick with a "great fever" (Greek, *megalo pureto*—*pureto* is the word from which we have the English, pyre or pyrotechnic, and means "fire"). Ancient physicians (including Galen, 130 A.D.) divided fevers into two classes—little and great. Considering the total lack of insecticides and poor hygienic methods, becoming infected with some "great" fever (such as malaria, typhus, pneumonia, etc.) was an every day possibility. Luke's use of the imperfect Greek verb *sunechomene* (lit., "was being seized with") may indicate that her fever had seized her for a long time—perhaps a chronic malady. Doctor Luke watches Jesus through the eyes of a physician and describes Jesus as going in, standing over the patient and taking her by the hand. But there the normal "bedside manner" ends. Jesus "rebukes" the fever. He "charged" the fever (*epetimesen*, as with the demon) exercising His "honorship" upon the fever and it left her. Immediately (with no time necessary to recuperate or regain strength) she arose and began to serve the house guests of her son-in-law. It was a miraculous healing.

That evening, as the sun began to set toward the Mediterranean Sea, literally hundreds of people (so many it appeared to be the whole city of Capernaum) gathered outside the door of Peter's house with people ill from all kinds of diseases and those possessed of demons. They wanted Jesus to heal them. Luke uses the Greek adjective *hekasto* ("each") to qualify the noun *hen* ("one"). He means to say that Jesus healed *each and every single one* there who had an illness or was demon-possessed. Christ's healings contrasted with modern pseudo-healers reveals the following:

- a. Jesus did not heal for notoriety; Mt. 8:1-4; 9:27-31; Mk. 3:7-12; 7:31-37; 8:22-26, etc.
- b. Jesus healed all sorts of afflictions. One so-called "faith-healer" is known to have selected through screening only forty out of seven hundred who came to him for "healing."
- c. Jesus never indicated healing was to be universal. Four times He healed "many"; once He healed ten; three times He healed two at once; twenty-three times He healed one person; often He healed only one of many present who were ill.

- d. Jesus did not use auto-suggestion or hypnotism in His cures.
- e. Jesus did not indicate healing was to be appropriated by all who appropriate the atonement provided by His death.
- f. Jesus healed only Jews with two possible exceptions (Mt. 15:21-28; Jn. 4:46-54).
- g. Jesus never discouraged the use of physicians and medicines.
- h. There was never a question about the affliction of anyone Jesus healed.
- i. There was never any question, even from enemies of Jesus, whether the afflicted were healed or not.
- j. There was never a case of relapse when Jesus healed a person.
- k. Jesus performed no "partial" healings.
- l. Jesus did not make faith a uniform condition for healing.
- m. There were never any failures by Jesus to heal anyone He intended to heal.
- n. Jesus specialized in extreme cases (even death).
- o. No one ever found Jesus guilty of fraud in His healings.
- p. Jesus never asked patients to ignore their symptoms.
- q. Jesus never failed to heal all in a group when He proposed to heal a group.
- r. Christ's healings were invariably instantaneous.
- s. Compassion was not the ruling motive with the Lord.

Jesus refused to let the demons cry out that He was the Son of God. He did not want and did not need verification from demons that He was God's Holy Son. The Greek text portrays Jesus being very emphatic in silencing the demons. All too soon the enemies of Jesus would be accusing Him of working miracles by the power of the devil.

4:42-44 Purposes: Mark tells us that after the crowds dwindled away from Peter's door, Jesus slipped away in the very early morning hours (while it was still dark) (Mk. 1:35) to a lonely place to pray. He is probably driven to seek solitude and prayer to resist the temptations that would come with such popularity. The crowds kept on seeking (*epezetoun*, Greek imperfect tense) and kept on trying to detain Him (*kateichon*, imperfect). It is evident that attending to people's physical necessities made Jesus extremely popular. He could have been crowned king had He exploited His miraculous power for this end (cf. Jn. 6:14-15). But Christ's primary purpose is not to heal and feed physical bodies which are ultimately doomed to dissolution and death. The primary purpose of His ministry and kingdom is the regeneration of the spiritual man. He makes that plain when He says, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other cities also; for I was sent for this purpose."

Luke's note, "And he was preaching in the synagogues of Judea," (4:44) seems to disagree with Matthew (4:23) and Mark (1:39) who say

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Jesus "went throughout Galilee." This disagreement may be due to scribal error. While the Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, Ephraemi and Old Syriac manuscripts have "Judea," the Alexandrinus, Bezae, Vulgate, and Peshitto Syriac (and others) have "Galilee," for Luke 4:44.

STUDY STIMULATORS:

1. Do you think of the devil as a real person? What do you think of the powers he is said to possess? How much time do you think we should devote to studying about him?
2. Why did God create the human body with certain vulnerabilities?
3. What was the first vulnerability the devil attacked in Jesus? How did Jesus overcome the temptation? May we overcome the same way?
4. What human vulnerability did the devil attack next in Jesus? Are you subject to the same vulnerability? Have you ever been tempted in this? How did you overcome?
5. What human vulnerability did the devil attack last? Have you ever succumbed to the philosophy that "the end justifies the means"?
6. Why did Jesus seek out synagogues to proclaim His mission and message? What kind of service would be conducted in a synagogue?
7. How did Jesus interpret Isaiah 61:1-2 to the people of Nazareth? What kind of interpretation did they expect?
8. What did Jesus mean by the proverb, "Physician, heal yourself."
9. How is Jesus' authority demonstrated in His teaching?
10. Do you believe demons are real? Why?
11. Why can't demons possess Christians?
12. What are some significant differences between the miraculous healings performed by Jesus and those of pseudo "faith-healers" today?
13. Was Jesus' primary purpose that of compassion in His healings? If not, why did He heal?

Chapter Five (5:1-39)

THE SON OF MAN CATCHING MEN

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. If the fishermen had fished all night and caught nothing, why did they try their nets where Jesus suggested (5:5)?
2. Why did Peter want Jesus to depart from him (5:8)?
3. What is leprosy (5:12)?
4. Why did Jesus send the cleansed leper to the priest (5:14)?
5. What is a "Pharisee" (5:17)?
6. Why did Jesus say first to the paralyzed man, "Your sins are forgiven (5:20)?"
7. What is Jesus illustrating with the "new garment" and "new wine" (5:33-39)?

SECTION 1

Challenging Men (5:1-11)

5 While the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he was standing by the lake of Gennesaret. ²And he saw two boats by the lake; but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. ³Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon's, he asked him to put out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people from the boat. ⁴And when he had ceased speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." ⁵And Simon answered, "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets." ⁶And when they had done this, they enclosed a great shoal of fish; and as their nets were breaking, ⁷they beckoned to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. ⁸But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." ⁹For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the catch of fish which they had taken; ¹⁰and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus

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said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; henceforth you will be catching men." ¹¹And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him.

5:1-3 Teaching: The great popularity of Jesus made people continually "hound" Him for healing or some other great miracle. Luke notes that crowds followed Jesus down to the shore of the lake of Gennesaret and there "pressed upon Him."

Gennesaret is a Hebrew name meaning, "princely garden." It is also the name of a very fertile plain three miles long and one-half mile wide on the northwestern shore of the lake. Luke very accurately calls it a "lake." It is also known as the "Sea of Galilee," the "Sea of Tiberias," and in the Old Testament as the "Sea of Chinnereth," (meaning, harp-shaped). It is a fresh-water lake resting 680 feet below sea level surrounded by mountains so that it resembles a huge bowl. The lake swarmed with fish of many different varieties. Barclay notes that in it were found shoals of fish covering as much as an acre. The lake is about 13 miles long and 9 miles wide at its widest point. In Christ's day nine cities of 15,000 or more stood on its shores. It was the scene of much of Jesus' Galilean ministries. It is noted for its sudden and violent storms caused by cold air sweeping down from the vast northern plateaus and converging with the tropical humidity of the lake 680 feet below sea level.

The crowds pushing and pressing made it impossible for Jesus to find a place to stand where all could see and hear Him. He saw two empty fishing boats. The fishermen were out on the shore washing their nets after a long night of fishing and catching nothing. Jesus stepped into one of the boats; it belonged to Simon Peter (the other boat probably belonged to John and James). This is not the first time Jesus met these Galilean fishermen.

He asked Peter to push the boat out into the lake a little way. Then Jesus sat down and began to teach. The Greek imperfect verb *edidasken* means Jesus kept on teaching the people. Luke does not record what Jesus said. But apparently what He taught had some connection to the great miracle which followed immediately. He must have taught things which pointed to His identity as the Messiah, for when He ceased speaking words He began teaching by sign and portent what He wanted to communicate: He is Lord! He desires that men leave all and follow Him!

5:4-7 Testing: Luke, the world traveler, notes that Jesus used the word *epanagage* a definite Greek nautical term meaning, "put to sea, set sail, launch forth," (cf. Lk. 8:22; Acts 13:13; 16:11; 18:21, etc.). Jesus instructed the fishermen to row out to the deep (Gr. *bathos*) part of the lake which could be as much as 150 ft. deep and let down their nets. Here is a land-lubber telling experienced fishermen how to fish!

Fishing was one of the three major industries of Galilee (along with agriculture and sheep-herding). Fishermen had an honorable place in society. They had a reputation of being seriously religious. There had been fishermen in Israel beyond the memory of man. Job, Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Habakkuk all speak of fishermen and their work. The tools of their trade, the back-breaking toil and the many fruitless hours, demanded strong, rough, tough, fearless, patient men. The daily experiences of fishermen taught them to be hard-headed realists. These character traits coupled with a lack of formal higher education would make them unlikely candidates for positions of leadership in the estimation of most people. Yet these are the very men Jesus chose to be apostles! The humble heart of a servant is fundamentally more significant to Jesus than all the erudition and charm in the world. The Israelites chose their first king on the basis of charm and not character (1 Sam. 8-9) and the results were tragic!

It was, therefore, a real test of their character when Jesus commanded, ". . . let down your nets for a catch." Peter answered, "Master (Gr. *epistata*, meaning "one who has the right to command," or "captain") we toiled all night and took nothing!" Peter uses the Greek word *kopiasantes* which means to "labor strenuously until one is weary and sore." Peter was tired. But Peter acknowledged the authority of Jesus to demand his trust even in the face of what seemed impossible, and at the word of Jesus let down the net once more that day.

How had Peter arrived at this relationship with Jesus? Peter and Andrew, James and John had been directed to Jesus by John the Baptist a year (or more) previous to this encounter (Jn. 1:35ff). From that first encounter near the time of Jesus' baptism (December 26 A.D.), they followed Him, heard His teaching and saw many of His miracles for about a year. These fishermen saw Him make water into wine (Jn. 2) and cleanse the Temple; do many miracles in Judea (Jn. 3:2); preach to Nicodemus and the woman at the well (Jn. 3 and 4); and perhaps they witnessed the healing of the Capernaum nobleman's son (Jn. 4). After that they apparently returned to their fishing businesses on the Sea of Galilee while Jesus conducted His early Galilean ministry (Lk. 4). Peter's acknowledgement of Jesus' "captaincy" was not an emotional, spur-of-the-moment whim—it was based on solid evidence which he had witnessed with his own eyes and ears.

Obedience to the word of Jesus brought into their nets such a huge quantity of fish the nets began to tear and come apart (Gr. *dierresseto*). They had to motion (Gr. *kateneusan*, nodding the head vigorously) to their partners to come help. Galilean fishermen had to form partnerships to have the capital to buy equipment and to carry out the extremely difficult labor. In speaking of such teamwork Luke uses two words,

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metochois ("partners" 5:7) and *koinonoi* ("sharers" 5:10); literally the words would be "have with" and "participate with" respectively. The boats were filled so full they were sinking. In verse six the literal description of the catch is, "they enclosed a multitude of fishes, a much . . ."

5:8-11 Turning: Although Peter had undoubtedly witnessed miracles by Jesus before (see above), this miracle on his own home grounds, involving his own vocation, his own boat and his own close associates, had profound impact on the deepest recesses of his personality. Here was One who had demonstrated supernatural sovereignty over matters which touched the most intimate aspects of Peter's life. Surely He was *Lord!* Peter was a realist, but he was also a man of deep feeling and religious devotion. Recognizing Jesus as Lord implicated Peter as a sinful man in the presence of Deity! Peter knew what Isaiah knew (Isa. 6:1ff)—God is absolutely holy, man is unholy and in need of forgiveness. This was a turning point in Peter's life! Jesus had never before challenged anyone to leave all and follow Him, but He was about to do so.

Matthew and Mark record that Jesus said, "Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men." Luke adds these words of Jesus, "Do not be afraid; henceforth you will be catching men." Jesus used the Greek word *zogron* which means literally, "capturing alive." The word is used in reference to the devil's capturing people (II Tim. 2:26). Apparently the emphasis is on securing and saving the lives of men for one purpose or another. Jesus wants men captured alive for Him that He may give them eternal blessedness. The devil wants to trap men alive to take them with him to eternal torment (Rev. 20:10). These fishermen added up all the evidence they had of who Jesus was and made the most momentous decision of their lives. They left everything else in second place and made Him and His will first in their lives. They went with Him to assist Him in His divine mission. They turned from being fishermen to become fishers of men.

The great Fisherman, Christ; His disciples, fishers; the world of men pictured as fish; these were favorite images of Christian artists and writers of the first centuries of the church. One of the earliest extant Christian hymns written by Clement of Alexandria (155-215 A.D.) dwells on such images:

"Fisher of men, the blest,
Out of the world's unrest,
Out of sin's troubled sea,
Taking us, Lord, to thee;
Out of the waves of strife
With bait of blissful life;
Drawing thy nets to shore,
With choicest fish, good store."

The picture of the fish carved on so many tombs in the catacombs of Rome preserves this image until this very day.

SECTION 2

Cleansing Men (5:12-26)

12 While he was in one of the cities, there came a man full of leprosy; and when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and besought him, "Lord, if you will, you can make me clean."¹³ And he stretched out his hand, and touched him, saying, "I will; be clean." And immediately the leprosy left him.¹⁴ And he charged him to tell no one; but "go and show yourself to the priest, and make an offering for your cleansing, as Moses commanded, for a proof to the people."¹⁵ But so much the more the report went abroad concerning him; and great multitudes gathered to hear and to be healed of their infirmities.¹⁶ But he withdrew to the wilderness and prayed.

17 On one of those days, as he was teaching, there were Pharisees, and teachers of the law sitting by, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem; and the power of the Lord was with him to heal.¹⁸ And behold, men were bringing on a bed a man who was paralyzed, and they sought to bring him in and lay him before Jesus;¹⁹ but finding no way to bring him in, because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down with his bed through the tiles into the midst before Jesus.²⁰ And when he saw their faith he said, "Man, your sins are forgiven you."²¹ And the scribes and the Pharisees began to question, saying, "Who is this that speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God only?"²² When Jesus perceived their questionings, he answered them, "Why do you question in your hearts?²³ Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Rise and walk'?"²⁴ But that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he said to the man who was paralyzed—"I say to you, rise, take up your bed and go home."²⁵ And immediately he rose before them, and took up that on which he lay, and went home, glorifying God.²⁶ And amazement seized them all, and they glorified God and were filled with awe, saying, "We have seen strange things today."

5:12-16 The Defiled: ". . . there came to him a man full of leprosy . . ." Lepers were some of the most pathetic people of that era. It was not the physical but the social consequences of their malady that made their situation so extreme. Leviticus chapters 13 and 14 give scrupulous directions for the ostracism of lepers. They were cast out of towns and villages and had to live far away from healthy people. Often they lived in caves or tombs. They were not allowed to come within one hundred feet of a well person. When anyone approached, the leper was required

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to cry out concerning himself, "Unclean, unclean!" Often people who were well threw stones at lepers (even rabbis). No one was allowed to touch a leper. Lepers were deprived of all religious contact. They were considered outcasts from the "camp of Israel." They were forbidden access to the Temple and its services. It was the social, religious and psychological deprivation that made the lepers such pitiful cases then.

Note the desperation in the leper's plea: "he fell on his face and besought him, Lord if you will, you can make me clean." The Greek word translated "besought" might more literally be translated, "begged." It is interesting that the leper asked for cleansing (Gr. *katharisaí*) and not healing. The leper expressed humility, absolute faith in Jesus' ability, and acquiescence to whatever Jesus willed to do. This is the kind of attitude Jesus always honors (cf. I Jn. 5:14-15). With this kind of total commitment, Jesus was able to do the impossible. He could do for this defiled "untouchable" what no one else could do—He could cleanse! It is the Lord's will to cleanse the defiled. So, Luke records, He touched the leper and said, "I am willing, be cleansed (Gr. *katharisthēti*)."

No one was supposed to touch a leper lest they too be defiled. Jesus' act declares: (a) I have authority to fulfill and supercede the Law—I am the Lawgiver; (b) I have power to take away the penalty that keeps man from God; (c) Love fulfills the Law! Jesus did not fulfill the Law and take away the penalty in fact, however, until He died on the cross and rose from the dead. This incident was simply a typical prediction of what He was going to do. Although Jesus fulfilled and superceded certain aspects of the Mosaic Law in order to show their true meaning, He never ignored the authority of that Law so long as it was in effect. Therefore, He ordered the leper to go to the priest, make the required sacrifices, and receive official cleansing before re-entering society.

To keep from enlarging the great throngs seeking Him merely for healing and to keep from increasing the agitation against Him already at work among the Jewish religious leaders, Jesus told the man to say nothing to anyone about his healing. Mark tells us that the man went out and began to spread the news so widely that Jesus could no longer openly enter a town because of the great multitudes which gathered to be healed of their infirmities, (Mk. 1:45), so Jesus had to stay out in the country. Luke notes that He withdrew into the "wilderness" (uninhabited areas) to pray. If these multitudes had sought Jesus to learn of the will of God for their spiritual lives and to commit themselves to Him for atonement and regeneration, He would not have withdrawn. Their primary concern, however, appears to have been physical and not spiritual.

A Brief Study of Biblical Leprosy:

1. The word *lepra* in pre-biblical Greek meant "psoriasis" or "scaly."
Translators of the Latin Vulgate took this Greek word and rendered

it into the Latin as *leprosus*, and it was from the Latin that our first English transliteration (not translation) *leprosy* came! Had the Greek word been *translated* it would have appeared as "scaly." Even the Latin *leprosus* means a scaling or peeling condition and the Latin word *liber* (book or parchment or leaves) is of the same derivation as *leprosus*.

2. The Hebrew word *tzara'ath* is from a root word meaning "to cast down, to defile." In Leviticus 13 and 14, even garments and walls of houses could have *tzara'ath*. This Hebrew word is translated in the English Bible as "leprosy."
3. Priests of the Old Testament were given only a few days to diagnose *tzara'ath*. It is medically impossible to diagnose modern Hansen's disease (modern leprosy) in such a short time. This suggests that the "leprosy" of the Bible was not the Hansen's disease (leprosy) we know today.
4. The Hebrew *tzara'ath* and the Greek *lepra*, *lepros* apparently denoted numerous skin conditions which were pronounced "unclean" for religious and social reasons but which were curable. These skin conditions served the same purpose as other conditions which incurred defilement—to show the absoluteness of man's estrangement from God because of sin.
5. It is significant that the only leper *healed* in the New Testament was one of the 10 Samaritan lepers. All other lepers were *cleansed*. Apparently the Samaritan was simply *healed* since he could not be sent to a Jewish priest to be *cleansed*.
6. It is also significant that there is no mention of leprosy (defilement) after the death and resurrection of Christ. The Law was nailed to the cross and fulfilled; there was no more ceremonial defilement. So, while the apostles healed the sick, cast out demons, raised the dead, caused the blind to see, the lame to walk, the deaf to hear, the dumb to speak, *they never cleansed a leper!*
7. Modern doctors have shown that the symptoms related in Leviticus chapter 13 have no connection with the disease we call leprosy (mycobacterium leprae) which is really Hansen's disease. Hansen's disease is an incurable disease mainly affecting the nervous system.

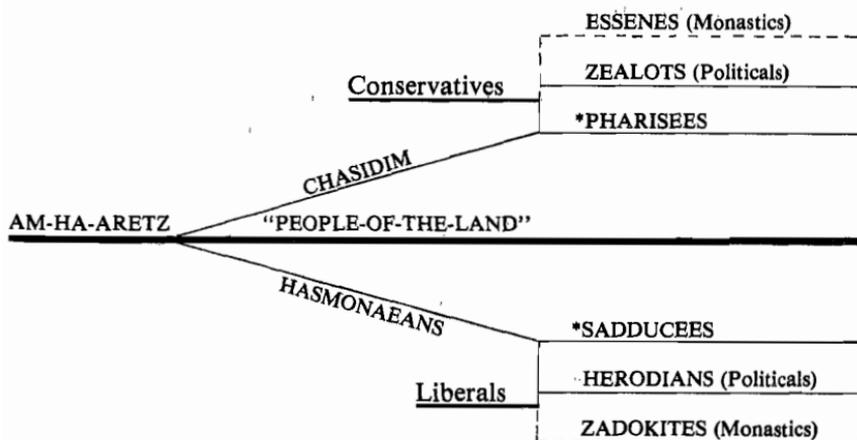
5:16-26 The Defeated: Luke mentions for the first time in his gospel the presence of Pharisees. The religious sect known as the Pharisees probably originated in the days of the Seleucid-Jewish struggles from a group of Jews who called themselves "the chasidim." The Hebrew word *chasidim* means, "the pious ones" and they resisted to the death any encroachments of Hellenistic paganism upon their Jewish culture. This took place about 300-200 B.C. This group gained the favor of the

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majority of the common people and were able, by the time of Jesus, to exert tremendous influence upon society.

The Hebrew word *pharashim* (Pharisee) means, "distinctly divided or separated" and the Pharisees were extreme separatists. They were promoters of a traditional, exclusivistic Judaism. They numbered about 6000 in Jesus' time. They were contemptuous of all who did not follow their traditions. The fundamental feature of Pharisaism was extreme legalism. In their zeal for the preservation of Jewish culture they devised thousands of traditions and rules about the Scriptures in order to protect the Law from being violated. They cared more for their rules than they did either the Law or men (cf. Mt. 12:1-8; Mk. 2:23-28; Lk. 6:1-5; Mt. 15:1-20; Mk. 7:1-13, etc.). They did believe in divine providence, the free will of man, resurrection from the dead and final judgment, and a coming Messiah. They placed great store in history and the traditional culture of the Jewish race but were interested in politics only when politics interfered with their cultural and religious traditions. They were outwardly, very religious, and were the recognized (even by Jesus, Mt. 23:1) repositories of religious instruction. They were, however, for the most part hypocritical in their relationship toward God (cf. Mt. 23:1ff). See the following chart, The Religious/Political Frame of First Century Judaism, for the origins of Jewish sects.

THE RELIGIOUS / POLITICAL FRAME OF FIRST CENTURY JUDAISM



* Not all priests were Sadducees.

* Not all rabbis were Pharisees.

The Pharisees, charged with the responsibility of maintaining the purity of Judaism, were here in Galilee investigating the sudden popularity of the itinerant Galilean rabbi, Jesus. Very little was officially known about Jesus. He had not gone to rabbinical schools; He apparently had little respect for Judea (had not spent much time there) which was the capital of conservative Judaism; it was being rumored that He took a very liberal view toward the traditions of the Pharisees. Jesus was teaching and preaching the word (cf. Mk. 2:1-2) and they wanted to know where He stood doctrinally. They were concerned as to whether Jesus of Nazareth based His teaching on traditional rabbinical authority or not. They soon found out!

Four friends with a frantic faith brought a man afflicted with paralysis to be healed by Jesus. The Greek word for bed is *klines* and denotes a couch for reclining at meals, in distinction from a *krabbatos* which in Greek would mean, "pallet or mattress." They could not get this couch through the door since people were jammed into the house and out around the door (cf. Mk. 2:1-2). They carried the couch to the roof-top of the house, took away some of the tiles of the roof, and let the man and his couch down through the roof into the room. The Greek word describing the man's affliction is *paralelumenos*. It is a perfect participle which means he had been paralyzed in the past and continued to be so. The word literally means, "loosed from something that is consistently fixed." Part of the man's body had been loosed from its normal consistency to the rest of the body. We know today that paralysis has something to do with the malfunction of the nerves of portions of the body in their connections to the brain. Brain damage (through stroke or accident) is usually what causes paralysis. Paralysis is almost totally incurable by medical technology.

Jesus surprised everyone with His first action toward the man. He said, "Man, your sins are forgiven you!" Matthew (9:2) notes Jesus said, "Be of good cheer . . . your sins are forgiven." Why did Jesus say this first and leave the more serious problem of the man's paralysis for later? Because the paralysis was *not* the "more serious" problem! Jesus is forcing the more serious issues first: (a) the man needs forgiveness even if he never receives healing; (b) most serious of all, the issue of His deity—His divine authority—must be declared in uncertain terms. The Pharisees recognized immediately the seriousness of Jesus' initial statement. They recognized that such a claim (to be able to forgive sins) was, if false, blasphemy. What they reasoned within themselves was true! Only God can forgive sins! The problem was the Pharisees refused to accept the idea (taught in the Old Testament, Isa. 7:14; Micah 5:2) that God could reside in a human body (become incarnate).

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Jesus, by supernatural knowledge, knew what they were reasoning within their minds. He proceeds to present incontrovertible proof of His authority. They cannot test the invisible power to forgive sins, but they can test His visible power to heal a paralytic. The healing proves the other. God would not grant such power to a liar and fraud. It is easy to say, "Your sins are forgiven you," and no external evidence will be available to verify its factuality. But to say to a paralyzed man, "Rise, take up your bed and go home" is not easy for it can be subjected to external verification! The following chart, somewhat appropriated from *The Gospel of Matthew, Vol. II*, pgs. 139-142, by Harold Fowler, pub. College Press, demonstrates the logical defense Jesus made against the charge of blasphemy.

THE REASONING OF THE PHARISEES	
False premise → really a conclusion	<p>Major Premise: "No man can forgive sins but God alone." Minor Premise: "But this one is not God in any sense." Conclusion: "Therefore, this one is blaspheming God in arrogating to himself authority to forgive sins, a prerogative which is God's alone."</p>
THE LOGIC OF JESUS' ARGUMENT	
1	<p>Major Premise: "No man but God can heal paralysis with a word of power." Minor Premise: "But I have power on earth to heal paralysis with a word of power (as demonstrated)." Conclusion: "I possess on earth the authority of God to heal paralysis." (This conclusion becomes the minor premise of further argument).</p>
2	<p>Major Premise: "None can forgive sins but one with God's authority and attributes." Minor Premise: "I have shown that I possess God's authority and God's attributes." Conclusion: "Therefore, I have power on earth to forgive sins."</p>
3	<p>Major Premise: "Only those who pretend to divine prerogative without right or authority are guilty of blasphemy." Minor Premise: "I have demonstrated by this miracle that I do possess the proper right or authority to exercise divine prerogatives." Conclusion: "Therefore, I am not guilty of blasphemy."</p>

Notice, Jesus did not say, "By the power of God, rise . . ." but, "I say to you, rise . . ." Eventually the Jews crucified Jesus on the charge of blasphemy. Jesus was not guilty of blasphemy because He proved that He possessed the absolute power of God and thus rightfully claimed the prerogatives of Almighty God.

The reactions of the multitudes are interesting: (a) they were afraid (Mt. 9:8; Lk. 5:26) (Gr. *ephobethesan* from *phobia*); (b) they were amazed (Mk. 2:12; Lk. 5:26) (Gr. *ekstasis*; they were *ecstatic*); (c) they glorified God (Mt. 9:8; Mk. 2:12; Lk. 5:26)—the word glorified in the O.T. comes from *kavod* which means *weight* and apparently derives from the idea of a person's wealth or worth; (d) they said, "We have seen strange (Gr. *paradoxa* from which we get *paradoxical*) things"—the word paradox means, "that which is contrary to the norm." They certainly did see strange and wonderful things from Jesus. No one had ever manifested such divine power—no one in their right mind had ever made such astounding claims. But perhaps the most paradoxical thing they saw that day was the refusal of the Pharisees to accept what they had seen with their own eyes verified to be true!

SECTION 3

Converting Men (5:27-39)

27 After this he went out, and saw a tax collector, named Levi, sitting at the tax office; and he said to him, "Follow me." ²⁸And he left everything, and rose and followed him.

29 And Levi made him a great feast in his house; and there was a large company of tax collectors and others sitting at table with them. ³⁰And the Pharisees and their scribes murmured against his disciples, saying, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" ³¹And Jesus answered them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; ³²I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

33 And they said to him, "The disciples of John fast often and offer prayers, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees, but yours eat and drink." ³⁴And Jesus said to them, "Can you make wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? ³⁵The days will come, when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in those days." ³⁶He told them a parable also: "No one tears a piece from an old garment; if he does, he will tear the new, and the piece from the new will not match the old. ³⁷And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; if he does, the new wine will burst the skins and it will be spilled, and the skins will be destroyed. ³⁸But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins. ³⁹And no one after drinking old wine desires new; for he says, 'The old is good.'"

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5:27-28 From Secondary Pursuits: Mark indicates Jesus went out from the inner city to a place "beside the sea" (Mk. 2:13) and taught the people gathered about Him. As Jesus passed on along the busy boat docks of the city He saw a man called Levi (which means, "companion"). His other name was Matthew (which means, "gift"). This Levi was a tax-collector (Gr. *telones* from *telos*, meaning toll, custom or tax); tax-collectors were called "publicans" from Latin *publicanus*. We know the following things about Levi: (a) His father's name was Alphaeus; (b) he was undoubtedly skilled in writing and keeping records; (c) he was apparently well versed in the Old Testament for he quotes more from it than any other gospel writer; (d) he left a lucrative position to follow Jesus; (e) he must have been a man of deep spiritual convictions to have such concern for his former colleagues.

The typical publican of that day may be characterized as: (a) self-centered, Mt. 5:46-47; (b) heathenish, Mt. 18:17; 11:19; 21:31; (c) mercenary, Lk. 19:2, 8; (d) yet, more able to repent than the Pharisees, Lk. 7:29-30; 18:9-14; 19:8. Levi probably did not fit this picture in all its aspects. He does not seem to be self-centered or mercenary. Most publicans were hated by all the Jews because they collected taxes for the despised Roman conquerors. Furthermore, the Romans had a system of "farming-out" taxes. Rome stipulated a fixed amount of taxes they wished to receive from conquered provinces. The collectors were to insure that amount; all they could collect above that amount they could keep as salary. Many tax-collectors became adept at fraud, extortion and manipulation, and some became very rich. The Jews considered them as traitors and heathen; not fit to be included in the covenant with Jehovah, and classed with the worst of sinners.

The Lord called Levi to change his occupation to the highest of all callings—an evangelist of the gospel of Jesus Christ. While it is not stated, we may assume that Levi had prior knowledge of Jesus: (a) no one followed Jesus blindly; (b) Jesus had conducted an extensive ministry of teaching and working miracles in the city of Capernaum prior to His call to Levi; (c) Levi may have already had business contacts with the fishermen-apostles who would have told him about Jesus. The Lord had a special mission for this man who had special training. Levi, skilled and experienced at record-keeping, gave the world its most influential and enduring place of historical record—a biography of the life of the Incarnate God, Jesus Christ. Levi was converted. He immediately left all, put his trust in Jesus and followed Him. Levi committed himself to the proposition of Jesus, "Seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these (necessities) things will be added to you."

5:29-32 From Sin: This was a turning point in Levi's life. He felt satisfied he had found Someone who could lead him to Life with a capital "L."

He believed he had found the Messiah who would fill his empty life with truth, love and holy comradeship which his forefathers and the prophets had so longed for. Now Levi wanted his associates and friends to know this Jesus also. Ultimately, this is the only real way to follow Jesus!

Levi was a man of considerable financial means, so he held a huge "reception" (*megale*, Gr. for great; *douche*—from *dechomai*, to receive) for Jesus in his own home. There was a huge crowd (Gr. *ochlos*, multitude; *polus*, much) of tax-collectors and other people at Levi's for this reception-supper. They were all reclining (Gr. *katakeimenoî*), probably on the Roman "triclinium" type couches. The triclinium was wide enough for three people. They rested their head on their left hand (the left elbow resting on the couch) and fed themselves with their right hand. Eating utensils such as we know today were possessed only by the well-to-do and rich. There were no forks; only knives, spoons, drinking goblets or cups and an individual dish for each diner. In the homes of the common people diners took a piece of flat Jewish bread and dipped it into the food in their individual dishes, or, in some cases where there were no individual dishes, the diners, one at a time, dipped a morsel of bread into the one main dish of food on the table. No one ever ate standing up. Jewish tradition says, "Eating or drinking upright upsets a man's whole body." In ordinary meals it was permissible to put one's hand into the common dish, but never to put it in at the same time as another guest—that would be extremely rude according to the apocryphal book Ecclesiasticus. An ordinary meal, in a moderately well-to-do home, would have consisted of fish or kid, vegetables (particularly onions), and cakes, with local wine to wash it all down. We do not know what Levi had served. It may have been more sumptuous than that. Whatever the meal, the real purpose of Levi was to introduce his friends to this miracle-working Teacher who spoke with the authority of God.

There were Pharisees and scribes there. We do not know they were in Levi's house when they "grumbled" at the disciples of Jesus. They could have been. It is doubtful that Levi had invited them. But in Palestine then, it was customary for spectators to gather, uninvited inside the larger homes just to watch the "goings-on" at one of the huge feasts of the well-to-do. It was a form of entertainment. More likely, however, the Pharisees heard about the feast and attacked Jesus' disciples after the feast was over somewhere other than in Levi's house. No self-respecting Pharisee would ever defile himself by entering a "publican's" house. This was the main point of their attack upon Jesus and His disciples. To the Pharisees a publican was no better than a Gentile or a Samaritan. In those days to dine indicated not simply hospitality and friendship, but brotherhood. When a person was invited to dine and did so, people

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assumed that the host and guest were in agreement religiously, politically and socially (cf. II Jn. 9-11, etc.). Pharisees considered tax-collectors and sinners anathema (cf. Lk. 18:11; Mt. 18:17). Thus the Pharisees assumed Jesus was condoning sin and had defiled Himself by such intimate association with Levi. Jesus ate with a publican—Jesus had joined in brotherhood with a publican. Rabbis only associated with righteous people. To the Pharisees it was not a question of the needs of the publican to know the truth and be brought to repentance; their highest priority was themselves—the keeping of themselves *traditionally* pure by not associating with sinners. There were no such instructions in the Law of Moses. To bring a sinner to a knowledge of God's revealed will so that sinner will repent, is the highest form of love—and love is the fulfillment of the law.

The Pharisees murmured. The Greek word is *egonguzon* which means to "grumble, mumble, or murmur indignantly in a low tone." It is onomatopoeic; i.e., when the word is pronounced it sounds like the thing it is describing. It is like the English word *gong*. Jesus' answer is a masterpiece. It is subtle enough not to enrage while at the same time it contains enough sarcasm that it cannot be shrugged off without having felt the sting of rebuke. Pharisees considered themselves learned teachers of the Law and publicans as unlearned heathen. Pharisees and rabbis looked upon the Law as medicine for the soul and themselves as blameless before the Law; therefore, in need of no repentance. Publicans were, to Pharisees, spiritually ill—in fact, terminally ill. Jesus said, Those who are well do not need a doctor; those who are ill do! Where else would you expect to find a physician than among the ill? Those who do not believe themselves to be ill will not seek a physician. Jesus came to save or "heal" those who recognize they are ill and need His healing. Publicans know they are sinners and want help (Lk. 18:13; 7:29); Pharisees do not acknowledge they are sinners (although they are) and do not want help (Lk. 18:11-12; 7:30; Jn. 9:39-41). That is why Jesus ate with publicans and sinners! If we are to bring people to Jesus for salvation, we must find those who will acknowledge they are sinners. Those who think they can be saved by themselves or someone other than Jesus are like the Pharisees. There is only one way to find sinners—befriend them, associate with them, and introduce them to Jesus. Befriending sinners does not mean we condone their sin. Eating with sinners and associating with them in certain situations does not mean we will be defiled. The apostle Paul knew Christians would be forced in certain situations of everyday life to associate with sinners (I Cor. 5:9-10), otherwise Christians would have to leave this world altogether. Thousands of sinners want to know Jesus. If Christians withdraw into little monastic clubs and mingle only with one another, how shall these thousands ever be introduced to Jesus?

5:33-39 From Self-Righteousness: A monastic attitude tends to produce self-righteousness. Self-righteousness feeds on legalism. This is the point of the next encounter between Jesus and the Pharisees. And it is all connected to the graciousness of Jesus toward Levi as contrasted with the self-righteous bigotry of the Pharisees toward publicans. This is not really a renunciation of the law of God; it is a disavowal of legalism and Pharisaic traditions. Jesus never renounced the Law; He came not to destroy it but to fulfill it.

Both Matthew and Mark indicate that John the Baptist's disciples joined the Pharisees in carping at Jesus in this instance. John the Baptist was probably already in prison by Herod's decree. These disciples of John were apparently part of the crowd of uninvited spectators at Levi's house or had been seduced by the Pharisees to join in attacking Jesus because of His innovative religious behavior. Had John been free he would not even have attended such an affair. He lived the life of an ascetic for the purpose of God, not to promote his own self-righteousness in the legalistic way of the Pharisees. The Pharisees, on the other hand, lived outwardly austere and ascetic to justify themselves in their legalism. The Pharisees fasted often and prayed often—publicly. They withdrew into a modified form of monasticism so they would appear to be righteous, unable to tolerate "sinners."

Where did the idea of fasting originate? Its origin is spiritual, not dietary. The commandment of the Law was that the Hebrew worshiper should *'innah* (Hebrew for "afflict") the soul (Lev. 16:29-34; 23:26-32; Num. 29:7, etc.). There was really no specific instruction concerning abstinence in the original commandment. The Hebrew word *tzum* is translated "fast," but this word is *not* used in the first 6 books of the Old Testament. Apparently the instruction in the Pentateuch "to afflict the soul" came to be *interpreted* to mean abstain from food and other things. The instructors in the Pentateuch said the Hebrew was to "afflict his soul" only on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) which occurred once a year in October. The Pharisees fasted *twice each week*, on Mondays and Thursdays, as well as on other special occasions. The Pharisees made a point to do their "fasting" publicly going to great lengths to exhibit penitence. They put dust and ashes on their heads; they wore sackcloth next to their skin; they allowed their hair and beards to go unkempt; Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 6:16) they disfigured their faces (Gr. *aphanizousin*) with gloom (Gr. *skuthropos*, "sadness, sullenness, moroseness"); and, of course, they abstained from food. Jesus' answer is not intended to preclude fasting altogether. Jesus fasted (Mt. 4:2). Jesus also said, "When you fast. . ." (Mt. 6:17), indicating there would be times when a Christian might wish to fast. Fasting (or, afflicting the soul) might be in order in times of spiritual depression,

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penitence or mourning. But it should be a spontaneous expression, not faked or pretended. And it cannot be legalistically and arbitrarily regulated by human traditions. These are the two main points of Jesus' answer. There is a time for fasting and there is a time for feasting; a wedding is a place to feast, not fast! The Messiah had come—it was a time to rejoice and come to God's feast (as the O.T. Prophets predicted, Isa. 25:6ff; 55:1ff; 61:1ff). John the Baptist himself had confirmed that Jesus was The Bridegroom. The "children of the bridechamber" certainly should not fast or mourn while the Bridegroom was with them. When the Bridegroom was slain would be the time for mourning; and that would come soon enough. But even that mourning would last only a short time for the Bridegroom would be raised from the dead and then joy would return to the disciples.

But the Pharisees refused to acknowledge that the Messiah had come. They refused to accept the announcement that God's promises of salvation by grace were present in Jesus. They preferred to continue seeking justification through their legalistic traditions. This is the point of the parables Jesus uses here. Obviously, the new garment and the new wine is the Christian revelation of salvation by grace and the old garment and old wineskins represent the old system to which the Jews were clinging for salvation; the Law of Moses, especially as it was traditionally interpreted and practiced for the purposes of self-justification. The promise of God for salvation was never intended to be limited in its appropriation to a set of rules and traditions. God's salvation has always been by grace, through faith (Rom. 5:2). The promise, made to Abraham when he was a Gentile, was to be appropriated through faith, and the Law which came 430 years later did not annul the promise or the means of appropriation. The Law was *not* against salvation by grace through faith. In fact, the Law was given to intensify man's realization that his only hope of salvation was by grace through faith. This is more precisely taught in Romans, chapters 3 through 8, and Galatians, chapters 3 through 5. It was *not* the Law itself that condemned man. Man was condemned by his perversion of the Law. Man took God's Law and arrogantly declared that he needed no grace from God, no faith in God, for he could, by adding his own interpretations and traditions to it, keep it in such an absolute and perfect way, God would owe him salvation. Man perverted the Law into a system of self-justification. His faith was in himself and his system—not in the Lawgiver, God.

Jesus came to fulfill the old system; He did not come to patch it up. To make the "new" a patch on the "old" would never work. Cloth in Jesus' day was not "sanforized." A patch of new cloth on old, when washed, would shrink and tear itself away from the old. New, unfermented

wine put in old, brittle and dried out wineskins, would form gases as it fermented and would soon burst the old skins. The proper thing to do is put new wine in new skins; when the new wine forms gases, the new skins stretch to meet the situation.

The new era of grace ushered in by Christ and His fulfillment of the old cannot be contained in the forms of the old Law and especially in the traditions of the Pharisees. Systems of Law and Tradition must, by their very nature, be constructed to fit times and cultures. Salvation by grace through faith fits all times and cultures. The Christian dispensation of God's grace calls for new and expanding ways to express itself. It must be able to transcend human cultures. It must divorce the spirit of man from its tendency to cling to the seen and direct it to the unseen. It must be able to strip the spirit of man of its tendency to arrogance and self-justification through a system and direct it to trust the absolute faithfulness of a Person. Man must be freed from the penalty of guilt in failing to perfectly obey the Law of God and his own perversions of that Law, so he can enter a covenant relationship with the God of grace by faith. That is what Jesus accomplished for man! That is why Christianity is not simply a "patch-up-job" on legalism; that is why Christianity cannot be restricted into some humanly legalistic "wineskin." Once a man believes in Christ, accepts His new covenant terms and is immersed in water, he is justified by the grace of God and he is forgiven all penalties and is free to grow in his expression of faith and love toward God as he allows himself to be motivated and guided by the Spirit of God through the New Covenant scriptures. Such a person is born again—a citizen of the kingdom of God. Never again does he need to seek to justify himself before God; never again can anyone else bind him to a system of legalism. Only the individual through distrust in God and His word, enslaves himself again to legalism.

Now this is the point of Jesus' last illustration here (Lk. 5:39). Jesus ends this discussion of conversion on a sad note. It will be very difficult for most men to *give up* the old way of self-justification and accept the new justification by grace through faith. Pride, the mother of all sins, is not easy to surrender. Pharisees (those of Jesus' day and those of all ages) satisfy themselves with "old wine" (self-righteousness through human legalism). The old is pleasant, so why even try the new? Human legalism is a form of idolatry. The Pharisees made *void* the word of God by their traditions and legalism and thus these became their god. The man who makes his own god can manipulate it. Human legalism can be manipulated to serve man's pride and other fleshly lusts. It is not easy to surrender in faith to the Personal God who *cannot* be manipulated. Jesus found it easier to convert Levi, who had probably not been too concerned with self-justification, than to convert the Pharisees

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whose self-righteousness closed their hearts to the grace of Christ. As one man has said, "How often does the good become the enemy of the best!" The idea of self-justification is intoxicating and exhilarating to the proud heart of man.

Keeping the commandments of Christ because we believe, trust and love Him is not legalism. Legalism is an attitude, not an action. Legalism is the proud heart of man thinking he can keep the law of God perfectly and not incur guilt and so earn his salvation by self-righteousness. Legalism does not depend upon the imputed righteousness of Christ but upon self-attained merit. Trying to obey the commandments of Christ because one believes and accepts His salvation as a gift is not legalism, but love.

STUDY STIMULATORS:

1. How would you characterize the "lake of Gennesaret"? What part did it have to play in Jesus' ministry?
2. What do you think of Jesus selecting fishermen to become apostles? How do men usually go about choosing their leaders (cf. I Sam. 8:5, 19, 20; 9:1-2)?
3. Did Jesus expect these fishermen to follow Him on some immediate, emotional whim? Does Jesus ever expect anyone to follow Him on that basis? How do you know?
4. Why was the miracle of the great catch of fish so impressive to Peter?
5. Describe the social circumstances of having "leprosy" in Jesus' day.
6. What was "leprosy"? What religious function did it have?
7. What did Jesus signify when He cleansed this leper?
8. What is a Pharisee? Where did they come from? Why were they following Jesus?
9. What was "paralysis" according to Dr. Luke? Why did they let the paralyzed man down through the roof into the house where Jesus was?
10. Why did Jesus *first* tell the paralyzed man his sins were forgiven?
11. What did the Pharisees say about Jesus forgiving the man's sins?
12. How did Jesus prove He could forgive the man's sins?
13. Who was Levi and what did he do for a living?
14. Why would Jesus call Levi to be an apostle?
15. How did Levi introduce Jesus to his friends?
16. Why did Jesus eat with "publicans and sinners"?
17. Why did the Pharisees and John's disciples attack Jesus for not fasting?
18. What is "fasting"? When should Christians fast?
19. What did Jesus mean by saying, "You cannot put new patches on old cloth . . ." and "You cannot put new wine into old wineskins"?
20. Why do men not desire the new "wine" after having drunk the "old"?
21. What is legalism? What is it *not*?

Chapter Six (6:1-49)

THE SON OF MAN EXPLAINING THE NATURE OF HIS KINGDOM

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. What is unlawful about plucking a few ears of grain on the sabbath (6:1-2)?
2. Why would the Pharisees get so enraged at Jesus for healing a man on the sabbath (6:11)?
3. Is being poor a prerequisite to citizenship in God's kingdom (6:20)?
4. Are Christians literally to turn the other cheek every time they are assaulted on the one (6:29)?
5. If we are not to judge one another, how can churches take it upon themselves to "excommunicate" certain members (6:37)?
6. Are there certain people intrinsically "good" and others intrinsically "evil" (6:43-45)?
7. Does the mouth of man always speak what is in the heart, or is a man able to hide what is in his heart (6:45)?

SECTION 1

Mercy (6:1-11)

6 On a sabbath, while he was going through the grainfields, his disciples plucked and ate some heads of grain, rubbing them in their hands. ²But some of the Pharisees said, "Why are you doing what is not lawful to do on the sabbath?" ³And Jesus answered, "Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: ⁴how he entered the house of God, and took and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and also gave it to those with him?" ⁵And he said to them, "The Son of man is lord of the sabbath."

6 On another sabbath, when he entered the synagogue and taught, a man was there whose right hand was withered. ⁷And the scribes and the Pharisees watched him, to see whether he would heal on the sabbath, so that they might find an accusation against him. ⁸But he knew their thoughts, and he said to the man who had the withered hand, "Come and stand here," And he rose and stood there. ⁹And Jesus said to them, "I ask you, is it lawful on the sabbath

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to do good or to do harm, to save life or to destroy it?" ¹⁰And he looked around on them all, and said to him, "Stretch out your hand." And he did so, and his hand was retored. ¹¹But they were filled with fury and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus.

6:1-5 The Perfection of the Law: Actually the controversy over Sabbath traditions and Jesus' approach to them came to a head just before this incident. Jesus had gone to Jerusalem to Passover, just prior to this. The student should read chapter 5 of John's Gospel for that confrontation. Apparently Luke is recording an incident in a grain field as Jesus was returning to Galilee with His disciples. Perhaps the Pharisees were travelling along—or they may have been local residents.

The Sabbath was the most unique aspect of Judaism. Practically all other religions (even pagan) had sacrifices, priests and temples, but only Judaism made one day out of each week so emphatically significant in religion. First century Judaism had literally hundreds and hundreds of minute traditions concerning Sabbath observance. The *law* concerning the Sabbath is really quite simple (Ex. 20:8-11); no work is permitted on that day. Exodus 34:21 specifies that no harvesting is allowed on the Sabbath. But the Israelite traveler going into his neighbor's standing grain was permitted to pluck grain by hand and eat as much as he wished (Deut. 23:24-25). Such action was not considered "harvesting." God would not contradict Himself. As Fowler points out (*Matthew, Vol. II*, College Press), the Pharisees presumed to be able to state God's will more clearly with their myriads of traditions than He was able to state it Himself. The Sabbath law was not complicated. God intended the Sabbath to be a day of rest and worship. The Pharisees had legislated practically every movement of the human body on the Sabbath day. This made void the word of God and defeated God's purpose for the Sabbath. No man could have rested or worshiped under such conditions.

The disciples did not violate the law of Moses: (a) Jesus did not rebuke the disciples—had they broken God's law He would have chastened them; (b) actually, the Mosaic law permits plucking grain (Deut. 23:24-25) without distinction as to the day; (c) Jesus pointed out that mercy for hungry human beings would not be a violation of the law, even if a specific law were contravened. Jesus referred to an illustrious case in their own history. God did not strike David dead when he entered the Tabernacle and took "show-bread" (the law specifically stated only priests were to eat this bread, Lev. 24:9) and fed his starving army (I Sam. 21:1-6). Human need takes precedence over any ritual—even over a specific law of God. How can that be? Because the very spirit and essence of the law of God for mankind is to supply the highest good for the

individual. God's highest good to man is mercy. Man's highest good to a fellow-man is mercy. Whatever is *truly* merciful is the fulfillment of the law (cf. Rom. 13:8-10; I Jn. 4:20-21). Jesus proved that with God, human need comes even before divinely sanctioned ceremonies! If this be true, how much more did hungry disciples come before the *human traditions* of the Pharisees? Christians must guard against their opinions or traditions coming before mercy and human need lest they be found standing with the Pharisees of old.

With masterful finesse and subtlety Jesus stakes out His claim to deity here. He declares the Son of Man controls the Sabbath instead of being controlled by it. And who has just given an authoritative statement on Sabbath priorities—He has! Matthew mentions that He gave them an even stronger clue about Himself when He reminded them that on the Sabbath the priests in the *temple* profane the Sabbath (by circumcising infants, etc.), and are guiltless; and *One greater* than the temple was in their midst! (Mt. 12:1-8). Mark adds this interesting statement of Jesus, "The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath," (Mk. 2:27). The sabbath does not precede human need.

6:6-11 The Protection of Life: God intended man to use the sabbath to sustain life, both physical and spiritual. He did *not* intend man to be destroyed by the sabbath. To worship God and glorify His name by ministering to the needs of others is life-sustaining. It sustains the physical life of others (and perhaps even their spiritual life), while enriching and edifying the spiritual life of the one ministering.

On another sabbath, in Galilee, Jesus went to a synagogue crowded with worshipers. As He began to teach, He noticed a man present who had a "withered" right hand. Dr. Luke notes it was the *right* hand. This would incapacitate the man from earning a living. If Jesus were to heal the man He would be "saving the man's life." The scribes and Pharisees glued their eyes on Jesus to see if He would heal on the Sabbath. The Greek word translated "watched" is *pareterounto*, a compound word—*para* means, *near* and *tereo* means, *keep watch* or *guard*.

The Pharisees were plotting to put Jesus on the spot in this crowded place by asking Him, "Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath?" Jesus anticipated their plot and, calling the man with the withered hand to the front of the auditorium, said, "I ask *you*, Is it lawful on the sabbath to do good or to harm, to save life or to destroy it?" Matthew reports Jesus reminded the audience that the Pharisees and their traditions were more considerate of an animal than of a man since their tradition permitted them to rescue one of their sheep on the sabbath if it had fallen into a pit. It is at this moment, as Mark notes, Jesus looked around at these

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hypocrites with *anger* (Gr. *orges*). The one time we are told Jesus was *angry* it is in connection with hypocrisy—a sin of the spirit, not one of fleshly passion. Of course, Christ never approves of any sin, but it does appear that He is more disturbed over the unique obtuseness of the sins of pride and self-righteous hypocrisy than those of fleshly indulgence; probably because of the almost total lack of compassion in the self-righteous hypocrite.

Jesus then demonstrated the divine answer to His question by healing the man's withered hand. The Greek word translated *restored* is *apekatestathe*. It is a word commonly used in the everyday language of the stonemason to explain that when a workman accidentally broke a stone, he made good the breakage by substituting a new stone in place of the broken one. Matthew (12:13) says the man's withered hand was "restored, whole like the other." Jesus gave the man back his livelihood. But the Pharisees were filled with *fury*. And here the Greek word is *anoiias* which literally means, "out of their minds." Their rage was senseless, mindless, blind fury. They were so bereft of reason in their passionate hatred of Jesus at this moment they rushed out and teamed up with the Herodians (Mk. 3:6), some of their bitterest political enemies, how they might do away with Jesus. It is rather awesome and frightening how pride, self-righteousness and hypocrisy will, in order to justify itself, blind itself to compassion and goodness in mindless rage. Pride is a monster, whipped into a devouring passion by the devil himself (Gen. 3:4-5).

SECTION 2

Ministering (6:12-19)

12 In these days he went out to the mountain to pray; and all night he continued in prayer to God. ¹³And when it was day, he called his disciples, and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles; ¹⁴Simon, whom he named Peter, and Andrew his brother, and James and John, and Philip, and Bartholomew, ¹⁵and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot, ¹⁶and Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

17 And he came down with them and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, who

came to hear him and to be healed of their diseases; ¹⁸and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. ¹⁹And all the crowd sought to touch him, for power came forth from him and healed them all.

6:12-16 Helpers called: Jesus reached a critical point in His earthly ministry. His popularity was at its peak. Multitudes pressed upon Him wherever He went. The number of disciples (Gr. *mathetas*, “learners”) had increased. He was not physically able to perform all the ministering that needed to be done. He was ready to commission a small group to become special helpers for His present ministry and train them for a world-encompassing ministry of their own when He would leave their physical presence to return to Heaven. Mark’s parallel passage states that Jesus chose the twelve for three reasons: (a) “to be with him,”—He needed their companionship and they needed His training; (b) “to be sent out to preach”—His message needed wider verbalization than He alone could give it; (c) “and have authority to cast out demons”—evidence that they were spokesmen for God. Mark says Jesus “made” the twelve (Gr. *epoiesen*); Luke says He “chose” from all the disciples, twelve. The Greek word *eklexamenos* is translated “chose” and is the word from which we get the English word *eclectic*.

This was such a momentous decision, one which would affect all men for all time and eternity, Jesus went aside from the multitudes and prayed all night before His selection of the twelve men. The following morning He chose the men and gave them the title, “apostle” (Gr. *apostello*) which means “one sent forth.” The Greek word is similar to the Latin word *missio* from which we get the English word, “missionary.”

Evaluated by the world’s standards, these men would never have been selected for such a crucial and demanding task. None of them possessed any unique “charisma” for leadership, not one of them had any “formal” training or family background to recommend them as potential influences on society or history. Four of them at least were common laborers in the fishing industry; one of them was a hated tax-collector; another was a right-wing political terrorist (Simon the Zealot). None were, as far as the record goes, of the “intelligentsia,” or of the ruling classes. But then it was the *message* these men delivered, not the men themselves, which had such a history-changing impact upon the world. Of course, they were men of character (all but one, Judas Iscariot) or they would not have been faithful and courageous messengers. Still, when all is said and done, it is the gospel which saves, not the gospel messenger. Perhaps the following chart will help the student combine in one glance the different listings of the apostles made in the New Testament:

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JESUS CHOSE TWELVE DISCIPLES, AND MADE THEM APOSTLES

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * 1. Simon Peter (Bar-Jonah) 2. Andrew, Peter's brother 3. James, John's brother 4. John, (Bar-Zebedee) 5. Philip 6. Nathanael (Bar-Tholomew or Bar-Tolmai) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Thomas Didymus ("Twin") 8. Matthew, Levi, (Bar-Alphaeus) 9. James (Bar-Alphaeus—not above) 10. Judas Thaddaeus, of James 11. Simon, Cananean, Zealot 12. Judas Iscariot (Bar-Simon) |
|--|---|

** Mt. 10:2-4	Mk. 3:13-19	Lk. 6:12-16	Acts 1:13
Simon Peter	Simon Peter	Simon Peter	Peter
Andrew his brother	James of Zebedee	Andrew his bro.	John
James of Zebedee	John his bro.	James	James
John his bro.	Andrew	John	Andrew
Philip	Philip	Philip	Philip
Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Thomas
Thomas	Matthew	Matthew	Bartholomew
Matthew, publican	Thomas	Thomas	Matthew
James of Alphaeus	James of Alph.	James of Alph.	James of Alph.
Thaddaeus	Thaddaeus	Simon Zealot	Simon Zealot
Simon Cananean	Simon Can.	Judas of James	Judas of James
Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot	

* Follows Matthew's list

** As they are specifically listed by the writers of the New Testament.

Jesus must have seen in each of these men some qualities which would have been especially useful in His kingdom. Eleven of them were helpful in fulfilling the nature of the Kingdom of God by ministering the gospel to the world. One of them was a betrayer, Judas Iscariot. Jesus knew Judas' heart before the deed was committed (Jn. 6:70). Then why was he chosen? We like the answer of Hobbs, "Certainly it was not for the express purpose of betrayal. God does not deal with men as puppets. All that we can say is that Jesus offered him his chance, and he did not take it. It will forever remain a mystery. But it serves as a warning to all."

6:17-19 Healing certified: What appears to be a discrepancy when one attempts to harmonize Matthew and Mark with Luke at this juncture is not a discrepancy at all. Close examination of the three accounts shows the following order: (a) Jesus aware of the great crowds following Him after healing the man with the withered hand, withdrew to the sea of Galilee (Mt. 12:15; Mk. 3:7); (b) a great multitude from all over the land of Palestine followed Him and His disciples to the sea, many in that area having been healed (Mt. 4:24-25; Mk. 3:7-12), and Jesus ordered them not to make His presence known; (c) Matthew quotes an O.T. prophecy (Isa. 42:1ff) to show that Jesus is fulfilling the Messianic character of the kingdom—ministry of spiritual healing; (d) Jesus withdraws from the multitudes by the sea and goes up on a mountain where he prays all night (Mt. 5:1; Mk. 3:13; Lk. 6:12-13); (e) Jesus chooses twelve disciples and names the apostles (Mt. 10:2-4; Mk. 3:14-19; Lk. 6:13-16); (f) Jesus comes down from the mountain to a “level place” and a great multitude from all over Palestine is once again thronging after Him to be healed and He healed them all (Lk. 6:17-20). And this is where we take up our comments on the Gospel of Luke again. Matthew skips around chronologically in his record because his purpose was to record the life of Jesus by subject matter, not by chronological order. This is done frequently by modern biographers without the issue of inaccuracy ever being raised. Why should it be raised against Matthew when his accuracy is verified by the three other biographers of Jesus?

There may have been a number of Gentiles in the crowds who came to “hear” and “be healed” since people were there from the “seacoast of Tyre and Sidon.” The interesting notation of Luke is that they came to “hear,” as well as be healed. We noted above that Matthew used Isaiah’s prophecy of the Lord’s “Servant” to characterize the Messiah’s ministry as one of spiritual healing. We have already dealt with the relationship of physical healing to the spiritual goal of Jesus’ ministry in our comments on Luke 4:32-44. It is interesting to note in Isaiah’s prophecy the emphasis on the Messiah’s ministry to “gentiles” since some of the people here are from Tyre and Sidon. Jesus’ earthly ministry was primarily to the Jewish people, calling them to their messianic destiny (Mt. 15:24) but whenever a Gentile came to Him in faith He was pleased, and honored their faith with grace and mercy. This multitude came to hear—Jesus lifted up His eyes and began to preach. And what a sermon it was! It has never been duplicated for simplicity and profundity. It is absolutely matchless! It marks clearly, concisely and conclusively that the nature of the Son of Man’s kingdom is a society of godliness and moral character lived out in the lives of individuals.

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SECTION 3

Moral (6:20-26)

20 And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said:

“Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

21 “Blessed are you that hunger now, for you shall be satisfied.

“Blessed are you that weep now, for you shall laugh.

22 “Blessed are you when men hate you, and when they exclude you and revile you, and cast out your name as evil, on account of the Son of man! ²³Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets.

24 “But woe to you that are rich, for you have received your consolation.

25 “Woe to you that are full now, for you shall hunger.

“Woe to you that laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep.

26 “Woe to you, when all men speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets.

6:20-23 Weal: “Weal” means blessing. Jesus pronounced certain blessings on citizens of His messianic kingdom. But before we deal with the beatitudes of this sermon we must briefly look at reasons for assuming this is the *same* sermon recorded in Matthew, chapters 5, 6 and 7, called “The Sermon on the Mount.” The student will immediately recognize there are both similarities and differences in the two records. Note the following:

- a. They begin and end the same way following the same general order in the rest of the sermon.
- b. It is altogether feasible that they are chronologically in the same time slot (see comments above on 6:17-19).
- c. Matthew, writing for Jews, would naturally stress certain elements of the Mosaic law in relation to the nature of the messianic kingdom, but such matters would be of little interest to Luke’s gentile patron, Theophilus, so he omits this.
- d. It is possible that Matthew, gifted at recording data, and an eyewitness to the Sermon, made a verbatim account while Luke, depending on eyewitnesses years after the fact (see Introduction) got only a summarization.
- e. While Matthew says Jesus went up on a mountain and indicates the Sermon was delivered there, Luke says He came down to a level place and preached it. The “level place” of Luke could be some plateau or natural amphitheater part of the way down the mountain.

- f. If it be urged that Matthew places the Sermon earlier in time, we reply it is evident that Matthew is not so much concerned with chronology as with topical arrangement. He has probably done so with this Sermon, placing it in an early part of his document as an example of Jesus' matchless preaching and as the keynote sermon of His messianic ministry. Luke has the chronological arrangement.

The four beatitudes summarize what a citizen of the kingdom of Christ *is*. They deal with character and being, because Christianity is fundamentally *being* before it is *doing*. What a man *is* must precede what he *does* in order to please God. That which motivates and controls a man determines whether what a man does is acceptable to God or not. Fasting, praying and giving alms to the poor are good in the eyes of God only if they are motivated from godly purpose.

- a. Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Both Jew and Gentile considered wealth as a sign of God's approval. Jesus and the apostles taught differently. Poverty within itself is no virtue just as wealth is not necessarily a vice. But poverty may prove to be a blessing in that it may strip a man of self-reliance and make him totally dependent upon God. Matthew says, "poor in spirit," but Matthew and Luke are ultimately picturing the same kind of moral character.
- b. Blessed are you that hunger now, for you shall be satisfied. Those who are poor, of both this world's goods and of spirit, will be satisfied if they rely on God. Matthew puts it, "hungering and thirsting after righteousness." Those simply hungering for more material things will never be satisfied! Hunger or poverty without faith may lead to stealing (cf. Prov. 30:9). But any kind of hunger that creates a need for God will be satisfied, if not here, in heaven.
- c. Blessed are you that weep now, for you shall laugh. The same focus applies here too, since there is a sorrow that leads unto death (II Cor. 7:10). Those who are poor, hungry and in sorrow, if they believe and do not faint, shall have power to laugh (rejoice) even in the midst of oppressive circumstances because of their hope that in heaven circumstances will be different! Hope for a better life in perfect circumstances after this life is over is the unique heritage of the Christian. It has a motivating power for godliness in this life (I Jn. 3:1-3).
- d. Blessed are you when men hate you . . . on account of the Son of man! The poor are usually oppressed simply because they are poor and powerless. But Jesus offers oppression for His sake as a blessing! There is not much blessedness in being oppressed for any other

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reason. The Greek word *aphorisosin* is translated "exclude" and is from two Greek words, *apo*, meaning "from" and *horizo*, meaning "to determine" (the latter word in English is *horizon*) thus the compound word means, "to mark off by boundaries." Poor followers of Christ may be cut off from social fellowship, civil rights and privileges others may enjoy. It is possible that affluent Christians might even be guilty of this toward poor Christians (cf. I Tim. 6:17-19; James 2:1-7). The poor are also slandered ("cast out your name as evil"). The Greek word *ekballo* ("cast out") was often used by Greek writers for hissing an actor off the stage. But where is the blessedness in being hated for the sake of Christ? Peter, the apostle, who suffered much for Christ's sake, tells us in his first epistle:

- (1) If any man suffer as a Christian, it proves he has ceased from sinning, so as to live, by the will of God, I Peter 4:1-11.
- (2) If any man suffer as a Christian he is blessed because he knows that God is not doing something strange, that if we share Christ's sufferings we will share His glory and that the spirit of glory and the power of God rests upon him because Christ was glorified by suffering for the will of the Father, I Peter 4:12-19.
- (3) If any man suffer as a Christian he is safe because it proves he has trusted his soul to a faithful Creator, who cares for him, I Peter 4:19—5:11.

Therefore, Jesus said, "if you are persecuted for My sake, *leap* for joy." Luke uses the Greek word *skirtesate* for "leap" and Matthew uses *agalliasathe* for "exceeding glad" and both of these words describe the joyous leaping of a Greek athlete upon winning a victory.

It should be quite clear that we are dealing with principles and practices of living to which only a converted person might surrender. To accede that these ways are profitable and joyous would involve a revolution of one's values! They take the accepted standards of the world and turn them upside down and inside out! Barclay observes, "The people whom Jesus called happy the world would call wretched; the people Jesus called wretched the world would call happy. Just imagine anyone saying, 'Happy are the poor, and, Woe to the rich!' To talk like that is to put an end to the world's values altogether."

6:24-26 Woe: There is another side; what of those who reject citizenship in the Messiah's kingdom and its godly morality? What is their future? What shall be their reward?

- a. Woe to you that are rich. The Greek word *apechete* is translated "received." It was used constantly in the first century as a technical expression in drawing up a receipt. Jesus means to say that those who devote all their energies and talents to earning this world's riches, may get them, but that is all the "consolation" (Gr. *paraklesin*, "comfort") they shall have. Their wealth will be all the help, comfort and encouragement they shall get. When a man of the world gets the riches of the world he has pursued, God marks his account, "paid in full." If that is all they have, their future prospect is woe because this world's riches are transferrable to the next world only if used for the glory of God and the help of others in this world (cf. Lk. 16:1-9).
- b. Woe to you that are full now. Woe to those who are satisfied with the fulness of this present world. This world will perish but they will not. If they have only the perishable to satisfy them, they will hunger in the next. If it is not truth, goodness, purity, peace, love and God that satisfies them here, they will hunger in the next world.
- c. Woe to you that laugh now. Applebury says, "The laughter of the wicked will become the cries of the lost." Although the New Testament does not prohibit Christian fun and laughter, neither does it condone frivolity and foolishness—much less the sick and foul humor of the centuries at which most of mankind has laughed. The wealthy and powerful who devote themselves to enjoyment of this world and give not the slightest consideration or compassion to the poor and oppressed are not fit for Christ's kingdom. They may laugh now, but when His kingdom is consummated and time is changed into eternity, they will have nothing but woe.
- d. Woe to you, when all men speak well of you. Of course, Christians are to strive for a good reputation among their contemporaries, (Rom. 12:17; I Tim. 3:2, etc.). What Jesus is talking about here is false flattery. *True* prophets of old were slandered because they told the truth while *false* prophets were flattered and praised by those who sought their favor. The Christian will get no flattery or testimonials from those who hate Christ and seek to ruin His church unless the Christian agrees to compromise his integrity and faithfulness.

The New Testament plainly states that the joy of heaven will more than compensate for the trouble of this earth. In fact, it says Christians will receive a glory beyond *all* comparison (II Cor. 4:16-18). The question is: who will believe that promise and so live in this earth as to prepare himself for the next?

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SECTION 4

Magnanimous (6:27-45)

27 "But I say to you that hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸ bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. ²⁹ To him who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from him who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. ³⁰ Give to every one who begs from you; and of him who takes away your goods do not ask them again. ³¹ And as you wish that men would do to you, do so to them.

32 "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. ³³ And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. ³⁴ And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. ³⁵ But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the selfish. ³⁶ Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.

37 "Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; ³⁸ give, and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For the measure you give will be the measure you get back."

39 He also told them a parable: "Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? ⁴⁰ A disciple is not above his teacher, but every one when he is fully taught will be like his teacher. ⁴¹ Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? ⁴² Or how can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,' when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother's eye.

43 "For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit; ⁴⁴ for each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thorns, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. ⁴⁵ The good man out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil man out of his evil treasure produces evil; for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.

6:27-36 Toward the Hateful: Magnanimous means, noble, liberal and self-sacrificing. And Jesus characterizes the citizens of His kingdom as magnanimous toward those who hate them. How may Christians be

expected to love those who persecute them and hate them and exploit them? Because God loves them! The Greek word for *love* here is *agape*. *Agape* is a love of the *will* and not necessarily of the emotions. We cannot have the same feelings toward those who hate us as toward our relatives and friends. That would be unnatural and really impossible. But we *can* decide that no matter how a man acts toward us we will always act toward him for his highest good. *Agape*-love is the kind of action that can be commanded (Jn. 15:12ff), because it is not dependent upon how we feel. It is something that we *must* do in spite of how we feel. A man's mind and will *can* overrule his feelings.

Jesus is calling for more than stoicism here. The Christian is more than merely passive toward his enemies and those who may exploit him. The citizen of Christ's kingdom "goes the second mile" (cf. Mt. 5:39-41). Jesus is illustrating the fundamental principle of non-retaliation for personal injury and insult. Christians are not by nature, vengeful, spiteful nor retaliatory. They leave ultimate justice up to the Lord (cf. Rom. 12:14-21). But "turning the other cheek" does not mean that we should be unconcerned about the defense of law and order and human rights. To turn the other cheek, or give up the coat does not mean that it does not matter at all about civil rights and civil justice. The devil is the author of anarchy; he has as his goal a society where evil rules. God has ordained human governments for the purpose of maintaining civil liberties and order. Human magistrates are God's ministers to execute His justice upon criminals (cf. Rom. 13:1-7). Human government is ordained to maintain an orderly execution of justice! Without law and order, man's first impulse when struck or robbed is to strike back or retaliate. A society where each man is a law unto himself, executing justice on a personal basis, would be anarchistic. The whole point of Jesus' instructions here is that the Christian is governed by a higher law than human government—he does not even need human government to keep him under control. The Christian goes beyond the law against retaliation. He not only does not retaliate—he shows love toward his enemies. Jesus never intended His statements here to be rigidly codified into some literal behavior. He did not offer His cheek to be struck a second time (Jn. 18:22-23); nor did Paul (Acts 23:3). It would hardly be the highest good to a criminal to allow him to strike a man until he killed him, or rob and extort without any restraint. Someone must call upon civil authorities to put a stop to such action—for the victim's sake, for society's sake and for the criminal's sake! But the Christian cannot take the law into his own hands—he must go the second mile if necessary.

"Give to everyone who begs of you . . ." is not a mandate to foster professional begging. Jesus is not encouraging Christians to help frauds,

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drunkards, the lazy, or professional beggars. The drunkard who begs money is not in need; neither is the man who is too lazy to work if he is able (cf. II Thess. 3:6-15). What Jesus is telling the Christian here is that he must not be self-centered, greedy and miserly. If *any* man is in *real* need, it is the nature of the Christian to help again, and again if he is able to do so. But the Christian must make evaluations and judgments because to give to a professional beggar who might otherwise earn a living would not be helpful. The Christian must "please his neighbor for his good, to edify him" (cf. Rom. 15:1-2). When we give we must not seek a return. Love gives for the sake of giving with no thought of return.

The primary motive for the Christian ethic is, of course, the love of God. We love, because He first loved us (I Jn. 4:7-19). But a secondary motive for the Christian to go "the second mile" is that he treats others as he would wish to be treated. The "Golden Rule," as Luke 6:31 is called, is uniquely positive. It is not like any other philosophy of ethics in all mankind. Barclay says it so well: "The Christian ethic is *positive*. It does not consist in *not doing* things but in *doing* them. Jesus gave us the Golden Rule which bids us do to others as we would have them do to us. That rule exists in many writers of many creeds in its *negative* form. Hillel, one of the great Jewish Rabbis, was asked by a man to teach him the whole law while he stood on one leg. He answered, 'What is hateful to thee, do not to another. That is the whole law and all else is explanation.'" The Stoics put it this way, "What you do not wish to be done to yourself, do not you do to any other." A citizen of the kingdom of God does not just not do bad things—he busies himself in doing good things.

The Christian is one who goes beyond the expected or the norm in doing good. There is a worldly standard of doing good. Those of the world do good to those who do good to them first; "even sinners love those who love them." If one does good to those who have done good to him, he is no different than the rest of the world. It is of interest that Luke used the Greek word *charis* which is translated "credit" in the RSV. It is as if Jesus said, "What special *grace* is in that kind of action?" It will do no good for the Christian to claim he is just as good as his neighbors; he must be better—he must go beyond his neighbor in doing good. The Macedonians gave "*beyond* their means, of their own free will" to the Judeans (II Cor. 8:3-4).

Jesus challenges His followers to go beyond the world's norm because He wants His followers to have the blessedness of being like God. The behavior of the "sinner" is too low for the Christian to aim—he should aim for the highest. God goes beyond the worldly norm; He actively loves and does good to those who hate Him. God sends His rain upon the just and the unjust alike (Mt. 5:44-45). God is kind to the ungrateful

and the selfish. If Christian children would imitate their Father (Eph. 5:1-2) this is how they will act.

In all this discussion about lending is Jesus forbidding the Christian to put his money in banks to earn interest or from borrowing money and paying interest? A fact often overlooked is that in ancient Israel commercial loans were practically unknown. Among the heathen it was a different thing. The Old Testament legislates against *usury* (Ex. 22:25; Lev. 25:36ff; Deut. 23:19ff). Nehemiah (5:3-10) condemned wealthy Jews for charging interest to their less fortunate brothers. The Israelites could charge interest to foreigners (Deut. 23:19-21). Wilbur Fields says in *Exodus*, College Press, pg. 494, "In modern times money is usually loaned for commercial purposes, to increase a man's capital, increase his business, or enhance his comfort. It is proper that a reasonable interest or payment be collected for this service. Thus Exodus 22:25 does not mean we should demand that our banks stop charging interest. Jesus himself approved the taking of interest from a bank (Mt. 25:27; Lk. 19:23). But this is quite a different thing from making gain out of a neighbor's need or being callous to the needs of a brother in the Lord. If a brother is in *need* and a personal loan may be given, there should be no interest charged by the brother offering the help." As a matter of fact, the whole point of Jesus here seems not to be in the area of "lending" but in "giving." Christ is telling his followers to *give* help to one another, expecting no return at all.

6:37-45 Toward the Heterodox: "Judge not, and you will not be judged . . ." Has Jesus forbidden all judgment here? Of course not! As a matter of fact, Jesus commanded judgment at least twice (Lk. 12:57; Jn. 7:24). The very fact that God has created us with the ability to choose compels us to make judgments or evaluations. We could never protect ourselves against wrong if we did not judge; we could never help others if we did not evaluate their needs. The apostle Paul told the Corinthian church it would have to judge and excommunicate an immoral member (I Cor. 5:1ff). He also told the brethren they should make righteous judgments between one another when disputes arose and not take their disputes to heathen judges (I Cor. 6:1ff). Jesus warns in this very Sermon (Mt. 7:6; 7:15-20) that the citizen of His Kingdom will have to judge who the "dogs and swine" are in order not to cast one's pearls and bread before them; the citizen will have to judge "fruit" of false and true prophets.

What Jesus is forbidding here is the hyper-critical attitude. He is telling us to be magnanimous toward those whose behavior, though not really sinful, may be different than ours. There must be liberty and charity among citizens of Christ's kingdom in the realm of opinion. Where there are no specific commandments or clear principles stated in the New Testament, Christian brethren must allow one another the

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freedom to choose and act as their consciences permit them to do so. The New Testament has a great deal to say about this (Romans 14:1 — 15:33; I Corinthians, chapters 8, 9 and 10; Galatians 5:1-26).

Jesus is advising us that we should not have a judgmental attitude. The less judging (especially of people) we do, the better off we shall be. The time will come when we shall be forced to form opinions about people, but we must be very careful not to form prejudicial opinions. We must not prejudge without sufficient evidence; we must not condemn as a sin something that is not a sin; we must not allow our opinions to be formed out of motives of envy, jealousy or our own guilty consciences. We must be very careful not to judge the motives of others for we do not know their hearts—only their actions. We must be sure our opinions of others are formed according to divine standards (the Bible) and not some worldly standards.

Jesus offers a series of mini-parables as cautions against hyper-active and hasty judgments:

- a. “. . . give and it will be given to you . . . for the measure you give will be the measure you get back.” If you give censorious judgment that is what you will get back; if you give good without measure out of a pure motive, you will receive without measure from both God and man. Whatever a man sows, he eventually reaps (Gal. 6:7-10).
- b. “Can a blind man lead a blind man?” No! they will both fall into the pit. We all have blind areas about our own faults—thus we are not clear-sighted enough to really lead others to the light about themselves. It is hypocritical for us to criticize the blindnesses in others without admitting our own blindnesses. We are *all* still followers—Jesus is the Master (Teacher). Were we ever able to be as honest and wise as He, we might be critical of others—but until then, we must let Him lead us all!
- c. “. . . first take the log out of your own eye . . .” Jesus clearly infers that if we successfully remove the huge impairments which keep us from judging our own spiritual faults, then we might be prepared to help our brother judge his faults. It is interesting that Jesus sees the “log” in our eye and the “speck” in our brother’s eye—we usually see it the other way! Again we are struck with the emphasis Jesus puts on man’s tendency to be self-centered. Self-centered people cannot judge fairly or rightly!
- d. “. . . no good tree bears bad fruit . . .” A hyper-critical attitude betrays a fundamentally evil heart. “. . . for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.” That which comes from our mouths reveals what is in our hearts! If we mouth prejudicial judgment it betrays a heart harboring hate. We do not have to compromise truth to put to death slander, gossip, non-factual opinions. There are three other options:

- (1) keep silent about the person
- (2) offer an informal prayer for the person
- (3) utter some known good about the person

The nature of the Lord's kingdom is magnanimity. Because the Lord is that way, He wishes His subjects to be that way. He wishes it for them so they may have the blessedness of holiness and righteousness. If you will treat a man as he is, he will continue to be what he is. If you treat him as he ought to be and can be, then he will more readily become what he ought to be and can be! That is what this Sermon is about; that is how God treats us!

SECTION 5

Mainstay (6:46-49)

46 "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you? 47 Every one who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like: 48 he is like a man building a house, who dug deep, and laid the foundation upon rock; and when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house, and could not shake it, because it had been well built. 49 But he who hears and does not do them is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation; against which the stream broke, and immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great."

6:46-48 Rock: Jesus concludes this great Sermon with a claim for authority which must have startled His audience. It still startles men today! For it is exceedingly presumptuous if there is no evidence upon which to base the claim. He is claiming that a man's life will stand or fall according to whether he hears and does His teachings or not. He is elevating Himself as Lord over mankind. The Sermon on the Mount has as its authority, the deity of Jesus. Because Jesus is Lord, His words are the mainstay of life. The man who hears and does what Jesus teaches will not be ruined by the storms of life. Poverty, sickness, war, persecution and failing human relationships will not destroy the person who trusts Jesus Christ because he knows there is a perfect world to come and these storms are from God to build character and a desire for that other world. The man who hears and keeps the words of this Sermon is building the character and longings that will make him happy and fit for that next world.

6:49 Ruin: One man has said, "Storms will come. Most any shanty will stand in the sunshine. But what about the storm?" To build one's

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life in opposition to the teachings of this Sermon is to build on "sand." To trust in this world only is to trust in that which is doomed to perish. To live out of harmony with this Sermon is to develop a character of greed, selfishness, superficiality, vengefulness, and criticism. That does not bring happiness in this life nor fit one to live in the presence of God forever in the next. Trust Jesus! He knows the way to Life! Become a citizen of His kingdom! The careful student should study the comments of Harold Fowler, *Matthew, Vol. I*, College Press, pages 184-442, on this unique Sermon on the Mount.

STUDY STIMULATORS:

1. Jesus was challenged about His Sabbath actions before Luke 6—Where? Why?
2. Why were the Jews so emphatic about the Sabbath?
3. What does the O.T. law say about plucking grain? about working on the Sabbath?
4. What does Jewish tradition say about working on the Sabbath?
5. Why did Jesus bring up David's eating of the "showbread"?
6. What does Jesus teach in this about the nature of God's kingdom?
7. What relationship did Jesus claim toward the Sabbath for Himself?
8. What does the Sabbath have to do with saving life?
9. Name three reasons Jesus selected 12 special disciples to become apostles?
10. Why would these 12 disciples not fit modern prospectives for leadership?
11. Can you name the 12 apostles? 12 American sports celebrities? 12 TV stars?
12. Is the Sermon of Jesus in Luke 6:20-49 the same as the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5, 6, and 7?
13. What do you think about this Sermon—is it some kind of Christian law? Is it possible to live it? What is we fail?
14. Does Jesus really intend for us to jump with joy when we are persecuted for His sake? Why?
15. Does Jesus really intend for us to be pacifists and protest police work and war and when invaded by a foreign power to "turn the other cheek"?
16. What is the Christian's best attitude toward "judging"?
17. Does Jesus really offer the teachings of this Sermon as answers to life's problems?

Chapter Seven (7:1-50)

THE SON OF MAN VISITING MEN

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. Why would a centurion care so much about a slave (7:1-2)?
2. What was behind the unusual conduct of the centurion toward Jesus (7:3-10)?
3. Why were the people seized with fear when Jesus brought the widow's son back from the dead (7:16)?
4. Since John the Baptist had already called Jesus "the Lamb of God" why is he now asking Jesus if He "is the one" (7:18-23)?
5. How is John the Baptist "more" than a prophet (7:26)?
6. What is the meaning of "wisdom is justified by all her children" (7:35)?
7. Why was this woman in this Pharisee's house washing Jesus' feet with her tears (7:36-50)?

SECTION 1

The Sick (7:1-10)

7 After he had ended all his sayings in the hearing of the people he entered Capernaum. ²Now a centurion had a slave who was dear to him, who was sick and at the point of death. ³When he heard of Jesus, he sent to him elders of the Jews, asking him to come and heal his slave. ⁴And when they came to Jesus, they besought him earnestly, saying, "He is worthy to have you do this for him, ⁵for he loves our nation, and he built us our synagogue." ⁶And Jesus went with them. When he was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying to him, "Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; ⁷therefore I did not presume to come to you. But say the word, and let my servant be healed. ⁸For I am a man set under authority, with soldiers under me: and I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my slave, 'Do this,' and he does it." ⁹When Jesus heard this he marveled at him, and turned and said to the multitude that followed him, "I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such

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faith.”¹⁰ And when those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the slave well.

7:1-5 A Benevolent Conqueror: After the Sermon on the Mount, somewhere in Galilee, Jesus entered the city of Capernaum on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. A Roman army commander (a centurion, commanding 100 men) lived there and he had a servant who was “dear” to him; the Greek word is *éntimos* and literally means, “very valuable.” Polybius, an ancient historian, says that the best man in the army held the position of centurion. Every centurion mentioned in the New Testament appears to be a “good” man (cf. Mt. 27:54ff; Lk. 23:47ff; Acts 10:1ff; 27:43; etc.). Most Romans were contemptuous of those they conquered and exploited the vanquished unmercifully. But this centurion was extraordinarily upstanding and good.

He had a slave (Gr. *doulos*) who was “at the point of death” (Gr. lit. reads, *emellen teleutan*, or “about finished.”). The word *entimos* might signify the slave was considered simply a valuable piece of property, but the complete picture of the centurion’s character shows a relationship to the slave much more humane and compassionate than that of “property-owner.” When the centurion heard of Jesus’ presence in Capernaum, he sent Jewish elders to find Him. (Matthew 8:5 says the centurion came for Jesus; this is no contradiction since the elders were his personal emissaries and it could understandably be said “he” came to Jesus). The centurion must have heard of Jesus’ healing power at some earlier date. Perhaps the centurion had first hand knowledge of the healing Jesus had done in the synagogue built by the centurion himself! The Jewish elders acclaimed the centurion worthy of Jesus’ help for they said he had built them a synagogue. The Greek idiom read, “. . . the synagogue he, even he, built for us . . .” This may indicate that the centurion paid for its building. The centurion loved (Gr. *agape*) their nation. He was not merely friendly and brotherly (*phileo*), but he had the concern of the Jewish people on his heart and mind. He willingly cared for them. This was even more unusual—a Roman concerned about the whole Jewish nation!

7:6-10 A Believing Commander: More of the excellency of this centurion’s character is now exhibited. He was a humble man. When Jesus started for his home, he sent messengers saying, “. . . do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; and the very reason I did not come to you personally was that I did not consider myself worthy.” Humility such as this was unheard of among Romans! He was a man of reason. He had testimony or evidence from some source that Jesus had healed sick people. He used his reasoning powers to decide what he had heard was true. Thus he believed Jesus could heal his dying slave without even coming into his home. Alexander

Campbell once said, "Reason deciding that the testimony is true, is believing; reason deciding that the testimony is false, is disbelieving; reason unable to decide, is skepticism." Faith or belief is built by the use of reasoning processes. Faith comes in this order: Fact-Testimony-Faith-Feeling. Many people try to reverse that order and build their faith from feeling, but feeling is the result of faith, not the foundation of faith. Facts testified to and believed on the basis of reasonable verification of the testimony is Biblical "faith." Faith is only as good as its Object; the Object is only as trustworthy as it evinces itself to be. Christian faith is in an objective Person—Jesus Christ. He has demonstrated His trustworthiness through historical facts which have been testified to by trustworthy historians. When our reason accepts the testimony, we then have evidence to believe Jesus *is* who these historians say He is. This is the same process of reasoning the centurion used to call upon Jesus for help in this life and death situation. The centurion was also a man who understood that faith and obedience are inseparable. He knew that trusting someone meant you committed your life to that person in obedience. He himself was a man who obeyed his superiors because he trusted them and he expected trustful obedience from those committed to his leadership. He was convinced of Jesus' authority so he believed that whatever Jesus said should and would be obeyed.

Jesus marvelled at him (Gr. *ethaumasen*). Only twice in the gospel records is Jesus said to have marvelled—once at unbelief (Mk. 6:6) and once, here, at belief (Lk. 7:9; Mt. 8:10). Jesus marvelled not because He was unaware that such a faith could exist, but because He *was* aware of how vibrant and alive the centurion's faith was. Compare this Gentile's faith with that of most of the Jews Jesus spoke to and you will see why He marvelled. The Jews had centuries of divine revelation and providence to prepare them to believe the Messiah when He came, but most of them rejected Him. This Gentile had *no* "oracles of God" (cf. Rom. 3:1-2; 9:1-5) such as the Jews had and no centuries of preparation, yet he believed. Faith is measurable, but the Lord measures by quality, not by quantity. The statement of Jesus about "faith as a grain of mustard seed" has nothing to do with quantity; it refers to the vitality or life-force that is in the seed. Faith is not a question of how much, but what kind. This centurion had no quantitative measurement of faith but what little he knew of Jesus gave him a powerful faith because it was active, alive and obedient. Jesus was thrilled by it! Jesus was also pleased by the character of the man. Normally, when a slave was unable to work, he was thrown out to die by his Roman lord. Normally, Romans hated Jews and considered them filthy, ignorant and untrustworthy. But this Roman was different! He was compassionate, benevolent and loved the Jews. He may have been a Jewish proselyte although the text does not say so.

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Matthew records (8:11-12) that Jesus gave a glorious prediction of the salvation of many of the Gentiles as well as a chilling prediction of the doom of the unbelieving Jews. Isaiah, the prophet, had made similar predictions in connection with the coming of the Messiah. Jesus honors living, obedient faith wherever it is found. There are no racial, cultural, social or economic prerequisites required by Jesus.

Matthew also records the tender words of Jesus, "Go; be it done for you as you have believed." And the servant was healed in that very moment. Luke records that the elders and friends first sent by the centurion became witnesses to the fact that the miracle had taken place. It is interesting to note that Jesus did not go to the centurion's home, did not lay hands on the slave, did not even meet the centurion himself; and there is no record that the slave had any faith in Jesus. This healing greatly contrasts to the requirements of the pseudo faith-healers of modern times.

We should learn from this incident:

- a. Do not be hasty to classify men. We usually think of all Romans as in the same category with the Caesars or Pilates of that day. But here is a Roman very much different! There may have been many more.
- b. Obedience is the only reasonable and proper response of a confession of faith. Faith and obedience are inseparable. When the authority of Jesus is recognized and acknowledged, just a word from Him should be sufficient to produce action from us.
- c. Jesus is Savior of all men. There are no special people for Him. Wherever He finds faith, He honors it. He expects to find faith in all men. Those who do not believe in Him are doomed to an eternity of torments.
- d. We can demonstrate the quality of our faith in Jesus by helping others. The Son of Man is willing and able to visit the sick through those who have an obedient, living faith like the centurion's.

SECTION 2

The Sorrowing (7:11-17)

11 Soon afterward he went to a city called Nain, and his disciples and a great crowd went with him. ¹²As he drew near to the gate of the city, behold, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow; and a large crowd from the city was with her. ¹³And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said to her, "Do not weep." ¹⁴And he came and

touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, "Young man, I say to you, arise." ¹⁵And the dead man sat up, and began to speak. And he gave him to his mother. ¹⁶Fear seized them all; and they glorified God, saying, "A great prophet has arisen among us!" and "God has visited his people!" ¹⁷And this report concerning him spread through the whole of Judea and all the surrounding country.

7:11-13 Compassion: Nain is about 20 miles southwest of Capernaum; a good day's walking distance. It is about 2 miles west of Endor—a place famous for a temporary resurrection from the dead (Samuel) in the days of King Saul. As Jesus drew near to the gate of this village He came upon a funeral procession. A young man had died and left his widowed mother without any visible means of support. This woman was in great sorrow not only because she had lost both husband and son and was now without the companionship of those nearest and dearest on earth, but also because she would be frantic to know where to turn for physical help and sustenance. A job market for women whereby they might earn a living was unheard of in those days. Women were expected to marry and keep house. Jesus had compassion on this heart-broken, weeping widow and said, "Do not weep." Then He touched the bier.

The Hebrew word for coffin is *mittah* (II Sam. 3:31); the Greek word is *sorou* (Lk. 7:14) and is translated here *bier*. Closed coffins as we know them were unknown among the Hebrews. The bier was an open, flat, wooden frame on which the corpse was carried from the house to the grave. Burial was usually very soon after the death of a person (less than 10 hours) because of hygienic reasons. Anyone who touched a dead body or anything which a dead body might contact, was declared by Old Testament law, unclean for seven days (Numbers 19). Jewish funeral processions were highly emotional and demonstrative. The corpse was usually dressed in clothes worn normally, stretched out on a bier with a cloth thrown over it (Acts 5:6). Sometimes burial spices were added to the body. The poor were buried in earthen graves; the rich in rock-hewn tombs. Lack of proper burial was regarded as a great indignity and a judgment of God. The funeral procession from the home to the grave was accompanied on foot by friends and relatives of the deceased, weeping, wailing and casting dust and ashes on their heads. Sometimes mourners tore their clothing near the neck of their garments as a sign of grief. Usually every funeral was attended by hired mourners paid by the family of the deceased. When the funeral procession started toward the burial place, the women would go first because, the rabbis said, "as Eve, a woman brought death into the world, women should lead death's victims to the grave." Funeral processions were always noisy with graphic demonstrations of mourning (whether there was much

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sorrow or not). The Hebrews considered it very improper not to have loud wailing and mourning at a funeral. Flutists, playing sad music on their instruments, also accompanied these processions. When the sad rites were finished at the grave, the family would gather for a funeral meal, to eat "the bread of mourning." Mourning lasted for 30 days; for the first three days, no work was done at all, and no greeting answered in the street.

The Greek word used to describe Jesus' *compassion* is *esplagchnisthe*. There are other Greek words translated compassion, but this word connotes the feeling of psychosomatic emotions. It is the word translated "bowels" in the KJV. The "bowels" or intestines were regarded by Greeks and Hebrews as the seat of passion and affection. What Jesus felt for this widow and the mourners was intense and deeply emotional. While Jesus had compassion for the weeping widow, at the same time He *commanded* her (*klaie*, Gr. imperative mood), "Weep not!" A godly person knows when and what to weep about. Stoicism is no Christian virtue. Jesus wept—more than once (Jn. 11:35; Lk. 19:41; Heb. 5:7). But believers are not to grieve as those who have no hope (1 Thess. 4:13). Perhaps Jesus is encouraging this widow and these mourners to refrain from excessive grief and to look to Him as Lord of life. Life is to be found by looking beyond death through trust in Christ. Penitence for the *sin* that brings death is the proper expression of mourning. This is what Jesus wept about! "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."

7:14-17 Celebration: Jesus raised the widow's son from the dead. This incident is one of at least three resurrections from the dead performed by Jesus recorded in the gospels (Jairus' daughter, Lk. 8:49ff; and Lazarus, Jn. 11). Luke alone tells of the widow's son, but his credibility is unassailable. A physician would hardly record such a story without checking out all details. The fact that Luke alone records this incident merely confirms the statement in John's gospel (Jn. 20:30-31) that there were many miracles, teachings and events in Jesus' life not recorded at all. He might have raised more than three!

Jesus could have raised this young man from the dead at a distance as He had healed the dying slave of the centurion; He could have walked alongside the funeral procession and brought the lad back to life without a word or a touch, but He chose to touch the bier. His objective was not merely to bring a dead man back to life but to bring the comfort of salvation to any who would believe in Him as Lord, so He must show that the power of Life resides in Him. For a Jew to touch a dead body or anything a dead body had defiled made the Jew ceremonially unclean for seven days (cf. Num. 19:11ff). Death is the result of sin (Gen. 2:17). When a man died, he was a symbol of sin, and his body a source of defilement to the living. Jesus was not defiled because He was without

sin. He demonstrated vividly by touching the bier of the dead that He is the Lord of death and life—He is the solution, the cure for sin and its results. Those who trust Him will conquer death because He has conquered it for them.

Jesus spoke to the dead man. Jesus expected the dead man to hear him and respond by sitting up. Either Jesus was who He claimed or a complete maniac. Any man who would go out into a street today, stop a funeral procession, command the mourners to stop weeping, touch the casket and say to the dead person, "I say to you, arise," would be called a lunatic and probably incarcerated.

The dead man sat up and began to speak. And He gave him to his mother. Unbelievers try to destroy the historicity of this event by declaring it to be a "myth."

- a. Such declarations are arbitrary. No *evidence* is offered to prove it is a myth. Where is the testimony from the first century that what Jesus did was mythological?
- b. Such a declaration is contrary to the authenticity and credibility of the record of Luke the physician. And there *is* evidence from the first century to establish Luke's veracity.
- c. Such a declaration impugns the character of Jesus. The gospels portray Him as honest, trustworthy, compassionate and a doer of good. How could He be guilty of such dissimulation if He only pretended to raise a dead man.
- d. It is incredible to suppose every time Jesus sought to raise someone from the dead that He could chance upon someone only apparently dead or in a coma.
- e. Those eyewitnesses to this resurrection did not react as if it were mythological or allegorical. They were seized (Gr. *elaben*, "taken") with fear. Something unnatural, extraordinary and amazing happened.

Moments before this whole company of people had been possessed with mourning, bitter wailing, grief and sadness. Now it is turned into a celebration of happy praise for God. Those who witnessed this awesome event testified, "A great prophet has arisen among us! . . . God has visited His people!" The idea that God would "visit" His people is a Messianic expression of both the Old and New Testaments. It is particularly expressed in Isaiah 7:14 in the term "Emmanuel" which means "God with us" (see also, Mt. 1:23; Zeph. 2:7; Isa. 29:6; Lk. 1:68, 78; Lk. 19:44; Psa. 8:4; Heb. 2:6). The report of this miracle spread throughout the land of the Jews, reaching even down into Judea. We wonder how many believed in Jesus as a result of the report. One thing is certain, it is proof that Jesus means what He says about some day calling all the dead from their tombs (Jn. 5:28-29, etc.), some to eternal life, others to eternal damnation.

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SECTION 3

The Suffering (7:18-23)

18 The disciples of John told him of all these things. ¹⁹And John, calling to him two of his disciples, sent them to the Lord, saying, "Are you he who is to come, or shall we look for another?" ²⁰And when the men had come to him, they said, "John the Baptist has sent us to you, saying, 'Are you he who is to come, or shall we look for another?'" ²¹In that hour he cured many of diseases and plagues and evil spirits, and on many that were blind he bestowed sight. ²²And he answered them, "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them. ²³And blessed is he who takes no offense at me."

7:18-20 Confusion: Some of the disciples of John the Baptist reported to the imprisoned John all the great miracles of compassion and the words of encouragement and hope Jesus was teaching during this great Galilean campaign. John the Baptist had been arrested and imprisoned about a year earlier near the middle of Jesus' first year of public ministry. Josephus records that John had been incarcerated in Machaerus, a fortress built in 90 B.C. by Alexander Jannaeus in the desolate wilderness east of the Dead Sea. It was the second most important fortress in Palestine, had been refortified by Herod the Great, and used as a winter residence. John was only about 33 years old when he was put in the dungeon at Machaerus.

John the Baptist had preached emphatically that the Anointed of the Lord, the Messiah, was to come shortly and lay the axe to the root of the tree and hew down every tree that did not produce the fruit of repentance (see comments, Lk. 3). He had been imprisoned for insisting that Herod Antipas repent of an adulterous marriage to his brother's wife. Matthew says (Mt. 11:2) John was in "a place of bonds and fetters" (Gr. *desmoterion*) when he heard of Jesus' ministry of compassion. The scriptures indicate Herod had many conversations with John when he was imprisoned—perhaps some badgering of John that his predictions of an avenging Messiah were, after all, wasted. So, when John heard that Jesus was healing people instead of judging them, bringing people back to life instead of slaying them, preaching good news of forgiveness instead of the wrath of God, he sent two of his disciples to question Jesus.

John's problem with Jesus was not whether He was the Messiah or

not but whether He was conducting the messianic program as He should. Jesus' program was not conforming to the vivid announcements John had made in the wilderness. So John asked, "Are you he who is to come, or shall we look for another?" While Luke used the Greek word *allon* for "another" (which generically means, "another of the same kind"), Matthew used the word *heteron* (which means, "one of another kind"). John's problem was not doubt, it was impatience. Many of Jesus' own disciples were impatient with the way Jesus conducted His messianic program. Hobbs says, "It was not a question born out of doubt but of perplexity. He expected the two pictures (judgment and salvation) to be fulfilled simultaneously. Both pictures are true, but they are fulfilled within God's will and according to His purpose." Foster writes, "John was too anxious to see the Messiah coming on the clouds of heaven in flaming fire to bring destruction upon the wicked and to bring succor to the noble. He had not been willing to tarry with the Messianic predictions of humble service, mighty miracles, and sufferings and death for the sins of the world."

7:21-23 Clarification: Jesus sent word back through John's disciples to John clarifying the essential nature of the earthly ministry of the Messiah. Contrary to popular Jewish opinion (apocryphal) the Messiah's ministry was to be one of hope and healing. Hope that the next life would be blessed and free of sin and sickness through the power of faith in Christ to heal both body and soul; this was what the Messiah came to announce. The essence of the Messianic ministry had long ago been prophesied (cf. Isa. 29:18-19; 35:5-7; 61:1-3). When John wrote his gospel record (some 60 years after Jesus' crucifixion) he reminded his readers, "For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him" (Jn. 3:17). Impatient men have continually cried out for God to judge the world, but God is long-suffering not wishing that any should perish so He is giving the world a message of hope and healing. The time will come, in God's divine plan, for judgment. Presently, however, it is time for hope and healing. Blessed is the man who imitates the longsuffering of God and does not "stumble" at God's patience through the Messianic ministry. Jesus chastened John the Baptist but He did so tenderly. The Greek word *skandalizomai* means, "offended, stumbled, tripped-up, trapped"; we get the English word, "scandalized," from it. Jesus does not want his ministry to become a stumblingblock to John the Baptist, but John must clearly understand Jesus' ministry will be conducted in God's way and God's own good time, and He will not alter His ministry to suit John's human misconception. Suffering humanity continues to cry out, "How long, O Lord . . ." (cf. Rev. 6:10), and the Lord continues to say, "In a little while . . ."

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SECTION 4

The Superficial (7:24-35)

24 When the messengers of John had gone, he began to speak to the crowds concerning John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to behold? A reed shaken by the wind? 25 What then did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft clothing? Behold, those who are gorgeously appareled and live in luxury are in kings' courts. 26 What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. 27 This is he of whom it is written, 'Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, who shall prepare thy way before thee.'

28 I tell you, among those born of women none is greater than John; yet he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he."

29 (When they heard this all the people and the tax collectors justified God, having been baptized with the baptism of John; 30 but the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected the purpose of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him.)

31 "To what then shall I compare the men of this generation, and what are they like? 32 They are like children sitting in the market place and calling to one another,

'We piped to you, and you did not dance;
we wailed, and you did not weep.'

33 For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine; and you say, 'He has a demon.' 34 The Son of man has come eating and drinking; and you say, 'Behold, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' 35 Yet wisdom is justified by all her children."

7:24-30 Perversity: John the Baptist had been a "fire-eating" prophet of the judgment of God upon his own nation so filled with materialism and hypocrisy. Many people had initially heard John's preaching with excitement (Lk. 3:15), but the penetrating righteousness of the truth he preached soon began to work on their consciences and they began to denounce him. Jesus takes this most opportune situation (John's asking about His ministry) to vindicate John's faithfulness in his ministry and his message as the revelation of God.

Jesus challenges their motives for first going out to hear John. What did they expect or want when they went to John—a fickle, unstable, vacillating "good-old-boy" who would bend with the ebb and flow of human opinion like a reed bends in the wind? Did they expect or want a preacher who was self-indulgent, fawning after those in positions of human power like those of Herod's court or like Herod himself fawning

after the Romans? Jesus' rhetorical question implies that this is indeed what many of them wanted. That is why they turned away from John the Baptist. He was certainly no vacillating, self-indulgent pawn of human tyrants. He was in prison because he dared to condemn a king's conduct. He was a prophet—and more than a prophet! He was the forerunner of the Messiah predicted by the prophets (esp. Malachi 3:1). He held a special place of service in God's redemptive program afforded no other prophet. Jesus added this epitaph, to which a literal Greek translation adds idiomatic emphasis: "I tell you, greater among those born of women than John, no one is!" This applies not only to John's position as forerunner, but to John's personal character. Jesus said John was the greatest man in the human race. That statement of Jesus minimizes much of what the world calls "greatness" in human beings. John had none of the trappings of worldly power, worldly wealth, sophistication, travel, education, longevity and yet among those born of women, not a greater has ever lived.

Then Jesus utters a very interesting and paradoxical statement, ". . . yet he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he." Hobbs puts it this way, "He (John) stood on the shoulders of all foregoing prophets as the one forerunner of Him whom they foresaw. But those coming thereafter stand on John's shoulders. . . . He saw only one picture of the Christ. But those who have come after him see the whole: death, resurrection, promised return and coming judgment. We see the end from the beginning." Jesus means that those who have become Christians have their covenant enacted upon better promises (cf. Heb. 8:6). Those who believe in Christ after the cross and resurrection and the ministry of the Holy Spirit have seen God as John the Baptist could never have seen Him. As great as John's position and character was, those who believe in the Christ after him have a much greater privilege. Do we not also have greater responsibility? Only the perverse would reject the message John preached. What he proclaimed was so transparently true only the calloused hypocrite would object to it. When Jesus announced that John was God's forerunner of the Messiah and that he was the greatest, in God's scheme of things, among all the prophets, many sinners "justified" (Gr. *edikaiosan*) God, by submitting to John's baptism. The word "justified" means they declared God to be right (as He spoke through John) that they needed to repent and be baptized by John. So they did! "Justifying" God means to put God in His rightful place, Absolute Sovereign in one's life. But the Pharisees and lawyers, hypocrites who pretended to worship God, rejected the "purpose" (Gr. *boulen*, "will, counsel, deliberate design") of God for themselves (which was forgiveness and repentance) refusing to be baptized in John's baptism. These hypocrites, no matter how much they pretended, would

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not put God in his rightful place—Sovereign over their lives. Why? Because, as Jesus would soon reveal (Lk. 7:43ff), they did not think they needed forgiveness or repentance!

7:31-35 Petulance: Those who wish only a superficial relationship to God and truth will find every excuse possible to have it. The Pharisees and other hypocrites of that age were like petulant children of the streets. They did not want to play God's game at all. When John the Baptist came, they said John's concepts are too austere. John is all doom and gloom and judgment. John demands too rigid a life—he is too ascetic. So they would not accept John's concepts. When Jesus came, they said His concepts were too liberated, too normal, too cheerful. Jesus is a wine-bibber and a glutton. So they would not accept Jesus' concepts. They condemned in Jesus what they implied John should have manifested, and condemned in John what they implied Jesus should have manifested. They simply were not going to play God-games unless they could dictate the rules. They really did not want to play at all so they said neither John or Jesus was playing the right game.

But Jesus' reply was, "Wisdom is justified by all her children." In other words, the rightness of both John's ministry and His is vindicated by what those ministries were producing—repentance and faith and changed lives! As seen by superficial people, who really did not want to see, the ministries of John and Jesus might have appeared to be in conflict. But that was because the hypocrites, Pharisees and others, judged them by human standards. Their concept of the "kingdom game" was human power, exploitation of the poor and ignorant, manipulation through human traditions and violent wresting of the kingdom from God's hands into their own (cf. the parallel to this incident in Mt. 11:7-19). So they said neither John nor Jesus knew anything about the "kingdom game" at all. Jesus said, Wait and see—what John the Baptist and I both say about the kingdom will be proven to be true! There are still worldly-minded people with superficial views of the kingdom of God, acting like spoiled brats, unwilling to accept Christ's mind on the kingdom. They do not want to play by God's "rules" so they either try to destroy the game for others or do not get in the game at all!

SECTION 5

The Self-Satisfied (7:36-50)

36 One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house, and took his place at table. 37 And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was

at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, ³⁸and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment. ³⁹Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw it, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner." ⁴⁰And Jesus answering said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And he answered, "What is it, Teacher?" ⁴¹"A certain creditor had two debtors; one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. ⁴²When they could not pay, he forgave them both. Now which of them will love him more?" ⁴³Simon answered, "The one I suppose, to whom he forgave more." And he said to him, "You have judged rightly." ⁴⁴Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house, you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. ⁴⁵You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. ⁴⁶You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. ⁴⁷Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little." ⁴⁸And he said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." ⁴⁹Then those who were at table with him began to say among themselves, "Who is this, who even forgives sins?" ⁵⁰And he said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

7:36-39 Condemning: Although Jesus despised the attitudes of most of the Pharisees, He never refused an opportunity to try to convert one. While He was in Capernaum, a Pharisee of that city invited Jesus to dine with him. Along with making a great show about their religious practices (Mt. 6:1-18) the Pharisees enjoyed making a great show of their wealth and position by inviting certain "select" famous and popular people to dine with them. They would never invite the poor, starving, *am-haretz* ("people of the land") whom they classified as "sinners" who did not know anything (see Jn. 7:48-49). Often men of such attitudes would allow the poor and common people to stand off at a distance in the court-yard of their homes and like spectators, "entertain" themselves watching the rich and mighty dine.

As Jesus was reclining (Gr. *kateklithe*) (see comments on Lk. 5:29ff) at dinner (probably evening meal), "behold" (surprise), a woman who was in the city, a sinner came and anointed His feet. The Greek idiom places emphasis on the fact that this woman had a reputation for being a "city sinner." This usually meant prostitution. We do not know exactly

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what her sin was. The silence of the scripture probably is a caution to us that the precise nature of her sin should not be as important to us as the example of her grateful attitude. Jesus later indicates that the *amount* of one's debt, though significant in man's estimation, is not so in God's since the debtors were both forgiven, regardless of the amount.

The woman's actions, the context, and the use of the Greek perfect tense verb *sesoken* in v. 50 (has saved and is continuing to save you) indicates that Jesus may have encountered the woman before this incident and forgave her sins. That is why, when she heard Jesus was in Simon's house, she came expressing in a highly emotional way her gratitude for having been forgiven by Jesus. She brought with her an *alabaster* (plaster of paris) jar (usually very beautifully decorated, expensive and delicate) filled with ointment (Gr. *murou*) myrrh—imported and expensive. She stood at the foot of the couch weeping, and her tears fell on Jesus' feet and made them wet. Quickly she knelt and kept wiping off (Gr. *exemassen*, imperfect) the tear drops with her long hair. It was a shame for a Jewish woman to let down her hair in public. That was only a custom of tradition and this woman would not let her gratitude to Jesus be hindered by the traditions of men. She began to kiss or embrace the feet of Jesus profusely (Gr. *kataphilei*) and to rub the very expensive perfume from her alabaster jar on His feet. This woman gladly did the most humiliating, servile deed to Jesus that could customarily be done in that era while at the same time gladly rubbed on His feet the most expensive and precious thing she possessed.

All this made no impression on Simon, the Pharisee. His only concern was that Jesus was allowing the woman to touch Him at all. Simon thought to himself, "If this fellow (not even the courtesy to use Jesus' name in his thoughts) were a prophet (some ancient manuscripts have "the" prophet), he would have known who and what *sort* (Gr. *potape*, originally a word meaning "of what country," thus Simon had already categorized her as "alien" to his own social class and not to be associated with) of woman this is who is touching him, because she is a sinner." Why did Simon think such condemning things about this woman (and Jesus)? Because, as we shall see, he was self-righteous. He did not consider himself a sinner—he owed no debt to God—felt no need for grace and therefore had no gratitude in his heart.

7:40-50 Condemned: Jesus answered the thought of Simon's heart. Jesus did not have to wait for men to express what they thought—He could know supernaturally what men thought (cf. Jn. 2:23-25). Jesus used a favorite teaching vehicle, the parable, to try to expose to Simon the evil of his heart toward both Himself and the woman. Jesus' parables were always true to life. He never told a parable that was divorced

from reality. What He parabolized was always true whether of this life or the next (cf. Lk. 16:19ff). He may have had two specific (but unnamed) debtors known to Him personally in mind as He told this parabolic account.

We are not certain about the modern worth of a *denarius*. Most commentators believe it was worth a day's wages in Jesus' time. Whatever the case, the real point of this true-to-life story is the graciousness of the creditor, and the attitude of the debtors. The disparity between the amounts owed is not really significant for neither could pay their debt. The one who loved the forgiving creditor the most was the one who realized how totally unable to pay he had been and how totally forgiven he was. The sheer power of the logic in Jesus' parable forced Simon to give the correct answer or appear to be a fool. But Simon's ego was not in touch with his mind for what he was forced to answer by logic he refused to answer in his heart. Simon had looked upon the woman as a "great" sinner and upon himself as no sinner. The woman knew she had been much in debt to God and when Jesus forgave her she loved much—was deeply grateful, and showed it. Simon showed no gratefulness to Jesus because in his own estimation he had received no graciousness from God. Simon did not think he needed any grace! This attitude is *extremely crucial*. The apostle Paul makes *ingratitude* (Rom. 1:21) the fundamental source or reason behind the Gentile rejection of God and the terrible sinfulness of mankind described in subsequent verses. *Ingratitude* is the immediate child of pride and self-righteousness.

Although Simon answered with indifference, perhaps even flippancy, he answered correctly. He pronounced his own condemnation, whether he realized it or not. Jesus, turning toward the woman, but talking to Simon, said, "Do you see this woman?" Now Simon had seen the woman for he judged Jesus on the basis of having seen what the woman was doing. But Simon had seen the woman through his self-righteous perspective and not according to the truth which logic had just forced him to conclude. That is why Jesus so often referred to the Pharisees as "blind" (cf. Mt. 15:14; Mt. 23:16; Jn. 9:39-41). Simon's self-righteousness not only blinded him to the woman's motives, and to Jesus' character, it also blinded him to the need to express the commonest courtesies toward a guest as Jesus graphically points out.

Simon, and many of his fellow Pharisees, fell into the ageless trap of the devil of "measuring themselves by one another, and comparing themselves with one another," and being bereft of understanding which the apostle Paul outlines to the Corinthian church (II Cor. 10:7-12). When we measure ourselves by other human beings we usually select those who "are not as good as we are" so we make ourselves look better. When we measure ourselves by one another we are always using imperfect standards and, always able to find ourselves "better" than our standards, we justify ourselves and declare ourselves able to stand on our

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own merits without need of the grace of God. Simon compared himself to the woman and he should have compared himself to God. We should all compare ourselves to Jesus and learn that we need His forgiving grace.

The perfect tense of the Greek verb *apheontai* ("are forgiven") like the perfect tense of the verb *sesoken* ("has saved" v. 50) indicates that this had already occurred at some time past and that the fact remained true at the time Jesus spoke. As Applebury points out, "her faith had saved her at some point in the past and the fact remained at the moment when He was speaking to her. Her faith, not her love was the cause of her being forgiven. Love follows forgiveness, just as in the story of the debtors." Actually, our love is in response to God's—our love is a "rebounded" love (cf. I Jn. 4:19): Faith (trust) comes by hearing the Word of God (Rom. 10:17) and then comes love. Feeling does not precede reason. Fact, testimony, faith, feeling—in that order. When the testimony that God has forgiven our sins in Christ is believed, then we begin to have feelings of gratitude and love and adoration. As Alexander Campbell once put it, "No one ever shed a tear over the crucified Christ where it was never heard!"

Jesus' statement, ". . . go in peace" was more than a mere dismissal. For a Hebrew the word *peace* (*Shalom*) means "wholeness, integrity, well-being, goodness." He was admonishing her to continue in wholeness and integrity.

Although Simon the Pharisee had condemned the woman and questioned Jesus' character for associating with her, he actually condemned himself. Whether he had a change of heart or not, we do not know. God does! Some Pharisees did! It is not impossible for a Pharisee to renounce self-righteousness and be forgiven (cf. Phil. 3:4-16), and thus be saved.

STUDY STIMULATORS:

1. What is a "centurion" and how does the one of Luke 7 compare with others?
2. How did the centurion's experience as a soldier help him relate to Jesus?
3. What was so unique about the centurion's faith that Jesus would marvel at it?
4. Since Jesus had compassion on the widow of Nain, why did He command her to cease weeping?
5. Is this resurrection from the dead a myth or a real event? Prove it!
6. Why do you think John the Baptist wanted to know if Jesus were "the One"?
7. Why did Jesus consider it necessary to defend the ministry of John the Baptist?
8. Why did the "sinner" woman weep upon Jesus' feet and wipe them with her hair?
9. What is the real point of the "parable of the two debtors" Jesus told Simon?

Chapter Eight (8:1-56)

THE SON OF MAN EXERCISING DIVINE AUTHORITY

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. How would women have “means” by which to contribute to Jesus’ needs (8:1-3)?
2. Why would the sower let most of his seed fall on unproductive ground (8:4-8)?
3. How can the word of God be the “seed” (8:11)?
4. If the disciples had seen Jesus raise the dead, how could they be afraid in the storm if He was in the boat (8:22-25)?
5. Why would Jesus allow demons to go into pigs and destroy them (8:26-33)?
6. Why didn’t Jesus let the healed man accompany Him (8:38-39)?
7. If Jesus was going to raise Jairus’ daughter from the dead, why didn’t he want a big crowd to witness it (8:51)?

SECTION 1

In Educating The Ego (8:1-21)

8 Soon afterward he went on through cities and villages, preaching and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with him, ²and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, ³and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod’s steward, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their means.

⁴ And when a great crowd came together and people from town after town came to him, he said in a parable: ⁵“A sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell along the path, and was trodden under foot, and the birds of the air devoured it. ⁶And some fell on the rock; and as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. ⁷And some fell among thorns; and the thorns grew with it and choked it. ⁸And some fell into good soil and grew, and yielded a hundredfold.” As he said this, he called out, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

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9 And when his disciples asked him what this parable meant, ¹⁰he said, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God; but for others they are in parables, so that seeing they may not understand. ¹¹Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. ¹²The ones along the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, that they may not believe and be saved. ¹³And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy; but these have no root, they believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away. ¹⁴And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature. ¹⁵And as for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bring forth fruit with patience.

16 "No one after lighting a lamp covers it with a vessel, or puts it under a bed, but puts it on a stand, that those who enter may see the light. ¹⁷For nothing is hid that shall not be made manifest, nor anything secret that shall not be known and come to light. ¹⁸Take heed then how you hear; for to him who has will more be given, and from him who has not, even what he thinks that he has will be taken away."

19 Then his mother and his brothers came to him, but they could not reach him for the crowd. ²⁰And he was told, "Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, desiring to see you." ²¹But he said to them, "My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it."

8:1-3 Dogma: Jesus went about from one city and village to another (Gr. *kata polin kai kōmen*) making proclamation (Gr. *kerusson*) and delivering a message (*euangelizomenos*) or evangelizing. The message was: "the kingdom of God" has come! This is the essential dogma for the education of the human ego or soul. God is Sovereign! He has never and will never be dethroned. That is good news! G. Campbell Morgan suggests a slight change in translation of the Greek phrase, *ten basileian tou Theou*, to read "the kingdom of God." There is no grammatical reason for objection to such a change. Actually, "kingship" is the primary meaning of the word *basileian*, (see Arndt & Gingrich, Greek lexicon, page 134). Territory is the secondary meaning of the word. The fact that God rules and He has made a way for rebellious man to be reconciled and receive citizenship in His kingdom, is what Jesus proclaimed. This is the Gospel—the "good news." God is in charge—history will ultimately be consummated under His sovereignty, and man has an opportunity

to harmonize himself to that absolute dogma and become the recipient of its consequences. No human mind or heart has been educated until it has heard the Gospel and no human being can be a citizen of the kingdom of God without surrendering to the kingship of Christ.

In the ministry of the women to Jesus and the twelve we have an example of the kingship of Christ taking root in the human heart. These women lovingly expressed their citizenship by participating in heralding the good news through their financial support of Christ's evangelizing. The Greek imperfect verb *diekonoun* indicates "they kept on deaconessing, or ministering" (RSV "providing") for Jesus and the twelve out of their own belongings. Supernaturally speaking, Jesus did not have to depend on anyone for physical subsistence. He could change water to wine and multiply bread and fish. He had the power to create or destroy. But if He is to capture the hearts of men and women for God He must, by humble grace, allow them to *share* in the work (kingdom) of God. G. Campbell Morgan writes, "I always see here for myself the grace of Christ, that He was content to be supported in that way, while He carried on His work. It is more blessed to give than receive, and it takes more grace to receive than it does to give. He was content to live on charity, while He carried on His mighty ministry."

Mary is from the Hebrew name Miriam (which means, "rebel") called Magdalene, out of whom Jesus had cast seven demons; Joanna (means, "dove") the wife of Herod's steward (Gr. *epitropos*, "one who looks after the king's financial affairs"); and Susanna (means, "lily"), who had also been healed of some infirmity. Barclay notes the significance that in this group of women are united such diverse backgrounds—Mary, with the dark past and Joanna, a lady of the king's court in one company. He says, "There is nothing which the Church needs more than to learn how to yoke in common harness the diverse temperaments and qualities of different people. If we are failing it is our own fault, for, in Christ, it can be done—it has been done."

It is also significant that the only mention of how Jesus was supported in His ministry tells of women leading out. Womanhood is glorified as it serves God:

- a. Jesus, the Messiah, was born of woman.
- b. Women supported His ministry. Lk. 8:1-3.
- c. Women stayed with Him in His agony at the cross, Jn. 19:25.
- d. Women were first to the tomb, Lk. 23:55.
- e. Women were prominent in service in the early church, Acts 1:14; 12:12; 16:13-15.
- f. Many women served in the church at Rome, Rom. 16:3-23.
- g. Women supported the apostle Paul's ministry, Phil. 4:3.

The glory of womanhood is in helping others serve Christ!

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8:4-15 Dynamic: The dynamic, the germinating power in the education of the human ego is the Word of God. Jesus makes this dramatically clear in His "parable of the sower." Actually, it is a parable of the soils. The word parable in Greek is *parabole* and literally means, "that which is cast alongside," or something deliberately placed parallel. Someone has graphically described a parable as "an earthly story with a heavenly meaning." The essential rule in interpreting parables is to find the one central truth which the parable intends to teach. Parables are mainly illustrative and many of the details in a parable are "window dressing" and have nothing to do with doctrine. Doctrine does not "lean on" parables; parables "lean on doctrine." In other words, parables do not constitute or give rise to the formation of doctrines—they simply explain and help apply doctrines already constituted.

At this very crucial point in Jesus' public ministry, it is apparent that He begins to make much more use of parables. This may be due to a number of circumstances:

- a. There is a growing opposition from the religious and political authorities toward His teaching (cf. Mt. 12:22-45, etc.).
- b. His own family and twelve disciples are expressing anxieties about His welfare (cf. Mt. 12:46-50; Lk. 8:19-21).
- c. Great multitudes are following Him but their minds are so enthralled with the materialistic aspects of the "kingdom of God" He is having difficulty penetrating that with any spiritual concepts (cf. Mt. 13:10-13, 34, 35).
- e. His own select group of twelve disciples have also manifested a need to have some truths concerning the kingdom more graphically imprinted on their minds.

Parables are enigmatic enough and require just enough self-honesty and effort to know the truth that they will conceal the truth from those who would oppose the truth and only use it for violent purposes. Parables have a way of stripping the human mind bare of all bias and rationalization and laying it open to reality so that those who hate the truth have their opposition intensified. Jesus now tells a parable to explain this about parables:

- a. the "way" (Gr. *hodos*) is more than a path (Gr. *tribos*). *Hodos* is translated "highway" in Mt. 22:10; Lk. 14:23 and means the hard, packed-down roadway. It is impenetrable. Some seed falls on such "soil" and because it cannot take root it never produces. It is vulnerable. Birds come and take the seed away.
- b. the "rock" (Gr. *petran*) is the ground which is underlaid with limestone. It is very shallow soil on top of hard rock which will not retain moisture. Seed sown on such soil may sprout but the young plant withers almost immediately.

- c. the "thorns" (Gr. *akanthon*) may be a generic term for the many thorns and thistles and prickly weeds which grow in Palestine. Seed falling in soil not thoroughly plowed and weeded will find thorns and thistles growing up with the young plants. The weeds are more prolific and hardier and will soon choke out the domestic plants. Soil must be constantly plowed and cultivated so the plants will grow.
- d. the "good" soil (Gr. *agathev*) is that which is prepared. It is "broken" up, plowed, fertile, retains moisture and is cleared of weeds and other hindrances.

Jesus concluded the parable with an admonition to "hear." In the Hebrew language the word *shema* means "hear and obey"; to the Hebrew mind to hear was to obey. The same is true of the Greek word *hupakouo* "obey" which comes from the root *akouw* which means "hear, hearken." The person who really "hears" the teaching of Jesus will obey it. Jesus came to accomplish man's salvation by His death and resurrection, but man must "hear and obey" to receive that salvation. When the Gospel is taught people are held responsible by God as to how they "hear." Those who teach the gospel have responsibilities to be faithful in proclamation, but those who are *taught* also have awesome responsibilities in hearing and obeying!

The disciples asked Jesus what this parable meant. He replied it was to teach the truth that proclaiming the kingship of God would not be easy. In effect, Jesus is explaining why He has suddenly intensified His use of the parabolic method of preaching. The truth of God's sovereignty may be widely disseminated but it will have limited reception—not because the truth has no germinating power nor because the proclaimer is inept but because the hearts of men refuse to receive it. This parable was to show the difference between His disciples who heard His proclamation that the kingdom of God had come and left all and followed Him and the self-righteous religious leaders and materialistic multitudes who heard but did not produce the fruit of repentance in their lives. Most of the time Jesus could speak plainly to His disciples and they understood. Of course, there were times when they did not understand because of their finite limitations, but they were good men and His teaching did not motivate them to want to kill Him as it did the rulers. The Greek word *mysteria* ("mysteries," KJV) is translated "secrets" in the RSV. The word in Biblical context means "revelation." It is not mysterious in that it *cannot* be known but in the sense that it is unknown until it is revealed. What Jesus is actually saying is He could *reveal* the things concerning the kingdom of God plainly to His disciples most of the time without fear of being misunderstood and opposed but for the rest of the people then He must speak of the kingdom in parables. So Jesus explained the parable to His disciples:

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- a. the "seed" is the word of God. The Greek is, *ho logos tou theou*. Jesus is the Logos in John 1:1-18 and Rev. 19:13. The word of Jesus is Life (cf. Jn. 6:63). The gospel of Christ is the seed by which men are "born again" (I Pet. 1:22-24) and it must be "obeyed" to produce the new life. This is of primary importance. The dynamic for eternal life is not religious systems or human traditions but faith in a Person, Jesus Christ, which is expressed by obedience to His commandments.
- b. the "wayside" soil represents people with hardened hearts. The word of God cannot bear fruit there because they do not love the truth but take pleasure in unrighteousness (II Thess. 2:9-12) and the devil is allowed to come and take the truth away and replace it with delusion and falsehood. This is the mind that has become calloused with continued rejection of truth (cf. Rom. 1:18-32; Heb. 3:7-13; II Pet. 3:5; Prov. 21:29; 28:14, etc.). This represents the coldly indifferent, close-minded, arrogant, self-righteous person, obstinately impervious to the historical reality of scripture because of the moral implications for his life-style. The disciple of Jesus who goes proclaiming the kingship of God will find that the Word can be absolutely resisted, that there is a real devil who will take away any word of God when a person does not want it, and, all who sow the "seed" of the kingdom will meet with some "hard" hearts.
- c. the "rocky" or shallow soil represents those who respond quickly and emotionally to the Word, but superficially. This person never really thinks about the hard historical realities of discipleship, stewardship, persecution, and self-control—they just "feel." These have no endurance when the "heat" of worldly opposition comes to their life because they have not allowed the Word of God to have root in their character. Their relationship to the Word is emotional but not mental and practical. The disciple of Jesus who sows the seed of the Gospel must understand that if the Word is to produce any lasting fruit it must be sown in minds characterized by stability, reality, endurance and depth.
- d. the "thorny" soil represents those who "want the best of both worlds" at the same time. It is the heart with potential (for if it will grow thorns, it will grow wheat) but it allows the weeds of worldliness to grow alongside the wheat of the Word. The desires and cares of this world, if allowed to go unchecked, will choke out desires and cares for the next world. If Jesus ever emphasized anything it was that Christian discipleship is impossible with divided loyalties. We must "set our minds on things above . . . not on things on the earth" (Col. 3:2). The "rich young ruler" and "Demas" are examples of thorny soil.

e. the "good" soil represents people with "honest and good" (Gr. *kale, agathe*) hearts. They are fair-minded, know what is right when it is proclaimed and practiced, and desire the truth even though it may involve suffering in the flesh. They hold on to all the truth they know and are loyal to it because they recognize its value. They have patience (Gr. *hupomone*, "endurance"). They are not fickle, but steadfast. They are not shallow but deep. The seed of the gospel sown in their hearts grows automatically (Gr. *automate*, Mk. 4:28), or, of its own accord. No manipulation is necessary, it grows according to its own schedule.

Jesus revealed in this parable that the kingdom of God (God's rule in the hearts of men) is produced by the Word of God preached to men. Those who proclaim the Word must be warned that it will fall on four different types of hearts. The Word will produce the fruit of salvation in *only one* kind of heart, honest and good; in all others it will not produce. Thus, by implication, Jesus is also teaching that sowing requires caring, training, work, persuasiveness, honesty, humility, patience, and faith. The student should definitely study Matthew 13:1-53 and Mark 4:1-34 in conjunction with Luke 8:4-18. We also recommend the very fine comments of Harold Fowler in, *The Gospel of Matthew, Vol. III*, pages 14-172, pub. College Press.

8:16-18 Development: If the sower sows and the seed has automatic life in itself, then the ultimate responsibility for producing fruit lies with the "soil." Hearing is the ultimate responsibility! The disciples may have wondered about Jesus' statement, "but for others they (the revelations of the kingdom) are in parables, so that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand." Jesus' answer to their perplexity: Lamps are made for lighting and light may be seen unless one is "blind." Jesus is not going to refuse to reveal the kingdom to anyone. He will preach the kingdom to everyone He possibly can. He is not going to conceal the light of the gospel—He is going to let it shine. The light of truth, so far as it depends on Him and His disciples, will be made available to all who are willing to see it. But truth is perceived only to the degree of honesty, and desire which the mind has toward it. Truth will not be forced upon anyone. Jesus is using parabolic form to present truth simply because for those who refuse to let God tell them anything, the door to the kingdom of God must be closed. Take heed then how you hear (obey)! The truth about the kingdom has all been revealed in Jesus and the apostolic writings. Nothing is hid that shall not be made manifest, nor anything secret that shall not be known and come to light. God has no more revelation about the kingdom than what the New Testament reveals. The Light is there! It is up to man to see it! Those who put the most faith in Jesus' words will understand them and profit from them

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most. Those who do not believe Jesus, even what little truth they have will soon become meaningless and lost. What a man does not use he will lose!

8:19-21 Disposition: Matthew and Mark (Mt. 12:46-50; Mk. 3:31-35) place this incident in a different position in their accounts. Most commentators think the incident should chronologically come before the sermon in parables and that Luke has placed it according to literary usage. Whatever the case, it is a classic example of the Son of Man exercising authority in the realm of the human ego. It also exemplifies the very thing Jesus warned against in the parable of the soils (the "thorny soil") that the word of the kingdom may be choked out by worldly-mindedness. Jesus' mother and brothers may have been altogether sincere in trying to call Him aside from the intensity of His present situation. Jesus had been so busy He had not even taken time to eat (cf. Mk. 3:20); the Pharisees were openly intensifying their attacks upon Him (Mt. 12:24) and saying He was demon possessed; they probably thought Jesus was so carried away with His cause that He had become oblivious to the dangers all about Him and they must take things in hand and give corrective guidance. At first, Jesus' answer seems flippant. But Jesus is not being frivolous toward family love at all—He is simply putting it in its proper place. Family relationships must come behind our spiritual relationship with the Heavenly Father. The true man of God is loyal to God and His work first. The old adage that "blood is thicker than water" (originally intended to advocate that family ties are stronger than the ties of baptism into the spiritual family of God) is wrong! The mother and brothers of Jesus needed to understand that they had no right to use their family relationship to hinder His spiritual mission. They were, in fact, dangerously close to becoming "thorny soil" by their worldly attitude toward His work. The ultimate criterion of our relationship to Jesus is not human family ties, or any other circumstance of human birth, but spiritual rebirth. As Jesus put it, our relationship to Him depends entirely upon whether we are doing the will of God or not. That is the kingdom disposition; Jesus wishes to exercise His authority through His word upon the human ego to produce that disposition.

SECTION 2

In The Elements (8:22-25)

22 One day he got into a boat with his disciples, and he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side of the lake." So they set out, ²³and as they sailed he fell asleep. And a storm of wind came down on the lake, and they were filling with water, and were in danger. ²⁴And they went and woke him saying, "Master, Master,

we are perishing!” And he awoke and rebuked the wind and the raging waves; and they ceased, and there was a calm. ²⁵He said to them, “Where is your faith?” And they were afraid, and they marveled, saying to one another, “Who then is this, that he commands even wind and water, and they obey him?”

8:22-23 Peril: The beautiful Sea of Galilee is 685 feet below sea level. It is surrounded by hills rising 2000 feet high which make the area resemble a huge “cup.” Jesus apparently decided to go “across” the sea, away from Capernaum, in order to bring some moderation to the intense popularity of His ministry. The opposition to His popularity was becoming vicious and murderous. Jesus wished very much that the people would not seek Him simply for the physical things such as healing and “bread and fish” (cf. Jn. 6:26ff). So He went away from Capernaum to let that attitude cool. He also knew it was not His time to die at the hands of His enemies so His retirement to the region of the Gerasenes (v. 26) was to temporarily postpone that crisis.

As they were out on the sea, a storm of wind came “down” on the lake. Luke’s use of the word “down” is minutely accurate! Storms to this day come “down” upon the Sea of Galilee because of its unique topography. Matthew, describing this same storm, uses the Greek words *seismos megas*, meaning “great shaking” (we get the English prefix “mega” and the noun, “seismograph” from these Greek words). Seismographs register the intensity of earthquakes. This must have been an awesome storm. Mark and Luke use the Greek words, *lailapsi megale anemou*, meaning literally, “a hurricane of great driving wind.” Anyone who has ever been in a storm at sea in a large ship knows how utterly awesome and terrifying an experience it is. Jesus and his disciples were in a small fishing boat which could hold twelve men but not a “large” catch of fish. These boats were wide and solid, but not very fast— not much larger than a life-boat on modern sea-going vessels. The waves were already swamping the boat and it was dangerously close to sinking with all aboard. Luke indicates Jesus went to sleep almost immediately after they set sail, and He slept on while the storm raged. He was at perfect peace with His Father and had no fear whatever. But the disciples were terrified. Mark records that they woke Jesus and said to him, “Teacher, do you not care if we perish?” Luke tells us the disciples addressed Jesus, “Master, Master . . .” (Gr. *epistata, epistata*, means, “commander, commander,”). How could they doubt Jesus’ concern? How could they doubt their eternal safety with Him as their commander? It is easy to believe in one’s safety as long as one is safe! The test of faith comes when one faces death and all human power is useless. Of course Jesus cared! He had demonstrated His care for fearful, suffering,

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dying humanity many times over already. He demonstrated His power to do whatever He wished about any human predicament. So, as Matthew records, when Jesus was awakened He said, "Why are you afraid, O men of little faith?" Matthew uses the Greek word *oligopistoi* for "little faith." It could be more accurately translated "brief faith." Faith is not measured so much by quantity as by quality. The faith that pleases God is steadfast, enduring and stable. Faith that is here today and gone tomorrow or that vacillates with circumstances, "emotionally up" one day and "emotionally gone" the next day is unacceptable to God.

8:24-25 Power: All three of the synoptic gospel writers used the Greek word *epitimaō* to express Jesus' action in "rebuking" the wind and the sea. *Epitimaō* means "to lay honor upon." In other words, Jesus laid His honor (power and authority) upon nature and it obeyed Him immediately. As co-Creator (Jn. 1:1-18; Col. 1:16) and co-Sustainer (Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3) He exercises His sovereign authority over the elements and they do His will. Jesus was not "scolding" nature: He was simply ordering it to do His will. Luke, like Matthew, indicates Jesus wondered where the faith of the disciples had gone, for he reports Jesus asking, "Where is your faith?"

Whereas before they were afraid at the raging of the storm, now they were awe-stricken with the power of Jesus over the elements. With simply a word He gave orders and was obeyed immediately. There is no possibility that this was a hoax. These men were fishermen by occupation. They had sailed this sea hundreds of times. They knew what storms were like. This was no ordinary storm—and it was real. The storm was stopped suddenly (not gradually) and at its apex. So these men said, "Who is this, that he commands even wind and water and they obey him?" Who is He indeed! He is Lord of all creation! What have you decided about Jesus? If we stand in awe before the almost unbelievable powers of nature (even of atomic power) how much more must we bow our wills to the absolute authority of His word!

SECTION 3

In Evil Spirits (8:26-39)

26 Then they arrived at the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee. ²⁷And as he stepped out on land, there met him a man from the city who had demons; for a long time he had worn no clothes, and he lived not in a house but among the tombs. ²⁸When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell down before him, and said with a loud voice, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beseech you, do not torment me." ²⁹For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. (For many a

time it had seized him; he was kept under guard, and bound with chains and fetters, but he broke the bonds and was driven by the demon into the desert.)³⁰ Jesus then asked him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Legion"; for many demons had entered him.³¹ And they begged him not to command them to depart into the abyss.³² Now a large herd of swine was feeding there on the hillside; and they begged him to let them enter these. So he gave them leave.³³ Then the demons came out of the man and entered the swine, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned.

³⁴ When the herdsmen saw what had happened, they fled, and told it in the city and in the country.³⁵ Then people went out to see what had happened, and they came to Jesus, and found the man from whom the demons had gone, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind; and they were afraid.³⁶ And those who had seen it told them how he who had been possessed with demons was healed.³⁷ Then all the people of the surrounding country of the Gerasenes asked him to depart from them; for they were seized with great fear; so he got into the boat and returned.³⁸ The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with him; but he sent him away, saying,³⁹ "Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you." And he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city how much Jesus had done for him.

8:26-33 Emancipation: Matthew says Jesus arrived across the Sea of Galilee at the "country of the Gadarenes." Both Mark and Luke make the place of arrival "the country of the Gerasenes." The Greek manuscripts vary here probably due to the fact that Matthew, writing mostly for a Jewish audience, used the name of the city Gadara (about 5 miles southeast of the seashore), which would be more likely used by the Jews, as a generalization for the whole area. Mark and Luke, writing mostly for a Gentile audience used the name of a city 50 miles south of the Sea of Galilee, Gerasa (the Roman capital of the whole region) as a synonym for the whole area. Both Gadara and Gerasa were cities of the Decapolis mentioned in the New Testament. Some ancient Greek texts read "Geresa" which may be a scribal emendation (attempting to correct what was thought to be an error in an earlier manuscript) since there apparently was a city on the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee closer to the seashore than Gadara.

Matthew says there were two men possessed of demons. Mark says there was a man with an unclean spirit. Luke says Jesus met a man from the city who had demons.

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- a. Matthew, Mark and Luke are all correct. They are inspired. Our removal from the situation by 2000 years is the problem.
- b. Probably Mark and Luke were interested in recording the more dominant one (the more spectacular one) possessed of many demons.
- c. Mark confirms in his account that the man was possessed of more than one demon (Mk. 5:14-20).
- d. Modern-day news reporters vary in accounts just as these men did and no one accuses them of historical errors.
- e. There is no contradiction unless Mark says "there was *only* one demon-possessed man."

Luke records that when Jesus stepped out of the boat onto the land there met Him a man from the city (Gadara) who had demons. For an extensive discussion of demon possession in the New Testament see our comments on Luke 4:32-41. Modern archaeologists have excavated the cliffs around Gadara (today called, Um Keis) and found tombs measuring 20 feet square, with side recesses for bodies. Like the demoniacs, people still dwell in them today. Nearby there is a field of several acres strewn with stone coffins and their lids. Every demon possessed person Jesus met received compassion and pity from Him. This was an exceptionally pitiful case.

- a. The man had been naked for a long time.
- b. He lived in tombs among dead bodies.
- c. He was seized with fits of violence many times by the demons.
- d. He was kept under guard and bound with chains and leg irons by the people of the area.
- e. But he broke the chains and irons and the demons drove him into the uninhabited wild places of the area.

When the man saw Jesus, he prostrated himself on the ground before Jesus and (the demons, or one specific demon among many) cried out, "What have you do to with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beseech you, do not torment me." Demons recognize their true sovereign! Jesus is Lord of *all*, and the demons know it. They know they have nothing in common with Jesus except that He is ultimately set to punish them in torments. When asked his name, the man said, "Legion." A Roman "legion" of soldiers numbered 6000, thus the word *legion* came to signify *many*. The word *abyssos* in classical Greek meant "bottomless," and was used to describe the ancient Greek cosmogony of a deep, limitless universe or space beyond this world. In the N.T. it is used to describe the "nether" world or the place of torments where the disobedient spirits are bound. It is translated "bottomless pit" in Rev. 9:1; 2, 11; 11:7; 17:8; 20:1-3. The demons feared this "bottomless pit" more than anything else.

The demons begged Jesus to allow them to inhabit a herd of swine feeding near the tombs. Mark says there were approximately 2000 swine in the herd. There were strict prohibitions in Judaism against Jews eating, raising or touching swine. However, the Jews who lived east of the Jordan River often accommodated themselves to the culture of the Gentile majority and paid little attention to religious custom, especially if it involved economics. We do not really know if the herdsmen were Jews or Gentiles. The demons knew Jesus would not allow them to inhabit human beings—He cast them out at every opportunity. They knew they were doomed to return to the abyss if they had no physical body in this world to inhabit. Perhaps they also knew that since the swine had no will by which they could control them, they could destroy the swine and Jesus would be blamed by the populace and the demons would have some temporary victory over Him. The malicious, destructive rebellion of the devil and his cohorts is graphically illustrated here. They will grasp at any straw to destroy anything God has made!

They did not fool Jesus! He knew all along the outcome of this incident. He was not being merciful to the demons. He knew this would shock the materialistic-minded people of this country (which they proved to be, 8:37) out of their indifference later when the man who had been emancipated from this demonic enslavement testified among them how much God had done for him. Many people of this area later became followers of Christ and some of the earliest Christian churches were formed in this area. Anyone who finds occasion to denounce Jesus for allowing swine to be destroyed is as spiritually blind as the people of Gadara were. They see neither the salvation of the one pitiful demon-possessed man nor the subsequent discipleship of the whole area as important as the loss of private property. Foster comments, "How often this is the main thing which men consider—material loss—and not the rescue of human beings! . . . The perverted estimate of the value of material things and of a human soul must needs be corrected." The issue was really: which is more important, hogs or men?

8:34-39 Effects: This spectacular demonstration of divine authority over demons and the material creation resulted in a number of exciting consequences:

- a. When the herdsmen saw what happened, they fled, and told it in the city and country. Spontaneous evangelism!
- b. Then people went out to see what had happened. No one could remain indifferent to such stories—they had to see for themselves.
- c. The multitudes saw the man clothed and in his right mind and were afraid.
- d. When the story was told again of how the demons were cast out of the man and the swine ran down into the sea and drowned, the

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people were seized (Gr. *suneichonto*, grasped, gripped in, laid hold of) by great fear (Gr. *phobos*).

The impact of what Jesus had done, and Who He must be paralyzed them with fear at what He might yet do.

- e. The people of the area entreated Jesus to leave their area. They may have been concerned that more private property might be destroyed by this mysteriously powerful Galilean. More probably, they were afraid of Him because of their sinful guilt. Even Peter had earlier cried, "Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man" (Lk. 5:8).

Guilty, unforgiven sinners, in the presence of divine holiness and power are slain and destroyed with fear!

- f. The man kept on begging Jesus that he might go with Him:

- (1) His love and gratitude would make him ready to serve Jesus with his very life.
- (2) He could be sure of staying rid of demon possession if he remained at Jesus' side.
- (3) Everyone in this area knew him and would forever associate him with the loss of 2000 hogs.

But Jesus had a work for him to do right in the most difficult place on earth to live for Christ—one's own home area.

The emancipated man proclaimed throughout the whole region what Jesus had done for him. The record of this great demonstration of divine power had been proclaimed now for almost 2000 years and millions have believed Jesus is who He claimed to be and have been freed from an enslavement worse than 2000 demons.

SECTION 4

In Enfeebling Sickness (8:40-48)

40 Now when Jesus returned, the crowd welcomed him, for they were all waiting for him. ⁴¹And there came a man named Jairus, who was a ruler of the synagogue; and falling at Jesus' feet he besought him to come to his house, ⁴²for he had an only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she was dying.

As he went, the people pressed round him. ⁴³And a woman who had had a flow of blood for twelve years and could not be healed by any one, ⁴⁴came up behind him, and touched the fringe of his garment; and immediately her flow of blood ceased. ⁴⁵And Jesus said, "Who was it that touched me?" When all denied it, Peter said, "Master, the multitudes surround you and press upon you!" ⁴⁶But

Jesus said, "Some one touched me; for I perceive that power has gone forth from me." ⁴⁷And when the woman saw that she was not hidden, she came trembling, and falling down before him declared in the presence of all the people why she had touched him, and how she had been immediately healed. ⁴⁸And he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace."

8:40-42 The Seeking: Jesus left the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee and sailed in a boat (Mt. 9:1; Mk. 5:21) back to Capernaum. The multitudes received Him back with gladness (Gr. *apedexato*) or "welcomed" Him. Mark tells us that the multitudes thronged about Him at the seashore (Mk. 5:21) and they continued to gather and press in upon Him until it became almost impossible for Him to move. Everyone was trying to touch Him (cf. Mk. 5:30-31 with Lk. 8:45). Luke informs us the multitudes had been waiting (Gr. *prosdokontes*, expecting, anticipating with eagerness) for Him to return. This was about the middle of the second year of Jesus' public ministry. It was the year of great popularity—conducted mostly in Galilee. Crowds followed Him wherever He went surrounding Him, begging Him to heal them or do some miracle for them to improve their physical and material situation. The scenes out in the streets and highways of Galilee would resemble the scenes of modern American cities when America's President walks their streets, except that Jesus had no bodyguards or roped-off areas to keep the crowds at a distance. In this teeming, pushing, chattering throng, there was a "ruler" of one of the synagogues by the name of Jairus. Matthew and Mark record that Jairus spoke to Jesus, saying, "My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well and live." Luke, always the precise physician, notes that she was his only daughter and she was twelve years of age. Jesus had apparently sat down and was teaching this clamoring crowd, for Matthew indicates Jesus "rose" and followed Jairus with His disciples. The great multitude went right along toward Jairus' house, continuing to press in upon Jesus and His disciples as they walked.

8:43-48 The Saved: On the way to the home of Jairus, in the midst of the clamoring crowd was a woman who had a "flow of blood" (hemorrhage) for twelve years. Mark records the woman "had suffered much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was no better but rather grew worse." Some ancient manuscripts of Luke's gospel also note that the woman "had spent all her living upon physicians." Her infirmity was incurable by the physicians of that day (perhaps even by physicians of today). She must have been very emaciated and weak. The "fringe" of the garment is called *tzitzith* in Hebrew and *kraspedou* in Greek. It consisted of tassels of twisted cords fastened to the outer

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garments as borders on cloaks or coats to remind Israelites of their obligations to be loyal to Jehovah (cf. Nu. 15:38-39; Deut. 22:12). Later such "fringes" became distinct badges of Judaism and many of the Pharisees lengthened theirs to make a public show that they considered themselves more "righteous" than the common people.

Why did the woman want only to touch the fringe of His garment? (Mt. 9:21; Mk. 5:28). She was probably ashamed to approach Jesus face to face since her hemorrhage made her "unclean" ceremonially (Lev. 15:19-31). As a result she was banned from the public, banned from the temple worship services, and should she touch anyone else she would make them "unclean" (cf. Num. 19:22). Considering the woman's helpless, hopeless and shameful plight it is to her credit that she had not become bitter. She had heard the reports about Jesus (Mk. 5:27) and believed He could heal her even if all she could do was touch the fringe of His garment. Her faith was not based on mysticism or on her own feelings—but on reports from eyewitnesses to former healings by Jesus. Our faith that Jesus is who He claims to be and will do what He says is based on the very same kind of evidence—eyewitness testimony. Her faith in Jesus was, to some extent, born of desperation. This is the case with all of us. Ultimately none of us will trust in Jesus until we are convinced there is nothing else that can save us. We must all finally come to the point where we despair even of life itself before we learn to rely on God (cf. II Cor. 1:8-9). When we have come to that place, then the testimony of who Jesus is (historical evidence) and that He is able to save, is there in the Bible for us to believe and act (obey) upon.

Luke records precisely that when she touched Jesus her flow (Gr. *hrusis*) of blood ceased. Mark uses a less precise and more figurative description, literally, "and immediately was dried up the fountain of the blood of her . . ." (Mk. 5:29). The healing was instantaneous—not gradual. No need for her to return to Jesus for more healing sessions. We feel sure that Jesus not only knew someone had touched Him, but that He also knew who. Why then did he ask? Probably to (a) publicly prove the woman's cure so that she might return to worship in the temple and social fraternization; (b) to make sure she knew that the power to heal was with Jesus, not His cloak; (c) to give the woman an opportunity to express her gratitude and become a witness to those in that crowd of who Jesus was. When Jesus asked who had touched Him, all in the crowd denied it (probably afraid He was upset about it). Peter and His other disciples thought it rather odd that Jesus would suddenly become aware someone had touched Him when the crowd had been pressing in upon Him, undoubtedly jostling and bumping and touching Him all the way from the seashore. But Jesus was talking about an unique touch—a touch of faith. Jesus perceived (Gr. *epignous*, "knowing") that power

had gone forth from Him. The Greek word *ginosko* is *not* used to describe physical sensations but mental comprehensions. Jesus had no particular sensation that power had gone from Him, but he *knew* it. Even the woman's "feeling" in her body that she was healed (Mk. 5:29) is described by the Greek word *ginosko* and means she *knew* it mentally—not emotionally. It actually happened to her—she didn't just "feel" like it had happened.

The woman saw that she could not remain anonymous (ashamed because of her "unclean" condition). If Jesus had the power to heal her in such a miraculous way, He would surely know who had touched His garment. She came trembling (Gr. *tremousa*) and prostrated herself down before Jesus in the presence of that pushing, shoving crowd and declared (Gr. *apengeilen*, from *apangelo*, meaning, "to declare precisely, plainly and clearly") why she had touched Him and how she had been immediately cured. But Jesus spoke tenderly to her (she was probably expecting some rebuke from this great rabbi because she had touched Him when she was "unclean") and said, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace." All three gospel writers use the Greek word *sesoken* (from *sodzo*, meaning primarily, "saved") which has been translated in the RSV, "well." The woman had been delivered and saved from her physical infirmity and thus made well. And then He told her to "go in peace." *Peace* in Hebrew is *shalom* and means, "well-being, integrated wholeness, goodness." Jesus meant for the woman to go her way also in spiritual well-being for her faith in Him had delivered her from her "uncleanness." She was restored to communion with God. She could now return to the temple to offer sacrifices and worship. This was the greatest aspect of her healing! Some day, she would become ill again and die, physically, but she had been restored to fellowship with God and that was what made her "well" in the ultimate sense. Jesus demonstrated His power over the ultimate disease—sin.

SECTION 5

In Eternity (8:49-56)

49 While he was still speaking, a man from the ruler's house came and said, "Your daughter is dead; do not trouble the Teacher any more." ⁵⁰But Jesus on hearing this answered him, "Do not fear; only believe, and she shall be well." ⁵¹And when he came to the house, he permitted no one to enter with him, except Peter and John and James, and the father and mother of the child. ⁵²And all were weeping and bewailing her; but he said, "Do not weep; for she is not dead but sleeping." ⁵³And they laughed at him, knowing that she was dead. ⁵⁴But taking her by the hand he called, saying, "Child, arise."

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⁵⁵And her spirit returned, and she got up at once; and he directed that something should be given her to eat. ⁵⁶And her parents were amazed; but he charged them to tell no one what had happened.

8:49-53 Only Believe: Jairus had been following Jesus closely all the time. No doubt Jairus was growing more anxious for his daughter's life moment by moment. While Jesus was still speaking to the woman healed of her "issue of blood" Jairus was standing next to Jesus in the pushing, pressing multitude. Suddenly, pushing through the crowd, came someone from Jairus' house (he was the ruler of a synagogue in Capernaum and a very important man of the community) blurting out the shocking news, "Your little daughter is dead, do not vex the teacher any longer." There was no doubt on the part of the messenger that the little girl was dead for he used the Greek word *tethneken*, a perfect tense verb which indicates the child had died before he left the house and was even now dead. Jairus must have been "pestering" Jesus constantly to hurry up to this house for the Greek word *skulle* ("trouble") literally means "to flay off the skin of someone" and so in a figurative way means to "agitate, vex, annoy, distress."

Jesus, hearing the shocking announcement, spoke directly to Jairus (Gr. *apekrithe*, "answered him"), rather tersely, "Do not fear, only believe and she will be saved." The Greek word translated "well," is *sothsetai*, the future tense of *sodzo*, meaning, "to save, to make whole." It is the same word Jesus used with the woman with an issue of blood. Jesus did not explain how the child would be "saved" or who would do the saving—He implied that Jairus was simply to trust Him and all would be well. Arriving at Jairus' house, Jesus entered the house with only Peter, John and James, and Jairus and his wife (cf. Mk. 5:37). Inside the house was pandemonium; flute players (Mt. 9:23), a tumult (Mk. 5:38), and a crowd of people weeping and bewailing the child loudly (the Greek word, *thorubon*, translated "tumult" in Mk. 5:38-39, literally means, "loud, deafening noise, confusion"). Confusion, loud wailing, flutes playing funeral dirges, and rooms packed with curiosity-minded people was in no way conducive to the majestic, yet privately tender thing Jesus was about to do, so He "put them all outside" (Mk. 5:40), He commanded them (Gr. *anachoreite*, imperative mood), "You all withdraw" (Mt. 9:24) "for she is not dead but is sleeping."

Jesus knew He was going to clear the house of all the confusion and noise by ordering the mourners outside. What he was going to do needed to be done, for the sake of the parents and the girl, as privately as possible. This was no time for even more confusion and uproar, well-intentioned though it might be. At the same time, Jesus wanted eyewitnesses to the event whose personal involvement might not later be challenged as

it might if the father and mother themselves were the only witnesses. These three disciples would be impersonal and objective in their observance. Furthermore, it is evident from verse 56 that Jesus wanted as little publicity of this miracle as possible because it would simply attract more and more multitudes seeking *only* healing, and intensify official opposition, (cf. also Mt. 9:26). If people wanted to believe and trust Jesus for forgiveness and salvation, He had already done enough miracles. Jesus did not have to heal every single sick person in the world to establish His power and faithfulness to keep His promise to forgive. As a matter of fact, the more physical healing that took place, the more people tended to seek it and neglect the cleansing of their souls unto salvation.

Why would Jesus say the child was "sleeping" when it was plain to everyone present she was dead? As G. Campbell Morgan puts it, "From Christ's viewpoint that is not death which we call death. When the spirit has left the body, that is not death. Death is a deeper thing than that." Physical death is merely the separation of the spirit from the body. Jairus' daughter still lived, somewhere, in another existence, absent from the body of flesh. Jesus wants everyone to know that the child is very much alive somewhere else, and that He has the power to bring her back from there to her fleshly body if He wishes. For Jesus, "death" is separation from God. Sin brings death in all its terrible reality. Death is *separation* from goodness, truth, purity, loveliness, wholeness and guiltlessness. Separation from God is by choice. Men may choose death or life. Life is by faith in God and His son. This little girl was not "dead"—she evidently believed in God and was still alive somewhere else. So Jesus simply used a figure of speech to describe the state of her present existence as one of rest (cf. Rev. 14:13)—not unconsciousness. When He spoke to her, she heard and obeyed. Jesus has the power to speak to invisible spirits. But when Jesus said, "She is sleeping" the people laughed at Him. The Greek word is *kategelon*, literally, "laughed-down"—in other words, they scorned Him or ridiculed Him.

8:54-56 Overwhelmingly Blessed: This miracle, as recorded by the gospel writers, demands an absolute decision about Jesus one way or another. Either He did raise this little girl from the dead or He is the world's biggest fraud. The account precludes any possibility of mythology or figurative language. Taking the girl by the hand, in the presence of her parents and three disciples, Jesus said (in Aramaic, Mk. 5:41), "Talitha cumi," which means, "Little girl, I say to you, arise." Surely her parents knew whether she was dead or not. If Jesus simply pretended to raise her from the dead and did not, what a cruel trick He tried to play upon the bereaved parents. If she was not dead, what a cruel trick Jesus has played upon millions of believers (including His own contemporaries).

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If either of these propositions be true Jesus should not be considered a teacher worthy of following no matter how eloquent His doctrines. But Jesus is no fraud! He actually raised the girl from the dead.

The gospel writers record that the little girl got up immediately and walked and Jesus directed that she be given food to eat. All this proves beyond any doubt that it was a real resurrection and not a symbolic one. This was no spiritist seance—Jairus' daughter was no ghost! The parents were "amazed" with great astonishment (Mk. 5:42). The Greek word *exestesan* is translated "amazed" but literally means, "stand out from." In other words, the girl's parents were "beside themselves" with astonishment at what Jesus had done.

Why would Jesus enjoin the parents to tell no one what had happened? We have already discussed the probable reasons above. Matthew notes that "the report of this miracle went through all that district" (Mt. 9:26) so someone told. In the very next chapter of Luke's gospel we see that Jesus' great popularity as a miracle-worker precipitates an official inquiry by the murderous Herod Antipas (Lk. 9:7-9) and poses problems for the further conduct of a public ministry by Jesus (Lk. 9:11-17; Mk. 6:31-44; Mt. 14:13-21). These are the fundamental reasons Jesus wanted to "keep a low profile" as a miracle-worker.

STUDY STIMULATORS:

1. What is the "seed" in the parable "of the sower"?
2. What is Jesus saying generally about evangelism or proclamation of the gospel in the parable of "the sower"?
3. How is the attempt of Jesus' mother and brothers to see Him an illustration of the parable of the "sower"?
4. How did Jesus evaluate the faith of His disciples during the storm at sea?
5. How many demon-possessed men came to meet Jesus on the other side of the sea?
6. Do you see a problem in the ethics of Jesus in allowing the demons to destroy a herd of swine? Why?
7. In such a clamoring, pushing multitude in Capernaum, why was Jesus concerned that someone had touched Him?
8. What implications, other than physical, did the woman's hemorrhaging have upon her life?
9. Why did Jesus command the mourners to leave the house of Jairus?
10. Why did Jesus say the little girl was asleep when she was dead?
11. Why did Jesus tell the parents to tell no one what had happened?

IS THERE DEMON POSSESSION TODAY AS THERE WAS DURING THE TIME OF CHRIST'S INCARNATE MINISTRY?

By Paul T. Butler

It is my opinion that there is no demon possession of human beings today in the precise manner such as manifested in the phenomenal way it was during Christ's incarnate ministry (and perhaps as it was during the remainder of the ascendancy of the Roman empire).

It is my opinion that the "binding of Satan" in Rev. 20:1-6 was initiated and resulted from the redemptive work of Christ in His Incarnation. It was completed when the "beast" of the 4th universal empire (as Daniel predicted), Rome, fell. At that time, it is my opinion, demon possession, as manifested in the Gospels and Acts apparently was to cease. All binding of Satan is relative. He has always been "bound" to some degree or other due to the fact that God is Almighty. God is the only being who is Almighty. It is my opinion a part of Satan's binding has to do with the restriction imposed by God that Satan's demons are no longer able to "possess" human bodies as they were during the time of Christ's incarnation.

1. To have this opinion does not mean I deny the power of Satan to deceive the minds of people today who deliberately choose to believe falsehood perpetrated by "lying signs and wonders." If the definition of demon possession means simply that Satan has captured the minds of men by unbelief, I would agree.

"Satan entered into Judas . . ." (Lk. 22:3 and Jn. 13:27) but he was not what other scriptures describe as "demon possessed."

2. Do the alleged demons possessing people today ever enter into animals? (See Mt. 8:28-34; Lk. 8:26-36; Mk. 5:1-16.)
3. Do the alleged demons possessing people today ever testify to the identity and deity of Christ or the messengers of Christ and what their work is? (See Acts 16:17; 19:15; Mt. 8:29; Mk. 1:24 and above references.)
4. Do the alleged demons possessing people today ever speak out as recognizable separate individuals—definitively separate from the human whose body they possess?
5. How may demons (alleged) today be exorcised? Is the exorcism always miraculous and always instantaneous? If not, is it simply a matter of conversion by the power of the gospel regenerating the mind through preaching and teaching? When there is an unsuccessful exorcism, or casting out, are those possessed by alleged demons doomed to suffer such possession until they die?
6. Only Jesus could give power to exorcise demons. That was a direct gift and a supernatural power. It apparently did not require being a "born again" believer to receive this power—Judas apparently was given this power—he was one of the twelve (cf. Mt. 10:1, 8).
7. On the other hand, many pseudo-faith-healers today, and "ministers" from all differing theological and doctrinal positions, claim they have

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cast out or exorcised demons. Whom are we to believe? Who has that power today among all who claim it? What are we to conclude from their claims? Who is to decide which are "real" demons and "real" exorcists? By what criteria?

8. Demons in the scripture were not "ecto-plasm"—they were (and still are, in the abyss) real persons!
9. The psychic powers of the human mind over matter have been well documented. What some think is demon possession could very well be such psycho-somatic phenomena. Voodooism, etc., may be classified under this heading.
10. The most destructive power of the devil is not possession of a human body but a mind or soul (cf. Mt. 10:28). It appears that while demons possessed bodies of some humans during Christ's incarnation—the mind or soul of that person was not possessed. Demons merely "troubled" humans (Lk. 6:18); they "drove" people to do, physically, what they did (Lk. 8:29).
11. Of all the miraculous gifts the Corinthian Christians were given, exorcism of demon possessed was not among them (I Cor. ch. 12-14).
12. How do we know when someone is demon possessed? What is the criteria by which distinction is made between demon possession and epilepsy, mental illness, perverted maliciousness and crazed murderousness (e.g. Hitler, de Sade, etc.)?
13. Is it not possible that all the mania for the occult and the practice of it is being used by the devil to get people to think he has powers which he does not really have (Rev. 13:13-15)?
14. If demon possession could only come to those who were willing—was the "little daughter" of the Syro-Phoenician woman a "willing" victim? In other words, demon possession had nothing to do with the willingness of the possessed. Therefore, exorcism was not done by "conversion" but by the exercise of divine authority in a miraculous way.
15. It seems apparent that only Jesus and the apostles, or specially endowed disciples (Lk. 10) could exorcise demons. This they did, not by "conversion" but by miracle. There is no evidence from the scriptures that this miraculous power could be given by any other than Christ Himself and that while He was in His incarnate ministry.
16. If miracles of healing, speaking in foreign languages, prophecy, including "discernment of spirits" (I Cor. 12:10), etc., ceased with the end of the New Testament era and the death of the apostles (or the ones to whom the apostles imparted these gifts), so that we can only be certain of the documented miracles of Scripture, then the same principle ought to be applied, for the same reason, to demon possession and exorcism.

IS THERE DEMON POSSESSION TODAY?

Otherwise, we are in a quandary to decide about modern claims of demon possession and exorcism among religious groups from one end of the doctrinal spectrum to the other. There are also pagan exorcists making claims.

17. There really is not any documentation of demon possession in the Old Testament such as occurred during the Incarnation (with an exception or two, e.g. King Saul).
18. It appears, then, that demon possession in the precise manner in which it occurred during Christ's incarnate ministry was uniquely for the purpose of affording historical evidence that Christ (and His apostles) possessed the Sovereign Spirit of God—that their message was one of victory and power over Satan and all of hell.
19. A recent case in point, excerpts from article in Joplin, Mo., *Globe*, 3-8-81:

Catholic priests were "attempting" to rid an 11 year old boy in Brookfield, Conn. of "demons." (The boy's name is unknown.)

A 19 year old friend was watching these sessions, challenged the demons "to take me on. Control me. Leave this boy alone," acc. to tape recordings of the sessions. Arne Johnson was the friend.

Johnson allegedly stabbed to death a co-worker (Alan Bono) after Bono had quarrelled at Bono's apartment.

Johnson is now pleading that "he is not responsible for his acts" because of "demonic possession."

Ed and Lorraine Warren, who worked on the Amityville Horror case were asked to help the boy who "appeared to be possessed" (the 11 year old boy). The Warrens said they found "movement of objects and frightening manifestations" in the house. The Warrens said "the boy was indeed possessed," and he seemed to be possessed "off and on, 24 hours a day," said one family member. Tape recordings the Warrens made of some of the sessions have the boy making guttural and hissing sounds, cursing his mother, and threatening to stab and kill those present in the room.

Photographs of the sessions show family members attempting to restrain the boy, who the Warrens said seemed to have superhuman strength.

A priest named Virgulak was called to investigate the case; he has made several reports to the bishop of the diocese, but no public reports. He has "declined to discuss the reports but said no formal exorcism has ever been requested or performed on the boy."

There were "prayer sessions" called "a deliverance" which is supposed to be "a lesser form of exorcism that does not require approval of the bishop."

The Warrens say Johnson's attempts to help the boy were amateurish

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because "the only way to order demons out of a person is by using the name of Jesus Christ."

Mrs. Warren said, ". . . (Johnson) he challenged what was within the child to take him on—and none of us ever do that, not even priests."

Problems with this account:

- a. Based on a number of "begging the question" statements such as, "appeared to be . . .," "seemed to be . . .," "seemed to have . . .," "no public reports . . .," "supposed to be . . .," "approval of the bishop. . . ."
 - b. "In the name of Jesus" means in the Bible, "by the authority of Jesus." Does Roman Catholicism have the "authority of Jesus" to exorcise? The "name of Jesus" is to be used in exorcism by only those authorized to use it (cf. Acts 19:13-16). Whom are we to believe now has that authorization? What credentials do they present for it? Do such exorcists agree doctrinally with the Word of the Holy Spirit in the Bible? If not, are we to believe they have the power of the Spirit?
20. There are two Old Testament prophecies, clearly Messianic, which predict the cessation of "sorceries and soothsayers" (Micah 5:12-13), and "unclean spirits" or demon-possession (Zech. 13:2). Homer Hailey, in his book, *A Commentary on the Minor Prophets*, pub. Baker, sums up Zechariah 13:1-6 in these words, "A fountain for sin and uncleanness will be opened for all the people. At that time the falsehood of idols will cease, prophesying will be discontinued, and the unclean spirits will pass out of the land." Mr. Hailey contends that Zechariah 13:1-9 is entirely Messianic and says, "Once the foundation was laid and the new revelation was complete, the need for prophets would cease. Daniel indicates the same in a strong Messianic prophecy, when he said of the anointed one, the prince, that He would bring in everlasting righteousness, and seal up vision and prophecy. Likewise, unclean spirits, the antithesis of the prophets, would cease. In the conquest of Christ over Satan and his forces, unclean spirits have ceased to control men as they did in the time of the ministry of Christ and the apostles."
- Of course, these prophecies from Micah and Zechariah do not preclude the *attempts* of human beings and Satan to try to *deceive* the world that demon possession and sorceries are still supernaturally viable. We believe the Bible clearly indicates what is alleged today to be supernatural demon possession is no longer a possibility. *Lying* wonders and *deceiving* signs remain very much a possibility so long as men and women refuse to believe and love the truth and prefer to believe what is false (see II Thess. 2:10-12; II Tim. 4:3-4, etc.).
21. The crucial and ultimate question about modern (alleged) demon possession is: *Whose testimony is reliable?* Whose testimony is inerrantly, infallibly reliable besides the testimony of the Scriptures? None! Any man today, without the inerrancy and infallibility of the Holy Spirit to verify his experience and accredit his testimony may be either deceived or a deceiver.

Chapter Nine (9:1-62)

THE SON OF MAN ANTICIPATING HIS EXODUS

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. Are the instructions to the twelve disciples about evangelism applicable to all Christians (9:1-6)?
2. Why did Jesus tell the twelve disciples to give the thousands of hungry people something to eat (9:13)?
3. If Jesus wanted to know what people thought of Him, why did He tell the disciples to tell no one who He was (9:18-22)?
4. Who would not taste death until they should see the kingdom of God (9:27)?
5. To what extent was Jesus' appearance altered on the high mountain (9:28-36)?
6. How could Jesus' deliverance into the hands of wicked men be concealed from His disciples if He had already predicted it to them (9:45)?
7. Why wouldn't the Samaritans let Jesus and His disciples stay over in their country (9:51-56)?

SECTION 1

Training The Twelve (9:1-9)

9 And he called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, ²and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal. ³And he said to them, "Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money; and do not have two tunics, ⁴And whatever house you enter, stay there, and from there depart. ⁵And wherever they do not receive you, when you leave that town shake off the dust from your feet as a testimony against them." ⁶And they departed and went through the villages, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere.

⁷Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was done, and he was perplexed, because it was said by some that John had been raised from the dead, ⁸by some that Elijah had appeared, and by others that one of the old prophets had risen. ⁹Herod said, "John I beheaded; but who is this about whom I hear such things?" And he sought to see him.

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9:1-6 Exciting Mission: The great year of popularity was drawing to a close. Even in Galilee the storm clouds of opposition were gathering on the horizon. A "crash course" in evangelism was in order for the Twelve. For two years the disciples have been soaking up the "classroom" lectures—now they are to have their first "field-trip" all on their own. Now they are to put to practice, without the Teacher's close supervision, the principles they have been taught. There is no way to learn to do evangelism but to do it! Methods are fine but no one method will suit every circumstance or personality.

The more detailed account of this event in Matthew 10:5-42 must be studied along with Luke's account here. Someone has outlined the event (as detailed in all three gospels) thus: Jesus conferred upon the Twelve (a) His mission, (b) His message, (c) His miracles, (d) His miseries, (e) His mastery. His purpose for sending them out was at least three-fold: (a) to multiply the effect of His mission to proclaim the kingdom of God, (b) to provide them with empirical evidence of His miraculous power when they should later become the only eyewitnesses to His death and resurrection, (c) to let them learn evangelism by doing. Matthew records that in addition to their power over unclean spirits and every disease, they were also given power to raise the dead. Their main objective was, of course, to preach the coming of the kingdom of God—miracles were merely to validate their message as the truth.

Due to the increasing opposition and disenchantment with Jesus (soon thousands of disciples will turn away from Him, Jn. 6:66), this mission of the Twelve was to be an intense and extensive mission. Jesus fully expected to join them later "before they had gone through *all the towns of Israel*" (Mt. 10:23). Their message was "the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mt. 10:7). There is no indication that they proclaimed Jesus to be The Christ. In fact, afterward at Caesarea Philippi, Jesus forbade the disciples from making such a public declaration. Matthew records that Jesus told the disciples not to go "among the Gentiles . . . or Samaritans." That did not mean they should not preach the kingdom to Gentiles and Samaritans should some of them be found in the cities and villages of Israel. It simply meant that the time was not yet available or opportune for an extensive ministry in Gentile and Samaritan cities outside the confines of Israel's borders.

Because of the intensity and rapidity necessary for their work (if they are to cover all the towns of Israel) Jesus placed limitations upon their physical and financial preparations. According to Matthew, Jesus told them, "You received without pay, give without pay." That does not mean that they were not to receive any financial or logistical support whatever in their ministry. In fact, Jesus concludes by instructing them to receive graciously and courteously any "room and board" offered

to them during this evangelistic tour, (cf. Mt. 10:11-14; Mk. 6:10-11; Lk. 9:4-5). The N.T. is clear that those who preach the gospel should have their livelihood supplied by those who receive the preaching (cf. I Cor. 9:1-14; Gal. 6:6; Phil. 4:15-17, etc.). Preaching and teaching the Word of God is work and the laborer is worthy of his hire! On the other hand, the preacher or teacher is not to be a mercenary—a hireling—preaching *only* for financial gain. The preacher should not approach his work like the worldly-minded man—“how much am I going to get out of it.” He should “put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provisions for the flesh” (Rom. 13:14). That is exactly what Jesus is trying to teach the Twelve by His limitations here. They are not to devote their energies to making elaborate and unnecessary material preparations. Luke and Matthew say, “take no staff” while Mark says, take nothing “except a staff.” Apparently the one staff (walking stick, also used to protect against highway robbers) every Palestinian traveler carried would suffice—they were not to make provisions for another one, an extra one. They were to carry no “duffel-bag” since they were to carry nothing extra; neither food or clothing, shoes or money. Jesus is instructing the Twelve to *put to practice* the Sermon on the Mount—“do not be anxious, what you shall eat or what you shall wear . . . seek first the kingdom of God . . . and all these things shall be added unto you” (Mt. 6:25-34).

Jesus also instructs these beginners that the evangelist must make wise use of time. The gospel message is a deposit from God to men over which they must exercise good stewardship. Notice the method Jesus gave the Twelve. First, they were to survey the city or village and find a home hospitable to their mission and to them (Mt. 10:11). They were to make that their headquarters (Mt. 10:11; Mk. 6:10; Lk. 9:4) and stay there until they had done their work and were ready to move on. While there, they were to be courteous and hospitable themselves, saluting the house and letting their “peace” come upon their hosts. Peace in Hebrew is *shalom* and means, “I pray for and will contribute all I can to God blessing you with well-being, both physical and spiritual.” What Jesus is really saying is that the Twelve should make expressions of their gratitude to their hosts, both verbal and physical. God does not wish to have ingrates and tactless men in His service. Thankfulness is probably the most beautiful characteristic of a man’s life—ingratitude is the most heinous sin (cf. Rom. 1:21). Third, if they were totally rejected in a city or village, or when they found no further hospitality to their mission in a place, they were to warn those opposing them that their blood was on their head as they rejected God’s message and His messengers (Mt. 10:14-15; Mk. 6:11; Lk. 9:5) and “shake the dust of that town from their feet.” Shaking the dust from one’s feet was used by Jews to

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symbolize disassociation from that which would incur guilt. Pharisees did this when they re-entered Judea from pagan territory.

Jesus is also giving the Twelve their first realistic experience of the tension between God's kingdom in the hearts of men and the mind of the flesh. There must be no further sheltering of these men from the antagonism of unbelief. They must not be nurtured on any illusions that discipleship to Christ would be tolerated by the worldly-minded. They must learn first hand that they were to be engaged in a life and death struggle and the disciple is not above his Master. But this is not the only world there is, so the Twelve were encouraged not to fear the battle or the enemy of God. He promised that if they would endure to the end of their lives they would receive their reward in heaven. If they feared God and loved Him more than life itself they would find eternal life (cf. Mt. 10:17-42).

9:7-9 Evil Machination: While the Twelve were rapidly covering as many cities and villages of Israel as they could with the message of the coming kingdom of God, Jesus was also circulating among the cities and villages preaching the same message. The "kingdom fever" was reaching astounding proportions. In just a few weeks thousands of people will attempt to take Jesus and force Him to be king (Jn. 6:15). When some of the dissolute, guilt-ridden, half-pagan politicians of Galilee (including Herod Antipas himself) heard all the accounts of miracles and "kingdom fever" circulating in Galilee they became superstitiously terrified that John the Baptist had come back to life. All kinds of conjectures were made. Some said it was Elijah returned from the dead or one of the old prophets. It presented Herod Antipas with a paralyzing problem. The Greek word translated "perplexed" is *dieporei* which means literally, "no way out." Herod thought he had gotten rid of any threat to his throne when he beheaded John the Baptist. Josephus states Herod gave as his public excuse for executing him that John was about to cause a revolution. Matthew and Mark tell the real reason Herod executed John. Any time Herod's position as ruler was threatened (whatever the approach such a threat took) all Herod could think to do was eliminate that threat by murder.

The Greek verb *ezetei* (translated, "sought") is in the imperfect tense and means, "he kept on seeking" to see Jesus. Herod had just killed John the Baptist because of his great popularity with the people and because he had threatened Herod's continued influence over the people by denouncing Herod's immoral union with Herodias. And now Herod turns his suspicions on Jesus. Jesus has been carrying on a campaign in every city and village of Galilee proclaiming the kingdom of God which has stirred up political excitement. Therefore it is abundantly evident why Herod wants Jesus found and brought to see him. But Jesus, when He heard all this, withdrew to a lonely place (cf. Mt. 14:13; Mk. 6:31; Lk. 9:10-11; Jn. 6:1).

SECTION 2

Teaching The Throngs (9:10-17)

10 On their return the apostles told him what they had done. And he took them and withdrew apart to a city called Bethsaida. ¹¹When the crowds learned it, they followed him; and he welcomed them and spoke to them of the kingdom of God, and cured those who had need of healing. ¹²Now the day began to wear away; and the twelve came and said to him, "Send the crowd away, to go into the villages and country round about, to lodge and get provisions; for we are here in a lonely place." ¹³But he said to them, "You give them something to eat." They said, "We have no more than five loaves and two fish—unless we are to go and buy food for all these people." ¹⁴For there were about five thousand men. And he said to his disciples, "Make them sit down in companies, about fifty each." ¹⁵And they did so, and made them all sit down. ¹⁶And taking the five loaves and the two fish he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke them, and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd. ¹⁷And all ate and were satisfied. And they took up what was left over, twelve baskets of broken pieces.

9:10-12 Desperation: This is one year before Jesus is to die the horrible death of crucifixion, accused of blasphemy and sedition. The disciples are definitely not prepared for this. Their hopes are centered in an earthly kingdom. So Jesus will spend the next six months (from Passover to Tabernacles) withdrawing from the hostility of His enemies and, at the same time, trying to isolate Himself from the fanatical multitudes. He wants to prepare the Twelve for the crucial climax of His earthly ministry. It is instructive that even Jesus recognized the need for His disciples to take a rest occasionally (see Mark 6:31; Greek *anapausasthe*, from which we get the English word, *pause*).

When we compare all four gospel accounts of this incident (Mt. 14; Mk. 6; Lk. 9; Jn. 6) we understand that the main reason for Jesus' withdrawal with the Twelve was the desperate, clamoring fanatical multitudes. Everywhere Jesus and the Twelve went the multitudes pressed upon them, crying out, demanding miracles be done for them. The poor, hungry, oppressed multitudes of Jesus' day, for the most part, had lost all hope in the promises of the prophets. All they could anticipate was continued oppression under the hated Herods, plus theological bigotry and hypocrisy under the Pharisees. They did not know where to turn for truth, compassion and, their deepest need, righteousness. It was at this moment Jesus "had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd" (Mark 6:34). When these desperate,

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hopeless thousands found out where Jesus was taking His Twelve on a "retreat" (to the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee), they ran there on foot (from the cities and villages of Galilee) ahead of Him (cf. Mt. 14:13; Mk. 6:33). Jesus went across the northern tip of the sea in a boat (from Capernaum to Bethsaida, see Mt. 14:13) and the multitude, gathered in Capernaum (Jesus' headquarters) from the recent preaching tour of Jesus and the Twelve, ran around the northern tip of the sea (some 2-3 miles) on foot. This great miracle-worker would not be allowed to get away. These poor down-trodden multitudes had at last been given a glimmer of hope. At last someone had come not to exploit them and oppress them, but to heal and excite them with the promise of the "kingdom of God." They had their hearts set on making Him king (Jn. 6:15).

Jesus had compassion on these throngs not only for their economic and political desperation but also because of their spiritual darkness. They were completely obsessed with the idea that the kingdom of God was some humanly-structured organization which would solve all their earthly distress. John's Gospel specifically states they "followed him because they saw the signs which he did. . . ." (Jn. 6:2). Why, then, did Jesus "welcome" this clamoring multitude when He was trying to get away from this very kind of superficiality; and why did He eventually work one of His greatest miracles for the very people who were putting such emphasis upon miracles? The fundamental purpose behind the enigmatic action of Jesus here is plainly seen when one connects the miraculous feeding of these thousands with His great sermon on The Bread of Life a day later in a synagogue at Capernaum (Jn. 6:22-71). The student *must* study this great sermon, recorded only by John, to understand the miracle of the loaves and fish. It is in this sermon that the compassion of Jesus for their spiritual darkness is really manifested. He pours out His heart in this discourse explaining that the real "bread" is His word (Jn. 6:63) and unless men "eat" and "drink" His word they are not really alive.

Jesus also took this unwanted circumstance (the hungry thousands) to teach the Twelve an important lesson. This multitude (numbering about five thousand men plus thousands of women and children) had probably left Capernaum and other villages early that morning to walk around the shore of the Sea of Galilee to a hillside near Bethsaida Julius. It was now late in the evening, and few of them had foresight to bring enough food with them. Perhaps most of them did not have enough at home to bring any with them. Whatever the case there was nothing to feed this vast multitude out there on the hillside so the Twelve became anxious. Their's also was a desperation of doubt. They really did not ask Jesus what could be done, they came and gave Him an order to (Gr. *apoluson*, imperative, "Dismiss") send the crowd away into the cities

nearby to find food and lodging. They also missed the point that what this multitude needed more than anything else was to realize Who Jesus Is. The Twelve thought the most urgent need of the crowd was earthly bread, and they knew they could not supply it, or did not want to. Perhaps they were also betraying a selfish indifference when they directed Jesus to send the crowd away to find food for themselves. They had retreated to this area specifically to "rest."

9:14-17 Demonstration: John tells us that Jesus knew what He was going to do about the situation but to test the faith and compassion of the Twelve, He said to them, "How are we to buy bread so that these people may eat?" (Jn. 6:5). The apostles had no answer except to send the people away to fend for themselves. So Jesus said to the apostles, "You give them something to eat!" In the Greek His statement reads literally, "Give (*dote*, imperative) to them to eat, you." This is an idiomatic way of putting the emphasis on "you." They complained that 200 day's wages (*denarii*) would not buy enough bread for this multitude. Andrew reported that the only vestige of food they had found among this great throng was five loaves and two fish a little boy had with him. Jesus said, "Bring them here to me" (Mt. 14:18). Then Jesus directed the apostles to have the thousands sit down upon the green grass of the hillside (it was early Spring, around Passover time) in groups of about hundreds or fifties (cf. Mk. 6:39-40). Mark uses the Greek words *sumposia sumposia* "companies upon companies" which literally refers to groups of party-goers or picnickers. Mark is describing the festive air about this great event.

Taking the five loaves and two fish Jesus looked up to heaven and blessed and broke the loaves and divided the fish, gave to the Twelve and they distributed among the thousands. All the thousands ate and were satisfied and the Twelve gathered up twelve baskets of left-over fragments. All four gospel writers record this astounding fact. Where did the miracle take place? Was it when Jesus broke and divided—or was it when the apostles went among the thousands making distribution? It really isn't indicated in the records, nor does it really matter. The point is it was an empirical demonstration of Jesus' supernatural power to create. This miracle and the one immediately following (Jesus' walking on the Sea) are two of the most indisputable miracles recorded of Jesus. The feeding of this vast multitude of people had so many witnesses there was no possibility of fraud. Foster points out, "A magician can fool a great crowd because his hands can move faster than the eyes of the people who watch. But here was a miracle in which everyone of the thousands present had a part. They all shared the feast." No magician or hypnotist could fool that many thousands of people. When these four gospel writers published their accounts near the middle of the first century A.D. there would have been plenty of people still alive who had

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attended that great feast on the hillside. If the gospel writers were liars someone would have been quick to publish evidence to discredit them about such an astounding fraud.

Although this miracle did not have much impact on the multitudes in its relationship to Jesus' spiritual mission (many of them followed Him no more, Jn. 6:66) it did have tremendous impact on the Twelve. They acknowledged Him as the Holy One of God and the only One to whom they might cling (Jn. 6:68-69). It is worthy of notice that even though Jesus had the power to create as much bread and fish as He wished, He would not tolerate waste. Twelve *large* (Gr. *kophinoi*, coffins) basketfuls were gathered up of the leftovers.

SECTION 3

Testing The Twelve (9:18-27)

18 Now it happened that as he was praying alone the disciples were with him; and he asked them, "Who do the people say that I am?"¹⁹ And they answered, "John the Baptist; but others say, Elijah; and others, that one of the old prophets has risen."²⁰ And he said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" And Peter answered, "The Christ of God."²¹ But he charged and commanded them to tell this to no one,²² saying, "The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised."

23 And he said to all, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.²⁴ For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake, he will save it.²⁵ For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?²⁶ For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.²⁷ But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God."

9:18-21 Crystallization of Confession: Although Jesus wished to withdraw from the multitudes that His disciples might rest and He might concentrate on their personal training, He conducted an extensive ministry between the feeding of the thousands and the confrontation of the Twelve at Caesarea Philippi. The following events, not recorded by Luke, transpired between Luke 9:17 and Luke 9:18:

1. Walking on the Water, Mt. 14; Mk. 6; Jn. 6
2. Miracles at Gennesaret, Mt. 14; Mk. 6
3. Sermon on Bread of Life at Capernaum, Jn. 6
4. Controversy with Pharisees about traditions, Mt. 15; Mk. 7
5. Healing Syro-Phoenician woman's daughter, Mt. 15; Mk. 7
6. Healing deaf stammerer, Feeding 4000, Decapolis, Mt. 15; Mk. 7
7. Pharisees & Sadducees demand sign at Magadan, Mt. 16; Mk. 8
8. Warns disciples against leaven of Pharisees on Sea of Galilee, Mt. 16; Mk. 8
9. Healing of blind man at Bethsaida, Mk. 8

It may have appeared to the Twelve as if Jesus were retreating. He had refused the crown from the five thousand; He had not yet shown the characteristics expected by the populace in their Messiah; at Magadan it appears as if the Pharisees and Sadducees have him in retreat. The religious leaders have demanded a sign from heaven (a sign of military or political power) but Jesus refused to give such a sign since sufficient evidence for His claims had already been given. Jesus walks away from this confrontation, gets into a boat and heads across the Sea of Galilee toward the northeast. What are the disciples to think? Popular opinion circulating the countryside is confused, trying to find some great prophet with which to compare Him (Jeremiah or Elijah). Jesus seems to have given up the struggle with His opponents.

The Lord knew that this was a critical point in His whole earthly mission. So He proceeds to take the disciples apart from the confused, clamoring multitudes to a place of privacy for questioning and teaching. Jesus knows He must crystallize their convictions concerning His identity and His mission in anticipation of the very dark hours ahead. The only solution to the hopelessness and despair of mankind in rebellion against God is to convince, confirm and commit these twelve disciples to the knowledge of His deity and then to commission them to introduce Him as Savior and Lord to the world.

The city of Caesarea Philippi was typical of the predicament of man in sin (then and now). In earlier times it was called Panium because it was a center of worship for the Greek god, Pan (god of all nature). It was destroyed but rebuilt by the Romans and named after the Roman emperor, Caesar, and eventually became a center of worship to Caesar Augustus. In 31 B.C. the Battle of Actium brought an end to 100 years of civil war in the Roman empire. Men were sick of war and thought they had brought an end to human misery. But 25 years later in the days of Jesus, men were as disillusioned as ever. Injustice, immorality and inveterate hatred between cultures and races was as deeply ingrained in men's hearts as it had ever been. Mankind desperately needed the

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Anointed One of God, The Christ. Whether mankind came to know its *only* Savior or not depended upon whether Jesus could crystallize the firm, but immature, convictions the Twelve had about Him.

Jesus called the Twelve to confess (Gr. *homologeō*, "say the same as") Him. He called them to commit themselves to a Person, Himself, and not a cause. It is important to contemplate the questions Jesus did *not* ask the disciples here. He did *not* ask them what they thought of the political situation, the religious status quo or the economic circumstances. He did *not* say to Peter, "Who are you, Peter?" He did not indicate, as much modern psychology does today, that man's fundamental problem is a "self-identity crisis"—that man needs above all else to find out who he is. Contrary to the world's way of thinking, Jesus knew man's problem was his confusion about God's identity. So Jesus demanded these men (upon whom the program of the world's redemption would soon fall) solidify their convictions about His identity.

What we possess we profess, and what we profess we propagate. If the conviction of the disciples about Jesus' identity was really deeply possessed they would profess it. It is also axiomatic that the more a person professes someone or something, the more he possesses it. It is in repeated confession or profession that decision is confirmed and the will is set. Jesus, in asking the disciples who they had decided He was, was aiming for a decision. Jesus Christ always cuts through the jungle of muddled human confusion and speculation and aims at man's logic. Our minds must be made up about His identity. Only he who is convinced will commit himself. C.S. Lewis says, "Every time you make a choice, you are turning the central part of you that chooses into something a little different from what it was before. And taking your life as a whole with all your innumerable choices, all your life long you are slowly turning this central thing either into a heavenly creature or into a hellish creature." The N.T. has a great deal to say about *confession* (cf. Rom. 10:9-10; I Jn. 2:23; I Jn. 4:15, etc.).

9:22 Call to Conform: It was the will of God that the Christ should suffer and die and be raised from the dead on the third day. The suffering of the Messiah was predicted in many places in the Old Testament (i.e., Isa. 53; Psa. 22, etc.). Few of the Jews ever recognized this. Most of Jesus' disciples would not consider it a possibility (cf. Lk. 24:13-27). Therefore, at this most opportune time and place, Jesus focuses all His power of persuasion on the Twelve in an attempt to convert their Jewish preconceptions about the Messiah to the revealed will of God. After Peter's emotionally charged confession of Jesus' identity, and Jesus' characterization of His church (Mt. 16:17-19), the Lord abruptly made the shocking prediction about His death. It wasn't that the disciples were naive and didn't know all the hostility Jesus had aroused in the

religious leaders of the day. They expected some crisis sooner or later, but they believed (probably from Jewish tradition) that the Messiah would fight and conquer His enemies and they were prepared to fight to the death for Him (Mt. 26:35; Mk. 14:31). But they were not willing to accept a Messiah who would become "a lamb led to the slaughter"—they refused to think in these terms. Matthew and Mark record that Peter "rebuked" Jesus for His prediction of a passive death (Mt. 16:22; Mk. 8:32).

Immediately, the Lord rebuked Peter (Mt. 16:23; Mk. 8:33). Peter had, in fact, become the adversary (Satan) of Christ! Peter stood opposed to the will of God. He was a stumbling-block (Gr. *skandalon*, "scandal") in the path of Christ because He was "minding" the things of worldly-minded man rather than "minding" the things of God. Jesus intended that His followers conform their minds to the revealed mind of God in everything. God's revealed mind about the Messiah was that He should die a vicarious death to atone for the sins of all the world.

Most men applaud someone who dies for a cause. The world admires martyrdom (as long as I am not the martyr). Millions have sacrificed their lives for political ideologies and they are national heroes. But Jesus' death was different than all of this. He died for man's *justification* before God! Man has absolutely no moral merit by which he can stand before God except trusting in the atoning death of Christ in his place. A man may sacrifice his life to preserve my physical life and I may admire him and be thankful. But to believe there is nothing good in me that would cause God to accept me without Jesus' death means death to my human pride. That is what makes the doctrine of the cross "foolishness to the Greeks and a stumbling-block to the Jews," (cf. I Cor. 1:23). Think of it this way: If you should die right now and appear before God and He should ask, "Why should I let you into My heaven?" what would be your answer? The only answer acceptable to God would be, "Because I covenanted with Christ to accept His death for my sins and He promised to give me His life." The self-righteous egotism of the human heart adamantly resists vicarious justification. Some few men claim they do not want to go to heaven after death—they want nothing to do with God, truth, holiness, or everlasting goodness. Most other men who do propose to go to heaven after they die aim to do so because they have done enough good deeds to balance out their bad deeds and thus feel they deserve to go there. Let us illustrate: A prominent theologian once wrote, "We hear much of the substitutionary theory of the atonement. This theory to me is immoral. If Jesus paid it all, or if He is the substitute for me, or if He is the sacrifice for all sin of the world, then why discuss forgiveness? The books are closed. Another has paid the debt, borne the penalty. I owe nothing. I am absolved.

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I cannot see forgiveness as predicated upon the act of someone else. It is my sin. I must atone." Thus reasons self-righteous man. This is the way the world thinks, but it is *not* the way God thinks! God has revealed His will concerning man's justification. Man, therefore, has only two options: (1) reject the revealed mind of God in scripture and, assuming he is more powerful than God, try to justify himself apart from Christ's vicarious atonement; or, (2) believe the revealed mind of God, Christ's death in his place, and accept it by entering into covenant relationship on Christ's revealed terms. Man must "mind" the things of God—man must conform to the will of God, executed in the death and resurrection of Christ, communicated in the N.T. scriptures.

9:23-27 Challenge to Commitment: The acceptance by faith of Jesus' death in man's place is precisely what these verses are teaching. To "deny himself" means to literally do what Peter did later to Christ! The Greek word *aparnesastho* means, "to disown, to contradict, to deny utterly any connection." It does not mean to abstain from certain pleasures and indulgences; *it means to deny, disown self*. It means to admit Self is dead. It means to acknowledge that I have no claims or rights for Self anymore because I "am bought with a price" (I Cor. 6:19-20) and I am not my own! I am dead in Christ! "One died for all, therefore all have died," (II Cor. 5:14). He died our death, we live His life! Paul said it very succinctly in Galatians, "I have been crucified with Christ (when Christ died); it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. . . ." (Gal. 2:20).

The struggle to believe and accept and practice this occurs *daily*. Every day we must "take up the cross" and accept the death of Self. Dying to Self may only be done by faith—not by feeling or by good works, because the death of Self occurred at a point in ancient history—at the crucifixion of Christ. The death of Self is, of course, accepted and applied to each person at the point in time when that person enters the New Covenant by confession and immersion in water according to the covenant terms. Good works are the fruit of death to Self by faith, but they are not the cause of that death—Jesus is the cause!

One of the great paradoxes of the Christian faith is that men must die to live. Jesus states it, "For whoever would save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it." What does Jesus mean? He gives us a clue in the following phrase, "For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?" The Greek word *heauton* is more emphatic ("himself") than the word *psuchen* ("soul") which is in the parallel passages (Mt. 16:26; Mk. 8:35). *Life is identity*; life is being, personality, character. *Life is purpose*. If there is no purpose there is really no life. God made man for a purpose. That purpose was to be conformed to the image of His Son (cf. Rom. 8:29). God made us to be truthful, faithful, pure, good, loving and thankful.

In this we find our true identity. When we accept the death of Self in the death of Christ and let Him live His life in us, we become children of God, joint heirs with Christ. God adopts us as His children and gives us His name. That is the only identity which will last forever. If Christ is ashamed of us (Lk. 9:26) and does not confess us before the Father, we have no identity. Those who search for life apart from union with Christ will hear Christ say, "Depart from me, you who work iniquity, I never *knew* you." To be separated from Christ is death—eternal death. Apparently in the place of eternal death (Hell) there will be consciousness but no "life." If there is no life there is no purpose, no identity. The man with no godly purpose or character in this life will have none in Hell. Hell will be an eternal purposelessness, eternal falseness, eternal insecurity, anguish, disorientation and non-identity.

What has a man gained if he forfeits his birthright to be identified as a child of God and has all the power, fame and riches the world offers? He loses himself! So now we see why Jesus considered it so crucial that His disciples confess His identity. The only way men find out who they really are is to confess and commit themselves to the true identity of Jesus as Christ—Lord!

Having mentioned that He would come for final judgment "in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels" (v. 26), Jesus did not want His disciples to confuse the Second Coming with other events which will manifest the power of His kingdom (such as the destruction of Jerusalem). Therefore Jesus states (v. 27) that some of the disciples standing there with Him would not die before they saw the kingdom of God come ("with power" Mk. 9:1). The popular Jewish concept was that when the Messiah came "in his glory . . . with the holy angels" it would be the "end of the world." What event was Jesus talking about in v. 27 (Mt. 16:28 and Mk. 9:1 also)? Apocalyptic language in both the O.T. and N.T. often describes any great intervention of God in history as the "coming of God" in judgment or redemption. There was only one of the Twelve dead before the establishment of the Church on Pentecost—Judas. The language of Jesus seems to imply that more than one would "taste of death" prior to the event described here. We think He was speaking of the destruction of Jerusalem. Later, He speaks of the destruction of Jerusalem in the same apocalyptic style (cf. Lk. 21:25-28; Mt. 24:29-31; Mk. 13:24-26, see also Mt. 26:64). Many of the apostles died before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. John, and perhaps a few others, lived beyond that event. The destruction of Jerusalem also destroyed the Jewish State and its religious power. Christianity was rescued from apparent obliteration. No longer would it be considered an illegal Jewish sect. It went forth to establish firm "beachheads"

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in the world of paganism and cause the Roman empire to tremble at its power. In this sense those who lived beyond the destruction of Jerusalem truly saw "the kingdom of God come with power."

SECTION 4

Transfiguration (9:28-36)

28 Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. ²⁹And as he was praying, the appearance of his countenance was altered, and his raiment became dazzling white. ³⁰And behold, two men talked with him, Moses and Elijah, ³¹who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem. ³²Now Peter and those who were with him were heavy with sleep, and when they wakened they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. ³³And as the men were parting from him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is well that we are here; let us make three booths, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah"—not knowing what he said. ³⁴As he said this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. ³⁵And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, my Chosen, listen to him!" ³⁶And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silence and told no one in those days anything of what they had seen.

9:28-32 Exodus: A week after the critical confrontation with the Twelve concerning His identity and Peter's carnal-minded rejection of His destiny of death, Jesus took the Twelve up on a high mountain to pray. This must have been Mount Hermon, a huge mountain, reaching 9232 feet above sea level at its peak. Caesarea Philippi was at the foot of this mountain. The mountain so dominated the entire land of Palestine it could be seen on a clear day from as far south as the Dead Sea. The Arabs named it, *Jebel esh Sheikh*, "the great mountain." It is doubtful that Jesus took the Twelve to the peak. They probably ascended to a secluded spot somewhere up the side of the mountain where they could find privacy. Both Matthew and Mark indicate the Lord took them "apart" for the purpose of privacy (Mt. 17:1; Mk. 9:2). While He was praying, the appearance of His face became *different* (Gr. *heteron*), and His clothing became gleaming white. Matthew and Mark say He was transfigured (Gr. *metemorphothe*; the word from which we get the English word *metamorphosis*). In Philippians 2:6-7 Paul writes that Christ having had the *morphe* (form) of *theou* (God) willingly assumed the *morphen*

(form) of *doulou* (a slave). Here on Mount Hermon the man *metamorphosed* (changed form) back into God the Son of glory. W. E. Vine says, Luke avoids the term *metemorphote*, which might have suggested to Gentile readers the metamorphoses of heathen gods, and uses the term, "became different." This was no phenomenon which could be explained by nature. It was not something externally happening to Jesus; it was emanating from within His very nature. Hobbs says, "It was His deity from within flashing forth in resplendent glory. The deity, which had been like a wick turned down low, suddenly was turned up to its brilliant brightness." Here was physical, scientific evidence that Jesus was the Incarnate God. The disciples had been in the presence of God and hardly realized it. Peter later testified of this event (II Pet. 1:16-21) to prove that what he preached about the deity of Jesus Christ was no myth. Peter was an eyewitness to Christ's majesty.

Suddenly, another spectacular phenomenon took place. Appearing with the metamorphosed Jesus were Moses and Elijah. The sleep-dazed disciples came wide awake! Moses and Elijah had been dead for some thousand years. But those who have departed this world still live in the constant presence of Almighty God and He has the power to make them appear at any time and place suitable to His purpose (cf. I Sam. 28:1ff.). Moses and Elijah, symbolizing all the Law and the Prophets, talked with Jesus about His "departure" (Gr. *exodon*; English, *exodus*). They were discussing Jesus' impending crucifixion and resurrection. Why did God choose this particular point in time for this great meeting between Heaven and earth? Because Jesus had reached the "watershed" of His earthly ministry. From this point onward popularity will be replaced by rejection and opposition. His ministry, viewed from human perspectives, will appear to be a tragic failure. It is at this point God will affirm unequivocally that is not so.

- a. It would encourage Jesus, Himself. It was predicted (Isa. 49:4ff.) that the Messiah would be discouraged but would be able to overcome it. Jesus was Man, very man, tempted in all points as we are tempted. It was only by the glory that was set before Him that He was able to endure the cross (cf. Heb. 2:10ff.; 5:7-9; 12:1-2; Lk. 22:42). Even His own disciples had become "stumbling blocks" to Him in their rejection of His mission. Fowler (*Matthew, Vol. III*, College Press, pg. 588) points out that the Father's affirmation of His pleasure in His Son would warm Jesus' heart "and encourage Him in His lonely mission among unsympathetic men." Fowler compares it to "the encouragement felt by an expert pilot flying through a storm-tossed night with no visible landmarks, when suddenly a voice comes over the radio, saying, 'We've picked you up on radar, friend, and you're right on course!'"

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- b. It would arrest the creeping carnality of the disciples. There must be a direct and drastic correction to their obstinately cherished worldly view of the Messiah and His kingdom. The appearance of Moses and Elijah discussing with Jesus His "exodus" would confirm that the Messiah's death was in complete harmony with all the Old Testament revelation (cf. Lk. 24:44-46). Jesus' "exodus" was symbolized by the Exodus from Egypt and the Exodus from Captivity. All the redemptive symbols of the O.T., the sacrificial lamb, the Passover, the victories over their enemies, find their fulfillment in Jesus' "exodus"!
- c. It was also to demonstrate that the death of the Messiah was no accident. It was in the plan of God all along. It would show that God was forever in control—men cannot wrest control of the universe and the goal of history from God's hands. God can intervene in history at any moment with supernatural power. He knows the beginning from the end and predicts it for man's salvation. It proved to Peter, and all who trust him as an eyewitness, that no prophecy about Jesus ever originated from man. The Transfiguration made the prophetic word "more surely" from God. All men will do well to pay attention to this as to a lamp shining in a dark place (II Pet. 1:19ff.).

9:33-36 Exclamation: Peter, impetuous Peter, so quick to speak and so often missing the mark, suggested they make three "booths" (Gr. *skenas*, "tabernacle, tent"—same word used in Hebrews 9:2, etc.), one for Jesus, one for Moses and one for Elijah. The two great representatives of Israel's destiny of the glorious past, Moses and Elijah, were departing. It had been predicted that at the outset of the messianic age a prophet like unto Moses would be raised up (Deut. 18:18ff.) and Elijah would come (Mal. 4:5). Both Luke and Mark comment that Peter did not know what he was talking about. Apparently he had seriously misinterpreted the significance of this sublime moment when Heaven came so close to earth.

- a. When Peter said, "It is good for us to be here. . . ." he may have been suggesting that Jesus should take this Transfiguration as a sign from Heaven cancelling out His prediction of imminent death. Perhaps Peter supposes, "Heaven is on Your side, Master, You are not going to die; surely our religious leaders will not go against Moses and Elijah if they know about this, so let us build three shelters and keep them here with us until this is made known down in Jerusalem."

- b. Peter said, “. . . let us make three booths . . .” He was completely enthralled by the supernatural event he had just witnessed. Still thinking of the kingdom of God in terms of the popular materialistic concept, Peter envisioned this as the fulfillment of Zechariah 14:16-19. Rabbinical and apocryphal interpretation of Zechariah's prophecy concerning the Feast of Tabernacles (Booths) literalized the return of Elijah, conquest of the nations by the Jews, reinstatement of the Jewish theocracy, and the remnant of the Gentiles coming to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. Peter was ready to be one of the first to celebrate Tabernacles in the new age of Israel.
- c. When Peter said, “. . . one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah . . .” it was evident he still did not understand that Jesus was different than other great human leaders. He did not fully comprehend that Jesus was God in the flesh or that Jesus had authority to abrogate and fulfill all Moses and Elijah had revealed. Hebrew Christians had a very difficult time accepting the superiority of Jesus over the Old Testament and that is why the book of Hebrews was necessary.

No wonder, then, that Luke editorializes, “Peter did not know what he was saying.” Peter was wrong on all three suggestions. The Heavenly Father quickly corrected that by engulfing them in a supernatural cloud and speaking audibly, in their language, “This is my Son, my Chosen (Gr. *eklelegmenos*, perfect tense verb, meaning, “one having been elected or chosen out from among others in the past and continuing to be chosen”); listen to him!” The phrase, “listen to him!” is in the Greek imperative mood and means it was a command! The disciples were to hear and accept the fact that the Messiah was destined to die at Jerusalem; that what the Messiah had been saying about His kingdom being a spiritual kingdom was correct; that the Messiah had come to fulfill and take out of the way the Law of Moses and the Prophets. The Law and the Prophets would not be destroyed (cf. Mt. 5:17f.) but wherever they stood in the way of man's complete reconciliation to God, Jesus would bring about their completion.

When God finished speaking, Matthew notes the disciples fell on their faces with awe and fear, but Jesus came and touched them, saying, “Rise, and have no fear.” Then, when they looked up Moses and Elijah were gone, so was the enveloping cloud and Jesus was there alone. Matthew and Mark note that as they were descending from the mountain side Jesus “commanded” them not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of man was raised from the dead. And, amazingly, they did not! Would men have believed them if they had? It is doubtful.

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Today men who do not accept the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ as an historical fact discredit the transfiguration of Jesus as either a myth or some subjective, emotional religious experience of the disciples themselves. But Peter was an eyewitness. And he emphatically declares it was no myth (II Pet. 1:16-21). The credibility and authenticity of Peter's testimony is unimpeachable. This event really happened just as the three Synoptics say it did.

SECTION 5

Tenderness Amid Tragedy (9:37-45)

37 On the next day, when they had come down from the mountain, a great crowd met him. 38 And behold, a man from the crowd cried, "Teacher, I beg you to look upon my son, for he is my only child; 39 and behold, a spirit seizes him, and he suddenly cries out; it convulses him till he foams, and shatters him, and will hardly leave him. 40 And I begged your disciples to cast it out, but they could not." 41 Jesus answered, "O faithless and perverse generation, how long am I to be with you and bear with you? Bring your son here." 42 While he was coming, the demon tore him and convulsed him. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the boy, and gave him back to his father. 43 And all were astonished at the majesty of God.

But while they were all marveling at everything he did, he said to his disciples, 44 "Let these words sink into your ears; for the Son of man is to be delivered into the hands of men." 45 But they did not understand this saying, and it was concealed from them, that they should not perceive it; and they were afraid to ask him about this saying.

9:37-43 Falling Faith: The next day after the Transfiguration, Jesus came down from the mountain with Peter, James and John. There was a great crowd of people gathered around the other nine apostles (who had been left at the foot of the mountain during the Transfiguration). The crowd was involved in an argument with some Jewish scholars (scribes). Seeing Jesus approaching, the crowd ran to greet Him. Jesus asked the crowd what they were discussing with the scribes. The reader should study this incident from a harmony of the Gospels in order to get the full impact of it.

A man from the crowd came to Jesus kneeling (Mt. 17:14) and bellowed (Gr. *eboesen*, from *boao* which is the word used to describe John the Baptist's crying loudly, or bellowing forth in the wilderness), "Teacher, I plead with you, direct your attention to my son, because he is my only

son and, see, a spirit takes him and suddenly he screams out as he is convulsed with spasms." Matthew records that the father of the boy said he was "moonstruck" (Gr. *seleniazetai*, translated, "epileptic," Mt. 17:15). Doctor Luke uses the Greek word, *sparassei*, from which we get the English word, *spastic*. The boy was demon-possessed (9:42). The demon tortured the boy by causing him to fall into fires, into water, foaming at the mouth, grinding his teeth, dashing him down upon the ground and "bruising" (Gr. *suntribo*, "to shatter, to smash, to crush, to break") him.

Then the boy's father cast a lightening bolt into the situation. He said, "I plead with your disciples to cast the demon out of my boy but they were not able." Jesus' immediate reaction was to accuse His own disciples of being part of a "faithless and perverse" generation and to ask exasperatedly, "how long must I bear with you?" Was Jesus justified in speaking so severely to these disciples? Indeed! Why should He be partial toward any person? Any display of unbelief, especially in people who have been given so many extra-ordinary opportunities to know the truth and such miraculous confirmations of it, deserves quick and firm correction. Jesus minced no words with the two disciples on the way to Emmaus (Lk. 24:25-27) for their unbelief. Jesus rather bluntly corrected His own mother (Jn. 2:4; Lk. 8:19-21).

Jesus cast out the demon commanding it, "Come out of him, and never enter him again" (Mk. 9:25). He gave the boy back to his father and all the multitude was astonished at the very apparent demonstration of the majesty of Almighty God.

9:44-45 Fearful Forecast: The proper relationship to Jesus does not consist in marveling over the miraculous but in faith in the face of the fearful. While this particular crowd stood around subjectively soaking up the great privilege they had enjoyed by their close proximity to a real miracle, Jesus turned to His disciples with a fearsome forecast of His messianic fate. Jesus took the twelve aside and resumed His journey south through Galilee (see Mt. 17:22; Mk. 9:30) for He had something of utmost importance to say for their ears only. So He prefaced His remarks with this command, "Let these words sink into your ears. . . ." The Greek verb *thesthe* is in the imperative mood (a command) and is from *tithemi* which means, "put in, deposit, establish." What Jesus is about to say to them is not just to make conversation. It is imperative that what He is about to say be deposited in their minds so that it may become a part of their thinking processes. And what were these all-important words? ". . . The Son of man is to be delivered into the hands of men." Their Master, their Lord, the One they recently confessed to be "the Holy One of God" (Jn. 6:69), is going to be killed and raised again after three days (cf. Mt. 17:22-23; Mk. 9:31-32). It is important for them to believe this because it is the will of God for the Son of man

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(the Messiah). Jesus must emphasize it and stress it because of the worldly-minded view of the Messiah held by most of the Jews (see our comments on Luke 9:18-27).

But the disciples did not understand what Jesus said to them. How could grown men not understand a statement as straightforward, un-mysterious, plain and brief as, "The Son of man is to be delivered into the hands of men and they will kill him; and when he is killed, after three days he will rise"? The fact of death, even violent death at the hands of enemies is a common experience to mankind. Resurrection from the dead is not! This may be the reason they could not understand it. But Luke goes on to say that what Jesus said was "concealed" from them and they could not perceive it. The Greek word *parakekalummenon* means "to cover with a veil." The Greek verb is in the perfect tense indicating that the veiling had taken place previous to this statement and was continuing to veil their thinking. This same Greek word is used in II Corinthians 3:12-18 and 4:3 where it is talking about the veiled revelation concerning the messianic age in the Old Testament and that the devil uses this, along with man's unbelief, to hide the gospel. It was not God who concealed from the minds of the apostles the understanding about the Messiah's death and resurrection, for the Prophets predicted it (Isa. 53, etc.). It was not Jesus who concealed His death and resurrection from the Twelve, for He predicted it very plainly four times (Lk. 9:22; Lk. 9:44; Mt. 20:17-19; Mt. 26:1-2). It was the apostles themselves, choosing not to believe Jesus about His death, who were concealing the meaning of His teaching, (see Mt. 16:21-23; Mk. 8:31-33). What the Lord says is perceived only if man is willing to let His word find a place in his heart (cf. Jn. 7:17; 8:37; 8:45, etc.). The parable of the soils illustrates this (see our comments on Luke 8:1ff.). The disciples deliberately resisted any thinking about this subject (the death of the Messiah) because it "distressed" them (Mt. 17:23) and it was a subject about which they were "afraid" (Mk. 9:32; Lk. 9:45) to seek any more information. Let all followers of Jesus of all ages take warning from the spiritual failure of the Twelve here. It is a betrayal of Christian discipleship to reject any teaching of the New Testament with the *a priori* that it does not conform to human experience. What Jesus commands and promises is accepted by faith in Who He Is!

SECTION 6

Taming Temperaments (9:46-62)

46 And an argument arose among them as to which of them was the greatest. 47 But when Jesus perceived the thought of their hearts,

he took a child and put him by his side, ⁴⁸and said to them, "Whoever receives this child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me; for he who is least among you all is the one who is great."

49 John answered, "Master, we saw a man casting out demons in your name, and we forbade him, because he does not follow with us." ⁵⁰But Jesus said to him, "Do not forbid him; for he that is not against you is for you."

51 When the days drew near for him to be received up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. ⁵²And he sent messengers ahead of him, who went and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him; ⁵³but the people would not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem. ⁵⁴And when his disciples James and John saw it, they said, "Lord, do you want us to bid fire come down from heaven and consume them?" ⁵⁵But he turned and rebuked them. ⁵⁶And they went on to another village.

57 As they were going along the road, a man said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." ⁵⁸And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head." ⁵⁹To another he said, "Follow me." But he said, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." ⁶⁰But he said to him, "Leave the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God." ⁶¹Another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but let me first say farewell to those at my home." ⁶²Jesus said to him, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."

9:46-48 Ambition: Jesus knew the Twelve had been having an argument (Gr. *dialogismos*, dialogue) as to which of them was the greatest. The transfiguration, the miracles, the warning about His impending confrontation with the political authorities and the explanation to Peter about His paying the Temple tax (Mt. 17:24-27) out of expediency only, convinced the Twelve that His kingdom was imminent. Since they still conceived of His kingdom as an earthly organization their first reaction was to begin "jockeying for position." The temperament for ambition is, of course, a part of the nature created in man by his Maker. Otherwise, man would have no drive to "subdue the world . . . and have dominion" over it (Gen. 1:28). But, that temperament for ambition must be held in check under the revealed will of its Creator. When human ambition is not under the direction of its Creator's will, it perverts, exploits and destroys. Thinking about the coming kingdom of God, the disciples were allowing visions of human grandeur to dance in their heads. They were all envisioning themselves in positions of power and human influence

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and already counting the personal accolades and wealth that would come their way. The disciples persisted in their efforts to gain favored positions until near the very end of Jesus' earthly life (Mt. 20:20-28; Mk. 10:35-45; Lk. 22:24-26). Apparently the materialistic concept of the new messianic kingdom was deeply ingrained in the Jewish mentality.

Jesus wanted to make a vivid illustration of the true standard of greatness in God's kingdom, so He called a child to His side. He said, "Whoever receives this child . . . receives me." The Greek word *dechomai* means a warm, hospitable, embracing reception. The disciples thought in terms of ruling great masses of people. Jesus spoke of serving children. One's political ambitions cannot be advanced by ministering to children. Hobbs puts it this way, "Working with little children is a totally unselfish task. For it involves not what you can get from them, but what you can give to them. . . . It requires more grace and skill to guide a little child than to serve as chairman of the Board. . . ." or, we might add, even as the ruler of a nation. The significance of all this is that Jesus seems to be saying that men may test their own spirituality and fitness for citizenship in His kingdom by their relation to children. The spirit of humility (lowliness of mind) that will serve a child is the spirit that will not cause anyone to stumble. To "receive" a child in Jesus' name is, in essence, to become like a child (cf. Mt. 18:1-22; Mk. 9:33-50). Children are not concerned with human power and grandeur. Children know they are weak and gladly look to others for help and sustenance. Children are submissive and malleable. There are no false facades or veneers with them, they have to learn hypocrisy from adults. Most of all, children know how to love and be loved. They love to please others with actions of friendliness and loyalty. This is true greatness from God's perspective. Most of the world would not see greatness in those terms. But Jesus said, ". . . he who is least among you all is the one who is great . . ." or, ". . . whoever would be great among you must be your servant . . ." (Mt. 20:26-27; Mt. 23:11; Lk. 22:26; Jn. 13:16; 15:20).

9:49-50 Arbitrariness: Suffering embarrassment from this gentle but mistakable rebuke for their selfish ambition, the apostles became silent. Suddenly John remembered something he thought might please Jesus and put them back in His good graces. The apostles had observed a man casting out demons in the name of Jesus and they told him to stop because he was not one of the Twelve. Apparently, Jesus gave power to do miracles to other than the Twelve. Just three months after this He sends seventy disciples out two by two (Lk. 10:1ff.) to evangelize and do miracles. In the first place, it was blatant presumption on their part to forbid someone working miracles in the name of Jesus. Jesus had never given them the authority for such action. In the second place, it betrays an attitude of loveless, hypocritical sectarianism to assume

that no one can do anything in Jesus' name unless he is one of the Twelve. This attitude, unchanged, would have forbidden John the Baptist, or Paul, or Silas, or Timothy from doing anything in the name of Jesus.

To do something in the "name" of Jesus is to acquiesce to Jesus' authority and word, to do it according to His purpose or revealed will, and to acclaim His glory. When this is done it is not only approved but welcomed by Jesus, no matter who does it or in what cultural setting. Jesus told them they were wrong. Jesus must tame this temper of arbitrariness in those He will send into all the world to preach His gospel. They must surrender to the truth that whoever does the Lord's will is to be received and not hindered from continuing to do His will even though they may not "be with us" socially, ethnically, culturally and methodologically. No greater cultural and methodological difference ever faced the followers of Christ than that of the first century Jewish-Gentile confrontation. That these apostles needed preparation for that confrontation is evident from Peter's later problems documented in Acts 10-11 and Galatians 1-2. He who works in the name of Jesus cannot be an enemy of the Lord, and he who is truly great in the kingdom will recognize that and live by it.

9:51-56 Anger: Luke indicates that Jesus knew His major work in Galilee had come to an end. Jesus will return temporarily to the borders of Galilee for a brief ministry, but now the days are drawing near "for Him to be received up" (crucified and raised from the dead). He "sets his face" to go to Jerusalem. It is the time of the Feast of Tabernacles (Succoth), one of the three major feasts of the Jews. For many months He has avoided Judea, the center of opposition to His messianic claims. The time has now arrived for Him to throw out the clear, unequivocal, absolute claim to Messiahship. There would be no better place or time than Jerusalem, at the Feast of Tabernacles. Apparently Jesus was giving so much intense concentration to His goal in Jerusalem it registered on His face and the Samaritans of the village where He wished to find lodging were offended by it. The Samaritans seemed to be hospitable to Jews traveling through their land from Judea to Galilee (cf. Jn. 4), but they were offended when Jews seemed to be traveling through their land simply as a short-cut from Galilee to Jerusalem to observe Jewish holy days! John 7:2-9 notes that Jesus' unbelieving half-brothers had sarcastically suggested He should go with them to the feast and make a public play for support for His messiahship, if He was really what He claimed. Jesus refused, but went later as non-publicly as He could. The usual, public route to the Jewish feasts from Galilee to Jerusalem was down the eastern side of the Jordan river basin, crossing the Jordan at Jericho and up the Jericho road to Jerusalem. Jesus went, instead, on a more direct route, through Samaria. The hostility of Samaritans toward Jews and vice versa was centuries old, dating back to the

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days of Nehemiah or earlier. So any Jew, evidently hurrying through their land to a Jewish feast, was *persona non grata*.

The Feast of Sukkoth (Tabernacles) takes place about mid-October, five days after Yom Kippur (The Day of Atonement). According to Jewish law and tradition all male Jews were to go to Jerusalem to observe this feast. The people were to dwell in temporary (lean-to) dwelling places made of olive, pine, myrtle or palm branches (no cloth). They must take their meals in these booths and sleep in them. The lean-to must have one open side, not be more than 20 cubits high (30 ft.) and be open to the stars at night. Every morning the high priest, followed by a procession of the multitudes of worshipers, went to fetch water in a golden pitcher from the Pool of Siloam. Then they returned, singing the great Hallel, to pour the water and a wine offering on the altar of burnt offering in the Temple court. More offerings and sacrifices were offered during this feast than any other except Passover. In addition to all the sacrifices the Jews made on their own behalf, seventy bulls were sacrificed for the seventy nations of the world, in token of the "messianic ingathering of the nations" at which time the Jews anticipated (traditionally) they would rule the world. As a matter of fact, Sukkoth probably was intended by God to symbolize the messianic ingathering of the nations—into the spiritual kingdom (the church). Jesus indicates this in John 10:16. Every evening extraordinary festivities took place at the Court of Women in the Temple. The four great lampstands were lighted; Levite musicians with lutes and cymbals stood on the fifteen steps that led to the Court of Men of Israel. At the sound of the *shophar* (ram's horn) a torch dance was begun and people sang and danced for hours. This is the most festive of all the celebrations of the Jewish year. It is the one at which the "messianic fever" would rise to its highest pitch. It is understandable why Samaritans would be offended at Jews using their country as a short-cut to attend such a festive gathering in Jerusalem.

The people of the village where Jesus wanted to stay overnight refused to accommodate Him. When James and John ("Sons of Thunder") saw this, they were filled with anger and were ready to retaliate with fire from heaven to consume this village. They asked the Lord if that was what He wanted too. Jesus' reply was a rebuke! A few ancient Greek texts of Luke's gospel (not the earliest texts), add, ". . . and he said, You do not know what manner of spirit you are of; for the Son of man came not to destroy man's lives but to save them." Whatever Jesus might have said, He displayed the spirit He wished to cultivate in the apostles, for He went on to another village in hopes of finding lodging. Jesus wants all His disciples to control their temperament to anger. There are times when controlled anger is needful (cf. Ex. 32:19; Num. 16:15; I Sam. 11:6; 20:34; Neh. 5:6; Psa. 97:10; Prov. 8:13; Amos 5:15; Mark 3:1-5;

Heb. 1:9; Rom. 12:9; Eph. 4:26; Rev. 2:6). But the Lord has specifically prohibited the Christian from personal retaliation or vengeance against his enemies (cf. Rom. 12:14-21; Mt. 5:38-42, etc.). That does not prohibit the Christian from calling upon properly constituted civil authority for protection and judgment against the lawless and wicked. However, the individual Christian or citizen is not to take the law into his own hands to act as judge, jury and enforcer. Our anger must be controlled within the revealed will of God.

9:57-62 Audacity and Affrontery: These verses are parallel to Matthew's account (Mt. 8:18-22). Either Matthew or Luke (or perhaps both) recorded these conversations out of chronological order. Matthew 8:18-22 is considered by most harmonists as chronologically following Matthew 13:53. Matthew probably inserted the incident where he did (8:18-22) to provide a cumulative documentation of Jesus' teachings on discipleship. Luke may have inserted it where he did (9:57-62) because it fits into the teachings of Jesus on "taming temperaments." If these discussions of Jesus with impulsive and irreverent volunteers should be placed immediately after the sermon in parables (Mt. 13:53), then Luke should have chronologically placed them right after the same sermon (Lk. 8:18). Whatever the case, they are authentic words of Jesus and demand serious study and application to His divine revelation about true discipleship.

The first would-be disciple came to Jesus and said, "I will follow you wherever you go." He was audacious, rash, hasty, over-confident and ignorant of the personal cost involved in discipleship to Jesus. Jesus never "smooth-talked" people into discipleship. He always insisted that those who wished to follow His way should count the cost (see Lk. 14:25-35). Jesus never pressured, "psyched," or "politicked" anyone into following Him. He preached the truth with compassion and persuasive logic, but He never manipulated people with emotionalism. The other two men answered His call to discipleship with excuses they deemed of higher priority than immediate and total commitment to Him. What they wished to do first seems innocent enough (go to a father's funeral, and say farewell to family). Seeing to the burial of dead bodies is of second priority, at least, to the saving of souls. There are always plenty of people who show no interest in following Jesus—let them take care of secondary issues. Nothing and no one is to come before obedience to clear, implicit commands from the word of Christ. Clinging to human ties or earthly associations or looking back and longing for them until they become more important than immediate obedience to Jesus makes a man unfit for discipleship. Those who wish citizenship in the kingdom of God must count the cost of discipleship and learn to live with the fact of Jesus' Lordship (cf. Mt. 7:21; Lk. 6:46). They must

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surrender all—thoughts (II Cor. 10:3-5), bodies, families, possessions—to His command. Impulsive discipleship based on emotionalism is uncontrolled audacity. Putting anything or anyone on a higher priority than immediate obedience to Jesus is irreverence. Jesus will have none of it! Why? Because divided loyalty saves no man's soul. Salvation is afforded only to those who trust completely in Christ.

God made man with these temperaments. They serve useful purposes (see our notes on Lk. 4:1-13). But Jesus knows these temperaments must be under the control of the will of God or the devil will deceitfully seduce man into perverting them to his own self-destruction. Jesus knows that if these temperaments are tamed to conform to the will of God they will produce the image of God in man—they will produce perfected man. Jesus demonstrated Perfected Man controlling these temperaments within the will of God all through His life.

STUDY STIMULATORS:

1. Is the evangelistic tour of the Twelve apostles to be emulated by Christians today? In what way?
2. What effect did the "kingdom fever" have on the politicians of Jesus' day? Does real Christianity still antagonize human rulers? Why? Can there ever be unity of Christianity and State?
3. Why did Jesus have compassion on the multitudes? Should we have compassion on the worldly-minded today?
4. Why did Jesus feed the five thousand?
5. Why did Jesus want to know what the Twelve thought about Him?
6. Just how much did Peter believe about Jesus when he made the good confession?
7. What did Peter *refuse* to confess about Jesus? Do men still refuse?
8. How does man really find himself—find real identity?
9. What does the transfiguration of Jesus mean in *your* relationship to Him?
10. Do you believe it is possible to tame your temperament as Jesus indicated about ambition, anger, audacity and affrontery? How?

GIFTS, MIRACLES

(Heb. 2:3-4)

By Paul T. Butler — OBC Convention, Feb. 1977

Introduction

I. DEFINITION OF MIRACLE

- A. "An event occurring in the natural world, observed by the senses, produced by divine power, without any adequate human or natural cause, the purpose of which is to reveal the will of God and do good to man." (McCartney, in *Twelve Great Questions About Christ*)
1. Hume once argued: there is more evidence for regularity in nature than for irregularity; therefore, regularity and not irregularity must be the truth of the matter.
 2. Certainly there is more evidence for the regular occurrence of nature than for any supernatural occurrence. If there weren't we could not talk of miracles.
 3. The argument of miracle rests on the regularity of nature generally.
 4. Only if all the historical evidence available to man could show there is no being outside nature who can in any way alter it can there be an argument against the possibility of miracles. This evidence does not do—indeed cannot do!
- B. In our text four different words are used:
1. *semeiois* = signs
 2. *terasin* = wonders
 3. *dunamesin* = powerful deeds
 4. *merismois* = distributions (of the Holy Spirit)
 5. Milligan (Hebrews) says these words classify miracles as:
 - a. to their design (signs)
 - b. to their nature (wonders)
 - c. to their origin (supernatural power)
 - d. to their Christian aspect (distributions of the Holy Spirit)

II. THE FACT OF MIRACLES RESTS ON THE HISTORICITY OF OUR NEW TESTAMENT TEXT

- A. Were these writers eyewitnesses?
- B. Are they credible
- C. Are the documents authentic?
- D. This is another subject—but it is the fundamental subject.

I. PURPOSE OF MIRACLES

- A. As our text points out, the primary purpose of miracles was to "bear witness" that the message from Jesus and that Jesus Himself was from God. Jn. 10:25, 37, 38; 14:10-11; Mt. 9:1-8

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The miracles do not prove Jesus to be the Son of God—many men worked miracles—but they prove Him to be a truthful messenger, and this truthful messenger says that He is God. Christ may have wrought miracles and not have been God; but He could not have wrought miracles and said that He was God without being God.

- B. To demonstrate the mercifulness of God in the case of individual men. Miracles illustrate and explain the teaching of Jesus on the love and mercy of God.
- C. To demonstrate God's wrath upon sin and rebellious sinners Mt. 21:18-19 (cursed fig tree), Acts 13:11 (blinding of Elymas) Acts 5:5-10 (Ananias and Sapphira). Bible miracles taught not only God's love and goodness but also His power and authority, and sometimes His righteous and fearful judgments.
- D. Miracles of the Bible demonstrate clearly that miracles were never intended to be universal:
 - 1. In extent: for they were always limited to few and special cases. Never have they been used to relieve suffering or prolong life here for all of God's people universally.
 - a. Some received no miraculous deliverance here (Heb. 11:35-40)
 - b. John the Immerser, greatest born of women, worked no miracles, nor was he delivered miraculously (Mt. 11:7-11; Jn. 10:41).
 - c. Jesus could have healed all or raised all from dead but He didn't.
 - d. Paul healed many, but did not heal Trophimus and Timothy (II Tim. 4:20; I Tim. 5:23).
 - 2. In result: All who were delivered from sickness had at other times to suffer again and die. All who were raised from the dead had to die again. Peter was delivered twice, but not a third time (God was no less compassionate and Peter no less believing).

II. PASSING OF MIRACLES (AS SUCH)

- A. It would take some convincing to persuade me that God does not work providentially in history today. I believe He answers when we pray (sometimes yes, sometimes no, sometimes without acting at all).
 - 1. I teach Life of Christ, Old Testament Prophets and Revelation. You cannot study and teach those books and believe them for 20 years without believing God is active in the affairs of men and nations.
 - 2. I do not deny that God could reinstitute an age of miracles such as we read in the Old Testament and New Testament if it suited His purpose.

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3. It is just that I believe He will not because He has no further need of such miracles and signs. Here is why I believe that:
- B. "When that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away . . ." I Cor. 13:10.
1. The reason for the election of the Jews in Christ (Eph. 1) was for "a plan in the *fulness of time*, to unite all things in him. . . ." (not for heaven, but for earth). Thus the plan was to unite both Jew and Gentile, slave and free, man and woman, into one body, the church. This is why the spiritual miraculous gifts were given in Eph. 4:11f., for this ministry of unifying. These miraculous gifts were to last until the *teleios* "man" was formed (Eph. 4:13).
 2. The identical context, outline, illustrations, and terminology in I Cor. 12—14 lead us to conclude that such is also the meaning of *teleios* there . . . to perfect both Jew and Gentile in the one body.
 3. It is unquestionably apparent that the problem in both Ephesians and Corinthians was the immaturity and schismatic tendencies of the early church. In light of the frequent association of love with perfection (maturity)—and in light of the fact that the entire epistle of I Cor. deals with the grand theme of divine love in the context of the childish immaturity of so many Christians at Corinth, it seems best to define "the perfect" in terms of the ultimate goal, aim, and end which Paul seeks to accomplish in bringing God's people to the fulness of spiritual growth and maturity in Christ.
 4. Paul's description of the carnal immaturity of Christians at Corinth serves to underscore his emphasis on the ultimate goal which he sets for them in chapter 13. Chapter 13 must be read in the context of the whole book and may not be interpreted apart from his charge in 14:1—"Make love your aim," and in 14:20 "Do not be children in your thinking; in malice be babes, but in thinking be perfect."
 5. When the "perfect" comes, says Paul, the tongues, etc. would cease. These miraculous gifts were not proofs of spiritual maturity. Paul does not say that these will cease when Jesus comes again, nor when the Corinthians get to heaven. Rather, that in time, during their life on earth, the miraculous demonstrations will cease.
 6. I do not think "perfect" means just the completed canon of New Testament books; it also has to do with a "perfected" church.
 - a. The canon's formation was by uninspired men (so far as we know). I believe every book in the New Testament is inspired

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- and apostolic. But what if another scroll of antiquity is found with the same credentials as the books we now have? We would not have a "perfect—complete" New Testament!
- b. The "perfect law of liberty" was already at work when James wrote of it in James 1:25. This perfect law was in action before the completion of our 27 books of the New Testament were formed in a New Testament. One could look into this law then and be blessed in obedience to it. It was the perfect law of freedom because it accomplished what the incomplete Law of Moses could not do. It is significant in this context that James also speaks of the children of God as being perfect and complete in the church (James 1:4-5).
- C. The end for which miracles were wrought, to attest to the veracity of Christ and His claims, to bring the church to maturity, and to bring about faith through which we may partake of the divine nature (II Pet 1:3-4)—this is the ultimate goal of God's work with us. MIRACLES CAN NEVER BE AN ACCEPTABLE SUBSTITUTE FOR THIS INDWELLING (I Tim. 1:5; II Pet. 1:3-11; I Jn. 1:5-8; 3:1-6; I Cor. 12:31—14:1; II Cor. 3:18). (See "A Study of the Work of the Holy Spirit in Christians," by Seth Wilson, mimeo, OBC bookstore.)
1. Miracles are signs or works of the Holy Spirit, not the Holy Spirit Himself. They are the effects of which He is the cause. Miracles have been found where the personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit did not occur. (Mt. 10; Lk. 10, apostles and 70 disciples worked miracles months before Jesus said the Holy Spirit had not come yet, Jn. 7:38). King Saul on his way to murder God's anointed was made to prophesy by the Spirit of God (I Sam. 19:18-24). Balaam's ass (Num. 22:25-30). Cornelius (Acts 10:44-48).
 2. It is evident that some men whom Christ called "workers of iniquity" claimed to have worked many miracles in His name. If they speak that boldly to His face, at judgment, does it not appear that they will be sincerely convinced that they have actually wrought such mighty works by His power here?
 3. It does not appear that miraculous demonstrations are necessary effects whenever or wherever the Holy Spirit dwells in men. I Cor. 12:3, the man who honestly says Jesus is Lord manifests he has the Holy Spirit. I Cor. 12:29-30 shows that not all in the New Testament church had the gifts of miraculous works.
 4. The word of God has the power to regenerate and to sanctify through faith which allows the Spirit of God to dwell in us Eph. 3:16-19; I Tim. 1:5; Gal. 5:22-25; II Pet. 1:3-4; II Cor. 3:18.

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5. Miraculous deeds did not guarantee a spiritual church. The Corinthian church “came behind in no gift” and was enriched “in all utterance and in all knowledge” (I Cor. 1:5-7); yet that church was notorious for errors in doctrine and evils in practice.
6. Are such wonders and signs always caused exclusively by the Holy Spirit? May some of the experience and utterances be caused by the workings of the subconscious mind, by something like hypnotic influences? (See *The Psychology of Speaking in Tongues*, by John P. Kildahl, Harper & Row.)

Scriptures warn of the possibility (at least in the first century) of “lying wonders” (Mt. 24:24; 7:22; II Thess. 2:9; I Jn. 4:1-6; Rev. 13:14; 16:14; 19:20). Even the Old Testament warned against false prophets with signs (Dt. 13:1-5; 18:22; Isa. 8:20).

7. Isolated wonders do not necessarily prove a divine revelation from God. Bible miracles were part of a coherent combination of many miracles and messages to which they were significantly related. The extent and quality of Bible miracles and revelations is different from the many alleged miracles and prophecies of today or any century since apostles. Philip’s miracles and those of Simon Magus were different. Even Pharaoh could see (or should have) the difference between Moses’ miracles and those of his magicians. (Gal. 1:6-9) Even a gospel by angels, if different than Paul’s would be condemned.
8. I Jn. 4:6 says it is not the Holy Spirit if men show they do not hear (heed and keep) the word of the apostles.

James 3:13-18 shows that the Spirit of God does not cause men to be jealous and factious—divisive.

WHEN THERE ARE SO MANY DENOMINATIONAL FACTIONS, ALLEGING TO HAVE THESE MIRACULOUS SIGNS AND WONDERS, YET STRIVING TO MAINTAIN THEIR DENOMINATIONAL DIFFERENCES EVEN IN THE FACE OF PLAIN SCRIPTURAL TEACHINGS?! What are we to conclude about their claims?

III. FUNCTIONAL GIFTS (Rom. 12:1-13)

- A. I believe all men and women have gifts from their Creator.
 1. All may not have the same gifts or latent potentialities.
 2. Some may have many more potentialities than others.
 3. BUT THEY ARE ALL NEEDED AS FUNCTIONS IN THE BODY OF CHRIST. This is the important point: No gifts, capacities, talents, abilities (all given by the grace of God) are more important FUNCTIONALLY, than others.
 4. The whole context here indicates Paul is talking *not* about miraculous gifts given by God for the same purposes as those of

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I Cor. 12-14; but of functional gifts, one of which at least every member of the body has (“... I bid every one among you. . .”).

B. I like the way Carl Ketcherside explains it in *Mission Messenger*, Vol. 36, No. 10, Oct. 1974, “Functioning Gifts.”

1. Any gift freely bestowed by God is a gift of the Spirit, regardless of how it is communicated to the recipient. That is why I object to designating any period of time a charismatic age. There is no such thing as a charismatic age, for the simple reason that there is no non-charismatic age. There has never been a time when the will of God was not enhanced and promoted by gifts of grace. A gift is not charismatic because of its nature, method of reception, or effect, but because of its origin. It is charismatic because it is a gift of *charis*, grace.

2. The man who has the enviable gift of understanding and relieving the needy is “charismatic” as surely as one who has the gift of prophecy. The one who can give cheerfully and freely as his contribution to the work of the saints is “charismatic.” In view of this, I am not turned on by such expressions as “The Spirit is working again in our time.” The Spirit has never ceased working.

3. The gifts of God are varied. Paul wrote to a congregation which came behind in no gift and told them that the ability to restrain sexual passion, making marriage unnecessary was a *charisma* of God. But he also implied that the gift of sexual need which could be gratified in marriage was a *charisma*. “I would that everybody lived as I do; but each of us has his own special gift from God—one in one direction and one in another” (I Cor. 7:7). It is quite evident that Paul’s gift was in a different direction than that of the majority.

C. Eph. 4:7 “But grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ’s gift.”

1. Do not the parables teach that men are *given* (how else, but by the grace of God) “talents” and “pounds” according to different measures, and each one is expected to *use* (none are non-functional) and be rewarded according, not to what he does not have, but according to how he uses what he does have?

2. Now if we will follow the leading of the Spirit in His revealed will and make sure instead of worrying about “having the Spirit” that the “Spirit has all of us,” we will “use” our *praxin* (function, or action) *charismata* (gifts) for the benefit of the one body. Actually, if we simply let ourselves be “transformed” by “the renewing of our minds . . .” (Rom. 12:1-2) we will use our gifts of grace for the upbuilding of the body in love.

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Even unconverted men and women have *charismatic gifts!* *functional gifts*—whatever they have in potentialities they have by the grace of God but they are not allowing the Spirit to use them for the upbuilding of Christ's body.

- D. Does all this mean that the special *supernatural* gifts should also be continued by the Holy Spirit in the church today? No.
1. They were for special needs. The functional gifts will always be needed.
 2. I do not need to see a miracle performed by anyone else, nor have one performed upon me, to produce faith in the revealed Word of God.
 3. The original envoys of Jesus who gave the message were thoroughly accredited and their message was confirmed by miracles, wonders and signs. There is no sense in having miracles to confirm miracles, and once truth is confirmed it never needs to be confirmed again.
 4. The spectacular, *supernatural*, signs and wonders were to cease (there is no doubt about that), but the functional gifts through which every member of the body may *love* man and God will abide!
 5. AFTER ALL, THE GRACE OF GOD HAS GIVEN EACH OF US GIFTS FOR FUNCTIONING IN THE CHURCH AND WE USE THEM ACCORDING TO THE MEASURE OF OUR FAITH.

The miraculous, supernatural gifts could be given and made to function regardless of the measure of the faith of the person.

CONCLUSION

Accepting the possibility of miracles is a matter of morality. C. S. Lewis wrote, “. . . the question whether miracles occur can never be answered simply by experience. Every event which might claim to be a miracle is, in the last resort something presented to our senses, something seen, heard, touched, . . . etc. and our senses are not infallible. If anything extraordinary seems to have happened, we can always say that we have been the victims of an illusion. If we hold a philosophy that excludes the supernatural, this is what we shall always say.”

What we learn from experience depends on our philosophy of epistemology (theory of how one learns) and that ultimately rests on our moral honesty. Many people think one can decide whether a miracle occurred in the past by examining the evidence according to the ordinary rules of historical inquiry. But the ordinary rules cannot be worked *until* we have

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decided whether miracles are possible, and if so, how probable they are. So, we are back to whether we are being honest or not.

Man's ability to think and reason gives evidence that something beyond nature exists. The Naturalist cannot deny the thinking-reasoning process without thinking and reasoning! It is obvious that the thinking process is not just a natural event composed of cells, electric impulses, etc. Therefore, something other than nature exists.

Morality is another undeniable evidence of the possibility of that which is beyond nature. Even the great determinist Karl Marx held there was "good" behavior and "bad" behavior and subjected what he determined to be "bad" behavior to withering moral scorn. He could justify this only with the presupposition that there is a moral responsibility—something beyond natural reflex.

Why does liberal theology exclude miracles? Because it excludes the "living God" of Christianity and believes instead in a kind of God who obviously would not do miracles, or indeed anything else outside of nature.

Men are reluctant to face up to the fact of a *living* God. They much prefer an abstract "Idea" to a Person. An idea does nothing, demands nothing. It is there for a person to change, manipulate or obliterate as the whim calls for. But a living, supernatural, all-sovereign Person is something else! It is shocking to discover there is a Person, a feeling, thinking, moral Person who is Creator and Sustainer of life, alive and active in our everyday affairs. It is even more alarming to think this Person has the right to demand mental and moral control of our lives. C. S. Lewis puts it thus: "You have had a shock like that before, in connection with smaller matters—when the fishing line pulls at your hand, when something breathes beside you in the darkness. So here; the shock comes at the precise moment when the thrill of life is communicated to us along the clue we have been following. It is always shocking to meet life where we thought we were alone. 'Look out,' we cry, 'it's alive!'"

An impersonal God—well and good. A subjective God of beauty, truth and goodness, inside our own heads—better still. A formless life-force surging through us, a vast power which we can tap—best of all. But God Himself, alive, pulling at the other end of the cord, perhaps approaching at an infinite speed, the hunter, king, husband, that is quite another matter.

There comes a moment when the children who have been playing at cops and robbers hush suddenly: was that a *real* footstep in the hall? There comes a moment when people who have been dabbling in religion (called, "man's search for God") suddenly draw back. Supposing we really found Him? Supposing He has worked miracles over and above and outside the natural order of things? We never meant it to come to *that!* Worse still, supposing He has found us?

Chapter Ten (10:1-42)

THE SON OF MAN EVANGELIZING AND EDIFYING

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. If Jesus had twelve disciples helping Him, why did He need seventy more (10:1-12)?
2. How could the compassionate Jesus condemn whole cities (10:13-15)?
3. When did Satan "fall" and what did it involve (10:18)?
4. What has God hidden from the "wise and understanding" (10:21-22)?
5. Does the Old Testament Law really command the Jew to love his neighbor as he loves himself (10:25-28)?
6. Is being like the Good Samaritan all there is to inheriting eternal life (10:29-37)?
7. What is the "one thing" that was needful (10:38-42)?

SECTION 1

Preaching the Kingdom (10:1-24)

10 After this the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to come. ²And he said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. ³Go your way; behold, I send you out as lambs in the midst of wolves. ⁴Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and salute no one on the road. ⁵Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house!' ⁶And if a son of peace is there, your peace shall rest upon him; but if not, it shall return to you. ⁷And remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide, for the laborer deserves his wages; do not go from house to house. ⁸Whenever you enter a town and they receive you, eat what is set before you; ⁹heal the sick in it and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' ¹⁰But whenever you enter a town and they do not receive you, go into its streets and say, ¹¹'Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet, we wipe

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off against you; nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God has come near.' ¹²I tell you, it shall be more tolerable on that day for Sodom than for that town.

13 "Woe to you, Chorazin! woe to you, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. ¹⁴But it shall be more tolerable in the judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you. ¹⁵And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You shall be brought down to Hades.

16 "He who hears you hears me, and he who rejects you rejects me, and he who rejects me rejects him who sent me."

17 The seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!" ¹⁸And he said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. ¹⁹Behold, I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall hurt you. ²⁰Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you; but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

21 In that same hour he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, "I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to babes; yea, Father, for such was thy gracious will. ²²All things have been delivered to me by my Father; and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him."

23 Then turning to the disciples he said privately, "Blessed are the eyes which see what you see! ²⁴For I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it."

10:1-20 Repentance: Jesus had followers other than the Twelve who were fully capable of evangelizing or preaching the kingdom of God. This text documents an evangelistic campaign involving seventy "others." It is not to be confused with the campaign in Galilee (recorded in Mt. 10:1-42, Mk. 6:1-13 and Lk. 9:1-9). The campaign in Galilee preceded the Feast of Tabernacles (see notes in Lk. 9:51-59). The preaching tour of the seventy followed Tabernacles and was in Judea. Jesus' attendance at the Feast of Tabernacles is recorded only by John's Gospel (ch. 7:1—10:21). The Feast of Tabernacles is to be inserted, chronologically, between Luke 9:62 and Luke 10:1.

The fact that Jesus should conduct two evangelistic campaigns prescribing the same methods in practically the same words should not be confusing. It is certainly no basis for claiming that Luke copied from

Matthew. They are different incidents, involving different people, at different times, and geographically in different locales.

For notes on Jesus' methodology in evangelism study comments on the tour of the Twelve, Luke 9:1-9. We will not make comments here since His instructions in both cases are practically the same. The one striking difference between the two tours is that in Galilee Jesus told the Twelve to "go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans . . ." (Mt. 10:5). He would not have to give that instruction in Judea since there were not many Gentiles living there.

Almost a year prior to this time the Lord had pronounced divine condemnation upon three cities in Galilee: Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum. That was about the middle of His second year of public ministry, (see Mt. 11:20-24). Now, about the middle of the third year, He repeats the judgment. It is first, a warning to the seventy that as He was scorned and rejected by these cities in Galilee, they would probably suffer the same treatment in Judea. It was second, an encouragement that Christ was aware of all hypocrisy and unbelief and God's judgment would ultimately vindicate their faithfulness in the face of rejection. We will make extensive comments on the condemnation of the three cities because there are very important lessons to be learned.

Chorazin was about 2 miles north of Capernaum. It was probably an important city being at the northern most end of the land of Palestine of the first century. Trade routes and military garrisons were probably there. It ceased to be inhabited by the time of Eusebius (250 A.D.). Only a few of its carved stones remain today. Bethsaida (Julius) was east of the Jordan, near the river's entry into the Sea of Galilee. The tetrarch Philip raised it to the rank of "city" and called it Julius in honor of the daughter of Augustus Caesar, Julia. Some think there was another Bethsaida—a suburb of Capernaum. Whatever the case, neither can be found today except for a few ruins of a Roman road. It was apparently a place of great activity in the fishing business; the word Bethsaida means, "house of fishing." Capernaum was a customs station, the residence of a high officer of the tetrarch of Galilee (Herod) (see Mt. 9:9; Jn. 4:46) and was occupied by a detachment of Roman soldiers whose commander built the Jews a synagogue at his own expense. By the time of Josephus (50 years after Jesus) Capernaum was of such small significance, Josephus called it a "village." These cities apparently "exalted" themselves and considered themselves too sophisticated, wise and well-off to need the likes of the itinerant rabbi from Nazareth to tell them what to do. They flocked after Him for miracles of healing, but scorned His message of repentance.

Jesus had walked the streets of these cities, especially Capernaum, and so did His apostles. He had his home in Capernaum. There he had

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healed a nobleman's son, a man let down through a roof, given the apostles a miraculous catch of fish, healed many of all kinds of diseases, cast out demons, healed Peter's mother-in-law, and, when the "whole city" came to Him at His door, he healed many more people. Finally, He healed the centurion's servant. Later in His ministry He healed Jairus' daughter at Capernaum, the woman with the flow of blood, two blind men, and a dumb demoniac.

Some of the Lord's greatest sermons were delivered in this immediate area. The Sermon on the Mount could have been close enough that many citizens of these cities attended. His sermon on the Bread of Life was in a synagogue in Capernaum; His sermon on human traditions was in Capernaum, as well as His sermon on childlikeness (Mt. 18).

Jesus condemned more often than most people like to admit. Most people want to think of Jesus as always positive, always encouraging, always forgiving, never condemning, and even indulging those who do not agree with Him. But check these scriptures: Mt. 7:21-23; Mt. 23:1ff.; Mt. 12:22-42; Jn. 3:36; 8:42-47; 9:35-41; 12:31. Practically every parable Jesus told ended with a condemnation or warning. The letters of the apostles in the New Testament contain much condemnation. Paul's instruction for fulfilling the ministry is to "reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering."

God cannot be reduced to a vacillating, flaccid, spineless compromiser. If God doesn't condemn unbelief and unrighteousness, He cannot praise and reward faith and holiness. If He does not hate and judge evil, He cannot love and preserve truth and goodness. That goes for God's Son, for God's propositional word, the Bible, and for the messengers and preachers of His word. The Jews of the prophet's days would not accept this. They refused to believe that God would condemn their paganism and unbelief. They wanted Him to condemn and destroy their enemies, but to indulge them in their unbelief (see Jer. 5:12; 23:17). We cannot afford such ignorance of God's real nature. J.B. Phillips in his book, *Your God Is Too Small*, says some people's concept of the "meek and mild" Jesus makes their God too small. Of all the ideas about Jesus, he says, this one that Jesus never spoke a harsh word or never condemned wrong is the "least appropriate." It pictures Jesus as someone afraid to take a stand or give His hand against evil. A god that compromises truth in the face of falsehood or surrenders to injustice without challenging and condemning it, is a "god too small." He would be, in fact, a cruel god. Indifference to evil is more insidious than evil itself. The Son of God was not indifferent to impotence and unbelief. He condemned it in order to bring about repentance. In anger and condemnation against evil lies true compassion.

Jesus' condemnation of these three cities is a result of their misappropriation of opportunities and privileges—the most evil form of

unbelief. He never condemned anyone for failing to use an opportunity they never had. He never condemned anyone for using an opportunity and falling short, if they recognized their shortcomings and asked for forgiveness. But He certainly had His severest judgment upon those who had opportunities and privileges and deliberately chose not to use them! These three cities had opportunity after opportunity to put His word to practice in their lives. They saw Him in action time after time. His word was validated as supernatural, powerful, and life-giving by the many miracles He wrought among them. They had clear, understandable, motivating sermons, one after another. They had a multitude of opportunities that Sodom, Tyre, and Sidon never had, and still they did not repent. These Jews to whom Jesus preached considered the Sodomites, Tyrainians and Sidonians incorrigible, worthless and unsavable. But Jesus knew that if they had had the opportunities afforded Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum, they would have repented! "To whom soever much is given, of him shall much be required" (Lk. 12:48). Daniel Webster, scholar, statesman, Bible-believer was once asked, "What is the most sobering, searching thought that ever entered your mind?" Without a moment's hesitation, the great orator and educator replied, "My personal accountability to God!"

The seventy returned from their evangelistic tour of the cities and villages of Judea bubbling with excitement, feeling they had been especially blessed (Gr. *charas*, "graced") because the demons obeyed them in the name of Jesus. Jesus said He saw in this the forecast of Satan's defeat by the coming of the kingdom of God which they had been preaching. What appears as Satan's power to thwart the purpose of God for man is about to be defeated. Satan's assault on the heavenly sovereignty of God is about to be repulsed (Rev. 12:1-17) and the devil will be cast down. The devil's power, the fear of death (Heb. 2:14-15), is about to be destroyed and he will be "bound" when Jesus makes atonement for man's sin and conquers death in His resurrection. All this is foreshadowed by Jesus' power over demons.

Jesus' authority to the seventy to tread upon serpents . . . and that nothing should hurt them, was never intended for all believers of all ages any more than His power to cast out demons and raise the dead given the Twelve was. If He had intended His power to the seventy to be perpetuated why aren't these "seventy" still alive? He gave them authority "over all the power of the enemy"; they could have kept themselves alive forever. The apostles had the power to raise the dead—why didn't they raise themselves from the dead? Clearly, miraculous power granted from Christ to certain people was intended to have a cessation. Miraculous power serves only one purpose—to validate the message to be from God. Once that purpose is sufficiently served,

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miracles are no longer needed. Miracles do not produce salvation or holiness—the *message* confirmed by the miracles does.

This is exactly the Lord's point in cooling the enthusiasm of the seventy. Their salvation is by the grace of God, not in their working of miracles. Some miracle-workers will be lost (Mt. 7:21-23)! Nothing man does earns him salvation—not even working miracles. Our salvation was earned by The Perfect Man (Heb. 2:5-18) and offered to us through His grace. We have access into that grace by faith (Rom. 5:2), obedient faith (Rom. 6:1-23). Our faith is expressed by accepting God's salvation, obeying the terms of His New Covenant (being immersed in water for the forgiveness of our sins, Acts 2:38, 22:16, etc.). What we must understand clearly is that although outward acts of piety should be the natural expressions of a heart and mind humbly surrendered to the Lord's will, they do not guarantee it (Mt. 6:1ff.). The Corinthian church, although it came behind no church in miraculous gifts, was one of the most carnal-minded churches of the first century! Jesus told the seventy that their enthusiasm was focused on the wrong aspect of their discipleship. Let them not rejoice in their power over demons; that was none of their doing and not by their choice, but by Christ's. They may rejoice, however, that by their choice to trust Christ God has graciously written their names in heaven. It is through choosing the will of Christ for our lives that we are saved, not by the exercise of relative amounts of piety. The essence of the kingdom of God is repentance. When Jesus sent the seventy to preach the kingdom of God, they were preaching that people should repent. They did not need to try to get people to be more religious—to go through more rituals, and add more temple services to their lives. Repentance means to accept the mind of God—to believe what God says about His kingdom instead of what men think it should be. Before man can accept what God says, God must say what He wants man to accept. God must *reveal* His will, and man must recognize and receive it in precisely the way which God chooses to reveal it. That leads into Jesus' next admonition to the seventy.

10:21-24 Revelation: God reveals His will in order to save man by correcting man's mind-set. Mind-set equals allegiance. Perspective determines values. Through Jesus Christ God has distinguished between the temporal and the eternal from a divine and infallible perspective. If man recognizes and receives Jesus' divine perspective he is able to focus his mind on truest and highest values. Thus man is saved from eternal deception and lostness. Without fully trusting in the divine perspective, man is left to be condemned to the human perspective. The human perspective cannot go beyond the human experience which is separated from the divine goal of the Creator for His creatures by an unbridgeable gulf of supernaturalism. Jesus pauses here, reminded

by the impenitence of these cities, to thank the Father that that unbridgeable gulf is bridged by the revelation of the Father in the Son. He had failed to win over those cities in which He had done mighty works, and yet He gives thanks! He uses the Greek word *exomologoumai* which means, literally, "I acknowledge what has happened and give you praise for it." Jesus acknowledges that the refusal of these proud and arrogant cities to accept His humble cross-bearing discipleship is evidence that God's plan for saving the teachable was working. The way of the cross is spurned by the worldly-minded (I Cor. 1:17-31). But that simply proves that the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom. So Jesus praises the Father. It is the Father's gracious will that only those who are childlike will accept His Son and His salvation. Jesus just finished teaching (Mt. 18; Lk. 9) that the unequivocal condition of kingdom citizenship is childlikeness. The tendency of faithless man in a situation where large masses reject the truth is to get discouraged, begin to doubt the power of the word of God, start to compromise by omitting part of the gospel message or by using unethical, shallow and pagan methods to manipulate people. The messenger of God who does his best, who is faithful to preach the whole counsel of God, and who still sees little visible result should rejoice, like Jesus, acknowledging it is evidence that God's plan for saving the teachable is working. Temporary setbacks, however heartbreaking, cannot defeat God. Rejoice that God is interested in *quality* as well as quantity.

The issue of revelation is crucial. It is the fundamental issue. What men are willing to have told to them by God is imperative—as opposed to what men think they already know and refuse to let God tell them. If men believe they already know all there is to know that is significant about life here and hereafter, then they will reject the Book that claims to be a revelation from God. When revelation is rejected, regeneration is impossible. Only God has the authority and power to re-create humanity. Regeneration is not determined by what men think or how men feel, but whether men believe and obey God's revelation or not! The people in the area of these three cities wanted Jesus to heal them and make their bodies feel good—to feed them and make their stomachs feel good—to entertain them with miracles and charge up their emotions, but they did not want to surrender their minds and wills to His teachings, or accept His vicarious death for their sins.

Whatever God wanted man to know for the here and the hereafter, He chose to reveal finally and fully, once and for all, in Jesus Christ. Jesus is the Way, the Truth and Life—no one comes to the Father but by Him (Jn. 14:6). Whoever does not honor the Son, does not honor the Father (Jn. 5:23). God does not fully and completely reveal Himself or His salvation in any other Person or religion. As a matter of fact, there

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is absolutely no access to the Father except through Jesus. God will not honor, recognize or accept any effort to repent toward Him except through Jesus (Heb. 5:11—6:8). Now that Christ has come, even an attempt to please God through Judaism is an abomination to God—He calls it apostasy (Heb. 6:6). Jesus is exclusive and inclusive in revealing God. Everything outside Jesus does not reveal God; everything in Jesus does reveal Him. In Jesus dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily (Col. 2:9).

To whom does Jesus choose to reveal the Father? To all who are childlike! To whomsoever will come to Him, He will reveal the Father. He will not coerce, force or manipulate men. Men must be left free to make their own choices. Jesus allowed these cities to choose, even against His divine wisdom and supernatural power. He did not force them to accept Him. The realistic picture of the Bible is that "many are called but few are chosen." The majority of humanity will not be saved, because they do not choose to be saved. Even the Son of God apparently failed where He did his most extensive works. But, in the end, it is not miracles or evidence of miracles which saves man—it is man's choice to surrender to the will of Him of whom the miracles testify, "He is God." The success of Jesus' ministry was measured by the Father's standards—not by men's standards. Jesus was anything but beaten and defeated. He did not cry out in ego-deflation; His image did not suffer; He did not quit the ministry because of Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum. Jesus was realistic, acknowledging that the gospel of God will only be accepted by the childlike. Jesus taught others to count the cost—He knew how to count the cost too!

Jesus was aware of the magnitude of His mission and ministry. He wanted the Twelve and the seventy to be aware of it also in order that they might experience a blessing in the face of rejections and persecutions to come. The coming of the kingdom of God and the coming of God's King was what many prophets and kings of history longed to see (cf. I Pet. 1:10-12). Those disciples who were privileged to join the Son of God in His earthly visit and those who have joined Him in His return in the Spirit should praise God for their blessing.

SECTION 2

Promoting Kindness (10:25-37)

25 And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" 26 He said to him, "What is written in the law? How do you read?" 27 And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with