
The Person and Work of Jesus Christ

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Table of Contents

Historical Introduction	5
Rome at the Time of Christ.....	16
The Four Gospels	18
Jesus Christ in Eternity Past.....	28
The Genealogy of Christ	28
Chronology of the Life of Christ	53
The Birth of John the Baptist	54
The Song of Mary.....	59
The Birth of Christ.....	62
The Night Before Christmas.....	64
Christ and the Shepherds	67
The Circumcision and Presentation of Christ.....	70
The Visit of the Magi.....	74
The Flight To Egypt and Return to Israel	75
The Early Life of Christ	77
The Event at the Temple	79
Jesus' Young Adulthood	84
Preparing the Way of the Lord (Isaiah 40).....	86
Jesus and John the Baptist.....	87
The Wilderness Temptation of Christ.....	97
Jesus' First Followers	106
The Wedding at Cana of Galilee.....	109
The Divine Guidance of Jesus Christ.....	116
The First Cleansing of the Temple.....	118
Nicodemus and Christ	124
The Accession of John the Baptist.....	146
The Samaritan Woman.....	153
Jesus' Galilean Ministry.....	163
Ministry and Rejection at Nazareth	167
The Official Calling of the Disciples	174
The Twelve Disciples.....	175
Teaching in the Synagogue of Capernaum	184
The Healing of Peter's Mother in Law	187
The Second Recall of the Four Disciples	189
Cleansing of a Leper	192
The Forgiving and Healing of a Paralytic	194

The Call of Matthew.....	196
Matthew's Banquet for Christ	197
The Dispensational Change	200
John Chapter 5.....	207
Jerusalem	207
Sabbath Review	210
John 5:19-47 Outline.....	213
Another Sabbath Controversy	221
Healing on the Sabbath	224
Transition to the Sermon on the Mount.....	229
The Beatitudes.....	232
Waiting for the Kingdom	237
Christ and the Law of Moses	241
The Law in the Kingdom of Christ	243
Oaths.....	253
Judicial Punishment	256
Love Your Enemies.....	261
Invisible Impact of Christians	266
The Lord's Prayer	268
Fasting – Christ's Comment	275
Grace Provision.....	277
Judge Not	288
Sermon on the Mount – Conclusion.....	301
Christ and the Centurion	314
The Raising of the Widow's Son.....	319
Christ on John the Baptist	321
The Woes Upon Chorazin and Bethsaida.....	335
The Easy Yoke.....	346
The Sinful Woman Forgiven	356
The Women's Auxiliary	368
Christ Casting Out Demons.....	370
The Demand For a Sign Refused	385
Jesus' Mother and Brothers.....	395
Parables, An Introduction	399
Parable of the Sower.....	400
Parable of the Seed.....	414
Parable of the Tares	416
Parable of the Mustard Seed	423
The Remaining Parables	424
Calming the Storm	438

The Demons and the Swine	444
The Healing of Jairus' Daughter	455
Healing Incidents	468
Christ Returns to Nazareth	471
The Final Galilean Ministry.....	476
The Commissioning of the Twelve	479
Herod and John the Baptist	504
The Beheading of John the Baptist	515
Jesus' Withdrawal from Galilee	522
The Feeding of the Five Thousand	524

Historical Introduction

John 1:1-5, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

He was with God in the beginning.

Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

In him was life, and that life was the light of men.

The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it."

Know from the beginning that Jesus was and is and forever will be the Son of God.

Luke 1:1-4, "Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us,

just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word.

Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus,

so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught."

Know from the beginning that this is the factual account of the Son of God, that this is the most widely documented life and times in history.

1 John 1:1-4, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched this we proclaim concerning the Word of life.

The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us.

We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

We write this to make our joy complete."

Know from the beginning that this factual account changes lives. It has changed mine, and it will change yours if you will listen and believe.

Gal. 4:4,5, "But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons."

Know from the beginning that God's timing is always right, and that He sent His Son at just the right moment in human history.

READ Isaiah 52:13 to 53:12

Know from the beginning that the life of the Son of God was predicted for many hundreds of years, and know that He had a destiny of sorrow and a destiny of glory.

Dramatis Personae for the Opening Act

- **Mary**: a young virgin, who is betrothed to Joseph, a carpenter. They are residents of Nazareth, a small town in the hill country of Galilee;
- **Elizabeth**: an older woman of the hill country of Judah, not far from Jerusalem, and Mary's cousin; her husband Zechariah, a priest in the division of Abijah;
- Wise men from the East;
- Shepherds near Bethlehem;
- **Gabriel**, an angel;
- An anonymous angel;
- **Simeon**, a righteous man who waits for the consolation of Israel;
- **Anna**, a prophetess more than a hundred years of age, and a widow for eighty four of those years a very pious woman;
- **Herod**, the king over the Roman province of Judea an evil man full of ambition.

Herod the Great

Herod in many ways personifies the trouble in Israel at the time of Christ. For a long time, hundreds of years, the Jews had lived under the control of one nation or another, and they longed to be truly autonomous. It seemed like

whatever empire had the upper hand in history would rule them.

If it wasn't the Babylonians, then it was the Persians, when the Persians took over. If it wasn't the Persians, it was the Greeks, when Alexander came rumbling through the ancient near east. If it wasn't Alexander, it was the Romans, after the death of Alexander and the disintegration of his empire.

The Jews still understood that they were a holy people, set apart for God. They always remembered that, if nothing else. They rankled under the rule of Rome, and it especially rubbed them wrong that Herod, the so-called Herod the Great had power over them.

Herod was worse than a Gentile; he was a half Jewish Idumaean, a descendant of Esau, a wild desert dwelling type. The Jews considered them with no small amount of prejudice.

To make matters worse, Herod was hardly a model human being. He has been called a monster one who was crafty and cruel, jealous and vain and always quick to seek revenge when wronged.

He came to the throne over the Roman province of Judea through cunning and manipulation of Marc Antony.

He had nine or ten wives. Even the historians lost count after a while. On the smallest of suspicion he had even his favorite wife, Mariamne, put to death, along with her sons Alexander and Aristobulus.

Even while on his own deathbed, just days before he died he had his own son, his flesh and blood Antipater put to death.

Caesar Augustus was heard to say, "It is better to be Herod's hog than his own son!"

Again at his deathbed he ordered all the principle men in Israel to be rounded up and placed in the local stadium, where they could be surrounded by his soldiers and then slain when he died. The reason: so that there would be great mourning at his death.

It must have been difficult for the Jews to read the Scriptures, and to know that their destiny was so great, and yet have the reality so different.

Understand, however, that this was Divine Judgment on the nation of Israel; that they had neglected their relationship with God, and that the situation was appropriate to their spiritual state. In this case the outward circumstances reflected accurately the inward condition: slavery.

It is no wonder, then, there was a great fascination in the nation of Israel with the prophecies about the Messiah, The one who would come and reestablish the greatness of their kingdom and their people, A man who would rise up and smite their enemies and make them a free people once again.

From time to time a fairly great and famous man would rise up, and there would be some excitement about the possibility of his being the Messiah.

Of course, things would quiet down when he turned out to be quite human, and the slavery of Israel droned on and on.

After a time there was even a certain amount of cynicism about the whole deal.

The same phenomenon exists today with the fascination about the end times and the return of Christ.

Herod tried bribing the Jews, so that they would like him, and he could view himself as a successful ruler.

Julius Caesar had given Herod a fantastic and truly royal inaugural celebration back in 37 B.C., when Herod took the throne. He always longed for that past glory, when in fact the traditional Roman warning of "*sic transit gloria mundi*" applied to him more than any other. The bribes came in the form of a building program that was the very rival of Solomon's.

He built monuments and buildings in the Holy Land, and even rebuilt their temple in

magnificent fashion, topping it with a golden dome.

- The rebuilding of the Temple was much like the building of the Winchester Mystery House in San Jose, California.
- More was added every year. A higher roof here, an annex there all very magnificent.
- When Herod died, his relatives took over the folly and the never ending program continued until it was finally finished in 66 AD, some 87 years after it was begun.
- It is one of the great ironies of history that it was burned down just four years later when Jerusalem was destroyed.

Other buildings and monuments were undertaken.

- A temple, a forum, and a theatre at Samaria.
- A great Greco-Roman capital, a temple, and port at Caesarea.
- The port was an engineering marvel that even today is remarked upon by the archaeologists who work at the site.
- Luxurious palaces and fortified retreats were built at Masada, Jerusalem, Jericho, and Herodium, which was near Bethlehem.
- In Jerusalem he had baths, a theatre, and a Hippodrome constructed.
- He also promoted Greek and Roman games so that the people might be entertained.

All of these things struck a sour note as any bribe to a slave will. The people really did not want these things. They wanted to be autonomous and free. But in order to be truly free, any people must know God, and that was exactly the problem in Israel.

Herod was the king. The people were unhappy. Their response to his despotism is worthwhile to note.

Jewish Responses To Herod's Rule; The Maccabean Revolt

Syria had one incredibly evil ruler by the name of Antiochus Epiphanes. This man was so evil that he made Herod the Great look like a great humanitarian by comparison. Antiochus was the prototype for the Antichrist of the Tribulation.

In 168 B.C. he desecrated the Temple in Jerusalem by setting up an altar to Jupiter Olympus, where he dedicated the use of the Temple to this false God by offering up the flesh of a swine. This was the 'abomination of desolation' of Daniel 11:31, "His armed forces will rise up to desecrate the temple fortress and will abolish the daily sacrifice. Then they will set up the abomination that causes desolation."

Antiochus made a furious effort, with the help of the corrupt high priesthood (who helped because of a bribe), to Hellenize the Jews.

The high priest himself, a man by the name of Jason, was power mad, and attempted a coup in Jerusalem when Antiochus was mistakenly reported dead during a military campaign in Egypt.

His brief reign was characterized by violence, but the real violence would begin when Antiochus heard of the coup. He returned to Jerusalem with his army, besieged it, and killed 40,000 Jews upon its capture, and sold at least as many into slavery. Then he went back to Egypt.

Eventually, Antiochus awoke the ire of Rome, and he was arrested and ordered to back off from Egypt or die. He did so, but he made another stop at Jerusalem, where he took out his frustration on the Jews. He entered the city on the Sabbath, and murdered thousands of men in the synagogues, while enslaving the women and children. He defiled the Temple in every way imaginable, and caused the daily ritual system to cease entirely. This meant war.

During this time of great persecution there was a priest by the name of Mattathias. He was an

old man of noble blood, and he had retired to a little town west of Jerusalem. There he was commanded to sacrifice on the Pagan altar, and he refused. In fact, he became enraged when a Judean came forward to sacrifice, and he struck the man, overthrew the altar, called upon the faithful to follow him, and fled with his sons into the wilderness.

This was the Maccabean family. The example of Mattathias was followed by many in various parts of the country. His story was well known, and the idolatrous altars were being overthrown, and Jewish worship and culture was being reestablished. The rigorous life of a rebel took its toll on Mattathias, and he died just a year later, in 166 A.D.

The third son of Mattathias, Judas, took over for him in directing the war for independence. He was a man full of energy and clever in the running of the war. He was an expert at guerrilla warfare, attacking at night, and at the most surprising times and places. Encouraged by early success, he became even more bold, and defeated Antiochus' head general, Apollonius, at Bethhoron.

It was only a little while later that Antiochus left Jerusalem and left the government to a man name Lysias. Lysias was a military dunce, and Judas defeated his larger army at Emmaus, and later at Bethsura. Judas was then able to occupy Jerusalem, where he purified the Temple.

Judas continued his triumphs on the military field, and after the battle of Adasa, the Jews had almost won their independence. Almost. Bacchides led another invading army, and this time the Jews were caught unaware. Able to only muster a small group of men, and losing many of those on the night before the battle, Judas was defeated, and died.

All that was gained seemed lost. The patriots were in a state of total disorder, and it was only renewed persecution that brought them together again.

The Jews again looked to the Maccabees, this time Jonathan, the youngest son of Mattathias would be their champion. Jonathan would fight

a skillful defensive campaign in the Jordan Valley, and when a new king took the throne in Syria, he gained support, and Israel a fair amount of freedom.

Jonathan was made high priest, and there was peace in the land for some 20 years. Sadly, in 144 B.C. Jonathan fell victim to the treachery of a man by the name of Tryphon, and was imprisoned in Ptolemais, in Galilee. This act left just one Maccabee, Simon.

Simon had all along been a steady military leader, but had left the national leadership to his brothers. Now it was his turn, and he placed himself at the head of the patriot party. After a short while, Tryphon put Jonathan to death, and seized the throne of Syria.

Simon had the wits to make an appeal for the freedom of the Jews to Demetrius, a well known general with connections to Rome.

This appeal was accepted, and once again it seemed as though the Jews would be free.

Although Mattathias had begun the rebellion over the issue of the Jewish religion, after 32 years, the war, and political freedom became the thing. Relationship with God had taken a back seat to military strategy and tactics, and politics. And remember, that no nation can remain free without a relationship with God.

At the time of Simon, in 143 B.C., Israel had apparently won their freedom through military skill and political maneuvering. They had won almost every battle that they had fought for 25 years. They had successfully manipulated the political machines of their foreign occupants.

They had done everything just right, but they had failed in the most important regard: the spiritual life.

Just eight years after the apparent victory of Israel, Simon and two of his sons was murdered by Ptolemais, and in 135 B.C. the nation of Israel once again found itself on the brink of slavery.

John Hyrcanus was one of the two living sons of Simon. When he heard of the death of his

father, he marched with the army against Jericho. Unfortunately, Ptolemais held a trump card: he had Simon's widow, John's mother, captive, and the sabbatical year of the year of Jubilee was just around the corner, so the siege of Jericho failed.

Seeing no further use for the woman, Ptolemais had her killed, and then he fled to Philadelphia. Antiochus the sixth (not Epiphanes) then invaded Judea, and besieged Jerusalem, and Hyrcanus and the army was trapped there and placed into a desperate situation.

The Jews caught a break when a truce was granted for the Passover feast, and Hyrcanus took the opportunity to bargain with Ptolemais. Hyrcanus compromised like crazy in order to gain the freedom of Israel, even going to the extreme of opening David's tomb to pay the tribute demanded by the Syrian General.

He then went to Parthia to bargain further for the freedom of Israel, and through compromise and manipulation was able to establish a treaty that lasted for more than fifty years.

By 30 B.C., the line of the Maccabees had died out with the death of Hyrcanus II, the grandson of Hyrcanus. His granddaughter was Mariamne, who went on to marry Herod the Great.

Now, where were the Pharisees during all this time? Well, they had begun to grasp for political power, so that they might more effectively carry out their mission. At first they were on the side of the Maccabees, but the more the rebels concentrated on the war, the further they got away from strict observance of the Law, and so they earned the wrath of the Pharisees.

Because of the gross compromises of Hyrcanus, and looting of David's tomb, more and more Jews went to the side of the Pharisees. After the death of Hyrcanus I, his daughter became queen, and seeing the handwriting on the wall, she abandoned her political power to Pharisees.

At the time of the birth of Christ, the Romans through Herod held the outward political

power, while the Pharisees held it internally. The people found themselves under a double tyranny, and it was a difficult time indeed.

Concluding principles:

- Freedom without a relationship with God is in reality slavery.
- War without a relationship with God is a waste.
- Both slavery and freedom begin in the soul.
- **John 8:32**, "Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.""
- **Gal 5:1**, "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery."

The Pharisees

The word "Pharisee" is the Greek translation from the Aramaic, and it means "one who is separated". To the Pharisee, this meant a separation from the influences of the Gentiles on their religion and culture.

We have a very similar thing occurring in our nation today. The Pagan influences in our society are waging war against the marvelous culture and vital relationship with God that our forefathers enjoyed. It is a natural and good response to do what you can to protect what is good; to defend it from those who so zealously attempt to destroy it.

Every time that the nation of Israel fell under the rule of another nation whether Babylon or Persia or Greece or Rome, they felt like they were losing a little bit more of themselves. The foreign nationals would come in with their foreign Gods and foreign customs and foreign games, and away would go just a little bit more of what was truly Jewish.

The emphasis of the Pharisees was in the area of the Mosaic Law. It was their aim to protect and uphold the Law of Moses, so that the pollution of foreigners and their foreign Gods would not destroy what made the nation of Israel so distinct, and so great in their time.

This is why they came to hate Herod so very much.

For some four hundred years before the birth of Christ they strove to fulfill their mission as they saw it. Such an aim was not so bad, but in carrying out that aim they became so extreme as to be parody of the Law.

Their undue attention to detail, and especially their imagination in creating details which did not exist resulted in their missing the point of the Law entirely.

The Law was designed to bring the people of Israel to a relationship with the living God through the provision of knowledge essential to the maintenance of that relationship. It was not designed to be carried out just for the sake of accomplishment and preservation.

The very best way for the Pharisees to have accomplished their aim would have been to perpetuate the Law through having a relationship with God by it.

Their teachings about religious matters are quite a revelation of their character.

They tried ardently to avoid all physical contact with the Pagan Gentiles. Even touching one would make them ceremonially unclean. This is why the Pharisees took such great offense at Christ's close association with the tax collectors and sinners.

They always stuck to the letter of the Law, without a hint of flexibility. They defined exactly many things that were not set forth in the Law. They were obsessed with the Sabbath, and were constantly specifying and clarifying what could and could not be done; how far one could travel; exactly how much could be lifted; what the precise exceptions were. Of course, the point that the Sabbath was designed for concentration on God was lost on them.

The Pharisees were consumed with the idea of appearance. They would pray long and loud in public. They would contrive special hats to cover their eyes, so that they might not see a woman (these were called the bloody

Pharisees, because they were always running into things).

Their motivation is equally revealing. They did what they did at the time of Christ for two reasons: to gain power, and to avoid judgment. The latter is especially interesting in the light of

1 John 4:18. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

They were fervent in their legalism lest they offend God, and thus come under His judgment in the eternal state. But you cannot have a true relationship with one you fear. You must have confidence before God, and that was one thing the Pharisee did not have.

Another motivation, the lust for power, had been hanging around the Pharisees for quite some time. Their mission, though warped in its execution, was quite a noble one. They looked at their mission, and decided that they needed power, political power in order to carry it out. Much like their association with the Law, their attempts to gain power led to their addiction to it, and its rule over them.

Perhaps the best characterization of their addiction to power was their success in the Maccabean Revolt, which occurred a couple of centuries before the birth of Christ.

In the intermediate period between the death of Alexander in 323 B.C. and the establishment of Roman control from 63 B.C. onward, Israel remained under the nominal control of Greece and even Syria.

The Sadducees

This religious group known as Sadducees came into being about 300 years before Christ. They are characterized by their aristocracy, their cultural surrender to the Greeks and others, and their opposition to everything the Pharisees stood for.

Their name comes from the Aramaic Sadduqim, which meant 'righteousness'. However, those

who were in opposition to them called them saddiqim, which meant 'destruction'.

They came from the ranks of the priests and high priests of Israel, during the time of the Greek occupation. Their desire was to give in to the Hellenizing influences of the Greeks, and thus retain their favor.

The Sadducees had a lot to lose to the occupation forces of the Greeks, because they were mostly prosperous, aristocratic people. In order to maintain their lifestyles and possessions, they placated the Greeks, giving in to their cultural and even religious influences.

During the Maccabean revolt, they stayed in the background. They were in fact very unpopular. When Jonathan Maccabee was appointed high priest by popular demand, it looked like the Sadducees would be gone forever. At the time, almost all of the people in the land were willing to sacrifice anything for their freedom. The strong oppression of the Syrians drove them to this sacrificial attitude.

After about 40 years of on and off civil war, the Jews became tired of the bloodshed, and popular opinion tended toward peace. In this case, peace meant compromise, and compromise was the game of the Sadducees. John Hyrcanus, of the Maccabees, was really very close to the Sadducee way of thinking.

However, the compromising policy of Hyrcanus became unpopular in a few years, and so the Pharisees came into power. Due to the double tyranny of the Pharisees and king Herod, the Sadducees had made a great comeback not long before the birth of Christ. Let's face it: the Pharisees were no fun at all.

The religious beliefs of the Sadducees can be summed up in a single thought: they were always opposed to what the Pharisees believed. They believed that only the written Law is binding, whereas the Pharisees believed that the body of tradition and written interpretation were just as important as the Law itself.

The Sadducees punished breaches of the Law severely, but the Pharisees often interpreted

their way around the written Law, and thus got out of the proscribed punishment.

They had a strong belief in human free will, while the Pharisees believed in predestination to the point of being fatalistic.

They denied the resurrection, and any kind of continued existence of the soul after physical death. This led to their inordinate value of private property and possessions. The Pharisees, however, believed that the soul continued after death, and that there would be a severe judgment in eternity.

The Sadducees did not believe in angelic beings, or demons, and any reference to such in Scripture was converted to a manifestation of God Himself. The Pharisees did believe in angels.

The Sadducees always reserved the right of private opinion about Scripture and the Law, while the Pharisees rejected that right, tyrannically imposing their opinions on all.

The Sadducees were a mixture of both the conservative and the liberal from today's American society. The pressures of history and their religious beliefs worked together to make them what they were. Although they had some good elements to their philosophy, they were just as spiritually and morally bankrupt as the Pharisees. They are a good example of wrong reaction for the right reason. It was a good thing to be opposed to the religious tyranny of the Pharisees, but the motives of the Sadducees were wrong, and thus their beliefs went in the wrong direction. Although religion was important to them, relationship with God was not, and so they destroyed themselves. They left the pages of history forever after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.

The Essenes

The Essenes were a widespread movement in the ancient world. They appeared on the scene not long before the Maccabean revolt, about 175 B.C.

Their decision was to withdraw from the evils of the world around them, and they were the

prototype of the monastic movement of the dark and middle ages. Because of the destruction of the Jewish nation, and their deportation to points all over the ancient world, this movement was widespread.

These are the people who produced the Dead Sea Scrolls, and who lived in the caves of Qumran where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found. In a sense, these were the ostriches of the time, sticking their heads in the sand, and hoping that others would leave them alone.

They were widely admired, especially by the intelligentsia of the day. Both Josephus and Philo are full of praise for them (but notice that neither wanted to be one).

Their group was strictly organized, and enforced strict obedience to their leadership. They had a system of double initiation. First, they had to undergo a probation period of one year, and after this time they would undergo an initiation ceremony of ritual purification.

After two more years of probation they gained their full membership in the community. At this time an oath was taken in which the new member would swear himself to complete truthfulness to other members of the community, and complete secrecy on the doctrines of the community to those outside (this is one reason why Christ forbade swearing).

Only adults were admitted into the Essene order, but they did have a children's' recruiting and introduction program.

The Essene community was dedicated to total communism. They had a common purse. They had common clothes. They had common food at a common table.

Trading of any kind was prohibited. They had a strictly regulated daily labor plan. They were total pacifists. They were not even allowed to make weapons or anything that might hurt someone.

They observed the sabbath with strict adherence. They read and explained Scripture in their daily worship schedule.

They were extremely ascetic in many ways. They abstained from sex and marriage; their ranks were only increased through outside recruiting. It is a testimony to their popularity that they have continued in one form or another until even today.

They were prohibited from profanity, makeup (or anything that might enhance their physical appearance), bathed only in cold water, wore only white, and were greatly modest about all bodily functions.

They substituted their own ritual system for God's, and they thought their own to be superior. They did not sacrifice any animals.

The Essene movement was a reaction to the incursions of the evil outside world. They were not much different from the other utopian movements of history. They depended very much on strong and virtuous leadership, and when their leadership failed them, they disappeared from the pages of history.

Unlike their Pharisee and Sadducee counterparts, they seemed to have a more vital, daily relationship with God. However, distortions were inevitable due to their rejection of God's ritual system, and some of them even went so far as to engage in sun worship. They were most like the Pharisees, and could even be considered a radical Pharisee sect.

They were the pattern which the early church (mistakenly) patterned themselves. Since they lived such sequestered lives, Christ would have little to say about them, because He never ran across them.

John the Baptist was considered to be like the Essenes because of his ascetic life in the desert, but he really wasn't.

The Zealots

The Zealots were almost purely a political party. They called for the violent overthrow of the Roman rule. They carried on the tradition of the Maccabees they were militant, and full of zeal and purpose. They were the cause of the Jewish wars and the destruction of Jerusalem.

They fought with complete fanaticism to the very end. They were extremely patriotic, but not many were Godly. They took their patriotism to great excess, and vowed to strike down all the enemies of Israel. Although they were politically correct (not in the modern sense), they were morally wrong, and in this they were most similar to the southern U.S. in the early 1800's.

Transition

The nation of Israel at the time of the birth of Christ was an unhappy nation. For hundreds of years, they had battled for their freedom and lost. They had been under the crushing rule of foreign nations.

For hundreds of years, a great destiny had been before them, taunting them. Because of this, they chafed under the yoke of Roman rule through Herod.

Without a national relationship with God, the nation could not be free. Without a national relationship with God, the nation could not enjoy the blessings of the unconditional covenants.

Without a national relationship with God, they would reject the greatest of all world leaders of all time: Jesus Christ. One and all, they would reject Him.

Introduction to the Spiritual Perspective

The past history of any people has an impact on their present culture the way they think, solve problems, react to pressure or prosperity. Israel at the time of Christ was no different. The people stood at the crossroads of their own national history. They had a past, and they could make choices which decided their future.

History is made up of many elements: geography, culture, philosophy & religion, economics, technology, politics, and many others.

The greatest of all the elements is the principle that Jesus Christ controls history. The attitude of a nation toward Christ has a great impact on its place in history. The attitude of the nation

toward establishment truth has a great impact on that nation's status before God. The attitude of the individual believer toward Bible Truth has a great impact on all other people in the nation.

The Cosmic System

The term "cosmic system" refers to Satan's plan and process for controlling the world, and his attempt, using his organization of fallen angels, to counteract the plan of God in all respects. In his plans and programs, Satan will ultimately and certainly fail. Jesus Christ is the victor in the spiritual warfare, the "angelic conflict". The Lord Jesus sits at the right hand of God the Father in heaven, where all His enemies shall be made his footstool.

The cosmic system has a great impact on the history of a nation. History has certain downward trends which signify the cosmic influence on a nation. For example, Israel at the time of the birth of Christ had been on the downward side of history for quite some time. It is important to take a look at the principles of the cosmic system related to history in order to fully understand the period in question.

General Principles of the Cosmic System.

Human history is the resolution of the prehistoric angelic conflict. In order to vindicate himself and His judgment of the fallen angels, God conceived a plan by which sinful human beings could glorify Him.

In order to justify his rejection of the prehistoric grace offer from God, Satan conceived a system designed to counteract the plan of God.

Therefore, the purpose of the Satan's cosmic system is as follows:

- To keep unbelievers from believing in Jesus Christ.
- To destroy the believer's relationship with God.
- To bring in his own millennium through internationalism and a centralized world government.

- To prevent God's millennium from arriving.

There are three plans in Satan's cosmic system.

- The World Plan
- The Individual Plan
- The Propaganda Plan

The World Plan of Satan

The world plan is Satan's plan to bring in His own millennium, and to prevent God from bringing in the Divine Millennium. The world plan is a highly organized international conspiracy of demons.

Eph 6:12. "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."

Although the world plan is highly organized through the genius of Satan Himself, the human side is not so. Demons do control human beings through demon possession and demon influence, but the humans themselves are rarely well informed. Often a world conspiracy theory will arise, but these are due to the demonic side and not the human side. There is no Biblical documentation for a human world conspiracy. Humans are simply pawns in Satan's world plan.

The Individual Plan of Satan

The individual plan is an integral part of the world plan, since human participation in the demonic organization is absolutely essential. The means to the end of the cosmic system is power.

The world branch is constantly grasping for power over the human race and its organizations. Power in the form of human government is of the utmost importance in the world branch of the cosmic system. The more power that the enemy has, the greater he thinks he can be. The more power the enemy has, the more effectively he can carry out his plan.

In every human life and human organization, Satan is grasping for more power, so he can wield it to carry out his plan. Every time that someone or some organization depends on a human viewpoint solution, Satan gains power over their lives. Every time that someone or some organization comes to believe a cosmic counterfeit or lie, Satan gains power over their lives.

The Satanic "Millennium"

As a part of the angelic appeal trial of human history, Satan has developed his idea of a millennium, which is designed to prove his point. In order to bring in his millennium, Satan must have total control of international human authority. This is why there is so much influence towards internationalism in the world.

God ordained nationalism after Satan's first attempt at internationalism at the tower of Babel, Gen. 11:19.

Satan will bring in his "millennium", known as the Period of Great Tribulation, which will only come after the rapture of the church. The Satanic millennium can only be put into place when there are no believers on planet earth.

This 'millennium' will be the most chaotic, disastrous, and miserable 7 years in world history. It is the tribulation of the book of revelation.

The intent of the Satanic millennium.

- To prove that the prehistoric sentence of God which condemned the fallen angels to eternity in the lake of fire was unfair.
- To prove that Satan is God's equal, Isa 14:14, "I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High."

The characteristics of the Satanic millennium.

- Counterfeit righteousness and injustice under the veil of justice.
- Constant change and lack of dependability
- Treacherous motives and cruel slavery behind the mask of mercy.

- Wrong approaches to problem solving and false solutions which always make the problem worse.
- Chaos and confusion.
- Bad decisions from a position of weakness and a society saturated with evil.
- Dishonesty, obfuscation, evasiveness, and a lack of veracity. (All this sounds like U.S. politics today).

The Fight Against the Divine Millennium

Satan is constantly fighting against the Divine plan for human history. Satan thinks that if he can destroy or delay the Divine millennium, he will somehow gain an advantage in the angelic conflict. He is wrong. He does not have the power to do either.

The Divine Millennium will come at the second advent of Christ, and it therefore immediately follows the tribulation. There have been two attacks in history against the Divine Millennium: the attack against Christ, and the attack against the Jews. These attacks are tantamount to murdering the witnesses of a trial, so that they cannot testify.

The Attacks against Christ.

Jesus Christ will be the world ruler during the Divine Millennium, and His rulership will be fantastic.

There was an attempt to destroy the mediatorship of Christ.

- In Genesis 6 there is a record of an attempt to destroy the human genetic purity of the line of Christ.
- In order to be the perfect mediator between God and man, Christ had to be both fully God and fully man in the hypostatic union.
- Satan attempted to destroy the human side of this equation.
- Demons seduced human women and impregnated them. Their children were angelic-human half breeds, and no longer genetically pure.

- Only Noah and his family resisted this demonic conspiracy. This is why the rest of the earth had to be destroyed.
- God considered this attack so great, that he imprisoned the angels who participated under the surface of the earth, where they still reside, waiting for their release in the tribulation.

There were attempts to kill Christ before He could fulfill the purpose of His life.

Satan knew that if he could kill Christ before His time, the plan of God would be stymied. Therefore, there were several attempts on His life.

- The attempt of Herod, **Matt 2:13-16**, "When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up," he said, "take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him." "When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi."
- The attempts of the Pharisees, **Matt. 12:14**, "But the Pharisees went out and plotted how they might kill Jesus."
- The attempts of the chief priest and elders, **Matt. 26:3,4**, "Then the chief priests and the elders of the people assembled in the palace of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas, and they plotted to arrest Jesus in some sly way and kill him."

Of course, all of these attempts failed completely.

The Attacks against the Jews

The Jews are God's chosen people, and they are going to be Christ's subjects in the Divine Millennium. Therefore, Satan is constantly plotting against the Jews in his attempt to exterminate them as a race of people. There is a

tremendous amount of Satanic propaganda against the Jews. The Jewish world conspiracies, etc.

In every generation, there is an attempt through the Satanic world conspiracy to eliminate the Jews as a race. In the 20th century, there have been at least three attempts at genocide against the Jews.

- In Soviet Russia, from 1917 to the present.
- In Nazi Germany, from 1933-1945.
- By various Arab nations, today.

During the tribulation, the genocidal attacks against the Jews will reach their crescendo.

We are to judge the present nation of Israel by the standards of Divine establishment.

We are to judge individual Jews only when they come under our authority or they break the law.

In all other instances, we are to give Jews maximum respect and reservation of judgment.

As a national entity, we are to provide a haven for the Jews, so that they might be free from racial prejudice.

Although these demonically inspired attacks are terrible in their intensity and genius, they have no chance of succeeding. God will protect the Jews until the return of Jesus Christ. He will succeed, easily.

The Propaganda Plan of Satan

The purpose of the propaganda plan is to promote the cosmic counterfeits and lies, and to attack the word of God. The propaganda plan integrates and cooperates with both the individual and the world branches of the cosmic system. The propaganda branch is an expression of Satanic genius and the demonic organization. Human beings are an important element in the propaganda branch.

The Promotion of the Cosmic Counterfeits and Lies

The cosmic system has an elaborate scheme of counterfeits and lies. These counterfeits and

lies are designed to supplant the truth. The counterfeits and lies match up with every category of truth possible, including:

- The Gospel.
- The plan of God.
- The power of God.
- The person and work of God the Father
- The person and work of Christ.
- The person and work of the Holy Spirit.

These counterfeits and lies are promoted by every means possible. There is a great emphasis today on the media, and especially television. Those who are heavily involved in the cosmic system inevitably become cosmic propagandists.

The Attack against the Word of God

In order to make the promotion of the cosmic counterfeits and lies fully effective, the cosmic system attacks the Word. The attacks against the Word come in two basic categories.

Attacks to destroy the Word outright. There have been many attempts throughout history to destroy the manuscripts of the Bible.

Attacks to undermine the credibility of the Word. These are usually attacks on the supernatural nature of the Divine inspiration of the Word. Liberal theologians are mainly responsible for this branch of the attack on the Word.

Rome at the Time of Christ

The Roman Environment During the Life of Christ.

The Pax Romanus.

After many wars, the Roman Empire was established. After the death of Julius Caesar, there was a civil war, and then Augustus Caesar (Octavian) was given absolute power over the senate and people of Rome. Augustus was a good man who desired peace and prosperity for Rome. After many long years of warfare, external and internal, the people were tired of it, and longed for peace. Augustus was sensitive

and thoughtful, a good ruler. Through his long rule many great things were provided.

Because of the state of peace, there was a great emphasis on trade and commerce. Many Romans made their fortunes because of the advantages of freedom through military victory and peace through military strength. There were great building programs in every city, financed by donations from the private sector. Theatres and temples and viaducts all sprouted as if there were a spring season for buildings.

There was a fantastic system of roads and trade routes on the sea, all protected by the police and the Roman equivalent of the coast guard. Piracy and highway robbery remained at a minimum through capital punishment.

Augustus also preached the virtues of morality and discipline and justice and courage. He realized that the Roman empire was centered on the family, and that its stability depended on it. There was a rigidly pro-family bank of legislation, which encouraged marriage and children inside the marriage relationship. Some of this was circumvented, while much of it was taken to heart.

Augustus was Caesar at the time of the birth of Christ. Although Augustus died in 14 A.D., Tiberius continued the Augustan tradition of the Pax Romanum. Tiberius was the emperor for the remainder of the life of Christ.

The Jews (and especially the Pharisees and Zealots) had absolutely nothing to complain about. The peace of Rome was very pro-establishment.

Koine' Greek, the Language of the Roman Empire

Koine' Greek was the language of Alexander's conquest. Attic Greek was a difficult language to master. When Alexander expanded the Greek empire as far as Afghanistan and India, the people had to assimilate in order to be a part of that empire. Without Greek the foreigners could not trade or prosper. However, since Attic Greek was so difficult, the people of the

empire commonized it, so that it could be easily used.

This commonization was a great simplification which retained the subtle and detailed nature of its predecessor.

Koine' Greek was the greatest language in history for written communication. Through it many complex and subtle concepts could be communicated with clarity. Koine' Greek was retained in the Roman Empire as the language of the common man. Nearly everyone knew it and used it throughout their lives.

Roman Culture

The Romans borrowed much of their culture from their Greeks. Greek literature, drama, and games were all retained by the Romans. The Romans admired almost all aspects of Greek culture, even the most debauched things.

The Romans had spent much of their developing years in war and in a very disciplined and workaholic environment, and so they lacked cultural self esteem. The Greeks had much to offer in the way of culture although much of theirs was corrupt. The Greeks had died from their cultural debauchery it was the ruin of their empire.

No nation has ever survived the corruption of their morals. The homosexuality of the Greeks was rampant; it destroyed them. The Romans adopted even this even to the point of pederasty. It would also destroyed them.

Analogous to this is the popularity of all things American to the Japanese. Whether its baseball or disco or Madonna, the Japanese people love it, as long as it is American. The contrast is that while Japan was conquered by the U.S. and it adopted much of U.S. culture, the Greeks were conquered by the Romans, and yet the Romans adopted the Greek culture.

However, at the time of Christ, the Romans remained for the most part moral and family oriented. It was the most stable time in the history of the world.

The Roman postal service was for government use only a great idea. Imagine the reduction in garbage from the elimination of junk mail. Personal mail went with travelers and traders.

The Romans had no public schools. The education of their children was a two-tiered system. The first tier was that of the disciplinary training. This was usually administered by a well educated and trusted household slave. He would teach manners and self-discipline to the children of the household.

The second tier was that of the educational training. Science, math, astronomy, medicine, botany, zoology, linguistics, literature, music, and sports were all common subjects in the education of the child. There was also a great emphasis on logic and rhetoric. 6. Next, there was the institution of slavery.

It is important to note that the Romans could never imagine a state of total abolition, so ingrained was the institution of slavery in their nation and their culture and even their thinking. The moral question of slavery was never raised.

Slaves became slaves because of the conquests of the Roman Empire. Whenever a new territory was conquered, much of the population was deported back to population centers elsewhere in the empire.

- This served a twofold purpose: it provided cheap labor, and the insurance against guerrilla warfare in the conquered territory.
- The people who were deported received a low form of welfare: they would have the basic logistics provided in exchange for their labor. Slavery did much to provide for those who would otherwise be charity cases.

The slaves of the Roman Empire took on what was considered the menial tasks of the day much of the manual labor was done by them. As the Empire grew and prospered, the more educated and presentable slaves become household helpers and educators.

Slaves were always dependent on their masters, and as long as the Empire stayed on the virtuous side.

- Manumission was often granted to faithful slaves.
- Emancipated slaves had great opportunities for upward mobility.
- There was not an extreme prejudice against slaves often they were respected for who they were.

Although slaves were considered property, they were allowed to have their own lives, marrying and producing families. The New Testament is written from this frame of reference.

- Masters are considered legitimate authority, as long as they stayed within the laws of Divine established. Therefore, slaves are called upon to obey their masters.
- Masters are called upon to emancipate their slaves.

The Four Gospels

General Introduction

In the middle of the 6th decade of the first century, Christianity had reached a crisis. Nero had begun his persecutions, and the Romans had begun to suppress the open rebellion of the zealot Jews in Palestine.

The church had been well established throughout the Roman Empire, and many doctrinal epistles had been written in support of the church.

Paul was in prison; many of the great believers of the eyewitness generation had died from natural causes and violent persecution.

It appeared as though the prophecy of Christ about the destruction of the Temple was about to come to pass due to the hopeless war in the Holy Land.

It was because of these intense adversities that God the Holy Spirit inspired three men in three

different cities to write gospels records of the life of Christ.

The three locations of writing were widely and evenly distributed.

Mark recorded Peter's gospel in Rome.

Luke wrote his gospel somewhere in Greece, probably in Achaia.

Matthew wrote from Antioch in Syria.

These three gospels were written for various reasons.

Matthew wrote to Jews, in order to convince them of the Messiahship of Jesus.

He hoped to convert them before the folly of the Zealot movement resulted in their persecution and destruction.

Already war was begun in Palestine.

Luke wrote to Greeks in order to provide an accurate history of the events of the incarnation. His second work, the book of Acts, is the accurate history of the early church.

Mark wrote to record the life of Christ as told by Peter. It is likely that Peter was in prison and close to martyrdom when he dictated the story of Christ's life. Peter no doubt thought it imperative that the story get out. The abbreviated nature of the narrative reveals both Peter's nature and that he was in a hurry.

These three gospels, although very similar in their record of events, arose from independent sources.

Peter told the story to Mark as he remembered it.

Luke had apparently interviewed a number of people over the years and put these materials together to form his gospel.

Matthew had already written quite a lot of material in Aramaic, which had to do with the prophecies concerning the life of Christ. He used this material to form the basis for a number of his passages, and filled in the rest from memory.

There was no written source on which these three are all based. The Q hypothesis is pure bunk, thought up by arrogant German scholars who had nothing better to do because they had rejected the inspired nature of the Word.

These three gospels are often called the synoptic gospels, because they have roughly the same record of events. Synoptic means to 'see together'.

These synoptic gospels were all written within a year or two from one another. It is therefore doubtful that they could have relied on one another. The times of writing are as follows (all dates approximate).

Mark, 65 A.D.

Matthew and Luke, 66 A.D.

Notice that in the time of crisis it was important from the Spirit's point of view to provide knowledge of the life of Christ! Remember, the Spirit chose when to inspire these works. The gospel of John is very similar in that it is inspired during a time of great adversity for the church. John wrote his gospel in the eighties, most likely the late eighties.

The problems of harmonizing the gospels

Critics of the gospels have been very skeptical about the accuracy of the gospel accounts because even the synoptic gospels do not appear (at least on the surface) to harmonize well.

However when the gospels are analyzed and then harmonized by those whose work goes beyond just a surface appraisal, things work out quite well. One such harmony is Dr. Thomas' *A Harmony of the Gospels*, which was written together with Dr. Gundry.

Dr. Thomas lists the following as problems with harmonization on page 302 of his book.

Accounts of Christ's words sometimes differ. One evangelist's report of the same conversation, saying, or discourse may be more less complete than another's. Differences may occur in grammatical construction. Synonyms may be substituted, verb voice or tense

changed, or nouns replaced by pronouns. There may be differences in the order of discussion.

Sometimes the differences in details reported even involve what appear to be contradictions. Occasionally, the same or similar statements will be found in contexts which appear to reflect different situations.

Somewhat similar events occur in different situations. Sometimes what really appears to be the same event will be reported in a different order in another gospel.

Sometimes diverse descriptive details are given for what appears to be the same event; sometimes these details may have the appearance of discrepancy. The gospel writers do not always report the same events.

The big issue is this: Do these problems undermine the historical integrity of the gospels? If they do, then they undermine the inspired nature of the word.

In the last century, the German scholars saw these problems and failed to account for them. Instead, they arrogantly denied the inspired nature of the Word, and the ministers and the people followed.

Responsible scholarship more than accounts for these problems without compromising the historical integrity and inspired nature of these documents.

The general solutions are as follows:

Jesus spoke three languages: Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic. The gospels were all written in Greek. Therefore, by necessity many of the gospel accounts of Jesus' words are translations. In translation, there is plenty of room of variance without losing meaning.

Sometimes the words are translated quite literally, but even so the use of synonyms is quite acceptable. Sometimes the words are translated more loosely in order to emphasize the impact of the words. This is also perfectly acceptable.

In modern language we have many punctuation marks to indicate what is a direct quote and

what is not; what is a clarification by the author, and what is a clarification by the original speaker; even footnotes are employed to refer to source materials. None of these things were available to the ancient writer.

Because of this it is difficult to tell when the writer is doing one of these things in his translation of Jesus' words (even if he is translating). Suffice it to say that God the Holy Spirit is the supernatural director of all translations of Jesus' words, and He ensured their accuracy.

When there are differences in translation, we can use them to amplify all the translations.

Dr. Thomas summarizes this principle in this way: "What one does expect to be reproduced in ordinary discussion are the striking or important statements, the leading thoughts, the major divisions or topics, and the general drift of discussion including transitions from one topic to another. While different reports are expected to agree on these matters, it is also expected that there will be differences on details such as changes of person, substitution of pronouns for nouns or vice versa, changes in tense, voice, or mood of the verbs, and substitution of synonyms are too trivial to be taken as serious objections to a reporter's accuracy in ordinary discussion.

"While wording is important, meaning can be conveyed in a variety of ways. Verbal inspiration does not imply that truth can be accurately communicated in only one way. Rather, it means that the manner in which the Holy Spirit did speak through the human agents is inspired and hence accurate, word for word."

The people of the ancient world, especially the Jewish people, had highly trained memories. They were often required to memorize long passages of the Old Testament, and even in a language that was not their native tongue.

This, together with the ministry of the Holy Spirit led to tremendous accuracy with reference to the meaning of the translation.

When a translation is direct from the Greek, we can expect greater accuracy in the quotation of Jesus' words, but even so, one writer for his own reason may add or subtract from the quotation without a violation of the principle of inspiration.

Also, Christ no doubt repeated many of His words over the course of His ministry; this does not mean that He said the exact same thing every time. Even during the same sermon it is likely that He repeated Himself. One gospel writer may have recorded one part, while another different parts with slightly different wording.

Differences in the details of what appear to be the same event may in fact be a record of two quite different occurrences.

Sometimes, a writer will arrange his material according to subject and therefore take things out of chronological order. This too is acceptable, and does not corrupt the inspired nature of the text.

The conclusion is this: that harmonizing the gospels presents no major problems with reference to inspiration. The accounts do harmonize well, and the problems that go with a harmony are easily and rationally accounted for.

The Gospel of Matthew

For each gospel, we will follow this order:

- Author
- Circumstances of writing
- Target readership
- Purpose of writing, and
- Characteristics of the gospel.

THE AUTHOR OF MATTHEW

Matthew God used an outcast. His name is a transliteration of the Aramaic word which means "gift of God."

In his own Gospel, Matthew uses his regular name. In other gospels, the name Levi is used. It

is likely that Matthew became his name after his conversion.

Matthew was a Jewish tax collector. It is likely that he was fairly well off financially because of his profession. This makes his decision to follow Christ all the more remarkable, because he left it all behind Luke 5:28. It is likely that he worked at the toll house in Capernaum.

When he decided to follow our Lord, he threw a big party, and invited all his friends. His decision to follow Christ was immediate.

As a tax collector, Matthew was an outcast in Jewish society. He apparently had no friends who were devout in the Jewish faith for at his party there were only other tax collectors and sinners.

The Roman tax collectors were hated by the Jews because the Roman taxes were in addition to the Jewish taxes.

They were also hated because they represented the occupying forces of the Roman Empire.

The tax collectors made their living by inflating the Roman taxes. They essentially worked on commission.

Tax collectors were wealthy, but hated by their own society. They had to live with a tremendous amount of prejudice.

Because of this prejudice their social options were severely limited. They could only socialize with others who were outcasts.

It was easy for Matthew to follow Christ, considering his personal circumstances. Social isolation does not make it easy to enjoy personal wealth. No doubt he knew of the supernatural essence of Christ's ministry, and he may have even heard Him speak. It is often the outcast that finds it easiest to follow Christ.

THE CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING THE WRITING OF THE MATTHEW

Of the circumstances of the writing of this gospel we know very little. What little we can draw comes from inside the book.

The Target Readership for Matthew

The target readership for Matthew's gospel was most likely Jewish believers in Palestine. A secondary audience may be found in Jewish audiences everywhere. His was the most read of all the gospels in the first century. This popularity is a good testimony to its arrangement.

THE PURPOSE OF THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

The purpose of this gospel was generally to awaken and establish faith in Jesus Christ.

That this gospel was written primarily with a Jewish audience in mind brings a more specific purpose: To establish Christ as the Messiah and to answer the attacks of Jewish critics on the issue of the person of Christ.

It was also intended as a tool for use in evangelism for other believers.

Finally, it was probably intended as a last ditch effort to stem the tide of destruction which was descending upon the Jews in Palestine.

The Jews were their own worst enemies. They were extremely self-destructive, and especially so since their rejection of Christ as Messiah.

Their self-destructive tendencies culminated in a great number of them choosing the way of the zealot armed resistance without virtue.

The way of the zealot could only result in the destruction of the Jews in the land, and of Jerusalem. The Romans' method of warfare was far superior to that of the zealots. Anyone with common sense could see the inevitable destruction of the Jewish armies.

Therefore, Matthew wrote his gospel as a last ditch effort to stem the tide of destruction that had welled up among the Jews in Palestine.

Matthew wrote just as the zealots began their armed revolt in 66 A.D.

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF MATTHEW

The most striking of the characteristics of this gospel is its emphasis on Christ as the Messianic King promised by the Old Testament prophets. Time and again Matthew points out

some event in Christ's life, or one of His characteristics as being a fulfillment of a prophecy. He especially concentrates on Christ as the fulfillment of the Davidic covenant.

Matthew also concentrates on the kingdom of the Messianic king. He uses the term, "the kingdom of heaven" 32 times, but it is not mentioned elsewhere in Scripture. He stresses both the spiritual and political aspects of the kingdom. Matthew records ten parables about the kingdom which are found in none of the other gospels. His is the gospel of the New Covenant for Israel.

Matthew's gospel has a very Jewish flavor, yet at the same time he often takes the opportunity to denounce the Pharisees and their incorrect practices and perceptions of the Messiah. The latter is probably due to Matthew's social isolation. No doubt he was often victimized by the Pharisees for being a tax collector. Like so many who are the victims of prejudice, Matthew has special insight into those who perpetuate such sins.

However, Matthew does not exclude the Gentiles. Matthew was emotionally a Gentile because of his social isolation. He makes sure his readers understand that once the Jews have completely rejected Christ, the kingdom would be transferred to the Gentiles.

Matthew is the one who arranges his material by subject, and aside from the passion week he does not follow the chronological order of events. Matthew, more than any other gospel writer, has an ax to grind. It is a righteous ax, and so he arranges his material to suit the grinding.

In spite of Matthew's choice of arrangement, his gospel retains a great unity and order. This reveals the mind of a tax collector. The order of numbers and accounts lead naturally to literary order. There is great continuity in the order of the subjects, and excellent literary transition.

The Gospel of Mark

THE AUTHOR(S) MARK AND PETER.

There are really two persons behind the writing of this gospel. The one who gave dictation, Peter, and the one who received it, Mark.

The following is an extraordinary statement: Mark was there when both Paul and Peter died. It is extraordinary because Mark began life as a coward, and was for while in great disfavor among the other disciples. This is a testimony to the grace of God.

Mark was Jewish, and grew up in Jerusalem. No doubt he was aware of the person of Christ and the events of His life. There is even some speculation that he was the young man of **Mark 14:51,52**. The actions of that young man are certainly commensurate with his character flaw of cowardice which he expressed about 20 years later.

His mother's name was Mary, and he was a relative of Barnabas. When Paul and Barnabas took Mark along on the first journey, he left for home before their ascent of the Taurus mountain range on their way to the interior of Asia Minor, **Acts 13:5**.

This desertion set Paul's heart against Mark. When Barnabas and Paul decided on a later missionary journey, Paul refused to take Mark along on the basis of his former desertion, **Acts 15:36-39**. In fact, Paul and Barnabas had a sharp disagreement over the issue, and they parted ways at that point. Barnabas believed in Mark.

Whatever transpired in the next 10 or 15 years (AD 49 to AD 62), Mark had won himself over to Paul. During Paul's first imprisonment, Mark was there with him, **Col. 4:10; Philem 24**. In Philemon (62 AD) Paul calls Mark a fellow worker. In Colossians, Paul reminds the Colossians to welcome Mark if he comes that way. Paul is restoring Mark's reputation to others.

Mark was with Peter in Rome (called Babylon by Peter) 1 Pet. 5:13, and sent his greeting

along with Peter's letter. Peter affectionately calls Mark his son.

Mark apparently left Rome shortly after Peter's first epistle (~65 AD), because when Paul is imprisoned a second time at Rome, he calls for Mark, who is with Timothy at Ephesus, **2 Tim. 4:11**. Paul calls Mark 'well useful for service'. He considers Mark the deacon type, and finds great favor with him in this role. The word for "well useful" is **euchrestos**, a very positive and complimentary word.

If Mark obeyed Paul's command, and it is likely he did, then he was present when Paul was executed.

If Mark was there for Paul's execution, then it is equally likely that he was there for Peter's, because they were both martyred at about the same time, and both in Rome.

Mark watched the deaths of these two great believers. He faced death with courage this time, a changed man because of the truth residing in his soul. This is the man who ran at the arrest of Jesus, and who ran in the face of the unknown at the base of the Taurus mountains. Mark was a man who feared, and yet by the grace of God who grew, and then endured. It is extraordinary that he is the one chosen by God the Holy Spirit to put down in writing the gospel as told by Peter, probably just before or just after Peter's death.

Remember Mark next time that you fail! And remember him the next time that you are ready to write someone off!

Peter Peter's name was also Simon. The testimony of Peter always stands behind the writing of Mark in this epistle.

If there is one character trait of Peter which rises above all others, it is his emotionalism. Peter often let his emotions rule his thinking, much to his detriment and regret.

Peter is enthusiastic, emotional, swift to speak without thinking, full of love and anger, sometimes legalistic and snobbish, and Jewish in a prejudicial way. He is one of the independent, rebellious Galileans. He loves

Christ so much, yet he cannot muster the spiritual resources to remain with Him in His arrest, trial, and death.

He is the second to the tomb on the third day, and enters first. He is the first of the disciples to see Christ after the resurrection. He is unsure of his standing with Christ immediately after the resurrection. Peter is a leader and very much a preacher, though not careful about what he says. He makes mistakes, he broods, and then he seeks and needs forgiveness in a desperate emotional way. In the end, he writes two epistles about suffering, and speaks his remembrances of Christ in a brief, but humble manner.

The gospel includes those incidents which place Peter in an unflattering light. In these he is brutally honest about his mistakes.

It excludes those incidents which place Peter in a flattering light.

Peter is an early leader in the church, but fades from the limelight in about 50 AD. Nothing is heard from him until he writes his epistles in the early 60's, and then dictates his gospel story to Mark in the mid 60's.

Probably the best analogy to Peter's early character is a politician on the campaign trail. Always promising, always in the limelight, but never following through.

CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING THE WRITING OF MARK

The place is Rome, the situation the persecutions of Nero. Paul and Peter are in prison, soon to die at the command of Nero himself.

Mark is there with them. Peter is anxious to tell the story of Christ before he dies, and he does so, dictating to Mark.

It is not clear whether Mark actually composed this gospel before or after Peter's death. It is not important. This was a really hard time for believers in Jesus Christ, and especially so in Rome.

THE INTENDED READERS OF MARK'S GOSPEL.

It is most likely that Peter (and Mark) had a Gentile audience in mind. This is especially interesting since Peter began with a prejudice against the Gentiles, and one which was difficult for him to leave behind. It apparently took him more than 20 years to do so. His gospel is devoid of anything that would be offensive to a Gentile, and it does not presuppose an extensive knowledge of the Old Testament.

Also, the Roman audience would have taken priority, since it was the closest.

THE PURPOSE OF THE GOSPEL OF MARK

Mark was written to win converts to Christianity. Mark portrays Christ as a suffering servant. This image fits well the Christians in Rome, and so the Romans would have been well acquainted with it.

To encourage those in Rome who were enduring persecution. Peter always had a heart for those who were suffering. He mentions the persecution of Christ often to encourage those who endured similar sufferings.

The greatest testimony and greatest encouragement for those who suffer is that of Christ.

The greatest testimony for those who are in unbelief is the suffering of Christ.

Remember, this gospel goes out to the very hotbed of the Neronian persecution. It is a voice that rises above the cacophony of persecution and says, "but it is true".

CHARACTERISTICS OF MARK'S GOSPEL

Brevity it is easily the shortest of the gospels, and conspicuous among the missing are the nativity, the genealogy, and most of Christ's longer discourses.

Action Peter tells the story as he lived his own life. The story moves at a very fast pace, and its transitions force the narrative into a bang-up story. The crowds are always pressing, the demons always attacking, miracles constantly

being performed. Peter includes action and excludes doctrine. Mark has been called the camera man of the gospel writers for his vivid portrayal of the life of Christ.

Believability the story is told in simple and even rough language. Peter's Greek lacks perfection, but it gives the gospel a nice 'I was there' touch that makes it quite vivid and easy to believe. Many minor details are included about Christ and His person. Even the bad things are left in the story.

Centered on Christ as the Son of God and as the servant of man. This would have been a good combination for his Gentile audience. The distinction of servant hood would have been especially appropriate since their Gods were ones who demanded service instead of those who would give it. The contrast would be striking.

Chronological Apparently, Mark's gospel follows closely the actual chronological order of events in the life of Christ.

The Gospel of Luke.

THE AUTHOR LUKE

God used a Gentile doctor. Luke is mentioned only three times in all of the New Testament, yet he is responsible for 28% of it, for he wrote both his gospel and the book of Acts.

Luke is the only Gentile writer of the New Testament, and probably the only second generation Christian writer. He was not present at the incarnation.

Luke is most likely Greek. He is an excellent writer and historian. In fact, he is the greatest of the historians of antiquity. He is objective, detailed, and well informed. He writes clearly and keeps things very well ordered.

Paul calls Luke the beloved physician in **Colossians 4:14**.

Although there were many charlatans in the ancient world, there were also a number of good and skilled physicians.

Medicine did not go much beyond advanced first aid in the ancient world, but such a service was very valuable.

Luke was probably behind Paul's advice for Timothy to take a little wine for his stomach.

At one point, Luke was the only one with Paul during his imprisonment, **2 Tim 4:11**.

Luke would have been a valuable addition to a missionary team, considering the hazards of travel in the ancient world. Considering the number of times that Christians were beaten, stoned, or otherwise injured because of their faith, Luke got to practice his profession often.

Luke was not only the team physician, but he was often active in the evangelistic efforts, **Acts 16:13**. That Luke was a Gentile meant that he would have been valuable in ministering to other Gentiles. Remember, most of the missionary teams were Jewish, and Paul's ministry at first concentrated on teaching at synagogues.

CIRCUMSTANCES AND TARGET READERSHIP.

Luke wrote in about 66-67 AD He wrote his gospel, and later the Acts of the Apostles, to a man by the name of Theophilus. He probably wrote from somewhere in Greece, maybe even Athens. Little else is known about the circumstances of writing.

Luke addresses Theophilus as "most excellent". This title was often used of those who were in prominent social or political positions. Theophilus was likely such a man. By accepting a book dedicated to him, Theophilus would have followed the ancient tradition of taking responsibility for its publication. We owe our thanks to Theophilus for the preservation of this great gospel.

Luke wanted to produce a gospel for Gentile readers, and it is easy on the Hebraisms and explains Jewish customs and localities. He usually quotes the Old Testament when it is contained in a saying of Christ, but not otherwise. There is little emphasis on the fulfillment of prophecy.

PURPOSE OF THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

Luke comes right out and says it in chapter 1:4: "so that you might know the exact truth about the things you have been taught."

It is Luke's intent to be precise, and to more fully explain the subjects of which he has already spoken.

Luke 1:13 reveal Luke's motive and method: "Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word have handed them down to us, it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus,"

Luke wrote for Theophilus, but with the intent that Theophilus would publish this work, and pass it along to many others. Luke's purpose is broad in its scope.

It is apparent that there were many falsehoods and distortions going around about the person and life of Christ. Luke wants to set the record straight with an exact narrative of the events.

Of course, by getting the record straight, Luke's desire is for evangelism. He wants people to know the truth, and to identify Christ as their savior. Luke has a great emphasis on the cross, and the end of the life of Christ. This reveals his designs for evangelism.

CHARACTERISTICS OF LUKE'S GOSPEL

Luke's gospel is much more comprehensive than the others. It begins many months before the other synoptic gospels, and it ends after the ascension. Many details are included here which are not in the others. Luke is a diligent and thorough historian.

Luke concentrates on praise and worship more so than the other gospels. He records the four great nativity songs Mary's, Zacharias', that of the angels, and Simeon's.

Luke emphasizes the humanity of Christ, and the perfection of that humanity.

Luke stresses that Christ makes salvation available to all men, and not just to Jews. He clearly shows the impact of Christ on the lives of many men, women, and children. Both the rich and poor, the Jew, the Samaritan, and the Gentile are included. Luke often shows this impact as occurring right inside people's homes.

Luke records seven prayers of Jesus Christ which are not mentioned elsewhere.

Luke is literary. He has a remarkably large vocabulary, and uses many different writing styles to fit the situation at hand. His is the best written of the gospels from a literary standpoint. There are 800 words in Luke and Acts which do not occur elsewhere in the New Testament.

Luke is detailed, but not to the point of boring his readers to death. He has a knack for including what is pertinent to the narrative, and leaving behind what is extraneous. Perhaps the powers of observation and diagnosis he developed as a doctor come into play in this regard.

Luke concentrates on the death of Christ. From chapter 9 forward he keeps the thread of Christ's death in the fabric of his narrative.

The Gospel of John

THE AUTHOR JOHN

God used a zealot. He was a cousin "according to the flesh" of Jesus Christ. Brother of James (not the epistle writer). A native of Galilee. John's mother Salome was a follower of Jesus, and ministered to Him of her own means.

John was a fisherman of the Sea of Galilee, his life was hard work, but apparently it had paid off for his family, because they had servants, and were able to support the ministry of Jesus Christ. Galilee was a region somewhat analogous to the U.S. South not too long ago. It is conservative to a fault, and more than a little rebellious in character. The fires of rebellion flamed openly in this region. In reality a lot of senseless violence took place in the name of the

zealot movement, but there was very little virtue. This time was somewhat analogous to that of Northern Ireland today.

John had great humility. When John the Baptist points out Jesus as the Messiah, John follows without delay. He never mentions own name in own Gospel.

He was nicknamed, with brother James as the "Sons of Thunder", a reference to their manner in Word and Deed, Mk 3:17. It is likely that they had a fair amount of Zealot ideals in their heads.

He was outspoken about his faith from the start. He was "The disciple whom Jesus loved" was the closest to Jesus of the inner circle of Peter, James, and John.

He was the only eyewitness to the cross among the disciples, and he was eyewitness to the resurrection, John 20.

He was one of the "Pillars of the Church", **Gal 2:9**. Paul had a high regard for him. He took over as chief of Apostles some time in the late 70's.

His writing reflects the 50+ years of careful thought about the life of Christ and the Christian life.

Under his ministry, Ephesus became the center of the pivot which gave the Roman Empire its greatest time of prosperity under the Antonine Caesars, 98-180 AD

He used very basic Greek grammar to express incredibly deep theological ideas.

He was the key figure in the transition from the pre-canon period to the post canon period.

CIRCUMSTANCES OF WRITING THE GOSPEL.

John wrote about 20 years after the completion of the synoptic gospels.

The synoptic gospels were written during the Neronian persecutions; John's gospel is written in the aftermath. The Neronian persecution set the attitude in the Roman Empire. The average Roman at least publicly viewed Christianity and Christians with disdain.

This unpopularity was worse for Christianity than the original persecution. Peer pressure was more effective in weakening Christianity than capital punishment. Martyrs make good PR figures.

At the time of writing, Christianity was much weaker than it had been some twenty years before.

John probably wrote from Ephesus, the place of his later ministry. He had formerly ministered in Jerusalem, but was apparently driven out by Jewish persecution.

John was the last eyewitness to the life of Christ, and he has a desire to retell the story in his own words.

John wrote in a time of transition to the post-canon era of the church age. The temporary spiritual gifts, with all their fantastic abilities, are being left behind.

THE TARGET AUDIENCE

If John's Epistles are any indication of the readers of his gospel, he wrote to a crowd that needed to understand the basics of Christianity.

The Christian church had fallen into great disrepair in just twenty years' time. The average Christian did not understand even how to confess his or her sins.

The suffering of the Neronian persecution, and the relentless peer pressure of the pagan Roman citizens had led many believers to seek alternate philosophies which bore the name of Christianity, but which were anything but.

John has an very tough uphill battle to fight with regard to heresy and the truth. The situation was not unlike what we encounter in our nation today.

THE PURPOSE OF THE GOSPEL

In John 20:30-31, John communicates his purpose: "Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son

of God; and that believing you may have life in his name."

John wants his readers to believe if they are unbelievers, and to grow to maturity if they are believers.

In order to do so, he attempts to establish Jesus as the Son of God and the Messiah (Christ), and reestablish the Word of God as the authority and the Truth.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE GOSPEL.

The gospel is very simple in the use of the Greek language and writing style.

John writes about some extremely profound concepts, and he uses many symbols to do so.

John records at least six miracles which are recorded nowhere else in the gospels. He always designates these as signs.

John's gospel concentrates on events which are not recorded elsewhere. He records Christ's early Galilean ministry, and his upper room discourse.

John concentrates on the words of Christ Himself.

John develops in a fair amount of detail the relationship between the Father and the Son.

John's gospel is like a commentary he inserts his comments on the narrative many times interpreting and illuminating the events as they occur.

Jesus Christ in Eternity Past

Christ in Eternity Past

John 1:1-5, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

In eternity past, the Father, Son, and Spirit were together trinity in the perfection of love.

Then God decided to create man, and allow man to have free will. As He looked down through history, He knew that man would use his free will to sin to speak and think and do against the perfect character of God.

God decided to permit this sin, even though it would separate Him from His creatures. He decided to do so because He had given His creatures free will, and He desired to honor that free will, and take responsibility for what He had created.

However, God could not compromise the perfection of His character in order to continue His relationship with His creatures. Therefore, God conceived a Plan whereby He could have a relationship with His creatures without compromising His own Holy character, and that plan meant the sacrifice of that which was most precious to Him of all: His unique and only Son.

Therefore, God would become God-man, in order to save mankind. The God man, Jesus Christ was unique in that He was fully man and fully God.

The Genealogy of Christ

Introduction

Matthew and Luke have taken the time to record the genealogies of our Lord. Since they wrote under the inspiration of God the Holy Spirit, we can assume that this information is important.

Thanks to the Pharisees' fascination with genealogies, at the time that these men wrote there was a great archive of information on the subject, and so they were able to accurately trace the line of Christ.

Luke traces the line of Christ through his mother, Mary. That is why 3:23 reads (or should read if it does not) "Jesus... being the son (as was supposed of Joseph) of Eli..."

Women were seldom included in Jewish genealogies, and so Luke only had the information about the patrilinear progenitors of Mary. He does start with her, however, even though he does not mention her name.

Luke did take the time to write the complete story of Mary and the immaculate conception, so he also took the time to write up her lineage.

Matthew traces of the line of Christ through Joseph, and thus back to Abraham. Luke takes Mary's line back to Adam.

Though Joseph was not Christ's biological Father, our Lord traced his legal heritage through him. That is why Matthew's line stops at Abraham. His line had to do with Israel, and Israel began with Abraham.

Since the line of Mary is Christ's biological line, the line is traced clear back to Adam.

Both of the genealogies skip generations.

This was a common practice in the Jewish handling of these things.

The reasons varied. It could be that the information was no longer available, or that the genealogist considered a certain generation unimportant. The reason does not matter. Just keep this fact in mind.

Luke's Genealogy.

Luke's genealogy is unique in that it traces its line in the opposite direction from the norm. However, we will start with Adam and go forward, in spite of Luke's deviant behavior.

ADAM

It is fitting that we start with Adam, because Adam was the first head of the human race. By looking at Adam's life we can discover the beginnings of our problems... and solutions. Adam is perhaps the one man in these genealogies with the greatest connection to Christ.

Rom 5:12, "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned"

When God created Adam, He gave him the legitimate authority to rule planet earth. When God created Adam, He created him body, mind, and spirit.

Adam's human spirit formed the basis for his relationship with God in the Garden.

Adam's body gave him the basis for logistical provision in time and space.

Adam's mind gave him the basis for volitional decision and true worship of God.

When Adam sinned, the following things happened.

- He surrendered his authority to rule planet earth to Satan.
- His human spirit was removed from his body, causing spiritual death. He could not pass on this human spirit to future generations.
- His body received an old sin nature, which would be genetically transmitted to all future generations.
- His mind became corrupted by the old sin nature, but still remained functional. He still had a conscience, which contained a frame of reference for right and wrong.

Therefore, all of Adam's progeny would suffer the following consequences:

They would be born spiritually dead, sharing the condemnation for Adam's sin.

They would be born with the indwelling presence of the old sin nature in the cell structure of their bodies (and yes, genetics confirms this).

They would be born with a soul, and thus would be able to choose for themselves the courses of their lives (and so genetics means very little).

They would be born with a human conscience, and thus be able to discern right from wrong,

Romans 2:14,15, "For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the law, are a law to themselves, in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness, and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them..."

Romans 5:13,14, "for until the Law sin was in the world; but sin is not imputed though [concessive use of the present participle] there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come."

The first part of this statement communicates the utter degeneracy of the post sin, pre flood era, and their great hope in the last Adam.

The Law of Moses provided very much in the way of Divine Establishment restraint on the old sin nature.

Without that restraint, the human race became extremely involved in the cosmic system, even to the point of sexual relations with angels.

And yet even at that time, their personal sins were not imputed to them. They were instead reserved for imputation to Jesus Christ

The second part of the statement has to do with the continued effects of spiritual death.

Although their personal sins were not imputed to them, spiritual death still continued unrestrained.

This shows the heart of the matter. Real spiritual death has to do with the imputation of Adam's sin. Salvation has to do with the imputation of our personal sin into Adam.

We did not commit Adam's sin Adam did. We do receive the imputation of that sin at the moment of human birth.

Romans 5:15,16 contrasts the two Adams:

"But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many. And the gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned; for on the one hand the judgment arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation, but on the other hand the free gift arose

from many transgressions resulting in justification."

Adam's original sin resulted in the spiritual death of the entire human race, except for the second Adam, Jesus Christ.

The work of Christ on the cross in receiving the imputation of the personal sins of the human race resulted in the opportunity for the human race to regain spiritual life in God.

Salvation is a free gift, but it must be taken accepted. It is offered to the entire human race without exception.

Salvation arose from the sins of all being imputed to the one.

Spiritual death arose from the sins of one being imputed to the all.

Romans 5:17 tells us about realms of power and authority related to sin.

"For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ."

Adam's sin put Satan into authority in the world and in the human body. As a result the entire world was enslaved to Satan through the world branch of the cosmic system.

The individuals of the world were enslaved to him through the individual branch of the cosmic system; But Christ's substitutionary spiritual death gave the human race the authority to take their lives back.

The abundance of grace is a brief description of post salvation spiritual assets.

The gift of righteousness is the imputation of the work of Christ into the new believer at salvation.

Therefore even in the devil's world we can rule our own lives through God's control.

Romans 5:18 provides a further explanation of the principle.

"So then just as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness [a judicial sentence, handed down by a judge] there resulted justification of life to all men."

The Greek word *dikaio.ma* indicates a judicial sentence passed down from a judge.

In this case, it is the death sentence passed down from God the Father to Jesus Christ. Christ died under the sentence of death for us.

The judicial decision is permanent and thus lasts for all eternity. God will never rescind His judgment of our sins in Jesus Christ. We are secure forever because of this.

This judicial sentence is also an act of righteousness for the perfect Christ chose to die for sinful mankind.

Because of God's judicial sentence and Christ's righteous act provide the basis for our justification.

The righteousness of Christ is then imputed to everyone who believes in Christ.

This righteousness is used by God in order to justify our salvation. We are qualified to live forever with Him.

Romans 5:19 begins the summary,

"For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous."

Adam's sin was imputed to all, and therefore all were made sinners.

Christ's work of righteousness on the cross will provide righteousness to all who believe on Him.

The final two verses of the chapter:

Romans 5:19,20, "Now the Law came in the side door [*pareiserchomai*] so that the transgression [*unbelief the unforgivable sin*] might increase [*grow in importance as an issue*]; but where the sin increased [*as an issue*], grace abounded all the more [*salvation provision*] that, as the sin reigned

through [*spiritual*] death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

The purpose of the Law is not to increase personal sin. Actually it limits it.

The unforgivable sin, unbelief, is in view here. The unforgivable sin is the rejection of Christ's work on the cross.

Because of spiritual death, the imputation of Adam's sin, the unforgivable sin ruled and does rule over all those who refuse to believe in Christ.

The Law increases the unforgivable sin as an issue, because the Law defines both sin and the grace provision of God.

As sin increased as an issue, so also did grace, and the grace provision of God.

Eternal life is the sum total of life after salvation for both time and eternity.

We live eternal life if we take hold of our portfolio of post salvation provision, and if we live eternal life, then we rule over all aspects of the cosmic system.

Therefore, in Adam we all died. In Christ, we can all live. This is the essence of the baptism of the Spirit.

I Cor. 15:20-22 introduce the matter.

"But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive."

This passage points out there is more to human life than life, and more to physical death than death.

Physical death is only a tragedy if it occurs while one is also spiritually dead. Human life is only meaningful insofar as it is spiritual.

Adam's sin resulted in the spiritual and physical death of all mankind. Christ's death resulted in the provision of salvation for all mankind.

Christ's resurrection resulted in the provision of a resurrection body for all believers. Christ was the first to be resurrected, but there will be many more.

1 Cor. 15:23 and 24 set forth the order of resurrections.

"But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming, then comes the end, when He delivers up the kingdom to the God and Father, when he has abolished all rule and all authority and power.

The word for order in this passage has to do with human organizations of various kinds. Primarily, it is a word used of military formations. In a military formation, things always happen in a certain order, and that is what is in view here.

First, Christ is resurrected.

Second, all believers from the church age receive their resurrection bodies.

Third, all believers from all other periods of history are resurrected.

It is at the end of history that all rule is abolished.

arche. is the word for rule, and it serves as the general category.

exousia and dunamis define the two types of rulership; exousia for legitimate authority, and dunamis for illegitimate.

It is all abolished because the kingdom of heaven is put into place, where Christ rules all.

The kingdom which Christ delivers is His millennial kingdom.

1 Cor. 15:25 and 26 explain the reason for the extension of Christ's millennial rule,

"For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be abolished is death."

Christ will reign in His kingdom until the job is completely finished. He reigns from the right

hand of the Father even now. He will reign on planet Earth in the millennium.

In this case, reigning or ruling means more than just sitting on a throne. It means an active and benevolent rule towards all who are His rightful subjects. All who believe in Him remain just that His rightful subjects.

There are many enemies of Jesus Christ: humans and angels and even death.

Death will be the last of these enemies to fall to the power and authority of Jesus Christ.

Death was brought into the world by Adam, though Satan was Christ's first real enemy.

1 Cor. 15:27 and 28 comment on the victory that has already been won.

"For he has put all things in subjection under His feet. But when he says, 'All things are put in subjection,' it is evident that He is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him. And when all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, that God may be all in all."

God the Father has placed all things under the rulership of Christ positionally. The cross and the resurrection were the dual strategic victories that absolutely assured the overall victory of God in the angelic conflict, and completely reversed the adverse effects of Adam's sin.

The cross was the strategic victory over sin; all the sins of man were imputed to Christ on the cross, and judged in Him.

The resurrection was the strategic victory over physical and spiritual death. Physical death because of the resurrection body; spiritual death because of the resurrection mind.

The conflict will continue, even though the handwriting is really on the wall at this point. Evil fights on though completely beaten.

God the Father is the exception to the rule. All is under Christ's subjection because of the cross, resurrection and ascension. God the

Father is the exception to that. He will remain in authority over the Son forever.

The purpose of this subjection is so that from beginning to end, God might remain in authority and it is fitting that He is.

He was in authority over Christ in eternity past.

He remained in authority throughout human history, and even until now.

And therefore it is right that he remains forever.

(Verses 29-34 form a parenthetical statement that is not pertinent to our study, so we will skip them)

1 Cor. 15:35 picks up the subject of the actual resurrection.

"But someone will say, 'How are the dead raised? And with what kind of body do they come?'"

We know how death came into the world through Adam's original sin came both spiritual and physical death. We should also come to understand how life will come again.

Paul begins his explanation of the mystery with an analogy from the world of agriculture. "That which you sow does not come to life unless it dies; and that which you sow, you do not sow the body which is to be, but a bare grain, perhaps of wheat or of something else."

The seed is planted in the shell of the human body, and the human body must die in order for the seed to grow.

An entire corn stalk is not sown in order to grow another; just a seed, and that is it.

An entire resurrection body is not placed inside of our own; just the kernel, the seed of one is placed.

1 Cor. 15:38,39 are an explanation of the individuality of the resurrection bodies of all creatures.

"But God gives it a body just as He willed, and to each of the seeds a body of its own. All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is

one flesh of men and another flesh of beasts, and another flesh of birds, and another of fish."

God made a sovereign decision to make our resurrection bodies in a certain way. Since it is God's decision, it is going to be a wonderful body.

The flesh of each order of creatures is different, and so are the resurrection bodies of all humans.

Heaven means inequality among resurrection bodies.

It is impossible to tell from a seed what it will grow into. So it is with the resurrection body. You cannot tell from looking at someone how they will turn out in heaven. Only God can tell.

The resurrection body is the result of what you do on earth with your human spirit, which is the seed.

If you cultivate it and nourish it, it will grow into something fantastic. If you neglect it, it will be not much.

1 Cor. 15:40,41 continue the explanation.

"There are also heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is one, and the glory of the earthly is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead."

The heavenly bodies are used to analogize the difference in the glory of the earthly categories. The sun is great and glorious the moon just its reflection. Stars are far off and dim. All are different according to the will of God.

1 Cor. 15:42,43 tell us the about the soil into which the seed of the resurrection body is sown.

"It is sown in a perishable body, it is raised in an imperishable body; it is sown in dishonorable, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a soulish body, it is raised a spiritual body. If

there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body."

The soil into which the seed is planted is the human body. The body is the perishable, the dishonorable, the weak, the soulish.

The soulish is from the Greek word *psuchikos*. Soulish is used elsewhere in Scripture (1 Cor 2:14; James 3:15; Jude 1:19) to connote a person without a human spirit.

The weakness is from the Greek word *astheneia*, which emphasizes the inability of the human to make the conversion.

The perishable is obvious.

The dishonorable points the old sin nature in the cell structure of the human flesh.

And now a comparison is made between the earthly body of Adam and his race, and Christ and His followers.

1 Cor. 15:45,46, "So also it is written, 'The first man, Adam, became a living soul.' The last Adam [Christ] became a life making spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual.

Adam's bad decision resulted in the spiritual death of the entire human race. This is summed up in the phrase **psuche zosan** "living soul."

A living soul is one that has human life, but not spiritual.

Human life is the sum of biological and soul life, or *psuche zosan*.

The second man's, Christ's, good decision resulted in the spiritual life of all who would believe in Him.

All who believe are given spiritual life in the form of the human spirit. All who receive the human spirit have human life, and eternal life.

The order of things was for Adam to come first, and then Christ. The problem must appear before the solution.

The conclusion is in 1 Cor. 15:47-49.

"The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven. As is the earthy,

so also are those who are earthy; and as is the heavenly, so also are those who are heavenly. And just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly."

SETH

Seth was Adam's third son, and after the death of Abel and the banishment of Cain, Seth would renew Adam's line.

Seth represents a new hope and new beginning. He was the appointed replacement for Abel, and that is the meaning of his name (Gen. 4:25-26).

Seth would father Enos at the age of one hundred and five, and he would die when he was nine hundred and twelve years of age.

During this time in human history, people lived to ages which seem impossible today.

The line of Christ had been cut off when Cain murdered Abel. Seth is the renewal of that line. In a sense, he is Abel's substitute; his designated hitter.

ENOSH

Enos is the Greek rendering of this name, which is more correctly pronounced Enosh. The Greeks were indiscriminate in their rendering of the Hebrew *sin* and *shin*, and that is why the difference.

There is one significant fact about this man: his life marks the beginning of the great apostasy of the antediluvian civilization.

Gen. 4:26, "to Seth also a son was born, and he called his name Enosh. At that time men began to cry out against the name of Yahweh."

The word for 'begin' in this verse is *h.Uh.al*, and it means to pierce or penetrate something for the first time. It had a universally negative connotation. It referred to rape, and other horrible crimes that included penetration. It referred to the abuse of land, and even pollution. In the context of Gen. 4:26, it means to begin something that should never begin. It

is, in essence, a rape of something that was innocent.

The verb 'to call' also can be used in the negative sense. It means in its basic form to call or summon someone. However, in its more severe connotation, it has the sense of crying out, or screaming against someone, and that is how it is used here.

The inseparable preposition is attached to shEm Yahweh in the final part of the verse. This preposition can have many meanings, but the one that fits best here is 'against'.

The word shEm is translated 'the name of'. The ancient Hebrews believed that a person's name represented his very essence.

Therefore, during Enosh's lifetime, there was a great bitter outcry against the name of the Lord. This was the beginning of the great period of apostasy and idolatry that would characterize the antediluvian civilization.

Enosh himself is not associated with the bitter outcry it is likely that he remained faithful to God in spite of public opinion about Him.

CAINAN

Although spelled Cainan in Luke's translation, this is the Hellenization of Qinan of the Hebrew.

We have no other information on this man, other than his place in the line of Christ.

MAHALALEEL

He is the son of Cainan (Kenan). There is no other reference to this man in the Bible.

His name literally means, "to the praise of God".

ENoch

Now we have someone we can talk about.

Genesis 5:22-24 tells his story:

"Enoch lived with God for three hundred years after the birth of Methuselah (his son). Thus all the days of Enoch came to three hundred and sixty five years. Enoch lived with God, and he was not, for God took him."

Hebrews 11:5 provides us with further interpretation:

"By faith Enoch was transferred [to heaven] so that he should not see death; and he was not found because God took him up; for he obtained the witness that before his being taken up he was pleasing to God."

Jude verses 14 and 15 quotes from the apocryphal book of Enoch, and it says,

"And about these also Enoch, in the seventh generation from Adam, prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones, to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him."

When he was sixty five years of age, Enoch was transferred body, soul, and spirit to the presence of God in heaven. There he stayed for three hundred years, at which time his soul and spirit were painlessly removed from his body, and he was transferred to paradise.

Enoch also was a prophet while he remained on planet earth, and he talked about his own generation, as evidenced by his prophecy recorded in Jude's epistle.

Enoch lived in a time of great apostasy. This time began during the life of Enosh, and was fully developed by the time Enoch came around.

The apostasy of that time was unbridled, since the Mosaic law had not yet been written.

Rom. 5:20, "And the Law came in the side door, so that the sin might increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more."

The time included a tremendous amount of demonism, even to the point of sexual relations with them. The demons were attacking the genetic line of Christ, hoping to pollute His human genetic purity and thus destroy His role as mediator.

Therefore, they seduced human women (and only women), and impregnated them. By the time of Noah's life, all but Noah's family had succumbed.

The human women were weakened by their hatred of God (see Enosh), and easily enticed by the attractiveness of these demons.

There was great violence, and the human race was in a constant state of war. The half angelic humans had great superhuman powers (see Hermes, Aphrodite, Apollo, Neptune, etc and they were super intelligent and super attractive (see Helen of Troy and Aphrodite) as well.

Many strange and terrible creatures roamed the earth, the brood of demons. Their fossil record remains thanks to the great fossilizing powers of the flood.

It was in this time that Enoch lived, moved to maturity following the plan of God, and was transferred to heaven by the omnipotence of God. Enoch did not see physical death because of his maturity, and he stands as a precursor to resurrection.

Although Enoch was not truly resurrected, his transfer to heaven was very much like a resurrection.

During all his time in heaven, Enoch stayed in his human body, yet face to face with God. It is probably a comment on his maturity that he was able to stand it, though in his sinful body.

After three hundred years of life with God, he was then transferred to paradise, under the earth.

At the resurrection of Christ he was transferred to heaven along with all the Old Testament Saints.

METHUSELAH

Methuselah is Enoch's son, and Lamech's father. His name means "man of the dart". It is an intriguing name, but we do not have the foggiest idea why.

Methuselah has the distinction of being the oldest man in Biblical history, and perhaps of all time.

Long life was a sign of blessing during Biblical times, and was synonymous with quality of life. This being true, then Methuselah represents the quality of eternal life within Christ's line.

LAMECH

Lamech forms the link between Methuselah and Noah. He lived to the age of 777.

Nothing else is known of Lamech, but if he raised Noah, it is likely he raised him right.

NOAH

Gen. 6:1-2, "Now it came about, when men began to multiply on the face of the land, and daughters were born to them. The sons of God [fallen angels] saw that the daughters of men were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves, whomever they chose."

This is the period of history which we have studied so closely the last few sections. Again, it was exceptionally degenerate, with little in the way of checks and balances.

Gen. 6:3, "Then the Lord said, "My Spirit shall not contend in man forever, because he is flesh in his going astray; but his days will be one hundred and twenty years."

God the Holy Spirit was working nonstop during that time. He was contending with the souls of the human race, convicting them, judging their acts, so that they might turn to God through Jesus Christ.

From this moment on, there would be one hundred and twenty years and no more.

Gen. 6:4, "The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men, and they bore children to them. Those [children] were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown."

This verse makes the origin of the Nephilim quite clear. They are the offspring of fallen angels and human women.

It also identifies the Nephilim with the age of heroes, made famous by the oral tradition that came through Noah and his sons.

Gen. 6:5-7 gives us God's evaluation of this period of time:

"Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.. An the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. And the Lord said, 'I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for I am sorry that I have made them."

The revelations of Divine emotion in this passage are really anthropopathism. These are the assignment of human emotions to God in order to explain some aspect of Divine policy. It is an easy way to explain the doctrine of dispensations to the uninitiated.

God did not grieve, and He was not sorry. It only appeared so because of the dispensational change of policy. It was time to judge the present civilization and move on to the next.

It was all a part of the Divine outline of history, and it did not mean that God did not know about this apostasy in eternity past.

It is true that this was not God's direct will for the people of this time, and that he was saddened by their negative volition.

Gen. 6:8,9 tells us God's evaluation of Noah,

"But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord... Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time; Noah walked with God."

The "eyes" of God represent his evaluative abilities, measuring Noah to His standards of righteousness.

The only way that Noah could have done so is through God's grace plan, including belief in the future savior, Jesus Christ.

That Noah walked with God is a sure indication of his fulfillment of God's post salvation plan.

Gen. 6:10-22 records God's plan for the destruction of life on planet earth, and Noah's salvation. A flood will come, so Noah will need a boat. The waters will come from above and below the earth **Gen. 7:11**.

Noah will save many of the earth's animal species **Gen. 7:13-16**. Many others will be destroyed **Gen. 7:21-23**.

Due to the intermingling of salt and fresh water, and the amount of silt in the water, all but the hardiest of the fish would be killed as well.

Thus Noah and his family were preserved; while the others died to await their future judgment.

Noah's three sons and their wives repopulated the earth, and began the postdiluvian civilization.

SHEM

Shem was a voyager on the ark, and the firstborn son of Noah. He cared for his nephew Canaan after it was discovered that he had been abused by his father Ham, Genesis 9:20-27.

In that account, He is called blessed by Noah a recognition of his spiritual maturity.

Christ's Genealogy from Shem to Abraham

Introduction

When Noah began the building of the ark, God made a covenant with him.

Gen. 6:18, "But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall enter the ark you and your sons and your wife, and your sons wives with you."

Entering the ark was equivalent to entering in to the covenant with God. The covenant was continued when Noah made his sacrifice at the landfall of the ark when he left the ark (this was really the first ark of the covenant).

Gen. 8:20, "Then Noah built an altar to the Lord, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar."

God spells out the details of the covenant:

Gen. 8:21, "And the Lord smelled the soothing aroma; and the Lord said in His heart, 'I shall not again personally cause the cursing of the earth because of man. There is evil in the imagination of man from his infancy. And I shall not again personally cause the destroying of every living creature as I have done.'"

So, God makes a promise to Noah, and to the entire human race, even to you and me in this passage. He will never again flood the earth with water.

This is the background to the verb which is translated 'cursing'.

quall means to diminish something. When it is used of water, it means to drain it.

It is this same verb which is used to describe the draining of the water after the flood.

The word used for 'earth' is Adamah. Adamah in the feminine means earth and all its inhabitants, and so it is here.

The final part place the blame squarely where it belongs: on man.

Therefore, this is a promise, specifically, to never flood the earth for what man has done.

The second part has to do with the destruction of all life. God will not destroy all life on the earth.

Notice the comment in between: There is evil in the imagination of man from his infancy.

In spite of man's evil imagination, God will not again destroy the earth and its inhabitants. Man's imagination is evil from infancy, and note not from his youth.

In **Gen. 8:22**, the future conditions of the planet are defined:

"While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease."

With the tilting of the earth's axis, all of the named conditions will exist. This is in contrast

to the previous stable conditions of the planet. The environment is going to be rougher from here on out.

Man's relationship to the animal kingdom is changed by the new covenant, as described in **Gen. 9:2-4**.

"And the respect of you and the terror of you shall be on every beast of the earth and on every bird of the sky; with everything that creeps on the ground, and all the fish of the sea, into your hand they are given. Every moving thing that is alive shall be food for you; I give all to you, as I did the green plant. Only you shall not eat flesh with its life, its blood."

The change means that the beasts will respect good human beings, and be terrified of the bad. In all cases their subordination is required. It is because of fear that animals are violent.

All animals are now O.K. to eat. The lifeblood of that creature must be drained before it is eaten, but that is the only requirement.

The third part of the covenant had to do with capital punishment.

Gen. 9:5-6, "And surely I will require your lifeblood; from every beast I will require it. And from every man, from every man's brother I will require the life of man. Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God He made man."

This is crucial, for before the flood there was no capital punishment, which is the major restraint on criminal activity. Capital punishment is ordained from this moment forward. If man or beast kills a man, he will be killed by man.

This would be a major difference from before the flood. Man is now responsible for policing himself, which provides a restraint on the function of the old sin nature.

The fourth part of the covenant is the sign of the promise.

Read Gen. 9:8-17

So the covenant is made and the transfer is made to postdiluvian civilization. Let's pick up the line of Christ again with Shem.

SHEM

Shem was the son of Noah. He was about 98 years old when he entered the ark with the rest of his family. He fathered many children, including Arphaxad, who would carry the line of Christ.

The land occupied by the descendants of Shem (**Gen. 10:21-31**) encompasses all of what would become the Jews under the covenant of Abraham. It includes Syria, Chaldea, parts of Assyria, Persia, and the Arabian peninsula.

Noah predicts that the people of Canaan would serve under the Semites.

ARPHAXAD, OR ARPHACHSHAD

He was born two years after the flood, conceived not long after the ark hit dry land.

He apparently settled in the mountainous country in the Northeast, and we really do not know much else about this man.

CAINAN

Cainan was the son of Arphaxad. He is not mentioned in the original table of nations in Gen., but for some reason Moses skipped him and went to his son, Shelah. Nothing else is known about this man.

SHELAH

The son of Cainan; the father of Heber.

HEBER

This man's name means 'fellowship'. In the Hebrew, it is really Eber.

The son of Shelah, the father of Peleg.

He is the founder of the Hebrew race, and he gave his name to it, **Gen. 10:21**.

PELEG

His name means division, and it was during his lifetime that the nations were divided.

The first crisis of the postdiluvian civilization was due to the tower of Babel. When God put down that attempt, the nations of the earth were formed, and the earth divided into geographical national boundaries for the very first time.

REU

He is the son of Peleg and the father of Serug. His name means, 'friend'. Nothing else is known.

SERUG

He is the son of Reu. His name means 'shoot, or tendril' in the Hebrew. There is an ancient city by this name, and it may have something to do with this man.

NAHOR

Do not confuse this man with the brother of Abraham. This Nahor lived in the 23rd century B.C., and is the grandfather of Abraham. His name means snorting or snoring.

TERAH

He was born in Ur of the Chaldees. His name means 'antelope'. Joshua 24:2 tells us that this man was involved in idolatry. He did take place in the big move to Canaan, with the rest of the family. He died about 2100 B.C.

The Abraham Connection

From Abraham to David, there are fourteen generations. Abraham Isaac Jacob Judah Perez Hezron Ram Admin Amminidab Nahshon Salmon Boaz Obed Jesse David.

Between the genealogies in Luke and Matthew there is only one difference, and that is the Luke's insertion of Admin between Ram and Amminidab. This points out the reality of skipped generations in genealogy lists.

It was a common practice to skip a generation and go from grandfather to grandson. Sometimes that generation was skipped due to a spiritual failure in the person in question; more often, there is no reason given.

We will concentrate on Abraham, Nahshon, and Boaz in this line.

This line covers the age of the patriarchs, from God's covenant with Abraham to the next covenant with David. Its chronology runs from Abraham's birth in 2160 B.C. to Israel under king Saul in 1004 B.C.

Abraham.

Gen. 12:1-3 records Abram's first call:

"Now the Lord said to Abram, 'Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and from your father's house, to the land which I will show you; And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing; and I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.'"

Abraham had to leave his own country because God had a wonderful place reserved for him and his progeny. He also had to leave because his first home and his family and relatives would have been a fatal distraction to him.

The covenants to Israel

God provided the nation of Israel a fantastic portfolio of grace blessings in the form of covenants. A covenant is based on the attributes of God.

It finds its motive in the love of God. There is nothing treacherous or deceitful about a covenant.

It finds its modus operandi in grace. God gives based on his thinking, power, and merit.

It finds its dependability in faithfulness. The blessings always wait for Israel to take them.

It finds its timing and organization in order. Everything is arranged by the capabilities of God in eternity past.

It finds its enactment in the sovereignty of God. God chooses to bless Israel.

It finds its revelation in the truth of God. God is forthright and clear and honest in His

communication of the details of His covenants. He always keeps His Word.

The only thing that Israel is to provide is their acceptance of the very first covenant, which is the spiritual one. The spiritual covenant is the relationship with God provision. In it, God provides Israel with everything that they need to have a national relationship with Him.

They have the information that they need in order to have a relationship with Him.

They have the power that they need in order to have a relationship with Him.

They have the righteousness that they need in order to have a relationship with Him.

This relationship with God is the greatest of all the covenants, and it provides the best of the blessings.

Abraham is an example: until he got his relationship with God on track, he would not receive the remainder of his covenant blessings.

During the age of Israel, only racial Jews receive the blessings of the covenants to Israel.

Individual Gentiles may still fulfill the plan of God for individuals, and they may share in the covenants to Israel by way of blessing by association.

The covenant to Abraham includes the promised land, a new and unique race, blessing by association to all who bless his race, a curse on the anti-Semitic, and a messianic clause.

The land is defined in **Gen. 15:18-21**.

The Jews must fulfill the spiritual covenant, and accept Christ as Messiah in order to fully inherit this land. This will not occur until the second advent of Christ. This is the messianic clause.

The new and unique race is formed at the conception of Abraham's first son by Sarah, providing a brand new genetic race through the seed of Abraham.

All who bless the Jews are in turn blessed by God. Throughout history the Jews encounter a massive amount of murderous persecution. Whenever a person or a nation provides protection, or aides them in some way, or just has a virtuous mental attitude about their race, that person or nation is blessed by God.

All who curse the Jews are in turn cursed by God. anti-Semitism is a death wish.

Abram did as the Lord commanded, and went out from Ur when he was 75 years of age.

Abram means, "top father (as in rank), or exalted father (as in respect)".

Sarai means, "contentious woman".

When he arrived in the new land at Shechem, he worshipped God. Soon after Abram arrived in the new land, a terrible famine hit, and he went down to Egypt to eat. This caused a complication.

Abram feared that he would be killed by the Egyptians if they knew that Sarai was his wife, because she was very beautiful.

He was an oaf, and cared more about his safety than what would happen to Sarai in the Egyptian harem.

Therefore, he lied to the Egyptians, and told them that Sarai was his sister.

Pharaoh took Sarai for his own, but by stealing her (unwittingly) from Abram he was the first to invoke the cursing clause of the Abrahamic covenant.

When the cursing hit, Sarai blabbed the whole deal to Pharaoh, and so Pharaoh was upset with Abram, but he did not kill him! He was honorable and gave Sarai back and sent the whole entourage back to Canaan.

When he arrived, Abram held a worship service in honor of the Lord. Apparently he had recovered from his devious ways.

When Abram returned to the land, he and his nephew Lot were so prosperous that their herds were always getting tangled together, and their shepherds were at the point of

engaging in a range war. Therefore, Lot decided to go down into the Jordan valley with his bunch in order to avoid further confrontations.

After a time, Lot became entangled in a local war. **Genesis 14** tells the story.

When Lot was living down in the Jordan valley, the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fought a big battle, where they were defeated.

Lot got himself tangled up in it all somehow, and he was captured by the victors. They took their spoil and Lot as well and left for points North.

Abram heard about this and did the honorable thing: he took the men of his household, 318 all told, and formed them into a fighting force.

They must have been well trained, because they pulled off the most difficult of all military maneuvers, a coordinated night action.

They rescued Lot and all his goods, and returned to their homes.

It is here that Abram has another worship service.

Next is the story of Abraham's offspring.

ABRAHAM'S OFFSPRING

The story of Sarai's treachery begins in **Genesis 16**.

"Now Sarai, Abram's wife had borne him no children, and she had an Egyptian maid whose name was Hagar. So Sarai said to Abram, 'Now behold, the Lord has prevented me from bearing children. Please go in to my maid; perhaps I shall be built up through her.' And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai. And after Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, Abram's wife Sarai took Hagar the Egyptian, her maid, and gave her to her husband Abram as his wife. And he went in to Hagar, and she conceived; and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her sight. And Sarai said to Abram, 'May the wrong done me be upon you. I gave my maid into your arms; but when she saw she had conceived, I

was despised in her sight. May the Lord judge between you and me."

This was not a good marriage. We have already seen the treachery of Abraham, and now it is Sarai's turn.

Sarai is barren, and no doubt she had quite a complex about it. So Sarai conceives a plan. Maybe Abram was bugging her all the time about children. Maybe the incident with Pharaoh had turned her off to him in some way.

Because of all this, Sarai just wanted to get it over with. However, she did not realize, that God's plan included her as well.

And Abraham was dumb enough to go along with the plan.

Of course, Hagar conceived right away, and after living for so long with Sarai, the contentious woman and no doubt the contentious master, she could not help but exult over her.

Poor Sarai. Her plan had failed miserably. What was worse, she had this daily reminder of her failure to give Abram an heir. Every time that Hagar craved new and unusual food combinations she probably winked in Sarai's direction.

The first thing that Sarai did was to try to take it out on her husband. "I may have suggested it, but you didn't have to go through with it. This is all your fault!" She had become quite irrational.

The second thing that Sarai did was to try to take it out on Hagar. She verbally and mentally and physically abused this poor pregnant woman. Hagar had to leave.

But the Lord would deal justly with Hagar, and she believed in him, and returned to the authority of Sarai, and things were better from then.

Now this plan had backfired terribly, and both Abram and Sarai suffered for it.

There is no Biblical record of the next fifteen years. But we know from the next part of their

lives, Abram and Sarai have improved their relationship with God tremendously.

In **Genesis 17**, the story picks up again.

"Now when Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, 'I am God Almighty; walk before Me, and be blameless. And I will establish My covenant between Me and you, and I will multiply you exceedingly.' And Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying, 'As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you will be the father of a multitude of nations. No longer will your name be called Abram, but your name will be Abraham; for I will make you the father of a multitude of nations. And I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come forth from you. And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you. And I will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojourning, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.'

God renews the covenant with Abram because Abram has grown spiritually to the point where he has capacity for all the great covenant blessing that God has prepared for him.

Abram falls on his face because he now has true humility. This is a humility that can only come from an intimate knowledge of God. Abram developed that knowledge over the fifteen years since the Hagar disaster.

Now Abram is Abraham, the father of a multitude. Now he is ready for the next test.

Gen. 16:9, "God said further to Abraham, 'Now as for you, you will keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. This is My covenant, which you will keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: every male among you shall be circumcised. And you shall be circumcised in the flesh of

your foreskin; and it will be a sign of the covenant between Me and you."

Had Abraham not been a mature believer, he probably would have said something along the lines of, "You want me to do what to my what?!" Instead, he humbly complies.

And, he must have been a great leader, because his entire household was under the requirement as well.

But this was the beginning of the miraculous birth of Isaac.

THE BIRTH OF ISAAC

Gen. 17:15-19, "Then God said to Abraham, 'As for Sarai your wife, you will not call her name Sarai, but Sarah will be her name. And I will bless her, and she will be a mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her.' Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, 'Will a child be born to a man one hundred years old? And will Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?' And Abraham said to God, 'Oh that Ishmael might live before thee!' But God said, 'No, but Sarah your wife will bear you a son, and you will call his name Isaac; and I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him.'"

The birth of Isaac would mean the creation of a new race on the planet the race of the Jew.

The new race had these assets:

- Client nation status. They were a nation that had a special relationship with God, and they were used as a witness to the entire world.
- A special code, in the Mosaic Law.
- A great land in which to live.
- Fantastic leadership, in the Davidic dynasty.
- A wonderful future, under the leadership of Jesus Christ in the Millennium.
- Unique mental prosperity, which provides the basis for success in any endeavor.

The purpose for the new race was to represent God as a witness to the entire world during the last half of the Old Testament dispensation; to stand as the sole witness to the world during the tribulation; to serve as the basis for the people of the millennium.

The new race was being propagated for their leader, who would come more than two thousand years later.

The impact of the new race in history. Prosemitism would always receive blessing by association. anti-Semitism would always receive cursing by association.

In this passage, Abraham listens to what God has to say, and comes to an erroneous conclusion.

He thinks it through, laughing all the while.

Sarah cannot have children.

I cannot give her what she needs to have children.

Then the Lord must want to use Ishmael as my seed, and must have all along!

Wrong, says God.

ISAAC TO JESSE

Isaac was born to Abraham and Sarah. He would marry Rebekah, and father the twins, Jacob and Esau. It is worthwhile to note that Rebekah, too, was barren. She was the second in the line to find healing in God. Another miracle to continue the line of Christ.

Jacob. This man was no prince, at least at first. He took advantage of his older brother, Esau, and took his birthright from him. Later he would wrestle with God, and in that match he would win God's respect. God changed his name to Israel, 'wrestler with God'.

Judah was one of the twelve sons of Israel. Tamar, the widow of both his first and second sons, tricked him into sexual relations by disguising herself as a prostitute. Tamar did this as revenge, because Judah had wronged her by not giving her to his third son. She became pregnant by this liaison, and bore him

twin sons. Judah would go on to spiritual maturity, in spite of his early handicaps.

Perez was the second born son of Judah, the second of twins. However, he was the one through which the line of Christ would run. Not much is known about this man, except his birth.

Hezron forms a link in the genealogy, but not much else is known about him.

Ram forms another link.

AMMINADAB

We know only one thing about this man: his daughter was the wife of Aaron the High Priest under Moses. He was a man of the Exodus, and he died in the desert.

Nahshon. Now we can tell something of this man. His sister Elisheba was married to Aaron. He was also a man of the Exodus generation, the captain of the tribe of Judah. He must have been a talented military leader, but he died in the desert with the rest of his generation.

Salmon married Rahab, the famous prostitute of Jericho. Although little is mentioned of Salmon, Rahab deserves mention.

She was a prostitute in the town of Jericho, and when two spies from the army of Israel come to scout the town they are going to destroy, they happen upon Rahab's house of ill repute (O.K., even 3500 years ago military men had an instinct for this sort of thing).

She saved these two spies from certain death by hiding them.

Rahab speaks to the two spies, and here is what she said, "I know that the Lord has given you the land, and that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land have melted away before you. For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, who you totally destroyed. And when we heard it, our hearts melted and no courage remained in any man any longer because of you; for the

Lord you God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath."

Then the spies promise her that she and her family will be spared, and they are.

Rahab and her extended family were the only survivors of the town of Jericho. All the others were killed. Rahab lived out her years with the nation of Israel, and she married Salmon.

Boaz was the son of Salmon and Rahab the prostitute. It was his destiny to marry a foreign woman named Ruth.

Elimelech lived in Bethlehem with his wife Naomi and two sons, Mahlon and Chilion.

A famine came upon the land, and so Elimelech took his wife and sons to the land of Moab.

Elimelech died in Moab, and after his death, his sons took Moabite women for wives. Their names were Ruth and Orpah (not Oprah).

Sadly, both the sons also died before they could give sons to their wives.

After some quibbling, Ruth determined to return to Bethlehem with her mother in law, while the other daughter in law stayed in Moab.

Ruth believed in God, and she wanted to be in the land of promise.

By her hard work in the fields she earned the respect of Boaz, a man of Bethlehem, and eventually he would marry her.

Through Ruth and Boaz, the line of Christ was continued.

Obed was the son of Ruth and Boaz, and he was the grandfather of David.

Jesse, Obed's son, was David's father.

Up to this point, we have studied some of the covenants of God with Israel.

The Noahic Covenant, where God promised never again to destroy the world by flood, and where God established man's responsibility to capital punishment.

The Abrahamic Covenant, where God established a new racial species.

The Mosaic Covenant, which was the national policy covenant for the nation of Israel.

Next God established the Davidic, or Messianic, Covenant. This was the leadership covenant for the nation of Israel.

The leadership covenant for Israel described a man who would be their great leader, and who would combine the three offices of prophet, priest, and king.

Christ fulfilled all three covenants.

As prophet, He spoke of His kingdom, and offered it to the Jews, but they rejected Him.

As priest, he died for the sins of the world, but the Jews would not receive Him.

Because the Jews rejected Christ as prophet and priest, He could not be their king, which was their only desire. Because of the Jew's rejection of Christ, His earthly kingdom was delayed, and the church age was inserted into history.

The Jews were not unlike many other people in history. They desired an outside solution to their problems, a panacea that would remove their troubles quickly and permanently.

They did not see that their humility was required, and the circumcision of their hearts needed to precede the rescue of their nation.

They were too proud to back down from their arrogant legalism, and love of the cosmic system.

From their pride they desired a king that would solve their problems, so that they could go on with their arrogance.

From their pride they rejected the man who was also a prophet and a priest.

There are many passages in the Old Testament which refer to the Messiah, the king after the pattern of David.

Gen. 3:15, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."

This is the first prediction of the Messiah. It communicates to Satan that the future Messiah will come from the seed of the woman.

Because of the process of meiosis, each month the woman produces an ovum which is without the genetic pollution of the old sin nature. This made it possible for Mary to conceive by the Holy Spirit, and bring forth a child that did not have the old sin nature, and thus would not receive the condemnation of Adam's original sin.

The last part of the prophecy concerns the ultimate victory of Christ. Christ will wound the head of Satan. This is a metaphor, and can refer to many things. It is probably a reference to the death, resurrection, ascension, and session of Christ.

Satan will wound the heel of Christ. Although this is often interpreted as referring to the cross, the meaning of 'Aqibh does not lend itself well to this. More likely it refers to the followers of Jesus Christ, who are subject to persecution throughout the ages. This is likely especially in light of its position opposite of rO'sh, head.

Gen. 12:3, "I will bless those who bless you, and him who curses you I will curse; and by you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves."

Of course, this is the Abrahamic covenant. Through the seed of Abraham came Christ, and through the death of Christ all nations and all people were blessed.

Gen. 22:18, "and by your descendants shall all the nations of the earth bless themselves, because you have obeyed my voice."

This is a reaffirmation of the Abrahamic covenant.

The reflexive pronoun 'themselves' denotes the function of volition related to salvation and post salvation spiritual growth.

Christ the Messiah is the source of these blessings.

Gen. 49:8,10, "Judah, your brothers shall praise you; your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father's sons shall bow down before you. The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.

These verse confirm that the Messianic line runs through Judah.

It also emphasizes the royalty of the Messiah that he would be a king.

Deut 18:18, "I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brethren; and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him."

This is a preview of the prophetic office and function of Christ. Christ will speak only what God commands.

It is worthwhile to note that the Jews had this verse available to them, and yet they still rejected Christ.

2 Sam 7:11-16, "from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house.

When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom.

He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever.

I will be his father, and he shall be my son. When he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men;

but I will not take my steadfast love from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you.

And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure for ever before me; your throne shall be established for ever."

This is a prediction of the coming of king David. Furthermore, it predicts that the house of David will last forever. It also describes the relationship of God to the Messiah: Father to Son.

It hints at the death of the Messiah that He will take the stripes (the whipping) of men.

2 Sam 23:5, "Yea, does not my house stand so with God? For he has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and secure. For will he not cause to prosper all my help and my desire?"

Here is communicated the everlasting nature of the Davidic covenant. It exists in the Divine decree. It is secure, regardless of what Israel will do, and they will do a lot. Also it is the communication of the prosperity which comes from the Messiah.

Psalms 2, "Why do the nations conspire, and the peoples plot in vain?

The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and his anointed, saying,

"Let us burst their bonds asunder, and cast their cords from us."

He who sits in the heavens laughs; the LORD has them in derision.

Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying,

"I have set my king on Zion, my holy hill."

I will tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to me, "You are my son, today I have begotten you.

Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.

You shall break them with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."

Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth.

Serve the LORD with fear, with trembling

kiss his feet, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way; for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him."

This is the first reference to the Messiah as the anointed one. The word 'Christ' means 'anointed one'.

Anointing with oil was a metaphor for the ministry of the Spirit.

People in ancient times used oil for light. The Spirit sheds His light on the Word, so that we might understand it.

People in ancient times used oil for a medicinal ointment. The ministry of the Spirit with the Word heals our souls.

People in ancient times used oil as a cosmetic. The ministry of the Spirit leads to true beauty the beauty of the soul full of Truth.

People in ancient times used oil to anoint the bodies of the dead. The Spirit is the member of the Godhead who resurrects the dead.

People in ancient times used oil to cook and flavor their food. The ministry of the Spirit in the Word flavors our lives, making them not only palatable, but enjoyable.

Christ was the Messiah, the anointed one. He is the keystone of our faith, and without Him and all that He has done our faith has no meaning. The Spirit ministered to our Lord from his birth. In Jesus Christ was manifest the fullness of the Holy Spirit all of the things that anointing represents.

Psalm 16, "Preserve me, O God, for in thee I take refuge.

I say to the LORD, "Thou art my Lord; I have no good apart from thee." As for the saints in the land, they are the noble, in whom is all my delight. Those who choose another god multiply their sorrows; their libations of blood I will not pour out or take their names upon my lips.

The LORD is my chosen portion and my cup; thou holdest my lot.

The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage.

I bless the LORD who gives me counsel; in the night also my heart instructs me.

I keep the LORD always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.

Therefore my heart is glad, and my soul rejoices; my body also dwells secure.

For thou dost not give me up to Sheol, or let thy godly one see the Pit.

Thou dost show me the path of life; in thy presence there is fullness of joy, in thy right hand are pleasures for evermore."

The key phrase in this passage is "in thy right hand". Jesus Christ would sit down at the right hand of God after the ascension. This is called His Session.

The session of Christ represents the finished state of all His work, and the accomplishment of the strategic victory of the angelic conflict.

Read Psalm 22.

This is a long passage that records with perfect accuracy the first person narrative of Christ on the cross.

The gospels have very little information on what Christ thought while He was dying for our sins just a few short verbal expressions. However, the thoughts were recorded one thousand years before the event in this Psalm.

The physical details given in this Psalm hit the experience of crucifixion right on the head. In fact, there is no other explanation.

Read Psalm 110

In this passage there is a repetition of the session of Christ. Furthermore, it emphasizes the royalty of the Messiah, and his priesthood.

Melchizedek was a priest and a king during the age of the patriarchs. He once had a brief association with Abraham. Melchizedek was the king of Salem, which was the city of Jerusalem at that time. Christ will be the king of

Jerusalem in the millennium and in the eternal state.

Finally, there is mention of His sovereignty, which He will reveal to the entire world for the first time at the second advent.

Read Isaiah 2.

Isaiah chapter two concentrates on the millennial rule of Christ. Christ will rule over a magnificent kingdom, in which peace and prosperity are the rule.

All the arrogance of man and the fallen angels is brought down, because of the greatness of the day of the Lord. An end will come to all idolatry. An utter and final end.

You should note that this passage hints at the idea of idolatry as being the source of the earth's many ills, including poverty and war.

Isaiah 7:14 records two details concerning the Messiah. That His mother will conceive Him while a virgin, and she will call His name Immanuel.

Isaiah 9:17, "But there will be no more gloom for her who was in anguish; in earlier times He treated the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali with contempt, but later on He shall make it glorious, by the way of the sea, on the other side of Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles. The people who walk in darkness will see a great light; those who live in a dark land, the light will shine on them. Thou shalt multiply the nation, thou shalt increase their gladness; they will be glad in Thy presence as with the gladness of harvest, as men rejoice when they divide the spoil. For Thou shalt break the yoke of their burden and the staff on their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, as at the battle of Midian. For every boot of the booted warrior in the battle tumult, and cloak rolled in blood, will be for burning, fuel for the fire. For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end

to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this."

Here again is the millennial reign of Jesus Christ.

Also, this passage establishes the location of the hometown of Christ, and the place where much of His ministry will take place.

Zebulun and Naphtali are two tribes of Israel. Their tribal boundaries form the area to the West and Southwest of the Sea of Galilee.

Included in these territories is the town of Nazareth, the hometown of Jesus Christ.

They are made glorious because of the ministry of Christ around them.

Isaiah 11:15, "Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit. And the Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and strength, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. And He will delight in the fear of the Lord, and He will not judge by what His eyes see, nor make a decision by what His ears hear; but with righteousness He will judge the poor, and decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth; and He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked. Also righteousness will be the belt about His limbs, and faithfulness the belt about His waist."

This passage concentrates on the prophetic character of Christ.

Through the Spirit and the Word, Christ will be the greatest prophet of all time.

Isaiah 40 proclaims the coming of the Messiah to the people of Israel.

Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is

pardoned, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins. A voice cries: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

This passage predicts the ministry of John the Baptist. This passage hearkens back to the wilderness journey of Israel.

It emphasizes the need for faith perception of the truth. For us, it looks forward to the coming of Christ, or our joining with him.

Read Isaiah 42. It establishes the purpose of the Messiah. "

These verses spell out the purpose of the life of Christ.

He will bring justice to the nations.

He will open the eyes that are blind.

He will set free the prisoners from the dungeon of the cosmic system.

The passage also confirms that these things are a part of the Divine Decree in eternity past.

Read Isaiah 49, which records the call of the Messiah.

This call will result in the salvation of Israel, and of all mankind. It will solve all problems, no matter how great. It will bring about the millennium.

Isaiah 53 records the substitutionary spiritual death of Christ, a priestly function.

Who has believed what we have heard? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or comeliness that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him.

He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.

But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes we are healed.

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.

By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people?

And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.

Yet it was the will of the LORD to bruise him; he has put him to grief; when he makes himself an offering for sin, he shall see his offspring, he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand,

he shall see the fruit of the travail of his soul and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous; and he shall bear their iniquities.

Therefore I will divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he poured out his soul to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

This is really important, because it records the purpose of the death of the Messiah. He is to die a substitutionary spiritual death, one that will pay for the sins of all mankind. It is a great sacrifice, and so God gives Him a great destiny.

Jer 23:5,6, "Behold, the days are coming," declares the Lord, "When I shall raise up for David a righteous Branch; and He will reign as king and act wisely and do justice and righteousness in the land. In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely ; and this is His name by which He will be called, the Lord our righteousness."

Daniel 7:27, "Then the sovereignty, the dominion, and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him."

This is a passage which describes the eternal kingdom of God under the rulership of Jesus Christ.

It tells of the gathering of all nations, human and angelic, and their subordination to Christ at the Great White Throne.

Micah 5:2, "But as for you, Bethlehem Ephratah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity."

The eternal nature of Jesus Christ is set forth here. He is truly God. Micah also identifies His birthplace Bethlehem.

Zech 12:10, "And I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him, like the bitter weeping over a first born."

This is a little different. It records the crucifixion of Christ as it relates to the Jews who demand His crucifixion. The Jews turned

against Christ, and demanded his death over that of Barabbas, a common criminal who had participated in an insurrection against the Roman rule.

Malachi 3:1, "Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming," says the Lord of hosts.

There are two predictions here. First, the prophet predicts the ministry of John the Baptist. Second, there is a prediction concerning the scouring of the Temple, which actually occurred on two occasions.

KING DAVID, THE FORERUNNER OF CHRIST

King David was the forerunner of Christ in at least three ways:

In his selection by Samuel the prophet.

In the establishment and administration of his kingdom.

In his relationship with God. The words of a man on his deathbed reveal a lot about him. David, for all of his sin and tragedy was a man of God.

Read 1 Samuel 16:1-13

David to the Exile

Joseph's Line, the Legal Line of Christ (Matthew).

SOLOMON

Solomon was a true genius, and he exploited that genius by having a great relationship with God. "Now God gave Solomon wisdom and very great discernment and breadth of mind, like the sand that is on the seashore. And Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the sons of the east and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men, than Ethan the Ezrahite, Heman, Calcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol; and his fame was known in all the surrounding nations. He also spoke 3,000

proverbs, and his songs were 1,005. And he spoke of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon even to the hyssop that grows on the wall; he spoke also of animals and birds and creeping things and fish. And men came from all peoples to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom."

Yet, Solomon became involved with the queen of Sheba, and his lust for her nearly destroyed him. Toward the end of his life he wrote a testimony to the folly of his lust. We have that testimony recorded in the Bible it is the book of Ecclesiastes.

"Futility of futilities! All is futility!" Is the tone of the book.

Solomon then proceeds to record all of his accomplishments, and all of his doings, he says, added up to nothing.

His final conclusion was this: "The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God, and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person. for God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil."

REHOBAM

The son of Solomon, he was a weak king, and although he wanted the right things, he lacked the leadership to bring them about.

He wanted a unified kingdom, but the Northern kingdom of Israel split from him.

He wanted the pure worship of God, but the entire nation rebelled and conducted even the most depraved forms of idol worship.

He was an immoral man, and he had a knack for making bad decisions from a position of weakness.

ABIJAH

Abijah saw the split of the two nations in a very black and white way. The Northern kingdom had rebelled, and must be forcibly brought back under the reign of one. That one, of course, was him.

He fought a great battle with Jeroboam, and though he won, he was unable to bring the rebels under his rule. The kingdom remained divided.

Abijah was also an immoral man, and he too was a failure as a king.

ASA

Asa returned to the pure worship of God. Although he allowed idolatry to exist, he emphasized what was true and right: the ritual plan of God.

Prosperity also returned to the southern kingdom. Many came down from the north because in him they saw a renewal of David's glory.

However, he did make a great mistake towards the end of his life. Zealous to make the northern kingdom return to the rule of God, he allied with a pagan nation, Syria.

Asa became ill and did not seek God's help. Depending on his household physicians, he died.

JHOSHAPHAT

This man, a king, was a winner. He sought the Lord with all his heart, and he made his nation a good place. When his nation was threatened, he turned the entire nation to God.

Read 2 Chron. 20

Jehoshaphat was benevolent and wise, and both his foreign and domestic policies were effective. He lived out his life peacefully, satisfied because of his great relationship with God.

JORAM

Not much is known about this man, other than his father.

UZZIAH

Uzziah was another great man, who followed the Lord for most of his life. He grew to have a great relationship with God under the ministry of the prophet Zechariah.

He had a great career as king, but he became proud, and in his pride he overstepped the bounds of his authority and tried to perform a priestly function. For that sin, God gave him leprosy, and he remained a leper until the day of his death.

JOTHAM

Jotham was also a great king, and he turned out to be great even than his father, for he did not become arrogant because of his success.

He died a contented man, confident before God of his eternal future.

The people were not completely responsive to his leadership, but Judah still became much stronger through him.

AHAZ

This man was a loser. He refused to depend on God, refused to believe in Him. He was instead an idolater, and as king he did many evil things.

He allied Judah with Assyria, and paid tribute to Tiglath-Pileser their king, even sending him the Temple treasures.

When he died, no one missed him, and the people did not think him worthy to be buried with the other kings of Israel.

HEZEKIAH

Hezekiah was a good and Godly king, who from his relationship with God desired to repair the damage that his father had done.

The Assyrian menace was great during this time, and he did everything he could to strengthen his own nation so that they might withstand the enemy.

The first priority was spiritual and moral.

After that he saw to it that the economy and the army were greatly improved.

The Northern kingdom of Israel went out under the fifth cycle of discipline during his reign, and their destruction together with the Sunday school ministry of Isaiah served to bring the

southern kingdom under the Divine standards once again.

Under his rule a great building program took place.

Hezekiah became deathly ill, and it looked like the end was near. However, he had no heir at the time, and of course the line of Christ was through him. He prayed for his own life, and trusted in God, and God extended his life for another 15 years. It was during that time that he fathered a son, Manasseh.

MANASSEH

Manasseh ruled for fifty five years. His was the longest rule of any of the kings of Judah. He was an extremely evil man, who hated God and his Word.

The prophets prophesied against him, but he only persecuted them all the more.

Because he was so evil, God sent the Assyrians against him, who captured him and carted him off to Babylon.

This Divine discipline worked, because Manasseh repented, and removed all the idols and idolatrous altars that he could.

Though he had been very evil, he died in peace, knowing the forgiveness of his savior.

AMON

Unfortunately, Amon imitated all of the evil of his own father, and failed to repent. He died the victim of a conspiracy, and his eight year old son took the throne in his place.

JOSIAH

When Josiah had reigned for 12 years he began a great purge of all the idol worship in the land. A few years later, he oversaw the cleansing and repairing of the Temple. While the priests were doing this, they discovered the book of the Law, and drew great conviction from it.

However, it was too late for the southern kingdom, and the wrath of God was already unleashed.

Josiah died in peace before the destruction of the nation, and did not have to witness the terrible invasion of the Babylonians.

JEHOIAKIM

Jehoiakim was an evil, idolatrous man who ruled as king during the destruction of the nation of Judah.

He is not mentioned Matthew skips over him because of his evil and the terrible destruction that occurred during his reign

His son Jeconiah, or Jehoiachin is mentioned by Matthew.

Mary's Line, the Biological Line of Christ (Luke).

Note: We are taking this one all the way to Christ.

NATHAN

Nathan was a son of David and Bathsheba. He is the quiet son, for nothing much is said about him in Scripture. Even so, he was a link in the biological line of Christ.

MATTATHIA

Nothing much is known about this man.

MENNA, MELEA, ELIAKIM, JONAM, JOSEPH, JUDAH, SIMEON, LEVI, MATTHAT, JORIM, ELIEZER, JOSHUA, ER, ELMADAM, COSAM, ADDI, MELCHI, NERI

Nothing is said about any of these men in the Bible.

SHEALTIEL

This is where a crossover point occurs. Both genealogies stop here. This is where the nation went into exile. Shealtiel was not the true son of Jeconiah, but instead, the line of David continued in this man because Jeconiah failed to produce an heir. This is why Matthew's genealogy claims Jeconiah as this man's father.

ZERUBBABEL

He is the head of Israel at the time of the return from exile. Zerubbabel is the result of the marriage between Pedaiah and the wife of

Shealtiel. Shealtiel died without leaving an heir, and so it was his brother's responsibility to step in for him.

1 Chron. 3:19 identifies Pedaiah as the true father, while Shealtiel was only his wife's first husband. The line continued.

According to the book of Ezra, this man was a key figure in the rebuilding of the Temple He was a good man who did much for the worship of the true God of Israel.

RHESA, JOANAN, JODA, JOSECH, SEMEIN, MATTATHIAS, MAATHNAGGAI, HESLI, NAHUM, AMOS, MATTATHIAS, JOSEPH, JANNAI, MELCHI, LEVI, MATTHAT

The biological line of Christ continued in these men. Nothing else is known of them.

ELI

Father of Mary.

MARY

From the Exile to Joseph Joseph's Line, the Legal Line of Christ, as Expounded in Matthew

SHEALTIEL, ZERUBBABEL, ABIUD, ELIAKIM, AZOR, ZADOK, ACHIM, ELIUD, ELEAZAR, MATTHAN, JACOB

Joseph, the husband of Mary and stepfather of Christ

Chronology of the Life of Christ

6 B.C. The Magi from the East see the star and begin their journey to Jerusalem.

Autumn, 6 B.C. Zacharias and Elizabeth conceive John the Baptist.

Spring, 5 B.C. Mary conceives by the Holy Spirit, and visits Elizabeth.

Summer, 5 B.C. Mary leaves Elizabeth; Joseph has a dream.

Late Summer, 5 B.C. Elizabeth gives birth to John the Baptist.

Late Autumn, 5 B.C. Mary is near term; she and Joseph are uprooted by the census and must travel the 70+ miles from Nazareth to Bethlehem.

December, 5 B.C. Mary gives birth to Christ; the Magi arrive in Jerusalem.

Late January Early February, 4 B.C. The presentation of Christ in the temple.

February, 4 B.C. The Magi visit the Christ child in Bethlehem; Mary and Joseph flee to Egypt after the warning in the dream. It is about a three week journey 200 miles or so.

February, 4 B.C. The children of Bethlehem are killed, calculating from the time the Magi saw the star and began their journey.

March 14, 4 B.C. Herod dies the sin unto death.

Late March, 4 B.C. Jesus, Joseph, and Mary make the trip back to Nazareth, probably arriving in late April or early March.

April, 4 B.C. Joseph and Mary and Jesus return to Israel, settling in Nazareth.

***Note: the year zero does not exist!

Spring, 9 A.D. Christ's first Passover in Jerusalem.

Spring, 26 A.D. John begins his ministry of baptism and repentance.

Autumn, 26 A.D. Christ is baptized by John, and begins His ministry.

Late Autumn Early Winter, 26-27 A.D. Christ's wilderness temptation.

December, 26 A.D. Christ's 30th birthday.

Late Winter Early Spring, 27 A.D. Christ's early Galilean ministry: Cana and Capernaum.

Spring, 27 A.D. Christ's first Passover during His ministry; first cleansing of the temple, Nicodemus.

Mid 27 A.D. to early 28 A.D, John's accession, Christ's training of the disciples, return to Galilee through Samaria, the Samaritan woman, the continuation of the Galilean ministry.

Galilean ministry:

Child at Capernaum healed, John 4:46-54.

Rejection at Nazareth, Luke 4:16-31.

Recall of the four disciples, Matt 4:18-22; Mark 1:16-20.

The demoniac healed at the Capernaum synagogue, Mark 1:21-28; Luke 4:31-37.

Peter's mother in law and others healed, Matt 8:14-17; Mark 1:29-34; Luke 4:38-41.

Tour of Galilee with Simon and others, Matt 4:23-24; Mark 1:35-39; Luke 4:42-44.

Final recall of the four disciples, Luke 5:1-11.

Cleansing of a leper and resultant publicity, Matt 8:24; Mark 1:40-45; Luke 5:12-16.

Paralytic healed and forgiven, Mat 9:18; Mark 2:1-12; Luke 5:17-26.

Matthew's calling and banquet at his home, Matt 9:9-13; Mark 2:13-17; Luke 5:27-32.

Dispensational teaching, Mat 9:14-17; Mark 2:18-22; Luke 5:33-39.

Spring, 28 A.D. Second Passover of Christ's ministry.

Spring, 29 A.D. Third Passover of Christ's ministry.

Spring, 30 A.D. Crucifixion and resurrection of Christ.

Summer, 30 A.D. Ascension and Session of Christ.

The Birth of John the Baptist

This begins our study on the people who waited in the right way for their Messiah.

We know the situation in Israel at this time; we know the history; and we know that the Messiah is going to come. It is a great thing to look at the lives of those who waited. In a sense we all wait for the coming of the Lord for the Lord's righteous activities in our own lives. It is a fine thing to look at those who waited in the right way, and to find out how we might wait.

READ Luke Chapter 1

There is a stylistic change in the Greek of this passage and the one which follows. Luke changes from the strongly idiomatic classical

Greek to one that is quite Hebraistic. Since Luke was a Greek by birth, and his language is very Greek, the speculation is this: that Luke records here the memories of Mary, the mother of Jesus.

INTRODUCTION

Luke 1:5-7, "In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah; and he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. And they were both righteous before God, living without blame in all the commandments and righteous requirements of the Lord. And they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both advanced in their days."

Luke goes out of his way in his usual way to put forth the background of these two people; their general lineage, and of more importance their spiritual status.

They were both of the priestly tribe of Levi. This was a tribe of prestige and prosperity and also the tribe of the Sadducees. This religious group came into being about 300 years before Christ. They are characterized by their aristocracy, their cultural surrender to the Greeks and others, and their opposition to everything Pharisaic.

The name "Sadducee" comes from the Aramaic Sadduqim, which meant 'righteousness'. However, those who were in opposition to them called them saddiqim, which meant 'destruction'.

They came from the ranks of the priests and high priests of Israel, during the time of the Greek occupation. Their desire was to give in to the Hellenizing influences of the Greeks, and thus retain their favor.

The Sadducees had a lot to lose to the occupation forces of the Greeks, because they were mostly prosperous, aristocratic people. In order to maintain their lifestyles and possessions, they placated the Greeks, giving in to their cultural and even religious influences.

Due to the double tyranny of the Pharisees and king Herod, the Sadducees had made a great comeback not long before the birth of Christ. Let's face it: the Pharisees were no fun at all.

Zacharias and Elizabeth had resisted the temptation to become Sadducees, and neither did they become Pharisees by reaction. They found a true relationship with God through the ritual system.

They lived in all the righteous requirements and commandments of God. The commandments included much more than the ten commandments. The commandments definitely included the greatest commandment to love the Lord with all their heart and soul and might.

They did so without blame. Without blame does not mean that they were perfect. It does mean that when they sinned they took care of it with the proper sacrifice and the mental attitude that went along with it. Without blame does not mean that their execution of the ritual plan was perfect they were after all human. They did their best and maintained a good relationship with God.

Elizabeth was barren. Whenever a woman of God is barren it means that God has something special in mind for her. The Greek word for "barren" is STEIRA, and it definitely indicates that she was physically incapable of bearing children.

In Elizabeth's case, this condition was in addition to her being past menopause. She was quite old, but this was not the reason for her barren condition. The two are separate in the original language.

Complicating the situation was Zacharias' advanced age. He could not have gotten Elizabeth pregnant even if she were able.

This situation was identical to that of Abraham and Sarah, some two thousand years before. It is worthwhile to note! The covenants to Adam, Abraham, and David are about to be fulfilled, and this birth will bring the messenger to prepare the way.

Luke 1:8-10, "Now it came about, while he was performing his priestly service before God in the appointed order of his division, according to the custom of the priestly office, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense. And the whole multitude of the people were in prayer outside at the hour of the incense offering."

There was a great number of priests. Because of this, it is likely that each priest would get to render his service once in a lifetime. The priests were chosen by lot to do so, and with God there are no accidents.

As a righteous man, no doubt Zacharias had big expectations for this day, and in some ways he may have looked at the event as the culmination of a good life. It was Zacharias' turn to burn incense at the incense altar in the Holy Place.

The incense altar represented the righteousness of Jesus Christ, the righteousness produced by His perfect life.

The incense burned twenty four hours a day a tribute to the uninterrupted righteousness of Christ's life. Zacharias merely went in to put on new incense, so that the burning might be perpetuated.

The aroma that the incense gave off was designed to be a pleasing one representative of the pleasure that Christ would give to God.

The position of the altar in that holy place showed the source of that righteousness the Spirit and the Word. The golden lampstand was a symbol of the ministry of the Spirit it illuminated the table of showbread. The table of showbread represented the Word of God. When illuminated by the Spirit it produces righteousness.

Thus the Holy place taught even the doctrine of kenosis.

The great multitude of people may indicate that there was a feast or that this was a holy day but we can only guess at that.

Zacharias encounters a surprise...

Luke 1:11,12 "And an angel of the Lord was seen by him, standing to the right of the altar of incense. And when he saw this, Zacharias was troubled and fear fell upon him."

There is little doubt left in Zacharias' mind that this is an angel of the Lord. He did not think it was a practical joke; he did not wonder if this happened to all the priests. He had an immediate reaction.

Zacharias knew that this did not happen every day. Furthermore, this angelic being had an imposing appearance, because fear is a universal reaction to the visible manifestation of angels. They are awesome indeed!

The angel stood at the right hand of the altar. This is the place reserved for Jesus Christ Luke records it because it is significant this angel stood as a direct representative of Christ Himself.

Zacharias knows that this is a grave moment something great, and perhaps terrible is about to happen. But he does not suspect in the least what it is all about.

The angel speaks ...

Luke 1:13-17, "But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your petition has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you son, and you will give him the name John. And he will be joy and gladness to you, and many will rejoice at his birth. For he will be great before the Lord, and he will drink no wine or liquor; and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb (birth). And he will turn around many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God. And he himself will go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous; so as to prepare a people who have been built for the Lord."

The angel has good news for Zacharias and his wife Elizabeth they are going to have a son. The

story also reveals that Zacharias had been praying for a son he had petitioned God. Not only will they have a child, but that child will also be joy and gladness to them. Such is not always the case, so this must have been welcome news.

Even greater news is that even at his birth many will rejoice, and that he will be great before the Lord. He will be different in that he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb.

The first part of the verse makes it clear that he will be great in his relationship with the Lord. ENO.PION is a preposition which denotes face to face relationship. John will have that kind of relationship.

Second, there is the matter of John's abstinence from alcoholic beverages. This also probably indicated that he would refrain from social life.

Finally, John is filled with the Spirit from birth. The preposition EK indicates separation, and in this case, separation from the womb. This preposition may indicate source the origin of something from someplace, but even so, the separation is now effective. It is no longer there at the place of its origin. EK does not indicate the existence of one thing inside another.

There is no precedence for interpreting this preposition to mean 'from inside', as is often done.

The adverb ETI is the key here. This together with EK translates "ever since." The Liddell-Scott lexicon makes this very clear on p.703. ETI does have some flexibility it can be taken in the ascensive meaning, which shows surprise on the part of the writer. It strengthens the phrase in which it takes part.

It was surprising that an infant would be filled with the Spirit from birth. Often this is interpreted as being in the womb because of verse 41 in this same chapter. Verse 41 in no way indicates that the fetus was filled with the Spirit in the womb. In fact, it is quite clear that it is Elizabeth who is filled, as we shall see.

With the ministry of the Spirit upon him, John will turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous; so as to prepare a people built for the Lord.

It had been quite some time since a prophet had ministered in the nation of Israel. There had been many false prophets, but not a single true one. The gift had gone out from the people. Now the fullness of time had come, and with it a prophet to proclaim the coming of the Messiah. The people must be humble; they must be obedient; they must be built inside their own souls.

Humility precedes obedience.

Knowledge precedes obedience.

Zacharias' failure and his discipline

Luke 1:18-23, "And Zacharias said to the angel, 'How shall I know this for certain? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years.' And the angel answered and said to him, 'I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God; and I have been sent to speak to you, and to bring you this good news. And behold, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day when these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which shall be fulfilled in their proper time.' And the people were waiting for Zacharias, and were wondering at his delay in the temple. But when he came out, he was unable to speak to them; and they realized that he had seen a vision in the temple; and he kept making signs to them, and remained mute. And it came about, when the days of his priestly service were ended, that he went back home."

Zacharias in the Holy Place in front of the archangel Gabriel, the very messenger of God wants proof!

All this time he has prayed for an heir. All this time he has done the right thing. But when push comes to shove, Zacharias fails to believe. He and his wife are too old, he thinks, for God to work a miracle.

The angel Gabriel is mentioned in three other passages in the Bible.

- When he appears to Mary, to announce her role in the Messiah's birth.
- And twice in **Daniel, 8:16 and 9:21**, to interpret the Word of God.
- Not only does this angelic being have an awesome presence, but he is also one of the highest ranking of all angels, if not the highest.

The angel refers to his duty, his rank, and his mission. His regular duty station is in the presence of God. He is an angelic attendant in God's throne room, and he is often sent as God's personal messenger.

Now, all elect angels were and are trustworthy, but Gabriel is likely the most trusted of all. The wise king always uses his best men as his messengers; the wise general his best as couriers. So it is with Gabriel. His mission was as a messenger, sent personally by God to communicate the good news of the birth of the one who would follow.

Because of Zacharias' unbelief, he is disciplined to be silent. As Gabriel was a messenger to him, so also he could have been a messenger to the great crowd of people who were outside. He could have had the honor of the first announcement of the coming Messiah. Instead, he is silenced. Silenced until the day of the birth of his son. We will contrast this with the response of Mary.

Zacharias comes out of the Holy Place; and there arrayed before him is a great crowd, all of whom were wondering why it took so long for him to do his duties.

Now comes the charades routine. Zacharias makes signs he tries to make them understand the message, but they just cannot understand him. They come to the conclusion that he has seen some kind of vision and they most likely wrote it off as another kook.

Zacharias goes home when his duties are over. We know from a later passage that he uses the time to become childlike in his humility, and to

turn his heart to a righteous attitude. He builds himself up in the Lord, until he develops a proper response. When he finally opens his mouth good things come forth.

Elizabeth conceives ...

Luke 1:24,25, "And after these days Elizabeth his wife became pregnant; and she kept herself in seclusion for five months, saying, 'So this is what the Lord has done to me in the days when he looked to remove my disgrace among men.'"

Elizabeth makes an expression of disgust here not of praise. She is living in seclusion, not excited to be a part of God's plan for the Messiah, but ashamed to even go out. It is going to take a visit from Mary to get her out of her funk.

Elizabeth Gives Birth to the Forerunner

Luke 1:57-66

Remember, Mary had gone back home, leaving Elizabeth to fend for herself. Elizabeth had fully recovered from her funk over conceiving at such an advanced age. She gave birth to a son, and many of her neighbors and relatives heard about it, and so they rejoiced over the birth of this child, fulfilling the prophecy of Gabriel.

It is funny to note that people make signs to him when he is not deaf, only unable to talk. Zacharias names the boy John, and immediately his tongue is freed, and immediately he speaks praise to God. He had had nine months in which to contemplate his earlier failure. He recovered and now says the most wonderful things. The local population is astonished at these events, and they wonder what the child will grow up to be. A prophet? The Messiah himself? There was a lot of serious thinking going on the subject.

ZACHARIAS' PROPHECY

Luke 1:67-69. And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying: 'Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people, and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of

David His servant as He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from of old Salvation from our enemies, and from the hand of all who hate us; to show mercy toward our fathers, and to remember His holy covenant, the oath which He swore to Abraham our father, to grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all our days. And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare His way; to give to His people the knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, with which the Sunrise from on high shall visit us, to shine upon those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.;"

Zacharias concentrates on the cross first. Zacharias realized the need for salvation, and that it had to come before any national independence or prosperity.

Then he talks of national freedom from oppression. He calls to mind the covenant of God, the Abrahamic covenant. He brings up the fact that peace gives one the opportunity to concentrate on God all the more.

John is the one who will prepare the way for the savior, to make smooth the path for him. He is to get people to the point where they can handle the ministry of our Lord.

Christ's ministry will be hard to swallow, because it is about a personal redemption that requires humility. The people of Israel wanted national redemption without the sacrifice of individual pride. John will preach the message of salvation and forgiveness of sins.

Zacharias concentrates on the mercy of God, because Christ is the visible manifestation of mercy to all mankind. The Sunrise from on high is a term that is used to denote the resurrected status of Jesus Christ.

- **anatole** means sunrise in the sense of the rising again of the sun in the east. **ana** is a

preposition which means both up and again.

- When you add the term from on high, it is obvious that this is God.
- So, Zacharias looks forward to the manifest mercy of God in the person and work of Jesus Christ, especially concentrating on the resurrection.
- The sunrise shines upon those who are in darkness and the shadow of death.
- Darkness refers to the cosmic system of Satan his design to prevent us from believing in Christ, and to destroy our relationship with God.
- The shadow of death refers to physical death.

The light guides us into the way of peace (prosperity).

JOHN THE BAPTIST'S CHILDHOOD

Luke 1:80, "And the child continued to grow, and to become strong in spirit, and he lived in the deserts until the day of his public appearance to Israel."

The Song of Mary

Introduction.

Luke's narrative now turns to the story of Mary, the mother of our Lord.

Note: there is no Biblical support for the practice of Mariolatry. Mary is clearly portrayed as the biological mother of Jesus Christ. There was nothing special about her makeup that she was the mother of our Lord nothing that made her unique from all other women. She was a woman who loved God, and she too waited for the Messiah. In fact she waited faithfully, unlike so many of her contemporaries, both women and men.

However, to make Mary someone to worship is completely wrong. Mary was born into sin, like every other female child before and after her. She does not have special access to God just because she conceived and gave birth to Christ. She is no different as far as we are concerned

than any other mature believer. Christ Himself warns against Mariolatry in Luke 11:27-28.

The Arrival of an angel.

Luke 1:26-28, "Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee, called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And coming in, he said to her, 'Hail, woman who has been graced out. The Lord is with you.'"

Again, here is the angel Gabriel, the messenger of God, one of the highest ranking of all the angels. He is sent to announce to Mary the imminent arrival of the Messiah. Of the genealogies of these two, we already know much. Repetition is not necessary.

As the angel "beams in", he issues a greeting to her. The greeting means literally, "woman who has been graced out". God is the only subject ever used by CHARITOO.

A CONVERSATION WITH AN ANGEL, LUKE 1:29-38

Notice that Mary is not fazed at all by Gabriel's angelic appearance. She is unique in this regard. Daniel trembles, Zacharias fears, the shepherds are terribly frightened, and Mary is troubled by the greeting of this angel! She begins to DIALOGUE in her own mind. She is thinking it through, having a dialogue with herself "What did this angel mean by his greeting?" She was troubled by it.

The angel alleviates her troubled mind and tells her the exact meaning of the greeting.

"You have found grace from the side of God." Let me quote from Bauer, Arndt, and Gingrich: "...denotes a person, and indicates that something proceeds from this person." Mary has found it because she looked for it. She is a wonderful believer from the age of Israel. In her great humility she cannot think that she has found grace, for she has already prospered in knowing God.

"You will conceive in your womb and bear a child."

This certainly would have come as a surprise, since Mary was a virgin. She certainly understood the consequences of what the angel was saying. She would be subject to disgrace, and maybe the risk of capital punishment. There are great and terrible implications to this.

"And you will name Him Jesus." His name means salvation.

"He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and kingdom will have no end."

There could be no mistaking it now. She was to be the mother of the Messiah. He is the Son of God he will sit on David's throne his kingdom will last forever his kingdom will know no boundaries. These are all very clear. She is to bear the Messiah.

Mary's response is simple "How will this come about, since I am a virgin?" Mary's response is not arrogant, unlike that of Zacharias. She is just curious. She did know the basics of reproduction. In fact, it is my impression that the Hebrew society was much more open about such things than our own. She was more than willing to believe.

Gabriel tells her as best he can the specifics on how she will conceive. "The Holy Spirit will appear over you, and the power of the most high will overshadow you; and therefore the holy one who is born will be called the Son of God."

This is the essence of the virgin birth. It is really quite clinical in nature. God the Holy Spirit performs the operation by his omnipotence, and adds the unpolluted chromosomes to Mary's ovum.

THE TWO MOTHERS ARE UNITED

Luke 1:39-45, "Now at this time Mary arose and went with haste to the hill country, to a city of Judah, and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth. And it came about that when Elizabeth heard

Mary's greeting, the fetus leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. And she cried out with a loud voice, and said, 'Blessed among women are you, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And how has it happened to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the fetus leaped in my womb for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what had been spoken to her by the Lord.'"

We are not sure why Mary got up and went 'with haste' to visit Elizabeth at least the text does not come right out and tell us. However, we do know that Elizabeth is in a funk over the timing of her pregnancy. She does not want to be a circus sideshow act she wanted children while she was still young.

We also know that Mary and Elizabeth were cousins, so it was likely that Mary knew both of Elizabeth's pregnancy and her mental state. Finally, we know that as soon as she know about her own immaculate conception, she left to be with Elizabeth.

Therefore, it is likely that the combination of the above conditions led Mary to visit Elizabeth. Just as soon as Mary enters the house and speaks her greeting, just as soon as that greeting enters the ears of Elizabeth, the fetus leaps in her womb. This leaping was reflex motility in response to the excitement of Elizabeth on hearing the voice of her cousin.

Immediately Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit. This is for the purpose of prophecy what she says next is inspired by God the Holy Spirit. Luke always does us the courtesy of telling us when one is under the filling of the Spirit. Elizabeth literally "sounds off with a great cry" and she says, "Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb."

This first part of what she says confirms that when she wants to talk about a human being she uses one expression. Mary is blessed because she is chosen to bear and nourish and raise the Son of God. The fruit of her womb (not

yet ripe nor picked) will also be blessed, because of His life and death.

The word for blessing here is EULOGEO, which means to speak well of someone. EULOGEO is blessing with reference to reputation.

Furthermore, Elizabeth says, "and why does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" Elizabeth employs a rhetorical question here. She does not expect an answer she knows it. Elizabeth knows that the child she will bear will prepare the way for Christ. She answers her own question in the next verse.

Elizabeth now gives an explanation of her previous words, "for behold, as the sound of your greeting came into my ears, the fetus in my womb leaped for joy."

Elizabeth explains to Mary her rhetorical question, and her statement about blessing. She is telling Mary that at the moment she heard her greeting (and at the moment she was filled with the Spirit) the child leaped in her womb. It all came together at that moment Elizabeth understood everything Mary the greeting her own pregnancy God's plan for the ages.

Finally, Elizabeth summarizes the entire experience the lifetime of that moment, "and blessed is she who believed that the things that were spoken will be fulfilled in her by the Lord."

Elizabeth is telling us that she finally understands it all, and she is complementing Mary on her immediate belief in the word of God. The word for blessing here is different from the one above. This is mental attitude contentedness. Elizabeth is saying in a roundabout way that she missed the boat that she did not immediately respond as she should have, and so she missed the blessing.

The important thing is that Elizabeth now understands everything with clarity. This verse also answers the previous question why Mary came to visit Elizabeth. It was so that Elizabeth could recognize her own error, and turn around.

MARY'S SONG, LUKE 1:46-56

This is the great prayer of worship from Mary. It is a prayer that is based on the utter confidence of one who has known and relied on the capabilities of God.

Let's look at what Mary knows about God from learning in the ritual plan of God. She knows the architecture of her own soul that she has emotion, mentality, and a human spirit. She knows that God is the source of her salvation. She calls Him her savior. She understands the omnipresence and omniscience of God when she says that "He considered" her humble state.

EPIBLEPO is the verb here, and it means to look down upon something, and to understand it. God looked down upon Mary and He fully understood her humble state. God also knew exactly what to do about it. That is the expression of his omniscience.

Mary understands the omnipotence of God she calls Him the Mighty One, and she knows exactly what God has accomplished.

She understands the perfection, or holiness of God. When she says, "Holy is His name", she says, perfect is his essence.

She understands the implications of the birth of the Messiah. She praises God for the strategic victory of the angelic conflict, and here is her reasoning. If God can accomplish the virgin conception and birth of the Messiah, He can accomplish anything else. What is the problem to go from one impossibility to the next.

Mary was a patriot, and she understood the implications of the Messiah on her nation. She related the Messiah to the kingdom of God, and indeed she already understood some of the kingdom concepts even before Christ ever explained them.

She understood the difference between being rich and poor. This metaphor has nothing to do with food or hunger in the literal sense. It has everything to do with a desire for a relationship with God. It is all about true humility.

Those who are humble and hungry for a relationship with God will receive the intrinsically good. Those who are rich in their own minds will go away empty handed.

Mary understood the mercy of God, and its implications. She knew the history of her nation and its heroes.

The Birth of Christ**Joseph Has a Dream.**

Matt 1:18-25, "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows. When His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before their union, she was found holding in her womb from the Holy Spirit. Now Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to publicly expose her, desired to divorce her in secret. But when he had considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him during a dream, saying, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take along Mary as your wife; for that which was conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. And she will bear a Son; and you will call His name Jesus, for He Himself will save His people from their sins.' Now this whole thing came about that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, 'Behold, the virgin will hold in her womb, and will bear a Son, and they will call His name Immanuel', which having been translated is, 'God with us'. And Joseph arose from his sleep, and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took her as his wife, and he did not know her until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus."

Matthew is a Jew, and he writes his gospel to Jews. He is very careful in how he says things, for he does not want his readers to stumble over his words. His hypersensitive Jewish readership would have stumbled often and missed the message with a Gentile author writing in the style and words of the unclean.

Matthew is the one who emphasizes the kingdom offer more so than the other Gospel

writers. He desires for the Jews to know their error in rejecting the Messiah and His kingdom.

I have provided a very literal translation, because it is important to understand the exact words of Matthew, and of the angel.

It was the Jewish custom to become engaged, and then have the marriage and its consummation one year later. It was during this one year period that Mary conceived by the Holy Spirit. Remember that she had gone away and visited with Elizabeth immediately after the immaculate conception. Since she stayed with Elizabeth for several months, Mary's pregnant state would have been quite obvious when she returned.

The Greek says, "EURETHE EN GASTRI ECHOUSA EK PNEUMATOS HAGIOU." This is translated, "she was found holding in her womb from the Holy Spirit".

Joseph either did not know or did not believe the last part that about the Holy Spirit. If Mary did tell him this, it probably seemed too far fetched for him to buy. The literal translation is correct the word for child does not appear in Matthew's text.

He could have used BREPHOS or PAIDEIA or TEKNON, but he did not. Instead he uses a term which is quite clinical. The aorist participle ECHOUSA is quite clear it simply communicates that her state came about previously, and that she was holding something, not a baby, not a child, but something in her womb. ek plus the ablative of source of PNEUMATOS HAGIOU shows very clearly that although she was pregnant from the Holy Spirit, no sexual relations were involved.

Joseph was a righteous man, and he did not want Mary to suffer public disgrace because of her pregnant state.

The aorist infinitive of DEIGMATIZO paints the picture of one pointing out another. Usually the context is one of disgrace. The public disgrace may have been deadly for Mary, because the Mosaic Law demanded capital punishment for adultery, **Deut 22:23-27**.

Joseph considered these things and came to a decision. This is all described by the verb ENTHUMEOMAI. ENTHUMEOMAI had the idea of smoldering incense, and it often portrayed the angry thoughts of an individual. Joseph does a slow burn over this, and manages no small amount of self control when he decides to put her away privately.

An angel of the Lord (unidentified) appears to Joseph during a dream. The word for dream here is ONAR. In another time and another place a very similar thing happened, and this becomes a marvelous play on words. ONAR is a very ancient Greek Word, and remained uncorrupted even to Matthew's day.

ONARION, a word with virtually the same spelling is the word for 'little donkey'. When Balaam went out to betray the nation of Israel, an angel of the Lord stood in his way with a drawn sword. Balaam's donkey, on which he was riding, saw the angel and stopped. Balaam did not see the angel. So the donkey talked to Balaam because of Divine inspiration. Balaam then saw the angel, and his effort to betray the nation was thwarted.

In same way, Joseph is out to betray the nation, and the entire world, when he desires to divorce Mary. His divorce of her would confirm to the world that she did have sexual relations with a man, and conceived from that liaison. So an angel is sent to stop Joseph in a dream.

The angel tells Joseph that he should not be afraid to take Mary along as a wife. The word PARALAMBANO is a terrific picture of marriage. It means to take someone or something along with you. When the man takes his wife, he takes her along with her on a lifelong journey.

The angel also makes a clear communication on the contents of Mary's womb. The angel uses the neuter singular definite article as a relative pronoun to describe what is in her. It is translated "that which", or "the thing". It is clear to the angel, a superior and righteous being, that what is in Mary's womb is not yet human life.

In the next sentence the angel says TEXETAI HUION, "she will give birth to a son". Notice that it is at the time of birth that the contents of her womb is identified as a son.

Look at the message of the angel "and you will call his name Jesus (savior), because He Himself will save His people from their sins". The angel did not emphasize the Messiah political savior aspect of Christ's life, but His role as the Savior from sin.

This was a part of Matthew's mission to show that Christ did succeed.

This whole thing took place so that Isaiah 7:14 might be fulfilled. "Behold, a virgin is pregnant, and brings forth a child." The Hebrew does not say that she is 'with child'. It says pregnant, and there is a difference.

They will call His name Emmanuel, which having been translated is 'God is with us.' The Greek preposition for with is META, which means 'with' in the sense of relationship. It denotes a close relationship between two persons. So Joseph rises from his sleep and does as the angel commanded. He took Mary along as his wife.

An important detail is included at the end of this passage. Joseph did not know Mary until after she gave birth. Knowing her is a polite way of saying that he refrained from having sexual relations with her. She was definitely a virgin when she gave birth, and Matthew confirms it.

Footnote: He does "know" her afterwards, and they produced several children together. Mary is not a perpetual virgin.

The Night Before Christmas

On the night before Christmas, God gave Christ the authority to establish His kingdom on earth.

Daniel 7:13-14, "I did behold in the night visions, and look! There came with the clouds of heaven one like the Son of Man; and he came to the Ancient of days, and was presented before Him. And to Him was given dominion and honor and a kingdom, that all

peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed."

The setting of this verse is before the incarnation of Jesus Christ. It cannot occur at any time during the incarnation, because such would violate the tenet of kenosis as spelled out in **Phil 2:58**.

It could not have occurred during the three days before the resurrection, because **John 3:35** indicates that Christ had already received the authority from God, and this was some three years before.

Daniel also gives the purpose of the kingdom as a universal service of Christ. Therefore this giving must have taken place before Christ even offered His kingdom to the Jews. With kenosis, that leaves only a time before the incarnation.

Although the timing of the passage in the chapter seems to be after the judgment of the Great White Throne, which Daniel's vision reveals in verses ten and eleven, verse twelve is the decisive verse.

Verses ten and eleven clearly stand at the Great White Throne and beyond into the eternal state, as confirmed by **Daniel 12:1** and **Revelation 20:11-15**. Verse twelve, however, jumps back to the first three beasts of **Daniel 7:46**. There are four beasts in the chapter. The fourth one is the beast of the tribulation, destroyed by the return of Christ.

In each case the beasts are metaphors that illustrate nations or groups of nations, **Daniel 7:17**, "These great beasts, which are four in number, are four kings who will arise from the earth."

The first three are nations after Daniel, yet before the incarnation. They are somewhat parallel with the parts of the statue in chapter two.

"The first was like a lion and had the wings of an eagle. I kept looking until its wings were plucked, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a

man; a human mind also was given to it." This is Persia.

"And behold, another beast, a second one, resembling a bear. And it was raised up on one side, and three ribs were in its mouth between its teeth; and thus they said to it, 'Arise, devour much meat!'" This is Greece.

"After this I kept looking, and behold, another one, like a leopard, which had on its back four wings of a bird; the beast also had four heads, and dominion was given it." This is Rome.

Since these are just before the incarnation, and the fourth beast is tribulational, and since the giving of authority took place before the incarnation, we can place the time of verse 13 and 14 at the night before Christmas with confidence.

Daniel's curiosity concentrates on the fourth beast, the one of the tribulation, v.19. Also, notice that the passage skips over the intercalation of the church age. The four beasts are consecutive in the passage.

What happened on that night before Christmas?

Christ came with the clouds. These clouds are elect angels, attending Jesus Christ.

Christ came to heaven from earth, where He functioned as the angel of Yahweh.

He approached the throne of God, and was presented to Him. The presenting official or officials are not mentioned by name. For this occasion we can place Michael, the archangel here. Perhaps also Gabriel, the kings' herald is also involved.

God, the Ancient of days (a reference to His eternal nature), gives Christ dominion, honor, and a kingdom. Dominion is authority to rule. This is specific authority to rule over planet earth.

- The first Adam surrendered that authority with his sin of abrogation of responsibility. He gave up the earth to be like the woman in sin.

- The last Adam, Jesus Christ, came to earth to retake that authority.
- However, in order to exert His authority, Christ must have the assent of the ruled. This He has yet to get.
- The dominion is everlasting Christ will never relinquish it.
- Honor is the respect that makes one fit to rule.
- Authority without respect is ineffective. Whereas authority is nominative, honor must be earned.
- There is a difference between authority and moral authority. Moral authority is the true right to rule. The Greek word *exousia* describes moral authority.
- This is given to Christ by God through the Word and the ministry of God the Holy Spirit. On two occasions, God would express His pleasure with the moral authority of Christ: at His baptism, and at the transfiguration.

Then there is the kingdom itself.

- The purpose of the kingdom is for the unification of all peoples of the earth in service to Him.
- This is the millennial kingdom of Jesus Christ. It was given at this moment, and stands waiting for His people.
- This kingdom is everlasting, and cannot be destroyed.

And in a moment's time, Christ left.

Philippians 2:5-8, "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bondservant, and being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."

The motive was love God wanted the very best for sinful and unattractive mankind.

John 3:16, "For God loved the world so much that He gave His uniquely born Son, so that everyone who believes in Him might not perish, but have eternal life."

At the next moment, Christ was born, the perfect God-man.

Luke 2:8-14

At Christ's baptism, God expressed His pleasure in Christ and told all those present of Christ's moral authority.

Luke 3:22, "And the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove, and a voice came out of heaven, 'Thou art My beloved Son, in Thee I am well pleased.'"

A few weeks later, John the Baptist reflected on the great presentation on the night before Christmas.

John 3:35, "The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand."

Another stamp of approval came before the inner circle of the disciples.

Matthew 17:1-5, "And six days later Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John his brother, and brought them up to a high mountain by themselves. And He was transfigured before them; and his face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. And Peter answered and said to Jesus, 'Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, I will make three tabernacles here, one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah.' While he was still speaking behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and behold, a voice out of the cloud, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to Him!'"

No matter the response of Israel, Christ had to die for sin, and He knew it.

Luke 22:41-42, "And He withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and began to pray, saying, 'Father, if Thou art willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but thine be done.'"

The climax of the Divine sacrifice came at the end of the ordeal on the cross.

Matthew 27:46,49, "And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, 'Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?' that is, 'My God, My God, why did you forsake me?' And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit."

Paul introduced his epistle to the Romans in this way:

Romans 1:1-3, "Paul, a bondservant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord."

After the resurrection Christ reminded His disciples of His authority.

Matthew 28:18-20, "And Jesus arrived and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority was given to me in heaven and on earth. Therefore, as you go, disciple [teach with authority] all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to keep everything I have commanded you. And behold, I myself am with you all days until the conclusion of the age.'"

But He also reminded them that the time for His kingdom had not yet arrived.

Acts 1:6-7, "And so when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, 'Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?' He said to them, 'It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority.'"

But that time is set in the decree, and will surely occur.

Revelation 1:7, "Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of

the earth will mourn over Him. Even so.
Amen."

The beginning of Christ's kingdom will be dramatic, and we will be there to see it all.

Revelation 19:11-16, "And I saw heaven opened; and behold, a white horse, and He who sat upon it is called Faithful and True; and in righteousness He judges and wages war. And His eyes are a flame of fire, and upon His head are many diadems; and he has a name written upon Him which no one knows except Himself. And he is clothed with a robe dipped in blood; and His name is called the Word of God. And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. And from His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may smite the nations; and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, 'KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.'"

THE REAL 'NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS'. DANIEL 7:13,14; LUKE 2.

'Twas the night before Christmas and all through the realm,

every creature was stirring, with God at the helm.

The messengers sent to the shepherds with care,

near Bethlehem Judea, town chosen most fair.

At the stable there gathered just a few who'd see,

the birth of Lord Jesus, the King of the free.

The centuries of prophets came down to a day,
the Day of the ages, of God's Holy say.

But the night before Christmas was a solemn affair,

'round the throne of the Father, who was sending Him there.

For long in the past before the dawn of mankind,

the Son was the sacrifice of God's own design.

Sacrifice most terrible but lovely indeed,
sacrifice most precious, destined to bleed.

And there at throne of the Ancient of Days,
was presented the Son, with the angels' hoorays!

The Son of Man then before union was made,
received power and glory, for a kingdom yet laid.

Its purpose was mighty to rule all the earth,
in peace and justice and Almighty mirth.

But one thing was needed 'fore kingdom could be,

a people who'd worship on free bended knee.

On the night before Christmas there waited a crown,

for the one who was going to that little town.

But thorns were its makeup, and sin was its cost,

and before kingdom there waited the Cross.

MRP, Christmas 1994.

Christ and the Shepherds

Luke 2:8-20, "And some shepherds in the same region there were bivouacking and diligently keeping guard over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were afraid with great fear. And the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid; for behold, I am announcing to you good news of a great joy which will be for all the people; because there was born for you today in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this is the sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.' And all of a sudden there was together with the angel a multitude of the heavenly army

praising God, and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among respectable men.' And it came about after the angels had gone from them into heaven, that the shepherds were saying to one another, 'Let us go straight to Bethlehem then, and let us see this event that has happened which the Lord has made known to us.' And they came in haste and found their way to Mary and Joseph and the baby laying in the manger. Now seeing this, they made known the statement which had been spoken them concerning this Child. And all who heard wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds. And Mary treasured all these matters, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God over all that they had heard and seen, just as it had been told to them."

The shepherds were "AGRAULOUNTES" bivouacking, or staying outside overnight. It is from the noun AGORA, which means outside, and the noun AULAZOMAI, which means to lodge, or stay away from home.

While they were there, they PHULASSONTES PHULAKAS, which is a very strong way to say that they kept guard.

It was in this same region that David watched over his flocks. It was in this same region that the temple flocks were kept. We cannot confirm it, but it may be that these shepherds watched the temple flocks.

The angel of the Lord EPESTE., which literally means to stand over someone. The glory of the Lord shone around them. This is described by the verb PERILAMPO.

Angels are apparently beings manufactured from light, and thus they produce the glory of the Lord. This is the awe inspiring thing that so often causes great fear.

The shepherds were EPHOBE.THE.SAN PHOBON MEGAN. Afraid with great fear.

The angel EUAGGELIZOMAI the word from which we get the English evangelize. The herald

of the king is announcing His arrival. First the angel makes it very clear that this is great news a great joy for all the people. Then he describes the news in detail. It is important to note that the angel concentrates on Christ as the savior. The herald of the king of kings and Lord of Lords directs his listeners to the mission of the first advent, which is redemption of the soul.

The sign which will reveal the truth of the matter to the shepherds is unique. A baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger. This is why Christ had to be born in a stable, and why there was no room at the inn. Because it would provide a unique setting which could be used as a sign of the veracity of God. If one is true, the sign, then the other is true as well, the savior.

The verb EXAIPHNE.S means literally out of a sudden. Our English 'all of a sudden' works also.

The multitude of the heavenly army is PLE.THOS STRATIAS OURANIYOU, and it is literally an army. They appeared to angels, praising God and saying specific things. These things were recorded by Luke in the form of verse, so they may indeed have been singing a song.

They praise God first, worshipping Him for what He has accomplished in the birth of Christ. Second, they give a message of good will to men on earth. They wish peace [eirene] to respectable men. The word for respectable is **eudokias**, which means to think well of someone. It is literally "well thought of men".

The angels leave, and so the shepherds have a brief discussion among themselves as to what they should do. It is a decisive and quick meeting They say, "let us go through immediately to Bethlehem" DIELTHO.MEN DE.HEO.S. In the English, Let's go straight to Bethlehem. The syntax suggests that this is an urgent and repetitive meeting. They recognize clearly that the Lord made known to them this event, and so they take off in haste [SPEUDO] and search and find [ANEURISKO] the stable where the Christ child lies.

The first thing that the shepherds do when they arrive is recount the events of the evening to Joseph and Mary, and everyone there (apparently there were others) wondered at the things which were told them. Mary treasured [SUNTEREO] these things in her heart, putting them together [SUMBALLO] in her heart.

Mary was thinking about these things, and throwing them together so that she had a full understanding of the events of the last few months. She treasured these things they were precious to her, because she knew that her savior was born.

The shepherds had to get back to their flocks, but they left glorifying and praising God over everything which they heard and seen, just as it was spoken to them. Their worship is directed toward the veracity of God, and there is two levels to this veracity, one of which is not mentioned. The first level is the immediate, obvious one. The events of the night fulfilled what had been spoken to them by the angel. The second level is that everything spoken by the prophets of old, everything in the Mosaic Law, was now coming to pass on this night.

These shepherds no doubt had a great sense of destiny before the angel ever came that night. They watched over flocks near the city of David's birth, and near where David himself shepherded. Therefore, when the chief shepherd arrived, they knew the implications. They were shepherds in the region of the temple flocks.

We cannot be completely sure if their flock was the flock, but even if they were only near, they would have known much about the temple flock, and they would have been acquainted with the temple flock shepherds.

The lamb of God was born that night, and everything in the ritual system was fulfilled in that baby in the manger. Everything that they knew of the ritual system would have come to mind as the angels appeared, and as they rushed to the stable, and as they saw the fulfillment of the sign.

It was what the shepherds knew beforehand that gave meaning to the events of that night. It was especially appropriate that the shepherds should come to see the chief shepherd and the lamb of God in that baby that night. And they went away glorifying God, because what they knew before went together with what they knew now.

The Davidic, Mosaic, and Abrahamic covenants were all fulfilled in Christ, and the shepherds knew it.

Lessons from the Passage

The quality of our worship is directly related to the amount of Bible Truth that we understand in our hearts. This was true for both Mary and the Shepherds. It is very clear that Mary understands the significance of the birth of her child. Because of this, she treasures those significant things in her heart.

The shepherds worshipped, not because they were neophytes to the faith, but because they had waited faithfully for the Messiah, and knew God already. This is the interpretation which best explains their actions. The shepherds were quite willing to go check out the sign which the angel had provided. They glorify God even as the angels had done just a little while before when the army of heaven was visible to them.

Therefore, the more you know of Bible Truth, the greater your worship and praise of God will be, for God is the author, and the Bible is the mind of Christ. The more you know of Bible Truth, the greater appreciation you will have of the grace of God as it is revealed in the events of your life.

You cannot interpret the events of your life in the right way without the truth. When you do have the truth, the events of your life have meaning.

There is more to this life than the visible there is an invisible realm which is far more important, and which adds meaning and importance to our own visible lives.

The angels rejoiced on that night for what God had accomplished in the birth of Christ. That

the elect angels rejoiced gives us an indication of the mood in the enemies' camp on that very same night. It must have been gloomy indeed. Insofar as we take part in the invisible realm of conflict, we add meaning and importance to our lives in the same measure.

God reveals Himself in the first advent His grace and power are revealed in the birth of Christ.

- Through the virgin pregnancy and birth.
- Through the birth of John the Baptist.
- Through the child in the manger.
- Through the minds and hearts of those who were prepared for the first advent of Jesus Christ.

This advent had to do with the redemption of sins.

The Circumcision and Presentation of Christ

Luke 2:21-38

Christ was circumcised according to the decree of the Law. Circumcision was the ritual performed on male babies on the eighth day of their life. It included the cutting away of the foreskin of a child, and a few words spoken in remembrance.

The ritual recalled the first circumcision, which was Abraham. It was a ritual which represented the cutting away of the scar tissue on Abraham's soul, and his advance to maturity. So every Jewish male child was circumcised after the pattern of their forbear, to remind them of the importance of spiritual growth.

Romans 2:25-29, "For indeed circumcision is of value if you practice the Law; but if you are a transgressor of the Law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. So if the uncircumcised man keeps the requirements of the Law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? And he who is physically uncircumcised, if he keeps the Law, will he not judge you who though having the letter of the Law and circumcision are a

transgressor of the Law? For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God."

Christ fulfilled the Law to represent that He too as a man would have to grow up spiritually. Indeed he would.

Luke 2:22-24, "And when the days were fulfilled for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought Him up into Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord, just as it has been written the Law of the Lord, 'Every first born male that opens the womb will be called holy to the Lord.' and to offer a sacrifice according to what was said in the law of the Lord, 'A Pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.'"

The reference for the purification of the woman is:

Leviticus 12:2-8, "When a woman gives birth and bears a male child, then she shall be unclean for seven days, as in the days of here menstruation she shall be unclean. On the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised. Then she shall remain in the blood of her purification for thirty-three days; she shall not touch any consecrated thing, nor enter the sanctuary until the days of her purification are completed. But if she bears a female child, then she shall be unclean for two weeks, as in her menstruation; and she shall remain in the blood of her purification for sixty-six days. When the days of here purification are completed, for a son or for a daughter, she shall bring to the priest at the doorway of the tent of meeting a one year old lamb for a burnt offering and a young pigeon or a turtledove for a sin offering. Then he shall offer it before the Lord and make atonement for her, and she shall be cleansed from the flow of her blood. This is the law for her who bears a child, whether a male or a female. But if she cannot afford a lamb, then she

shall take two turtledoves or two young pigeons, the one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering; and the priest shall make atonement for her, and she will be clean.”

The woman’s purification had a practical function related to health and hygiene; but there is also a representation here related to original sin.

The purification of the male child begins with a Sabbath period, and commemorates the original creation of man. That purification then continues for thirty-three more days, for a total of forty. Forty was the number of purification from sin by means of doctrine forty days and forty nights of the flood; forty years in the wilderness. So there is circumcision for spiritual growth and forty days for purification by it.

The female child required fourteen days for the first period of purification, representing her place as second in creation or perhaps it took two Sabbaths to adore the woman. Then sixty six more days for a total of eighty, a double wilderness experience for her.

That Joseph and Mary gave the two turtledoves or pigeons in place of the lamb tells of their financial station in life: they were quite poor.

The burnt offering and the sin offering were related to the imputation of the righteousness of Christ and Adam’s sin respectively. They commemorated the first born in such a way as to call to mind the Passover, and thus the work of Christ. **Exodus 13:1.**

The Passover is recorded in Exodus chapter 12.

The firstborn’s holiness comes directly from the firstborn of God, Jesus Christ. Everything was done properly with regard to Jesus Christ, even though He did not require it. The propriety of these acts was quite poignant, and even ironic.

LUKE 2:25-35

So they came to the temple for Christ's dedication and Mary's purification. Simeon and

Anna and others were there in the temple. Apparently they were part of a regular crowd that was faithful to God and waited for the true Messiah. Both of these people were old, and yet they remained faithful to God even in their old age.

Simeon was righteous, DIKAIOS, and well receiving, EULABES. The latter means that he had true humility, a predisposition to obey. PROSDECHOMAI means to wait for some event. It could as easily describe waiting for the bus as for the Messiah. But Simeon is waiting for the encouragement of Israel. PARAKLESIS is a word which means to call someone alongside, as in getting a lawyer, or other kinds of help. It was used for the role of the Messiah. So Simeon is waiting unconcernedly for the Messiah, because he has received word from God.

There is great emphasis on the perfect aspect of this construction, so it concentrates on the irrevocability of this action by God.

So Simeon has been irrevocably told that he will not die before he sees the Messiah, and so in spite of his advanced age he is waiting for Him just as though he was waiting for the bus.

This is certainly the way to wait for Christ’s return, which is the rapture. Not by checking your watch every five minutes. The rapture will occur it has been promised. But we know neither the day nor the hour; it is hidden even from Christ.

Simeon is deeply moved by the event, and utters a prayer of thanksgiving, knowing that his life was complete with this event. He asks God to die, a remarkable request indeed. He has done his duty and he has seen what was promised. He calls God a DESPOTA, a lord or master of property. The DESPOTA is a ship’s captain. He sees God as the owner of the earth.

The reason for this unusual request is that he has seen the salvation of God. This distinction is made because many were calling themselves God’s salvation, but only one was it.

Many call themselves God’s salvation even today Buddha, Mohammed, and so on. But

there is only one true God man, and that is Jesus Christ. And this provision of salvation is distributed to each individual face to all humanity. The distributive use of KATA with the noun PROSOPON indicates all this. It portrays both the whole of humanity and every individual face in it.

Simeon furthers this idea by saying that the child is a light of revelation to the Gentiles and the glory of Israel. The Gentiles are the unbelievers of Simeon's world; Christ reveals God. Christ is the glory of Israel He is their crown and greatest child, the fulfillment of all the promise of Abraham, Moses, and David.

And to Mary alone Simeon says something pretty hard...

The child is appointed for the fall and rise of many. PTOSIN means fall, and it describes the violent fall of a person in their death, or the violent destruction of a house or building. The Christ child is appointed for the violent end of many He will judge all of humanity. ANASTASIN means rise from the prone position, or even resurrection. Christ is appointed for the resurrection of many.

All of humanity falls into these two categories. You will either fall because of your unbelief and meet the final violent end of eternity in the Lake of Fire, or you will rise because of your belief and receive a resurrection unto eternity in Heaven.

Simeon continues giving the reason for the appointment of Christ with a statement even about Mary herself.

He calls it a corresponding sign, a SEMEION ANTILEGOMENON. Christ is appointed for something corresponding with regard to Mary; corresponding to what has just been said. ANTI mean 'face to face' when in compound verbs, so this is 'speak face to face.' The idea is that this sign speaks face to face with what has already been said. It does not necessarily contradict it though, and it does not here.

The ROMPHAIA was the heavy broadsword of the Thracians. They used it from horseback

with devastating results to the human body. Simeon says a ROMPHAIA will pass through the very soul of Mary. The verb DIERCHOMAI means to 'pass completely through' something. The idea is that wielding the heavy sword from horseback causes it to pass completely through the body of the enemy.

Well, this is the sword of the Spirit passing completely through the soul of Mary, and exiting. It is the sword of inspiration.

Hebrews 4:12, "For the word of God is living and operational and sharper than any two-edged sword and piercing between the soul and the spirit, joints and marrow, and is the critic of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

Several other verses shed light on this statement:

Ephesians 6:17, "And take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

But especially Revelation, which has the ROMPHAIA in a prominent place.

Revelation 1:16, "In His right hand He held seven stars, and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength."

Revelation 2:12, "And to the angel of the church of Pergamum write: The One who has the sharp two-edged sword says this..."

Revelation 2:16, "Therefore repent; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the word of My mouth."

Revelation 19:15, "From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty."

Revelation 19:21, "And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh."

So the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, the sharp two-edged sword of the mouth of Jesus Christ will pass through Mary. This will result in the revelation of the reasoning of many hearts. The word of God reveals the reasoning of your heart. It is the critic of the thoughts and intents of the heart. This is portrayed as an event yet future, so that it is not a reference to the virgin pregnancy.

This must be a function of inspiration through her. God the Holy Spirit will inspire her so that she says or writes something that is the measure of thought for many hearts. Since the famous magnificat is already passed, it is not likely just that, although Simeon could indicate that what she has said will be employed to reveal the thoughts of many.

To this end, Mary did say "He has scattered those who were proud in the thoughts of their heart." However this is not a very exact fit for what Simeon says.

Although Mary makes an occasional appearance in the gospel narratives, nothing comes close to fit the bill of this great announcement.

Acts 1:14 is the last official mention of Mary in the Bible: "These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers."

John 19:27 reports that after the crucifixion she lived in the home of John, and yet he mentions her not at all. Mary was likely in her mid to late forties at the time of the death of her son; she may have lived quite long after that.

From Luke's narrative of the nativity of Christ there is some evidence that he has access to Mary. This may well be her legacy that was prophesied by Simeon.

There is no possibility that this statement could lead one to believe in Mariolatry. Participation in inspiration, yes. But we do not worship the writers of the New Testament.

An intriguing possibility exists with Mary as the author of the letter to the Hebrews.

Unfortunately, there is just not enough evidence to make a definitive assertion at this time.

LUKE 2:36-38

Anna had been a widow for some fifty or sixty years. She lived a life dedicated to service in the temple with fasting and prayers. Just as Simeon is speaking with Mary, Anna walks up and begins to thank God, and preaches to everyone there on that day.

Notice that she preaches to an exclusive group those who are looking for the redemption of Israel. This was a very mature woman, and there is little doubt that these faithful, Simeon and Anna knew one another. You can envision Anna glancing over at Simeon as he performs this ritual, and then she sees the light of his face and she knows. She knows!

The nativity story teaches a couple of important lessons.

That God is immanent; that is, He intervenes in the lives of men. This is perhaps the greatest lesson of our lives.

Immanence on the part of God requires responsibility on our part. If God is not responsible for His creation, which is the assertion of deist belief, then man is not responsible to God. But God's intervention puts responsibility squarely in our laps. God therefore requires of us certain things:

- He requires us to depend on His grace for salvation.
- If He did not intervene in our lives, then we would have to produce our own salvation.
- He requires us to depend on Him for our post salvation glorification of Him. It is His grace which accomplishes our achievements in the post salvation plan.
- Grace, and not works is the general rule because of the interventionist attitude of God.

This is why the birth of the Messiah was so very meaningful to men like Simeon and women like Anna. They were relieved to see a visible manifestation of grace and know that they were not responsible for providing their own salvation. You see Simeon say that it is the Lord's salvation, and not his.

Apart from spiritual responsibility, there is a logistical responsibility to provide for ourselves. This is one of the implications of the fall. It is grace and not works. So that with immanence there is an implicit trust in God. This has a profound effect on personal belief and even political philosophy.

The second lesson is imminence, and that is a philosophy of waiting.

Simeon and others had an understanding that the first advent was imminent. Not that it would occur right away, but that it would occur because God had promised it.

Although God has made no such promise with regard to the rapture, that is, that it will occur in our lifetimes, it is an event promised by God, and we are to wait as graciously as Simeon did.

And even if we are not fortunate enough to see the rapture, the ends of our lives are imminent; they may happen at any time.

Living in that imminent state of mind has its impact as well. You can take no vacation from the plan of God. You can make no assumption that you will have plenty of time to grow later. God has already set the date for your end, and you may die at forty.

Therefore do not say to yourself that you will really concentrate on spiritual growth after you raise your children or establish financial security or some other distraction in life. That can be a truly crucial mistake in the arrangement of your priorities.

The Visit of the Magi

GOLD, FRANKINCENSE, AND MYRRH.

Matt. 2:1-12

This passage records the doings of the magi from the east. There are some things that we do not know about them. We do not know their country of origin. We do not know how many there were. The number three comes from the number of different gifts given to Christ. We are not aware of their royal status they are never called kings.

What is significant is their humility, especially as compared to that of the spiritual leaders of Israel. The spiritual leaders of Israel knew where the child would be born, but they did not go. The Gentile magi did not know where he was to be born, but they found out and went.

Also significant in this passage is the beginning of Herod's scheme to kill the child. Herod wants to know the exact time at which the star of the Magi appeared. He instructs the Magi to search thoroughly for the child. He gives as his reason his desire to worship the child as well. Herod is an evil man, jealous of any who would take his throne.

He was worse than a Gentile; he was a half Jewish Idumaeon, a descendant of Esau, a wild desert dwelling type. The Jews considered them with no small amount of prejudice. To make matters worse, Herod was hardly a model human being. He has been called a monster one who was crafty and cruel, jealous and vain and always quick to seek revenge when wronged.

He came to the throne over the Roman province of Judea through cunning and manipulation of Marc Antony.

He had nine or ten wives. Even the historians lost count after a while.

On the smallest of suspicion he had even his favorite wife, Mariamne, put to death, along with her sons Alexander and Aristobulus.

Even while on his own deathbed, just days before he died he had his own son, his flesh and blood Antipater put to death. Caesar Augustus was heard to say, "It is better to be Herod's hog than his own son!"

Again at his deathbed he ordered all the principle men in Israel to be rounded up and

placed in the local stadium, where they could be surrounded by his soldiers and then slain when he died. The reason: so that there would be great mourning at his death.

Herod tried bribing the Jews, so that they would like him, and he could view himself as a successful ruler.

Julius Caesar had given Herod a fantastic and truly royal inaugural celebration back in 37 BC, when Herod took the throne. He always longed for that past glory, when in fact the traditional Roman warning of "sic transit gloria mundi" applied to him more than any other.

The bribes came in the form of a building program that was the very rival of Solomon's. He built monuments and buildings in the Holy Land, and even rebuilt their temple in magnificent fashion, topping it with a golden dome. Other buildings and monuments were undertaken: a temple, a forum, and a theater at Samaria, a great Greco-Roman capital, a temple, and port at Caesarea.

The port was an engineering marvel that even today is remarked upon by the archaeologists who work at the site. Luxurious palaces and fortified retreats were built at Masada, Jerusalem, Jericho, and Herodium, which was near Bethlehem.

In Jerusalem he had baths, a theater, and a Hippodrome constructed. He also promoted Greek and Roman games so that the people might be entertained.

All of these things struck a sour note as any bribe to a slave will. The people really did not want these things. They wanted to be autonomous and free. But in order to be truly free, any people must know God, and that was exactly the problem in Israel.

But what is really significant about this passage is the gifts of the Magi.

Gold was appropriate, since it represented royalty. It did so even in the ritual system of Israel it represented exactly that. It also represented deity.

Frankincense was burned on the incense altar in the Temple. It represented the righteousness of Christ.

Myrrh was used to scent the oil that burned in the golden lampstand of Israel. It was also used to embalm the dead.

These Magi brought the gifts which perfectly portrayed Jesus Christ from the viewpoint of the ritual system, and they were not even Jews! You can see why God led them to Bethlehem. It was entirely appropriate that they should do so, since the Jews would reject Him. This hearkens forward to the church age.

The Flight To Egypt and Return to Israel

MATT 2:13-23

The magi had been in Jerusalem to ask about the location of the Messiah. They figured they could find the information at the capital city.

Since Bethlehem was just five miles from Jerusalem, it was just a couple of hours by foot. Herod had instructed the magi to find the Christ child, so that he could worship him, too. Of course this was a lie. Herod was jealous, irrational, and probably demon possessed. Herod wanted to kill Christ. Because of the short distance between Jerusalem and Bethlehem, Herod would have expected an answer the next day or evening at the latest.

The magi came and worshipped the child, and then returned to their country by a different route. This would have given Joseph and Mary no time at all to prepare for the long journey to Egypt. It was more than 200 miles, and with a child just a few weeks old.

Joseph and Mary knew that their child was the Messiah, and they were experienced by now with angelic communication. This was no time to quibble they left that very same night.

Joseph and Mary and their child stayed in Egypt until the end of Herod, probably not more than a month.

Matthew is a great recorder of prophecy. Since he wrote his gospel to the Jews, he was always

on the lookout for ways in which he could prove that Christ truly was the Messiah.

For this event, Matthew draws on Hosea 11:1, which records the call of Israel from Egypt. The historical event was the Exodus of Israel under the guidance of Moses. The wilderness journey was an event which was celebrated in the three annual feasts. The Jews were constantly reminded of the events of that journey, because it was a great analogy for their spiritual lives and their national heritage.

The Passover and the feast of unleavened bread reminded them of the beginning of their journey and salvation.

The Pentecost reminded them of the law giving at Mt. Sinai, and the importance of the Word in their spiritual lives.

The feast of tabernacles reminded them of their failure in the desert.

The historical event of the Exodus also stood as a prophecy pertaining to the life of Christ. The call is facilitated by an angel, and through Christ's parents. It is interesting to note that Hosea substitutes 'son' for 'Israel', the king for his subjects. Just as Israel would have its beginning in Egypt, so also would their king, Jesus Christ. This was another great reason to believe in Christ as the Messiah.

Herod understood [IDON] that he had been tricked by the magi. They never came back, and so he assumed that they were making fun of him, ridiculing him [EMPAIZO]. In reality, the magi simply obeyed the word of the angel which guided them, but Herod took the thing as a dirty trick. The word emphasizes Herod's perception of the event.

Because of his perception of the event, Herod was very enraged.

The word for rage here is ETHUMOTHE., which is similar to Joseph's anger at hearing about the pregnancy of marriage. There, the word was **enthumeomai**, or inward anger. Joseph did a slow burn.

Here, the word is modified by the adverb LIAN, which strongly magnifies the emotion. Herod does a fast and violent burn.

Herod's anger, together with his jealousy for the Messiah, made him a virtual humanization of the devil himself.

This would motivate him to murder all the male children, two years old and under, in and around Bethlehem.

The number of children was not all that many by holocaust standards. There probably were not much more than twenty or so.

The word for murder is ANAIRO, which means to snatch away violently. It is a Greek word for illegitimate killing.

Herod had little information on the child Messiah, and that is why he calculated [E.KRIBO.SEN] the age of the child as 2 years or less.

The magi had seen the star some two years before, and so he assumed that the child may have been born then. Of course, we understand that Christ was only six or eight weeks old at the time, but Herod did not know that. That is why he was so liberal in his murderous decree.

Herod sent [APOSTELLO] to have the children killed. He was a powerful man, and he had others do the dirty work for him.

Again, a prophecy is fulfilled here, and Matthew is kind enough to record it. **Jeremiah 31:15** finds its fulfillment here.

The prophecy there has to do with the exile of the southern kingdom of Judah.

Ramah was just to the north of Jerusalem, and on the exile route to Babylon. It was a high place, and it was here that it was likely that the children and the aged who would not be able to make the journey would be killed.

There was great weeping that day by the women of Judah.

Rachel was the wife of Jacob (Israel), and so she came to represent the women of God's chosen nation.

And now Bethlehem is another Ramah. Bethlehem also was a city on a hill, just like Ramah to the north. Ramah meant 'height' or 'high place'. And Bethlehem is a place where children are murdered. The women are crying out loud, and mourning for their children. This is the kind of hard grief, where you do not want someone around you, because it is so very painful.

This is the record of the return of Joseph and Mary and Christ to Israel.

Joseph was guided in two ways: first, to return to Israel, and second to avoid the region of Judea and to go north to Nazareth. The immediate reason to go to Nazareth was to avoid Herod's son, Archelaus. The act of avoidance fulfilled another prophecy concerning the Messiah.

Herod did not last much more than a few weeks after his murder of the children in and around Bethlehem.

His death went like this: (ugly people die ugly deaths)

When it was apparent that he was going to die, and even Herod understood that he was on his own deathbed, he ordered that his own son, Antipater to be slain for no good reason.

Just a day or two later, he ordered that all the principle men of the nation be gathered in the hippodrome (horse racetrack) and surrounded by soldiers.

These soldiers were ordered to kill these men when he died, so that there would be much mourning in the land at the time of his death. The order was never carried out.

Archelaus was also anti-Semitic, and during his reign he would slaughter thousands of Jews, until he was deposed and exiled to Vienna, where he died.

The death of the children around Bethlehem caused an uproar, and since Jesus, Joseph, and Mary left at night and in a hurry, it was probably assumed that Jesus died there as well, since they never returned to Bethlehem.

Up until this point, there had been a lot of hoopla over the birth of Christ and John the Baptist. They were already mini-celebrities.

The assumed death of Christ allowed Him to grow up in Nazareth in a quiet way, without the bother of the masses, and without other satanically inspired attempts on His life.

The Early Life of Christ

Luke 2:40 "Now the child was growing and being made strong being filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon Him."

The noun PAIDION describes Christ. It depicts a child from the viewpoint of trainability. This stage began when the child was eight days old, and continued until adulthood (which was the early teens at the time).

The first two verbs describe the early life of Christ:

- EUXANEN is from AUXANO, which means to grow. It is in the imperfect tense, which portrays a past action occurring over a duration of time. This is in the active voice, which portrays the child as the source of the action. It is a reference to the physical growth of Christ's body. Since this verb is often used to describe the growth of plant life, you could loosely translate this "He grew like a weed."
- EKRATAIOUTO is from KRATAIOO., which means to strengthen, or empower. It is in the passive voice showing that the child did not produce this action. This verb is in the imperfect tense, showing the past action over a duration of time. This is a reference to the spiritual growth of Christ.

The idea of Christ's spiritual growth is further strengthened by the modal participle PLE.ROUMENON.

- A modal participle reveals the manner in which the action of the main verb occurs.
- This participle shows that the strengthening of Christ occurred through His filling with wisdom.

- The participle is in the present tense, so its action occurs at the same time as the action of the strengthening.
- The basic meaning of PLEROO is "to fill to the point of overflowing". It leaves no part of the vessel unfilled.

The substance of the filling is SOPHIA, or wisdom. SOPHIA is applied truth; truth that has become a real part of the person's life not just a theory but much more an application. Christ was made strong, being filled with wisdom.

A final note is made about Christ's childhood: "and the grace of God was upon Him."

- The preposition EPI plus the accusative of the personal pronoun AUTO portrays a motion that reaches its goal completely. It shows that the grace of God completely reached its goal in Jesus Christ.
- During the childhood of Christ, the grace of God fully attained its goal in Him. It reached its maximum potential through His appropriation of it. Even as a child, Christ was perfect.

General principles of Jewish child raising during the time of Christ.

Since a child was renamed a PAIDIA at eight days of age, it revealed their attitude that children were to be trained from the youngest stage of infancy.

The religious education of children began as soon as they could speak. The child's earliest vocabulary included doctrinal terms. This early religious education was done by the mother more often than not. Of course, our Lord could not have found a greater teacher than his own mother she was a great believer. Instruction in the Law fell to the father of the house it was his duty to instruct the children in the keeping of the Law.

The schooling of children was almost exclusively religious by nature. General education and vocational training came later. This religious training took place in the local synagogue under the tutelage of a Rabbi. The purpose of these schools was as follows:

- to keep children from all contact with vice;
- to train them in humility, even when the bitterest wrong had been received;
- to show sin in its repulsiveness, rather than to terrify by its consequences;
- to train to strict truthfulness;
- to avoid all that might lead to disagreeable or indelicate thoughts;
- to do all this without showing partiality, without either undue severity, or laxity of discipline, and with judicious increase of study and work with careful attention to thoroughness in acquiring knowledge.

Until age ten the Bible was exclusively the textbook, from ten to fifteen the Mishnah, which was the traditional oral teachings of the Jews. It was largely philosophical by nature. Its equivalent would be systematic theology.

After age fifteen the young man could divert his studies to vocation or continue with his higher religious education. This determination was made on the basis of the aptitude of the individual.

Perhaps because of the strong Pharisaic influence, the first book studied by children was Leviticus, the laws and ordinances for Israel's spiritual and national life.

The home was the seat of the ritual.

- Many times each day the child was reminded of the importance of God's Word through the mezuzah, which was attached to the door frame of every Jewish home. This device held a small parchment the outside of which was inscribed with the name of God. On the inside was written **Deut 6:4-9** and **11:13-21**. The Jews would touch the mezuzah every time they passed the threshold, and then kiss the fingers that touched it as a reminder of the importance of application.
- Every sabbath there were preparations made by the family to remind them of their responsibility in relationship with God.

The yearly schedule of feasts was a great aide in teaching the character and plan of God. Since it was on a yearly schedule the level of inculcation was high. Think about our holiday schedule.

It is clear from Christ's ministry that He knew the Old Testament far better than any of His peers.

Remember from our dispensational constants two things:

- That spiritual growth is always through faith perception and testing through adversity and prosperity. This is exactly how Christ grew strong. That he was being filled with wisdom meant that the perception and inculcation had to take place beforehand.
- That the character and sufficiency of God are always the issue. And so they were for Christ during His childhood. Imitation of God's character and reliance on Him are the very essence of SOPHIA.

The Event at the Temple

LUKE 2:41-50.

[Translations the author's from the Greek]

Luke 2:41, "And every year His parents used to go into Jerusalem for the feast of Passover."

This verse sets the stage for the story to follow. It shows the custom of Joseph's family with reference to the Passover feast.

The preposition KATA plus the accusative of HETOS means "every year".

The customary imperfect of the verb POREUOMAI is translated, "used to go"

The dative case of the noun HEORTE.S shows the reason for their annual trip to Jerusalem the Passover feast.

As a matter of fact, it was the custom for all Jewish men over the age of twelve to do so. That Mary went when she was not required revealed her devout nature. The child Jesus was

apparently left behind with friends or relatives until he was old enough to go.

Luke 2:42,43, "And when he became twelve, they went up according to the custom of the feast, and upon their return after the full number of days, Jesus the boy stayed in Jerusalem but His parents did not know it."

More attendant circumstances to the main story are related in these two verses. They actually form one sentence in the Greek. The style of the sentence is quite dramatic. The crucial details are withheld until the very end.

The first phrase determines the time of this episode: the culminative aorist of GINOMAI shows that twelve years in the life of Christ had already past. He was actually twelve and a few months. This was to be the first Passover of the child.

- Remember, Herod is dead, and the events of the nativity are now twelve years past.
- The excitement of the nativity is long past, obscured by the present sufferings of the nation.

The next phrase tells us that this year was no different than the others. They went up according to the custom of the feast. the verb ANABAINO is put into participle form, and this is a genitive absolute. It makes a parenthetical statement that gives necessary details, but the genitive absolute communicates that the details are not vital to the story. Luke is simply telling us an extra detail that is not really vital. "when they were returning from the feast (they went up first)" would be a good way to communicate this.

Next Luke says that Christ's parents were returning after the full number of days.

It was allowable for many to leave the feast before its completion if they had a ways to travel. The most important parts of the celebration were early in the week, so many families took advantage of the 'getaway' days. (Easter vacation at school). Joseph's family did not do this.

The full number of days is TELEIO.SANTO.N TAS HE.MERAS in the Greek. The participle is used in the temporal sense to show that they left long after many others. They stayed for the full feast regardless of the inconvenience, ostensibly to gain its full benefit. The aorist participle shows that they stayed the full number of days before they returned.

Luke next tells the real story: that Christ remained in Jerusalem while his parents left for Nazareth, and they did not know about it.

The articular infinitive HUPOSTREPHEIN with the preposition EN shows that it is during their return that they did not know that their son was with them.

The constantive aorist tense of the verb HUPOMENO describes Christ's decision to remain. It summarizes his entire stay into one whole.

Luke also makes it clear that Jesus is still just a boy by adding the word PAIS. He desires to remind us of this to show how extraordinary this boy was.

Under normal circumstances good parents would keep a close eye on their twelve year old son when they were on a trip.

Verse 44 heightens the drama, revealing the mistake of Jesus' parents and their action to rectify it.

Luke 2:44, "Now assuming him to be in the caravan they went for a day's journey they were seeking him among relatives and acquaintances."

The aorist participle **nomisantes** shows their wrong assumption, which preceded their wrong action. The action of an aorist participle precedes that of the main verb, which shows them looking for Him in the caravan as it went along. **nomizo** is a verb which reveals thinking that is still in the theory stage. Joseph and Mary's theory is that Jesus is in the caravan, en to **sunodia**.

- As many as two hundred thousand people would go up to Jerusalem for the feast. Great caravans with thousands of people

would leave together for mutual protection since the roads were relatively unsafe.

- With so many people, it would be easy for one to get lost or not be seen for a while.
- Joseph and Mary trusted their son implicitly. Besides, he had just come of age by going to his first Passover. He was now considered a man, wasn't he?

It was their decision to go along for a day's journey and seek for their son in the caravan. It would take at least a day to search thoroughly among so many people.

The word used for seek is the imperfect tense of ANAZE.TEO, which means to search for a fugitive or an escaped slave. The addition of the preposition **ana** onto the regular verb shows a great intensity of action.

They look among their relatives, and "known ones", or more properly, "acquaintances." They figure that the boy will be with someone they know are related to. Maybe he is with John, the son of Elizabeth and Zacharias, who would also have been at his first Passover that year. Maybe with James and John the sons of Zebedee or Simon who would be called the Zealot. All of those families were most likely there, being devout and from the North.

Luke 2:45, "and not finding they returned to Jerusalem seeking him."

So far, one day of searching has passed, and still no Jesus.

The subjective negative adverb ME. is used to denote their failure. It allows the element of doubt in the matter. They did not find him, but neither were they sure that he was not with the caravan. Nevertheless, the percentages now lie with Jerusalem, and so they return.

The aorist tense of the participle HEURONTES confirms that their failure to find Jesus preceded their decision to return to Jerusalem.

Again the verb ANAZE.TEO is used to describe their desperate search for their son. Israel at this time was not the safest of places, and they had already come so close to losing their son

right after he was born. These things no doubt heightened their fears.

In verse 46, Luke narrates the reunion of the child and his parents.

Luke 2:46, "and it came about after three days they found him in the temple sitting in the midst of the teachers and listening to them and questioning them."

The three day period is significant, very significant. The exact Greek phrase is META HE.MERAS TREIS it shows the completion of three full days. This is used elsewhere in Scripture as a prediction of the amount of time that Christ's body would spend in the tomb.

Mat 12:40, "for just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."

Mk 8:31, "And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again."

John 2:19, "Jesus answered and said to them, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.'"

Mary, after Christ's death some twenty two years later, would recall this event. How clear it must have been to her that while Christ was gone He was about the things of the Father.

At the Passover, 30 A.D. Christ would die and His body would lie in the tomb for three days and nights. During that time His soul would be attending to the Father's business, making the great proclamation TETELESTAI to the fallen angels in prison under the earth, **1 Pet 3:19**.

It is clear that Luke interviewed Mary or someone close to her in order to learn of this episode in the life of Christ. The information could not have come from any other source.

The days lay out as follows:

- Day one: Joseph and Mary stay in the caravan and search for Him as they travel north.
- Day two: travel back to Jerusalem.
- Day three: search in Jerusalem.
- Day four: find Christ in the temple.

The circumstantial participle KATHEZOMENON shows the circumstances in which they found their Son sitting EN MESO TO.N DIDASKALO.N 'in the midst of the teachers'. **didaskalon** denotes a teacher with authority, an expert in the study of the Mosaic Law. This and the following two participles are in the present tense, indicating that all this was going on at the moment that his parents found him.

Two other circumstantial participles spell out what Jesus was doing while he sat.

- AKOUONTA AUTO.N listening to them. The genitive case of indicates that He listened with humility.
- EPERO.TO.NTA AUTOUS questioning them. EPERO.TO.NTA portrays a very intense questioning. Here not in the sense of aggressiveness, but in the depth and detail of the questions themselves. That the student should interrogate the teachers is a remarkable thing in itself!

In His humanity our Lord still had much to learn. Up to this point he had learned all that he possibly could, but there was more to go with each passing moment. Remember that in the incarnation the deity and thus the omnipresence and omniscience of Christ is completely restricted.

Christ in his humanity was finite and limited in what he could know and apply. The creature is always finite.

Verse 47 reveals the response of the teachers to the knowledge of Christ.

Luke 2:47, "Now everyone who heard him was astonished by his perspicacity and his answers."

This comment seems to be an aside to the drama of Christ being lost and then found by his parents, but in a way it is the real story. This

is a mile marker in Christ's young life it gives us a brief check on his ability to perceive and apply the truth.

First is the response of the hearers: they EXISTANTO "were astounded."

- Usually amazement is short-lived; a surprise hits, the amazement comes, and then it is gone as quickly as it came. Not so here. The imperfect tense of EXISTE.ME shows that the boy's listeners were in a constant state of amazement.
- EXISTE.MI means to stand outside of oneself. It shows that you are beside yourself with surprise, amazement, etc. It is even used to show a state of befuddlement or even psychosis. Luke makes a joke here: Christ's listeners are stunned to the point of unthinking about His thinking!

The object of the teachers' amazement is twofold.

- The SUNESIS of Christ. This summarizes His perceptive ability with reference to spiritual matters. In essence it reveals the function of Jesus' human spirit. It is definitely a function of the heart the kind of thinking that immediately precedes application. Naturally this includes belief. This understanding only comes from the grace of God, and not the power of man, **Eph. 3:4** and **2 Tim 2:7**.
- His answers, described by the word APOKRISIN. Interestingly enough, this word comes from a compound which literally means 'from the source of judgment'.
- Of course, the teachers cannot see our Lord's thought processes, but they can listen to His answers. From his answers they deduce His fantastic thought processes.

Luke 2:48, "and seeing him they were thunderstruck and his mother said to him, "Child [TEKNON] why have treated [done] us in this manner? Behold your father and I searched for you in torment."

To begin with, the astonishment of Joseph and Mary is not due to the spiritual discussion which is going on as they arrive. They are amazed that they have found him at all they were at the point of giving up. If they were amazed in the same manner as the teachers, their response would have been in that category. There is a certain agony in finding that which is lost, even when it is found intact. Joseph and Mary experience just such an emotion.

Mary is the one who speaks. Joseph may have spoken but it is not recorded here. She definitely rebukes her son, but that rebuke is definitely wrong.

She calls him TEKNON this is not a term of respect it is the neutral child appellation, but it has no reference to authority. Mary assumes that her child is wrong because of the way that she suffered.

Mary adds an adverb to describe their mental attitude during the search ODUNO.MENOI. This is the present passive participle of ODUNO.MAO., which functions as an adverb to describe their mental attitude. The search was full of doubt and mental agony. The verb literally describes the agony that comes from burning. They were out of fellowship while they were searching.

Parents: there will be times when you agonize over your children. Your attitude is your responsibility, regardless of what your children do. Whatever your children do, right or wrong, your bad attitude is your fault, and never, ever theirs.

Verse 49 gives Christ's reply to the accusation of his mother.

Luke 2:49, "and he said to them, "Why were you seeking me? Did you not know that it is necessary for me to be about the things of my Father?"

First there is a legitimate question. 'Why were you seeking me?' It is wonderful to notice that he does not judge his parents. He does not use the compound verb for the desperate search,

nor does he use the adverbial participle for mental torment. He asks why they searched for him at all, when they should have known all along where he was. Christ uses the objective negative adverb OUK to indicate that there is no doubt that they should have looked at the temple first.

Although they assumed [NOMIZO] him to be in the caravan, they should have assumed him to be in the things of the father.

EN TOIS TOU PATROS MOU should be translated 'about the things of my father.' Not 'in my father's house'. The word OIKOS [house] is not in the text.

The word DEI describes the higher calling of the boy. It shows a moral necessity for him to be about the things of his father. The things of the father have to do with faith perception of the truth also consistent with verse 40 and its record of Christ's childhood of wisdom.

This is the first indication of Christ's self-awareness of His essence and mission in life. It is likely that He knew it long before this, but this is our indicator of its existence at age 12.

From at least age 12 Christ was aware that he was the son of God. It is also apparent that it was necessary for Him to upgrade his education by speaking with the teachers at the temple.

Joseph and Mary's response to Christ's truthful statement is recorded in verse 50.

Luke 2:50, "and they themselves did not understand the statement which he spoke to them."

The verb SUNIE.MI is used to denote that the statement [RHE.MA] had to be understood on a spiritual level. Joseph and Mary are not using their spiritual frame of reference for this incident.

The negative adverb OUK shows that their misunderstanding was complete they missed the boat they didn't even find the dock in fact, they were not even near the water.

Joseph and Mary are so wrapped up in their own pain that they cannot see that not only did they mistakenly assume that Christ was in the caravan, but also there was absolutely nothing wrong with what the boy did in staying at the temple. Their rationale is irrational: because they suffered, they assumed him wrong.

It is not that they did not understand Christ's statement in an academic sense; it is just that they are so out of fellowship with God that they will not accept the conclusion of their son. To accept his conclusion is to admit their wrong, and that is just something that they will not do. One or the other of them had to be wrong; it was not Christ.

One of the greatest surrenders of pride is to admit that you have caused your own pain; that is what Joseph and Mary are struggling with. Make no mistake the accusation of Joseph and Mary is completely unfair. The next statement is all the more remarkable because of this.

Verse 51 reveals Christ's obedience in this unfair situation.

Luke 2:51, "And he went down with them and came unto Nazareth and he remained subordinate to them. And his mother was maintaining all these events in her heart."

It was His parents original wish to go back home to Nazareth; it was Christ's righteous desire to remain in Jerusalem. Since the boy was under the authority of his parents, he went back down to Nazareth. Nazareth is down for two reasons: because it is down with respect to elevation it is downhill; and because it is down with respect to importance Jerusalem is the most important city of all.

Luke uses a very strong idiom the periphrastic participle to show Christ's utter and complete subordination to his parents. It immediately became DEI a moral necessity to obey his parents' wishes. It was God's direct will in spite of his parents out of fellowship state and the importance of his interchange with the temple teachers.

Mary was maintaining these things in her heart. This is why we know that this is Mary's narration to Luke. Only Mary could know her own heart. She would have had to tell someone about the thoughts of her heart.

- The word for maintain is DIETEREI the imperfect tense of DIATEREO. The imperfect shows that she did this constantly, not just at one moment of time.
- DIATERO here is contrasted with SUNTEREO of 2:19, when Mary heard the words of the wise men from the east. This is not the same as treasure. It is closer to remember without reference to an emotional appreciation. It literally means to 'keep through'. This concentrates on the duration of the events. Verse 19 concentrates on Mary's understanding; this verse concentrates on her memory without reference to understanding.
- PANTA TA RE.MATA is a phrase which indicates that not only this event but many others remained in Mary's memory.

Jesus' Young Adulthood

The young adulthood of Christ is recorded in verse 52. Translation, "And Jesus kept on progressing in wisdom and years and blessing before God and men."

The verb **prokopto** applies to all three statements which follow; all three are equivalent with reference to the progression which occurs.

The verb means to advance or progress. There is a hint that hard work or toil that is involved in this advancement, from the stem **kopos**.

In reality, there is a double advancement that is commensurate with his advance in age. The age advancement goes on without volition it is the natural thing.

The other two advances have to do with the good decisions of our Lord in His young manhood.

prokopto is in the imperfect tense, showing this progression over a duration of time.

The first way in which Christ grew (as he grew in years) is in wisdom; **sophia**. His increase in wisdom goes on unabated through the perception and application of the Word of Truth. Note this in spite of the fact that his parents made the wrong decision for him.

The second way in which Christ grew (as he grew in years) is in **charis**.

charis can be translated as grace, or the result of the appropriation of grace, which is blessing.

Since the appropriation of God's grace is portrayed in the word sophia, this second thing must concentrate on the blessing side. The word favor is not a good translation, since it limits the realm of blessing to opinion. It encompasses much more than respect or opinion.

There are two realms of blessing which are mentioned: human and divine.

The preposition **para** plus the dative case of the two nouns shows that the blessing is in the sight of each category described by those nouns.

In the sight of is another way of saying viewpoint. The two categories of blessing are human and divine; anthropoids and **theo**.

No matter which viewpoint you take, Christ was blessed in his life as a young man.

There is no doubt whatsoever that this blessing was due to sophia, and commensurate with its growth. To: Appropriate Prosperity; Essence of God Note: this passage and the next take place during the ministry of Christ, but they reveal details that have to do with his early years.

Mark 6:3 gives reference to Christ's family life and profession as an adult. Translation: "'Is this not the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? Are not his sisters here with us?' And they were constantly stumbling at him."

Christ is speaking in His hometown in his home synagogue. The home crowd identifies him as one of their own, and they use this against him.

He grew up there, and when they see him teaching they use his family and his profession against him, as if to destroy his credibility by them.

In the parallel passage of **Matt 13:55**, Christ is called the son of the carpenter, a reference to his father.

In these passages, two facts come out: That Christ had at least four brothers and two sisters (if not more).

This indicates that Joseph and Mary had several children other than Christ, and as a result Mary did not remain a virgin.

Christ is about 30 years old at this time, and he was the first child in his family. All of these others were younger, but we know no other details.

It is apparent that Joseph died at some time after Christ was 12 years old. If this is so, then no doubt Christ had to take some responsibility for the younger siblings, especially in the area of logistical provision. Providing for a family of seven would have been no easy trick. In addition, he continued his spiritual growth, **Luke 2:52**.

From Christ's statement at the cross, it is also apparent that Mary did not have sufficient means to live on her own, **John 19:27**.

That Christ was a carpenter and the son of a carpenter. **Matt 13:55** identifies that some of the Nazarenes identified Jesus as the son of the carpenter. **Mark 6:3** identifies that some called him a carpenter in his own right.

There were carpenter guilds at the time which were very similar to the modern labor unions. Often they provided workers' benefits such as unemployment insurance or burial plots. These guilds were also formed for collective bargaining, and fought for the improvement of working conditions and workers' wages.

Because of the antiestablishment nature of these organizations, it is very unlikely that Jesus was a part of one. Away from population centers the guilds were less powerful and also less frequently present at all. Such was the case in Nazareth.

From Today's Handbook of Bible Times & Customs, p. 123, "This occupation takes on special significance because both Jesus and Joseph worked at it. Carpenters were not usually house builders because homes were not made of wood, but they did have wooden trim and fixtures. Jesus likely spent His time fashioning ox yokes, stools, plows, cabinets, carts and lattice windows. On occasion carpenters also made artificial teeth! The tools Jesus handled were the axe, hatchet, saw, knives, plane and square. Hammers and bronze nails were in use at the time. It was also possible that He worked with a bow drill."

The carpenter was much more of a fringe profession than it is in our country today. There was not that much good building wood in Israel, and the homes were made of stone. There would not have been that much work for a carpenter in a small town like Nazareth. Christ's hometown crowd speaks of his profession in a derisive manner.

Although Christ was a carpenter as a young man, he did not use his experience to illustrate any of his teachings. Perhaps this is a testimony

Christ's family and his profession and father's profession are used as ad hominem arguments against his ministry.

The phrase which follows their description of him explains their tone of voice: 'and they were constantly being stumbled at him.'

An ad hominem argument is one which uses extraneous human arguments as an attack against credibility. A person's profession or other family members are not the issue in credibility, but the Nazarenes use this against Jesus, because they cannot accept his message, because it hits too close to home it requires the sacrifice of their pride.

A carpenter in a small town would likely be poor, especially a fatherless family of seven or more. They are making fun of his family because they were poor.

Luke 4:16 testifies about Christ's custom of going to worship in the synagogue. Translation: "And he went unto Nazareth, where he had been raised, and he entered according to his custom on the Sabbath day into the synagogue and he stood up to read."

Christ's usual custom was to worship on the Sabbath day in the synagogue. From the position of the phrase 'according to his custom', it is apparent that his custom of entering the synagogue is restricted to the sabbath day. Because this occurs in Nazareth, it is likely that it was his custom to do this in previous years.

It was likely that it was also Christ's custom to stand up and read the law. Any male Jew could read and give a sermon in the synagogue. Arrangements for the sermon were made beforehand, so Christ was definitely invited to speak here. Since this event occurs after the first year of Christ's ministry, he is already very well known throughout the land.

Although the reading of the Law and the sermon were restricted to the Sabbath day, it was possible to worship and learn the truth at the synagogue any day of the week.

Nazareth was a country town, definitely off the beaten path. It had some military significance because both the Mediterranean and the Sea of Galilee could be seen from there. It was on a hill which looked both ways. Jesus could grow and develop his spiritual genius here without being noticed.

This custom extends back to his days of growing up in Nazareth. This crowd has heard him speak before, although he had never revealed his true nature or mission before this time, **John 2:4** (my time has not yet come). They may have liked him before, but now they do not. This is most likely due to his Messianic claim.

The real reason for the rejection is his teaching, even though the Nazarenes reject him on another basis. This is typical of those who are negative to the truth.

Preparing the Way of the Lord (Isaiah 40)

The Jews received the call to leave Egypt. They were to proceed to the promised land under the leadership of Moses. Between them and the promised land was a few hundred miles of wilderness. Of course, they had to cross it.

Leading them was the cloud by day and the fire by night; visible manifestations of Divine presence. Furthermore, there was the tabernacle, the tent of meeting with God.

Not long after they left Egypt, God provided a covenant at Mt. Sinai. A Law which defined individual liberty in ten commandments. That Law also defined sin.

Because of their involvement in sin and idolatry, the Jews were delayed in the desert some forty years. Their journey through the wilderness was anything but straight.

When Isaiah preached the message preserved in Isaiah 40, the southern kingdom of Judah was in a state of apostasy and their destruction by the Assyrians was near.

Isaiah preached a message which would remind the Jews of their crooked path in the desert, and of the reason for their failure: a bankrupt relationship with God. He would inspire them to build the highway in the heart, so that there would be a highway in the wilderness.

Isaiah's message also stood as a prophecy of the ministry of John the Baptist. It was John's mission to prepare the hearts of the Jews for their king and for their new covenant. **Malachi 3:1** also predicted the ministry of the Baptist

The text of Isaiah's message. "Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you

delight, behold, He is coming, says the Lord of Armies."

Isaiah 40:35 contains an excerpt from one of Isaiah's sermons. It has a command, and an explanation of that command.

The command comes from verses 35, while the explanation from verses 68.

Verses 35 read like this: "A voice is calling, 'Clear the way for the Lord in the wilderness; make smooth in the desert a highway for our God. Let every valley be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; and let the rough ground become a plain, and the rugged terrain a broad valley; then the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all flesh will see it together; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.'"

The Jews would have responded to this message immediately, for the wilderness journey was a vital part of their national heritage.

Isaiah's message is about the wilderness of the souls of the people of Judah, for because of their rejection of God, and their love affairs with the idols of the Gentiles, they had created an imposing wilderness indeed.

It is up to them to smooth out the rough places through confession of sin, and a humble orientation to God's plan for their lives.

It is only when the hearts of wilderness are smoothed out that the glory of the Lord is revealed.

This revelation is the millennial rule of the king of kings and lord of lords, the bright morning star, Jesus Christ. But first the people must humble themselves to the king and his plan for their lives.

To illustrate the clever nature of Satanic propaganda, observe:

The Jews rejected the millennial king and His kingdom from their distrust of the Gentile world.

The Gentiles now futilely attempt to bring in that kingdom when it cannot come without the king bidding.

Verses 68 explain: "a voice says, 'Call out.' Then he answered, 'What shall I call out?' All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the Lord blows upon it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever."

Isaiah makes the issue of soul leveling clear in these verses.

Isaiah communicates the mortal and fading nature of the human body, as contrasted with the word of God.

This is really a 'you can take it with you' verse. Everything in this life will be left behind except the word of God in your soul.

On the basis of this truth, make your priorities straight. Once they are on the level, your life will become straight as well.

Bible truth is the bulldozer in the soul. Sin and death and Satanic propaganda are the great mountains and gullies.

Jesus and John the Baptist

John the Baptist had a ministry from God to prepare Israel for the millennial kingdom and its king.

The ministry of John the Baptist had nothing to do whatsoever with the church. In essence it is in its own watertight compartment apart from the church. It drew its precedence from the dispensation of Israel.

John drew his sense of destiny from an Old Testament prophecy concerning his ministry. **Isa. 40; Mal 3:1.**

Since John and Jesus were cousins, it is likely that they knew one another as children and young men. John knew exactly who the Messiah was, and probably long before he ever preached his message.

John began his ministry of repentance and baptism in the Spring of 26 A.D.

So far, we have eliminated confusion concerning the relation of John's baptism and the baptism which occurs in the church age.

Now, let us contrast John and Christ.

You must understand that John was the greatest prophet of the age of Israel. His person and message were greater even than Isaiah or Jeremiah or any other. Our Lord testified to this in Matthew 11:11.

John had a great following; he was wildly popular among the people of Israel and even among some Romans.

His mission was to point the way to one even greater. From the seeming greatest to the even greater.

Long after John was gone, people still gravitated towards his ministry, even to the exclusion of Christ. In some ways, people still do, whenever they are legalistic and place great value on outward acts of piety.

Therefore, **John 1:1-18** will serve well to teach us some general truths about Christ and the contrast between he and John the Baptist. In no small part it was what John the apostle was trying to accomplish in this passage.

John 1:1-18 picks up the issue from the beginning and also describes John's relationship to Christ.

Verse 1 translation: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with the God, and God was the Word."

This verse is divided into three clauses, each of which make a statement concerning Jesus Christ.

John (the writer of this gospel) uses the term 'the Word' to describe Christ. This term has quite a history in Greek and Hebrew thought (to doctrine of logos).

The first clause places the existence of the Word in eternity past.

The phrase **en arche** emphasizes the qualitative aspect of the beginning. This is the beginning of **Gen. 1:1**; the beginning before the heavens and the earth were created.

The imperfect tense of the verb **eimi** reveals the eternity of the Word in the beginning. The existence of the Word went on and on.

The term **ho logos** shows the personification of order and wisdom existing on and on before the creation of the heavens and the earth. This is a person, and not just a principle.

Thus from the beginning of John's gospel you know that we are talking about God.

The second clause indicates the coexistence of the Word with the God. The proper noun **Theos** is preceded by the definite article **ho**. It points out that this is the one and only God; not just one God among many. Thus we know of at least two persons in the Godhead. The preposition **pros** shows the face to face presence of one with the other.

The third clause is one which clarifies the divine nature of the Word. There is no doubt from this clause that the Word was always God. Again the imperfect tense testifies to the timeless nature of the Word.

So the first contrast: with Christ we have God; John is man, created by God.

The second verse offers even more clarification on the trinity and the preexistence of the Word: "This one was in the beginning with the God."

The demonstrative pronoun **houtos** points back to the logos. It is translated 'this one'.

The imperfect tense of the verb to be makes the action timeless, eternal in nature.

The phrase **en arche** is used again to point to the time before the creation, eternity past.

The phrase **pros Theos** again shows the face to face presence of the **logos** and the **theos**.

Verse three turns to the creation. Up to this point all activity has been in eternity past. "All things came into being through him, and

outside of Him not one thing that came into being came into being."

This verse describes the **logos** as the agent of the creation.

All things is from the Greek *panta*. It refers to both creatures and the material universe apart from living creatures.

Whether the material universe or living creatures, all were created by God the agency of Jesus Christ.

Along with this creation is the responsibility of maintenance, which is also handled by the deity of Jesus Christ, **Col. 1:16-17**.

Notice that God is apart from the material universe; he created it, but it is not Him.

Again, John is very thorough by his repetition of the idea. He wants his readers to make no mistake about what he is saying, so he clarifies the original statement by stating the absolute in the negative. 'and outside of Him not one thing that came into being came into being.'

The second contrast to John the Baptist is the creator contrast the Word created; John could not.

Verse 4 turns back to eternity past and then marches forward into the time of men. "In Him was life, and that life was the light of men."

There was always life in Jesus Christ: this is indicated by the imperfect tense of the Greek verb to be, *eimi*.

This life, **zoe**, is much more than the principle of biological life it was soul life. **zoe** rises above animal instinct and behavior to the independence of the soul. And not just the function of volition, but the soul as it was designed to enjoy God and His provision.

From eternity past Christ had this life, and this life was given to Adam and the woman.

That same life was surrendered to the slavery of Satan at the fall, but it was never lost by Christ.

Christ is life, real life, personified. The life of Christ was the light of men.

At last the Word and the Life enter into time.

Although it always existed and always will exist, the Word of Life entered into time and was the light of men.

Light is the opposite of darkness. Light always destroys darkness, but darkness cannot overcome the light. Darkness is the result of obscuring the light, but the light always exists. Light and darkness are incompatible mutually exclusive. The Sun always shines, but there are times when we do not see it.

God the Holy Spirit provides the light so that we can comprehend the Word. In order to see the Word we must have light.

This life was the light of men in the past. It kept on shining. This sums up the first incarnation.

Verse five gives the final description of Christ, bringing Him into present times (for John and for us). "And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not grasp it."

There is a nice little double entendre here with the **katalambano**. It has the dual meaning of overcome and comprehend. Had the forces of darkness truly comprehended the intrinsic good of the light, then it would not have tried to put it out.

John uses the present tense of the verb **phaino** to portray Christ's present shining. Even though he died on the cross he still shines now.

Christ is the Sun (**1 Cor 15:41**), and the Morning Star (**Rev 22:16**). The Morning Star shines just before sunup. It shines as the darkness is about to end.

The darkness is the darkness of the devil's world. The roach illustration.

Verse six turns to our man, John the Baptist. "There came a man, the side of God, his name, John;" Even the style of this verse differs from that of the previous five. It is very spare and understated, as if to downplay the nature of this man, especially when compared to Christ.

Although John's writing style is almost always simple, here it become hyper-simple, and less elegant than John's brief discourse on Christ.

The verb **egeneto** is used here to describe the arrival of John. Again it is the inchoative aorist that John uses to describe the beginning of an action. John had a definite beginning. It is also the same verb that John has used previously to describe the creation by the Word. John was one created by the creator. But this verb more describes the arrival of John's public ministry than the creation of his soul.

The noun *anthropos* leaves no doubt about the true nature of John. He is a man of the human race.

The participle **apestalmenos** portrays the action of God in sending John the Baptist. It is from the verb **apostello**, 'to send forth'. It is the perfect participle, so it shows that before John arrived someone sent him. It is the passive, so it shows that it was not John who was the ultimate source of arrival, but someone else.

The preposition **para** points to the source of the sending it is God. This shows that John came from the side of God. A figure of speech that reveals how very close John the Baptist was to God. Before John began his ministry he was close to God he prepared himself in a very thorough manner by laying aside the distractions of everyday life.

The final phrase of the verse is to the point of being laconic. Three nouns lay alongside one another to identify the name of the man sent from the side of God.

Verse seven continues John's description of John. "He himself came as a witness that he might testify concerning the light, that all might believe through him."

The aorist verb **elthen** describes again the arrival of John on the scene. It is translated, 'he came'.

The subject of the verb is **houtos**, the demonstrative pronoun used to intensify the source of the action in the verb. It points strongly to John in contrast to Jesus Christ.

The preposition **eis** plus the accusative case of the noun **marturian** is translated, "as a witness." John was a witness, a man who pointed to the truth of the matter.

John then goes on to give the twofold purpose of the Baptist's ministry, using the particle *hina* twice to introduce two purpose clause.

The first clause is **hina marturese**. *peri tou photos*. "that he might testify concerning the light."

The potential subjunctive mood of the verb **marturese**. indicates that John had a responsibility to fulfill in his ministry. This mood lays the emphasis on human volition, or choice.

John's responsibility was in area of testimony he was to give his testimony about the light. The light, of course is Jesus Christ.

Notice that this passage does not say it was John's responsibility to convert people. That is addressed in the next clause.

The second clause is "that all might believe through him." The subject of the clause is all those who were alive at the time of John's ministry.

The responsibility of the potential subjunctive lies squarely on the shoulders of John's audience. Their responsibility is to believe in what John has to say. This responsibility is not John's. They believe through him, but John does not do the believing.

This summarizes very well the issue in personal evangelism. It is our responsibility to testify concerning the light; it is their responsibility to believe. You have completely and totally succeeded in your mission if you get the word out, regardless of how your audience responds.

If this is true, then do not fear rejection does not matter to the messenger. You should always be glad when someone believes on account of your testimony. However, you should be objective about your duty no matter what the response. The accomplishment of

your mission should never depend on whether you are getting positive results.

Verse eight makes a clarification for the sake of being thorough: "He himself was not the light, but came that he might testify concerning the light."

The far demonstrative is used to point to John the Baptist. Used in conjunction with the verb to be, an emphatic contrast is set up between the light and the witness to the light.

John's purpose in life is reiterated in the second clause. There he quickly goes over what he has already communicated.

All of this adds up to a very thorough and even redundant statement about John's role in relation to Christ.

Since John has gone so far out of his way to put the Baptist into his place, it is fair to assume that there was a problem with Baptist worship at the time.

Verse nine turns back to Christ, and begins to add some details about Him, "He was the true light, who illuminates every man, coming into the world." This is very poorly translated into your English Bible, and so we must make some corrections.

There is first an addition of one adjective to the idea of light, true. There were many false messiahs at the time of Christ, and even the Baptist was thought to be the Messiah himself, he was so magnificent. Therefore the light is qualified as the true light.

The next statement reveals a function of the light related to creation. It begins with the definite article used as a relative pronoun, which simply picks up the true light from the previous clause and makes it the subject of the verb of this sentence.

The verb describes the action of illumination. This is a transitive verb, so the translation shining does not work as well as illumination. This is the light shining on someone or something giving its light.

This is a figure of speech which refers to the availability of Divine illumination from birth.

The idea of illumination, when used as a figure of speech, always describes the process of understanding.

The object of the verb is translated "every man". John chooses to emphasize the individual by using the singular. The illuminated truth is available to every man from the moment that he enters the world.

The third clause of the verse indicates the moment of illumination.

Grammatically, the participle can only describe the coming of every human being into the world. The phrase describes a transition from one place to another. It cannot describe the moment of conception, because that would indicate some kind of preexistence, which is not a Christian doctrine. It therefore must describe

The moment of birth is the moment at which this illumination takes place. From that moment forward, the common grace ministry of God the Holy Spirit is available to every human being. From that moment forward, Christ remains the great hope for every man.

Verse ten reveals the relationship between Christ and the world. "He was in the world, and the world came into being through him, but the world did not know him." There are three parts to this verse: The incarnation; eternity past; and a comment on the two.

He was in the world. This testifies to the incarnation that God came into the world. That he came as a human is revealed in a later verse. For right now it is enough to know that God came into the world.

The world here is planet earth, the habitation for humanity.

And the world came into being through him. This is a repetition of an idea already introduced, but now there is more of a context for it.

Because God created the world, He is truly outside of it. He exists completely independent of space and time. Now the world is planet earth and all its inhabitants.

But this is significant on the basis of the first clause of the verse he was in the world, the same world that he created. God is responsible towards his creation.

The conjunction sets up a mild contrast to that which has come previously in the verse. The contrast has to do with the difference between what God has done for man and how man responded.

God came into the world the greatest sacrifice and expression of love in history. God created that same world.

But the world did not know him. This is a description of the response of humanity to the incarnation. They did not know him describes both recognition and acceptance. Although Christ presented himself as the Son of God, the world did not accept Him as such.

Verse 11 tells of the coming of the Word to a chosen people, "He came unto His own, and His own did not receive Him."

This of course is a reference to the Jews and their rejection of Him.

The Jews were the chosen people of the Messiah, and they did have a long association with Him, going back to the very beginnings of their history.

He came to them; He was the Messiah; and yet they did not receive Him. The objective negative adverb makes it clear that this was a complete rejection. Of course what rejection is more complete than death?

Verse 12 identifies the shift in Christ's ministry: "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the authority to become children of God, to those who believe unto His name."

The correlative pronoun **hosoi** describes a direct correlation between those who receive Christ and what they receive as a result. The

number is an exact correlation, so that no one is short changed.

The aorist tense of the verb **lambano** describes the action. It is past action, summed up in one moment of time. It is translated "received", and it is a synonym for trust or belief in Christ.

The accusative direct object **auton** identifies the object of belief, who is Christ: Him.

The second clause of the verse puts down what those who receive Christ receive in return.

The dative indirect object of the personal pronoun **autois** identifies the receivers as those who receive Christ. "to them".

The aorist tense of the verb **didomi** identifies a past action that is seen in one moment of time. It is translated "He gave." The 'He' here is Jesus Christ, the living Word.

What is given is a right. This word describes legitimate authority, and individual rights. Since this is given to individuals, it is better to call this a right given by God.

The right is related to a potential. The right implies responsibility. A right always has a direction. It may take the direction of free speech or bearing arms. Rights are divided into realms. Here the realm is related to a potential: the potential to become children of God.

Becoming a child of God is not something which occurs at salvation; it is there only in the form of potential. At salvation God gives you the right to become a child of God; whether you do so is entirely up to the free expression of your volition.

Therefore, being a child of God is not synonymous with salvation. It is identified here as the goal of post salvation life. In this case, being a child of God is equal to being a mature believer in Christ.

As a child imitates the parents, so the adopted child of God is to become an imitator of Him.

Verse thirteen is the follow up to the twelfth: "who have been born not from bloodshed nor

from the will of flesh nor from the will of man but from God."

This verse comments on how one becomes a child of God. You must be born first.

The verb **egennethesan** makes it clear that the birth is outside of the choice of the one being born. The adverb **ouk** shows that the three things listed before God are definitely not the way.

John sets up this verse in anticipation of the guesses of his readership.

When he says 'who have been born', he anticipates them thinking of a change in life, as illustrated by birth.

There are three types of changes cited by John: change by violence; change by self; and change by someone else's will.

Remember that the context of verse twelve is not salvation, but post salvation spiritual growth. The context is change, not salvation. John uses the figure of birth to portray post salvation spiritual growth in his epistle.

The word **haimaton** is translated, 'bloodshed'. It is in the plural here, and the plural of this noun always depicts the shedding of innocent blood. It could easily be translated 'violence'. This is emphatically not a portrayal of the physical birth of a child, but instead of attempting to bring change about through violence. The threat of physical violence to a person does not bring about true change.

What comes from the sin nature may be change in the sense of 'different', but never in the sense of 'better'.

Changing the trend of your sin nature from self-righteous moral degeneracy to immoral overt degeneracy or vice versa is definitely not a change for the better. In fact, sometimes it is a change for the worse.

Here it is the human volition as controlled by the Old Sin Nature.

You cannot do it is impossible to bring about change in your life by your own efforts. No

campaign of self-improvement apart from the grace of God can accomplish intrinsic and lasting good. The appearance of good may be achieved by self, but underneath the appearance remains a wicked heart.

Do not allow yourself to fall prey to anti-grace sentiment about self.

The third possibility for change is **ek thelematos andros** 'from the will of man'.

This phrase contrast the previous one by emphasizing dependence on others as a viable means for personal change.

Again, this may bring about a change in the sin nature trend; a change of outward appearance, but underneath remains the wicked heart.

Welding your own will to that of another may effectively stop a pattern of overt behavior, but it is not in any way the means to true change.

This phrase includes counseling and discipling in the bad sense of the word. Those things do not bring about true change any more than the sin nature can.

The only real catalyst for change is God, as explained by the Greek phrase **alla ek Theou**.

The conjunction **alla** indicates a very strong contrast with what has gone previously. What is to follow is the right and true way to the change of heart. It is the true post salvation change.

ek Theou tells us that true change only comes from God, and this is the set up for what is to follow in verse 14.

Get it through your heads that you can only bring about true change through the change of heart that is brought on by faith perception of the truth.

Faith perception is what makes Christianity distinct from all religions.

Faith perception is what makes Christianity distinct from all worldly means of false change.

Faith perception is what makes Christianity work, period.

Verse 14 now defines how the change was brought about: "And the Word became flesh and camped among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as a unique and only born one from the side of the Father, full of Grace and Truth."

The verse begins with the conjunction **kai** which continues the train of thought from the previous verse.

The noun **logos** is next, and with the definite article **ho** it is translated "the word". It is the subject of the sentence, and of course it is describing Christ.

The verb of the sentence is **egeneto**, which describes the beginning of the hypostatic union at the virgin birth. It is in the aorist tense, so it portrays one moment of time in the past. It is translated, "became".

sarx is the Greek word for flesh, and in this case it describes the physical human body, with no sin nature.

The conjunction **kai** shifts the thought to another fact about the incarnation. It is translated "and".

The aorist verb **skenosen** depicts an action from the past as occurring in one moment of time. It describes the temporary dwelling in a tent. "Camped" is a good way to translate this.

The preposition **en** plus the locative of place is translated here "among us".

Again the conjunction **kai** is used by John to shift to another fact about the incarnation, this time a more personal one.

The verb **etheasametha** is in the first person plural and so it reveals that John was an eyewitness to these events. It is in the aorist tense, and so it sums up the past action into one moment of time. The verb itself describes the act of witnessing an event with your own eyes. It is translated "we beheld" or "we eye witnessed".

This may be taken in the narrow sense of the transfiguration, or in the wider sense of His entire life, but we will go with the latter, as it seems to fit the context a little better.

Glory is a synonym for the essence, capabilities and attributes of God, as well as His actions toward mankind.

Glory here represents the reflection of the glory of the Father in the life of the Son.

This is the full explanation of our birth from God.

This verse progressively explains the statement in the previous verse about being born from God.

Verse 13 gave three ways in which the salvation birth is not accomplished, and then goes on to state that it instead comes from God.

The salvation birth is based on the following:

That the word became flesh. This defines the person through whom our salvation was accomplished.

That the word camped, or temporarily lived among us. Our salvation was accomplished while Christ was living on planet earth.

That the word was observed by other human beings, even the writer of this gospel.

That the life of the word was glory and this glory was related to the Father as the only born Son. Our salvation was accomplished by the Son of God.

The Son of God was full of grace and truth. Grace and truth are the opposites of the three things on the list in verse thirteen: violence, self reliance, and reliance on others.

If an unbeliever can use it or do it, it is not a part of God's plan for salvation or the post salvation life.

Christ represents both our salvation and the secret to the post salvation life.

It all depends on Divine provision, and the key to that provision is the truth. You cannot possibly access divine provision without knowing the truth, and therefore the truth must be the first priority in the Christian life.

Just as you cannot become a believer without the gospel, so also you cannot reach maturity without the Bible.

Just as you cannot perceive the gospel without the ministry of the Spirit, so also you cannot perceive the truth without.

Just as you must believe in the gospel in order to be saved, so also you must believe the truth in order to reach maturity.

Verse 15 turns back to the testimony of John: "John testified concerning him and cried out saying, "This was he about whom I said 'The one coming after me has attained rank above me, because He was (always) first with reference to me.'""

This is John's statement of humility. It confirms from his own mouth what John the apostle has already stated in verses 6 through 8. At the time of his ministry John the Baptist knew exactly where he stood with reference to his second cousin, the Messiah.

This verse forms a link between verses 14 and 16, so that Christ's rank is confirmed before turning back to the subject of grace.

Most of the difficulty in translating this verse comes in John the Baptist's statement itself, and we will concentrate our efforts in exegesis there. The rest of the verse is well translated and needs no tweaking.

John's statement begins with the definite article *ho*, which is attached to the participle **erchomenos** at the end of the verse. Together they are translated "the one coming". The participle is in the present tense and so portrays its action at the same time as the main verb.

The adverb **opiso** is translated "after". It is a temporal adverb showing Christ's appearance as following that of John. John is identifying the Messiah, and those who followed John would have known that, since it was the force of his ministry.

The second phrase is **emprosthen mou gegonen**. We have translated this "has attained rank above me."

The preposition **emprosthen** here describes the status of rank. Although it is normally translated 'before' with reference to face to face presence, it takes up the idea of one being before another in a line. But we will not forsake the personal nature of this preposition. John and Jesus are second cousins according to the flesh. They at least knew one another as acquaintances growing up.

The perfect tense of the verb **gegonen** shows that the attainment of rank happened in one moment of time, and that moment is portrayed as having an impact forever.

With the preposition **mou** John the Baptist identifies himself as the lower ranked one of the two.

The explanation comes in the third phrase, which is translated, "because He was always first with reference to me".

The explanatory use of the conjunction *hoti* points to the last few words of the verse as the explanation of what has just been said.

The imperfect tense of the verb *to be* describes the eternal existence of the rank of Jesus Christ.

The built in third person singular 'he' identifies Jesus Christ as the one who produces the action of the verb.

The adverb **protos** indicates the highest rank of all: first.

The personal pronoun in the genitive case takes the adverbial genitive of reference, and so is translated, 'with reference to me.' This is not a statement of the priorities of the Baptist, but of comparison.

The comparison is valid with reference to every human being.

John's statement of the supreme rank of Christ fits into the overall narrative.

Christ is God.

The Word became flesh.

Jesus Christ was always first, relative to John and to the whole world.

Only God could become flesh; flesh could never become God. Only the first could become last, the highest ranking die for all those of lower rank.

John's testimony confirms Christ's preeminent rank. John 1:7; John 1:27.

Christ's self testimony doest the same thing.
Rev 1:17; Rev 22:13.

Verse 16 makes the grace of God a personal thing. It too is an explanation of verse 14, and it is translated "For of His fullness we have all received, even (superior) grace in exchange for grace." This is also the setup for verse 17 which explains this one in even fuller detail.

The fullness referred to here is the fullness of Jesus Christ presented in verse 14. It is the fullness with reference to grace and truth.

That same fullness was received (aorist tense) by John and others, and of course is available to us.

The ascensive use of the conjunction kai leads up to a literary climax, **charin** anti **charitos**. It is translated, "even grace in exchange for grace". Note that the ascensive use points to a further description of the same thing, and does not add a new thing to another. It is not "and grace..."

The final three words describe a trade up; one thing for another, but the thing received is far superior to the thing exchanged. It is one grace for a superior grace.

This is a description of the trade out of dispensations brought about by the first advent.

It is very important to realize that the dispensation of Moses was also a dispensation of grace and that the Law was a grace provision of God.

The plan of God for the church is very superior to the ritual plan for Israel, but it is not a

complete change of policy on God's part. Grace always has and always will be the policy of God toward mankind. It must be that way.

Verse 17 continues the thought: "For the Law was given through Moses, the grace and the truth came through Jesus Christ."

The real comparison in this verse is between Moses and Christ. Of the two, Christ is far superior.

The two dispensations find their distinctions for that very reason: their human leaders and administrators.

God was the one who gave the law; Moses was the human agent.

Now let us turn to a comparison between the Law and Christ.

Christ is the fulfillment of the Mosaic Law, Matt 5:17.

Belief in Moses' Law led to a belief in Christ, John 5:45-47.

Verse 18 finishes the discourse, "No one has ever seen God; the only born God who is unto the bosom of the Father He explains."

The nominative case of the pronoun **oudeis** forms the subject of the first phrase of this verse. It is translated, "no one".

The verb **heo.raken** is in the perfect tense, describing a past action that has lasting results into the present and even future. It is the verb which describes the faculty of sight, and so is translated, "has seen"

Inserted between the subject and verb is the adverb **po.pote**, which is translated "ever".

The object of the sentence is the proper noun **theon**, which is in the accusative case. It receives the action of **heo.raken**, and is translated "God".

No one has ever seen God. This is a complaint that so many unbelievers have. They do not see God, and therefore they do not see a relationship with Him as important or relevant.

Up to the moment in history when John wrote, there had been theophanies of various kinds, but never a direct revelation of the person of God (insert theophanies).

But then the word became flesh and dwelt among us.

The subject of the next phrase of the clause is **monogene.s** theos. These two, the adjective and noun, are both in the nominative case, and produce the action of the sentence.

monogene.s denotes a unique birth. Only one man was ever born a virgin, as only one has received the resurrection. The proper noun theos concentrates on the hypostatic union. This is translated, "the only born God". Jesus Christ is the unique person of the universe, the God man.

Next there is the definite article and participle. These are translated together "the one who is" There is an eternal nature to these words conveyed by the combination of the present tense of the participle and the nature of its subject, God the Son. Furthermore, the prepositional phrase **eis ton kolpn tou patros** follows. The preposition eis describes the Son as being in a constant state of motion. This motion is directed toward the bosom of the Father.

kolpon is the Greek word for bosom and it portrays fellowship of the closest nature. "like a child at rest on its mother's breast", or John resting on our Lord's chest at the last supper. Complete trust is required like a dog rolling over for you to pet his tummy.

The Son is always in the closest of fellowship with the Father. This describes their coequal and coeternal status, and the reliance of the Son on the Father throughout the incarnation.

The verb of this final clause is **exe.ge.sato**. This is the aorist tense, which portrays a past action and sums that action up into one moment of time. It means to draw out or explain something, and it is the Greek word on which is based our English exegesis. We will translate it "explained"

The demonstrative pronoun **ekeinos** is inserted as a duplication of the subject. There is no object.

The Word became flesh and explained the Father. In just what way the Son explains the Father we are about to study.

The Wilderness Temptation of Christ

The introductory verses, or how Christ got to the wilderness. The three gospel accounts of the event differ substantially so as to shed as much light as possible on it. Since Divine Guidance is in view here, we will exegete each passage in turn in order to get the details.

Matthew 4:1, "Then Jesus was led up into the wilderness by the Spirit to be tempted by the devil"

The adverb of time pote is translated 'then'. It reveals the sequence of events in Christ's life. Mark uses the adverb euthus to communicate the immediate aspect of this transition.

ie.sous is the proper noun used as the subject of the sentence. This is 'Jesus'.

The verb is ane.chthe. It is in the passive voice, which indicates that our Lord did not produce the action of the verb but instead received it. The constantive aorist tense summarizes the past action into one moment of time. The verb itself means to lead from a lower to a higher point. This point can be figurative, as in the case of spiritual maturity, or literal, as in this instance. Christ was going from the low point of the Jordan River (just a few miles from the lowest land elevation on the planet) to the rough wilderness above. This emphatically does not mean snatched away, as some have tried to make the point that the Spirit picked our Lord up and bodily moved Him to the desert. This is translated, 'was led up' The Spirit did the leading and Christ did the following. Exactly how this occurred will be the subject of our study of the doctrine of divine guidance.

The prepositional phrase eis te.n ere.mon describes the geographical transition from the

Jordan to the Wilderness. It is translated "into the desert".

A second prepositional phrase puts forth the leadership of the Spirit, who was the direct agent of the leading. It is *hupo tou pneumatou*, and translated "by the Spirit".

The last clause of the verse is a purpose clause which is *peirasthe.nai hupo tou diabolou*. The verb is the aorist passive of *peirazo*, which means to put someone to the test. Depending on the one doing the test, the purpose may be good or bad. This is translated, "to be tempted by the devil"

Notice that *hupo tou diabolou* is identical to *hupo tou pneumatou*. In the battle to come, it will be the ministry of God the Holy Spirit versus the temptation of the devil.

This is the first evidence testing done under the conditions of the church age. Christ is our prototype for the fulfillment of God's plan for the church age dispensation. An entirely new and never before tried set of grace assets will be put through its paces over the next forty plus days.

Mark 1:12, "And immediately the Spirit cast Him out into the desert"

The major difference here is in the verb that is used to describe the action of the Spirit in getting Christ to the desert.

In this verse, *to pneuma*, the Spirit, is the subject, and *auton* the personal pronoun describing Christ is the object. This reveals that once under the leadership of the Spirit there was no doubt whatsoever as to what would happen.

The verb *ekballei* is in the present tense, which reveals an action as it happens. It is the dramatic way to present the action typical of Mark's gospel. The verb literally means to cast out. The Spirit 'cast out' Christ into the wilderness *eis te.n ere.mon*. Again we do not yet know how this occurred, only that it did.

Luke 4:1, "And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit returned from the Jordan and was being led by means of the Spirit in the desert." The

main change here is the revelation that Christ was led by the Spirit for the duration of His stay in the desert, and that it was from a state of being full from the Spirit that gave the leadership.

The verse begins with the post positive conjunction *de* which serves as a transition from the genealogy in the last part of chapter 3. Its force is, "now let's turn to another subject."

Four words work together to form the foundational statement of the verse: *le.sous ple.re.s pneumatou hagiou*. They are translated "Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit."

The nominative case of *ple.re.s* forms the key part of the description it denotes a state of complete fullness. It can denote thought or emotion, negative or positive, but the idea here refers to the control of the soul.

The verse does not say how, but it does make it clear that *le.sous* is under the control of *pneumatou hagiou*.

The first thing that Jesus does under the control of the Spirit is return from the Jordan, where he had just been baptized. The word for returned is *hupostrepson*, which is in the aorist tense. This describes a past action occurring in one moment of time, and thus the translation "He returned".

The second thing is that "He was being led by means of the Spirit."

The verb *e.geto* is from *ago*, which is the simple verb for the act of leading. It is in the passive voice and so reveals that the subject receives the action of leadership. The imperfect tense indicates that the action took place over a duration of time in the past, and not just at one moment. It is translated, "He was being led."

The preposition *en* plus the instrumental case of means shows that the Spirit was the means of the leading.

en te. eremo. portrays both location in the desert and the amount of time spent there. It is translated, "in the desert" This tells us that the

Spirit not only led Christ to the desert, but also the entire time that He was there.

Analysis of the three.

Although in all three cases Christ got to the wilderness under the leadership of the Spirit, nowhere are there specific mechanics mentioned. This does not indicate however that there were no mechanics at work.

If no mechanics are mentioned, then we must fall back on what we do know about the ministry of the Spirit in relation to Divine Guidance.

The guidance of the Spirit for Christ in the desert must therefore fall within what the New Testament teaches about the guidance of the Spirit in the church age.

Christ is the author and perfecter of our faith. As he goes we should follow.

DIVINE GUIDANCE OF CHRIST FOR HIS DESERT EXPERIENCE

The Old Testament had plenty of guidance for Christ with reference to His destiny in the desert. Israel experienced several notable failures while wandering in the Wilderness. All three of these failures include both a failure in leadership and a failure in the people to follow. All of the events in the history of Israel are recorded for the benefit of Christian believers of all time.

READ 1 Cor. 10:1-15

Jesus Christ himself was certainly aware of the will of God with respect to these events.

Some of the events during which Israel failed are:

The Provision of Manna

The Golden Calf Episode

Aaron's Rod that Budded

The Waters of Meribah

MANNA

Num 11:6; Josh 5:12; Psalm 105:40; Exo 16.

Name. Manna means "What is it?" in the Hebrew. This is after the response of the Jews when they saw it for the first time.

Physical Description:

Ex 16:13,14,21 "and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. When the layer of dew evaporated, behold, on the surface of the wilderness there was a fine flake like thing, fine as the frost on the ground... but when the sun grew hot, it would melt."

Ex 16:20, "But they did not listen to Moses, and some left part of it until morning, and it bred worms and became foul; and Moses was angry with them."

Ex 16:31, "And the house of Israel named it manna, and it was like coriander seed, white; and its taste was like wafers with honey."

Num 11:7, "Now the Manna was like coriander seed, and its appearance like that of bdellium."

Num 11:8, "The people would go about and gather it and grind it between two millstones or beat it in the mortar, and boil it in the pot and make cakes with it; and its taste was as the taste of cakes baked with oil."

It was eaten for the duration of the wilderness experience of the children of Israel Ex

Its cessation after 40 years was significant enough to be recorded by Joshua, **Josh 5:12**.

Manna was a miraculous grace provision from God.

Ex 16:32, "Then Moses said, 'This is what the Lord has commanded, 'Let an omer full of it be kept throughout your generations, that they may see the bread that I fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you out of the land of Egypt.'"

After a while the children of Israel became dissatisfied with the monotony of manna

Num 11:4-6, "And the rabble who were among them had greedy desires; and also

the sons of Israel wept again and said, 'Who will give us meat to eat? We remember the fish which we used to eat free in Egypt, the cucumbers and the melons and the leeks and the onions and the garlic, but now our appetite is gone. There is nothing at all to look at except this manna.'

Note that this was a rejection of the grace of God, and therefore called into question His Holy character.

Note the desire to return to Egypt. The Old Testament records the expression of this desire no less than eight times it was probably muttered on many other occasions.

It was the Lord's original plan to give the people meat for a month. So much so that it would come out of their nostrils. Moses failed to believe the Lord, and thus a plague was sent.

The lust of the rabble was met with quail by the millions **Num 11:31**, "Now there went forth a wind from the Lord, and it brought quail from the sea, and let them fall beside the camp, about a day's journey on this side and a day's journey on the other side, all around the camp, and they spread them out for themselves all around the camp."

Those who went to gather quail would have had to go through the manna fall in order to reach the dead birds.

After a day in the desert sun the quail was well past its prime. In fact, the plague struck those who were foolish enough to eat it. v.33, "While the meat was still between their teeth, before it was chewed, the anger of the Lord was kindled against the people, and the Lord struck the people with a very severe plague."

This punitive discipline was designed to wake up the Israelites and renew their dependence on logistical grace.

Christ used manna to illustrate the grace assets related to salvation and eternal life, **John 6:31-33**, "Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread out of heaven to eat.' Jesus therefore said to them, 'Truly truly I say to you, it is not Moses

who has given you the bread out of heaven, but it is My Father who gives you the true bread out of Heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world."

The grumbling of Israel is analogous to any time that we call into question the grace provision of God, whether in spiritual or physical form.

This failure was memorialized by the placement of a pot of manna inside of the ark of the covenant. In spite of the failure, the covenant continued, covered by the ark of the covenant.

THE GOLDEN CALF

Exo. 32; 1 Kings 12:28; 2 Kings 10:29.

The Golden calf represents the failure of the children of Israel at the Holy Mountain of God.

It was there that they made an idol because of their impatience with Moses, who had been on the mountain with God for what they considered as too long.

Ex 32:1-4, "Now when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people assembled about Aaron, and said to him, 'Come, make us a god who will go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.' And Aaron said to them, 'Tear off the gold rings which are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me.' Then all the people tore off the gold rings which were in their ears, and brought them to Aaron. And he took this from their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, and made it into a molten calf; and they said, 'This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt.'"

Notice that the people have yet to receive the tablets, but they have already received the commandment against idolatry, and so they are sinning in cognizance against God, **Ex 20:23**.

Notice also Aaron's direct involvement in this caper. He fashioned it with his own hands.

The people recognize that without Moses they would have died in the desert, and they fear being without him.

It is their desire to replace Moses because they had made him into a god. Their idolatry was directed toward a man, and not the one true god at all.

It is ludicrous for them to think that a calf was the God who brought them up from Egypt. Their reversionism has taken them to irrationality.

In Ex 32, verses 7-14, Moses beseeches God to withhold from destroying the nation of Israel for their idolatry, and the Lord assents.

Moses then descended from the mountain with the tablets of the Law in his arms, he first hears and then sees the idolatrous feast. He is so angry that he dashes the tablets on the rocks at the foot of the mountain. They are utterly shattered. Next he melted down the golden calf, ground it into powder, and scattered the powder over the surface of the water. He made the people drink that water. All this from verses 15-20.

Moses then turns to Aaron, whom he left in command before he went up on the mountain. Aaron's reply is one for the books.

Exo. 32:21-24, "Then Moses said to Aaron, 'What did this people do to you, that you have brought such great sin upon them?' And Aaron said, 'Do not let the anger of my lord burn you know the people yourself, that they are prone to evil. For they said to me, 'Make a god for us who will go before us; for this Moses, the man who brought us up from Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.' And I said to them, 'Whoever has any gold, let them tear it off.' So they gave it to me, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf.'"

Aaron first attempts the blame the people for his failure in leadership.

Second, he fabricates the story of the manufacture of the calf. He implies that the calf is from God Himself by telling of its miraculous production.

As a memorial, the broken tablets of the law were placed inside of the ark of the covenant. In spite of this failure, the covenant would continue, covered by the mercy seat of God.

AARON'S ROD

Numbers 17.

In Numbers chapter 16, the rebellion of Korah is recorded. It resulted in the death of 14,700 Israelites by plague.

At the conclusion of the rebellion, there was a great need to reaffirm the authority of Aaron.

Therefore, God conceived a test which the Israelites could perform, so that His choice of Aaron could be made clear to them.

Num 17:1-7, "Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 'Speak to the sons of Israel, and get from them a rod for each father's household: twelve rods, from all their leaders according to their father's households. You shall write each name on his rod, and write Aaron's name on the rod of Levi; for there is one rod for the head of each of their father's households. You shall then deposit them in the tent of meeting in front of the testimony, where I meet with you. And it will come about that the rod of the man whom I choose will sprout. Thus I shall lessen from upon Myself the grumblings of the sons of Israel, who are grumbling against you.' Moses therefore spoke to the sons of Israel and all their leaders gave him a rod apiece, for each leader according to their fathers' households, twelve rods, with the rod of Aaron among their rods. So Moses deposited the rods before the Lord in the tent of the testimony."

Of course, Aaron's rod budded, and thus was his authority established, verses 8-11.

Aaron's rod that budded was placed into the ark of the covenant to remind the people of the

rebellion of Korah, and the importance of following their divinely appointed rulers.

The covenant continued in spite of the failure, because the sin was covered by the mercy seat.

THE WATERS OF MERIBAH

Exodus 17:17; Numbers 20:2-13.

This is the real third test which Christ received in the wilderness. It was the reason that the people were not allowed to enter the promised land.

At Meribah, the people became thirsty, and demanded that God bring them water.

They had been without water for one day. They were uncomfortable, but not dying.

Because of this thirst, they put the Lord to the test. They demanded that He prove His deity by giving them water. This was the last straw, and so the punishment came.

THE TESTS OF CHRIST: two fast balls and a curve.

Test one: the logistics test.

Matt 4:2-4, "And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He finally became hungry. And the tempter said to Him, 'If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.' But He answered and said, 'It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God'"

ne.steusas is the verb that is translated fasting. It describes complete abstinence from food. The culminative aorist tense concentrates on the end of the fasting.

husteron is used as an adverb to emphasize that Christ was not ordinary man. It is translated 'finally'.

Luke 4:24, "And He ate absolutely nothing during those days; and at the concluding of them, He hungered. And the devil said to Him, 'If You are the Son of God, speak to this stone that it might become bread.' And Jesus answered him, 'It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone.'"

The combination of **ouk** and **ouden** places an absolute negation on the verb **ephagen**.

The preposition **en** plus the phrase **tais heme.rais ekeinai**s shows that the negation lasts for the entire forty days.

The aorist participle **suntelestheiso.n** indicates that it was only at the very conclusion of the forty days that He became hungry. The verb **peinao** describes an obsessive hunger, where all that is thought of is food. It is not just the growling of the stomach. After forty days, even the healthiest human being is at the limits of his endurance. So was Christ.

The imperative mood of the aorist verb **eipe** shows a command to the stone.

The subjunctive mood of **ginomai** reveals that it all depends on Christ's volition. The devil knows that the Divine Power is available, but that its use would invalidate the purpose of the incarnation.

Matthew says stones plural instead of stone singular from Luke. This difficulty is resolved by applying the principle of plurality. Each recital is correct; there was more than one instance of temptation. Matthew records one of these, while Luke the other. It is likely that Luke records the latter of the two, because of Christ's abbreviated reply. This could not be resolved by applying the principle of translation.

When you put these two together, they form an interesting narrative that describes an ongoing temptation. In the later temptation His Scriptural reply is abbreviated, as though He is at the very end of His endurance, or because it is not necessary to repeat the whole thing.

This test relates to the logistical test of Israel:

The Israelites had something to eat every day. Manna was the world's greatest health food. It was the same thing, but it was something.

Christ had nothing to eat for forty days and forty nights. Therefore, His test was far greater than what they endured. He ate the same thing every day: Nothing.

Placing the manna inside the ark of the covenant foreshadowed this test of our Lord. It commemorated Christ's victory in the desert, and it looked forward to the redemption of this failure at the cross, as represented by the mercy seat.

The essence of the temptation had to do with the temptation to use His divine attributes or rely on what God provided His humanity.

To use His divine capability of omnipotence to turn the stones to bread would violate the principle of kenosis; to do so would destroy divine character.

The very reason for the incarnation would have been undermined and destroyed had Christ given in here. The cross and the Christian way of life would have instantly become meaningless.

Christ used only what God provided His humanity to resist this temptation. Three grace assets are pertinent:

The human spirit, or spiritual conscience, which was Christ's frame of reference for spiritual matters.

The power of God the Holy Spirit related to the perception and recall of the word.

The Word itself, at the time only the Old Testament canon.

Note that Christ quotes from Deuteronomy 8:3.

The context of this verse is Moses' final exhortation to the children of Israel before their occupation of the promised land.

All three of Christ's replies will come from this speech.

These three things denote readiness for the blessings of the land of milk and honey:

First, there is worship of the one true God and abstinence from idolatry. This is personal love for God.

Second, there is humble acceptance of the circumstances of your life, good or bad, and

acceptance of delegated human authority, good or bad.

Third, there is a devotion to the word of Truth, and acceptance of God's logistical grace.

This scripture was originally learned and inculcated by Christ, probably at a very young age.

At this appropriate time, the Spirit recalled this passage into Christ's spiritual frame of reference, His human spirit. Christ instantly understood the issue.

Now the issue remained: Would He apply what had been recalled? The answer is of course. He even quotes the passage directly to the devil.

Deut 8:1-10

Test two: the idolatry test.

Matthew 4:8-10, "Again, the devil is taking Him alongside to an exceptionally high mountain, and showing Him all the kingdoms of the world, and their glory; and He said to Him, 'All these things will I give you, if falling down you might worship me.' Then Jesus said to him, 'Begone, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.'"

paralambano means to take alongside. This verb has a wide connotation which seems to harmonize well with the situation. It means to take someone into your home as a guest; to take someone aside for the purpose of private instruction or reproof; to take someone alongside for purpose of helping them; and in the legal context to take someone into custody. This is the perfect word for this situation, because you can see the enemy taking Christ alongside as a used car salesman does. The historical present is used to emphasize the drama of the moment.

lian emphasizes the great height of this mountain; perhaps it was even Mt. Everest or Mt. Ararat...

deiknumi fits well into the sleazy used car salesman context. It means to show or

demonstrate something to someone. This too is in the historical present.

The aorist participle **peso.n** demonstrates that the falling down must precede the distribution of the kingdoms and their glory.

The subjunctive mood of the verb **proskune.se.s** indicates that it is up to Christ; He must exercise His will freely in this matter. The verb depicts the kissing of another's feet, and comes with the idea of sycophantic flourish before a deified king.

Luke 4:5-8, "And he led Him up and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to Him, 'I will give You all this domain and its glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. Therefore if You worship before me, it shall all be Yours.' And Jesus answered and said to him, 'It is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God and serve Him only.'"

Luke uses the word **oikoumene.s** for world. It bears closer to the meaning of 'establishment', or 'corporation'. This contrasts with the straightforward kosmos of Matthew.

Luke adds that the show occurred in one moment of time. Ahem, he did not want Christ to look too closely. Again the used car salesman analogy. This from **stigma. chronou**, a point of chronological time.

exousia denotes that Christ would be given delegated authority from Satan over all these kingdoms, along with the glory of them. Let me point out that the glory of the devil's world is only a veneer.

The enemy did not receive the kingdoms of the world because of meritorious service. He deceived Adam, and received the authority because of Adam's irresponsible sin.

This temptation is recorded by both Matthew and Luke, who write and cover it thoroughly between them. There is only one instance of temptation here.

We will accept Luke's order of events here, because they are more logical, and Luke tends to be very chronological in his narrative, while Matthew is topical.

All of the kingdoms of the world would belong to Christ at the right time, and only when His chosen people would accept Him as the Messiah.

This particular condition was not yet fulfilled, and in fact the early indicators were not looking good.

In other words, this was attacking Christ at a potential weak spot. The greatness of the world made the temptation all the more agonizing.

That Christ would continue in poverty for the rest of his life is a testimony to his fantastic resolve.

Part of this test had to do with timing, and part of with idolatry. It harkens back to the failure of the golden calf.

Christ's solution to this problem comes from Deut 6:13. Note that the blessings of the Promised Land are neither earned nor deserved. Yet they are given freely by God.

The offer from Satan is something similar, but infinitely less because of the object of worship. The satisfaction that comes from a relationship with God is so great as to add to one's appreciation and enjoyment of the attendant blessings. In the worship of idols, all the things turn to dust.

Christ applies the perfect passage for this specific temptation, another great testimony to the work of the Spirit and the level of inculcation that Christ has reached.

Again Christ solves the problem through the Holy Spirit, the Word, and His human spirit. These same three grace assets are available to us as church age believers.

In this case kenosis is not as much an issue, because Christ is not directly tempted to use His capabilities to solve the problem.

The authority/putting God to the test.

Matthew 4:57, "Then the devil took Him alongside into the holy city; and he stood Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, 'If you are the Son of God throw Yourself down; for it is written, 'He will give His angels charge concerning You.' And, 'On their hands they will bear You up, lest You strike your foot against a stone.' Jesus said to him, 'On the other hand, it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

paralambano is used again by Matthew to describe the sleazy operation of the enemy. This polite word is used to outline an insidious temptation.

entello is the word used to indicate the giving of responsibility to the angels. It is in the future tense because it depends on a past condition in the context of Psalm 91.

palin is used by Christ to express His contradiction of the assertion of Satan. palin means back; again; it is an adverb. Here it takes on the meaning of contradiction. It returns to Scripture, where Satan has just taken the conversation, and contradicts what has just been said.

Luke 4:9-12, "And he led Him to Jerusalem and stood Him upon the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, 'If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here; for it is written, 'He will give His angels charge concerning You to guard You,' and, 'On their hands they will bear You up, Lest You strike Your foot against a stone.'" And Jesus answered and said to hi, 'It is said, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

This test has many levels:

There is a temptation to verify His own Messiahship by jumping down from the temple; from this it appears to be about Aaron's rod that budded.

There is a necessity for Christ to see if the verse quoted by Satan is right and if it applies here.

If it does not apply, then Christ must rely on the Spirit to provide Him with the right Scripture.

This is also a temptation to use the privileges of His own deity 'If you are the Son of God.' kenosis comes back into play here.

Note that in this test the enemy is using Scripture against Christ. It is an oft used ploy, and it seldom fails. This points out the necessity for a prepared pastor.

The enemy quotes Psalm 91 in the temptation. Verses 11 and 12 are quoted but taken out of context.

This Psalm is about trust in God, and how God responds to those who love Him.

Especially pertinent is the conditional clause of verse 9: "If you make the most high your dwelling" This means that the following verses depend on the fulfillment of this condition.

Christ could not demand that God send his angels to cushion up his fall... that would be putting God to the test, as what happened in the wilderness at the waters of Meribah.

This test appears to be about the establishment of Christ's earthly authority. A good miracle in front of thousands of temple worshippers including the most important men in Israel would well establish Christ's authority among the Jews.

How soon they forget. Christ was only forty days before the object of the triple miracle of His baptism. The heavens split open; the voice of God spoke; the Spirit descended in the form of a dove. Yet this miracle, probably in front of those same leaders who were now below in the temple court, did not convince the people to follow Christ.

The spiritual gift of miracles would establish Christ's authority at the proper time. This was not that time. The gift of miracles functions under the sovereignty of the Spirit so that He chooses the time the place and the miracle to be performed.

The devil is trying to promote Christ before God. The devil is attempting to foist onto Christ an Aaron's rod that budded scenario. He is

attempting to do so by quoting Scripture that sounds right.

Christ rightfully sorts this one out, and quotes Deuteronomy 6:16. The full passage through verse 19 goes like this: "Do not test the Lord your God as you did at Massah. Be sure to keep the commands of the Lord your God and the stipulations and decrees he has given you. Do what is right and good in the Lord's sight, so that it may go well with you and you may go in and take over the good land that the Lord promised on oath to your forefathers, thrusting out all your enemies before you as the Lord said."

Again this is a quote from Moses final speech in preparation for the second generation to enter the promised land.

This time it was done right by Christ. He passed the tests that Israel failed.

In a completely appropriate way, the three items in the ark of the covenant represent both the failure of Israel and the triumph of Christ.

Christ not only paid for our sins, but He also produced the righteousness which would be imputed to us at salvation.

In producing that righteousness Christ established a way of solving problems which He would leave as a heritage for all church age believers.

That way was total dependence on the grace assets of God.

Christ's testing in the desert was intense, subtle, and could only be passed through dependence on the grace assets.

These three tests fall into three general categories: Provision, prosperity, and promotion.

These three tests were temptations to Christ in three categories:

The temptation to use divine power and violate the principle of kenosis.

The temptation to forsake a great relationship with God for direct worship of Satan.

The temptation to put God to the test.

Putting God to the test.

You put God to the test when you demand Him to reveal Himself in some way that benefits you.

The issue is motive. The issue is self promotion.

You are not promoted until God promotes you.

You are not a success until you succeed according to the standards of the Word of God.

Real promotion and success depend on your fulfillment of the plan of God.

You can only fulfill the plan of God through the implementation of the victorious ideology.

The conclusion of the tests.

Matt 4:11, "Then the devil left Him; and behold, angels came and began to minister to Him."

Mark 1:13, "and the angels were ministering to Him."

Luke 4:13, "And when the devil had finished every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time."

Jesus' First Followers

John 1:35-51 (translation), "Again the next day John was standing with two of his disciples,

"and he looked upon Jesus as He walked, and said, 'Behold, the Lamb of God!'"

"And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.

"And Jesus turned, and beheld them following, and said to them, 'What do you seek?' And they said to Him, 'Rabbi [which translated means Teacher], where are you staying?'"

"He said to them, 'Come, and you will see.' They came therefore and saw where He was staying; and they stayed with Him that day, for it was about the tenth hour.

"One of the two who heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.

"He found first his own brother Simon, and said to him, 'We have found the Messiah' [which translated means Christ].

"He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him, and said, 'You are Simon the son of John; you shall be called Cephas' [which translated means Peter].

"The next day He purposed to go forth into Galilee, and He found Philip. And Jesus said to him, 'Follow Me'.

"Now Philip was from Bethsaida, of the city of Andrew and Peter.

"Philip found Nathanael and said to him, 'We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.'

"And Nathanael said to him, 'Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?' Philip said to him, 'Come and see.'

"Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, and said of him, 'Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!'

"Nathanael said to Him, 'How do you know me?' Jesus answered and said to him, 'Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.'

"Nathanael answered Him, 'Rabbi You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel.'

"Jesus answered and said to him, 'Because I said to you that I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You shall see greater things than these.'

"And He said to him, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, you shall see the heavens opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.'"

John the Baptist knows Jesus already; they are cousins according to the flesh. So when he sees the Messiah, he points Him out to the two disciples he is with. He calls Jesus the "Lamb of God." This is a reference to the Passover feast.

The Passover and Unleavened Bread

The Documentation. Ex 12:320; Lev 23:6; Deut 16:18; Num 28:1625.

THE PROCEDURE.

A lamb without spot or blemish is slain by the head of each family.

The blood from the lamb is sprinkled with hyssop on the top of the doorframe.

The lamb is roasted and then consumed with bitter herbs by the father and his family.

After Jerusalem was established, the Passover was to be celebrated only there.

For the week following the Passover feast only unleavened bread would be eaten.

On each of the seven days the Levitical priest would sacrifice 2 bullocks, 1 ram, 7 lambs, and 1 goat.

On the second day an offering of barley was made. This was the first harvest fruits of the year.

The sabbath was observed on the first and last days of the feast, but the entire week was treated as a sabbath with reference to work. Only work for food preparation was allowed.

THE INTERPRETATION.

The wilderness journey.

This feast represented the Exodus from Egypt.

The Passover represents the night before the departure of the Israelites from Egypt, Exo 12.

The blood on the doorframe was a sign to God to pass over that house. All other houses would have the firstborn of all men and animals killed by God.

ii. The eating of the lamb would be the last meat eaten before the journey to the promised land.

iii. The bitter herbs represented the bitterness of the slavery of the Israelites in Egypt.

The unleavened bread represented the hurry in which the Jews had to leave. They did not have time for the yeast to rise.

The observation of the Sabbath was a reminder to set apart time for the Lord, so that one would be spiritually prepared for the wilderness journey.

All together, these things represent the beginning of every believer's relationship with God: the moment of belief in Christ.

The believer leaves behind all that he has in the way of pride and human good in order to take hold of salvation in Christ.

The promised land still lies ahead. This is the hope of spiritual maturity and its blessings.

The rituals.

The sacrifice of the lamb was a preview of the saving work of Christ on the cross. The lamb was without spot or blemish, which was the status of Christ at the virgin birth. This called to mind the righteousness, justice, love, mercy, grace, and flexible proficiency of God.

The eating of the whole lamb represented the necessity of total belief in Jesus Christ for salvation.

The priests sacrificing the animals provide a backdrop for the truth of the feast. These were burnt offerings.

The sacrifice of 7 lambs per day displayed the perfect work of God.

ii. The sacrifice of the ram each day was a reminder that this was the sacrifice of God's Son. It harkened back to Abraham's near sacrifice of Isaac.

iii. The sacrifice of the goat each day was a reminder that Jesus Christ was the scapegoat for the entire human race.

iv. The sacrifice of the 2 bullocks per day represented the prosperity which comes from a relationship with God. The bullock was a sign of prosperity and the means to prosperity, for it was a beast of burden. Ownership of two bullocks was considered prosperity in ancient Israel.

The sacrifice of the barley was a giving of the first-fruits of the harvest, and it was given in

thanksgiving for logistical grace. It called to mind the faithfulness of God.

The unleavened bread represents the status of Christ on the cross. There is no sin whatsoever in Christ, just as unleavened bread has no yeast.

The daily sacrifices were to remind the Jews of the importance of their relationship with God. They put an exclamation point onto the other activities of the feast.

The Temple.

The daily sacrifices were made by the priests at the brazen altar in the outer court of the Temple or tabernacle.

This represents the righteousness of Christ ascending up to God the Father in the smoke of the burnt offering.

The copper of the altar represented judgment, and specifically the judgment of Christ in our place on the cross.

New Testament.

Christ spoke of his relationship to the Passover at the last supper. Mat 26:26-30, "While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Take and eat; this is my body.' {27} Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you. {28} This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. {29} I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom.' {30} When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives."

Paul used the unleavened bread to illustrate the church without the bad influence of those in the cosmic system. 1 Cor 5:7, "Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth."

In other words, Christ was the fulfillment of the Passover. John knew that Christ was about the redemption of sins; that was the nature of his own baptizing ministry.

The two disciples follow Jesus, because He is the Messiah, and greater than John. This is not too difficult a decision to make.

They use a respectful form of address, Rabbi.' They recognize that Jesus has the authority of a teacher of the Law, and therefore a Jewish authority. This would certainly miff the Pharisees and Scribes in the days and years to come.

These two disciples want to know where Jesus is staying. This is tantamount to proclaiming that they are with Him now; they want to follow Him wherever He will go. They are through with John.

Andrew went and found Peter; there is not much more that Scripture has to say about Andrew, but this of course was something very good. A lot has been said about this kind of ministry; deservedly so. Even the timid can have great impact simply by repeating the act of Andrew in their own way. It is a simple kind of thing: "I have found the Messiah; come see for yourself."

Jesus calls Simon CEPHAS, which is translated PETROS. They mean rock.' He would be the foundation rock of the early church.

Bartholomew is the name mentioned in the synoptic gospels. This means 'Son of Ptolemies' Since this is only a last name it is not specific as to the actual person behind it. It also may be interpreted 'Son of Ptolemais', a city on the North Coast of Palestine, not too far from Galilee. In modern parlance, 'the guy from Ptolemais'.

John uses Nathanael, the man's first name. The Ptolemies were the royal family in Egypt, and major players in the events following the death of Alexander the Great in 323 B.C. and the building of the Roman Empire. The most famous of all the Ptolemies was none other than Cleopatra of Egypt.

Bartholomew/Nathaniel exhibits an elitist attitude toward Nazareth that could come from being part of a royal family, or simply from a neighboring town.

It is interesting to note that Christ says of Nathanael, "a real Israelite". The word 'real' is translated from the adverb *ale.thino.s*. This adverb is one of emphasis on true nature. But Nathanael Bartholomew is of Egyptian heritage he could not be a genetic Jew. But Christ talks about his spiritual heritage as Paul would... that the true Jew is the one who believes in Him regardless of his genetic make up.

Christ also comments that Nathanael is without guile, or cunning deceit. Another way to put it is that Nathaniel is very forthright; he says what he thinks. Nathanael is a straight shooter with his words, as he has just demonstrated with his comment on Nazareth.

Nathaniel's response to Christ's statement is surprise and disbelief. "How do you know me?" Christ responds, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." We do not know what Nathanael was doing under the fig tree, but it was certainly related to his forthright nature.

On the basis of Christ's simple statement, Nathanael believes. It is now Christ's turn to register surprise.

On account of Nathaniel's belief, Christ prophesies: 'You will see the heavens opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.' This is a reference to behind the scenes of prayer. Taking the prayers to God, and returning the answers to man. However, this is a literal vision, and so Nathanael will have the gift of seeing behind the scenes of prayer.

The Wedding at Cana of Galilee

Cana was a town in Galilee, due west of the Sea of Galilee and north of Nazareth, about halfway between the two.

The ancient Jewish wedding ceremony would go like this:

There were typically many attendants to the bride and groom. The groom would select a friend to be his best man.

The weddings were often held in the fall, after the harvest, so that the maximum number of people could attend. Relatives would travel relatively far to attend.

The bride was transferred to the house of the bridegroom's father in a wonderful, boisterous, fun parade. Flowers were scattered, songs were sung. A procession of virgins accompanied the bridegroom.

A feast took place, which could last as long as a week. This traditionally began in the evening.

Riddles were told.

Love songs were sung, usually the words of the Song of Solomon were set to music for this.

A cloak or skirt was spread over the bride which represented the marital commitment. This was the high point of the feast.

The ceremony would seldom have the presence of a government official or priest.

Friends and relatives recited Biblical passages or quoted historical wisdom as the couple stood before them.

After this the couple was left alone to consummate their marriage in a room specially prepared by friends and relatives. While the consummation took place the party outside continued.

Later the couple would emerge from the consummation room with evidence of the woman's virginity on a piece of cloth.

THE TEXT, JOHN 2:1-11

John 2:1, "And a wedding began on the third day in Kana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there."

This third day is really one week's time since Christ returned from the wilderness.

Day one has the testimony of John the Baptist to the Levites, John 1:19-28. This occurs at Bethany beyond the Jordan.

The next day Christ comes back from the desert, and arrives at Bethany where John remains with his disciples, John 1:29-34.

The day after that Christ calls His first disciples, Andrew, an unnamed disciple, and Simon Peter, Andrew's brother, John 1:35-42.

On the fourth day, Philip and Nathanael Bartholomew are called, John 1:43-51.

Three days later, Christ is in Kana, about three days walk from Bethany beyond the Jordan.

Christ's mother, Mary was present at this feast.

Now if Mary was very young when she gave birth to Christ, then she would be middle aged by now somewhere in her forties.

Since the birth of Christ and her tremendous display of maturity during that period we have seen her but once. That time was the time that Joseph and Mary took Christ to the Passover in Jerusalem. At that event, Mary displayed a fair amount of immaturity.

Since that event, Mary has given birth to other children through Joseph, and raised them.

She has apparently also been widowed, since the Passover event is the last time that Joseph appears on the radar screen.

John 2:2. "Now indeed Jesus was called into the wedding, and His disciples."

The ascensive use of the conjunction kai is translated indeed. This betrays some surprise on the part of the writer. Although Mary was already present at this feast, it was unusual for others to be invited while the festivities were in full swing.

The passive voice of the verb ekle.the. reveals that Christ was polite. He did not barge in, but he was called. The passive voice shows us that Christ did not produce the action of the calling, someone else did.

The use of the conjunction eis indicates that he was outside of the wedding, an uninvited guest.

The third person singular of the verb ekle.the. shows us that only Christ at first is called in; His disciples are left outside. This further

indicates that Christ was called in because Mary was His mother not because of His celebrityship. The fact that John mentions Mary's presence supports this.

The conjunction kai plus the phrase hoi mathetai autou reveals that the extension of the invitation to the disciples was more of an afterthought.

Although this was a large Jewish wedding the addition of five or six more people would have placed a pretty serious burden on the wedding logistics. The Bride's father would have to pay for the consumption of food and drink by the disciples. Furthermore, these things were planned carefully according to how many guests were attending. Six more would have strained the limits of that plan.

John 2:3. "And the wine having failed, Jesus' mother says to him, "They have no wine".

So Mary has a firm grasp of the obvious. There is more to this verse than that.

John dramatized this moment, and not because Mary was speaking. The failure of the wine would have been a serious impediment to the celebration. If this was only midweek in the celebration, it would have been a social disaster.

This moment is dramatized by the use of the dramatic or historical present tense of the verb legei to speak.

The focus of the disaster is revealed by the position of the participle husteresantos.

This participle is in the genitive absolute. This shows a grammatical disconnection with the rest of the statement in the verse. It shows that although Mary made the statement, she really had no idea why this had happened.

It is extremely likely that the wine failed due to the presence of six additional guests Jesus and His disciples. It also means that Jesus and His disciples were helping the wine shortage along by drinking along with the other guests. It does not imply drunkenness on their part. They did the polite thing.

Mary's statement is one which is pregnant with meaning. She is verbally elbowing her son. Hey, this was a bad situation.

Mary's verbal elbowing has to do with the deity of her Son. She more than anyone else knows that He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. She wants Him to use His deity to solve this problem.

There is no record of any miracle occurring from the hand of Jesus before this one. Christ has only just received the filling ministry of the Spirit at His baptism, which would have included the gift of miracles.

Therefore, Mary is not working from precedent here. She has not seen Christ do this before. Her concentration is not on the spiritual gift of miracles, which has yet to function; it is on the deity of Jesus Christ.

Though Mary does not have a clue as to why the wine has failed, it was most likely very obvious to Christ.

Though Mary only sees a quick solution to a social disaster, Christ sees much more. His responsibility in the doctrine of kenosis. Mary misses the point badly.

John 2:4. "And Jesus says to her, "What is to me and you, ma'am? My hour has not come."

Again John uses the dramatic or historic present to make the scene vivid. Again this is done with the verb legei, 'to speak'.

Our Lord uses a Hebrew idiom to make it clear to His mother that He now has His own realm of authority.

The idiom is literally from the Greek phrase Ti emoi kai soi. "What is to me and you?."

Christ very clearly says in this idiom, "Mind your own business."

What is amazing here is that Christ has just finished with the severe tests in the wilderness, and two of the three at least attempt to get Him to do the same thing that His mother is attempting here.

So Christ has to set the boundaries of His own authority with His mother. This is His affair, and not hers.

Christ uses a formal term for woman in the vocative case to gain the attention of His mother. *gune*. translates best as 'ma'am', or 'lady'. It can be a term of affection, and is almost always a term of respect, but it is formal, and it shows the objective way that Christ is addressing His mother. He is reproving her, after all.

Christ used this same term as He was dying on the cross. John 19:26 says, "Ma'am, behold your Son." There, it is definitely a term of respect and affection.

Christ then makes the issue clear: His hour has not yet come.

This hour does not refer to the hour of His kingdom ministry, for that ministry was most certainly in action even at that time.

The baptism of John was the official beginning of the kingdom ministry; from that time Christ had the filling ministry of the Spirit, and the spoken authority from God.

Christ has gathered the first of His disciples, who will be instrumental to His kingdom pronouncement.

The kingdom ministry was designed to introduce the millennial kingdom and its king to the people of Israel.

The kingdom ministry is not synonymous with the reign of the king. The reign of the king will include the full revelation and implementation of His Godly powers and character.

The hour when He can reveal and use His deity has not come, and He must make that clear to His own mother.

The hour of Christ's glorification can only come when He is accepted by the chosen nation, Israel. So far, that acceptance has not come.

Alva J. McClain has suggested six reasons for the Israelite rejection of Christ in his fine theological work, *The Greatness of the*

Kingdom. They are just as valid today as they ever were.

The high spiritual requirements our Lord laid down as essential for entrance into the kingdom (Mk 1:15; Lk 18:1517; John 3:35).

His refusal to establish a kingdom merely social and political in character (Lk 12:1330; John 6:515).

His denunciation of the current religion with its traditionalism, legalism, and ritualism (Lk 11:3754).

His scathing arraignment of the ruling classes (Matt 23).

His association with and compassion for the outcasts of Israel (Matt 9:1013; Lk 15:1,2).

His exalted claims for Himself (John 5:1618; 10:2433; 18:37).

John 2:5. "His mother says to the servants, 'Do whatever this one says to you.'"

Now it appears that Christ's mother keeps steaming straight ahead in spite of the rebuke of her Son. But this is not the case.

She says, *poiate* the imperative second person plural of the verb *poieo*., 'to do'. This is a command, but the direct object of the command is *ti an* 'whatever'. The indefinite particle *an* leaves the command wide open to the authority of Jesus Christ.

The *whatever* can mean that Christ tells them nothing.

The *whatever* can mean that Christ will give money and tell them to head to the nearest liquor store.

Or the *whatever* can mean that Christ will rely on the Father and the Spirit to solve the problem.

Although the possibility exists for the presence of some contempt in this statement, it is much more likely that it is a straightforward statement of complete humility.

Mary takes the rebuke of her Son with great self esteem, and recovers in a matter of moments

so that she is completely humble when it is her turn to speak next.

John 2:6. "Now there were six stone water jars according to the custom of the Jews for purification, each containing two or three metretai."

This verse is purely explanatory by nature. It sets the stage for the narrative to follow.

A metretai was about ten gallons. This gives us an idea of the great size of this wedding and just how much wine was being consumed. 20 or 30 gallons times six makes it 120 to 180 gallons of wine that Christ was going to make.

These stone water jars were there to hold water for dishwashing and handwashing. In other words, they were there for common, sanitary usage. The water, though sanitary and no doubt potable, was a grade below that which is drinking water.

It was the Jewish custom to wash hands and dishes both before and after meals. A large volume of water would be needed for such a task.

If Christ was going to turn all of this water into wine, it would provide enough for perhaps a hundred guests over the course of several days. Perhaps this wedding was still in its early stages, but it is more likely that the wine was intended to be too much; not to tempt everyone to over drink to a state of inebriation, but instead to symbolize the overflowing nature of the plan of God and the millennial kingdom.

David had said some thousand years before this event, "My cup runneth over." This is certainly evidence of that very thing.

Joel 2:24 contains a messianic and millennial prophecy that catches this same symbology, "And the vats will overflow with the new wine and oil."

How appropriate that this first miracle should be so very millennial.

The wine offering of the feast of first-fruits represented the prosperity that would come from the appropriation of grace provision for

spiritual life. The feast itself celebrated the law giving at Mt. Sinai.

John 2:7. "Jesus says to them, 'Fill the water pots with water.' And they filled them to the top."

Now Christ gives a direct command it is the imperative mood of the verb gemizo to fill.

The verb itself always takes the negative connotation 'Full of wickedness'; 'Full of smoke'. It is even used of the seven plague and the abominations of Revelation.

This negative connotation is related to the usual base purpose of the water jars.

The jars are to be full of dishwater, not pure, clear drinking water.

This dishwater is a good symbol for the world, and the Christian's involvement in it. You really do not want to partake of it, but it is used by God to make us clean such is the role of the undeserved suffering that is so often a part of living in the devil's world.

So Christ wrinkles His nose when he orders the servants to fill the jars with water. He is setting up a really striking contrast by using a verb of distaste.

The forthcoming miracle is really going to be a strong contrast and wonderful surprise.

John 2:8. "And He says to them, 'Draw it now and take [it] to the headwaiter.' And they took [it]."

This reveals that Christ knew beforehand just what had happened to the dishwater.

The previous verse shows Christ's premeditation; this one shows its execution.

Now Christ was doing this by the spiritual gift of miracles.

A spiritual gift is a part of the human spirit, the spiritual frame of reference in the soul.

A spiritual gift is given by the sovereignty God the Holy Spirit. It only operates under His initiative.

This passage tells us much about that gift.

That the one doing the miracle has full knowledge of the intent of the Spirit.

That the one doing the miracle participates fully in the execution of the miracle itself.

That it takes a lot of doctrine to appreciate what the Spirit is doing in the substance of the miracle.

That miracles contained great symbolism and drew their meaning from the substance of the miracle accomplished. They are thus a reflection of the order of God.

Christ could not have done this miracle on the initiative of His own deity; such would violate the principle of kenosis, and such a violation would invalidate the entire incarnation.

Christ voluntarily restricted the independent use of His own divine attributes during the incarnation.

John 2:9. "Now as the chief steward tasted the water which had become wine and had not known where it came from (but the servants who had drawn the water had known) the chief steward loudly summoned the bridegroom."

This is a very convoluted verse that is an explanation that must explain itself.

John is revealing the miracle here, but he deems it appropriate to explain the reaction to it from the viewpoint of the chief wine steward. The scene is intended to be comic.

The chief steward is like a maitre d'hotel at a fancy restaurant. He knows all the protocol, all of the details concerning a wedding feast. The perfect timing, the perfect food, etc. The bridegroom would leave the details to this man so that he could concentrate on his bride. You can imagine that these men were quite stuffy, persnickety to the extreme, and very demanding. You can also imagine this man fretting as the wine ran out "What shall we do?" Yet here comes the servants with a 20 gallon stone jar full of wine. They are saved from disgrace! They need not hear the dreaded words... "You'll never work in this town again."

But the steward has standards, and he must taste the wine. In this pinch anything but pure vinegar will do...

Now this chief steward 'tasted' the wine. This verb is *geuomai*, which fits well into the picture of winetasting. It means to savor, or relish something by taste. To really enjoy any experience.

John goes out of his way to make it clear that the steward did not know the source of the wine, although the servants did. It is the secret that the servants hold; you can see their hidden, silly smiles, and their mental giggling. The fretting, ruined chief steward is saved from certain social death, and he does not yet know.

Now the chief steward tastes the wine, and he immediately reverts to that unique form of snob degeneracy that only chief stewards and maitre d'hotels can express. His toupee' jumps into the air as he realizes the superb nature of this wine. Without delay he calls the bridegroom, and bugs the man who is to remain unbugged. He is so amazed with what he considers a blunder on the part of the bridegroom that he violates one of his own rules.

The verb *phoneo* is used to denote that the chief steward uses a loud call in order to summon. The verb is used of the trumpet blast, the rolling thunder, the voice of John the Baptist in the wilderness, the shout of the archangel at the second coming, and even the voice of God. This guy is not whispering.

He is calling to reprove the bridegroom because this great wine had remained hidden until now.

John 2:10. "Every man first puts forth the good wine and whenever they [the guests] have become drunk the inferior [younger]. You have kept the good wine until now."

The chief steward reveals a custom that makes a fair amount of sense. Serve the good wine first.

Drunk people cannot appreciate good wine. Their senses are dulled.

Drunk people cannot tell when inferior wine is served their palates are corrupt.

You can hear the stuffy way in which this man communicates. He is instructing the bridegroom with a very imperious tone of voice "Every man..."

Of course, the poor man has no way of knowing that this wine has only become so minutes ago. He makes a fool of himself before his knowing servants.

The Greek adjective *elasso*. is translated inferior. It really means younger, which translates well as inferior when a wine frame of reference is in view.

John 2:11. "This beginning of the signs Jesus did in Kana of Galilee and manifested His glory and His disciples believed in Him."

The word *arche*. indicates that this is the very first miracle that Christ performed. It is translated beginning.

It is for this reason that we know that Christ the child never did miracles. It is also for this reason that we know that even as an adult Christ never did miracles until this time.

This is what tells us that Mary had no frame of reference for the spiritual gift of miracles: the same gift that Christ used to perform this one.

John appropriately calls this miracle a *semeion* a sign. The miracles and healings that Christ performed were all designed as signs things which would point to His messiahship.

All of these things originate outside of Christ Himself due to the doctrine of kenosis.

This sign manifested His glory. It is an attestation of His messiahship. In none of these signs is Christ's full glory revealed; they only point to what is there.

Glory here is a reference to the character of God revealed in Christ. As such, these signs do not point to Christ's deity, but to the character of God revealed in His humanity. That is the primary focus of the signs.

The character of God was produced through the humanity of Christ by His appropriation of Divine grace in the ministry of the Spirit and the study of the Word.

The signs also point to Christ as the Messiah, the one who is fit to rule Israel and all the world in the millennial reign.

John also mentions that His disciples believed in Him at this point.

John 1:49 reveals that Nathanael Bartholomew was certainly a believer. The mental attitudes of the other disciples are not revealed.

Philip, Andrew, Simon Peter, Nathanael Bartholomew, and perhaps one unnamed disciple were the others present at this feast.

This was the clincher. Other signs had attended Christ in His life. The miracles surrounding His birth were more than a few trivial things. The triple miracle of His baptism was really fantastic, but it had happened to and not by Jesus.

Now Jesus does a miracle, and because of it, His disciples believed.

There is more meaning than what meets the eye in this miracle. It is not just a miracle; it is a symbol miracle.

The symbol miracle is one which reveals something about the kingdom.

Christ refers to wine in the kingdom context in Matt 9:17. There, the new wine represents the plan of God for the millennium, while the wineskins represent the subjects of the kingdom.

Here Christ turns common dishwater into superb wine; it was probably the best vintage in history.

The common dishwater represents the ritual plan of God for Israel. It is serviceable, and even potable as water, but not what you would always want to drink if you did not have to (This makes the desire to return to the ritual plan even more amazing).

The new wine represents the millennial rule of Christ, and the policy of God for that rule.

This is finest of times under the greatest of rulers. Christ is the essence of justice, love, grace, and order, and His reign will be characterized by fantastic peace and prosperity.

This miracle therefore points to the greatness of the rule of Christ, and the change from the plain to the immaculate.

The Divine Guidance of Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ functioned under a system of divine guidance that was both similar to and unique from that used by church age believers.

Some believers in history have attempted to use the unique way in which Christ was led, and therefore ended up with disaster. If you stay with what is just for us as church age believers you will go the right way.

The unique part of divine guidance for Christ was that the Messianic prophecies related to the first advent. Christ knew these prophecies quite well as a part of His expertise on the Old Testament canon of Scripture. When He determined from His store of wisdom that it was time to fulfill a certain prophecy, then He did so with full confidence.

The wise decisions that Christ made in prophecy fulfillment were always kept within the constraint of His perfect character. Christ knew that He would fulfill prophecy; He did not manipulate events so that He would and thus look good. He let the opportunities present themselves within the integrity of the way that He conducted His life, and then He fulfilled them.

We do not have 'personal' prophecies about our lives as Christ did, and therefore we must avoid the Messiah syndrome with reference to divine guidance. Events in the Bible are not types for our lives; Bible verses do not provide direct guidance concerning where we should go or what we should do; there is no kind of

'twilight zone' guidance from the pages of Scripture.

One of the best illustrations of the Messianic guidance which Christ received from Old Testament prophecy is His wilderness temptation. The question is this: How did Christ know to go to the desert at that time? Here is what we do know:

Matthew 4:1, "Then Jesus was led up into the wilderness by the Spirit to be tempted by the devil"

The verb is in the passive voice, which indicates that our Lord did not produce the action of the verb but instead received it. The constative aorist tense summarizes the past action into one moment of time. The verb itself means to lead from a lower to a higher point. This point can be figurative, as in the case of spiritual maturity, or literal, as in this instance. Christ was going from the low point of the Jordan River (just a few miles from the lowest land elevation on the planet) to the rough wilderness above. This emphatically does not mean snatched away, as some have tried to make the point that the Spirit picked our Lord up and bodily moved Him to the desert. This is translated, 'was led up' The Spirit did the leading and Christ did the following.

A second prepositional phrase puts forth the leadership of the Spirit, who was the direct agent of the leading. It is *HUPO TOU PNEUMATOS*, and translated "by the Spirit.

The last clause of the verse is a purpose clause. The verb is the aorist passive of *PEIRAZO*, which means to put someone to the test. Depending on the one doing the test, the purpose may be good or bad. This is translated, 'to be tempted by the devil'

In the battle to come, it will be the ministry of God the Holy Spirit versus the temptation of the devil.

This is the first evidence testing done under the conditions of the church age. Christ is our prototype for the fulfillment of God's plan for the church age dispensation. An entirely new

and never before tried set of grace assets will be put through its paces over the next forty plus days.

Mark 1:12, "And immediately the Spirit cast Him out into the desert"

The major difference here is in the verb that is used to describe the action of the Spirit in getting Christ to the desert.

The verb EKBALLEI is in the present tense, which reveals an action as it happens. It is the dramatic way to present the action typical of Mark's gospel. The verb literally means to cast out. The Spirit 'cast out' Christ into the wilderness. Again we do not yet know how this occurred, only that it did.

Luke 4:1, "And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit returned from the Jordan and was being led by means of the Spirit in the desert." The main change here is the revelation that Christ was led by the Spirit for the duration of His stay in the desert, and that it was from a state of being full from the Spirit that gave the leadership.

Four words work together to form the foundational statement of the verse. They are translated "Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit."

The nominative case of PLEIREIS forms the key part of the description it denotes a state of complete fullness. It can denote thought or emotion, negative or positive, but the idea here refers to the control of the soul.

The verse does not say how, but it does make it clear that Christ is under the control of PNEUMATOS HAGIOU, the Holy Spirit.

The first thing that Jesus does under the control of the Spirit is return from the Jordan, where he had just been baptized. The word for returned is HUPESTREPSEN, which is in the aorist tense. This describes a past action occurring in one moment of time, and thus the translation "He returned".

The second thing is that "He was being led by means of the Spirit."

The verb is the simple verb for the act of leading. It is in the passive voice and so reveals that the subject receives the action of leadership. The imperfect tense indicates that the action took place over a duration of time in the past, and not just at one moment. It is translated, "He was being led."

The preposition EN plus the instrumental case of means shows that the Spirit was the means of the leading.

en te. eremo. EN TEI EREMO portrays both location in the desert and the amount of time spent there. It is translated, "in the desert" This tells us that the Spirit not only led Christ to the desert, but also the entire time that He was there.

Analysis of the three.

God the Holy Spirit exerted leadership in getting Christ to the desert to be tested.

Christ is our prototype, and therefore the way in which the Spirit leads Him is the way in which we are led.

The way in which the Spirit leads is fully revealed in the New Testament canon.

Just because all the mechanics are not revealed in these passages about the wilderness temptation does not mean that they are not there. In fact, it is implicit that they are from the mention of the Spirit's leadership.

The Spirit guides through the recall of Bible Truth.

The Spirit guided Christ through the recall of both the principles of Divine character and Messianic prophecy.

In this case, the Spirit recalled Isaiah 40:35, "A voice is calling, 'Clear the way for the Lord in the wilderness; Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God. Let every valley be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; and let the rough ground become a plain, and the rugged terrain broad valley. Then the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all flesh will see it together; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.'"

Christ understood this passage as we do it reveals the ministry of John the Baptist. Malachi 3:1 corroborates this fact.

And the ministry of John the Baptist was to prepare the way for the Messiah in the desert. From this it would seem obvious the direction that Christ would take upon the completion of His baptism straight to the desert.

And so Christ obeyed the leadership of the Spirit and entered the desert not by hocus pocus but by the recall of Messianic prophecy and application.

DIVINE GUIDANCE AND THE ESSENCE OF GOD

In order to remain in the direct will of God you must begin with humility based on the essence of God proper.

In order to remain in the direct will of God you must have spiritual self esteem based on the capabilities of God.

In order to remain in the direct will of God you must make decisions from the nike the victorious ideology of the Christian way of life. 1 John 5:4: "And this is the victorious ideology that has overcome the cosmic system our doctrine."

The victorious ideology includes the right mental attitude of Divine Character.

The overall principle of righteousness and justice.

The motivation of personal love for God and virtue love for mankind.

The grace approach to problem solving and flexible proficiency.

The forethought of organization.

The principle of willpower in self control.

The extension of willpower over time in the temperament of faithfulness and dependability.

The communication with integrity.

The victorious ideology includes an understanding of the true goal.

The victorious ideology includes a thorough understanding the field of endeavor.

The victorious ideology includes an understanding of the mechanics which lead to the attainment of the true goal.

Implementation of the victorious ideology in any field of endeavor or matter of guidance will result in your ending up where God wants you in His direct will.

In other words, make the decision from the best available information.

Recognize the function of the Divine Decree in the presentation of opportunity, but sift opportunity through the filter of Divine Character.

Do not seek to make things happen because of your unhappiness with your life circumstances.

If things are bad and the opportunity arises to move on, then do so. If things are bad and Divine character demands that you move on, then by all means do so.

Do not let circumstances dictate your decisions. Difficult circumstances are a test of your willpower and faithfulness, but not necessarily messages from God. Christ ran into endless difficulty in the execution of His ministry, but He did not use them as an excuse to stop teaching the Word. This is one of the primary reasons that I am still in the ministry.

On the other hand, if circumstances are overwhelming they may prompt you to reconsider your present position through the lens of divine character. You may find violations which force you in another direction. The divine discipline of Paul illustrates this.

Sometimes even when you have all of your ducks in a row with a decision God still overrules. You can bet that He has a greater purpose in mind for you if He does. 1 Thess 2:18 is the perfect illustration.

The First Cleansing of the Temple

A distinction must be made between the two times that Christ cleansed the temple. Christ

cleansed the temple at the beginning and end of His ministry. The second occurrence came during the last week of His life, and is recorded in Matt 21:12-13; Mark 11:15-18; Luke 19:45-48; John 2:13-15

Before Christ went to Jerusalem and the Temple, and after he changed the water into wine, He stayed a few days in Capernaum (John 2:12).

His mother and His brothers (according to the flesh), and His disciples were all there with Him.

Capernaum was the headquarters of Christ's Galilean ministry, and that ministry comprised the majority of His overall effort.

Matthew 9:1 calls Capernaum Christ's 'own city'.

Christ chose Capernaum because it was the most important city in the region. The Romans had a sizeable military contingent there, and there were many government officials about. It was an important trade center, and much commerce came there because of the fishing industry.

Here, Christ could teach the kingdom to Jews and Gentiles alike. He could have an impact that would be talked about throughout the region.

This points out that Christ had a plan for His ministry; that He was organized and wise in the spreading of the word; He imitates His father in this area of foresight and planning.

John 2:13, "And the Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up into Jerusalem"

Now, it does not indicate in this verse that His disciples were with Him, but verse 17 says that His action here prompted their recall of an Old Testament passage. That verse does not absolutely require the disciples' presence. One of three things: Christ went up alone, and His disciples joined Him at the temple; Christ went up alone, and His disciples heard about the cleansing after the fact; Christ went up with His disciples, but John failed to mention it here. The second option is the most probable.

We do not know if Christ had been to Jerusalem in the 15 or so years since His first Passover. It is unlikely that He did, because He is not remembered or identified in any real way by the officials in the temple. When He does His deed, they ask Him for a sign. This reveals their ignorance.

The Passover had to be a rather poignant time for Christ.

On His mind would rest the burden of the sins of the world, for He knew that He would have to pay for them in the not too distant future.

As He enters the temple, that grand representative structure of all that He is and will do, His mind is full of doctrine.

Through this structure, and the doings of the priests, the people are to come to know the Father through Him.

John 2:14, "And He found in the temple the ones who were selling oxen and sheep and doves, and the ones who were seated, the money changers."

The temple had become the very center of an extremely corrupt system. It was the ultimate monopoly, and the evil priests manipulated that monopoly into a moneymaking machine.

The Law prescribed that only sacrifices without spot or blemish were worthy for sacrifice in the temple.

The chief priests manipulated this by making sure that no one had a worthy animal. They sent their inspectors to school for months so that they could identify the defects of any given animal. Actually this just became an excuse for disqualifying the animals brought by the heads of households. They also came to charge the people for the inspection of their animals. This evil led many to just give up and buy the animals that the temple provided, without even trying to bring their own. This was wrong, wrong, wrong. The whole point of the sacrifice was that it would come from the family; that the man would know the animal personally; that he would see the cost of sin, and greatness of God's sacrifice in sending His own Son. The

reason for all this rigmarole was so that the people would have to buy an animal from the temple. Of course the prices on these animals was greatly inflated, and the chiefs priests made a great profit from them.

Furthermore, the chief priests and officials made it so that the animals could only be bought with the official temple currency, and the exchange rates were quite exorbitant. Thus, the moneychangers.

With the clinking of coins and the mutter of exchange and the baaing of sheep and the cooing of pigeons and the mooing of cattle you could hardly hear yourself think in the house of worship. There was record of more than three thousand head of sheep in the temple at one time. What cacophony! What corruption!

So, Christ walks into His Father's house, the house designed for learning about His sacrifice, and He finds the worst kind of corruption. What follows is not an act of anger, but justice.

John 2:15, "And He made a scourge from ropes and He cast all of them out from the temple and the sheep and the oxen, and He poured out the coins of the moneychangers and He overturned the tables."

Physical wreckage is much preferred over spiritual corruption.

There were a bunch of moneychangers, and only one Christ, but they did not attempt to stop Him.

Was Christ an imposing figure, or were they so shocked by this action that they did not respond?

The scourge of ropes could have been a fearful weapon, when wielded by one with skill.

The tables used by money changers were really just small stools, behind which the clerk sat on the ground. They were laden with coins, but would not have taken any great strength to overturn. It is more likely that Christ kicked them over than turned them over by hand.

Christ had a human body unpolluted by the influence of the sin nature. He could have been an imposing figure indeed.

Christ had been a carpenter by trade. It is likely that He had great strength in His hands and arms, because the profession was even more rigorous then than it is now.

John rather humorously adds the driving out of the sheep and oxen; he makes a funny because you already expected them to be driven out. Christ drives out the wimpy bankers and moneychangers and inspectors, and even the oxen and sheep.

By pouring out the coins and overturning the tables, Christ made it impossible for them to determine whose money was whose. He effectively destroyed their profits.

John 2:16, "And to those who were selling doves, He said, 'Remove these things from here [in any direction], do not make the house of My Father a house of merchandise.'"

This is the final part of the cleansing phase.

The verb *airo* [arate] is in the aorist imperative. The aorist tells us that Christ intended for the command to be carried out immediately.

The first words of Christ in this incident contain a command. He has legitimate authority in this place.

Christ calls the temple 'the house of His Father'. This is the legitimizing factor.

Christ is the rightful heir to the throne of Israel.

Christ is the rightful chief priest of Israel.

Christ is the Son of God.

Therefore, what He does here is an expression of natural law.

The Greek word *EXOUSIA* summarizes natural law in the concept of legitimate authority. It includes in its definition both rights and legitimate authority. The question arises: did Christ have the right to exert authority in the temple? The answer is a very emphatic yes!

The word EMPORIOU is the source of our English emporium. It really does describe well a Wal-Mart kind of store. There was so much stuff in the temple it more resembled an emporium than a place of worship.

This principle applies directly to the church.

The church is to never become a business or a house of merchandise for the purpose of profit.

The policy for giving and distribution of the Word of God must always remain grace. The ancient temple was the center for the distribution of truth. The chief priests had put a price on the Word, and such a thing was evil. The same thing is true today.

The Word of God should never come with a price tag. Instead, through the grace giving of believers, a budget is set for the dissemination of the Word. The contributions received through grace giving are to be considered the direct will of God for the budget of that local assembly.

Attempts to augment the church budget through merchandising step outside of God's direct will, and illegitimize the ministry of the church that does so.

If the Jews there at the temple were flabbergasted by Christ's actions, then they were certainly just as flabbergasted at his words.

John 2:17, "His disciples remembered that it was utterly written, 'Zeal for Thy house will devour Me.'"

This quotation comes from Psalm 69:9. John cites it in order to remind his readers that Christ is the Messiah about whom the Old Testament prophesied.

Christ's supernatural fulfillment of more than three hundred Old Testament prophecies is one of the most stunning testimonies to the veracity of the Word of God.

The periphrastic construction of the verb EIMI with the participle GEGRAMMENON really emphasizes the writing of the Word. 'It stands written' is not a bad translation; what should

be stressed in the translation is the unchangeable nature of the Word, once written.

Psalm 69 itself is one which describes undeserved suffering.

In the first several verses David relates a desperate situation: he is up to his neck in water... he is sinking in a bottomless pit of quicksand, vv.23.

David takes some of the blame on himself and his sin against God, v.6.

However, since he confessed his sins whatever deserved suffering he had was immediately converted to undeserved.

Verse 10 makes it clear that David's zeal for the plan of God is the single most contributing factor for his undeserved suffering.

qin'ath is the Hebrew word for zeal, and it denotes emotional action. There are two kinds: crusader arrogance emotional revolt, and emotionally charged legitimate action. The zeal here is legitimate. It is governed completely by thought.

The phrase 'for my father's house' is a reference to the temple. The temple stood for the plan of God for Israel. It was a standing metaphor for Bible Truth and spiritual growth, and ultimately of relationship with God.

Here is undeserved suffering for blessing. Here is undeserved suffering for being a believer in Jesus Christ and fulfilling God's plan for your life.

The final part of the Psalm makes it very clear that the zeal is not the direct source of the suffering, but the people who do not like the zeal for God's plan, "And the insults of those who insult thee have fallen on me."

Christ acted with zeal, but it was good zeal. He is not acting in anger, but in love for God. Christ is not consumed by zeal itself, but the zeal causes others to pursue Him and hate him.

This event signals the beginning of organized resistance to Jesus Christ, and foreshadows His death and resurrection.

John 2:18, "The Jews therefore answered and said to Him, 'What sign do You show to us, seeing that You do these things?'"

The Jews were no doubt flabbergasted by Christ's assumption of authority in the temple, and his reference to it as 'His Father's house'.

They desired of Him a sign, some outward miracle that would prove His position of authority.

This is fascinating, because it is not more than two weeks since the temptation of Jesus Christ, when the devil took Christ to the top of this same temple and tempted Him to jump down as a sign to these same men. Christ rejected the method proposed by Satan, but more than that, He knew that all the greatest signs in the world mean nothing to people who stand negative to the Truth.

Such were these men. They demanded a sign, because they assumed they would not receive one. They assumed that Christ's authority was not legitimate. This is the same leadership that went to John the Baptist just a few weeks before. They got a pretty good explanation from John at that time about the person of Christ, the Messiah.

Negative volition rejects God, regardless of how easy it is to believe.

Positive volition accepts God, regardless of the obstacles to belief.

John 2:19, "Jesus answered and said to them, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.'"

This is Jesus' supply of a sign. Of course, the Jews would have to wait three years for this sign. It is the resurrection sign, the greatest sign of all time.

Note that Christ concentrates on the greatest sign even though He will do many other things, such as miracles and healings.

Christ had ample reason to know of His resurrection. The correct interpretation of the story of Jonah and the big fish would render the information of His death and resurrection.

Christ did not pull this idea out of thin air, He pulled it out of the Old Testament through the recall ministry of God the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 12:38-40 gives the full explanation of this, "Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered Him, saying, 'Teacher, we want to see a sign from You.' But He answered and said to them, 'An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign shall be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet; for just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the Sea Monster, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.'"

This is a simple simile, and nothing else.

Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the Sea Monster;

Christ would descend to Sheol, under the abyss after His death and before His resurrection.

This prediction of a sign so scared the Jews that they insisted a guard be put on His tomb after His death. Matthew 27:62-66.

Notice that Christ implicates the Jews in His death. Already He is seeing the sign of their murderous negative volition.

But the Pharisees didn't get Christ's statement, not yet, except for one.

John 2:20, "The Jews therefore said, 'It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?'"

They did not get the point.

The temple had been building for forty six years to date. It would hardly be finished for another forty.

It is singular that the Pharisees who were there were stricken by the ludicrous nature of Christ's claim as they perceived it. Yet had they perceived it as Christ proclaimed it, they would have thought it much more so.

According to their perception, they would have to tear down the temple around them.

This was the temple of bribery. Herod, the half-breed Jew gave it to the Jews so that they would love him as ruler.

The Jews hated Herod, but took the bribe anyway.

The temple itself was a perfect symbol of Jewish hypocrisy, and yet they were quite blind to that hypocrisy.

They were not about to tear down Herod's temple, their pride was inextricably wound together with this building.

Christ gives the Jews an interesting test by remaining vague about to which temple He refers.

Christ has legitimate authority to order this temple of Herod's destroyed, but He does not do that.

John 2:21, "But He was speaking of the temple of His body."

Christ was deliberately vague, but He was definitely communicating about His body as this verse reveals.

Since Christ always communicated clearly, the Jews misunderstood Him from their own blind arrogance.

John 2:22, "When therefore He was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that He said this; and they believed the Scripture, and the word which Jesus had spoken."

An interesting point, but there were others who heard this and believed it.

Nicodemus certainly heard these words, and they were likely to have prompted his curiosity to come to Christ.

Nicodemus provided for Christ's burial along with Joseph of Arimathea.

Joseph of Arimathea was also among the Jewish rulers at this event, and heard this statement as well.

The passive voice of *egert* reveals that Christ did not raise Himself, but that He would

be raised, specifically by the power of God the Holy Spirit. Rom 1:4.

When Christ says that He will raise the temple Himself in verse 19, He must be speaking from the Godhead. Christ did not raise Himself. He could say this in a Trinitarian sense. The Positive Response at the Passover

John 2:23, "Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name, beholding His signs which He was doing."

Remember, Christ came down to Jerusalem from Cana in order to participate in this Passover.

In this verse John reveals a positive response to Christ's ministry. Remember, John is likely an eyewitness to these events.

The positive response was belief. This belief is total trust in a person or institution for what they offer.

The belief was directed toward the name of Christ. Parents designed the names of their children so that they would reveal the essence of the child. Christ's name was Jesus, which meant salvation in the Hebrew. The essence of Christ was truly salvation. And He would die as a substitute for the sins of mankind, and satisfy the justice of God regarding the issue of human sin.

The positive response has a cause: they beheld the signs which He was doing.

Christ was performing miracles. Christ was healing the sick and lame.

John 2:24, "But Jesus Himself was not trusting Himself to them, because He knew all men."

This is truly a great verse, revealing God's wisdom incarnate in Jesus Christ.

Although man must believe in Christ, Christ does not have to believe in man.

God understands perfectly the nature of human degeneracy and the total depravity of man.

God never has to trust man, and in fact is wise not to trust him.

This applies to believers. We are never required to entrust ourselves to man unless it is legitimate authority.

We must be wise in choosing whom we will trust.

Do not take 'knowing all men' as the equivalent of omnipresence or omniscience. During the incarnation Christ voluntarily restricted the independent use of His Divine capabilities and the independent expression of Divine character. Instead, He knew all man because He knew the principles related to the nature of man. If you know these principles, then you truly know man.

John 2:25, "And because He did not have need for anyone to testify concerning man; for He Himself knew what was in man."

This reveals the background for verse 24.

The word for need is chreian. It comes from the 'grace' word group.

charis is the approach to problem solving. This is grace.

chrestos is the ability to solve problems within the parameters of the grace approach. This is proficiency.

chreian is the absolute necessity of doing things according to approach of grace and the ability of proficiency.

But this verse says that Christ did not have a need for anyone to testify concerning the untrustable nature of man that He knew Himself what was in man.

First how did Christ know this Himself? The only answer is that He had combined experience with the Word of God. He did not know the nature of sinful man from His divine nature.

Christ derived the principles of human nature from Scripture, and confirmed them through the observation of man in His life.

Second, the phrase 'what was in man' refers directly to the principles of human nature. The human soul, the human body, the old sin nature, the imputation of Adam's Original Sin, all of these things are 'what are in man.'

Since this verse concentrates on the negative in man, it is the combination of the sin nature and original sin that Christ used to conclude that He should not trust Himself to man.

Nicodemus and Christ

Nicodemus is a Greek name that means 'Victor of the People'. Indeed he would be.

He is found only in John's Gospel, in John 3:1-10; 7:37-52; and 19:38-42.

John 3:1 names him as a man of the Pharisees and a ruler of the Jews. The latter places him as a member of the Sanhedrin. A glimpse at this ruling body will reveal much about the man.

The word "Sanhedrin" comes from the Greek SUNEDRION, 'a sitting place together'. It describes many people sitting together in the same place.

In the second and third centuries, the Persians, then the Greeks began to grant the Jews some privileges of self rule. The ruling counsel of the Sanhedrin finds its roots there, but the actual organization did not come into being until the time of the Maccabees, about 190 B.C.

They patterned themselves after the 70 elders of Moses' appointment in Numbers 11:16, and claimed to exist continually since that time (about 1400 B.C.).

The Sanhedrin consisted of 70 members, presided over by the High Priest of the Jews. After the High Priest, the leadership fell to the Chief Priests, and then to the rank and file of the elders.

The powers and religious alignment of the Sanhedrin rose and fell throughout the time from its inception to Christ's era. Sometimes it was dominated by Hellenists, sometimes by nationalists. Sometimes it had a great amount of influence over the lives of the Jews,

sometimes hardly any. Sometimes it ruled much land, others only a small sliver.

At this time, 27 A.D. the Sanhedrin was dominated by a conciliatory branch of Jews known as the Sadducees, although there was a strong branch of Pharisees as well. They had a lot of power over both spiritual and secular matter, although only in Judea. However, all of Israel felt the influence of their power, and no place was truly free from their tyranny.

The Sanhedrin was a court much akin to the supreme court of the United States. When a lower court could not come to a decision, then the higher court would have to intervene. During Christ's time, the Sanhedrin was trusted with most of the civil as well as religious cases. They had a tremendous influence on internal affairs, and apparently no small influence even in cases of capital crimes.

The Sanhedrin had its own police force, and no doubt had a constant temptation to abuse the powers of arrest. Otherwise, they would follow simple rules of jurisprudence.

Nicodemus was a rank and file member of the Sanhedrin minority party. He was just an elder.

He was one of the legalistic Pharisees. He would have an influence on policy, even though in the minority. The greater Sanhedrin could not rule effectively without the input and cooperation of men like Nicodemus.

The Sadducees were the aristocratic and Romantic branch of the Jewish Leadership. They were very antisupernatural in their world view, even denying the afterlife. They remained very materialistic, and were sycophantic toward the Roman rulership in order to retain their wealth.

The Pharisees were scholars, although extremely legalistic in their outlook, fanatics for making laws that did not exist. The Pharisees fashioned themselves as the champions of the people and yet were very oppressive in their rule.

Both considered themselves the best. Both were wrong. Nicodemus, however, was an honest man with positive volition.

READ John 3:19

Nicodemus was apparently a famous man, a member of the ruling council of the Pharisees, the Sanhedrin. In other words, he was a super Pharisee.

Nicodemus came to Jesus by night. The original language shows a little surprise at this appearance. Perhaps because the Pharisees were already more than a little leery of Christ. The night time appearance reveals his desire to keep the visit a secret Nicodemus did not want the other Pharisees to know about this. It also shows his positive volition to Jesus Christ.

Nicodemus' first words reveal his positive volition further. He has put two and two together in his own mind about Christ, and makes a statement to this effect. 'Rabbi, we know that you have come as a teacher from God; for no one is able to do these signs which you do, unless God is with him.' This statement does not go all the way; but it is true.

Jesus' reply is a compliment. It assumes the best of Nicodemus that he is a believer. What he is saying is this: that Nicodemus' statement reveals that he has seen the kingdom of God. Born from above is a reference to salvation. The notion of born again is not in the adverb ANOTHEN. ANOTHEN is never used in classical Greek to denote the idea of 'again'. In fact, the use of this adverb in that way is drawn from this passage. Christ did not intend to use it that way, and neither did Nicodemus mistake it in that way.

Nicodemus mistook ANOTHEN for a word which sounds almost like it ANTHROPON. Nicodemus says ANTHROPOS in his next sentence.

Nicodemus' question in reply to his misunderstanding of Jesus' statement is relevant "How can a man (anthropos) being old be born?" Someone who is already a man cannot be born. You are born and then you

become a man. He makes his point really clear by his example: 'He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?' Jesus was speaking on a spiritual level and Nicodemus on an earthly one.

Jesus reply in verse 5 is a clarification for Nicodemus. "Unless anyone is born of water and the Spirit, he is not able to enter into the kingdom of God."

Notice that this is a parallel of His previous statement except that he substitutes EX HUDATOS KAI PNEUMATOS for ANOTHEN, and 'enter into the kingdom of God' instead of 'see the kingdom of God'.

Our Lord is responding to the mistake of Nicodemus, and also changing his assessment. Instead of assuming that Nicodemus is a believer, Christ now assumes that he has yet to enter the kingdom.

'Born of water and the Spirit' is especially pertinent because it reveals two births.

Born of water is not a reference to baptism. Instead it is a reference to human birth. Before every birth, the woman's water breaks (actually it is the fluid from the amniotic sac). Born of water is reference to this. It appears that every person is born of water, and this is a good way to make it clear that you are talking about human birth.

Born of the spirit is of course a reference to salvation, where God the Holy Spirit makes the new believer a new creature in Christ through His baptizing ministry.

Our Lord's implication is this: that you must be both a man and believe in order to enter the kingdom of God. In a roundabout way he also tells Nicodemus that he is right about the first birth, but wrong about the second.

In verse 6, Jesus gives even further clarification on the matter. "That which is born from the flesh is flesh, and that which is born from the Spirit is Spirit."

This simply divides birth into two categories: fleshly birth and spiritual birth.

It takes the point of view of origin in the matter of birth. The kind of birth which you have is a matter of the origin of that birth.

In verse 7 Christ deals with Nicodemus' mistake. "Do not take surprise that I said to you, 'It is necessary for you to be born from above.' In the next verse, our Lord draws an analogy to explain this statement. These two verses, 7 and 8, are Christ's final explanation of His first statement. Essentially He says, 'do not misunderstand.' Nicodemus was not amazed, he misunderstood.

The analogy that Christ uses is this: "The wind blows where it wills and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes or where it is going; so is everyone who is born from the Spirit."

Christ is emphasizing that this is an invisible birth.

The birth from above is one which we know exists. We can see the results of it in believers (the sound).

Unlike the birth from flesh, we cannot perceive with our senses the origin or destination of the birth from above.

In other words, Christ is just showing a further distinction between the two kinds of birth, so that Nicodemus will clearly know in his own mind that there is a spiritual birth.

In Nicodemus' final words he reiterates his positive volition. He says, "How can these things come to pass?"

Nicodemus uses the demonstrative adverb TAUTA to form the subject of his reply. It is a word that must be defined by a previous reference. It is translated, 'these things', and it goes back to these things:

The birth from above that gives insight into the kingdom of God.

The birth from above that enables one to enter the kingdom of God.

The birth from above that comes from the ministry of God the Holy Spirit.

The ministry of the Spirit that is invisible yet very real, and with a will of its own.

By using the verb GINOMAI instead of the verb ESTIN, he shows his desire for the second birth. Nicodemus wants to know how to get the second birth for himself. GINOMAI is the verb of becoming, not of being. GINOMAI always indicates a change, an entrance into a new status.

Furthermore, Nicodemus uses DUNATAI, the verb of ability. By using DUNATAI, Nicodemus reveals his desire to know mechanics; to know what is to be done to gain entrance into God's kingdom.

Nicodemus asks this question in such a way as to reveal a personal desire for this information he wants to become a believer.

Later passages reveal that at some point Nicodemus did accept Christ. His words in chapter 7 and his deeds in chapter 19 reveal it.

Verse 10, "Jesus answered and said to him, "You are the teacher of Israel and do not know these things?"

This verse is more of an exclamation than anything. Nicodemus as a member of the Sanhedrin should be an expert on salvation. He is a leader of his nation, and one who holds grave judicial responsibilities.

This also serves as a reminder of the kind of leadership that Israel had at the time. It was weak spiritually, and so the rank and file in the country would be exceedingly weak. This is why Christ would not trust the new believers. They had very little inherent restraint on the sin nature.

Verse 11, "Truly, truly I say to you that we speak that which we have known, and we testify what we have seen, and you do not receive our testimony."

The formula amen stands as a pre-certification for what is to follow. Christ uses it to convince His hearers of the verity of His statement before they even listen to His words.

The two second verbs, oidamen and heorakamen are both in the perfect tense. In this case, they show something that is a life changing event the intervention of God. Christ uses the first person plural because He speaks for his followers and disciples as well. So, His disciples speak because God has intervened, and they know it. They testify because God has intervened and they have seen it. The knowing has to do with the doctrines, especially kingdom doctrines that Christ teaches. The seeing has to do with the miracles and healings that are done by Christ.

All of this earnest testimony and speech, and yet the Sanhedrin does not receive it. Christ employs the second person singular [you all], so He speaks to more than just Nicodemus.

Christ chides Nicodemus and his Pharisee and Sanhedrin mates so that Nicodemus might understand that this is not his first opportunity to receive the gospel. Perhaps Nicodemus was a part of the Sanhedrin task force sent to John the Baptist to find out whether Christ was fit to be their Messiah.

But Christ is getting at something more...

Verse 12, "If I spoke to you [all] earthly things and you [all] do not believe, how will you believe if I were to speak heavenly things?"

Christ uses a really fascinating conditional sentence. He begins in reality, by citing in the protasis what has already occurred. Then He postulates from the protasis what should logically occur as a result.

'If I spoke to you earthly things... ' This has really happened. The aorist indicative of lego reveals this as an actual past event. Christ has spoken to Nicodemus and others about earthly things.

Their response was unbelief, one and all. Nicodemus, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Sanhedrin, they have all rejected Christ on the earthly level.

Now Christ postulates with the aorist subjunctive. This applies a likely outcome to a circumstance. The circumstance is Christ

telling the Jewish leadership about heavenly things. The likely outcome is unbelief. The kind of reasoning here is simple: if the Jewish leadership is unable to believe an easy thing, then how will they ever believe the more difficult? It is like saying, 'Because you could not lift 100 lbs., it is fair to assume that you cannot lift 200 lbs.'

Christ uses the second person plural to impersonalize this principle. He does not want Nicodemus to believe that He applies it to him.

This discourse on the negative volition of the Jewish leadership precedes the giving of the gospel, and for a reason. Jesus helps to identify for Nicodemus a sense of destiny about his unique position in the Sanhedrin as a believer. Remember, this reproof of Christ's is directed at a body of men, not Nicodemus directly.

You, too, can have this kind of unique destiny by being a believer in a time when belief is not so popular. For Nicodemus, there was some of the greatest peer pressure against belief in God of all time, and yet He wanted to believe. This reproof and brief discourse is all about helping Nicodemus to identify himself, and separate himself from his peers.

Verse 13, "And no one has ascended into heaven, except the one who first descended from heaven, the Son of Man."

The **Son of Man** is a prophetic term, a reference to Christ's relationship with Adam.

It occurs 107 times in the Old Testament, but only fourteen times outside of Ezekiel. In those cases outside of Ezekiel, it is almost universally an idiom for 'human being'. But in one instance in Daniel, it most certainly refers to Adam himself. The one time that it is used in the singular in Daniel is 7:13, and this is the reference for the popular term in New Testament times.

Daniel 7:1314, "I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven one like a Son of Adam was coming. And He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. And to Him was given

dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed."

The 'Ancient of Days is an Aramaic title that refers to God the Father as judge of Jesus Christ. Daniel 7:722 is the only instance of this title for God the Father. It concentrates on his eternal nature, and His authority over the other two members of the Godhead.

God would judge the sins of mankind in the Son of Adam on the cross.

God gave two evaluations of His Son during the incarnation 'This is my Son, whom I love, in whom I am well pleased.' Once at His baptism, and once at the transfiguration.

The picture presented in Daniel's vision is the transfer of authority from God the Father to Jesus Christ the Son. This transfer of authority occurred in heaven most likely immediately before the incarnation. This is something of a Christmas story from Daniel. It is a revelation of the moments before the incarnation of Christ, the sad/glad going away ceremony for the Son. From that moment forward God the Son would never be the same. He would become the God man, and though His deity did not change, His status did. This is the moment when Christ voluntarily restricted the independent use of His divine attributes, and the independent expression of His divine character. This moment was somewhat akin to taking a military oath.

The earthly transfer of authority took place at Christ's baptism.

The term 'the Son of Man' describes here Christ's relationship to the first man, Adam.

READ Romans 5:12-21.

Naturally, this verse would be a popular one with an oppressed nation such as Israel.

In Ezekiel the prophet himself is addressed as the son of Adam, an identification of him as one belonging to the human race.

By the time that Christ came on the scene, the Son of Man was a popular term, and needed no explanation whatsoever. Never once in the New Testament does the use of the term require an explanation to the readers or listeners. It is simply used. Christ employed the direct Greek translation of the term, which used the noun anthropos as a translation for the Hebrew Adam.

Now the verse serves to communicate that Christ is indeed the Son of Man. This is one for Nicodemus to remember a few years from this time, when Christ does ascend.

This is not the first time that Christ uses His own future as evidence for His deity. Remember the cleansing, when he used His own resurrection as future evidence. Well, here we go again.

So, Christ will ascend, and it will mean this: that He descended from heaven at some time before. At this moment when Christ speaks to Nicodemus, He has already descended. Nicodemus alluded to it, but believed that Christ was just a man sent from God. Christ identifies Himself as the Son of Adam, who is the Son of God, and offers His future ascension as evidence for His present status.

Verse 14, "And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up."

Verse 15 will deal with the purpose for this statement, but let's see what this says first.

A comparison is drawn between a past event for Israel, and the necessity of a future event in the life of Christ.

Again this is the use of a future event for evidence of present status.

This event that Christ refers to is in Numbers 21: 9. The setting is that of yet another rebellion by the children of Israel against Moses and against God. Specifically, "Why have

you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this miserable food."

The discipline for this complaining attitude was a plague of fiery serpents, which bit the Jews, many of whom died. The fiery term is most likely due to a specific effect of the venom on the nervous system.

Well, with this kind of discipline, many of the Jews repented, and went before Moses to seek forgiveness, asking him to intercede on their behalf.

Moses went before God for his people, and so God forgave them. As a sign, God required Moses to make a fiery serpent of bronze and lift it up before the people so that if they looked at it they would live.

When people received a bite by a serpent they would look at the bronze serpent and be cured of the effects of the venom.

Moses' serpent was made of bronze to represent the judgment of God concerning this sin.

By looking at the serpent, an expression of belief was made. The kind of seeing here is the Hebrew word RA'AH, the equivalent of the Greek THEOREO, 'to behold'. The idea is looking with a desire to know. The pure motive is taken into account in the looking, and not everyone who glanced the way of the serpent would be healed of their sin and the discipline that accompanied it.

Now Christ would be lifted up on the cross.

Verse 15, "that whoever believes in Him might have eternal life."

This verse sets the standard for salvation unto eternal life.

Note the third class conditional sentence: salvation is a direct result of the expression of human will.

The work is done; the son of man has been lifted up; we need only trust in that work. Not in what we do, or thing, or any kind of merit

inherent in ourselves. Just Him, and more specifically the work done on the cross.

This is a purpose clause; the Son of man was lifted up on the cross so that we might believe, and no other reason. hina.

Notice that the adjective pas describes the universal condition for salvation, 'everyone who believes.' There is no exception, no amount or severity placed on sin, so that some of the worst who believe are excluded. Every one who believes, without exception, without reference to what has gone in the past.

Next, is the Divine motive. Why has God chosen to forgive mankind, even the most sinful of men?

Verse 16, "For God so loved the world, so that He gave his only born Son, in order that everyone who believes in Him might not perish but might have eternal life."

The verse has three parts: the motivation of God, the resultant action, and the purpose of the action. Here begins a commentary by the writer of this gospel, and not the words of Christ Himself.

The 'might' here is dependent absolutely on human volition. The might is not, 'believe, and you might not perish', but you will not perish if you do believe. It is not, 'Believe and you might have eternal life', but believe and you definitely will have it. The might is that the verse looks at the possibility from the viewpoint of human free will, not what God might do after the free will is expressed. This is a Greek third class condition, and it shows that if the condition is fulfilled, then always, always, the results will come to pass. Here, the condition is belief in Christ, and here, everyone who believes does not perish, but comes to have eternal life.

The conjunction houtos indicates a stronger degree of God's love. He so loved...

The verb e.gape.sen is from agapao. Virtue love is in view here. The verb is in the aorist tense, and so reveals one moment of time in eternity past. That moment when God conceived His

perfect idea on how to provide for the redemption of mankind.

So first, the love of God.

Love is a word that describes purity of motive.

Motivation is a thought or system of thought that leads one to act. In order to move, you must first think.

Given the conditions of fallen mankind and the perfection of God, what was the thought or system of thought that moved God to act in the provision of salvation?

The Bible reveals that it was the purest motive of all, love. The very verse we study confirms this.

The motive was not anything that we might consider from human viewpoint: it was not attraction to the human race, for they were in total depravity; not personality or physical attractiveness or success or clothing or anything else. God looks at the heart, and before Christ, the heart is wicked, with nothing that might attract the love of God.

The motive was a desire for the human race to have the same thing that the three members of the Godhead had, a virtue love relationship.

From eternity past, God has perfect personal love among the members of the Godhead.

The Father has perfect love for the Son and the Spirit.

The Son has perfect love for the Father and the Spirit.

The Spirit has perfect love for the Father and Son.

This love is based on the virtue of both the subject and the object of love. It is perfect love expressed toward perfection, and infinite by nature.

This perfect love is an appreciation and admiration for the other persons of the Godhead. This directed toward who they are and what they do.

This perfect love is infinitely fantastic, and the greatest treasure of all time and out of time.

When God observed mankind in total depravity, He moved to save them in order to provide for them the greatest treasure of all time and out of time, a love relationship with Him.

But the love of God had to overcome the sinfulness of man without compromising His own holiness. He could not give the greatest treasure to the those who were unfit because of the ravages of sin.

Therefore, Christ, the God-man. The unique person of the universe.

God gave His only born Son.

The aorist tense of *didomi* again takes us back to a moment of time in eternity past, when God made the decision to give His Son.

Giving is a real lightweight idea for what God did. It was sacrifice, plain and simple. From His foreknowledge, God knew exactly what the sending of His Son entailed.

The sacrifice included at the least a change in status. By limiting His capabilities and character, Christ limited His old relationship with the Father and the Spirit, Phil 2:58.

The sacrifice included the utter separation of the cross. The physical pain, was something, but the spiritual was far more. *Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?*

The adjective *monogenes* reveals a couple of things about Christ.

Christ is the only born Son of God. Not the first born, with others to follow, but the only born.

Christ is the God-man in hypostatic union, and is therefore unique in all the universe. He was truly one of a kind. And yet God was willing to sacrifice Him.

This was an incredibly painful sacrifice! And from it we gain an idea of the virtue of God: of how very much He values His own love, and what He would do to bring it to His own creatures who stand without it.

The sacrifice of Christ was a universal one He died for all the sins of all mankind, it was unlimited atonement. 1 John 2:1.

God's intent is to save the human race from perishing. This perishing is eternity in the Lake of Fire.

People choose to go to hell. It is an option in life, and those who reject God and the Gospel choose the Lake of Fire. Unlimited atonement makes eternal punishment just.

The Lake of Fire is the final destination for both fallen angels and unbelieving mankind. It was prepared in angelic prehistory at the judgment of the fallen angels, Matt. 25:41, "Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels.'"

The first occupants of the Lake of Fire will be the beast and the false prophet of the Tribulation, Rev 19:20, "And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone."

Next will be Satan himself, Rev 20:20, "And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever."

After the judgment of Satan, all unbelievers are judged and cast into the Lake of Fire. This is the judgment of the Great White Throne, Rev 20:14-15, "And death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire."

Specific mention is made of sinners who are especially heinous, Rev 21:8, "But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part [fate] is in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone,

which is the second death." This mention is made so that we believers might gain a greater appreciation of divine justice related to unbelievers.

There is no way out.

John 3:18,36 "He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

Heb 9:27, "And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment."

The lake of fire is modeled after an old place of sacrifice just South of Jerusalem. It was called gehenna. Gehenna is synonymous with the valley of the sons of Hinnom, or BenHinnom.

The valley of Gehenna was a place of child sacrifice, where babies were thrown into a fire, 2 Kings 16:3; 21:6.

Jeremiah 7:32; and 19:6 set this place as a place of discipline for Judah.

Christ often uses Gehenna to describe eternal punishment, Matt 10:28; 13:40,42,50; 25:41,46; Mark 9:43, 45, 47,49.

The alternative to the Lake of Fire is Eternal Life. What is the difference? The sacrifice of human pride. This is why so many choose the Lake of Fire. It seems such an incredible thing that people would do this, but they do!

Note that we begin in judgment, and can choose to get out from under it by believing in Jesus Christ, but we cannot escape that judgment if we reject Him.

This is a literal lake of fire... Christ and all the other writers of Scripture portray it as such. This is not a metaphor, not simply an illustration, not something used to scare us, but does not really exist [if you don't clean your room, the boogie man is going to get you!], not anything other than what it is, a place of eternal punishment.

Hell is not just eternal separation from God; it is much, much more. It is eternal, burning pain, for the fires of hell do not consume the resurrection bodies of the damned. This form of punishment is appropriate for those arrogant enough to reject the Grace Offer of God. It is the arrogance of those who equate themselves with God; of those who deny their need for God.

From the perspective of the eternal state we will observe the justice of God, and understand fully His action in carrying out the sentencings to Hell. If it seems harsh now, then learn more about God, and you will know.

The alternative to perishing is eternal life (really brief review).

Verse 17, "For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but to save the world through Him."

This is a crucial verse on divine motivation and character.

It reveals God in the best possible light; that His motive in sending His Son was the highest and purest form of love.

Have you ever encountered an unbeliever who was offended at the idea of hell? That a loving God could never send anyone to eternal damnation? Well, this verse is certainly for them.

There are two things that a loving God would never do:

The first would be to leave anyone in condemnation without the possibility of redemption;

The second would be to force anyone to accept that offer of redemption.

So God sent His Son to die for the sins of mankind, and you should certainly consider the grave nature of this sacrifice as a vital symbol of God's earnest desire to save mankind. He gave His unique and only Son on our behalf.

For "God is not willing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9)

Therefore, God does not gleefully rub together His hands in anticipation of the final judgment; every lost soul grieves Him.

Yet, Christ will judge believers and unbelievers alike. (see doctrine of judgments).

Verse 18, "the one who believes in Him is not judged; but the one who does not believe has already been judged, because he has not believed in the name of the only born Son of God."

This verse is best seen in the light of the doctrine of imputations (reference).

At its simplest foundation, this verse says that people are brought into this life in a state of condemnation, and brought out of that state by belief in Christ.

Believers are still evaluated at the judgment seat of Christ; but the salvation issue is certainly no longer a question.

Verse 19, "and this is the judgment: that the light shone in the world and men loved the darkness more than the light; for their works were evil."

John now goes back to the big picture. In a wistful manner he summarizes the life of Christ.

The light shone in the world; this is a one-sentence review of John 1:15.

Men loved the darkness more than the light; this sounds a little like John 1:5, but there is a distinction. In the earlier verse there is a concentration on the efforts of the darkness to destroy the light; in the later verse, an explanation of why the men of darkness rejected the light.

The explanation is that their works were evil.

Perhaps a quote from one of John's epistles will explain it best: 1 John 2:15-17.

Do not love the cosmic system nor the things in the cosmic system. If anyone loves the cosmic system, the love of the Father is not in him.

The first part of this verse is command and warning to abstain from having high esteem for the cosmic system.

If you have high esteem for the cosmic system, that is, if you like being involved in it, then you are not in spiritual adulthood.

You cannot enjoy being in the cosmic system and be a spiritual adult at the same time.

The cosmic system is the enemy and opposite of God the Father's plan for your life.

If you are in the cosmic system, then you are an enemy of God, even though you may be a believer.

Because everything that is in the cosmic system, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the arrogance of life, is not a part of the Father but is a part of the cosmic system.

John divides the cosmic system into three categories: lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the arrogance of life. See the genius in this.

There is a kind of lust that comes from within the body sexual lust.

The lust of the eyes is materialism what things in life that you desire.

And then there is a generic arrogance of life.

And yet the world and its lust is deceiving itself, but the one who does the will of God remains forever.

Again, the cosmic system and its components cause self-deception and self-destruction in the cycle of lust and unhappiness.

Those believers who get involved in the cosmic system lose their rewards for eternity even though they still have eternal life.

By contrast, those believers who stick it out in the plan of God have not only eternal life, but a fantastic system of rewards as well.

Tragically, those who refuse to believe in Christ do not have eternal life, but instead are cast into the lake of fire.

A conclusion: people remain in darkness because somehow they love what is there and

what they do there. Some people loathe the darkness and so come into the light.

Verse 20, "For each one who practices worthlessness hates the light and does not come to the light, so that his works might not be exposed."

Worthlessness is PHAULOS, the word which means even in the Greek out of bounds.'

Some things are obviously out of bounds, like many evil sins and acts. Murder would be a good example for this.

Other things are not so obvious, such as the right thing done for the wrong reason. God looks on the heart, and probes our motives for doing good things.

We can do good things because we love Him and are responding to His love; or, we can do good things because we are trying to impress God with our own brand of righteousness. The latter is certainly PHAULOS.

Let me emphasize the practice. This shows a consistent pattern of behavior that is uncaring about sin.

Someone who cares about resisting temptation will not only fight and scratch and bleed in the war against sin, but they will also acquire all the defenses that they possibly can through their study of Bible truth.

And not only this, but someone who cares about sin will confess that sin as soon as they possibly can.

And this person who practices worthlessness does not come into the light; that is, he does not regularly expose his soul to the truth. This is because that exposure will cause him to leave behind what he loves so much.

Verse 21, "And the one who practices the truth comes to the light, in order that his works by be shown that have been made in God."

But the one who practices the truth must get the truth on a regular basis, even every day to do so.

Coming to the light is that very thing exposure to the truth.

Coming to the light gives you the opportunity to practice the truth, and once you practice the truth you have every reason to return to that exposure of light, because it places you in a very excellent standing you are fulfilling the plan of God!

Imputations

Romans 3:19-20, "Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, that every mouth may be closed, and all the world may be accountable to God; because by the works of the Law no flesh shall be justified in His sight; for by the Law is the knowledge of sin."

1 Timothy 1:9-10, "Realizing this fact that the Law was not made for a righteous man, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who murder their fathers and mothers, for murderers in general, for fornicators and homosexuals, for kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine."

The Mosaic Law defines sin for both unbelievers and believers.

Galatians 3:24-26, "Therefore what is the purpose of the Law? It has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under the tutor. For you are all the sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus."

The purpose of the Law to the unbeliever is:

- To reveal sin, but not to remove it.
- To reveal sin, but not to prevent it.
- To prove all human beings as sinners, but it was not a standard by which one might prove himself holy.

The Law was added because of transgressions.

Galatians 3:19, "Therefore why the Law? It was added to grace because of the

transgressions, until from whom came the seed in what form it had been promised, having been ordained through angels by the hand of a mediator."

The Law was added to the Old Testament portfolio of grace because of the transgressions, or personal sins of those in that time.

The Law bridged the gap between Moses and Christ. Christ is the seed, who came in the form of a man.

He was ordained through angels by their great pronouncement on the night He was born.

Though the Law was ordained to life, it is a sentence to death, Romans 7:10, "and this commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me;"

Therefore, the Law is a minister of condemnation, and not of spirituality.

2 Cor 3:68, "...who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. But if the ministry of death, in letters engraved on stones, came with glory, so that the sons of Israel could not look intently at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face, fading as it was, how shall the ministry of the Spirit fail to be even more with glory?"

A Study of Romans 5:12-21:

Rom. 5:12 "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, so also death went to all men, on the basis of which all sinned"

Sin entered the world through Adam. Note, however, that this is for the human race. Sin originally entered the world through Satan.

Spiritual death entered the world through sin. Spiritual death is separation from God due to His holiness and your sinful state; it is total helplessness to remedy the situation.

Spiritual death went to all men by the imputation of Adam's original sin to the genetically formed old sin nature.

The result of this is that all men are considered to have sinned. EPI HO should be translated 'on the basis of which' not 'because'

This is not a raw deal! It is the best deal that mankind ever received!

Rom. 5:13 " now before the Law, sin was in the world; but sin is not imputed while there is no Law."

The first half of this verse relates something so obvious it is almost embarrassing: that sin was in the world before the time of the Mosaic Law.

The preposition ACHRI with the genitive case can show time until, or also time before; here it is the latter.

The contrasting statement is in the second half of the verse. That sin is not imputed while there is no Law. Ultimately, God is fair.

All the personal sins of the world were imputed to Christ while He was on the cross.

1 John 2:1-2, "My dear children, I write this to you so that you might not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world."

2 Corinthians 5:14-15, "For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again."

1 Timothy 2:6, "who gave himself as a ransom for all men the testimony given in its proper time."

Titus 2:11, "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men."

Even before the cross this was considered as true, because of the veracity of God. He is always faithful to His word.

Condemnation comes not because of personal sin, but because of Adam's original sin (see later reference). The imputation of Adam's

original sin causes a condemnation that can only be abrogated by belief in Christ.

The last half of this verse does not refer to personal sin, which is all imputed to Christ while He is on the cross.

The last half of this verse does not refer to the sin nature, which is transmitted genetically and thus not a part of the imputation plan.

Psalm 51:5, "Surely I was born in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me."

Therefore this imputation can only be Adam's original sin. And isn't that the subject of this passage anyway?

This applies to all who have not reached the age of God-consciousness.

The Law brought God consciousness and a whole lot more; it brought a knowledge of sin; of imputations; of the perfect character of God; of the future work of Christ.

In other words, the Law made an issue out of the gospel for all who encountered it.

Children before a certain age do not have God consciousness; the mentally retarded may never gain it.

Before the Law came it was much more difficult to come to God consciousness. There was no written code or ritual which taught sin and the work of Christ.

This does not, however, mean that there was no condemnation or imputation of Adam's original sin. Far from it. For both spiritual death and salvation by faith are dispensational constants since Adam.

The two statements of verse thirteen do not say that there was no gospel before the Law came!

There was spiritual death in the time between Adam and Moses. It is just that the Law made it so much easier to come to God-consciousness that it increased spiritual death.

There is a verse which should make this passage a little clearer.

2 Peter 2:21, "It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred commandment that was passed on to them."

Rom. 5:14, "Nonetheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come."

Spiritual death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam.

This does not mean, however, that spiritual death then ceased to reign after the introduction of the Mosaic Law. In fact, spiritual death still reigns today, even after the accomplishments of the cross and the resurrection.

Adam was a type of Christ. He was born into a state of perfection no sin nature, and no condemnation.

He was a crucial part of the imputation plan of God. The sin of Adam was imputed to all mankind, as the sin of all mankind was imputed to Christ.

It is on the basis of our persistent rejection of the gospel that we are in the end condemned to the Lake of Fire.

John 3:18, "He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

You are judged already because of the imputation of Adam's original sin.

If you never came to God consciousness, Adam's sin was never imputed to you, and so you were never condemned.

John 3:36, "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

The wrath of God abides on you because you previously received the imputation of Adam's original sin, which caused your condemnation.

If you never came to God consciousness you never received the sin of Adam and resultant condemnation.

It did not matter how those in the time between Adam and Moses sinned, but whether they believed in Jesus Christ.

Spiritual death continued to reign because there are other ways to come to God consciousness than through the Mosaic Law. Although the Mosaic Law was quite effective in this regard, there are other ways.

Romans 1:20, "For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities his eternal power and divine nature have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse."

The Religious Argument. The religious argument contends that God exists because mankind universally believe in His existence. Creatures do not crave what does not exist, and men seek after God. Even religious instincts indicate the reality of a Supreme Being. The concept of man seeking God is found in Jeremiah 29:13, and Acts 17:27.

The Moral or Anthropological Argument. This argument says that to a greater or lesser degree man's soul possesses both volition and conscience with an urge to choose right over wrong. This phenomena has no explanation apart from the existence and influence of a Supreme Being with perfect and eternal holiness or integrity. A material, ungoverned universe can know nothing of moral values apart from the absolute righteousness of a Supreme Being. Acknowledging the existence of virtue and truth eventuates in becoming aware of the source of virtue and truth. Jesus said, "I am the truth...no man comes unto the Father but by Me."

The Ontological Argument. Ontological reasoning says that since the human mind possesses the idea of a perfect and absolute

being, such a being must exist. Apart from the religious and moral tendencies, the existence of God is a necessary idea to the human intellect, and beyond the relative which mankind measures there is the absolute which gives value and character to the relative.

The Teleological Argument. This argument is the fact that the universe, by its telescopic and microscopic wonders, always form arrangement, purpose, and adaptation, which connotes a designer. Structure in the universe demands a designer. The more we discover about the perfect structure of the universe in science, the more we recognize the need for a designer. Romans 1:20. The order of the universe can no more be accidental than the shuffling of twenty-six letters of the alphabet into a beautiful poem. The chemical contents of the human body are never accidentally combined to form man.

The Cosmological Argument. This reasoning states that the intuitive law of cause and effect demands the existence of God as the initial cause. Order in the universe demands both a creator and a preserver. The universe presents an overwhelming demand for belief in the existence of God.

John 1:3, speaking of Jesus Christ as eternal God, says, "All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being."

Colossians 1:16-17 teaches that Jesus Christ is not only the creator of the universe, but that He also holds it together for the perpetuation of human history until the end of the Millennium, "For by Him were all things created both in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or empires or rulers or authorities. All things have been created through Him and for Him. He has existed prior to all things and by Him all things hold together."

Hebrews 1:10, "In the beginning, O Lord [Jesus Christ], You laid the foundations of the earth and the heavens are the workmanship of Your hands."

Hebrews 1:3, "He upholds all things by the word of His power."

Rom. 5:15, "But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many."

This contains the simple and just formula of imputation.

Many, but not all died in Adam. Some who never reached God consciousness did not.

Christ died for the sins of all.

As a result, those who never reach God consciousness are automatically saved, while those who believe in Christ are saved by the work of Christ. This is the many.

While Christ died for all in unlimited atonement, not all are saved. Only many.

Rom. 5:16, "And the gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned; for on the one hand the judgment arose from one resulting in condemnation, but on the other hand the free gift from the many transgressions resulting in justification."

A contrast between Adam's original sin and the atoning sacrifice of Christ.

The judgment is the imputation of Adam's original sin; it is synonymous with the imputation in verse thirteen. An imputation is a divine judgment.

The result of the imputation of Adam's sin is condemnation.

The free gift came from the imputation of all the sins of mankind being imputed to the body of Christ on the cross. The imputation of the free gift to the one who believes results in justification.

The true nature of the free gift is the righteousness of Christ that same righteousness that He produced by dying for the sins of man.

John 3:18, "He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been

judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

John 3:36, "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

Rom. 5:17, "For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ."

Death reigned through the imputation of the original sin of Adam.

We should reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ. There two good explanations of the reign of life in this verse:

Our reign over the sin nature, which is spiritual adulthood to spiritual maturity.

Our reign with Christ in the millennium.

If we do the first, we will have the second.

Christ is the prince-ruler of the church, and will be the king of kings and Lord of lords starting at the second advent.

We can share in Christ's victory in operation footstool through our advance in the protocol plan for the church age.

Rom. 5:18, "Therefore a conclusion: as through one transgression all men tend to condemnation, so also through one act of righteousness all men tend to justification of life."

This is an exact parallelism. In order for God to be perfectly just in His imputations, there must be perfect balance present. The exact parallelism is denoted by the use of HOS in the first clause and HOUTOS KAI in the second. They are translated, 'as... so also'.

The second one first: not all men are saved, and that is not what this verse says. Salvation is hardly automatic.

Instead, the double use of the preposition EIS in this clause functions to show a tendency toward something, which is justification through the righteousness of Christ. This double EIS without the verb is unique to Greek literature.

So our translation: 'through one act of righteousness all men tend to justification of life.'

Not all men fulfill this purpose of God, because God gave all men free will.

The first one second: If not all men are saved by the atoning sacrifice of Christ, then certainly not all men are condemned through Adam's original sin.

Remember, this is an exact parallel. Therefore, if you believe that unlimited atonement leads not all to salvation, you must also believe that Adam's original sin cannot be imputed to all.

Adam's original sin may only fairly be imputed to those who have God consciousness; anything less would violate the integrity of God. God never arbitrarily condemns anyone!

This is the true volitional view!

Rom. 5:19, "For just as through the one man's disobedience the many were appointed sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be appointed righteous."

Notice the word HOI POLLOI. It is the Greek word 'many'.

Again there is an exact parallel between the two clauses of this verse. This time that parallel is formed by HOSPER... HOUTOS. The translation is 'just as... even so'.

Again we will take the second clause first: through the obedience of the One many will be appointed righteous.

'Many' is perfectly accurate! Not all are saved through the work of Christ. Many are saved, and in fact many are not!

The obedience of Christ resulted in unlimited atonement. However, God still honors volitional decisions!

Although through the work of Christ all men tend toward justification, not all receive it.

And the first clause last: through one man's disobedience the many were appointed sinners.

Many, but not all are appointed sinners.

Although all men tend to condemnation, not all receive it.

Adam's original sin is only imputed at God consciousness!

Rom. 5:20,21, "And the Law came in that the transgression might increase; but where the sin increased, grace abounded all the more, that, as sin reigned in death even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

The purpose of the Law was so that God consciousness might increase. The Law is superb at that function.

Romans 3:19-20, "Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, that every mouth may be closed, and all the world may be accountable [HUPODIKOS] to God; because by the works of the Law no flesh shall be justified in His sight; for by the Law is the knowledge [EPIGNOSIS] of sin."

Galatians 3:24-26, "Therefore what is the purpose of the Law? It has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under the tutor. For you are all the sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus."

This is because wherever Adam's original sin is imputed, there is an amplification of grace.

God is glorified each time someone believes in Christ.

The imputation of Adam's original sin makes that a possibility.

The reign of grace is again the process of spiritual growth to maturity. Salvation makes the reign of grace possible!

When someone goes to heaven by default, there is some glorification of God because it is a display of the work of Christ through unlimited atonement.

When someone chooses Christ from the status of condemnation, there is greater grace. This is the subject of Paul's conclusion.

Romans 6:5-6, "For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin..."

The old sin nature was crucified with Christ on the cross.

As a result, it cannot be a basis for condemnation.

The Old Sin Nature is transmitted genetically through the seed of Adam. It provides temptation to the soul, James 1:14-15.

This context concerns the post salvation effect of Christ's payment for the old sin nature.

Romans 4:15, "For the Law produces wrath; but where there is no Law, neither is there transgression (original sin).

Naturally, this can lead to no small amount of confusion.

Pay attention to the word PARABASIS. Paul employs it to denote original sin!

ROMANS 5:14

1 Timothy 2:14 (the woman's original sin).

The Law (as the gospel) brings wrath from God because of the imputation of Adam's original sin and subsequent condemnation.

But if there is no Law yet on the heart, there is no Adam's original sin.

This does not mean that if you sin in ignorance of the Law, there is no sin! That notion would

offend any Jew who knew of the Law of burnt offerings in Leviticus chapter four. The first half of that chapter is about the sacrifices which must be made for sins done in ignorance.

This is a distinct reinforcement of Romans 5:13b, "but sin is not imputed while there is no Law."

Romans 7:9-11, "but I was then continuously alive apart from the Law, but after the commandment came, sin sprang to life, and I died, and the commandment resulting in life was found in me, this resulting in death. For the sin, after taking the opportunity through the commandment deceived me and through it killed me.

The previous two verses form the immediate context: "Therefore what will we say? The Law is sin? Definitely not! But I would not have known sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting unless the Law was saying "You will not covet." But sin, after taking an opportunity through the commandment produced in me every kind of lust. For apart from the Law sin is dead"

The Law is not sin, but it brings knowledge of sin. With the knowledge of sin comes the ability to sin knowingly.

Therefore without the Law sin is powerless. Because knowledge of sin brings power to sin.

Therefore the Law gives voice to the sin nature. The sin nature develops a vocabulary and broader frame of reference through the Law's defining of sin.

Paul says he was continuously alive apart from the Law that is, that before he knew of the Law he was spiritually alive. The imperfect tense of ZAO portrays past continuous action.

At some time in the past Paul was continuously alive.

This was the time before he knew the Law, as indicated by the second clause.

Human life is not an issue in this passage. The subject is neither human life nor death.

If the subject is figurative life, there is only one figurative life that it could be; spiritual life.

Now again, Paul is saying that he was spiritually alive before the Law came into his life.

After the commandment came, sin sprang to life. Just which commandment is defined by the end of verse ten; it is the commandment which results in life which could only be the gospel.

So the commandment which results in life causes sin to spring to life, which in turn brings about spiritual death.

Therefore each human life is a miniature copy of the history of sin. Each one is born into innocence.

The category of sin in view here is however the sin nature. The sin nature lies dormant in the flesh until such time as it develops a vocabulary and frame of reference.

The vocabulary and frame of reference of the sin nature can only come through the Law of God, whether through natural means or through the Pentateuch.

- Natural means number one: the conscience.
- Natural means number two: parents.
- Natural means number three: other institutions of authority.

The amplification of the Pentateuch in the New Testament may also be a source of the Law for this purpose.

The knowledge which comes by these means may be knowledge of God, direct prohibitions against sin, or the Gospel itself.

The sin nature does not act ignorantly or blindly; it acts through cognizance.

Therefore knowledge of the Law of God activates the sin nature.

The activation of the sin nature brings the imputation of Adam's Original Sin, and thus condemnation: spiritual death.

The final clause of verse ten explain this with clarity: HE ENTOLE HE EIS ZOEN, HAUTE EIS THANATON.

A very literal translation would say, "the commandment which is unto life, this is unto death.

There are many uses of the preposition EIS in the Koine' Greek of the New Testament; the obvious use here is as something which points to the result of an action or incident.

Therefore, there is a commandment which results in life.

And, this same commandment results in death.

The demonstrative pronoun HAUTE points back to the antecedent ENTOLE. It is worthwhile to note that the same commandment which results in life also results in death.

There is only one commandment that can result in life. It is the commandment to believe in Jesus Christ.

So listen again to Paul's order:

He was continuously alive apart from the Law.

The commandment came and sin [the sin nature] sprang to life.

Then came spiritual death.

This possibility sees Paul's continuous spiritual life as post salvation.

The death in the verse would then be temporary spiritual death, or loss of fellowship.

The hearing of the commandment would be anytime that you add a new 'nono' to the categories of your soul.

The failure of this interpretation is threefold: the sin nature is alive and well long before salvation, so it does not spring to life each time something new is learned; the death is very obviously the imputation of Adam's Sin; and the continuous life is not an accurate representation of the spiritual dynamics of the Christian life.

The continuous life is life in the womb interpretation.

This possibility sees the continuous life as the biological life in the womb, with the imputation of Adam's sin at birth.

However, this immediately falls apart when you realize that there is no God consciousness for many months after birth, and that the crux of this passage has to do with the knowledge of God, sin, and the gospel.

This view completely fails to account for the gap between human birth and God, and so must be discounted.

The only option remaining is the one we have discussed.

THE ESSENCE OF ADAM'S SIN:

Adam's Original Sin is imputed at God consciousness, but before any personal sin is committed.

On the basis of Adam's Sin, each one receives condemnation which is tantamount to spiritual death. This is the point at which separation from God is initiated.

Only because Adam's Sin is imputed before any personal sin is committed is there the allowance of a just imputation of personal sin to Jesus Christ.

Whether the child believes in the gospel at this time is not an issue; the sin is always imputed before any personal sin is committed, and before there is a chance to express belief in Jesus Christ.

In other words, there is no chance of continue perfection. The sin of Adam is imputed before anything else can occur.

The results of the imputation.

Therefore, each human being is a model in miniature of the life of Adam, and even before Adam, of Satan.

There is creature innocence, knowledge, and then sin.

But unlike Adam and Satan, there is condemnation before the commitment of personal sins.

This early condemnation is what allows God to impute our personal sins to Christ, and thus it also makes volition the issue.

This also allows for the perfection of Jesus Christ, because He had no sin nature and no sin before His God consciousness.

With no sin nature, God could not impute Adam's Sin to His Son.

Therefore, Christ had to remain perfect throughout His life, or suffer eternal separation from the Father. The stakes were indeed high.

The imputation of Adam's sin at God-consciousness means that there is no condemnation or spiritual death before that time. In fact, there is spiritual life until that time.

Since there is no condemnation or spiritual death before that time, it is clear that God is able to save those individuals without the compromise of His justice.

There is no need for the imputation of the personal sins to Christ of those who do not reach God consciousness, because there is no sine without God consciousness. Therefore, there are no sins that need to be imputed!

At God consciousness, if the knowledge of God and sin are rejected, then certain things occur immediately. Remember, condemnation from Adam's sin occurs before there is a chance to consider the gospel.

Romans 1:21, "Therefore, though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks; but they became vacuous in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened."

Remember the two preceding verses are specifically about God consciousness.

This sounds remarkably like an entrance into the very first stage of the cosmic system, and so it is.

Ephesians 4:17-19, "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the unbelievers also walk, in the vacuum of their mind, being continually darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance, the being in them, because of the hardness of their heart; and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality, for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness."

Distinctions of early life.

In the womb, there is biological life but no soul life. Though there is a sin nature, it is dormant.

The soul and spirit are imputed at birth; there is human life and spiritual life but no consciousness of God (see Psalm 8:2). There is a sin nature, but it is still dormant.

Between birth and God consciousness there are three basic needs of every infant:

There are physical needs, including food, clothing, shelter, and even comfort.

There is the need to explore and accumulate knowledge.

There is a need for love and affection.

If the basic needs of an infant are consistently met, then it will be a happy child.

The means for God consciousness vary, and Paul even indicates that the state may be achieved by learning one of the ten commandments.

Those responsible for an infant are responsible to meet his or her needs consistently and personally.

The expression of displeasure by an infant who has not reached God consciousness is simply related to its needs, and not a rejection of the authority of his or her parents or guardians.

This expression of displeasure is definitely not sin. It is absolutely necessary that the infant at this time communicate to his caretakers about his needs.

The expression of displeasure is the way an infant does this, and this cannot be classified as sin.

At the moment of God consciousness, the sin of Adam is imputed, spiritual death ensues (loss of the human spirit) the sin nature activates, and the child enters the cosmic system.

Three Psalms:

Psalm 51:5, see David's Bastardship.

Psalm 58:3, "The wicked go astray from the womb; they err from their birth, continually speaking lies."

This Psalm has been quoted as support for the imputation of Adam's sin at birth.

But observe: this Psalm is an imprecation against the wicked of the world. The sixth verse says, "O God, shatter their teeth in their mouth; break out the fangs of the young lions, O Lord."

It is a Psalm exclusive about the wicked of the world and their behavior; in no way is it intended to describe the entire human race.

Therefore, when the third verse makes its axioms, those axioms apply exclusively to the wicked, and definitely not to the entire human race.

And therefore, the verse does not have the imputation of Adam's Sin as its subject.

This point becomes clear from a study of the original Hebrew:

The first verb is the qal perfect ZORU, which is translated 'go astray'.

The perfect tense communicates an axiom that is always true about the wicked of this world.

The verb itself usually denotes the literal separation of a blood relationship, and is the same verb employed in Psalm 69:8 to describe David's blood separation from his own brothers. Here however it illustrates the spiritual separation between the wicked and God.

The wicked produce the action of this verb; that is, they go astray under their own power, and

not because of their sin nature or because of the imputation of Adam's Sin.

They go astray from the womb; the phrase is MERAHEM, and it is a synonym for birth.

Now of course this is a hyperbole. David is trying to communicate a point by exaggeration.

The hyperbole is a common figure of speech in the Bible, and has persisted throughout history and almost all languages and cultures. It draws attention to the degree of something by overstating the case.

"They go astray from birth" is another way of saying that they are sinning at the earliest age possible.

The second verb is TA`U, and it also is a qal perfect verb.

Again the perfect tense is axiomatic; it describes something that is always true about the wicked.

The verb itself depicts someone who wanders about aimlessly; it is the perfect picture of the drunk, and Isaiah employs it that way in Isaiah 28:7.

It also depicts someone who wanders away from the Law of God.

The subject of this verb is the wicked, and it produces the action of the verb. It is an accurate portrayal of volition producing personal sin, and nothing else.

The combination of preposition and noun MIBETEN also describes that the action takes place immediately after birth, but note that this also is a hyperbole.

Example of hyperbole: "Christ paid for the trillions of sins that I have produced in my lifetime."

I have committed a lot of sins in my lifetime.

I have not committed a trillion sins.

In order to illustrate the great number of my sins, I used an outrageously large figure.

Biblical examples of hyperbole:

Deuteronomy 1:28, "The cities are great, and walled up to heaven," to express their great height.

Judges 20:16, "Every one could sling stones at a hair and not miss" to describe the wonderful proficiency which the Benjamites had attained in slinging stones."

1 Kings 1:40, "So that the earth rent with the sound of them." A hyperbolic description of their jumping and leaping for joy.

John 3:26, "All men come to him" Thus his disciples said to John, to show their sense of the many people who followed the Lord.

Now think this through:

This is about the wicked only, and applies to the wicked only.

The wicked their lives of personal sin at the earliest possible time; the double hyperbole does not communicate that the wicked are sinning at the moment they are born; nor do the two parallel verbs explain the sin nature or the imputation of Adam's Sin, but only the production of personal sin.

If David had wanted to convey the idea of the old sin nature, then the wicked could not have been the subject of the two parallel statements. He could have employed the term 'lust' or 'temptation' to do so, but certainly no human being produces his own temptation through his own volition.

If David had wanted to convey the idea of the imputation of Adam's Sin, he would have had God as his subject, or made the wicked the recipients of the action of the verb.

The final conclusion? That this verse is a hyperbole about the activation of the sin nature in the wicked at the youngest age possible.

Psalms 8:2, "You have built a fortress from the mouth of children and infants because of your foes, to stop your enemies and adversaries."

God builds a fortress from the mouth of babes and infants.

The word for 'children' is `OLELIM. It denotes a child of any age, but one who is definitely a child.

The word for 'infants' is YONQIM, which is literally a 'sucking one'. This is the infant who is still at the breast.

The fortress is defined well from Matthew, where we find that it is a fortress of praise.

Matthew 21:12-16, "And Jesus entered the temple and cast out all those who were buying and selling in the temple, and overturned the tables of the moneychangers and the seats of those who were selling doves. And He said to them, 'It is written, My house shall be called a house of prayer; but you are making it a robbers den.' And the blind and the lame came to Him in the temple, and He healed them. But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that He had done, and the children who were crying out in the temple and saying, 'Hosanna to the Son of David,' they became indignant, and said to Him, 'Do You hear what these are saying?' And Jesus said to them, 'Yes; have you never read, Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babes You have prepared praise for Yourself?'"

The reference to infants is of course a hyperbole again; infants are incapable of speech. The hyperbole means again that the praise comes at the youngest possible age.

Children also build a fortress of praise to God. The children in the temple on that day were perceptive enough to realize that Christ was truly the king of the Jews after the pattern of David.

Children do this because they are young, inexperienced, and uneducated, yet they are fully capable of giving praise to God. Now that confounds the enemies of God!

It confounds the enemies of God, because it illustrates the concept of spiritual I.Q.

Spiritual I.Q. has its foundation in the wisdom of God and the power of the Spirit. It has no

foundation in education or experience outside of the necessary vocabulary.

Children can praise God as well as anyone; they are enabled by God the Holy Spirit to do so.

This does not rule out the necessary doctrinal content of praise. Children must have doctrine to bring praise to God.

1 Corinthians 1:26-29, "For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and God has chosen the lowborn things of the world and the despised, the things that are not, that He might render powerless the things that are, that no man should boast before God."

There are three categories of human division in this passage:

The category of human wisdom to have or to have not.

The category of human power to have or have not.

The category of worldly environment to have or have not.

God chooses many from the lesser category in order demonstrate His power.

He chooses the fools (here the frame of reference is human wisdom, so uneducated would work well here) to shame the wise.

He chooses the weak to shame the powerful. This is weak according to human standards. It may be poor with reference to money; it may be that you are the low man on the totem pole in your company; it may be that you are not empowered politically. It may be that you are weak physically or in the current subjective standards of beauty.

He chooses the lowborn and the despised, the "are nots" of this world to render powerless the "ares", that no man should boast before God.

You cannot bring your human intelligence, human power, or human birth standing to the Great White Throne; you cannot bring these things to the judgment seat of Christ.

This is why the praise of children glorifies God.

Implications of this point of doctrine concerning child rearing:

That there is no sin until God consciousness; therefore, there can be no sin-related discipline until then.

There is still plenty of room for a learning routine within the limits of the infant's attention span.

Whatever negative emotions and expressions come from an infant are related to his basic needs.

That the infant communicates these things instinctively, and that it is the parents responsibility to understand and meet these needs as they are communicated.

That without an active sin nature, there is no guile in the communication of needs. They can always be accepted as they are.

That the sin nature activates when the child reaches God-consciousness, and that this causes no small amount of consternation in a child; so an authoritative yet loving approach to discipline is the best way to go, especially early on.

The parents must form an alliance with the child against the sin nature.

That the child must be made to understand the forces within him, so that he can begin to help himself.

The sooner the child can understand what impels him to be bad, the sooner he can begin to stand against temptation on his own.

Gentleness and communication are the watchwords of correction in the early days.

Two proverbs:

"Spare the rod and spoil the child"

"Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord." 3. That evangelization is an absolute necessity at the moment of God consciousness.

As soon as you know that your child has reached God consciousness (and it should be obvious), you have a heavy and personal responsibility to evangelize your child.

You are never to scare your child or abuse your authority in any way to accomplish this end. You are to present the issue clearly to him or her, and to ask him if he would like to tell God that he believes in Christ.

Of course it is best to place the gospel within your child's frame of reference!

The evangelization of your child will ease your burden of child raising one hundred fold.

The Accession of John the Baptist

Introduction:

Note the distinction: to this point John has pointed the way to Christ, and noted Christ's superiority; here he completely accedes to Jesus, more than hinting to his disciples to give way and follow Christ.

For a few weeks after Christ's return from the wilderness, John has continued to point the way to Christ. Since Christ returned, here is what happened:

- The priests and Levites came to John to inquire about Christ (John 1:1928).
- John identified Christ as the Son of God (John 1:2934).
- Christ called His first disciples (John 1:3551).
- Christ performed His first miracle, at Cana, in Galilee (John 2:111).
- Christ stayed a few days at Capernaum with His family and His disciples (John 2:12).
- Christ cleansed the temple at the Passover (John 2:1322).

- The people in Jerusalem responded positively to Christ's miracles at the Passover (John 2:23-25).
- Nicodemus came to Christ at night and inquired about His person (John 3:121).

This places the time at around late Spring to early Summer of 27 AD. Christ is thirty years old.

Now Christ's ministry has begun in earnest, and it is time for John to completely step aside. Christ's appearance in the region provides a golden opportunity to do so.

By this time John has been on the scene for about a year and his ministry has gained great fame and popularity. In fact his message continued to have a following even decades after, and spread to far distant places even after his death.

Imagine the humility of this man. To find such popularity, and then give it all to Christ.

Discussion of John 3:22-36

John 3:22: "After these things Jesus and His disciples came into the Judean land and there He spent time and baptized with them."

So Christ moves from Jerusalem to the Judean countryside, apparently somewhere near the river Jordan. The phrase *meta tauta* summarizes everything that had happened in Jerusalem at that first Passover.

John uses the Roman term Judea, so this includes not only the old Judah, but also a good deal of the old Northern kingdom, now called Samaria. The location of this verse can be anywhere from halfway between Galilee and the Dead Sea south along the Jordan River to the Dead Sea itself. They may have been only a few miles from John and his disciples at the time. At any rate, not more than forty miles, and probably much less than that.

In the Greek, when there are two verbs and only one object in a sentence, the object takes both verbs. That is the case with DIATRIBO and BAPTIZO. They each describe different actions

taken by Christ, but they both take the same object, the disciples.

This object, the personal pronoun *auton* 'them', is modified by the preposition META.

META defines the relationship of subject and object, and modifies the action of the verb accordingly.

Christ did these actions in the company of the disciples; He 'does' these things with them. They do these things together, but since the verb is in the third person singular, it portrays Christ as the initiator of the action.

Christ 'spent time' with the disciples.

Since Christ produces the action of the verb, He is the initiator, while the disciples are the co-participants.

DIATRIBO means to 'wear away' or 'rub away'. It describes the wearing of a path by foot traffic, or the wearing away of clothes from use. Since the preposition DIA compounds this verb, the picture is of complete use or wear. Not just worn, but worn through.

After a while, the Greeks applied the concept of this verb to time. 'While away the hours', 'spend time'. It also applied to money 'spend', and others things that get spent, like physical energy.

It even came to exemplify academic effort. Our English word 'diatribe' is the direct descendant of this concept. The noun form of this verb could mean both 'pastime' and 'study'. The adjective always meant 'pedantic' as in teaching in such a way that wears on the student.

John 2:12 describes Christ and others staying at Capernaum. John employs the usual verb for such activity, *meno*.

John 3:22 is quite far enough away where the use of a synonym would not be required. In this verse John wanted to describe exactly how Christ spent the time with His disciples.

The time spent was a wearing time, a time of study.

Christ took this time to inculcate His disciples in the essentials of His kingdom. He baptized with His disciples.

Now we have a puzzle. Christ initiated this action; the Pharisees perceived that He was baptizing; but John makes it clear that it was not Christ Himself that was doing the actual baptism. And there is little doubt that this is baptism by water.

We know that Christ initiated this action because BAPTIZO is third person singular, and Christ is the subject. His disciples did this with Him, META AUTON.

We know the Pharisees' impression from John 4:1, "Jesus knew that the Pharisees heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John."

We know that part of this impression was mistaken from John 4:2, "Although Jesus Himself was not baptizing but His disciples were."

The conclusion is that the baptizing was Christ's idea, but the disciples carried it out.

This idea bore fruit in two areas:

The introduction to Christ's kingdom ministry continues. People are baptized, and from it are identified with the millennial kingdom. (doctrine of the Millennium, intercalation of the church age)

The disciples get a more intense form of training. Teaching always requires a more thorough understanding of the subject matter.

You must anticipate what your pupils want to know, and distinguish what they need to know. You must filter your subject matter accordingly, and thus you think about it.

You must sort out what is true and false concerning the subject matter.

You must put the subject matter into a teachable form, and be able to explain it in a manner that will satisfy the curiosity of your pupils.

You must fit the subject matter into the overall system, to give your pupils the broader picture.

So by instructing the disciples on how to introduce others to the kingdom, Christ better inculcates them into its precepts.

None the less, after this accession by John, water baptism never again enters the scene in Christ's ministry.

John 3:23, "Now also John was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there, and they were appearing and being baptized."

So in the time since Christ returned from the wilderness John has continued his ministry, pointing the way to Christ.

Aenon near Salim was a little north of halfway between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea.

The phrase 'John was also baptizing' tells us that the baptism of Christ's disciples was water baptism.

An interesting verb is PARAGINOMAI 'they were appearing'. It paints this picture: one moment they are nowhere to be seen, and the next they appear right at John's side. It tells us that John's ministry was going like hotcakes.

John 3:24: "For John had not yet been thrown into prison."

This event is not too far off, but we do not have the exact time. A little over a year later John the Baptist is in jail, Luke 7:11-17. It does occur before Christ goes back to Galilee, according to Mark 1:14. This return is apparently just a few days off.

John's readers knew that the Baptist would go to prison and die there, and this verse explains that those events are still in the future.

Just as John preceded our Lord in ministry, so also in imprisonment and death.

Herod Antipas feared that John's ministry would bring about an armed revolt in Judea and Galilee. This, and John's rebuke of Herod for marrying his brother's wife were the human viewpoint reasons. But perhaps there is

something more than meets the eye here... It is obvious that it was God's plan for John's ministry to end.

John 3:25: "Then there arose an inquiry from the disciples of John with a Jew about purification."

So the disciples of John and a Jew got into an inquiry about purification. The word for inquiry portrays two or more people investigating a matter, all seeking the truth. It is literally, 'a seeking', or 'a quest'. It is interesting that these natural adversaries have joined together on a topic that would pit them as adversaries purifications. The preposition META reveals that these two have allied on this matter.

Purification would be an interesting subject, but it does not seem to line up well with their question, which is given in the next verse. What they actually ask about is Christ. Let's try to connect the two.

Purification fits well into the topic of baptism, for baptism could easily be perceived as a ritual of purification.

John's baptism was a baptism of repentance in preparation for the Messiah and His kingdom. Just like the other rituals of the Jewish system, it was a real act that taught Bible doctrine.

However, it was the Jewish trend to distort the teaching rituals into legalism. It was their contention that just doing the rituals themselves pleased God, regardless of what was in their hearts.

At some point the conversation must have shifted to a comparison of Christ and John.

It must have been interesting indeed for John and his disciples when Christ began to baptize.

Remember, John brought in this new ritual of baptism after the Jews had been doing the same things for 1400 years.

Remember also that John was the first true prophet of Israel in a few hundred years. He had a spectacular following because of his gift.

But John made it clear from the start that he was just showing the way to Christ, and that his baptism was intended for that same purpose.

Now Christ, the superior has set His disciples to baptizing, and not too far from where John's ministry was located.

They are in a quandary: what change does this bring to John's ministry?

John 3:26: "And they came to John and said to Him, 'Rabbi, He who was with you beyond the Jordan, about whom you yourself have testified, behold, He is baptizing and all are coming to Him.'"

Hey, these guys are out of fellowship about losing their ministry to Christ and His disciples.

Their concentration and focus is entirely on John, in the first part. "He who was with you..." "About whom you have testified..."

But then they notice that this ministry is tapering off and they do not like it. "He is baptizing [sneering tone], and all are coming to Him."

This is the wrong focus! Wrong attitude!

But something else. Christ has now begun His own ministry. Why is John still at work? Why has John not ceased now that Christ has begun? Perhaps this is John's one flaw. He did not know when to hang it up.

John 3:27: "John answered and said, 'No man can receive a single thing unless it has been given to him from heaven.'"

This is a hard line grace answer. The real man in question is Jesus Christ.

It reveals the unasked question of the disciple-Jew alliance: Why Christ and not John?

John tells them: All are going to Christ because it comes from heaven.

John uses two very strong grammatical constructions in order to make clear the absolute nature of grace.

The first is OUDE HEN, which I have translated 'a single thing'. OUDE is nothing, and HEN is the

numeral one. Together with the phrase 'no man', they make a double negative, which is fine in the Greek, but confusing in the English. In the Greek one negative strengthens the other. In the English, one negative cancels the other. This construction is very strong and makes an absolute statement. John is hammering on this alliance.

The second is the perfect periphrastic participle of DIDOMI. This one shows that heaven is the ultimate source of all things. You receive not a single thing, unless it comes from heaven. It is one of the strongest ways to state a principle of doctrine.

Additionally John makes clear the subjects to whom this rule applies: mankind. He uses ANTHROPOS. Christ is a member of the human race, and so this principle certainly applies to Him.

Therefore, what Christ has in the people who are flocking to Him comes straight from heaven.

Remember, in verse 23, people were appearing out of nowhere to be baptized by John. Now they are all going to Jesus, according to verse 26. Insert millennium comment: Christ is here to found the millennial kingdom; John is in the way. Beware yourself in getting in the way of the kingdom of Christ. You should be a window on the kingdom of heaven, an open doorway.

John 3:28: "You yourselves witnessed me saying, "I myself am not the Christ, but that I have been sent ahead of Him."

Again, John draws attention to Christ, and his relationship to Christ. Here he reprises his role as the waypaver, even for some of his disciples.

The emphasis here is interesting:

In claiming that he is not the Christ, John emphasizes himself with the intensive use of the personal PRONOUN EGO.

In claiming that he has been sent, John uses the perfect periphrastic construction. This again concentrates on John's person.

John uses the preposition EMPROSTHEN to describe his relationship with Christ. He sees himself as going ahead of Christ to prepare the way.

The conclusion is that John says the right things, but that he has appearance of being self-centered. If John was doing the right thing at this time, this would be a marvelous statement; but since he is not, we may call it somewhat self-centered.

John has applied his mission in this way: he sees himself as the one who must prepare the way for every individual in Israel. That before anyone goes to Christ, they must go through him.

He sees a continuing role for himself in Christ's kingdom. He is the screener, the waypaver, the man who prepares the hearts of all for Christ, even as Christ is on the scene.

But Christ, by setting His disciples to baptize, has communicated a very hard message to John that with the beginning of the Kingdom ministry, he is no longer needed.

Christ is there to be seen face to face; His ministry is in the open. Why should Israel go through a human being to see Him?

John 3:29: "The who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, the one who stands and hears him rejoices with joy through the sound of bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine has been made full."

The bride at this point is Israel; the groom is Christ; the friend is John.

The friend is what we would call the best man. In the Jewish wedding, the friend would stand next to the bridegroom and hear his vows. At this he would rejoice, as any best man would.

John says:

That he does not have the prize at this wedding of all weddings: Christ does.

But that he still rejoices for Christ, and that the joy of hearing Christ's voice has been made full at this time.

Again, though, there is hint of bitterness. John perhaps has indulged in self-pity here. Oh, he is not the bridegroom, and he does not get the bride, but at least he vicariously experiences the bridegroom's joy. "Even though I do not get Christ's joy, I am happy for him. My limited joy has been made complete."

Why the negative assessment of John's statement? Because of his actions. If John had ceased his ministry at the beginning of Christ's ministry, then these statements could have been taken in the most positive light possible. Now because of John's action, they have the appearance of tarnish and rust. There is a dark side to them.

John 3:30, "It is necessary for that one to increase, but for me to diminish."

Note the two verbs that reflect the necessity.

The first is AUXANO, to grow. This verb described the growth of living things, of plants and trees, of children. It shows a gradual growth over a period of time.

The second is ELATTOO, to shrink. This too is a verb of gradual change. It describes the action of shrinking over time, of growth in reverse.

What John has done here is nothing less than put a spin on the events of the past few days. But let's look again at the facts!

In verse 23, people are coming out of nowhere to be baptized by John.

In verse 26, they are all going to Christ.

This is not a gradual growth and diminishment! This is an all at once radical change.

But why does John put his spin on these events? It can only be because he wants to hold on to the following and the ministry that he thinks he has.

John sees his accession as gradual; what has already happened was immediate and absolute.

John uses a rather impersonal mode of reference to Jesus Christ. It is the far demonstrative pronoun, ekeinon.

In fact, in this entire discourse, John uses the word Christ only once, and never the word Jesus.

In verse 27, John says, "a man cannot receive a single thing". The application is Jesus.

In verse 28, John says, "I myself am not the Christ." But the real focus of the sentence is John, through his use of the intensive pronoun.

In verse 29, John employs a short parable, where Christ is the bridegroom, but Christ is never mentioned by name.

In verse 30, John uses the far demonstrative.

Jesus was John's own cousin. They were family, and yet John the Baptist uses only titles and roundabout ways to describe our Lord.

John uses emphatic, intensive, and self-centered modes of expression to describe himself.

Apparently, all the popularity and approbation had gone to John's head. He would lose that same head about a year later.

What follows now is an injection of John the Apostle's. He inserts his own discourse, and in a way it concentrates on what the Baptist has just said. In opposition to John's self-centered words, the Apostle concentrates very much on the person and character of Christ.

John 3:31: "The one who comes from above is above all; the one who is from the earth is from the earth and speaks of the earth. The one who comes from heaven is above all."

Now for John the Apostle's editorial comment. He tells us in this verse that what the Baptist has just said is cosmic propaganda, and entirely wrong.

First is Christ. Christ comes from above, and is above all. He is above the selfishness and pettiness of the Baptist. He is above all human flaws.

Second is the Baptist. He is from the earth and he speaks the worldly point of view. Make no mistake. John paints the Baptist here as he is: worldly and trapped in the cosmic system.

Spouting forth to his last few followers the propaganda that he hopes will keep them.

Third is Christ again, and you can see immediately John the Apostle's desire to keep his gospel centered on Christ, and above all in its own right. John needed to get out the truth on the last days of the Baptist's ministry, but did so in such a way that was objective and did not linger on the sad details of the demise of this great prophet of Israel.

Knowing what we now know now will make it easier to understand why in a few more days John will be thrown into prison, and his enigmatic message to Christ once there.

From here, the Apostle sticks to Christ.

John 3:32: "What He sees and hears this He testifies, and His testimony no one receives."

Now this is Christ. The nearest antecedent to the third person masculine pronoun is the last sentence of verse 31, which is about Christ.

Nice. A description of the human faculties of sight and hearing, attributed to the one from above. Now we have the hypostatic union.

This verse tells us that from Christ we get just the facts. That Christ tells us like it truly is. It also describes the general response to this ministry of truth.

No one receives the truth. It is the old aphorism, the truth hurts. The truth often demands that we surrender our pride, and that is the most painful thing. Only true humility will respond to the truth in the right way. But truth is the kind of ministry that Christ has undertaken.

Christ testifies what He sees and hears. This also refers to His method of faith perception. He only has available for application what He has gained through faith perception. That very same thing is what we have. This is a great testimony to kenosis.

John 3:33, "The one who receives His testimony sealed that God is Truth."

Positive believers receive another kind of sealing. This one they produce by themselves. It is the sealing of the notion that God is truth.

God is the very personification of the truth, and when someone believes in Christ, they confirm that notion in their hearts.

The sealing is a confirmation that what has been said by Christ is true.

Verse 34 will explain this idea a bit more.

John 3:34, "For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God; for He did not give the Spirit from measure."

This jumps back to Christ in order to explain this new believer produced sealing in the previous verse.

Christ speaks the words of God.

God gave the Spirit without measure to Christ, so that Christ could speak God's Words.

The term John uses for words is *remata*. This can mean the actual words that come out of a person's mouth, or it can mean the principles of a person's life. Here I think it covers both. Christ spoke the very words of God (albeit in translation), and communicated the important principles that come from Him.

This Christ did from the ministry of God the Holy Spirit, in perception and application of the truth.

(faith perception of the truth)

John 3:35, "The Father loves the Son and has given Him all things into His hand."

This a direct reference to Daniel 7:1314.

John 3:36, "The one who believes unto the Son has eternal life; the one who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

Again this has to do with imputations, and is a restatement of verse 17.

For the sake of clarity understand that obeying the Son means believing in Him, and does not make reference to post salvation obedience.

This verse does not undermine eternal security.

The Samaritan Woman

An Exposition of John 4:1-42

John 4:1, Therefore when the Lord knew that the Pharisees heard that Jesus was making and baptizing a great many more disciples than John "

Christ finds out that the Pharisees are looking into things, and that they are aware that He is making and baptizing many more disciples than John.

The word PLEINOAS is "more" (disciples), but it describes a great many more. Not just a one vote majority, but a landslide. The Pharisees now would identify Christ as the threat here. They were quite worried about two things.

First, that nobody was paying attention to them.

Second, that as a result they were losing their grip of power over the people.

Christ knew it would be very much in their interest if he were eliminated. He knew that they hated Him from the Temple incident, and that though there were many coming to Him, their faith was still very weak.

John 4:2: "Although Jesus Himself was not baptizing but His disciples"

This is a parenthetical statement attached to verse 1. It explains that Christ was not the one doing the baptizing in this operation, but His disciples.

It clarifies the issue so that there is no confusion on the matter of baptism.

John 4:3, He left Judea and departed again into Galilee."

The word "left" is translated from APHIEMI, which means "to quit, cancel, forgive, or leave."

Christ left the region because of the real threat of the Pharisees. His destination is again Galilee, and He will have to travel through the ancient region of Samaria to do so.

Mark 1:14: "And after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the Gospel of God."

Mark 6:17: "For Herod himself had sent and had John arrested and bound in prison on account of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip, because he had married her."

Luke 3:19-20: "But when Herod the tetrarch was reproved by him on account of Herodias, his brother's wife, and on account of all the wicked things which Herod had done, he added this also to them all, that he locked John up in prison."

From Josephus... Herod feared open rebellion from John's disciples.

The Lord moves in strange ways. Christ evaluates that the Pharisees are a threat to Him and the kingdom ministry, and decides that it is wise to move to Galilee and continue His ministry there. It is His aim to gain a following and bring in the kingdom through positive volition.

John clings tenaciously to his perceived but nonexistent niche in the kingdom ministry, and in the course of forth-telling manages to upset Herod Antipas.

Herod fears open rebellion from the followers of John, and is upset about John's calling into question his morals in marrying his sister in law. Herod has the Baptist arrested and placed in prison. John has been taken off the scene, and is no longer an impediment to Christ's kingdom ministry.

But fortunately Christ is out of the way and safe up in Galilee. Through intermediate means and wise behavior, Christ avoids disaster.

Note: the Pharisees had a tremendous amount of power in Judea, and only less so in Galilee. Things are becoming hazardous for Christ already.

Now Christ heads through Samaria, and there He will settle the issue of racial prejudice once and for all.

John 4:4, "And He had to pass through Samaria."

Christ had to pass through Samaria because of the threat from Herod. Herod's headquarters was to the northeast of where Jesus and His disciples had been. They could not go around Samaria, so they had to go through.

Samaria was not the usual route from Judea to Galilee. Because of racial prejudice, the more devout Jews found other ways to go. The Samaritans had intermarried with the occupying Assyrian forces back in the eighth and seventh centuries, B.C. Of course, many of those Assyrians were believers in Jesus Christ, and true Jews, but no matter. The Samaritans themselves had a king-sized inferiority complex, due to the Jewish prejudice.

So it is providential that Christ go this route. There is a woman, really, an entire town that is on positive signals toward God. Christ had to go through Samaria because of Herod, and because of the woman and the town of Sychar.

This providence is a kind of Divine guidance to watch out for. It involves a change of your plans, and perhaps even suffering. But it takes you to people who want God.

John 4:5,6, "So He came to a city of Samaria, called Sychar, near the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph; and Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied from His journey, was sitting thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour."

Sychar is in central Samaria. It is in a hilly region, a region full of Jewish history. Jacob stopped near here, and set up camp for the first time in the promised land. It was here that his daughter was raped by the men of Shechem (about a mile from Sychar), and where his sons killed the Shechemites. When the Shechemites were dead, Jacob took their land for his own.

Later, he willed this parcel of land to Joseph. Gen. 33:18ff; 48:22. Joseph's portion of this land was an extra one, due to his spiritual maturity. There is a significance here. The people of this land were Joseph's people, long lost, now about to be redeemed. Christ here

gives a region and a people an opportunity which has not been theirs for 2,400 years.

The country is hilly, and so naturally Christ would want a drink. It is late afternoon "the sixth hour", and summer. The hiking was exhausting work. Christ is sitting by the well, when along came the Samaritan woman.

John 4:7,8, "There came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink", for His disciples had gone into the city to buy food."

Now there was another well on the other side of Sychar that was much nearer the town. Why the woman came here is a part of Christ's insight.

There is no one at this well but Christ, and at a time when there would be much drawing of water.

In the summer, water would for the most part be drawn at sunrise and sunset, for water carrying is much hard work. Furthermore, this well is up on the side of a hill, making it that much more difficult. But Christ sees this woman coming his way, and rightly perceives that she is a social outcast. Women have a way of sticking together. This one is apart from the other ladies. Now what would be the reason for that?

Christ must ask her for a drink because He is at the point of exhaustion, and He has nothing to draw with. Here also is a reflection of Christ's true humanity: He really needed that drink.

John has His request in the imperative of entreaty, showing Christ's legitimate need for water. The imperative of entreaty is what a Greek used when he really needed something badly, and quickly.

Our Lord was in a state of dehydration. Christ's physical state paralleled the woman's spiritual state.

John 4:9, "The Samaritan woman therefore said to Him, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman?" (for the Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.)"

This woman exhibits also bitterness. One, social outcast; two, bitterness. You can see Christ tallying the score.

Here is a man weak from thirst who asks the woman to help Him, and puts a tone of urgency on the matter; and she responds his request with a remark that is bitter and sarcastic.

Her tone is like this: "Oh, so now, when you really need a drink you ask for one, but not when your prejudice is in the way?" She criticizes harshly, and has prejudice back toward the Jews. She assumes that Christ is a racist because He is a Jew.

The woman knows Christ is a Jew maybe from his robe, which probably had a Jewish fringe on it, but certainly from His Jewish accent. John's explanatory statement makes the Jewish prejudice clear. But we know this from many other sources.

There is a little bit of sexist suspicion here as well. She makes an issue out of her sex. The Jewish men did not exactly have a good record on sexism either.

This is the third clue to Christ about this woman's character: she is suspicious of men, and makes an issue out of her sex. Social outcast. Bitter. Sensitive about her sex. Hmmm.

John 4:10, "Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is who says to you "Give me a drink" you would have asked Him, and He would have given to you living water.'"

Now comes the hook. I want you to notice first the innovation of our Lord. In this instance He skillfully turns the conversation to the gospel.

This part of the discourse has no small similarity to the conversation with Nicodemus.

In both, Christ sets out the bait with a statement that would be obvious to a believer, but an enigma to an unbeliever. Here He knows the spiritual status of the woman. With Nicodemus, He did not.

In both, the hearers of Christ come back with an earthly interpretation of His spiritual statement, thus identifying themselves as unbelievers. In both, Christ then goes on to explain the gospel.

Christ has identified this woman as a social outcast who is bitter and hypersensitive about her sex; now we see further that He knows she is an unbeliever. Christ's words form a complex conditional sentence. It is a contrary to fact condition. He sets up a condition that is not true.

"If you knew the gift of God (but you do not) and who it is who says to you "give me a drink" (but you do not), you would have asked Him (but you did not), and He would have given to you living water (but I did not).

It is based on a premise that is obviously not true. She is not a believer.

The gift of God must be His grace offer of salvation. It is the Greek word *DOREAN*, which describes a gift of any kind. But this gift is further described as being from God. The descriptive genitive case of *TOU THEOU* makes it clear. Of course, Jesus is the Messiah, standing right before her eyes. Yet she does not know Him.

But what is the living water?

From this verse alone we see that it is some form of sustenance that it is a metaphor for real H₂O. But we will delay our analysis until verses thirteen and fourteen, where Christ gives a full description of this very special water.

John 4:11,12 "She says to Him, "Sir, you do not have the drawing apparatus and the well is deep; therefore where do you have the living water? You are not greater than our father Jacob, are you, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, and his sons and his cattle?"

The woman now speaks as one on the defensive. Being a social outcast, she is likely to be an expert at repartee. Her fellow townfolk probably hurl insults at her every day, and she is used to giving as good as she gets.

Now she is thinking: who is this guy? He makes noises like I should know him, and he alludes to some gift of God, and living water.

So she sticks with what is tangible. She looks around her. How could he have any water at all. She does not mention it, but this man has no drinking skin. Neither does he have the apparatus with which to draw the water. He cannot reach down into the well and get the water (it is reported to be about 75 feet deep). Her conclusion from the tangible is that he has no water on him, nor the ability to draw water here.

So then she goes to the intangible. The local legend is Jacob. Since it has been some 2400 years since Jacob, his life and person may very well have reached folkloric proportions in Sychar. She alludes to Jacob as if he is capable of miracles, because she has ruled out the tangible. The local legendary figure fits nicely here.

With her question, the woman implies that Christ is definitely not greater than Jacob. It is quite likely that she believes no more in Jacob than she would in Santa Claus. But she assumes the truth of Jacob's legend for the sake of putting down Christ.

But she does go on to establish the historical validity of Jacob's person. He gave us the well... drank from it himself, so did his sons, and his cattle.

The cows she threw in. It stretches the imagination that Jacob watered his herd from a well that was 75 feet deep. If you have ever seen how much water a cow drinks, then you know that to water a herd from a well is pure fiction! Perhaps Jacob lowered the cattle into the well, let them drink, and then hauled them back up!

Our Lord may have had to bite His lip to keep from laughing at this point.

So in summary:

She goes over the possible, and finds nothing. She goes over the miraculous, and rejects Christ in favor of Jacob.

John 4:13,14 "Jesus answered and said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water which I myself will give to him will certainly not thirst for eternity, but the water which I will give to him will become in him a well of water springing up unto eternal life.""

Now we have the full description of the living water metaphor. Let's put together all the aspects of it.

You must know the gift of God and the Messiah to ask for it.

It is something you ask for.

It is called "living water". The participle zo.n reveals an eternally existing state.

If you drink from it you will never thirst again, not for all eternity.

It is a well of water that springs up unto eternal life.

The process of elimination.

Is the water the Word of God?

The Word could accurately be called the "living" word.

But, you do have a need to stay in the word throughout your life. This living water is more of a one shot deal.

Therefore, it is not the Word of God.

Is the water God the Holy Spirit?

Again, the Spirit could accurately be called "the living water".

But fellowship with the Spirit can be sporadic, and is an option to the believer. The portrayal of the living water leaves this in question. It is a once for all proposition, and the ministry of the Spirit is definitely not that.

Is the water the Gospel?

You must be positive to God consciousness to receive the Gospel concerning His Son.

You must be positive to the Son of God, who is the living gospel, the mediator between God and man.

You must ask for the gospel. That is, you must truly desire a relationship with God through His Son.

Christ is certainly the living water.

You must drink the living water in order to enjoy its benefits you must believe in the gospel.

If you drink from the gospel you will never need salvation again. It is the free gift of God and lasts for all eternity.

The result of belief in the gospel is eternal life, for time and eternity.

So yes, the water is the Gospel.

Some points of exegesis:

The adjective PAS plus the articular participle pino.n makes a universal statement. "Everyone who drinks"

This universal statement is applied to the water from Jacob's well.

The conclusion of the statement is DIPSE.SEI PALIN "will thirst again" The verb reveals the need of the human body for water replenishment. The declarative indicative mood makes this a dogmatic statement of reality the need for water is definite. The adverb of repetition is PALIN "again".

The conjunction DE is adversative, showing that verse fourteen is going contrast the statement in verse thirteen.

Another universal statement is made, this time with HOS AN PIE. This is a potential subjunctive verb, showing that a function of volition will take place here. That whatever God does depends on a free will decision of God.

HOS AN is translated "whoever" this opens the field to all, and the results are applied equally across the board.

The universal statement is applied to the living water, given by Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ really

did give us the living water, through His death on the cross.

Then the kicker, a statement that is so strong that it cannot be mistaken. OU ME DIPSE.SEI EIS TON AIO.NA "will absolutely not thirst for eternity." The idiom OU ME. is the most decisive way of negating something in the future.

EIS TO.N AIO.NA is an idiom for eternity. This phrase makes it clear that if you drink of the living water, you will never thirst again, in time or eternity. This is a clear statement of eternal security.

The living water has a function it becomes in the believer a well of water that springs up to eternal life. The metaphor is clear: you drink the water, and it springs up inside of you, resulting in eternal life.

The drinking is again belief in the gospel, which is the living water.

The new well of water is the human spirit, which springs up resulting in eternal life.

This is a nice double entendre here. The human spirit is the first component of the resurrection body, and an irrefutable appeal to God for a resurrection body in eternity.

But the human spirit is also a spiritual frame of reference for learning Bible Truth in time. So it too springs up to eternal life.

The springing up is the verb hallomenou, from hallomai. It is truly a word that belongs in the laboratory of Dr. Frankenstein. It describes the twitching, leaping, quick movements of a living being. It is used in a special way only to describe movement that proves the existence of life. In Acts 3:8 it describes the leaping of the lame man who had been healed. There, it proved the new life in his legs. Same for the healing that took place in Acts 14. The human spirit is the very source of the spiritual life. John chose this word carefully!

John 4:15 "The woman said to Him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I will not thirst, nor come through here to draw."

Our woman is not all the way there yet. Her eyes are still firmly locked on terra firma.

She sees a way that she will not have to face the public again. If she never has to drink water again, then she will never have to come all the way out to Jacob's well to drink, and never have to walk through town to get here. Never have to walk under the disapproving glares of her townspeople. Never have to be ashamed of her own sinful activities again.

You must be careful with this woman's form of address to Jesus Christ. Kurie can be the equivalent of the English "Sir". She does not yet recognize Him as the Messiah.

So she goes from disrespect to respect. From disbelief to belief. From desiring Him to solve her earthly problems to the next stage.

And now she is ready for that next stage.

John 4:16 "He said to her, "Go call your husband and come back here."

This is the next hook. Now Christ does this from deductive reasoning, and from the gift of God the Holy Spirit, as we will see.

So far, Christ knows that this woman is a social outcast, that she loathes public appearances, that she is hypersensitive about her sex, bitter, suspicious of men. Plenty to get us to this point. Christ could very well work off a hunch at this point. But, He will also function under the spiritual gift of prophecy.

Christ brings out this woman's fatal distraction. The one thing that is between her and belief in Christ.

John 4:17,18 "The woman answered and said, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You have well said, 'I have no husband'; for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; this you have said truly."

The woman's answer is firm and clear. She uses the negative particle OUK to tell Jesus of her marital status. The statement covers the truth however.

At the very least this is where Christ's spiritual gift of prophecy kicks in. He could deduce a lot from His own human genius, but not this. This divinely inspired information came to Christ from His spiritual gift of prophecy.

This woman is:

Immoral she is living with a man who is not her husband.

A failure at the marriage thing.

Disreputable, and the target of much public outcry.

She is not, however, a criminal she is not participating in adultery.

Adultery is a sexual relationship with someone other than your marriage partner, or a sexual relationship with someone else's marriage partner. Or both. Just because the woman is living with a man does not make her a criminal.

Not only would this woman have come under the Law of Israel for her adultery, but also the more stringent law of Christ's kingdom, Matt 5:27,28. But He does not get after her for it, so she is not in that state.

After Christ lays out the truth through the spiritual gift of prophecy (and definitely not through His Deity), He goes on to say to the woman that she has spoken truly. He uses the perfect tense of the verb to speak to emphasize the clinical truth of her statement, but also to make it clear that she understands that her statement was a white lie.

Give her credit for something: she stuck with the institution of marriage for five times before she gave up. That is much more than in our culture.

John 4:19,20 "The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you people say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship"

When the woman says that she perceives Christ is a prophet, it is a little stronger than it comes out in the English translation. She uses the word THEOREO, which means to be an

eyewitness to a significant event, and no kidding this event is quite significant.

But she says something controversial here, actually anything controversial would do. The reason is that she tries to distract Christ from her sordid personal life.

The issue which she brings up is one of the great controversies of the day. When the Samaritans were cut off from the rest of the Jews they decided to make their own temple, and worship there.

But it is just a smokescreen. Look, a flock of turtles!

John 4:21 24 "Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall you worship the Father. You worship that which you do not know; we worship that which we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in Spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

The first statement of our Lord brings attention back on the true issue for the woman. He does answer her question, but in doing so rivets the conversation back to what the woman truly needs.

He makes it very clear that the place of worship does not matter, and in fact will become a non-issue. By use of the word HORA Christ indicates the nearness of that very time.

But the absence of worship in either Samaria or Jerusalem is not a direct reference to the fifth cycle of discipline for Israel, but rather the coming of the church age, and its grace assets.

The Shekinah glory, the indwelling presence of Jesus Christ between the cherubs of the ark, was in the temple in Jerusalem. When the church age would come, the Shekinah as a center of worship would cease. Therefore, neither count.

The contrast between the Samaritans and the Jews serves to point out God's plan for the Jews and the exclusion of the Gentiles.

The statement, "salvation is from the Jews" communicates their historic ambassadorship. God used the nation of Israel as His ambassadors before all the nations of the world.

But note though salvation is from the Jews, it does not belong exclusively to the Jews. The Gentiles may believe and thence become true Jews.

True worshipers worship in Spirit and in truth. This refers to the ministry of God the Holy Spirit during the church age. It does not matter that the temple is here or there, but only one's positive volition to God.

The hour now is because the advent of Christ's ministry concentrated worship through Him as a visible witness to God. You could wherever because of the second advent.

The final statement makes it an absolute. If you desire to worship God, you must do so in Spirit and truth.

Christ speaks quite dogmatically here; He does so to establish His spiritual authority before this woman.

So also must we, whenever we witness to unbelievers. Notice that Christ satisfies the woman's question, and takes advantage of the question to establish His authority.

John 4:25 "The woman said to Him, "I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ); when that One comes, He will declare all things to us."

Perhaps the woman knows because of John the Baptist's ministry. She rejects Jesus' authority, and deflects it to the Messiah. This is her final effort to get away.

The issue is Christ, as the Messiah. The Son of God and King of kings.

Now finally the woman says that she places her trust in the Messiah, and it is put up or shut up time.

John 4:26 "Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am He."

Jesus is the Messiah, and He answers her question.

Her response is interrupted by the arrival of the disciples from town.

John 4:27 "And at this moment His disciples came, and they marveled that He had been speaking with a woman; though no one said, 'What do You seek?' or, 'Why do You speak with her?'"

Second miracle of the day. The disciple did not blow it by opening their big mouths. They at least had enough respect for Christ to do so.

On the one hand, the disciples marveled (Thaumazon) that Christ spoke to this woman, because of her race, and because of her sex. They had the prejudice that Christ did not.

The particle MENTOI is adversative. It introduces a concessive clause and should be translated, "Though".

The first possible question of the disciples would have been "What do you seek?" This is the equivalent of "What do you want with her?" A rude question, but typical of the prejudicial, sexist Jews.

The second question, "Why do you speak with her", is more to the point. They witnessed, as they drew near, His conversation with her. But they did not hear the words, for John, among the disciples on that day, indicates the possibility of these questions based on their marvel.

Notice the disciples are tempted to ask the same question as the woman, but they do not. The woman had more bitterness to drive her.

John 4:28,29 "Therefore the woman left her water pot and went forth into the city and said to the men, 'Come, see the man who told me all the terrible things I did, He is not the Christ, is He?'"

She first leaves her water pot for Christ to drink; she has changed her mind about His

prejudice and thirst; she now sees Christ as devoid of impure motive.

The record is incomplete as to when Christ got His drink. From what He says in a moment to His disciples, count on it being unimportant.

The woman went forth into the city. She has lost her public shame. This indicates that she has overcome her fatal distraction.

The woman said to the men. Now here is something interesting. Which men? All the men of Sychar, or just her men her five and a half husbands. The text just has it as generic men, plural. The definite article TOIS assumes that the readers would know to what men John referred.

It would seem natural for her to go to her men first, for they were the source of her fatal distraction before. All of her former husbands would think her weird, or nasty in some way. That she goes to them makes sense.

That she would just go to the men of the town does not make good sense. Hypersensitive about her public image, she would want to absolve herself before the women first. Also, this way does not fit because it would reveal a prejudicial act on her part, and perhaps spite toward the woman who had so maltreated her.

First, she uses the imperative of entreaty to urge the men to come and see Christ. It is the same imperative of entreaty which Christ used to indicate His need for water. She uses it here with DEUTE to reveal another, greater necessity. That for the gospel.

She makes her case for their need by telling them about Christ's revelation of her personal failures.

Now, this woman lives in a small town, and has been a spectacular moral failure. Her going to the victims of her failure, and saying these things would cause quite a ruckus.

Although about everyone in town would know of her personal failures, an outsider would not. Therefore, the supernatural aspect of it.

She uses the correlative pronoun HOSA to indicate the degree of her sin. "Hey, that was pretty bad" is the indication. The correlative indexes the degree of a thing, usually to show an extreme. That is definitely the case here.

By the use of the aorist tense of POIEO, the woman keeps her sin in the past. They are not the terrible things which she is doing. She does not consider that she is even living with husband number five and a half.

Her last statement seems strange at first. The negative adverb ME in a direct question expects a 'no' answer, and so under normal circumstances her question would be, "He is not the Christ, is He?" This would of course express doubt, and that would be uncharacteristic of someone who has just become a believer and is in the process of telling all of her former husbands about it.

Those of you with Greek Bibles will notice that it is not ME alone, but the compound adverb METI. This throws a little more light on the problem.

METI works to indicate the woman's manners. It proposes an element of doubt for her hearers, but not for her. So she is saying "come and see Him, He miraculously knew all sins that you know, perhaps He is the Messiah for you too."

It is a difficult idiom, but note that the woman addresses the men, and so she communicates what is not an issue for her, but for them. That issue is whether Jesus is the Messiah.

The woman is doubtful, not about the identity of the Messiah, but whether her five and a half husbands will accept that.

This is not a particularly effective way to witness. "I doubt whether you will accept Jesus as Messiah, but I want to tell you about Him anyway."

But even in her weakness, God the Holy Spirit picked up the slack. It is a fine thing to note. Your weakness is compensated by the Spirit's common grace ministry.

The strength of her words is in the evidence of her transformation. She is no longer afraid of publicity how could this come about?

I would suggest that this woman expressed the gospel in such doubtful terms because of the horrified look on the faces of her hearers.

John 4:30 "They went out from the city and were coming to Him."

The portrayal is interesting it confirms something we already know that Christ is up on the hillside, and the well is in a difficult location to reach by foot.

The aorist tense of the verb EXERCHOMAI makes it clear that they all left the city at the same time. This reveals that the action all occurred at one point in time. They left the city at the same time, but...

The imperfect tense of the verb ERCHOMAI shows them arriving over a duration of time. They all got spread out due to the rigors of the climb. Now, we are not talking about Mt. Everest here, but at least a hill and enough distance where there is a stream of people coming to Christ, even though they all started together.

John 4:31-33 "Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, saying, "Rabbi, eat." But he said, "I have food to eat of which you do not know" At this the disciples said to one another, "Can someone have brought him food?"

The disciples are urging Christ to eat, because he must look pretty rough. The verb EROTAO means to "ask", or when the words are in the imperative, "urge". The note of urgency must come from the disciple's visual analysis of Christ's condition.

Again, we are reminded that Christ has a human body, and no matter how great his conditioning, it is susceptible to exhaustion. This has probably occurred a couple of months after His ordeal in the wilderness, and the extreme starvation of that experience may still have an effect on him now.

Regardless, food is not the way to treat a heat injury or dehydration. Food requires water for metabolization, and can hasten the demise of someone in the severe stages of dehydration. Not only is their advice spiritually incorrect, but it is medically incorrect as well.

Christ's reply is on the spiritual level alone. But it sounds like he may have his own stash. The statement of Christ in verse thirty two is intentionally unclear, so as to stimulate curiosity in his disciples.

So the disciples talk among themselves, mystified that Christ has food. But he still does not look well.

John 4:34-38 "But Jesus said, "It is food for me that I might do the will of him who sent me and that I might finish his work. Do you say, "Four months more and then comes harvest"? But I say to you, look, lift up your eyes and behold the fields that are already white for the harvest. The reaper receives pay and gathers fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. That is how the saying comes true: 'One sows, and another reaps.' I sent you to reap a crop for which you have not toiled. Others toiled and you have come in for the harvest of their toil."

Christ puts his spiritual responsibilities ahead of logistics. This is the height of unselfishness.

He describes the realm of spiritual responsibility by using the term, 'the will of him who sent me'

The time frame for the execution of this responsibility is until he has finished God's work. This is another way to say, 'until I am dead'. Our lives model Christ's in this regard.

Christ employs two aorist subjunctive verbs, POIESO and TELEISO, to communicate the contingent nature of His execution of God's work.

It will depend on Him whether He accomplishes what God has prepared for Him, Eph 2:10, "For we are God's handiwork, created

in Christ Jesus for the good deeds which God has prepared beforehand."

This works much like unlimited atonement and salvation. God prepared the salvation, we must accept.

Christ then points out that it is a relatively long time to the harvest apparently four months to the grain harvest (that would, incidentally, place this incident in June).

And there below them, spread out in a panorama, comes the town of Sychar streaming to Jacob's well, and to once again seek the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The woman who was hardly noticed by the disciples has opened her mouth in a weak and human way; and that plus the common grace ministry of God the Holy Spirit is more than enough to impel the people.

As they come, Christ has more instructions for His disciples in the matter of ambassadorship.

The pay of the reaper is logistical grace. It is there to keep him alive so that he can gather the fruit of the harvest.

The harvest itself is the ambassadorial responsibility of every believer. This responsibility must come second to spiritual growth, but it is necessary nonetheless.

The harvest is for eternal life because those whom you harvest now have that life. They now wait along with us for the final harvest of the Great White Throne, where all of our names will be found in the book of life.

The purpose is so that the reaper and the sower may rejoice together.

Sowing the seed is tantamount to giving the gospel. Christ sowed the seed and reaped the harvest with the woman.

The woman has now sown seed among the people of her town, and they come to the harvest of their own accord.

Funny thing, but the reapers are the disciples, and the sower is the Samaritan woman. Christ is getting the disciples ready for a big shock:

they are going to rejoice with one whom they would normally consider racially and sexually inferior.

The disciples have not toiled for this crop, but they will reap. The woman has toiled, and she will have the pleasure of watching the harvest.

John 4:39-42 "Many Samaritans of that town came to believe in him because of the woman's testimony: 'He told me everything I which did.' So when these Samaritans had come to him they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. Many more became believers because of his word. They told the woman, 'It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard him ourselves; and we know that this is in truth the Savior of the world.'"

A genuine revival welled up in Sychar on account of this woman who believed and was willing to give the gospel, no matter how weak the presentation.

Her testimony was simple: "EIPEN MOI PANTA HA EPOIESA" He told me everything which I did.

Again, this testimony is powerful, because everyone in this little town knew of this woman's affairs.

This woman may be someone that we know by name from other gospel accounts, but her identity is closely guarded by John, because her past life is really not an issue.

John makes this abundantly clear when he goes on to say that her testimony faded into oblivion when Christ began to speak. Therefore, this harvest divides into two: those harvested by the words of the woman, and those harvested by the words of Christ.

Who witnessed to whom is not an issue. But for John, this woman's privacy is. What does it matter how spectacularly you have failed in your life before God? What does it matter if you were the very pinnacle of average? None. You are a new creature in Christ.

It is with respect that the townspeople make their comment. They admit the validity of the woman's judgment when they concentrate on the words of Christ. Let us not forget that this woman's witness was particularly weak, while the words of Christ were no doubt quite dynamic. And this does not matter either, for the common grace ministry of the Spirit covered both.

Notice their salvation orientation: Christ is the savior of the world.

Christ is the savior not just of the Jews, but of the Samaritans, and the entire world.

Is it not significant that the first real harvest of Jesus Christ is of Gentiles? And now these Gentiles are true Jews.

Jesus' Galilean Ministry

Arrival in Galilee, John 4:43-45.

"And after the two days He went forth from there into Galilee. For Jesus Himself testified that a prophet has no honor in his own country. But when He came to Galilee, the Galileans received Him, having seen all the things that He did in Jerusalem at the feast; for they themselves also went to the feast."

Christ is headed to Cana, a day or two's journey from Sychar. Galilee was His original destination.

Let's get this right: Christ went to Galilee, but He knew beforehand that a prophet has no honor in his own country.

He is not stupid or naive. He does have a sense of duty concerning the gospel, and willingly goes where He is quite sure of a negative response.

Christ's exact words were PROPHETES EN TE IDIA PATRIDI TIMEN OUK ECHEI - "A prophet has no honor in his own fatherland."

Christ uses PATRIDI for 'country'. It is a word that describes the land of one's forebears. Galilee was the land of Christ's fathers - it was where He grew up.

The word for honor is TIMEN, and here it describes something close to our idea of respect.

There are valid reason for this, which we will address fully when Christ goes before the synagogue in Nazareth. For now the simple: they watched Him grow up, and even though Christ was a perfect child it was difficult for them to perceive that He was the messiah all along. They are so arrogant, they think they would have noticed or something.

John concludes by noting that the Galileans actually did receive Christ. He uses the particle OUN in an adversative sense. This John also does in 9:18 of his gospel.

Christ was not wrong, here. Though the Galileans saw what Christ had done at the feast (many miracles), that is not the equivalent of following Him.

An interest in the spectacles of healing and miracles does not indicate a desire to accept Christ and His kingdom.

Miracles and healings are easy things to like. The kingdom requires sacrifice of self, and so is quite difficult to accept.

The reason for the Galilean acceptance is clear: the miracles at the Passover feast. There is therefore an exception to the rule. This incident serves to point out that you must never assume negative volition about any group - not Samaritans, and not even the people of your home town or nation.

Note also that Christ was not wrong in making His generalization. Christ did make that testimony, but He still went, trusting the Lord that people are truly free to make their own decisions about Him.

The Nature of the Galilean Ministry

Matthew 4:17: "From that time Jesus began to preach and say, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'"

Mark 1:14b-15: "preaching the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and

the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

Luke 4:14b-15: "and news about Him spread through all the surrounding district. And He Himself taught in their synagogues, being praised by all."

This synoptic passage divides into three parts: the message, the time, and the method.

The message is one of repentance and belief in the gospel. Again, the concept of repentance. It means to change your mind, and does not refer to how you feel about a thing.

The time is the fullness of time - just the right time according to God's sense of order for Christ to appear on the scene and begin His kingdom ministry.

This is the true beginning of the kingdom ministry. Whereas before Christ baptized, or witnessed to the people of Samaria, now He offers His kingdom.

The method of Christ was to go to the synagogues in the region, and teach there. There He would have a gathering of at least religious people, if not a few who were faithfully waiting for the Him. Christ's ministry was naturally characterized by sound strategy.

An interesting thing at the end of Luke's statement: He was praised by all.

In Luke 4:14b and 15, the present participle DOXAZOMENOS shows simultaneous action with the main verb.

The main verb is the aorist verb EDIDASKEN, which summarizes the action of teaching in Galilee. It is in the past. So while Christ was teaching, all the people He taught praised Him.

This is more than just a fascination with miracles. God designed the miracles to validate Christ's teaching. All the people who saw Him in the synagogues responded positively to the message as well as the miracles.

Again, Christ's trust in free will is well justified. There is genuine positive volition in this region.

One more thing: at some time along in here, Christ must have released His disciples to return to their homes and jobs, for only a little while later He is going to place them on recall.

Christ Heals the Official's Child - John 4:46-54

John 4:46,47 "He came therefore again to Cana of Galilee where He had made the water wine. And there was a certain royal official, whose son was sick at Capernaum. When he heard that Jesus had come out of Judea into Galilee, he went to Him, and was requesting Him to come down and heal his son; for he was about to die."

This was apparently a part of Christ's course of travel from synagogue to synagogue. There was one in Cana, so he came there. It would be natural for Christ to come to Cana, because of His former miracle there. That miracle would be the perfect groundwork for a few days of ministry.

The royal official was a BASILIKOS. Since his son is in Capernaum, he must be from there. He is not from Cana, because he comes to Cana; presumably from Capernaum.

BASILIKOS was a somewhat generic term, which encompassed both members of the royal family, and those who were officials in the king's household. We can only speculate here. There is some significance here, even though the exact identity of this man remains hidden. Social status means nothing in the kingdom of God. You may be from the highest or lowest social class, but it does not matter to God. His grace offer extends to all.

This event is especially pertinent coming right after the narrative of the redemption of a complete social outcast, the Samaritan woman. So in just a few verses we go from the lowest class to one of the highest, and both are redeemed by the grace of God. If grace is extended to all, then there is no excuse for anyone. Race, social class, sex, etc.

This royal man is at the point of desperation - his son is sick, and really about to die.

The verb ESTHENEI describes the boy's illness. It describes the spectrum of bodily ailments, from weakness or minor illness to a fatal disease.

The phrase EMELLEN APOTHNESKEIN makes the grave nature of his condition quite lucid. It is literally, 'about to die'.

The boy is in Capernaum, the city of Nahum, while his royal father is in Cana with Christ.

The father has come to Cana because he had heard that Christ had come up from Judea. At the very least, this man knew of Christ. He may have even seen Christ at the feast in Jerusalem. But he knows Christ, and believes that He can heal his son.

The man goes to Christ. His son may be so ill that he cannot be moved. Such is likely.

He asks politely for Christ to come down to Capernaum (Cana was in the hills and Capernaum at the seaside). He certainly does have respect. It is unclear as yet whether this royal man believes in Christ.

John 4:48, "Jesus therefore said to him, "Unless you all see signs and wonders, you absolutely will not believe."

This is a statement about the general mental attitude in Galilee at this time. Although Christ addresses the man (HOUTOS), the statement is plural (IDETE), and thus impersonal.

SEMEIA is the word for signs. It is something miraculous done for a specific purpose. At this time to point the way to the Messiah.

TERATA is the word for wonders. But there is a terrifying side to this. At the least it is something so powerful that it would cause the witness to be stricken with awe. Terror is not out of the picture. Perhaps a good example is the baptism of Christ, where the heavens tore open, and the voice of God came out of the sky, and the Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove. Another example has yet to happen in our narrative - it is the transfiguration of Christ. An awesome display of power is a good way to describe this.

EAN ME is the Greek idiom for 'unless'. An equally good way to translate is "If you all do not see signs and wonders."

IDETE is the simple verb for seeing, in the aorist subjunctive. So, the people of Galilee must see signs and wonders in order for the event to come to pass.

This is the strongest possible negative in the Greek language. It is the watertight, absolute negative, OU ME.

The verb is the aorist subjunctive PISTEUSETE. It reveals something about belief. The aorist shows that belief in Christ occurs in one moment of time.

The fulfillment is negative, the second half of a double negative. Turn this around, and it is "You all must absolutely see signs and wonders before you will believe."

It is not that the Galileans refuse to believe, but that they will not believe unless Christ proves it to them by the use of signs and wonders.

What would these people have done in the post-canon church age?

Notice that this is not a personal slam of this man. He is different from the class that Christ outlines because he is not there to believe in Christ, but to preserve the life of his son.

It is apparent that the man believes in the supernatural powers of Christ, and that he has followed somewhat the career of the Messiah.

John 4:49 "The royal man said to Him, "Sir, come down before my child dies."

The royal man addresses Christ respectfully, saying, KURIE. As we saw with the Samaritan woman, this title does necessarily mean belief in Christ.

The man assumes that Christ must be face to face with his son in order to perform the miracle; this is a mistaken assumption.

The aorist imperative of KATABAINO shows the man's sense of urgency. Again it is the imperative of entreaty. No man has the right to command the Messiah as though God were

under the authority of man. The imperative of entreaty commands out of necessity.

The son of this man is young - just a PAIDION. This indicates that the boy is physically just a boy.

The royal man depicts the time crunch with the phrase PRIN APOTHANEIN TO PAIDION MOU.

PRIN is the adverb of time 'before'. It is before an undetermined time, which is the time of the death of his son.

The verb is APOTHANEIN, the aorist infinitive of the verb 'to die'. The aorist tense concentrates on the exact time of death. The royal man assumes that if Christ can get there at any time before death it will be in time, and the boy will be saved.

Again, there is an implied belief in the healing power of Christ. Whether this belief extends to Christ's future work on the cross is still to be seen.

John 4:50, "Jesus said to him, "Go; your son lives." The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him, and he started off."

Christ decided to heal this man on the basis of the man's belief in His power to heal. That was enough for the healing to take place. It is clear that there is perfect confidence on the part of Christ in the matter. He says, POREUOU, HO HUIOS SOU ZE.

The present imperative of POREUOMAI is the command of Christ. It is simply, 'Go'. The presumption is that the man is to return to Capernaum and the side of his son.

The present active indicative of ZAO is a simple statement of fact. The present tense reveals durative action. The man's son continues to live. The declarative indicative mood makes a dogmatic statement of reality about the son's life. He truly continues to live.

The man's response is belief in the word of Christ, but still not in Christ for eternal salvation. The man's action in returning to Capernaum without Christ reveals his steadfast belief in Christ's ability to heal. There is no

question in his mind that he will find his son well.

John 4:51-53, "And as he was now going down, his slaves met him, saying that his son was living. So he inquired of them the hour when he began to get better. They said therefore to him, "Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him." So the father knew that it was at that hour in which Jesus said to him, "Your son lives"; and he himself believed, and his whole household."

The slaves of this man left the side of the boy, because he could obviously be safely left. There were probably nurses in attendance. They were on their way to Cana, when they met one another. Their message was of course one of joy. The son was living, and clearly out of danger for his life.

The very hour at which the son began to get better was the very hour that Christ spoke the words to the royal man. There was no coincidence here. The words of Christ healed the son.

The result is that this man and his household finally put their whole belief into the Messiah, and His future redemptive work.

The important principle from this story is that faith in miracles and healing does not mean faith in Christ unto salvation. It is an important theme in the context.

John 4:54, "This is again a second sign that Jesus performed, after coming out of Judea into Galilee."

The aorist participle ELTHON indicates that the signs were performed after coming out of Judea, but, and this is tricky, before He is completely into Galilee. The aorist participle shows action that occurs before that of the main verb. So the 'coming out' occurred before this, while the implied arrival was technically not complete. Compare this verse with John 4:43 to see it in the right light.

The first sign was the revelation of the Samaritan woman's personal life. The second the healing of the royal man's son.

Ministry and Rejection at Nazareth

Luke 4:16, "And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, he entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read."

This verse reveals again the strategy of Christ in going to the synagogues - but it also refers to a custom of His from youth, and the foundation of His strategy.

The participle TETHRAMMENOS vividly portrays the bringing up of Christ.

The basis meaning of TREPHO has to do with the care of animals. It really indicates just feeding and watering them. In fact, it is probable that our English word trough comes from this very verb.

This participle is in the perfect periphrastic construction, which is the most intense and vivid way to portray action with the Greek language.

The passive voice shows that Christ did not grow up by himself, but that He had been brought up by His parents.

Going into the synagogue on the Sabbath was the EIOTHOS of Christ. This word comes from ETHOS, which means custom, or even law. From this same word we draw the English 'Ethics'. Not only was this a custom, but it was a rigid habit.

From the context itself, it appears that this was His habit from youth. That He would go into the synagogue on the Sabbath and read.

The synagogue was a place for local gatherings of Jews, outside of Jerusalem.

Here, the local rabbi would read Scripture and instruct upon it. This usually occurred on the Sabbath, and during the feasts.

Here, the local children and young men would receive religious instruction.

The interior of the synagogue had seating arrangements, and, a platform. This platform was called the BEMA. It was situated either in the center of the room, or at one end. On the

BEMA was an ark, which carried the scrolls of Scripture.

Often the synagogues that were far from Jerusalem would also add the entire ritual system, so that their members could understand the truth.

Since this was Christ, and it was His hometown, it is likely that on this day the synagogue would have been especially full.

John 4:17-20, "And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the book, and found the place where it was written, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are downtrodden, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord." 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 upon Him."

The quoted passage is Isaiah 61:1-2. But, Christ paraphrases part of it, leaves some of it out, and adds a little something on His own initiative.

Here is the quote from the NASB: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives, and freedom to prisoners; to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn."

Christ substitutes gospel for good news, a paraphrase.

He substitutes 'poor' for 'afflicted', but this distinction can be blurred by translation.

Then Christ sets up parallel statements:

- Release to the captives;
- Recovery of sight to the blind;
- Set free those who are downtrodden;
- Proclaim the favorable year of the Lord.

Isaiah's parallel of these things is:

Bind up the brokenhearted;

Proclaim liberty to the captives;

Freedom to the prisoners;

Proclaim the favorable year of the Lord.

But note - Christ's addition comes from another place in

Isaiah 6:9,10, "Go, and tell this people: "Keep on listening, but do not perceive; keep on looking, but do not understand. Render the hearts of this people insensitive, their ears dull, and their eyes dim, lest they see with their eyes, hear with their ears understand with their hearts, and return and be healed."

As for leaving out certain things, well that is perfectly alright. He had a specific reason for doing so.

Another reason for their rapt attention was that the Isaiah 61 passage is messianic. It speaks of the anointed one of the Lord, who is the Messiah. Here the man who is reputedly the Messiah, and He chooses to read a Messianic passage. And this passage, when read, is in the first person... "The Spirit of the Lord is upon ME... The Lord has anointed ME... He has sent ME..."

The favorable year of the Lord is the year of Jubilee. And Christ is saying here that the Jubilee is upon them.

A loud trumpet would proclaim liberty throughout Israel on the tenth day of the seventh month (the day of atonement), after a lapse of seven Sabbaths of years. So every fiftieth year was a jubilee year.

On this year, the following things would occur - Lev 25:8-17.

It was considered a normal sabbatical year, so the land would lie fallow for the second consecutive year. cf. Lev 25:2-7.

The trumpet would sound on the day of atonement.

They specifically remembered their time of slavery in Egypt, and their release from captivity.

All of the slaves in the land were released, although this was often applied only to those of Abrahamic descent (Leviticus does not say that).

All of the real property reverted to its hereditary owners. This signified that God was the owner of Israel's land - v.23.

Interestingly enough, this struck a course that was anti socialist, but not truly capitalist. It was anti-monopolistic.

It definitely reaffirmed the right to own property, and rejected the redistribution of wealth based on need.

However, reversion to hereditary landholdings every fifty years assured that there would be no long-lasting monopolies.

Property values were adjusted according to how many years it was to Jubilee.

The Jubilee was not practiced or mentioned after the Babylonian exile. This is the third reason why Christ had their rapt attention. Surely such a proclamation would surely take their breath away.

From the aorist passive verb EPEDOTHE, we understand that someone handed to Christ the scroll of Isaiah. In other words, Christ did not get to choose the scroll of reading. Whoever it was may have known the Messianic character of this book, for it is full of Messianic prophecies. From verse 20, it is understood that the synagogue attendant was the one who handed Christ the scroll.

The verb ATENIZO describes the riveted eyes of the congregation. The verb means to stretch muscles or ligaments, and came to denote a staring countenance, almost with the eyes bulging out of the head.

John 4:21,22, "And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." But all were speaking well of him, and wondering at the gracious words

which were falling from His lips; and they were saying, "Is this not Joseph's son?"

Now Christ began to tell them something about this reading, in other words, what was important about it. The aorist tense of ARCHOMAI concentrates on the very moment of the beginning, and so these words barely got out of Christ's mouth, and he may not have finished the complete sentence reproduced here.

What he was about to say, and was interrupted during, was that He Himself was the anointed one, the preacher, the atoning sacrifice that gave freedom. But...

But Christ is interrupted by an uproar of voices in the synagogue - and they are all talking of Christ. Now, the KAI at the beginning of verse twenty two is adversative, and should be translated "but".

This conversation goes on simultaneously with Christ speaking. Does this bother you? It bothers me.

The imperfect tense of MARTUROO makes it clear that this was an ongoing roar of voices.

The verb THAUMAZO is also in the imperfect. They are all - PANTES - all testifying out loud, and marveling in their souls.

But there is a right time for everything, and this is not the right time for talking and marveling.

They testified and marveled at the gracious words which went forth from His lips. But this observation is about the scroll reading, and not Christ's sermon which was to follow, for we know from the Greek that they interrupted Him before He could really talk.

The verb EKPOREUOMAI describes the words going forth from the lips of our Lord. And, it concentrates on their enunciation. What they were saying was this: "When He reads that scroll He is so eloquent." But nowhere in this description is there a description of the words getting into their hearts and lives.

The crowd also notes that Christ is the home town boy made good. "Is this not Joseph's son?"

is a question that expects a positive answer. They are marveling at this kid who is now a man, and whom they know.

It is a weird and ironic scene - a crowd bubbling with conversation over the eloquence of their home town boy, when at the same time this man, no, the Messiah is beginning to speak more words.

As we will see, Christ immediately identifies their character, and their terrible flaw. Instead of talking about Christ, they should have been listening to Christ.

John 4:23,24, "And He said to them, "No doubt you will quote this parable to Me, "Physician, heal yourself!" We heard certain things were happening at Capernaum, do them here in your fatherland as well." And He said, "Truly I say to you, no prophet is welcome in his home town."

Now Christ replies, and He begins with the adverb PANTOS, "by all means" or "certainly". Christ is positive as to the character of His audience. The spirit of this is sanctified cynicism... "Next you are going to do this." PANTOS means that Christ is rolling his eyes at his audience.

The proverb or parable is one that even exists today in many forms.

Here is a simple enigma: There are two barbers in a one horse town... to whom do you go for the best haircut? The one with the worst haircut, for they must cut each other's hair.

It is often the fatal flaw of the physician that he cannot heal himself.

But Christ places these words in the mouths of His audience, that He should heal those people in His hometown, the same as what He did in Capernaum.

But Christ will not do it. He is not going to give them the satisfaction, because he knows that they have only a prurient interest in His miracles and healings.

Christ knows the character of His audience from their disrespectful bantering just when He was beginning to preach.

The way Christ quotes the fruit of their character is less than flattering. He sees them as narrow eyed people yearning for the satisfaction of their stimulation lust. The correlative pronoun HOSA gathers the healing at Capernaum to their desire to see the same in Nazareth.

But also the aorist imperative of POIEO means something. These people, Christ knows, are into the demand syndrome. "Do for us what you did in Capernaum" is the gist.

Now Christ has a message or moral based on His analysis of their character, and it is this: "No prophet is welcome in His hometown."

And it is true here, for this audience has been so rude to Christ that He could not even get His message out.

Christ was less than welcome, for while His audience was full of praise for how He read the scroll, they were less than interested in what He had to say about it.

In fact, if their true desire was to see a healing or a miracle, then these words of theirs are nothing more than flattery. They no doubt interrupted His message so that He would get on with the healing.

So, the people of Nazareth had no interest in God or the truth, but instead went to that synagogue only to satisfy their stimulation lust.

Now, some principles.

The church is not about stimulation lust, but teaching, and inculcation in doctrine.

Stimulation lust is a sign of the cosmic system. It reveals a bitterness toward God, a deep seated rejection of the truth, spiritual blindness, and a frantic search for happiness.

As long as your soul is dominated by any form of lust, you cannot please God. You may attempt, in your state of deception, to flatter

God into giving Him what you want, but you will not receive it

First, you must repent, and leave behind your love for the cosmic system, and turn to God, and His grace plan.

Then He will guide your life, into a life of balance, and give you what He thinks you will like. What God thinks you will like is best for you.

John 4:25,26, "But I say to you in truth, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the sky was shut up for three years and six months, when a great famine came over all the land; and yet Elijah was sent to none of them, but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow."

This narrative goes back to 1 Kings 17 and 18...

In chapter seventeen, God gives Elijah power over the rain clouds of the sky. They will rain only by the word of Elijah. Ahab is king, and he is an evil, idol-worshipping hypocrite.

So, the drought is discipline, brought on by the Lord, who delegated the power of drought to Elijah.

Now something interesting... God commands Elijah to live outside of the land during this time. First, He is assigned to the brook Cherith. This is one of the tributary streams that run from the Jordanian highlands in the East down to the Jordan River to the West. It is difficult to know exactly which one, but know this: it was in a wild and remote part of the country, near the same wilderness where Christ received His evidence testing.

The brook Cherith dried up, the Lord told Elijah to go to Zarephath, in Sidon. This is also outside the boundaries of the land.

Zarephath was an old, old city on the Mediterranean seacoast. It had been around more than seven hundred years at the time when Elijah came.

Although there was no positive volition at all in the land - and listen to this - no positive volition

in the land, there was one woman there who wanted to hear the gospel.

Lesson: during the dispensation of Israel the gospel was still quite available to the Gentiles. The woman in Zarephath was a Gentile, and positive to the teaching of the Word.

The widow and her son were exceedingly poor, and when Elijah met her, she was gathering sticks or twigs so that they could have a meal.

But God worked a miracle through Elijah. When Elijah arrived at the widow's place, there was a little bit of flour in her bowl, and a little oil in her jar. But that never ran out as long as the drought continued.

Then also, the widow's son became sick, and almost to death, but Elijah healed him through the Lord's power.

The result of these two miracles was that the woman believed in Christ: "Now I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in your mouth is truth." The miracles were validation for Elijah's God.

But meanwhile, back in the promised land, God has done no more miracles, and the drought marched on.

That time is brought forward by Christ, and applied not to the nation, nor to the region, but just to His home town. There will be no miracles here, because the people are full of unbelief.

This statement would have really chapped a crowd like this. Not only because they could care less about God's word, but also because their stimulation lust had gone unappeased.

Just a mention of it here: when one category of lust is thwarted, then the truly unhappy will often shift their trend to another. It would happen here.

So Christ goes from being on the verge of announcing His Messiahship to telling these people that they will not get their Messiah. Hard stuff.

This is also a precursor to the age of the Gentiles. For the gospel went to the Jews in the land first. But when the Jews reject the Gospel, the primary focus of evangelism turns to the Gentiles.

John 4:27, "And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian."

This one originates in 2 Kings 5:1-14. It has very much the same theme as the first illustration.

The description of Naaman, the gentile Assyrian, is in the very first verse, "Now Naaman, captain of the army of the king of Aram, was a great man before his master, and highly respected, because by him the Lord had given victory to Aram. The man was also a valiant warrior, but he was a leper."

A little servant girl, who attended Naaman's wife, suggested that Naaman go to Elisha, in Samaria to be healed. This little girl was a Jew.

So Naaman went to Israel, to the city of Samaria, and pleaded with the king to be healed, but the king mourned that he could not do it.

Elisha heard of this Syrian, and so went to him, and told him to dip himself in the River Jordan seven times, and he would be healed.

After some bickering, Naaman did just that, and was healed by God. His skin came out of that water just the same as a child's.

And Naaman said this: Behold now, I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel; so please take a present from your servant now.

And, as Christ said, there were plenty of lepers in Israel at this time, but God cleansed only a Gentile.

This would have had much the same effect on the Jews in the synagogue at Nazareth as the preceding statement. And they became mad as hornet.

With their stimulation lust unabated, they switch over to killer lust.

John 4:28-30, "And all in the synagogue were filled with rage when they heard these things; and they rose up and cast Him out of the city, and led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city had been built, in order to throw Him down the cliff. But passing through their midst, He went His way."

The adverbial participle AKOUONTES reveals the time of their rage - it is simultaneous with their hearing Christ's two illustrations. Because this is a present participle, there is simultaneous action.

The adjective TAUTA tells us that they were filled with rage upon hearing both illustrations, because TAUTA is plural - 'these things'.

The substantive adjective PANTES communicates that every single person in that synagogue was filled with rage.

THUMOY is the noun for rage. It is the kind of rage that is ecstatic and unthinking. It describes the total control of emotion over the soul. Since the same word is often used of human passion, you could say that they were in an orgy of rage.

Furthermore, the aorist passive verb EPLESTHESAN reinforces the idea of ecstasy in rage. This comes from PIMPLEMI, a different verb than the usual PLEROO. This was a special verb when used with words of emotion. It was used with fear, enthusiasm, even the Old Testament kind of ecstatic filling of the Spirit.

This is a crowd of people. It is difficult to get an exact figure, but it is likely to be more than a hundred, even much more. And they are more than a crowd, for they have turned into a mob.

At the time that this was written, the city of Nazareth sat upon a hill. The present city is a little more down in the valley. This is a pretty small town, so the entire crown of the hill was not covered by the town. The crowd of the synagogue stood up, and took Jesus outside of the city limits.

There is no record of Christ's response, verbal or physical, during this crisis. It is unlikely that any of His disciples were present, though, so

there were no other eyewitnesses than a mob and Himself.

You can be sure that Christ remained poised, even in the crisis, and did not fear or panic in any way. Such would be sinful, and that was something that He did not do.

It seems probable that in order to escape the synagogue Christ would have had to go through the crowd to the exit. There is a good chance that their synagogues had but one entrance.

So a procession of sorts goes through the streets, with a number of people leading Christ along to the brow of the Nazareth hill, and kill Him by throwing Him off the cliff there.

The verb KATAKREMNIZO is quite graphic, and means only one thing: to chuck someone off a cliff, so as to kill them. It may be like our English defenestrate, which means to throw someone out a window to kill them.

But it was not Christ's time yet. Note this same rage at the death of Christ more than two years later. There, the people and the Jewish leadership have constructed an insidious rationale. Here, they really have nothing but unrequited lust.

The Greek is interesting and yet ambiguous about Christ's escape. It says - AUTOS DE DIELTHON DIA MESOU AUTON EPOREUETO. Literally, 'but He Himself, going through their middle, was on His way.'

The intensive use of the personal pronoun AUTOS puts the success of this maneuver entirely upon the shoulders of Christ.

Poised for the right moment, Christ just turns and slips through their midst. The leaders may have turned to look down the cliff, while the rest of the people were still coming up, and could not see who it was.

It is significant to note that the people are full of rage, and in their ecstasy could be easily duped.

There is no mention at all of Divine intervention here, and Luke, the meticulous historian, gives full credit to Christ.

The verb POREUETO describes Christ's egress from the scene of peril. He did not run, but the imperfect tense portrays a steady pace, and one that was probably unhurried so as to keep unwanted attention at bay.

So the leaders turn to do their final deed, and Christ is gone! And they cannot see him for the mob. And the mob comes up to see the end of this mean man, only to find that He is no longer there! Matthew 4:13-16: "and leaving Nazareth, He came and settled in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali. This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet, saying, "The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, by the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles - the people who were sitting in darkness saw a great light, and to those who were sitting in the land shadow of death, upon them a light dawned."

Isaiah chapter nine has a larger context of the Messiah. It is not just this, but also several more verses that are Messianic. Later in the chapter, Isaiah tells of the wonderful counselor, and great ruler, who is the Messiah. In the first two verses things are more simple: it is the Messiah, a region, and a condition.

The region includes two areas, Zebulun and Naphtali.

The southern border of Naphtali runs west from the southernmost tip of the sea of Galilee, where it intersects with the river Jordan, until it gets to Mt. Tabor. From there it runs North for ten or fifteen miles, then West for another ten, then North again for forty or fifty miles, until it gets just past the Leontes river. From there it runs due East until it again intersects the Northern Jordan river, and then runs back down to the Sea of Galilee, and around it on the West side until it hits the southern tip again.

Zebulun occupies an area about twenty miles across, to the Southwest of Naphtali. It runs southwest until it intersects with the Kishon River.

The condition is really twofold. It has an initial condition, and a changed condition.

The initial condition is that of darkness. In fact, Christ modifies this quotation to include something from the Twenty Third Psalm.

The Twenty Third Psalm has that great line... "Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for Thou art with me."

So they are the people who are sitting in darkness, and those who are sitting in the land of the shadow of death.

It means that in this region there is little, if any truth. Truth is the light that shines, and chases the darkness away.

It is the land of the shadow of death, because it is the land of the enemy, and his shadow lurks over them all, tempting them to reject the love and light of God.

The final condition is that of great light, and the great light is the embodiment of truth, Jesus Christ, the Messiah Himself.

The great light is the Messiah.

The dawning of the light is the dawning of the new era of the Messiah and His kingdom.

The Official Calling of the Disciples

Matthew 4:18-22; Mark 1:16-20

Christ has now moved to Capernaum, which will become His headquarters. Matthew would later call this city Jesus' own.

Now Christ has already had an impact on these four disciples; they have come to believe through John the Baptist's ministry, and through Christ's word.

But it is time for Christ to put His disciples to the work of the Lord, so he put them on recall.

Matthew 4:18-22: "And walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon who was called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fisherman. And He said to them, 'Come after Me, and I will make you fishers of men.' And immediately leaving the nets, and followed Him. And going on from there He saw two

other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and He called them. And they immediately left the boat and their father, and followed Him."

Mark 1:16-20: "And as He was passing through by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew, the brother of Simon, casting a net in the sea; for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, "Come after Me, and I will make you become fishers of men." And immediately leaving the nets, they followed Him . And going on a little farther, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who were also in the boat [with others] mending the nets. And immediately He called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went away to follow Him."

Both writers agree completely with the details of the calling of Simon and Andrew.

Christ was walking, passing through by the shore of the sea of Galilee, just as we left Him in Luke 4. It is the adverbial present participle, PARAGON, which reveals the circumstantial background to the moment He saw Simon and Andrew. Apparently He was on His way somewhere else, perhaps from Nazareth to Capernaum.

He saw the two brothers, as they were casting a net in the sea, for the purpose of fishing.

So Christ gave them a command - DEUTE OPISO MOU - literally translated, 'come after me.'

Both accounts agree to the exact wording.

Principle: This is the inspired retelling of this event. It is more probable that Christ spoke this command in Aramaic, the language of the day for the region. But, when two gospel writers agree on the exact Greek translation, you can rest assured that the spirit of the Aramaic has been captured, without any loss of meaning.

When two or more gospel writers disagree on the exact Greek translation, then the multiple accounts must harmonize to bring full meaning. The differences are the work of God the Holy

Spirit as well, and they make the narrative better, not worse.

The second half of Christ's words of recall to His disciples has to do with their mission. They are going to be fishers of men.

Mark adds one note to the account of Matthew, and that is the word GENESTHAI. This is the aorist middle infinite of the deponent verb GINOMAI, 'to become.'

Mark's meaning is a little more graphic as to the nature of their transformation. It concentrates on function, and not quality.

The aorist tense tells us that the transformation from fishermen to fishers of men will be immediate. In other words, they will make the switch immediately. Second, there is no mention of quality here; they may have been crummy at first.

But remember, Christ had given them intensive training just a few months before, when they dove by the river Jordan. They would have had some frame of reference for what they were about to do.

The disciples' response is immediate and sure - leaving their nets they followed Him. The adverb of time EUTHUS leaves no question as to their obedience.

These men already had built up a certain amount of trust in Christ. They were believers in Him, and had begun to know Him.

Their nets were left right where they lay, and their boats, and their families.

The calling of the second pair of disciples runs very much the same as the first.

This time, Christ just 'calls' them. The implication is that His words are the same as those that went out to Andrew and Peter.

They too follow immediately.

These four are the only ones mentioned in the narrative, and so are likely the only ones with Him during this time. It would be only a short while until the call of Matthew, and a little more time until the twelve are officially appointed.

The Twelve Disciples

Matthew

God used an outcast. His name is a transliteration of the Aramaic word which means gift of God.

In his own Gospel, Matthew uses his regular name. In other gospels, the name Levi is used. It is likely that Matthew became his name after his conversion.

Matthew was a Jewish tax collector. It is likely that he was fairly well off financially because of his profession. This makes his decision to follow Christ all the more remarkable, because he left it all behind - Lk 5:28. It is likely that he worked at the toll house in Capernaum.

When he decided to follow our Lord, he threw a big party, and invited all his friends. His decision to follow Christ was immediate.

As a tax collector, Matthew was an outcast in Jewish society. He apparently had no friends who were devout in the Jewish faith for at his party there were only other tax collectors and sinners.

The Roman tax collectors were hated by the Jews because the Roman taxes were in addition to the Jewish taxes.

They were also hated because they represented the occupying forces of the Roman Empire.

The tax collectors made their living by inflating the Roman taxes. They essentially worked on commission.

Tax collectors were wealthy, but hated by their own society. They had to live with a tremendous amount of prejudice.

Because of this prejudice their social options were severely limited. They could only socialize with others who were outcasts.

It was easy for Matthew to follow Christ, considering his personal circumstances. Social isolation does not make it easy to enjoy personal wealth. No doubt he knew of the supernatural essence of Christ's ministry, and

he may have even heard Him speak. It is often the outcast that finds it easiest to follow Christ.

Matthew is a rich man who defied the odds.

Remember Matthew if you are an outcast.

John Boanerges

Cousin "according to the flesh" of Jesus Christ. Brother of James (not the epistle writer). A native of Galilee. John's mother Salome was a follower of Jesus, and ministered to Him of her own means.

John was a fisherman of the Sea of Galilee, his life was hard work, but apparently it had paid off for his family, because they had servants, and were able to support the ministry of Jesus Christ. Galilee was a region somewhat analogous to the U.S. South not too long ago. It is conservative to a fault, and more than a little rebellious in character. The fires of rebellion flamed openly in this region. In reality a lot of senseless violence took place in the name of the zealot movement, but there was very little virtue. This time was somewhat analogous to that of Northern Ireland today.

Great humility -

When John the Baptist points out Jesus as the Messiah, John follows without delay.

Never mentions own name in own Gospel.

Nicknamed, with brother James as the "Sons of Thunder", a reference to their manner in Word and Deed, Mk 3:17. It is likely that they had a fair amount of Zealot ideals in their heads.

Outspoken about his faith from the start.

"The disciple whom Jesus loved" - was the closest to Jesus of the inner circle of Peter, James, and John.

Was the only eyewitness to the cross among the disciples, and he was eyewitness to the resurrection, John 20.

One of the "Pillars of the Church", Gal 2:9. Paul had a high regard for him.

Took over as chief of Apostles some time in the late 70's.

Did not start writing until late in life.

His writing reflects the 50+ years of careful thought about the life of Christ and the Christian life.

Under his ministry, Ephesus became the center of the pivot which gave the Roman Empire its greatest time of prosperity under the Antonine Caesars, 98-180 A.D.

He used very basic Greek grammar to express incredibly deep theological ideas.

He was the key figure in the transition from the pre-canon period to the post canon period.

Peter

Peter's name was also Simon. The testimony of Peter always stands behind the writing of Mark in this epistle.

Overview: Peter is enthusiastic, emotional, swift to speak without thinking, full of love and anger, sometimes legalistic and snobbish, and Jewish in a prejudicial way. He is one of the independent, rebellious Galileans. He loves Christ so much, yet he cannot muster the spiritual resources to remain with Him in His arrest, trial, and death. He is the second to the tomb on the third day, and enters first, but did not believe what he saw.

He is the first of the disciples to see Christ after the resurrection. He is unsure of his standing with Christ immediately after the resurrection. Peter is a leader and very much a preacher, though not careful about what he says. He makes mistakes, he broods, and then he seeks and needs forgiveness in a desperate emotional way. In the end, he writes two epistles about suffering, and speaks his remembrances of Christ in a brief, but humble manner.

If there is one character trait of Peter which rises above all others, it is his emotionalism. Peter often let his emotions rule his thinking, much to his detriment and regret.

At the transfiguration of Christ, Peter emotionally desires to build tabernacles for Christ, Moses, and Elijah. He was not thinking. Mat 17:4.

Such a project would have placed the Messiah on equal footing with the two prophets.

Such a project hinted at the necessity for these three to grow spiritually when all three were in a completed state.

In other words, Peter fails to think rationally before he speaks.

At Christ's prediction of Peter's denial, Matt 26:35. Peter replies, "Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny you." (All the disciples said the same thing too).

Peter is the instigator here. All the disciples follow his heroic statement.

All the disciples follow in Peter's denial, as well.

John 21:15-17 records Peter's recovery before Christ, after the resurrection, "So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?' He said to Him, 'Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.' He said to him, 'Feed my lambs.' He said to him again a second time, 'Simon, son of John, do you love Me?' He said to Him, 'Yes Lord; You know that I love You.' He said to him, 'Shepherd my sheep.' He said to him the third time, 'Simon, son of John, do you love Me?' Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, 'Do you love me?' And he said to Him, 'Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.' Jesus said to him, 'Tend my sheep.'

Peter is still feeling guilt over his denial of Christ at this time, several days after Christ's resurrection.

Note that Peter does not blame himself for his failure, but Christ. He is projecting his failure onto God.

Christ asks Peter if he has agape love for him, and the answer is no. Only phileo love - friendship. Peter does not feel worthy enough, and so he describes his love as friendship.

Though Christ commands Peter to feed his sheep, Peter does not feel qualified to do so, because he is only a friend of Christ.

The second round is identical to the first.

The third round is significant: it is Peter's second threefold denial of Christ.

Peter's grief is founded on Christ's use of the word phileo the third time. In essence Christ says, "Do you even like me?" This because of the silence after the second command to tend His sheep.

Again, the command of Christ to feed his sheep.

Christ then predicts the kind of death Peter will die, and it is not what one would consider pleasant. He concludes the prediction with a command - 'Follow me!'

Peter is momentarily distracted by John, who was following them down the beach.

Christ cuts to the chase. 'Follow Me' is repeated, and that is the end of the story.

In your life, cut to the chase. Follow Christ. No excuses. No distractions. Get your eyes off of others, and follow Christ.

Peter is an early leader in the church, but fades from the limelight in about 50 A.D. Nothing is heard from him until he writes his epistles in the early 60's, and then dictates his gospel story to Mark in the mid-60's.

Peter wavered on the question of Gentiles and the church. In Acts 10, he receives direct guidance from the Lord on the subject of whether Gentiles should be allowed in the church. He responds positively, but just a few years later, he has to be rebuked by Paul on the very same subject.

Gal 2:11-14 contains that rebuke. "But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision. And the rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy. But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of all, 'If

you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?"

Probably the best analogy to Peter's early character is a politician on the campaign trail. Always promising, always in the limelight, but never following through.

But Peter recovers, and not long before his death he writes the most marvelous gospel and two Epistles.

James Boanerges

What we know about James is mostly related to his much more famous brother, John. Matt 4:21 communicates that they left the business and their father behind to follow Christ.

However, before John ever became famous, there was James, who was always mentioned first among the two brothers, the sons of Zebedee. This can be because he was older, or because he was the more prominent of the two at the time.

James was one of the inner circle of three along with Peter and John. Only they were present at the following events.

The raising of Jairus' daughter, Mk 8:51; Luke 5:37.

The transfiguration, Mat 17:1; Mk 9:2; Luk 9:28.

The garden of Gethsamene, Mt. 26:37; Mk 14:33.

The Olivet discourse, Mk 13:3.

Strangely, he is missing at the tomb on resurrection morning. This will always remain a mystery.

James was the first of the true twelve to die for his faith (Judas Iscariot does not count for obvious reasons). Acts 12:2 records that Herod Agrippa had him put to death with the sword.

This martyrdom may have been part of the impetus for John's late ministry, because it is only after this that John begins to rev up his engines.

Andrew, Simon's brother

Andrew is properly the first disciple of Christ. This is perhaps the most significant fact of his life. His brother Simon and business partners James and John followed his lead.

This places him as a leader, though quiet, because he really is not prominent like Peter, James, and John.

Andrew goes to lead his brother Simon Peter to the Messiah after hearing John the Baptist point the way. John 1:40-42

After his original call to discipleship, Andrew returned to fishing. When John the Baptist was placed into prison, Christ came back to Galilee, where He once again called Simon Peter and Andrew. Mk 1:14-18.

People ask him for advice at the feeding of the five thousand, John 6:8. He is included in the inner circle at the Mt. of Olives during the last week of Christ's life.

Philip

Philip is from the hometown of Andrew and Peter, Bethsaida. He is another of those conservative, rebellious Galileans.

There is one character trait that comes out again and again with Philip; he is practical. By this I mean that he is analytical, naturally a skeptic, and keeps his feet firmly grounded on planet earth.

This turns out to be an advantage in evangelism. He naturally senses the protests that unbelievers might make, and so simply says, 'come and see'. John 1:46. He describes Christ as the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets, the distinction of a careful man. John 1:45.

This turns out to be a handicap in every day life with Christ.

At the feeding of the five thousand, Philip can only see the practical side of things, and so he leaves out the possibility of a miracle, John 6:4-7. Christ asks a rhetorical question and Philip

gives Christ a non-rhetorical, practical reply. He is more concerned with money than miracles.

At the last supper, Christ tells his disciples that He is God incarnate, and that a relationship with the Father comes through Him. Philip then expresses his desire to see the Father. Christ rebukes him by telling him again that He is the embodiment of the father, John 14:6-11.

Philip is a good disciple to study for all the skeptics. He probably out-doubts Thomas.

James Alphaeus

He is the cousin of Christ. His mother Mary is the sister in law of Mary the mother of Christ.

He is the father of Jude, the one who wrote the epistle of Jude.

His father is Cleopas, one of the men on the road to Emmaus.

Apart from this we know little, but it appears that he wielded much influence in his family, for they seemed to all follow Christ.

Nathanael Bartholomew

This man may be a celebrity, or at least from a famous family.

Bartholomew is the name mentioned in the synoptic gospels. This means 'Son of Ptolemies' Since this is only a last name it is not specific as to the actual person behind it. It also may be interpreted 'Son of Ptolemais', a city on the North Coast of Palestine, not too far from Galilee. In modern parlance, 'the guy from Ptolemais'.

John uses Nathanael, the man's first name. The difference can be for the following reasons.

John knew the man's real name, and the synoptic authors did not. This may be true if he was just the guy from Ptolemais, but it seems unlikely, considering that he was with the disciples at the resurrection and probably for the years in between, unless 'guy from Ptolemais' was just a nickname.

There was a legitimate reason for the synoptic writers to keep the man's real name hidden,

but this reason was diminished or eradicated by the time that John wrote some ten or fifteen years later.

The Ptolemies were the royal family in Egypt, and major players in the events following the death of Alexander the Great in 323 B.C. and the building of the Roman Empire.

The most famous of all the Ptolemies was none other than Cleopatra of Egypt.

Ptolemy the 15th was the son of Cleopatra, and it is possible that this Bartholomew was in this line of descent.

Bartholomew/Nathaniel exhibits an elitist attitude toward Nazareth that could come from being part of a royal family, or simply from a neighboring town.

It is interesting to note that Christ says of Nathanael, "a real Israelite". The word 'real' is translated from the adverb *ale.thino.s*. This adverb is one of emphasis on true nature. There is cold and really cold the kind of cold that penetrates to the bones. There is American, and there is really American. Not just someone who is born here, but one who is a John Wayne or George Washington kind of American to the very core of his being.

But Nathanael Bartholomew is of Egyptian heritage - he could not be a genetic Jew. But Christ talks about his spiritual heritage as Paul would... that the true Jew is the one who believes in Him regardless of his genetic make up.

Christ also comments that Nathanael is without guile, or cunning deceit. Another way to put it is that Nathaniel is very forthright; he says what he thinks. Nathanael is a straight-shooter with his words, as he has just demonstrated with his comment on Nazareth.

Nathanael is possibly from a royal family. His comment is one that a king would make about a backward country town. But his opinion is honest and forthright. "Can any good thing come out of Arkansas?"

Nathaniel's response to Christ's statement is surprise and disbelief. "How do you know me?"

Christ responds, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you."

We do not know what Nathanael was doing under the fig tree, but it was certainly related to his forthright nature. There is not much that is especially supernatural here.

On the basis of Christ's simple statement, Nathanael believes. It is now Christ's turn to register surprise.

On account of Nathaniel's belief, Christ prophesies: 'You will see the heavens opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.' This is a reference to behind the scenes of prayer. Taking the prayers to God, and returning the answers to man. However, this is a literal vision, and so Nathanael will have the gift of seeing behind the scenes of prayer.

Thomas

This is the second of the doubters (see Phillip) among the disciples, although all seem to fail, and doubt is the seed of all failure.

He was a twin, although his sibling is not mentioned at all in the Bible. Thomas is the Aramaic word for 'twin', and the Greek equivalent didymus was placed alongside it three times in John's gospel.

John 11:14-16, "Then Jesus therefore said to them plainly, 'Lazarus is dead, and I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, so that you may believe; but let us go to him.' Thomas therefore, who is called Didymus, said to his fellow disciples, 'Let us also go, that we may die with Him.'"

Thomas here displays a rather caustic sense of humor.

Christ is present, yet Thomas says this to his fellow disciples; it was spoken under his breath.

Verse 8 says that there was imminent danger in Bethany, Lazarus' home town - that the

disciples and Christ would be stoned if they went there.

Verse 16 reveals that Thomas was the kind of guy that would follow Christ unto to death, but not without getting his two cents in.

The disciples are not mentioned in the event surrounding Lazarus' resuscitation, so they actually may have been scared away by Thomas' remark.

John 14:1-5. "Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way where I am going." Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going, how do we know the way?"

Thomas here shows a remarkable blindness to Jesus' discourse.

He misses the point that Christ is making; that He is going to die. Thomas' feet are still on terra firma, when they should be in heaven.

He does not know where Christ goes, and therefore he cannot know the way. At least he is honest.

Christ's reply is simple: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me."

John 20:24-29. "But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore were saying to him, 'We have seen the Lord!' But he said to them, 'Unless I shall see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.' And after eight days again His disciples were inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst, and said, 'Peace be with you.' Then he said to Thomas, 'Reach here your finger, and see My hands; and reach here

your hand, and put it into My side; and be not unbelieving, but believing.' Thomas answered and said to Him, My Lord and my God!' Jesus said to him, 'Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed.'"

Judas the unknown, or Thaddeus, or Lebbaeus

John 14:21-23 "He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me; and he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him, and will disclose Myself to him.' Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, 'Lord, what then has happened that You are going to disclose Yourself to us, and not to the world?' Jesus answered and said to him, 'If anyone loves Me he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and make Our abode with him.'"

This Judas is pretty astute. Here he wants to know the change. Why the disclosure? Why the ministry shift?

I found myself immediately wanting to hear more from this man, and yet he remains silent.

Thaddeus or Lebbaeus means 'breast'. This may be a clue to this man's affectionate or endearing nature, but such is only speculation.

Simon the Zealot

More often called the Canaanite, which means zealot. We know nothing more about him.

The Zealots were almost purely a political party. They called for the violent overthrow of the Roman rule.

They carried on the tradition of the Maccabees - they were militant, and full of zeal and purpose.

They were the cause of the Jewish wars and the destruction of Jerusalem.

They fought with complete fanaticism to the very end. They were extremely patriotic, but not many were Godly.

They took their patriotism to great excess, and vowed to strike down all the enemies of Israel.

Although they were politically correct (not in the modern sense), they were morally wrong, and in this they were most similar to the southern U.S. in the early 1800's.

Judas Iscariot, the Traitor.

All four of the gospels reveal before the fact that Judas will betray Jesus Christ, Matt 10:4; Mk 8:19; Luk 6:15; John 6:71.

Luke and John portray him as under the immediate direction of Satan Himself, Luke 22:3; John 13:27. There is little question from the latter verse that this man became demon possessed by Satan.

He was the group treasurer, a position that would have been given to a trustworthy person. John 12:4-7, But Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, who was intending to betray Him, said, "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii, and given to poor people?" Now he said this, not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box, he used to pilfer what was put into it. Jesus therefore said, "let her alone, in order that she may keep it for the day of My Burial."

It was for this same money-grubbing motivation that Judas betrayed our Lord, and yet 30 pieces of silver was not very much money. His greed must have been great indeed.

Judas was so trustworthy that even when our Lord implicated Him before the betrayal, many of the disciples did not believe Him, John 13:28-29.

And yet at the last the scales fall from Judas' eyes and he realizes what he has done. Matt 27:3-5, "Then when Judas, who had betrayed Him, saw that He had been condemned, he felt remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, 'I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.' But they said, 'What is that to us? See to that yourself! And he threw the pieces of silver into the sanctuary and departed and he went away and hanged himself."

Judas identifies Christ as honorable blood - one not worthy of betrayal.

Judas has a change of feeling - metamelomai. He now cares about what he has done. Before he was callused and uncaring. Now he does, but it is too late.

Judas still views his betrayal as permanent, and kills himself before the resurrection.

It is difficult to discern from this whether Judas was a believer.

Judas makes a really weak attempt at reparation by attempting to give the money back. Perhaps he had hoped to have Christ set free on account of this, but it utterly failed.

Luke puts the right end to the story in Acts 1:15-18. "And at this time Peter stood up in the midst of the brethren (a gathering of about one hundred and twenty persons was there together) and said, 'Brethren, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit foretold by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus. For he was counted among us, and received his portion in this ministry.' Now this man acquired a field with the price of his wickedness; and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out. And it became known to all who were living in Jerusalem; so that in their own language that field was called Hakeldama, that is, Field of Blood).

Judas' body split open because it had been dead. This was the perfect contrast to Christ's death.

The betrayal of Judas is very well documented by Old Testament prophecy.

Many women followed Jesus Christ. The reason is simple: In a society where women were treated as unimportant, unclean, and generally inferior, Christ treated them with respect, and placed them on equal spiritual footing as men. As a result, Christ gained many women followers who were in many ways more valuable than even His closest disciples.

Salome. Mk 15:40; 16:1.

She is the mother of James and John, the husband of Zebedee; she is Mary, Jesus' mother's sister, and so the aunt of Jesus Christ.

Do not mistake Salome with the woman of the same name who demanded John the Baptist's head on a platter.

Mk 15:40-41, "And there were also some women looking on from a distance, among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the Less [Alphaeus] and Joses, and Salome. And when He was in Galilee, they used to follow Him and minister to Him; and there were many other women who had come up with Him to Jerusalem."

These women followed Christ - e.kolouthoun, the same verb that is used of the disciples' following of Christ. These women are never identified as disciples proper, and yet they follow just as the disciples do.

These women served Christ - die.konoun, the verb which is the basis for the spiritual gift of deacon.

Read Mark 16:1-8

This occurs after the initial visit by Mary Magdalene, before sunrise.

They used the excuse of anointing Christ's body (which they intended to do anyway) for going to the tomb to investigate Mary's claim.

The women reported to the eleven disciples and the other followers of Jesus, but they did not tell any outsiders. This is the explanation for the final verse.

Mary from Magdala

Luke 8:1-3, "And it came about soon afterwards, that He began going about from one city and village to another, proclaiming and preaching the kingdom of God; and the twelve were with Him, and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and sicknesses; Mary who was called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had

gone out, and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others who were contributing to their support out of their private means."

Here is the introduction to the Ladies' auxiliary.

Many women were supporting Christ's ministry from their own means - making sure that the word was getting out.

Mk 15:47, "And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses were looking on to see where He was laid."

This is particularly astute, a key to everything that would follow.

As we know from the next verse, 16:1, they found out this piece of information so that they could care for the body of Christ. Their motivation was pure, and these two ladies were doing the right thing for the right reason.

If they had not found out the location of the tomb, then who knows how long it would have taken for them to locate it.

She is the first witness to the evidence for the resurrection, John 20:1-2, "Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came early to the tomb, while it was still dark, and saw the stone already taken away from the tomb. And so she ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and said to them, 'They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him.'"

Now, Mary saw the empty and the angels and heard their declaration, but she misunderstood. She still assumed the death of Christ.

The 'they' here is a reference to the angels.

She goes and finds one of the disciples, and they treat her like Christ never did. They do not believe her words, and so they decide that they better check things out for themselves.

Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus

Luke 10:38-42 tells us that Mary had her priorities straight: "now as they were traveling along, He entered a certain village; and a

woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home. And she had a sister called Mary, who moreover was listening to the Lord's word, seated at His feet. But Martha was distracted with all her preparations; and she came up to Him, and said, 'Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Then tell her to help me.' But the Lord answered and said to her, 'Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; but only a few things are necessary, really only one, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.'"

This woman had her priorities right.

This was her great opportunity to listen to the gospel from the Lord's lips and she was not going to miss it.

She chooses to set aside her responsibilities for the moment, and Christ vindicates her reasoning.

We choose our lifestyles.

With lifestyle comes obligation and responsibility.

We choose our responsibilities.

Mary could have gotten the information about what Christ said from her brother Lazarus, after her hostess responsibilities were complete.

Mary recognized that getting the information first hand and face to face was a priority.

Face to face is always better. Any other medium is inferior and diluted.

Matthew 26:6-13 tells us of Mary's anointing of Christ. "Now when Jesus was in Bethany, at the home of Simon the leper, a woman came to Him with an alabaster vial of very costly perfume, and she poured it upon His head as He reclined at the table. But the disciples were indignant when they saw this, and said, 'Why this waste? For this perfume might have been sold for a high price and the money given to the poor.' but Jesus, aware of this, said to them, 'Why do you bother the woman? For she has done a good deed to Me. For the poor you have

with you always; but you do not always have Me. For when she poured this perfume upon My body, she did it to prepare Me for burial. Truly I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done shall also be spoken of in memory of her."

John 12:1-9 adds some important details to this story. 1. That it was Judas Iscariot who led the protest against the use of the perfume, and for seriously wrong motivation. The other disciples were fooled by his protest. 2. That Lazarus was present at this event, the resuscitated man who was a perfect backgrounder. 3. That the expensive perfume was spikenard, from India. Very expensive indeed. 4. That the perfume's scent filled the entire house.

This was just two days before the cross. The scent would have still remained when Christ went to His ordeal. People bathed much less often than we do in the era of modern plumbing.

The sweet fragrance of the sacrifice of the Lamb of God was literal, as well as spiritual, thanks to Mary.

Mary, the mother of James Alphaeus. She does not say anything, but Scripture records her as present at the cross and resurrection. Her husband is one of those who talked to the resurrected Christ on the road to Emmaus.

Mary, the mother of Our Lord. She is the greatest of them all, faithful to her son to the very end.

Acts 1:14 makes it clear that the women were present after the ascension. No doubt they played an important role in the early church as well.

Teaching in the Synagogue of Capernaum

Mark 1:21-22: "And they went into Capernaum; and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and began to teach. And they were lightning struck at His teaching; for He was teaching

them as one having authority, and not as the scribes."

Luke 4:31b-32: "And He was teaching them on the Sabbath; and they were lightning struck at His teaching, for His message was with authority."

These parallel passages introduce the circumstances surrounding a more spectacular event. But, they are quite significant in themselves, since they reveal a striking weakness in the scribes of the day.

Now Christ has gone into this synagogue following the same strategic initiative as before; to go where the Jews commonly gather. This is a fulfillment of Matthew 4:17, Mark 1:14-15, and Luke 4:14-15.

He does this on the sabbath, so naturally there would be a crowd there. It is likely that word of His escape from the angry, murderous mob in Nazareth has come down here. Since this is on the sabbath, it was at least a week later; plenty of time for the tale to travel fifteen miles.

Again, Christ begins to teach.

This we draw from Mark 1:21, which has the verb DIDASKEN. This is the aorist active indicative form of the verb, and it is the inceptive aorist, which emphasizes the beginning moment of an action.

Furthermore, Christ is again interrupted, much like the last time He spoke in a synagogue. It is 'begin' because He did not finish. Otherwise we would interpret this as a constantive aorist, which summarizes the whole of a completed action into one moment of time.

Now as Christ teaches, and before He is interrupted, the audience falls into a state of amazement.

Both gospel writers describe this amazement with the verb EKPLESSO. This is a compound verb, composed of a preposition and a regular verb.

The regular verb is PLESSO, which describes a lightning strike, or one thing striking another with startling quickness. John employs it in Rev

8:12 to describe the striking of the heavenly bodies so that their light is reduced to one third of their former glory. An asteroid or comet strike?

The preposition EK adds on to this in order to show that they are struck by the authority of Christ, and knocked out of their regular way of thinking.

"knocked out" is another way to translate this verb, but in reality it is much stronger than the English idiom implies. "lightning struck" is much better.

Both verbs are in the passive voice, to show that Christ's teaching style produced the strike, and nothing else.

The amazement is brought about by contrast. They are used to the teaching style of the Scribes, which was apparently much wimpier.

Lack of moral and spiritual resolve results in a lack of authority when teaching. Maturity means authority.

Christ's method of authority finds its description in the word EXOUSIA. We know this one quite well.

It means legitimate authority, and Christ certainly had this.

All who have legitimate authority may teach in their realm with authority! Whether pastors or businessmen or math teachers or coaches or drill sergeants.

Mark 1:23-28: "And just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, saying, "What do we have to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are - the Holy One of God!" And Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be quiet, and come out of him!" And throwing him into convulsions, the unclean spirit cried out with a loud voice, and came out of him. And they were all amazed, so that they debated among themselves, saying, "What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey

Him." And immediately the news about Him went out everywhere into all the surrounding district of Galilee."

Luke 4:33-37, "And there was a man in the synagogue possessed by the spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out with a loud voice, "Ha! What do we have to do with you, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are - the Holy One of God!" And Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be quiet and come out of him!" And when the demon had thrown him down in their midst, he came out of him without doing him any harm. And amazement came upon them all, and they began discussing with one another saying, "What is this message? For with authority and power He commands the unclean spirits, and they come out." And the report about Him was getting out into every locality in the surrounding district."

Luke is the one who gives us the detail that we need for establishing the existence of disembodied spirits. He says PNEUMA DAIMONIOU AKATHARTOU - the spirit [soul] of an unclean demon.

Sometimes demons are called spirits, and sometimes demons. But when this construction occurs, it reveals beyond a shadow of a doubt that this man had only the spirit, or soul, of a fallen angel.

It definitely stands to reason that a demon cannot enter the body of a human being with his own body. Instead, his own body must be left behind. Thus, two possibilities.

One, the demon sets aside his own body for the purpose of possession, and then returns to it when the possession is through.

Two, the demon has lost his own body as a penalty for past crimes, and is in fact permanently disembodied.

If this is so, then the disembodied spirit must lust for the sensuality that a physical body can bring.

This would be so even if the physical body is only human, so much less than their former angelic bodies.

This would also explain the willingness of many demons on another occasion to enter the bodies of pigs - Matthew 8:28f.

Mark says, DIDASKEN... EUTHUS.

Christ began to teach, and as He got out His first few words, the audience was amazed, and then immediately the demon interrupts.

This demon possessed man is a plant. Satan has directed him there, to interrupt and distract, so that the audience in that synagogue will not have much of a chance to respond.

The fact that this audience is thunderstruck by Christ's authoritative style is a good indicator of their positive disposition to Christ's ministry. The demon's interruption at this moment reinforces that, for if they were thunderstruck in a negative way, the demon would have remained quiet.

Luke adds one interjection to the words of the demon, otherwise the two accounts are identical. Therefore we take Luke's narrative: "Ha! What do we have to do with you, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are - the Holy One of God!"

The interjection is "EA!" Its only design is to draw attention away from what Christ is about to say.

The first phrase is interesting - it is identical to what Christ said to His mother at the wedding at Cana. That phrase really means, "mind your own business".

The demon actually has the nerve to tell the king of kings that He has no authority in that place, or over him.

Remember, the crowd is amazed by Christ's authoritative manner, and in a positive way. The demon not only interrupts, but he also all but tells the audience that Christ has no business teaching in this way.

The appellation "Jesus of Nazareth" is a jibe at what happened just the week before. This is a demon, and one way or another he would have the ability to know about that heinous event at Jesus' hometown. The demon designed this statement to anger Jesus, to tempt Him to sin.

Then comes a second statement: "Have you come to destroy us?"

The demon uses the plural pronoun when he refers to himself. Since there is only one demon (from the preceding verse), this can refer to one of two things:

The combination of demon soul and human body.

That the demon speaks for all who are present.

Since the issue is authority, and the taunt about Nazareth has occurred just recently, it is best to take this as everyone there on that day. You see, the demon questions whether Christ has the authority to destroy them, since He teaches with so much authority.

There is something more here. The demon attempts to strike fear into the hearts of those who listen. Can this man destroy them.

And even more... another sarcastic taunt. Christ was the one who was almost destroyed, just a week before. "You have authority, and yet you can barely save yourself from destruction."

Perhaps that demon, and the man he possessed were there in Nazareth. Perhaps that demon was the mob manipulator on that day.

Completing the mockery is the statement, "I know who you are, the Holy One of God".

This mocks the authority and title of Christ.

The demon uses few words, but uses them to extreme effect.

The demon does not testify here to Christ as the messiah, but questions that existence with sarcasm.

Now the initiative returns to Christ; He must establish His authority beyond just the way He teaches.

So Christ had to act, and act fast.

He rebuked the demon, saying, "Be quiet and come out from him."

The verb for rebuke is actually EPITIMAO, and it means to dishonor, or disrespect someone. In modern parlance, "diss".

Then come two commands - PHIMOTHETI and EXELTHE.

PHIMOTHETI is the aorist imperative of PHIMOO. This is a command that you give to your dog - Christ literally says, 'be muzzled' or 'muzzle yourself'. This is the imperative of command, given from Christ's legitimate authority.

EXELTHE is also the aorist imperative, but this time of EXERCHOMAI, "come out".

These aorist tenses make it clear that the actions commanded are to occur immediately, if not sooner.

Since the demon called into question the authority of Christ, Christ had to establish His authority with everyone present.

And the demon had no choice to obey - the penalty for disobedience would have been immediate and severe, probably Tartarus.

One last act of violence and defiance - the demon threw the man down into the middle of the audience in the synagogue. The participle is HRIPSAN, which means to throw someone or something. Sometimes in anger.

The body was thrown into the midst of the crowd... the man may have been picked up to some height in order to do so.

However, there was no harm done to the man - even the tossing was all show.

After this astounding event the crowd became thunderstruck once again - this time it is THAMBOS, and all at once they are speaking to one another about the authority of Jesus Christ to command demons, and exorcise them from a human body.

This then resulted in much publicity for Christ. Adversity had been turned to advantage.

The Healing of Peter's Mother in Law

Matthew 8:14-17: "And when Jesus had come to Peter's home, He saw his mother-in-law lying sick in bed with a fever. And He touched her hand, and the fever left her; and she arose, and waited on Him. And when evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed; and He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were ill in order that what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, "He Himself took our infirmities, and carried away our diseases.""

Mark 1:29-34: "And immediately after they had come out of the synagogue, they came into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. Now Simon's mother-in-law was lying sick with a fever; and immediately they spoke to Him about her. And He came to her and raised her up, taking her by the hand, and the fever left her, and she waited on them. And when evening had come, after the sun had set, they began bringing to Him all who were ill and those who were demon-possessed. And the whole city had gathered at the door. And He healed many who were ill with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and He was not permitting the demons to speak, because they knew who He was.

Luke 4:38-41: "And He arose and left the synagogue, and entered Simon's home. Now Simon's mother in law was suffering from a high fever; and they made request of Him on her behalf. And standing over her, he rebuked the fever, and it left her; and she immediately arose and waited on them. And while the sun was setting, all who had any sick with various diseases brought them to Him; and laying His hands on every one of them, He was healing them. And demons also were coming out of many, crying out and saying, 'You are the Son of God!' And rebuking them, He would not allow them to

...speak, because they knew Him to be the Christ."

They go right from the synagogue to Simon Peter's home, where his mother in law lay sick in bed with a high fever. Notice Luke's greater attention to detail - he is the doctor, and so he says it is not only a fever, PURETO, but a MEGA-PURETO. This is like saying she had a very bad fever, very dangerous to her life. "Raging fever" would be a good translation.

They (being Simon and Andrew, James and John) all request that she be healed. Since she is a loved one, known very well at least by Simon and Andrew, they make the request from compassion and not lurid interest in spectacular events.

Christ raises her up, taking her hand in His. This effects the healing, and it is done.

You will notice in subsequent healings that Christ touches those whom He heals. Contrast this with demon exorcism, which includes only terse commands to the demon in question.

Simon's mother in law then gets up, and waits on Christ, and then all of them. Mark (Peter) makes it quite clear that her particular attention was on Christ.

When evening had come, after the sun had set, they (again being the four present disciples) brought many who were ill and demon possessed.

Although the miracles and healings and exorcisms were validation signs for the kingdom ministry of Christ, in no way should you construe that they were only for publicity's sake. In fact, they were done, every one, as acts of compassion, and motivated from virtue love.

He cast out the demons with a word, at the same time not permitting them to speak because they knew who He was. But some of the demons were coming out, saying "you are the Son of God".

This is the old reverse psychology tactic. If a demon says to you that a certain man is the

Messiah, you would have a tendency to disagree and disbelieve such a thing.

Since these demons were doing this, Christ commanded them to silence.

During this period of many healings, Christ did lay His hands on every one of the ill. From this we get the idea of the laying on of hands, which of course has been distorted into some pretty silly notions. (see laying on of hands)

Matthew quotes Isa 53:4, saying that this incident and others like it were the fulfillment of an Old Testament prophecy.

This is exciting! This is fantastic! Isa 53:4 is the Old Testament prediction of the atoning sacrifice of Christ. The entire chapter reads like this: "Who has believed our message? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of parched ground;

Christ grew up a tender shoot; a perfect young boy in every respect. He also grew up perfectly in a spiritually bankrupt environment. He has no stately form or majesty that we should look upon Him, nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him.

This stands as the only report of the physical countenance of Christ. His form was not stately or majestic; his appearance was at best neutral and at worst just downright unattractive. He was despised and forsaken of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and like one from whom men hide their face, He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

His life, although He was perfect in every way, was filled with grief and rejection. People treated Him as though He had some deforming disease or handicap. Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried; yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed.

This here is the atonement. In spite of His atoning sacrifice, Christ is often considered the recipient of Divine discipline. In a way He was, but it was our discipline, eternal discipline that He took. All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet he did not open His mouth; like a lamb that is led to slaughter, and like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, so He did not open His mouth.

The image of the lamb to the slaughter is quite poignant. The lamb is silent out of ignorance of what lies ahead. How much greater is our Lord, who was silent, full-knowing the future ordeal? Would we as deserving recipients of slaughter keep as silent? By oppression and judgment He was taken away; and as for His generation, who considered that He was cut off out of the land of the living, for the transgression of my people to whom the stroke was due?

Few in His generation realized the import of His atonement and death. His grave was assigned with wicked men, yet He was with a rich man in His death, because He had done no violence, nor was there any deceit in His mouth. But the Lord was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief; if He would render Himself as a guilt offering, he will see His offspring, he will prolong His days, and the good pleasure of the Lord will prosper in His hand. As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; by His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, as He will bear their iniquities. Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great, because He poured out Himself to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet He Himself bore the sin of many, and interceded for the transgressors."

This makes a clear association between the healings done by Christ and His atonement on the cross. The healings of physical ailments foreshadowed the healing of sin on the cross.

The exorcisms foreshadowed the final subduement of demons.

The miracles foreshadowed the fantastic nature of the eternal kingdom.

These things are validations because they are supernatural, and no one else could do them. But they are also full of meaning.

From this passage we know that Simon Peter was married. This same wife appears again only once in Scripture, in 1 Cor 9:5, where Paul mentions that it was Peter's custom to take her on his missionary journeys.

Because of this very active sabbath night, the whole city had gathered at the door.

Notice also that no one is worried about Christ doing these things on the sabbath.

The Second Recall of the Four Disciples

Luke 5:1-11: "Now it came about that while the multitudes were pressing around Him and listening to the word of God, He was standing by the lake of Gennesaret; and He saw two boats lying at the edge of the lake; but the fishermen had gotten out of them, and were washing their nets. And He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little way from the land. And He sat down and began teaching the multitudes from the boat. And when He had finished speaking, He said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch." And Simon answered and said, "Master, we worked hard all night and caught nothing, but at Your word I will let down the nets." And when they had done this, they enclosed a great quantity of fish; and their nets began to break; and they signaled to their partners in the other boat, for them to come and help them. And they came, and filled both of the boats, so that they began to sink. But when Simon Peter saw that, he fell down at Jesus' feet, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.!" For amazement had seized him and all his companions because of the catch of fish which they had taken; and so also James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus

said to Simon, "Do not fear, from now on you will be catching men" And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed Him."

This account is significantly different from the one in Matt 4:18-22, and Mark 1:16-20. Let me show you how this cannot be harmonized, and so must be a different, and later event.

In Matthew and Mark, Simon and Andrew were not fishing from a boat, and yet here they are.

In Matthew and Mark, Christ does not enter a boat, and yet here He does.

Matthew and Mark say nothing of the great catch of fish, and yet Luke does here.

This event in Luke is later because of the parallel sequence followed up to this point.

Somehow, some way, the disciples went back home again, and took up their trade. The most probable reason is that they perceived a need for money or trade - that the logistics seemed weak. But it is clear that this was not what they should have been doing - that they should have been with Christ all the time, fishing for men. This becomes clear in the passage.

There is no coincidence here. God led Christ to be here at this exact hour; see the events unfold from the disciples' viewpoint: they are fishing along near the shore of the Sea of Galilee, and there before them a crowd develops, following and pressing in on one man. Naturally, it is Jesus, the one that they have left behind. But what do they do? Do they go to listen to the teaching of the Word? No. Instead they just go about their business.

It is interesting to note that this is a very positive crowd, and that they press in to hear the word, and not to receive healings or exorcisms or witness miracles. But in their zeal to hear Him, they are pushing Him into the sea.

Christ spies them as they are washing their nets. He goes over and gets into Simon's boat and asks him to put out a little way from the land. Far enough to keep the crowds off, but

near enough so that they can still hear Him. And Simon does so.

So Christ teaches the crowd for a while, and then concludes His message. Then comes an order. There is a contrast here. Before, Christ asked Simon for the use of his boat. Now, He orders him out to deeper water, and to let out his nets for a catch.

Simon's reply is weak. He is likely exhausted from a night's fruitless work. But he is also curiously unbelieving in Christ. He simply goes through the motion. Now Andrew must have been on board, for at least two participate in the lowering of the nets.

And straightaway they caught a great quantity of fish, the net was completely full, so many fish that the nets began to break, and so they had to call for their partners, and when both boats were working the full nets, the boats became so overloaded with fish that they began to sink. And that was enough.

Simon just then drops to his knees before our Lord, and says a curious thing: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, Lord."

Simon is using the exorcism formula - a formula that he had heard many times before from the lips of Christ.

Yet his meaning is not that Christ is demon possessed, but that he is. He tells Christ that he cannot stand to be in His presence any longer on account of his sin. This rings a bell from our Hosea study. 10. Chapter Seven, Verse Thirteen: "Woe to them, for they have fled from Me! Destruction is theirs, for they have rebelled against Me! I would redeem them, but they speak lies against Me."

Verse thirteen is another discipline summary. It is a summary of the case of God vs. Israel.

Israel has strayed from God. So, woe to them.

God, through Hosea, employs the interjection 'OY. This is an impassioned expression of grief and despair. It is even onomatopoeic, evincing the sound that comes forth involuntarily from

one's mouth at the moment that the bad news is heard.

God says that they will have this experience because they have strayed, 'KNEADED. This verb holds the connotation of panicked flight. Israel flees from God because they fear a face to face confrontation. Yet, this confrontation is in reality the only thing that will save them. Lesson: never fear what is best for you. If it is best for you to go to God and confess your sins in humble repentance, then do so, and without fear.

Israel has rebelled against God. So, destruction is theirs.

The word for rebel is PHAS`U. It can describe personal or national rebellion. An interesting note: it too holds the connotation of fear. It reveals that fear always stands as the motivation for rebellion, in the negative sense of the word.

The rebellion of Israel from God has brought on SOR, 'devastation'. Always, always, this word contains the idea of violence. A violent destruction waits for this fearful, rebellious nation.

Israel speaks lies against God. So, they do not receive redemption.

This nation has gone so far in the cosmic system that they have begun to speak Satanic propaganda against God. They are now the propaganda ministers of the devil.

PADAH is the Hebrew word for redemption. In the age of Israel, this redemption would have been both spiritual and national. The nation would have been renewed, were they not now the friends of the enemy. 11. This would not be the last time that Peter would do this very thing.

John 21:15-17 records Peter's recovery before Christ, after the resurrection, "So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?' He said to Him, 'Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.' He said to him, 'Feed my lambs.' He said to him again a second time,

'Simon, son of John, do you love Me?' He said to Him, 'Yes Lord; You know that I love You.' He said to him, 'Shepherd my sheep.' He said to him the third time, 'Simon, son of John, do you love Me?' Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, 'Do you love me?' And he said to Him, 'Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.' Jesus said to him, 'Tend my sheep.'

Peter is still feeling guilt over his denial of Christ at this time, several days after Christ's resurrection.

Note that Peter does not blame himself for his failure, but Christ. He is projecting his failure onto God.

Christ asks Peter if he has agape love for him, and the answer is no. Only phileo love - friendship. Peter does not feel worthy enough, and so he describes his love as friendship.

Though Christ commands Peter to feed his sheep, Peter does not feel qualified to do so, because he is only a friend of Christ.

The second round is identical to the first.

The third round is significant: it is Peter's second threefold denial of Christ.

Peter's grief is founded on Christ's use of the word phileo the third time. In essence Christ says, "Do you even like me?" This because of the silence after the second command to tend His sheep.

Again, the command of Christ to feed his sheep.

Christ then predicts the kind of death Peter will die, and it is not what one would consider pleasant. He concludes the prediction with a command - 'Follow me!'

Peter is momentarily distracted by John, who was following them down the beach. 1. Christ cuts to the chase. 'Follow Me' is repeated, and that is the end of the story.

In your life, cut to the chase. Follow Christ. No excuses. No distractions. Get your eyes off of others, and follow Christ. 12. James and John were also seized with amazement and humility.

Interesting, but Andrew is not mentioned at all with regard to response. Two possibilities. He was already positive, or he remained negative. I choose the former. 13. Christ now reiterates His former command: "From now on you will be catching men." This was probably spoken in a firmer tone than before. Nonetheless, they obey. 14. Also, there was a miracle performed here. A once in a lifetime gathering of fish... See how the miracle is just done, with no reference to hands or touching or anything. It is still done by the spiritual gift and the power of God the Holy Spirit.

Miracles were most properly signs of the valid ministry of Christ.

The laying on of hands was a symbol of the Messiah.

The first healing, of the royal man's son in Capernaum, was more properly a miracle, and is identified as such within the passage, John 4:46-54. It had to do with the time of the recovery, and not the healing itself. That healing may have occurred on its own, since nowhere does it say that Christ performed it.

Cleansing of a Leper

Matthew 8:2-4: "And behold, a leper came to Him, and bowed down to Him, saying, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean." And He stretched out His hand and touched him, saying, "I am willing; be cleansed." And immediately his leprosy was cleansed." And Jesus said to him, "See that you tell no one; but go, show yourself to the priest, and present the offering that Moses commanded, for a testimony to them."

Mark 1:40-45: "And a leper came to Him, beseeching Him and falling on his knees before Him, and saying to Him, "If you are willing, You can make me clean." And moved with compassion, He stretched out His hand, and touched him, and said to him, "I am willing; be cleansed." And immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed. And He sternly warned him and immediately sent him away, and He said to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show

yourself to the priest and offer for you cleansing what Moses commanded, for a testimony to them." But he went out and began to proclaim it freely and to spread the news about, to such an extent that Jesus could no longer publicly enter a city, but stayed out in unpopulated areas; and they were coming to Him from everywhere."

Luke 5:12-16: "And it came about that while He was in one of the cities, behold, there was a man full of leprosy; and when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and implored Him, saying, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean." And He stretched out His hand, and touched him, saying, "I am willing; be cleansed." And immediately the leprosy left him. And He ordered him to tell no one, "But go and show yourself to the priest, and make an offering for your cleansing, just as Moses commanded, for a testimony to them." But the news about Him was spreading even farther, and great multitudes were gathering to hear Him and to be healed of their sicknesses. But He Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray."

This occurs in one of the cities in the region of Galilee.

The account follows the usual formula for healing; the man asks; Christ touches; the healing comes to pass.

The man's ailment is significant: it is leprosy, and when one recovered from this disease he was required by the law to make a ritual sacrifice.

Leprosy originated in Egypt, and probably at some time during the slavery of Israel there, 1800-1400 B.C. It is definitely an Egyptian disease.

Since the children of Abraham were living in Egypt, and under somewhat trying conditions, it would have been very difficult for them to avoid it, and apparently they did not.

The book of Leviticus has a very detailed symptomology of the disease, and is quite strict

on the necessity of quarantine. See Lev 13 and 14.

The disease itself was considered completely incurable until 1960, A.D. Because of this, when someone did recover, it was an outright miracle. Thus the offerings.

Leprosy is caused by a bacterial organism very similar to the one that causes tuberculosis. Indeed, the two may have a common ancestor. In all of its forms it is a very hideous disease, and can at some points be quite infectious. Hence the Scriptural caution of quarantine.

In some instances, Leprosy resulted from sinfulness. Miriam's judgment of Moses for his genetically (Egyptian) Gentile wife resulted in the disease. She had it for seven days only. Moses had the disease for a moment, as a sign of God's power to him (Ex 4:6). Naaman the Syrian had it, and became healed. He was commanded to undergo seven cleansings in the river Jordan.

The man's faith is remarkable: he says, "if you are willing, you can make me clean." Notice how very grace oriented this is - it all depends on Christ. Christ's response is apropos - "I am willing..."

This sacrifice would be one attended by a priest, and so Christ sent the man in that direction, so that the priests would have a testimony of Christ's messianic powers. At the same time, Christ makes it clear that he is to tell no one else. The ex-leper blew it.

In light of what we know about healings, and how they pointed to the atonement, there is additional symbolism here. The sacrifices for a healed leper were sacrifices based on the atonement of the Messiah.

These sacrifices were all but forgotten in Israel. The last recorded one to be healed from the disease was a Syrian, Naaman.

That a priest would be asked to make this ritual would have been completely unheard of, and therefore a real attention getter.

The ritual went like this:

The priest collected two clean live birds, cedar wood, a scarlet string, and hyssop.

The first part of the ritual involved killing one bird over an earthenware vessel and under running water. Interestingly enough, the word for running is actually 'living'. This etymological observation may explain the initial confusion with the woman at the well.

Then the wood, the string, the hyssop, and the still living bird, and dip them all together into the blood of the already sacrificed bird.

The bird, the branch, the string, and the hyssop are then shaken toward the newly healed individual, sprinkling him or her with the blood and water from the first bird.

Immediately after the sprinkling, the still living bird is set free.

What this all adds up to is a symbolization of the miraculous recovery.

The killing of one bird and the freeing of another has obvious symbolism. The healed leper should by all rights be doomed to a horrible life and death. Only the intervention of God has saved him. He should be the dead bird, but instead he is the living one, free from a terrible disease. It also symbolizes the killing of Christ so that we might have freedom from sin.

The cedar wood was one of exceptionally fine quality, and it represents the body of the now healed leper. Because of its hardness and also its fragrance add it to a tree that is extremely resistant to disease. This is also the new state of the leper. It also points to the perfect body of Christ on the cross.

The hyssop was well known as a fragrant herb, similar to Thyme and Marjoram. Due to the feathery spines on its stalk, it was ideal for use as a sprinkling device. Therefore it came to be a symbol for the purification from sin, Psalm 51:7. Someone used it at the cross to extend a sponge full of wine to Christ. It also represents the saving of Israel in the Exodus and the Passover feast.

The scarlet thread is a little more difficult. The scarlet dye was manufactured through the crushing of a certain species female worm. Christ called himself a worm,

TOLAH refers to the coccus iliacus, a very unusual worm which was harvested, crushed, put into a very large vat. In this manner, its blood was used for the purpose of making a crimson dye used to color king's robes in the ancient world.

On the cross, the perfect and impeccable humanity of Christ was crushed with the judgment of our sins. Therefore, He calls Himself TOLAH, for the weight of those sins crushed Him as He was being judged for them.

So the imputation and judgment of our sins in Christ on the cross by God the Father is analogous to the worm being crushed in a vat, so that its blood can be used for the manufacture of royal robes.

Because our Lord was judged for our sins on the cross, we now wear the royal robes of His imputed righteousness. We were imputed with the righteousness of God the Father, and we share the righteousness of Christ through the baptism of the Spirit.

Summary: the healing of a leper was also a celebration of the atonement of the Messiah on the cross. When Christ ordered the leper to present himself to the priests, it would have been a testimony that He was that atoning Messiah.

Naturally, this would have resulted in a great deal of publicity, and because that information pointed to Christ as Messiah, some of that would have been negative publicity.

From this point, Christ could no longer publicly enter a city. Instead, He generally stayed out in the countryside, and pray.

The Forgiving and Healing of a Paralytic

Matthew 9:1-8: "And getting into a boat, he crossed over, and came to His own city. And behold, they were bringing to Him a paralytic, lying on a bed; and Jesus seeing

their faith said to the paralytic, "Take courage, My son, your sins are forgiven." And behold, some of the scribes said to themselves, "This fellow blasphemes." And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, "Why are you thinking evil in your hearts? For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise and walk'? But in order that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" - then He said to the paralytic - "Rise, take up your bed, and go home." And he rose, and went home. But when the multitudes saw this, they were filled with awe, and glorified God, who had given such authority to men."

Mark 2:1-12: "And when He had come back to Capernaum several days afterward, it was heard that He was at home. And many were gathered together, so that there was no longer room, even near the door; and He was speaking the word to them. And they came, bringing to Him a paralytic, carried by four men. And being unable get to Him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above Him; and when they had dug an opening, they let down the pallet on which the paralytic was lying. And Jesus seeing their faith said to the paralytic, "My son, your sins are forgiven." But there were some of the scribes sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, "Why does this man speak that way? He is blaspheming; who can forgive sins but God alone?" And immediately Jesus, aware in His spirit that they were reasoning that way within themselves, said to them, "Why are you reasoning about these things in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven'; or to say, 'Arise, and take up your pallet and walk'? But in order that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" - He said to the paralytic - I say to you, rise, take up your pallet and go home." And he rose and immediately took up the pallet and went out in the sight of all; so that they were all amazed and were glorifying God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this."

Luke 5:17-26: "And it came about one day that He was teaching; and there were some Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting there, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem; and the power of the Lord was present for Him to perform healing. And behold, some men were carrying on a bed a man who was paralyzed; and they were trying to bring him in, and to set him down in front of Him. And not finding any way to bring him in because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down through the tiles with his stretcher, right in the center, in front of Jesus. And seeing their faith, he said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven you." And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, "Who is this man who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?" But Jesus, aware of their reasonings, answered and said to them, "Why are you reasoning in your hearts? Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins have been forgiven you,' or to say, 'Rise, and walk'? But in order that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" - He said to the paralytic - "I say to you, rise, and take up your stretcher and go home." And at once he rose up before them, and took up what he had been lying on, and went home, glorifying God. And they were all seized with astonishment and began glorifying God; and they were filled with fear, saying, "We have seen remarkable things today."

Jesus returns from the city where he had healed the leper and once again pointed to his atonement. In the mean time, He had become ever more popular, and could hardly enter a city without a great uproar, and the formation of a crowd. This is the reason for the sea-borne transport - He could swiftly cross over with the fear of the assembly of a bothersome crowd. Matthew calls Capernaum Jesus' own city - it was where he had received the most positive volition, and where He was living for the time being. His headquarters as it were.

When He had enjoyed several days of rest and anonymity, the people found Him at home, and

so a great crowd gathered. This crowd was composed of Pharisees and Scribes from all over Galilee and Judea, and even from Jerusalem. They had put together an investigative committee to see what the big deal with Jesus was all about. There was no room - standing room only. He took the opportunity to begin teaching.

The power of the Lord was unto him for healing. Luke says it in 5:17: KAI DUNAMIS KURIOU EN EIS TO IASTHAI AUTON. A. This is important. Here it says clearly, explicitly, that Christ heals by the power of the Lord, and not by the power of His own deity as the second person of the Godhead. This is the exact representation of the doctrine of kenosis.

Also, there is an implication that there were times when the power was not available. So this was a God given and directed power, and God chose the timing. It includes self awareness of that power. In some way, Christ could detect what was going on, and be prepared to heal.

There was a paralytic who desired to be healed. However, he could not get through the crowd to Christ, even with help from four others, who bore him on a bed or pallet. It was their intent to lay the paralyzed man in front of Jesus (they may have known the thing about touching).

Thwarted by the crowd (and can't you just see the Pharisees and Scribes refusing to budge), the four men then manage to get their charge up onto the roof, and then to dig and remove tiles immediately over the head of Christ. They are persistent, and this is enough for Christ. They let him down right in front of Christ. And by the way, another great sermon was interrupted, but our Lord is quite skillful at turning these kinds of interruptions into opportunity. Besides, He recognized in them a great faith.

Christ's words are a shock to the Scribes and Pharisees. He says, "My child, your sins are forgiven you." Luke has a difference here with the other synoptic writers.

The reason for Luke's difference is one of tone verses literal wording.

Christ's tone in speaking these words was gentle and compassionate. Even though He spoke literally the word ANTHROPE, He said it so gently and compassionately that Matthew and Mark were compelled to translate it from the Aramaic as TEKNON.

When Christ tells the paralytic that his sins are forgiven, this should be nothing new to the Scribes and Pharisees. They should know better.

Christ does not actually say, "I forgive you by my authority". He uses the passive voice, and so only indicates that the source of the paralytic's forgiveness is outside of his power.

Furthermore, in the Old Testament, others are given the authority to communicate the forgiveness of God to His people.

Through a priest in the ritual sin offering, Lev 4:20.

Through an angel in Isaiah 6:7.

The thought process does not match what Christ said, the Scriptures, nor is it even honest with their own practice.

Christ, by saying these words, did not necessarily imply that He was the atonement, or that He had the authority to forgive.

The Old Testament has a prescription for forgiveness which could include the pronouncement by man or angel of the thing which God had done.

The priesthood held it to their own right that they should conduct the sacrifices and rituals, and thus by them forgive the sins of the people. This was a gross perversion of their office, but nonetheless they did become this presumptuous.

Really, the indignation of the Scribes and Pharisees comes from their feeling that Christ is impinging on their territory. Territory that they had obtained illicitly. The hypocrisy of the Pharisees on this occasion is quite evident. When they said to Christ that He was a blasphemer and that forgiveness was the realm of God, what they meant that was they did not

want Christ to take over their position as the forgiver of the people.

So Christ must demonstrate to the Pharisees that He really does have the authority to tell this paralytic that he is forgiven.

He first reasons with the Pharisees, in order to point out their hypocrisy.

Which is easier to say: 'Your sins are forgiven' or 'Rise up and walk'? It was easy for the Scribes and Pharisees to tell their charges that their sins were forgiven. They would just say the words, and the people would feel good.

But could the scribes speak with authority, and tell the man to rise and walk? They were completely and totally helpless in this regard.

So Christ points out to the Jewish leadership that there is a vital difference between He and them: He has the power of God, and they do not. He has the authorizing, validating gifts of the Spirit and they are impotent beside Him.

And then He says the words (no mention of touch is here, but it was present - Luke 4:40 is still in effect at this time) SOI LEGO, EGEIRE KAI ARAS TO KLINIDION SOU POREUOU EIS TON OIKON SOU. "I say to you, rise and take up your pallet, go to your home".

But notice something else - that Christ refers to Himself as the Son of Man. This was a Messianic term. (Son of Man)

And so the paralytic did exactly as Jesus commanded.

The Call of Matthew

Matthew 9:9: "And as Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man, called Matthew, sitting in the tax office; and He said to him, 'Follow Me!' And he rose, and followed Him.

Mark 2:13-14: "And he went out again by the seashore; and all the multitude were coming to Him, and He was teaching them. And as He passed by, He saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting in the tax office, and He said to him, 'Follow Me!' And he rose and followed Him."

Luke 5:27-28: "And after that He went out, and noticed a tax-gatherer named Levi, sitting in the tax office, and he said to him, 'Follow Me.' And he left everything behind, and rose and began to follow Him."

Christ passes on from his headquarters at Capernaum to a place by the seashore. Since Capernaum was a seaside town, this was probably not very far at all.

Again Christ was mobbed by the crowds - this time the crowds of commoners, and not Pharisees and Scribes.

Christ and the crowd are moving from one place to another, and just then He noticed a tax-collector sitting in his office.

Matthew and Mark portray this event as a slam bang affair - as though it just happened so quickly that you would hardly know what hit you.

Luke is much more matter of fact, but his account allows for the spirit of Matthew and Mark.

Christ orders Matthew to follow Him. It is the present active imperative of AKOLOUTHEO. Since the verb is in the present tense, it indicates that the act of following should be durative.

And Matthew left everything and rose and followed Christ! Instant obedience, and this from one the religious types of Israel would have nothing to do with.

Matthew - God used an outcast. His name is a transliteration of the Aramaic word which means gift of God.

In his own Gospel, Matthew uses his regular name. In other gospels, the name Levi is used. It is likely that Matthew became his name after his conversion.

Matthew was a Jewish tax collector. It is likely that he was fairly well off financially because of his profession. This makes his decision to follow Christ all the more remarkable, because he left it all behind - Lk 5:28. It is likely that he worked at the toll house in Capernaum.

As a tax collector, Matthew was an outcast in Jewish society. He apparently had no friends who were devout in the Jewish faith for at his party there were only other tax collectors and sinners.

The Roman tax collectors were hated by the Jews because the Roman taxes were in addition to the Jewish taxes.

They were also hated because they represented the occupying forces of the Roman Empire.

The tax collectors made their living by inflating the Roman taxes. They essentially worked on commission.

Tax collectors were wealthy, but hated by their own society. They had to live with a tremendous amount of prejudice.

Because of this prejudice their social options were severely limited. They could only socialize with others who were outcasts.

It was easy for Matthew to follow Christ, considering his personal circumstances. Social isolation does not make it easy to enjoy personal wealth. No doubt he knew of the supernatural essence of Christ's ministry, and he may have even heard Him speak. It is often the outcast that finds it easiest to follow Christ.

Matthew is a rich man who defied the odds.

Remember Matthew if you are an outcast.

Matthew's Banquet for Christ

Matthew 9:10-13: "And it happened that as He was reclining at the table in the house, behold many tax-gatherers and sinners came and were dining with Jesus and His disciples. And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to His disciples, 'Why is your Teacher eating with the tax-gatherers and sinners?' But when He heard this, He said, 'It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick. But go and learn what this means, 'I desire compassion, and not sacrifice' for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.'"

Mark 2:15-17: "And it came about that He was reclining at the table in his house, and many tax-gatherers and sinners were dining with Jesus and His disciples; for there were many of them, and they were following Him. And when the scribes of the Pharisees saw that He was eating with the sinners and tax-gatherers, they began saying to His disciples, 'Why is He eating and drinking with tax-gatherers and sinners?' And hearing this, Jesus said to them, 'It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick; I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.'"

Luke 5:29-32: "And Levi gave a big reception for Him in his house; and there was a great crowd of tax-gatherers and other people who were reclining at the table with them. And the Pharisees and their scribes began grumbling at His disciples, saying, 'Why do you eat and drink with the tax-gatherers and sinners?' And Jesus answered and said to them, 'It is not those who are well who need a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.'"

Matthew's reminiscence is the best, and he adds one thing that Mark and Luke overlook. It is a most important detail, especially for Jews, and we will get to it.

Matthew held a big reception at his own home for Christ, and invited his tax-collector buddies, and also many sinners were there as well. None of the accounts define just what kind of sinners they were, but in order to gain this appellation they would have been those who were public outcasts. This was truly the outcast's ball.

And Christ is reclining right at the table with them, eating and drinking. No doubt he was also making good of the time to communicate truth.

The Scribes of the Pharisees and the Pharisees participate in a coy and solicitous conspiracy against Christ.

They target Christ's disciples, thinking that they may be susceptible to their conspiratorial lies.

They are attempting to make Christ look bad in front of His disciples. Public opinion was extremely strong against the category of people who were at this banquet. They wanted to manipulate that public opinion in order to destroy Christ. But it was not the proper time yet.

Christ overhears their coy solicitations, and so He speaks to them a principle: 'It is not those who are well who need a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.'

This can be posted on the doorframe of every local church. Every ambassador for Christ must remember this principle.

The local church is never to be some kind of social club for the self-righteous, or a place where only people with nice and friendly personalities are allowed to be

There is a time for the sinner to grow up, but there is also a place for the sinner-beginner to learn the Word of God and learn how to apply it.

Luke, the physician would have loved this statement. It may have been one of the most important things that he had ever heard, even if it was told to him many years after it took place.

Matthew recalls that Christ quoted Hosea 6:6 as a reproof to the Pharisees. It was the perfect verse for them to hear.

In fact, Matthew would recall when Christ quoted this verse on another occasion, in chapter 12 verse 7 of his gospel.

Verse Six: "For I delight in virtue love, and not sacrifice; and knowledge of God instead of whole burnt offerings."

The first verb is haphets, and its meaning reveals a sensual and emotional response to stimuli.

It is used of sexual delight for both men and women, and for matters and things that are fun to do. It is pleasure of any kind, and is the basis for many systems of motivation.

It is in the qal perfect, which here reveals a principle of God's nature. This verse reveals God's very soul.

The object of God's delight is hesed - virtue love and the sum of human virtue in every expression of character. hesed is the revelation of motivation as it extends from the complex of thought in the soul. And God delights in this.

The converse of hesed is zabhah, the actual slaughter of the sacrificial animals. The picture here is the actual act of sacrifice. God does not delight in the acts of sacrifice. He created the animals, too. They, too are the objects (thought lesser) of His pleasure, and in sacrifice they are destroyed. God does not take pleasure in that, nor does he delight in just the act.

The Jews had gotten to the point where the ritual system meant absolutely nothing to them; where they just went through the motions, without the slightest thought of the representation.

And yet the sacrifices of the ritual system were magnificent representations of Bible doctrine. The rituals taught many aspects of Divine character and interaction with sinful mankind.

The ritual system was an ingenious way to teach Bible truth, and it was never designed for just going through the motions in order to please God.

Going through the motions was a part of idolatry, but it was not any part of the plan of God. The idolaters perceived going through the motions as a way to please the idol and soothe his wrath, and bring his blessing.

Going through the motions is anti-relationship, and is a philosophy that keeps its adherents ignorant of the person of God.

The second half of the parallel statement is similar, but brings its own distinctions.

yadha is the intimate kind of relationship knowledge that God earnestly desires. He wants His people to have a knowledge of Him.

the converse of yadha is again a part of the ritual system: it is the whole burnt offering, the me'oloth. But the idea again is relationship, and so it has been since the beginning of time.

Genesis 1:26-27, "Then God said, 'Let us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness...'"

a. Why are we made in His image? So that we might have a relationship with Him, and bring praise to His name. b. The image is the soul image, not the physical one. God is not just a really big human being.

In the garden, there was a spiritual time of day, a time when the man and the woman would meet with God. It was relationship from the very beginning. Gen. 3:8, "And they heard the sound of the Lord walking in the garden in the spiritual time of the day."

All of the patriarchs and great believers of old were such because of their quality relationship with God. Noah, Abraham, Moses, Ruth, Esther, Rahab - all are great because they know Him and reflect His greatness in their own lives.

The ten commandments are based on relationship with God, Ex 20:1-3, "Then God spoke all these words, saying, 'I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no others gods before Me.'"

All of the covenants to Israel were based on the precept that they must function in the framework of relationship with God.

Deuteronomy 6:1-9 says it best, "Now this is the commandment, the statutes and the judgments which the Lord your God has commanded me to teach you, that you might do them in the land where you are going over to possess it, also that you and your son and your grandson might fear the Lord your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments, which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged. O Israel, you should listen and be careful to do it, that it may

be well with you and that you may multiply greatly just as the Lord, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey. Hear O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. And you shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontlet bands on your forehead. And you shall write them on the door posts of your house and on your gates."

The content of this verse is quite valid in the church age. Never get means mixed up with substance. a. The means is the ritual system, or in our dispensation the study of the word. b. The substance is a dispensational constant, that is, it is valid at all times in human history. The substance is relationship with God.

We must never ritualize relationship with God. To ritualize that is to trivialize it. God never intended for something so personal to be institutionalized or monopolized in any way.

The means are there for a reason, and are to be employed to maximum advantage. But the means are never going to be the substance, and God is never, ever pleased just by your 'doing' the means.

The Dispensational Change

Matthew 9:14-17: "Then the disciples of John came to Him, saying, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?" And Jesus said to them, "The attendants of the Bridegroom cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them, can they? But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast. But no one puts a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; for its fullness pulls up from the garment, and a worse tear results. Nor do men put new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the

wineskins burst and the wine pours out, and the wineskins are ruined; but they put new wine into fresh wineskins, and both are preserved."

Mark 2:18-22: "And John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting; and they came and said to Him, "Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?" And Jesus said to them, "While the bridegroom is with them, the attendants of the bridegroom do not fast, do they? So long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day. No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; otherwise the patch pulls away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear results. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost, and the skins as well; but one puts new wine into fresh wineskins."

Luke 5:33-39: "And they said to Him, "The disciples of John often fast and offer prayers; the disciples of the Pharisees also do the same; but Yours eat and drink." And Jesus said to them, "You cannot make the attendants of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them, can you? But the days will come; and when the bridegroom is taken away from them, then they will fast in those days." And He was also telling them a parable: "No one tears a piece from a new garment and puts it on an old garment; otherwise he will both tear the new, and the piece from the new will not match the old. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the new wine will burst the skins, and it will be spilled out, and the skins will be ruined. But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins. And on one, after drinking old wine wishes for new; for he say, "The old is good enough.""

Introduction

Our Lord receives an opportunity here to give the disciples a basic understanding of a very complex subject: dispensation.

Here also is more evidence that John's disciples are not exactly on the cutting edge of theology, and in fact quite out of touch with Christ's kingdom ministry.

This passage forms the reply for John's statement then, and Christ definitely criticizes John's disciples for taking his viewpoint of the ministry transfer.

After the introductory details, the passage divides into three: the bridegroom analogy; the patch analogy; and the wineskin analogy.

The introductory details: "Then the disciples of John came to Him, saying, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?" "And John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting; and they came and said to Him, "Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?" "And they said to Him, "The disciples of John often fast and offer prayers; the disciples of the Pharisees also do the same; but Yours eat and drink."

Matthew has just the disciples of John approaching Jesus with the question of fasting; Mark has both John's disciples and the Pharisees asking; Luke has Christ's disciples making the same inquiry.

Obviously, the reconciliation of the passage takes some work. Two possibilities resolve the existence of contradictions.

The sequential explanation: Mark, Matthew, then Luke. In other words, there was a fast that both Pharisees and John's disciples had - and they noticed that Christ and His disciples were not participating. First John's disciples, then the Pharisees came to Christ and asked their question.

The separate incidents explanation. The three gospels writers remember separate incidents, and record each as they some them.

Regardless, the Bible is inerrant, and so there is no contradiction here. Pick the incident of your choice.

The 'they' of Luke's gospel refers to the Pharisees and scribes only - John's disciples are not in view at all there. Luke also places this at the banquet at Matthew's house, where there was a big party with lots of food and little fasting.

These individuals are both fasting. Fasting was a legitimate, non-compulsory exercise in Israel. It is not forbidden, and it is not mentioned in a negative light.

Moses fasted at Sinai while receiving the Law from God, Ex 34:28; Deut. 9:9. He did so again in mourning when he saw the golden calf, Deut. 9:17f.

At many times during the history of Israel, fasts were proclaimed at times of national emergency or distress.

Judges 20:26, during the Gibeah disaster.

1 Sam 7:6, during the Mizpah disaster.

2 Chron 20:3, during the disaster that Jehoshaphat had with Moab.

Ezra 8:21-23, during the journey home from the exile.

Neh 1:4, at the discovery of the destroyed Jerusalem.

Esther 4:16, at the attempt of genocide against the Jews. g. Jer 36:9, at a time of the destruction of Jerusalem.

A few times, Israel employed the fast as an act of penitence.

1 Kings 21:27, Ahab, when his evil and idolatry is exposed.

Neh 9:1, at ceremony of commemoration for the destruction of Judah.

They also implemented it as an accompaniment to earnest prayer, public or private. 2 Sam 12:16, David, at the sickness of he and Bathsheba's child.

Fasting also often went alongside mourning.

2 Sam 1:12, David and his men at the death of Saul.

2 Sam 12:21, David, while his child was alive.

Fasting came to be on the annual schedule of religious events during and after the exile, and all of these were related to the fall of the Jewish client nation. They were a sort of remembrance of suffering kind of fast.

But never, never in the history of Israel did God command His people to fast. Lev 23:27-29: "On exactly the tenth day of this seventh month is the day of atonement; it shall be a holy convocation for you, and you shall humble your souls and present an offering by fire to the Lord. Neither shall you do any work on this same day, for it is a day of atonement, to make atonement on your behalf before the Lord your God. If there is any person who will not humble himself on this same day, he shall be cut off from the people."

There have been many who equate the humbling of the soul with a literal fast, but there is no reason whatsoever to take the passage this way.

The command to humble your souls is entirely self-sufficient, and is another way of saying 'believe the doctrine'.

Fasts were supposed to be a sort of Sabbath from food, wherein greater concentration could be placed on God Himself, and especially during a time of mourning or Divine discipline.

John the Baptist required his followers to observe the annual fasts of the Jews.

Christ condemned hypocritical fasting, but did not condemn the practice outright, Matt 6:16-18, "And whenever you fast, do not put on a gloomy face as the hypocrites do, for they neglect their appearance in order to be seen fasting by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But you, when you fast, anoint your head, and wash your face so that you may not be seen fasting by men, but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will repay you."

Although Christ is hard the Pharisees for their approbation lust, He does not come down on fasting.

Instead, He assumes that people will continue to fast, and pushes them all to do it in the right way.

There is a good reason why the Pharisees and disciples of John should not fast at the present time: Christ is on the planet.

The first analogy, aimed at John the Baptist and his disciples. "And Jesus said to them, "The attendants of the Bridegroom cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them, can they? But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast."

The attendants of the bridegroom are the disciples of John; the groom is Christ Himself; and the bride is Israel.

Notice that Christ equates fasting and mourning. Here we have the legitimate reason for fasting, which is a state of mourning.

Christ's question to them is "Why are you mourning?" The truth which lies under the question is, "This should be a time of celebration for all of you".

Christ has arrived, and He is offering to the kingdom to the bride - this is a time for rejoicing. The millennium is upon them, why fast?

The use of the word fast in the last sentence shows an equivalency to mourning. In fact, since Christ uses the two terms interchangeably we can assume that He considered them as synonymous. Therefore, the subject in the last sentence is about mourning.

This is the reason that Matthew's gospel is so valuable - because he remembered the force of Christ's discourse and translated so that we could have insight into the meaning.

Here also is another foreshadowing of Christ's death. The disciples would mourn then.

The bridegroom will be taken away from them through the ascension - Acts 1:9 records this event, and there Luke uses the same verb, *APAIRO*, to describe the event. Under the ministry of God the Holy Spirit, Luke interpreted the ascension as the fulfillment of Christ's prediction. Acts 1:9 is the only other place in the New Testament where this verb is used, other than our three synoptic accounts of this event.

The verb *APARTHE*. points out some interesting things.

It is in the passive voice, revealing the nature of Christ's passing. It will be not of His choosing, but from the action of God.. The subject receives the action of the verb.

The verb means to be taken away, not in any violent way, but just taken away.

The verb is in the subjunctive mood, revealing that from the human viewpoint, this event is only a potential event. Remember that the church age is no set thing yet from the viewpoint of the Jewish client nation. They may still choose Christ for their king. From the viewpoint of the divine decree and divine foreknowledge, their rejection is set in stone.

The second analogy, that of the patch. "But no one puts a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; for the patch pulls away from the garment, and a worse tear results." "No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; otherwise the patch pulls away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear results." "And He was also telling them a parable: "No one tears a piece from a new garment and puts it on an old garment; otherwise he will both tear the new, and the piece from the new will not match the old."

Introduction to dispensations

Dispensation is a theological term which describes the Divine outline of human history.

"A dispensation is a period of human history defined in terms of divine revelation. According to the Bible, history is a sequence of divine administrations. These consecutive eras reflect

the unfolding of God's plan for mankind. They constitute the divine viewpoint of history and the theological interpretation of history. The doctrine of dispensations if the vehicles by which believers living at a specific time can orient to God's will, plan, and purpose form their lives." (Thieme, p.3).

In human history, God gradually and progressively reveals His eternal purpose for mankind. Although the revelation is gradual and progressive, every generation has all that it needs to glorify God.

Dispensational constants:

Since the creation of man, spiritual growth has come through faith perception, and tested through adversity. This will always be the case, Gen. 3:8, "Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the spiritual part of the day." There was a spiritual part of every day in the garden.

The truth has always been provided, although the form and mode of communication of the truth is a variable.

The human spirit has always been provided as the frame of reference for spiritual matters. It was there in the garden, and lost through the fall.

In the church age, additional power is provided in the filling ministry of God the Holy Spirit.

Since the creation of man, the character and sufficiency of God has always been the issue for mankind. This will always be the case.

Since the creation of man, spiritual opportunity is always equal. So it always will be.

Since the fall of man, salvation has always been by grace through belief in Christ. So will it always be. Since Adam and Eve were in a state of perfection, they had no need for salvation.

Dispensational variables:

The form and agents of communication of the truth.

The form of communication varies widely, from direct communication from God in the garden to oral tradition to written communication and ritual communication.

The agent of communication is closely associated with the form, yet it is distinct. Agents have varied from God to priests to prophets to apostles to pastors.

The amount of truth, due to progressive revelation. Because the revelation of the truth is progressive, and always builds on the body of truth from preceding ages, each successive age has greater amount of the truth than the preceding one. Sometimes the increases are dramatic, sometimes they are less so.

The availability of Divine Power

The ministry of God the Holy Spirit in the church age marks a fantastic increase in the availability of divine power. In future ages, there will be even more. In preceding ages, less so. This may be related to two things: (1) The progressive degeneracy of man; (2) The progressive amount of truth.

Corporate vs. Individual emphasis. In some dispensations, there is a greater emphasis on the corporate than the individual. The age of Israel is such an age. There is no dispensation that fails to recognize the importance of the individual.

The individual emphasis harkens back to the individual decisions of fallen angels to follow Satan and to reject the grace offer of God. The corporate emphasis stresses the effect of individual decisions on the whole.

Time and space relationship to Jesus Christ. The relationship in time of a dispensation to the first and second advents has a direct effect on the conditions of that dispensation, especially what is revealed in the Word.

Trends of Volition

Some dispensations seem to feature more positive volition than negative, and of course vice-versa. Even within dispensations this holds true.

Representation of an age of angelic prehistory. Most dispensations concentrate on the time of grace in angelic prehistory.

This analogy is the first of two which describe the change in conditions in the age of Israel due to the presence of the Messiah.

The dispensation of Israel still continues during the life of Christ, although it will end with the beginning of the church at Pentecost, 30 A.D. However, it really should not continue at all after the baptism of our Lord. There are four reasons why the incarnation should be regarded as a separate dispensation (from *The Divine Outline of History*, R. B. Thieme, Jr., pp.49-50.

God revealed Himself to mankind as never before in history - in the person of Christ. In the Scriptures the life of Christ is recorded four times over, from four perspectives, unlike any other period in history.

God designed the incarnation of Jesus Christ to purchase salvation for all mankind in every dispensation. From God's viewpoint this extraordinary period throws light across all of history and is not hidden away as part of another dispensation. God's design for the incarnation of Christ also included an unprecedented system of power that enabled the humanity of Christ to accomplish His mission.

Our Lord's incarnation is a separate dispensation because it plays a major role in defining other dispensation. One of its characteristics - resurrection - becomes a distinguishing mark of the completion of each subsequent dispensation.

This approximately thirty-three-year dispensation is like a cornerstone or hinge that connects, yet divides, two very different dispensations. Israel and the Church are different from one another because of the Incarnation, which itself belongs to neither of these dispensations. We will briefly present each of these four approaches.

The incarnation runs from the birth of Christ in B.C. 4 to the resurrection and ascension of Christ in A.D. 30, a period of 33 years.

The pre-baptism era

The presentation of the Word.

The total information and complexity of the Word remains the same as in the last era. The means of communication also remains the same. Although the living Word was now in His human body, his time of teaching had not yet come. Although John the Baptist had a special ministry in preparing the way for Christ, he is a prophet, and no more, John 1:6-8, "There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light."

The current phase of the angelic conflict

The Pre-baptism era of the life of Christ marked the beginning of the rebuttal phase of the angelic conflict. The intensity of the conflict became much greater. The scope of the conflict was focused on the person of Jesus Christ.

There was a great deal of angelic protection for the person of Jesus Christ, especially in His early years, Mt 2:13-18 (read). The conflict continued in the lives of other human beings, but the great focus was on Christ Himself.

This era had several purposes within the conflict.

The continuation of the age of Israel, and the era of Divine Discipline, which overlapped the present dispensation (explain).

Jesus Christ lived the perfect life of a believer under the ritual system of the age of Israel, Mt 5:17, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them."

He proved that it could be done as the last one to take the witness stand under the ritual plan of God.

He began the transition to the church age and the rebuttal phase of the trial.

He was therefore the perfect cornerstone between the two dispensations, Mt 21:42; Mk 12:10; Lk 20:17; Acts 4:11; Eph 2:20; 1 Pet 2:6,7.

The post-baptism era

Note: At His baptism, Our Lord received the filling ministry of the Holy Spirit, and thus began His earthly ministry, and the prototype Christian life.

The presentation of the Word

The total information revealed took a large step forward at the revelation of the living Word in the baptism of Christ. The complexity of the information stayed relatively low. The means of communication took some new turns as well.

The Word was for the very first time communication in a person, that is, Jesus Christ. Our Lord Himself communicated through Word and deed. He taught individuals, small groups, and large crowds. He also taught by the example of His own life. The availability of Divine power.

The general populace had the same power as the preceding eras. Jesus Christ received the full-time filling of the Spirit for the first time in History.

Through it He received all of the spiritual gifts that He needed to establish the Christian way of life. Included were at least miracles, healing, knowledge, prophecy, pastor-teacher, and faith. Through it He was empowered to execute perfectly the prototype Christian life in the protocol plan of God. Because of it He could remain impeccable and accomplish what He needed to without using His own omnipotence. The current phase of the angelic conflict.

Although the scope of the angelic conflict remained the same, this was perhaps the most intense time in history, Mt 4:1-12; Lk 4:1-12 (read).

The level of chaos, violence, and suffering isn't always an accurate measuring device for the intensity of the spiritual conflict.

In this era, Satan and Jesus Christ underwent an incredibly intense spiritual contest, and our Lord was the winner. The purpose of this era was to establish the new way of spiritual life for Church age believers, and to accomplish the salvation of mankind.

In His life, Our Lord became the first witness of the rebuttal phase of the trial, and underwent a severe cross examination by the devil. It was also necessary for Him to die a substitutionary spiritual death on the cross, so that our salvation might be made available. In the rebuttal phase, every mature believer is an example of what Satan and the fallen angels could have had if they would have accepted the grace offer of God. In Christ, Satan had an example of what He could have had if he had never sinned in the first place. Whereas Adam became an example of the fall of Satan, Our Lord was an example of Satan without the fall, 1Cor 15:45-49. The life of Christ after His baptism begins a string of witnesses which bring individual recrimination against the fallen angels.

Jesus Christ is the patch of new cloth; the dispensation of Israel is the old garment. The one central truth that is communicated by this parable and the next is that of unsuitability.

The new cloth does not fit with the old garment.

The old garment is unsuitable for the new patch; so the conditions of the dispensation of Israel are unsuited for the coming of Christ.

The Pharisees were fasting as a part of their ritual system. John's disciples were fasting as a part of his ministry. Both are unsuited for the dispensation of the incarnation. We have seen that fasting was related to mourning. However, mourning was particularly unsuited to the celebratory nature of Christ's appearance and ministry.

Both Matthew and Mark use the word PLEROMA for what we have as 'new'. Actually PLEROMA is a word which means fullness. The new patch is full, like a sponge, but later it will be empty and smaller. Thus, the tearing. Christ certainly was the fullness of God in a human being, and could not be coupled with a dispensation that is all about compensation for sin.

The second parable is much the same as the first: it has as its one central truth the idea of unsuitability.

This time, Christ is the new wine, and the old wineskin is the dispensation of Israel, and more specifically, the idea of fasting.

The difference here is that the unsuitability lies in the idea of expansion instead of shrinking. The new wine expands, whereas the new patch of cloth shrinks.

In both cases, Christ and the dispensation of the incarnation are the new things, and the dispensation of Israel and fasting are the old things. In both cases, the old is unsuitable to the new, and Christ urges them to bring new to the new. The new is a new dispensation.

In essence, Christ is telling them that their dispensation, with its ritual form of teaching, is outdated, and in fact they should be letting it pass.

The way to let that dispensation to pass is to take hold of the new one, and its distinctions, or dispensational variables.

The followers of John the Baptist should be the first ones on the case, because they were supposed to "be prepared" for the coming of the Lord. How could they be prepared through legalism? How through clinging to the former dispensation, now obviously past?

Nor do the Pharisees have an excuse.

John Chapter 5

Jerusalem

John 5:1, "After these things there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem"

Chronology.

This is the spring of 27 A.D., the second Passover during Christ's ministry. This feast is not tabernacles, although many assert it to be.

The great day of atonement was the day of fasting mentioned by the disciples of John and the Pharisees.

Jerusalem was a few days' journey from Galilee, and so it would have been difficult to make it while the feast was still going.

The phrase META TAUTA - "after these things" is an allusion to what has just gone previously in his gospel, but was some time before if this is the feast of Tabernacles.

The previous event at the end of John chapter four is the healing of the royal man's son. This in turn was only a few days after the incident with the Samaritan woman at the well. And that event just when Christ was entering Galilee and starting up His ministry there.

In a nutshell, META TAUTA would encompass about one year in time! This stretches the meaning of the phrase a little too far.

The apostles made the connection between the feast of tabernacles and the transfiguration of Jesus Christ.

Read Mark 9:1-8.

The transfiguration was a preview of the glorification of Jesus Christ at the second advent.

Read Rev. 19:11-16.

Our Lord testified to this very thing.

Read John 7:2-8.

If Christ would not go up to this feast the next year, then why the year previous.

Conclusion: this cannot be the feast of tabernacles.

The handicapped in ancient Israel were cared for, but it was just about a guarantee that one would live in poverty for all his life.

John 5:2-5, "Now there is in Jerusalem by the sheep gate a pool, which is nicknamed in Hebrew Bethzatha, having five porticoes. In these lay a multitude of those who were sick, blind, lame, and withered. And a certain man was there, who had been thirty-eight years in his sickness."

The sheep gate is a gate that opens to the North side of the temple area, but not the temple itself.

About two hundred yards to the North from this gate there are two man-made pools, standing next to each other in north-south orientation.

John's account mentions only one pool, that one by the name of Bethzatha.

The other name possibilities (Bethesda, Belzetha, etc.) exist because of some confusing place names in the area, but must be discounted on the basis of the weakness of their manuscripts.

This confusion exists because Herod the great, the man who had the pools built a few years before Christ's birth, called the complex the 'house of mercy', or, Bethesda. And, nearby, there was a suburb called Bezatha. The two place names collided and over the years they became one - 'Beth-zatha'.

The two pools issue from the same underground spring, and so were often lumped together. Beth-zatha was the name for the complex. Even we say we are going down to the neighborhood pool, when there may be a baby pool or a lap pool in addition to the main one.

The word for 'called' is EPILEGOMENE, which means to place one word on top of another, or to assign a nickname. Thus we know that Bethzatha is a nickname and not its proper name.

This pool complex had five porticoes. A portico is a porch that has a roof supported by columns. This was really a magnificent looking area, typical of Solomon's building program.

The story about the angel stirring up the waters is certainly not included in the original manuscript of John's writing.

The earliest manuscript that contains the angel story is from the fifth century; the earliest that omits it from around 200. Case settled.

What the inclusion of the angel story does is attempt to provide a rationale for why so many of the sick, blind, lame, and withered went there, and why they wanted so much to go into the waters.

This place was a sort of Lourdes of the ancient world. A local legend, totally untrue, had an angel stirring up the waters and giving healing to any who could get there while the water roiled. What a terrible false hope these people had! Many of them would have come just for the feast, and gone to this place as a special pilgrimage. Perhaps the rumor that Christ was near stirred up the frenzy of interest even more.

The roiling of the waters was a pretty bad tease. All of the scrambling to get into the pools must have been a horrifying spectacle.

Thirty eight years is a really long time to be ill! There is hope and hopeless hope. How he must have rationalized his presence there. How he must have hoped a hopeless hope to be healed. The man's illness left him in an incapacitated state - he did not have the physical capability to reach the roiling of the pool.

John 5:6-9, "When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he had already been a long time in that condition, He said to him, "Do you wish to get well?" The sick man answered Him, "Sir, I have no man to cast me into the pool whenever the water is stirred up. But while I myself am coming, another goes down before me." Jesus said to him, "Arise, take up your pallet, and walk." And immediately the man became well, and

took up his pallet and began to walk. Now it was the Sabbath on that day."

John reveals Christ's motivation through the statement, "[Christ] knew that he had already been a long time in that condition."

Christ's offer comes from His compassion. Christ had seen thousands and thousands of the sick and lame, and even many of them were present at this scene, but this man is among the worst.

Christ did not come to heal every sick or lame person in the world. It is a point of fact that He did not.

He did choose this man out of compassion. He was the most pitiful of the bunch at the pool.

Christ uses the word HUGIE.S to define the man's desire. It denotes physical soundness or wholeness. It portrays the absence of disease or defect. Paul uses this for sound doctrine in Titus 2:8.

Also remarkable is that the poor man had no one to help him. There is no compassion in Israel.

Healing this man will be a sign that Jesus Christ is the Messiah, and especially the suffering Messiah. How appropriate then that this healing occurs at the Passover feast, which is a ritual that teaches the same principle.

A typical misunderstanding occurs. Christ asks the man if he wishes to get well, and the man assumes that Christ speaks of the healing powers of the waters.

The sick man has no idea whatsoever as to the identity of Christ. If he had, then he would have been on to what Christ was offering.

Remember also that Christ has been away in Galilee for a year or so, and that he did not announce His return to Jerusalem. And this: if this man had no one to put him in this pool, then who would have carried him to Galilee and Christ.

But Christ had to come here, because this man was positive, and had no way to physically come to Christ.

The man says, "Sir, I have no man to cast me into the pool whenever the water is stirred up. But while I myself am coming, another goes down before me."

The man addresses Christ respectfully with the appellation KURIE. This is the 'sir' of the koine Greek. It does not indicate that he knew Christ's true nature. Remember this from the woman at the well? She used the same form of address.

The use of HOTAN, 'whenever' indicates that the water is stirred up on random occasions.

TARASSO describes the stirring up of the waters. The sick man uses the passive voice, which most likely indicates his belief that the stirring up does not come from a natural source. Note the difference: "The water stirred..." "The water was stirred by the angel..."

The man also emphasizes that he is alone in this endeavor by the intensive use of the personal pronoun EGO combined with the verb ERCHOMAI. Together, these are translated, "I myself."

This is a most pitiful plea.

"Jesus said to him, "Arise, take up your pallet, and walk around." And immediately the man became well, and took up his pallet and began to walk around. Now it was the Sabbath on that day."

Not only does Christ command the sick man to get up and walk, but also to take up his pallet.

The KRABATTOS was a small portable bed, perhaps in the form of a mattress-stretcher combination. The same word was employed by the synoptic writers for the man who was lowered through the roof to Jesus. That mattress was obviously on some kind of frame, and rigid.

While the pallet used to carry him, now he carries the pallet. Christ's command is very appropriate, and designed to bring a great demonstration of the power of God.

The verb for walk is PERIPATEO, and it means literally to 'walk around'.

The idea is definitely that of demonstration.

Imagine the scene: all those scrambling madly to get into the waters whenever they stir, a pitiful, wild, weird freak show. Does the cure work immediately, or does it take time? Do I have to be where the water stirs, or just in the pool anywhere when it does stir? How can you tell the difference between the stirring of the angel, and the wind. Or worse yet, the stirring of the angel and all the splashing and confusion as the scramble occurs.

And then, of all things, one of their number, clearly outside of the pool, arises and begins to walk around with his pallet in hand.

There is a hushed silence... amazement... "HEY IT'S THE SABBATH! YOU CAN'T DO THAT ON THE SABBATH! ALERT! ALARM! SABBATH BREAKER! SABBATH BREAKER!"

John puts a shadow on this happy moment by mentioning that it was the Sabbath. Surely this man knew it was the Sabbath, but how could he disobey the one who had healed his illness of thirty eight years?

John 5:10-13, "Therefore the Jews were saying to him who was cured, "It is the Sabbath, and it is not permissible for you to carry your pallet." But he answered them, "He who made me well was the one who said to me, "Take up your pallet and walk." They asked him, "Who is the man who said to you, "Take up your pallet and walk?" But he who was healed did not know who it was; for Jesus had slipped away while there was a crowd in that place."

The Jews are angry because of this Sabbath violation - notice how little true compassion they have - they could care less about the man's medical history, and the hopelessness that he experienced during that thirty eight year illness.

The Jews have forgotten the true meaning of the Sabbath, which is concentration on God and His work. Surely they should understand this

magnificent healing as a work of God, and worship Him for it.

Not only have they forgotten the true meaning of the Sabbath, but they have also distorted it, replacing it with cheap legalism and a multitude of rules. Let's look at the Mosaic rule concerning the Sabbath...

Sabbath Review

Gen. 1:31-2:3, "And God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. Thus the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts. And by the seventh day God completed His work which He had done; and he rested on the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He "sabbathed" from all His work which God had created and made."

God does not tire.

God can do an infinite amount of work and still concentrate and appreciate what He has done.

But God stopped on this occasion to demonstrate to man his need for concentration on God.

It is true that man needs physical rest; but the rest for the soul comes from a relationship with God, and that is the nature of the Sabbath.

Rhetorical question: if you only needed rest once a week, then why do you sleep every day? Isn't sleep rest?

One day a week of rest has no magical effect on the body, nor is this indicated anywhere in the Bible. There is no verse that says if you fail to rest one day a week you will die young!

Exodus 20:8-11, "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh

day; therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy."

Deut 5:15: "And you shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out of there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God commanded you to observe the Sabbath."

Also significant is the placement of this commandment. It follows after three relationship commandments:

You shall have no other Gods before Me.

You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain.

The interpretation of the Sabbath as a period of concentration on God is the only interpretation compatible with the greatest commandment, Deut 6:5.

Read Joshua 21:43-22:6.

The Jews occupied the promised land, and immediately entered into the rest of God. Here for the first time the Sabbath is equated with spiritual maturity, and the feast of tabernacles.

Observe that Joshua tells his people that they have kept all that the Lord commanded, and that this was the prerequisite for their entrance to the blessing of the promised land. God kept every promise about it.

He also warns them to continue in this direction - "to love the Lord your God"

Notice that in the commandment it is called the Sabbath of God. This is the possessive sense

here - the Sabbath that belongs to God; the one you should give to Him.

Exodus 23:12, "Six days you are to do your work, but on the seventh day you shall cease from labor in order that your ox and your donkey may rest, and the son of your female slave, as well as your stranger, may refresh themselves."

Here is the more practical side of the Sabbath - but see that the Sabbath is for the animals and slaves and visitors at your house.

The refreshment seems to be of a physical nature here.

This physical command is repeated in Exodus 34:21, "You shall work six days, but on the seventh day you shall rest; even during plowing time and harvest you shall rest."

A Sabbath could be a whole week, Lev 23:39, the feast of Tabernacles. Here the connection with concentration on God is made the more strong.

A Sabbath could be a whole year, Lev 25:2,4,6.

Exodus 16:22-30 is a reminder that the Lord provides logistics so that you can concentrate on Him.

If you are striving to get ahead, and make logistics a priority above God, then you are under the mistaken assumption that God cannot provide for you.

If you make recreation a priority above God, then you are under the mistaken impression that God cannot refresh you in the allotted time.

Ezekiel 20:12,20 place a seal on the meaning of the Sabbath: "And also I gave them My Sabbaths to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord who sanctifies them."

The purpose of the Sabbath is to know God, the God who sanctifies them.

Interestingly enough, we are sanctified by knowing God.

There is one day a week when the people know God, and that is what sanctifies them.

Aside from the prohibition of work, there is very little specific about the commandment. The real question about this commandment is whether you concentrate on God during this period.

Perhaps Isaiah 40:27-31 summarizes the benefit of the true Sabbath best: "Why do you say, O Jacob, and assert, O Israel, "My way is hidden from the Lord, and the justice due me escapes the notice of my God"? Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable. He gives strength to the weary, and to him who lacks might He increases power. Though youths grow weary and tired, and vigorous young men stumble badly, yet those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary."

Read Hebrews 3:7-4:13.

This long passage is about the Sabbath rest of Joshua, which is spiritual maturity.

You can only enter the Sabbath rest of God through belief in Jesus Christ.

Unbelief prevents you from ever knowing this wonderful rest.

The writer of Hebrews makes a big point out of the present time. Again and again he makes the assertion that there is no day like today to enter into the Sabbath rest of God (although you cannot reach maturity in a day, you can get on the trail that leads to it).

The word of God is the means of entering the Sabbath rest - it is the way to maturity.

When the Pharisees accuse the sick man of violating the Sabbath, he says that he was just following orders from the one who made him well, HUGIE.S, physically well. He is not spiritually well just yet.

But the sick man only knows that he is well. He does not know who made him that way.

John 5:14-16, "Afterward Jesus found him in the temple, and said to him, "Behold, you have become well; sin no longer, so that nothing worse may befall you." The man went away, and reported to the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well. And for this reason the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because He was doing these things on the Sabbath."

Christ was in the temple, for His observation of the Passover proceedings. What thoughts He must have had.

The man is physically well, but there is in him a persistence of sin. There is little or no evidence of his conversion to this point, and our Lord makes it clear that he is at this moment not right with God.

Handicaps are neither spiritual liabilities nor spiritual assets. Volition runs the same in the handicapped as in all others.

The prohibition against sinning is quite interesting:

Christ says, "ME.KETI HAMARTANE". The verb HAMARTANE is in the imperative mood, so this is a command. ME.KETI is a temporal adverb which denotes the cessation of an action. This really does mean "sin no longer", as in never again.

But how can Christ tell this to someone whom He knows will sin? Christ has to be aware of the realities of the sin nature. C. Really, this would be a legitimate command to a believer - all of us are commanded to restrain from sin.

However, there is a very similar turn of the phrase in Jeremiah 31:34, and it would be a good idea to go there and examine its context.

The formerly sick man reported, ANAGGELO to the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well. This Greek word holds only a negative connotation here. It may be taken as "tattled", or just "reported", but either way it is the voluntary nature of the act that really stinks.

This man chose to report to the Jews what could only turn out wrong.

The Jews employed this information in persecution - DIOKO means to doggedly pursue someone for the purpose of doing them harm.

The stated reason for the persecution is Christ's violation of the Pharasaic rules of the Sabbath. He definitely broke their Sabbath, but not the real one. Remember, Christ was the fulfillment of the Law; He could never have broken the real Sabbath.

John 5:17-18, "But He answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working." For this cause therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God."

The two verbs translated "working" are both the same, ERGAZOMAI. They are the present middle indicatives, indicating ongoing, non-stop work to the indefinite future.

The purpose of these verbs is to answer the assertion that we rest because God rested. The essence of the Sabbath is not the cessation of work, but concentration on God.

But Christ's works and God's works should be the objects of concentration, and they certainly are not a violation of the Moses' Sabbath.

Christ uses the personal pronoun EGO in order to emphasize His own work - not in contrast to that of the Father's, but in concert.

So two things here would get the attention of the Pharisees:

That Christ called God His Father.

That Christ considered His work equivalent with that of the Father's.

As a result, the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him.

The more bold Christ became, the more the Jews wanted to kill Him; the more that Christ revealed about the plan of God in Him, the more the Jews wanted to kill Him; the more

that Christ set Himself up as a substituted for them, the more the Jews wanted to kill Him.

So this was not only persecution, but deadly persecution.

Even two years before the death of Christ, the conspiracy to kill Him gained great strength.

Christ spoke the truth - He is a part of the trinity. God is three persons in one Godhead.

The first person of the Trinity is God the Father. The second person of the Trinity is God the Son. The third person of the Trinity is God the Holy Spirit.

The three persons of the trinity possess identical essence in one being.

This divine being is tripersonal, having three distinct persons which are autonomous from one another in soul function.

This distinction in persons is more than just one God showing different facets or modes of His one person.

Christ is a part of the trinity even though His is in the flesh.

Definition: "In the person of the incarnate Christ are two natures, inseparably united without mixture or loss of separate identity, without loss or transfer of properties or attributes, the union being both personal and eternal from the moment of the virgin birth."

The standard operating procedure for the hypostatic union was to be something called Kenosis, Phil 2:5-8, "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross!"

During the incarnation our Lord voluntarily restricted the independent use of the divine capabilities. Furthermore, the expression of His character was restricted to what He had

developed in His humanity, and not what He inherently had as deity.

He did this in compliance with the Father's plan for His time on planet earth.

Christ voluntarily became man, and with that restricted His deity to His humanity.

During the incarnation Jesus Christ never once exercised the independent use of His own Divine capabilities, either to benefit Himself, to provide for Himself, or to glorify Himself, Mt 4:1-12; Lk 4:1-12.

Voluntary restriction does not mean that those things went away, but that they were simply not used. He was still omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, love, etc.

Christ's divine capabilities and character traits were ready and available for His use at all times, but He chose not to use them.

John 5:19-47 Outline

The Humility of the Son, vv.19-21

His humility in earthly doings, "19 Jesus therefore answered and was saying to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing from Himself, unless it is something he sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also likewise does."

Now here is the definition of Christ's humility to the Father, and from Christ's own lips.

Christ does exactly what the Father does. He is the exact imitation of the integrity of God.

This statement, during the incarnation, is restricted to the character of God, and it stands as a great example for all of us.

Also in this statement is a strong reinforcement of the doctrine of kenosis.

The Son observes the Father through His study of the Old Testament. Christ definitely does not "go visit" the Father when no one is looking. Christ's observations are limited to what anyone else has during that time.

God does what He does from His perfection. Christ does what He does from God's perfection. For what Christ does, He does as a man.

What Christ says here to the Pharisees is really stunning: that he is both equal to the Father, and to them. Christ is limited by kenosis to the human condition.

His humility in future doings,"20 For the Father loves the Son and shows to Him all things which He Himself does and He will show Him greater works than these, so that you yourselves might marvel."

The Father loves the Son

There is equal love in the Godhead among all members. The Father loves the Son's humanity as well.

This is my Son, whom I love; in whom I am well-pleased. The Son had lived the perfect life up to this time, and He is the one human being who deserves the true personal love of the Father.

The Father shows the Son all things which He himself does.

The showing depends on the power of the Holy Spirit, but neither is this outside of the access of the rest of the human race. In order to be truly effective as savior and prototype, Christ had to have only what was available to other believers of His time. Therefore, this revelation of God is what was already revealed to everyone, and something that was in plain sight. It also eliminates excuses, and removes anti-grace thinking.

The greater works, those which would cause even the Pharisees to marvel, are future, and things which have yet to be done.

Christ had already done healings and miracles - and such things had been done in the Old Testament.

But there had been no resurrection, nor yet the second coming and millennial rule. These are the works to which Christ refers.

The greater works does not refer to church age mystery doctrine, because Christ did not reveal the church, or even hint at the church until the last week of His life.

Therefore, these things must be those already associated with Israel.

His humility in life making,"21 For just as the Father raises the dead and makes them alive, even so the Son also makes alive whom He wishes."

God the Father gave life in a limited sense in the dispensations before Christ. He placed their souls into interim bodies, and transferred them either to torments or paradise. And also he creates the soul in the first place and puts it into the human body.

This function is portrayed as occurring just then, as Christ spoke. God still held this role.

Jesus Christ had apparently already resuscitated a number of people as a kingdom sign. Christ would continue to do this, in order to point to His own resurrection, and the future resurrections of mankind.

Christ specifically points out that His willpower is involved. This works in conjunction with His spiritual gift. Our willpower works the same way with our gifts.

The Equality and Superiority of the Son, vv.22-30.

His authority to judge,"22 For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son."

The Son will judge on several different occasions.

Judgement of our sins on the cross.

The self-judgment of our sins in time through confession.

The Judgment Seat of Christ, the evaluation of all Church Age believers.

The baptism of fire, which is the judgment of all unbelievers of the tribulation, both Jew and Gentile, Mt 25:31-46; Ezek 20:33-48.

The evaluation of all tribulational believers, both Jew and Gentile, Mt 25:31-46; Dan 12:2-3.

At the great white throne, there are three categories of judgments.

The judgment of believers.

All believers who lived before the incarnation, both Jew and Gentile, are judged at this time.

All Millennial believers are judged at this time.

The judgment of unbelievers. All unbelievers in history, except those of the tribulation, are judged at this time. Mt 25:31-46, Ezek 20:32-38, Rev 20:7-10.

The judgment of all fallen angels at the end of the Millennium. Their sentence was passed before time began, but its execution is not carried out until the end of human history.

The purpose of His authority, "23 So that all might honor the Son just as they honor the Father. The one who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father Who sent Him."

The purpose particle introduces the purpose for the authority of Christ in judgment.

God gave Christ the authority to judge so that the human race would give Him equal honor.

The honor that Christ should receive comes from the dual sacrifice of His kenosis, Phil 2:5-8.

This honor is a mental attitude of appreciation for the sacrifice and integrity of another.

There is honor for the Father from the Old Testament dispensations.

The honor is an option, for it is in the potential subjunctive mood.

The application of man related to Christ's authority, "24 Truly truly I say to you that the one who listens to My word and believes in the one who sent me has eternal life and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life."

Since Christ has authority to judge and to give life, it behooves all men to listen to the word of Christ and believe in the one who sent Him.

Belief in Christ negates the judgment which rightfully should come to one in total depravity.

Every human being is born into a state of total depravity, characterized by total separation from God due to Adam's original sin, and total helplessness to do anything about it. This is a state of judgment!

If you refuse to believe in Christ, you are left in that state of judgment; if you believe in Christ you are removed from that state of judgment and placed into union with Christ.

The resurrection related to Christ, "25 Truly truly I say to you that the hour is coming and now is when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God - and the ones who hear will live."

This event is in the present - it is really a double entendre. First, is when someone listens to the voice of the Son of God, and believes what he has to say. This person, who begins in a status of spiritual death, that is, total depravity, will live.

The future life is when that person will be resurrected unto life. Thus, resurrection is in view here as well.

The explanation of the power to resurrect, "26 For just as the Father has life in Himself, so also He gave to the Son to have life in Himself."

This is a restatement of the previous statement about the ability to give life. But it does have its own twist.

Notice here that the attribute of life itself is applied to Christ.

The life here is eternal life, and it implies quality as well as infinity.

For us, the meaning is vitality.

Vitality in the gospel of John.

Vitality is expressive Christianity.

The format for vitality is prayer.

The contents of vitality are worship, observation, supplication, confession, dependence, and character.

The explanation of the authority to judge, "27 And He gave authority to Him to make judgment, because He is the Son of Man."

Hand in hand with the authority to give life is the authority to judge.

The two represent the only possibilities for your eternal fate.

A narration of the resurrection and judgment, " 28 Do not marvel at this; because the hour is coming in which everyone who is in the tombs will hear His voice, 29 and they will come out, the ones who did [divine] good unto a resurrection of life, but those who practiced human good unto a resurrection of judgment."

The hour is coming - this represents the eminence of divine judgment. The word denotes a short span of time between the present and the future.

When the time is past, it will seem only a short time.

Everyone who is in the tombs - obviously, those who are dead. This does not seem a reference to the incident at the death of Christ, Matt 27:52-53, "and the tombs were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the tombs after His resurrection they entered the holy city and appeared to many."

Those in the tombs at Christ's death are resuscitated - their old nasty decayed human bodies are raised.

However, verse 29 clearly states this passage as a resurrection at the end of time.

Furthermore, here it is PANTES, everyone who is in the tombs; in Matthew it is POLLA, "many".

Will hear His voice - now this is the change from verse 25, and is really the completion of it. If you hear His voice now, you will hear it later, and that's good.

HOI TA AGAPA POIESANTES, "the ones who did the intrinsic good".

The participle is in the aorist tense, and so it reveals action that occurs before the main verb.

It describes the action of those who believed in Christ during the span of their lives on earth.

The aorist participle also denotes that the action occurred in one moment of time - this is a single act of good.

The definite article and noun portray a single act of intrinsic good, and one which is known by the listeners. It is only belief in Christ.

The result is a resurrection unto life, eternal life, that is.

HOI TA PHAULA PRAXANTES "The ones who practiced the human good."

This is really descriptive! The aorist participle describes past time, but here the meaning of the verb overrules the tense of the participle in the kind of action. The verb pra/ssw is "practice", and therefore indicates action over a lifetime.

The noun reveals anything worthless or out of bounds. It summarizes all the acts of human good which an unbeliever accumulates over a lifetime.

This person is also resurrected, but unto judgment - the harsh judgment into the lake of fire, which occurs at the great white throne.

The equity of Christ's judgment, "30 I am not able to do anything from Myself; I judge just as I hear, and My judgment is just, because I do not seek my own will, but the will of the One who sent Me."

Christ follows the will of the Father in judgment.

Christ desires to please God in all of His judgments.

None of the judgments of Christ attempt to please man; they only attempt to please God. This is what makes all of His judgments perfectly fair.

To please man is to fall into the morass of relativity. There is no fairness in relativity.

The Testimony about the Son, vv.31-37

The invalidity of self-testimony, "31 If I testify about Myself, My testimony is not true;"

Christ is speaking to the Pharisees here. Remember that! He therefore switches over to a very objective mode in testimony about Himself.

When Christ says, "not true". What He means is not true to the Pharisees. Of course His testimony is true! It is just that He knows that the Pharisees will not trust His self-testimony.

The validity of outside testimony & the first outside witness to Christ, "32 There is another who testifies about me, and I know that the testimony which He testifies about Me is true."

Outside testimony is more valid for the Pharisees. He would have their attention by now.

Although some manuscripts have the more logical "you know", they are late and unreliable.

So, there is an outside witness, and his testimony is true. The Pharisees would be asking themselves who this might be.

The first witness: John the Baptist, "33 You have sent to John, and he has testified the truth."

Remember, the Pharisees sent a fact finding team to John, John 1:19-28. At that time, John told them about Christ. He made the issue very clear.

Christ uses the intensive form of the personal pronoun "you". He wants to really emphasize that the Pharisees were concerned enough about John ministry to find out more about Him.

When John made the issue so clear, it was the truth.

Christ's purpose in citing these witnesses, "34 But I did not receive the testimony from man, but I speak these things so that you might be saved."

Christ here reveals His pure motive in providing testimony. He wants the very best for the Pharisees, which is for them to be saved through belief in Him.

Christ did not receive the testimony from man. This means that Christ is pointing out that He received a greater testimonial than just human. He received one from God the Father Himself at His baptism.

Although I have not included it in my outline, this is really the second witness to Christ.

John's testimony and the Pharisees' former acceptance of it, "35 He [John the Baptist] was the lamp that was burning and shining and you wanted to rejoice for a short time in his light."

Notice the past tense HEN. Although John was the lamp that was burning and shining, Christ makes it clear that this is no longer the case.

In fact, John has allied with the Pharisees now, and has become the enemy of Christ.

John was the lamp... the lamp that the Pharisees would remember would be the lampstand in the holy place of the tabernacle and temple. It is the lamp which represents the ministry of God the Holy Spirit.

John in his ministry shed light on the Old Testament. He was like the Spirit in that regard. In fact, the Spirit worked alongside the ministry of John.

For a short time the Pharisees wanted to rejoice in the light of John's ministry. At first they had a few shreds of positive volition. That time is clearly past.

Summary: we now have two witnesses - John the Baptist and God the Father.

The second witness: the works of Christ, "36 But I have a greater witness than John; for the works which the Father gave Me so that I might finish them, the very works which I do, testify about Me that the Father sent Me."

So the works of Christ also testify about Him - that He is the Son of God.

Christ did the following works through the ministry of God the Holy Spirit.

Miracles.

Healings.

Demon Exorcisms.

Remember, these great things are done through the spiritual gifts and the power of the Spirit, and certainly not through his own deity.

These same works are given by the Father, so that they might be fulfilled or finished by Christ.

Step by step Christ fulfills Old Testament prophecy.

Through Old Testament wisdom Christ does the works which are given by the Father.

By the guidance of the Spirit Christ knows when to do what. The Spirit even guides when we are not sure or flat out do not know.

Eph 2:10, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."

Christ does miracles, healings, and exorcisms, and nobody else does. Doesn't that point to His being the messiah?

The third witness: the Father, "37 And the Father who sent Me, has testified about Me. You have neither heard His voice, nor seen His form,"

Christ has already alluded to this witness.

The Father testified about Christ at His baptism.

But the Old Testament is chock-full of testimony about Christ. Christ fulfilled dozens and dozens of prophecies.

The Pharisees did not hear the voice of the Father, because they did not want to, not because they did not hear with their ears. Many Pharisees would have been present at the baptism of Christ.

The Pharisees have not seen the form of God. This time the verb is o)ra/w, and it does not mean to see with the organs of sight, but with the organ of the heart.

The part of God that the Pharisees do not see is EIDOS. This is actually a cognate of HORAIO, and speakers of Greek employed it to describe the outward form of an idol.

God did reveal Himself in theophanies during Old Testament dispensations, but those days are past by the time this passage rolls around.

Irony: they are right in front of the Son of God, and yet they do not see God in Him.

The Pharisees' Rejection of the Witnesses and Their Negative Volition, vv.38-47

The Pharisees' response to the word, "38 and you do not have His word living in you, because you do not believe the one whom He sent."

The participle me/nonta describes the wordless state of the Pharisees. It is not that the Pharisees are without a knowledge of the Scripture, for they could compete with the best in the world in this regard.

But, they do not have the word living in them. The present tense combines with the meaning of the word so that it places a strong emphasis on the indwelling and durative nature of the word.

Christ makes a point: you can know a tremendous amount about the word, and still there is an issue about whether it dwells in you.

Whether the word dwells in you is entirely up to you. In order to make the word dwell in yourself, you must make it a vital part of your life and relationship with God.

The Pharisees never did do this, and so they rejected the witnesses.

Remember, there is negative volition at hearing the word, and negative volition at using the word. The Pharisees fell into the latter category.

Their blind and failed search of the Scriptures, "39 You search the Scriptures, because You

assume to have eternal life in them; and they are those who testify about Me!"

Something amazing: the Pharisees search the Scriptures, because they assume to have eternal life in them. This sounds good, and yet the Pharisees missed something, for sure.

ERAUNTE describes a search only when you do not know what you seek. It describes the exploratory operation in surgery, or the endless and fruitless quest of philosophy.

Searching the Scriptures would normally be a good thing; but when you search and do not know why, then you are in trouble. You will not find the object for which you search if you do not know what it is.

The verb DOKEITE means to assume something. It describes presumptive thinking. Christ inserts the personal pronoun HUMEIS in order to show His surprise that the Pharisees do this. It could be translated, "even you".

The Pharisees assume that they have eternal life in the Scriptures, and this is a good assumption.

With this good assumption they go on to search aimlessly through the Scriptures, paying a great deal of attention to detail which did not exist, and failing to discover eternal life.

Christ is eternal life, and the Old Testament is full of testimony about Him.

What the Pharisees desire is a quality of life, but they assume that the quality is legalism, and living Scripture to the letter, and even their letter.

The eternal life of Christ comes by dwelling in God through Scripture.

Their current response to Christ in spite of the witnesses, "40 And you do not want to come to Me in order that you might have life!"

Now Christ registers His indignant surprise at the negative volition of the Pharisees.

They search the Scriptures, but do not see Him there. How ridiculous! How stupid.

They have John the Baptist; God the Father; the Old Testament; the works of Christ. What more could they possibly want? Why don't they see Christ?

The policy of Christ related to approbation from men "41 I do not receive glory from men,"

The do/can of man is any extraneous or illegitimate approbation which He might receive. 1 Pet 1:24 [Isa 40:6], "All flesh is like grass, and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls off, but the word of the Lord abides forever."

Christ here sets up a contrast with the Pharisees, who loved the approbation directed toward their illegitimate activities, and given for ulterior motives.

Christ includes the preposition PARA: This portrays on or more persons and that something proceeds from this person or persons.

The noun ANTHROPON is plural, and it gathers all of mankind into one generic class; it could just as well be translated "mankind," or "people."

The Pharisees' lack of virtue love, "42 but I have known you, that you do not have the love of God in yourselves."

The conjunction ALLA is not adversative, so much as it is transitional. It changes gears to the next clause, which has to do with what the Pharisees lack.

The Pharisees lack true love - the virtue love of God. The virtue love of God is certainly something that would be acceptable to Christ in His judgments.

Christ uses the perfect tense of the verb "to know". Christ has already had experiences with the Pharisees, so that He knows of their lack of virtue.

Again, they have a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures without the love of God. What a spectacular failure.

If Christ has the authority to judge mankind, and He knows the Pharisees do not have what it takes, well, this should chill them to the bone.

The Pharisees' willingness to receive false messiahs, "43 I have come in the name of My Father, and you do not receive Me; If another shall come in his own name you will receive him!"

Christ came in the name of the Father, and with many testimonies about His true nature.

Christ uses the personal pronoun EGO to form a contrast between Himself and the false messiahs of the day.

Christ forms a hypothetical future case with something called the future more vivid construction. It creates a likely scenario, and then adds a definite outcome.

The likely scenario is the coming of another false messiah. In fact, many false messiahs have come since that day, and many even in the lifetimes of the Pharisees who listened then to the words of Christ.

The definite outcome is that the Pharisees will receive this false one. There is no question left in the construction.

It is a prediction base on the current state of the souls of these Pharisees. Their legalism and unhappiness has left them quite vulnerable to false doctrine and false messiahs.

The impossibility of the Pharisees' belief, and the reason, "44 How can you believe, while receiving glory from one another, and you do not seek the glory which is from the only God?"

You cannot believe in Christ and at the same time seek the approbation from men. Christ knows the fatal distraction of the Pharisees quite well!

The Pharisees searched the Scriptures for nothing, but for their work they hoped to receive glory from one another and from man.

The glory which is from the only God is Christ Himself, and the relationship with God which He brings to man.

ZETEITE denotes the search for what is known. It contrasts strongly against the preceding verb of searching.

It is really a rhetorical question.

The Pharisees present judge, "45 Do not assume that I will accuse you before the Father; your accuser is Moses, in whom you have hoped."

The indictment against the Pharisees comes from the Law of Moses.

They have place their hope in Moses - that is, in their fulfillment of the letter and ritual of the Law of Moses.

Yet the law of Moses exists in order to lead the way to God, and to provide the basis for a continuing relationship with Him. Of course, the Pharisees utterly failed to see this.

So this same Law of Moses forms their indictment.

The first part goes to the future, to the Great White Throne, where both believer and unbeliever Pharisees will be judged. In both cases, Christ will not accuse them.

The second part indicates that the judgment from the Law already exists - it is in the present tense.

Again, there should be a chilling effect on the legalists who listened to Christ on this occasion and others like it. Will the Law of Moses be read at their judgment? It is entirely possible! How about Deuteronomy 6?

Their rejection of Moses, "46 For if you believed Moses [and you did not], you believed in Me; for he wrote about Me."

Christ now makes a very clear and pointed comment: that they do not believe in Moses!

He does this with a present unreal conditional sentence. In this construction, the protasis is considered untrue, and the apodosis simply hypothetical.

So it goes like this. If you believed (but you didn't) then you would have believed in Moses (but of course you do not).

The rejection applied to belief in Christ, "47 But if you do not believe in his writings, how can you believe in My word?"

The Pharisees do not believe in the writings of Moses - they do not believe in them at least as God intended.

The Pharisees do believe in the writings of Moses as they interpret them, but that does not count before God.

It is impossible to reject Moses and at the same time receive Christ. If you miss Moses, you will most certainly miss Christ.

Another Sabbath Controversy

Matt. 12:1-8: 1 "At that time Jesus went on the Sabbath through the grain fields, and His disciples became hungry and began to pick the heads of grain and eat. 2 But when the Pharisees saw it, they said to Him, "Look, Your disciples do what is not right to do on a Sabbath." 3 But he said to them, "Have you not read what David did, when he became hungry, he and his companions; 4 how he entered the house of God, and they ate the consecrated bread, which was not 'right' for him to eat, nor for those with him, but for the priests alone? 5 Or have you not read in the Law, that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple break the Sabbath, and are innocent? 6 But I say to you, that something greater than the temple is here. 7 But if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the innocent. 8 For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."

Mark 2:23-28 "And He happened to be passing through the grain fields on the Sabbath, and His disciples began to make their way along while picking the heads of grain. 24 And the Pharisees were saying to Him, "Look, why are they doing what is not right on the Sabbath?" 25 And He said to them, "Have you never read what David did

when he was in need and became hungry, he and his companions: 26 how he entered the house of God in the time of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the consecrated bread, which is not 'right' for anyone to eat except the priests, and he gave it also to those who were with him?" 27 And He was saying to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. 28 Consequently, the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.

Luke 6:1-5 "Now He happened on a certain Sabbath to be passing through some grain fields; and His disciples were picking and eating the heads of grain, rubbing them in their hands. 2 But some of the Pharisees said, "Why do you do what is not right on the Sabbath?" 3 And Jesus answering them said, "Have you not even read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him, 4 how he entered the house of God, and took and ate the consecrated bread which is not 'right' for any to eat except the priests alone, and gave it to his companions?" 5 And He was saying to them, "The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."

Outline

The incident (Matthew, Mark, Luke).

The Pharisees' reaction and accusation (Matthew, Mark, Luke)

Christ's defense and counter-indictment.

The precedent of David and His companions (Matthew, Mark, Luke).

The support from the Law (Matthew).

The present day existence of a superior principle (Matthew).

The principle of relationship with God (Matthew).

The principle of priority in creation (Mark).

The principle of priority in rank (Matthew, Mark, Luke)

Harmonic Conversion

At that time Jesus and His disciples were going through a grainfield, and the disciples had just

begun to pick and eat the heads of grain by rubbing them in their hands.

All three gospels contain the necessary information, but Luke is more explicit that the disciples had actually consumed some of the grain when the Pharisees issued their complaint.

Matthew and Mark make it clear that they had only just begun to pick and eat, but they are unclear as to whether the food had passed their lips.

The difference is somewhat important - they had indeed done the deed, and not just begun it.

The grain fields are not specifically located - nor is this detail important. But there is a clue here as to the timing of this event - it is late summer, near the harvest, for the grain was edible.

Rubbing a head of grain with the hands removes the chaff. That the disciples could accomplish this with an easy motion points to the ripeness of the grain.

And the Pharisees saw this, and said to Christ, "Look, why are they doing what is not right on the Sabbath?"

The Pharisees were lurking nearby. If this is near Jerusalem, their presence next to the grainfield would be understandable; if not, then they are simply hounding Christ and the disciples in order to 'get' something on them.

They think they might have it here, but they are sorely mistaken.

All three of the gospels use the Greek *e)/cestin* to denote their idea of morality. This word is closely related to *e)cousi/a*. Where the latter denotes a human right, the former moves to the more abstract realm of what is right. It is not exactly the written Law, so much as it is natural law. It concentrates on the principle behind what may be written.

They relate the activity of the disciples to their understanding of the Sabbath, and conclude that the activity is not right.

Their idea comes from the fourth commandment, recorded in Exodus 20:8-11, "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath of the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and made it holy."

You will immediately notice the absence of a prohibition against picking grain. In fact, it is clear that there are no specifics at all pertaining to the stoppage of work on this day. Therefore the complaint of the Pharisees has to do with their interpretation of work on the Sabbath.

What is left unsaid is why the disciples must eat this grain - why they have not eaten an so must use this unconventional method of provisioning. The answer to this question in turn answers the query of the Pharisees.

But He said to them...

"Have you not read what David did, when he was in need, and became hungry, he and his companions; how he entered the house of God in the time of Abiathar, and they ate the consecrated bread, which was not 'right' for him to eat, nor for those with him, but for the priests alone?"

The event to which Jesus refers is from 1 Samuel 21:1-6, but the background comes from the chapters before.

David kills Goliath, and becomes a great hero for the nation of Israel (1 Sam 17).

David and Jonathan the son of Saul become fast friends; the women of Israel greet David as a greater hero than Saul; Saul is jealous of David; Saul twice attempts David's life; David prospers greatly; David and Michal, the daughter of Saul are to be married; Saul attempts to trick David by the great Philistine foreskin caper, and thus the hand of Michal was won; David has much

success against the Philistines in battle (1 Sam 18).

Saul issues a general order to put David to death; Jonathan talks his father out of this plot; time passes and war with the Philistines resumes - David is again a great military hero; Saul resumes his jealousy and makes another personal attempt on the life of David; Saul renews the general decree against David's life; Michal assists David in his escape from the royal palace (Psalm 59); David flees to Samuel at Ramah; they flee together to Naioth; Saul sends his henchmen to capture David at Naioth, but they are thrice thwarted by the Spirit of God through Samuel; Saul goes there personally, and the Spirit thwarts him as well; the chapter ends with Saul naked and humiliated, prophesying for twenty four straight hours under the control of the Spirit (1 Sam 19).

David flees back to Ramah, and meets there with Jonathan; they conspire together to save David's life; David hides in a field near Jerusalem to await the word of Jonathan; Saul learns of this conspiracy from Jonathan himself, and attempts to kill his own son; Jonathan warns David of his danger, and David flees again (1 Sam 20).

READ 1 SAM 21:1-6

David in his desperation takes the sword of Goliath from Ahimelech, and then flees to Gath, the hometown of Goliath (Psalm 34); Achish the king of Gath turns against David, and David must act insane (Psalm 56) before him in order to escape (1 Sam 21).

David arrives at the cave of Adullam (Psalm 57, 142), and there he becomes captain of a band of outcasts, ala Robin Hood; He takes his aged parents to the king of Moab in order to safeguard them there; David then sorties to the forest of Hereth (AKA Sherwood); Saul discovers that Ahimelech has aided David, and through Doeg the Edomite massacres eighty five priests along with many other men, women, children, and even animals; Ahimelech

himself escapes to David; David accepts responsibility for the slaughter (1 Sam 22).

John 5:16-18, "And for this reason the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because He was doing these things on the Sabbath. But He answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working." For this cause therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God."

Now: Christ and His disciples are David and his men; and, the Pharisees are Saul and his men.

Christ's point is that an emergency situation may warrant the breaking of the Sabbath. David's flight illustrates the principle perfectly.

Although this was not a situation in which Christ was in danger of losing His life, the Pharisees are certainly after His skin.

"Or have you not read the Law, that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple break the Sabbath, and are innocent?"

There is no specific verse attached to this principle, but it is certainly true.

Think about it: the priests have to work on the Sabbath; they carry out many duties every Sabbath that would constitute the prohibition against work.

Christ points out this issue, but does not make reference to the Pharisees' strict interpretation of the Law. The work of the priests on the Sabbath would comprise work in anyone's book.

This second point differs from the first, in that it points out an exception to the work prohibition that is not an emergency. This applies just as readily as the first, and even more so, because Christ has not yet finished this element of His discourse.

"But I say to you, that something greater than the temple is here."

The greater thing is the body and person of Christ.

The temple only foreshadows what would be fulfilled in every way in Him.

The work of the priests in the temple all represented aspects of Christ's life and work.

Now which is greater, the fulfillment or the shadow?

So if the priests could break the Sabbath in the foreshadowing of Christ, the mere presence of Christ would create a Sabbath negation zone.

The presence of Christ provided the opportunity to Sabbath whenever He taught doctrine, and that could be any day of the week, and any time.

With Christ present the need for the regimented weekly Sabbath was entirely negated. An hour with Him would have been far superior to any Sabbath day during the dispensation of Israel.

"But if you had know what this means: 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the innocent."

In this third principle, Christ quotes Hosea 6:6.

There are means to the substance of the Christian life, and there is the substance itself.

The substance is always relationship with God through the Word of Truth.

During the dispensation of Israel, the means of the spiritual life were the rituals given by God through Moses. God designed these rituals to teach the Israelites about Himself, and relationship with Him. At no time did God intend the rituals to become the substance of the spiritual life.

The Pharisees were the masters of making the means into the substance - the very thing which Hosea 6:6 refutes.

The test which the Pharisees should apply to Christ's disciples is whether their activity violates the substance. With Christ present in the world, there is the unique opportunity to enjoy the substance of the spiritual life at any time!

"The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath."

Look again at the first chapter of Genesis... which came first, man or the Sabbath?

If man came first, then how could man be made for the Sabbath? It is entirely the other way around!

And why was the Sabbath made for man? So that man would take time to know God.

Believing that God made man for the Sabbath places a very wrong emphasis on the means to the substance.

The substance is not ritual for the sake of ritual. God did not make man so that he would worship the Sabbath; the Sabbath was never a god to be worshipped, and yet that is exactly what the Pharisees desired for those under their authority.

The Pharisees had manufactured an idol from the rituals which God provided. They worshipped the means, and threw away the substance of Old Testament spiritual life.

And He was saying to them, "The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."

The final argument of Christ concentrates on His own authority.

If God made the Sabbath for man, then the Lord of all men should rule the Sabbath indeed.

Christ is the Lord of all men, and thus the Lord of the Sabbath as well. It is therefore His prerogative to do what He desires on the Sabbath, and to direct His disciples to do as He wishes, regardless of the day of the week.

And all this over such a little thing as eating grain on the fly!

Healing on the Sabbath

Matthew 12:9-14: "9 And departing there, He went into their synagogue. And behold, a man has a withered hand. 10 And they questioned Him, saying, "Is it right to heal on the Sabbath?" - in order that they might bring charges against Him. 11 But He said to

them, "What man will there be among you, who will have one sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will he not grab it and raise it out? 12 How greatly a man differs from a sheep! So then, it is right to do good on the Sabbath." 13 Then He says to the man, "Stretch out your hand!" And he stretched it out, and it was restored to full health, like the other. 14 But the Pharisees went out, and plotted together against Him, that they might destroy Him."

Mark 3:1-6: "1 And He entered again into the synagogue; and a man was there with a badly withered hand. 2 And they were scrutinizing Him to see whether He would heal him on the Sabbath, in order that they might bring charges against Him. 3 And he says to the man with the withered hand, "Rise into the middle!" 4 And He says to them, "Is it right on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save a soul or to kill?" But they kept silent. 5 And after looking around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, He says to the man, "Stretch out the hand." And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored. 6 And the Pharisees went out and immediately were plotting together with the Herodians against Him, that they might destroy Him."

Luke 6:6-11 "6 And it came about on a different Sabbath, that He entered the synagogue and was teaching; and there was a man there and his right hand was withered. 7 And the scribes and the Pharisees were scrutinizing Him, to see whether He would heal on the Sabbath, in order that they might find grounds to bring charges against Him. 8 But He knew their plans, and He said to the man with the withered hand, "Rise and stand in the middle!" 9 And Jesus said to them, "I ask you, is it right on the Sabbath to do good, or to do evil, to save a soul, or to destroy it?" 10 And after looking around at them all, He said to him, "Stretch out your hand!" And he did, and his hand was restored. 11 But they themselves were filled with [irrational] rage,

and discussed together what they might do to Jesus."

Outline

The Setting.

Christ is teaching in the synagogue of the persecuting Jews. "And He departed there. And it came about on a different Sabbath, that He entered their synagogue, and was teaching;"

Christ leaves from the vicinity of the grainfield, where He had just concluded a controversy with the Pharisees over the issue of the Sabbath.

On a different Sabbath, not long after the grainfield Sabbath, Christ entered their synagogue, and was teaching. Of course this was Christ's modus operandi - to teach in the synagogues, where the Jews had gathered to listen to the Word.

So the Pharisees had the home synagogue advantage.

Now this is a synagogue, and it appears that Christ has gone back to Galilee, for there were no synagogues in Jerusalem proper - there would be no need.

The opportunity - the man with the badly withered hand. "And there was a man there whose right hand was badly withered."

Luke is the doctor who notices details. Although he was not there, he would naturally inquire as to which hand was withered. It is the right hand, which would have had a profound impact on the life of the man. Luke would only say this if it mattered - the man was likely right-handed, and truly crippled by this event.

Mark records the impression of the impressionable Peter, who describes the condition with the perfect participle. This shows both severity and permanence.

The verb XERAINO and the noun CHEIROS describe the hand. These words indicate a parched, dried, and even diseased state. The problem with the hand therefore may have come from a disease, and maybe from a terrible

burn. The source does not matter - the condition does. It was a terrible, irreversible condition that was a considerable handicap.

The opposition - the Pharisees who conspire against Him. "And the scribes and the Pharisees were scrutinizing Him, to see whether He would heal him on the Sabbath, in order that they might find grounds to bring charges against Him."

The scribes and the Pharisees watch Christ like a hawk. They want Him, and they want Him badly. The verb for 'scrutinize' is PARATEREO, which means literally, 'to keep beside'. In other words, they stayed close to Him, in order to catch Him.

They were looking for grounds for a legal accusation, and they felt they could get it if Christ healed this man on the Sabbath. KATEGOREO is a Greek verb which meant to bring formal charges against a person. Our own English verb categorize does not quite have this meaning, but if you employ it in the personal judgment of a person it comes close.

The scribes and the Pharisees had quite a dilemma. They could not kill Christ outright, for that would be murder. They did not want Him assassinated, for that would create a martyr. Their only other option was religious vilification combined with capital punishment. They initiated that policy here, even though they would not succeed for another two years.

The charge: healing on the Sabbath. "And they questioned Him, saying, "Is it right to heal on the Sabbath?"

The Pharisees were never ones to let manners interfere with their regulation of events. They interrupted Christ's teaching in order to bring up the subject of healing on the Sabbath.

Again they use the verb EXESTIN to define the issue. In their minds, is it right to heal on the Sabbath. The verb goes all the way back to natural law.

The Reply. "But He had known their plans, and He said to the man with the withered hand, "Rise and stand in the middle!" Christ knew

their plans - the pluperfect tense of OIDA. In fact He had known them (John 5:16,18), and from this knowledge knew exactly what to do. The command to stand in the middle MESON has in mind the common synagogue layout of the day, which kept a platform in the middle, and seating in the round.

The illustration of the endangered sheep. "And He said to them, "What man will there be among you, who will have one sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will he not grab it and raise it out? How greatly a man differs from a sheep!"

I have retained the future tense, although smoother translation would be in the present, "What man is there among you..."

Christ confronts the Pharisees here - and tells them of their own practice of breaking the Sabbath. This makes it clear that the Pharisees must arrest themselves if they are to arrest Jesus.

A fundamental point to Christ's argument is that the man in the illustration has only one sheep. If a man has only one sheep, then that sheep is of paramount importance. The livestock of the ancient world was rather like the modern automobile - it was both a sign of wealth and a means to wealth.

If the sheep falls into a pit on the Sabbath, it may well die in the next twenty four hours, who would allow such a torturous death on his own animal? Wouldn't it be merciful and God-like to rescue it?

The grabbing and lifting would certainly be considered work by any objective standard, and not just by the stringent definition of the Pharisees.

But the grabbing and lifting would be an act of mercy, and so would fit within the frame of reference of healing as well.

A contrast arises: when Christ heals, it is by the power of God, and not by His own effort; yet when the Pharisees would rescue their one sheep, it would be by human effort alone.

Then Christ turns their attention to the man, standing on the platform with Him. His argument is truly flawless.

And recall that Christ does this for the benefit of the Pharisees and scribes, so that they would see that He is correct, and find the true nature of compassion.

The principle: a good work is not 'Sabbath' work. "And then He said to them, "I ask you, is it right on the Sabbath to do good, or to do evil, to save a soul, or to destroy it? So then, it is right to do good on the Sabbath." But they kept silent."

A good work or a bad deed does not come into play in the Sabbath frame of reference.

The question that Christ brings to the fore is an excellent one: does one refrain from the application of the truth on the Sabbath? Of course not!

Saving a sheep is an application of truth; so also healing a man.

Good deeds and saving a soul PSUCHEN are in the same category. Saving a soul actually refers to saving a life - that is, keeping the soul in the human body. It is not really saving a soul in the context of eternal salvation. Here, it connects with the soul of the endangered sheep, while the good deed would be the healing of the man with the withered hand.

Bad deeds and destroying souls are in another category. If you left the sheep, you would be doing a bad deed - it would be sinful to let it die in agony. In the same way, it would be sinful not to heal the man before them on the Sabbath.

Christ come to a conclusion for all who are present: it is right to do good on the Sabbath!

But the scribes and Pharisees kept silent. What a strong expression of negative volition. Christ presents a brilliant argument - one that is extremely convincing. And yet, they keep silent. Now this is arrogance of the first degree.

The Healing. "And after looking around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart,

He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand!" And he stretched it out, and it was restored to full health, like the other."

Hardness of heart is the same as spiritual blindness. It is a characteristic of those who have repeatedly rejected the truth of God, and accepted the cosmic counterfeits and lies. Their motive is most likely power lust.

Christ is grieved, sullupe/omai is a compound verb, composed of the preposition sun and the verb lupe/omai. The addition of the preposition only adds strength to the basic meaning of the verb, which is "to receive offense". It is not grief in the sense of mourning, but offense in the sense that someone has done something to hurt you.

Christ looks around at them in anger, ORGES. Having taken offense at their spiritual blindness.

Christ is not out of fellowship over this. His anger is not irrational, nor is it unfounded. What this verse conveys is that the Pharisees do wrong to Christ by rejecting His perfect rationale for healing the man before them, and that Christ knows that they have done this to spite Him.

Christ does what is right then, and at the same time demonstrates that their hardness of heart has no effect on His doing what is right. Christ must do what is right, even if others think it wrong.

The Response of the Pharisees. "But they themselves were filled with [irrational] rage, and they were plotting together with the Herodians against Him, that they might destroy Him."

It is so important to see the contrast between the ORGES of Christ and the irrational rage of the Pharisees.

The Pharisees were filled EPLESTHESAN with irrational rage ANOIAS.

The verb is in the passive voice, showing that the subject receives its action. Here the subjects

are the scribes and Pharisees. This portrays the out of control nature of their emotion.

The noun is really a compound word which literally means "unthinking".

The Herodians were men of influence and partisans of the Herodian house. They were much the same as the Sadducees with regard to their religious beliefs. They would have been strange bedfellows, but for their common hatred of Christ.

This does not bring anything new from the viewpoint of the Pharisees, but Mark mentions the plot in order to bring in the Herodians. The Sadducees.

This religious group came into being about 300 years before Christ. They are characterized by their aristocracy, their cultural surrender to the Greeks and others, and their opposition to everything Pharaonic.

Their name comes from the Aramaic *Sadduqim*, which meant 'righteousness'. However, those who were in opposition to them called them *saddiqim*, which meant 'destruction'.

They came from the ranks of the priests and high priests of Israel, during the time of the Greek occupation. Their desire was to give in to the Hellenizing influences of the Greeks, and thus retain their favor.

The Sadducees had a lot to lose to the occupation forces of the Greeks, because they were mostly prosperous, aristocratic people. In order to maintain their lifestyles and possessions, they placated the Greeks, giving in to their cultural and even religious influences.

During the Maccabean revolt, they stayed in the background. They were in fact very unpopular. When Jonathan Maccabee was appointed high priest by popular demand, it looked like the Sadducees would be gone forever. At the time, almost all of the people in the land were willing to sacrifice anything for their freedom. The strong oppression of the Syrians drove them to this sacrificial attitude.

After about 40 years of on and off civil war, the Jews became tired of the bloodshed, and popular opinion tended toward peace. In this case, peace meant compromise, and compromise was the game of the Sadducees. John Hyrcanus, of the Maccabees, was really very close to the Sadducee way of thinking.

However, the compromising policy of Hyrcanus became unpopular in a few years, and so the Pharisees came into power.

Due to the double tyranny of the Pharisees and king Herod, the Sadducees had made a great comeback not long before the birth of Christ. Let's face it: the Pharisees were no fun at all.

The religious beliefs of the Sadducees can be summed up in a single thought: they were always opposed to what the Pharisees believed.

They believed that only the written Law is binding, whereas the Pharisees believed that the body of tradition and written interpretation were just as important as the Law itself.

The Sadducees punished breaches of the Law severely, but the Pharisees often interpreted their way around the written Law, and thus got out of the proscribed punishment.

They had a strong belief in human free will, while the Pharisees believed in predestination to the point of being fatalistic.

They denied the resurrection, and any kind of continued existence of the soul after physical death. This led to their inordinate value of private property and possessions. The Pharisees, however, believed that the soul continued after death, and that there would be a severe judgment in eternity.

The Sadducees did not believe in angelic beings, or demons, and any reference to such in Scripture was converted to a manifestation of God Himself. The Pharisees did believe in angels.

The Sadducees always reserved the right of private opinion about Scripture and the Law, while the Pharisees rejected that right, tyrannically imposing their opinions on all.

The Sadducees were a mixture of both the conservative and the liberal from today's American society. The pressures of history and their religious beliefs worked together to make them what they were. Although they had some good elements to their philosophy, they were just as spiritually and morally bankrupt as the Pharisees. They are a good example of wrong reaction for the right reason. It was a good thing to be opposed to the religious tyranny of the Pharisees, but the motives of the Sadducees were wrong, and thus their beliefs went in the wrong direction. Although religion was important to them, relationship with God was not, and so they destroyed themselves. They left the pages of history forever after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.

Transition to the Sermon on the Mount

Read Matthew 12:15-21

Read Mark 3:7-12

Outline

The geographical movement of Christ and His disciples.

The reason. "But Jesus, knowing [this],"

Jesus knew that the Pharisees and Herodians were trying to kill Him.

In fact, He knew this even before the grain field incident, as we have seen.

The movement. " withdrew from there to the sea with His disciples."

"There" is again undefined. We do not know the location of the grain field, nor do we know the position of the synagogue where the withered hand incident took place.

But we do know that Christ went with His disciples down the sea, and of course the sea is the Sea of Galilee. So, they are somewhere on the coast of the Sea of Galilee.

The attendant movement of His followers.

The following. "And a great multitude from Galilee followed;"

First, we have the fact of the following. They followed Him from Galilee and beyond Galilee.

And second, the reason, which was the usual reason - because He healed people.

Their places of origin. "and also from Judea, and from Jerusalem, and from Idumai, and [from] beyond the Jordan, and [from] the vicinity of Tyre and Sidon,"

Judea is the southern region of Israel. It was 50-75 miles from Judea to the Sea of Galilee. Our modern equivalent: two or three days' drive... 1500 miles.

Jerusalem is about sixty miles from the Sea of Galilee.

Idumai, or Idumaea was about 100 miles to the south, south even of Judea, or a good four days journey.

Beyond the Jordan is 30 to 60 miles to the southeast from the Sea of Galilee.

Tyre and Sidon lie about 30 and 40 miles to the northwest from the Sea of Galilee.

Conclusion: the people of the surrounding regions were coming from all over to see Christ and to receive His healing touch.

The desperation of the multitude.

The healings. "a great multitude hearing what great things that He was doing came to Him..." "...for He had healed them all,"

Although these two parts of the narrative are out of order, they are in the outline here to explain the motivation of the crowd.

Christ had healed some of them, and the word got out, and so they were coming from all over.

Mark says that "Christ healed them all." In other words, it was His current policy to heal every last one who came to Him. Christ did not heal every sick person in the region - only those who came to Him, and only those who came to Him at this time.

It was never the policy or intent to heal every human being of their physical ailments.

The chaotic reaction of the multitude. "in order that they might not press upon Him; for He had healed them all, so that as many as had afflictions fell upon him to cling to Him.

This is a very chaotic scene.

The people press in against Christ, the sick and afflicted falling upon Him and clinging to Him; hundreds and thousands of people falling and flailing and touching and grabbing and clinging.

In fact, it would not only be chaotic, but dangerous.

The necessity of physical separation. "And He told His disciples that a boat should stand ready for Him"

What a clever, Satanic plot. The people are so anxious to touch Him and cling to Him that they would kill Him in their frenzy.

So Christ very wisely told His disciples to keep a boat ready for Him, so that He can escape their clutches.

Technicality: it does not say that Christ actually got into the boat. Perhaps its presence was enough to settle down the crowd.

The testimony of the unclean spirits. "And the unclean spirits, whenever they beheld Him, fell down before Him and cried out, saying, "You are the Son of God!"

"unclean spirits" is a synonym for demon possessed people. The spirits were not falling down before Him on their own, but instead they were causing the bodies that they occupied to do so.

The spirits were causing their hosts to cry out "You are the Son of God!" Now why would they do this?

The first possibility is that they feared a penalty which Christ could bring against them - namely, imprisonment in the abyss. And so their public declaration and movement could have been an attempt at avoiding this terrible imprisonment.

But, it is much more likely that they were trying to whip the crowd into a frenzy, and thus have

Christ die by accident before He could properly introduce His kingdom.

Think: Christ has done many miraculous things, and His life has been full of wonder, but what word has He spoken of His kingdom?

The truth is, He is about to talk about His kingdom for the very first time, and it would be just the right time from Satan's point of view for Him to die.

Christ had no chance of anonymity here. The demons would draw attention to Him wherever He went... and at all times whipping up crowds to throng against Him and even endanger Him.

The exhortation for silence

"And He strongly exhorted them not to make Him known,"

This exhortation went out not only to the demons, but also to all that He healed.

The Greek verb is EPETIMESEN, which means to give strong honor or respect, and in a negative connotation to warn.

Here we may have a dual connotation: a warning against the fallen angels who were attempting to have Him killed by frenzy, and an exhortation against the people who pressed against Him.

The fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah. in order that the word [which came] through Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, 'Behold, My Servant whom I have chosen; My Beloved in whom My soul is well-pleased; I will put My Spirit upon Him, And He shall proclaim justice to the Gentiles. He will not quarrel, nor cry out; nor will anyone in the streets hear His voice. A battered reed He will not break off, and a smoldering wick He will not snuff, until He casts out judgment for victory. And in His name the Gentiles will hope.'"

This quote is from Isaiah 42:1-4. You should note that Matthew paraphrases a good deal of it without compromising its essence.

Here is the quote from the New American Standard: "1 Behold, My Servant, whom I

uphold; my chosen one in whom My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations. 2 He will not cry out or raise His voice, nor make His voice heard in the street. 3 A bruised reed He will not break, and a dimly burning wick He will not extinguish; He will faithfully bring forth justice. 4 He will not be disheartened or crushed, until He has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands will wait expectantly for His law."

The Septuagint translates this way: "1 I will come to the aid of Jacob Israel my servant. My chosen one - my soul delights in him. I have given my Spirit upon Him; He will lead out judgment to the Gentiles. 2 He will not cry out nor yell; nor will His voice be heard outside. 3 He will not crush a reed that has been crushed and he will not snuff a dimly burning wick - but - He will lead justice into truth. 4 He will take up and He will not be broken until He has established justice upon the earth. And the Gentiles will hope in His name."

First observation: this looks really tangled!

First simplification: Matthew did not take his quote from the Septuagint! Throw it out!

Second simplification: Matthew is simply paraphrasing the Hebrew text - there is no great need for an exact translation.

When you paraphrase a passage, you paint with broad strokes of the brush. You capture essence, and not letter. Paraphrasing is the impressionism of translation.

Now, the impression that Matthew was attempting to give.

The impression has to do with the whole passage in Isaiah, else Matthew would have quoted it only in part.

This passage has been fulfilled in part at the baptism of Jesus Christ.

The voice from heaven said some of these things, and the Spirit descended in bodily form as a dove.

But the impression that Matthew attempts to give here does not have to do with the events at Christ's baptism.

The impression does not have to do with the Gentiles, for Matthew does not include them in his narrative.

The impression has to do with the silence that Christ requires of the crowds (but not necessarily of the demons).

Here it is: Christ will make no ripple or wave on the face of the earth until He casts out judgment for victory.

The picture in the Greek is that of an exchange of judgment for victory. This can only be the cross.

So, Isaiah 42:1-4 predicts that the Messiah will make no violent moves until He has paid for the sins of man.

You will notice that anything within the integrity of God will be allowed after the atonement.

Christ does not want the approbation, and He really cannot truly have it anyway until after the atonement.

Remember what Christ will do at the second advent. With a shout, with the voice of the archangel! 10. This was a common critique of the Jews - that Christ did not make a big splash when He came.

Distinctions on the policy of non-violence.

This policy applies to every aspect of Christ's life.

This policy is restricted to the incarnation only.

This policy is a dispensational constant for evangelization.

This policy does not apply in matters of divine establishment for the church age.

The United States is a Gentile client nation, and the Laws of Divine Establishment should apply.

Luke 21:24: "...and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled."

The context is the Olivet discourse, where Christ told His disciples of the things to come.

If you remember from the fig tree special, this discourse makes some generalizations about the church age before it gets to the specific predictions of the tribulation.

A part of the discourse not contained in Matthew 24 is that part which deals with the destruction of Jerusalem and the rule of the Gentiles.

Luke covers this in chapter 21, verses 20-24 of his gospel.

Christ indicates that the church age will be characterized by Gentile dominance.

The laws of Divine Establishment are outlined in codices 1 and 3 of the Mosaic Law.

Codex 1 is the freedom code, or the 10 commandments.

Codex 3 is the establishment code, and is set forth in Lev 11-20 and Exodus 21:1-23:9.

The spiritual code, which is codex 2 of the Mosaic Law, is not a requirement for the client nation. It is set forth in Lev 1-8, 21-25, and Exodus 25-40.

Summary: because Christ does not rule the planet during the church age, the Laws of Divine Establishment apply to Gentile nations. The nation which heeds these laws is a 'client' nation.

And, there are many indications from the epistles that the LDE are brought forward into the church age. Romans 1; 1 Tim 1:8-10.

The Beatitudes

Beatitudes Quick Review

The first blessing: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, because theirs is the Kingdom of God."

And, there is something quite significant here: even though you may be a believer, you are still poor in spirit! Many believers have a terrible time with this concept, because they fail to understand that this sermon assumes residence in the kingdom.

Now, this is truly a remarkable statement! You have no power, and yet the kingdom of heaven belongs to you! But you can see that this is a fantastic introductory statement. This is the wisest thing that you can say to a new believer - just the simple fact that they are poor in spirit - whether they like it or not, whether they acknowledge it or not.

And, this is a blessing from God regardless of whether it is enjoyed.

This is not something you obtain by being humble; it is your estate regardless of your attitude.

Furthermore, this is a remarkable statement because it holds in view the doctrine of eternal security. You have the kingdom of heaven in spite of your lack of merit!

Therefore the first blessing to the one in the kingdom is eternal security.

The second blessing: "Blessed are they who mourn, because they will be comforted."

There are two ways to take the mourning: in the literal sense of mourning for some loved one that is lost; in the figurative sense of mourning over lost fellowship with God.

Now let's turn to mourning. Mourning due to the loss of fellowship is a fairly common Biblical theme.

Psalm 30: 1 I will extol You, O Lord, for You have lifted me up, and have not let my enemies rejoice over me. 2 O Lord my god, I cried to You for help, and You healed me. 3 O Lord, You have brought up my soul from Sheol; You have kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit. 4 Sing praise to the Lord, you His godly ones, and give thanks to His holy name. 5 For His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for a lifetime; weeping may last for the night, but a shout of joy comes in the morning... 10 Hear, O Lord, and be gracious to me; O lord, be my helper. 11 You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; You have loosed my sackcloth and girded me with gladness. 12 That my soul may sing praise to You, and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks to You forever.

Psalm 38:1-8: "1 O Lord rebuke me not in Your wrath; and chasten me not in Your burning anger. 2 For Your arrows have sunk deep into me, and Your hand has pressed down on me. 3 There is no soundness in my flesh because of Your indignation; there is no health in my bones because of my sin. 4 For my iniquities are gone over my head; as a heavy burden the weigh too much for me. 5 My wounds grow foul and fester because of my folly. 6 I am bent over and greatly bowed down; I go mourning all day long. 7 For my loins are filled with burning; and there is no soundness in my flesh. 8 I am benumbed and badly crushed; I groan because of the agitation of my heart."

Isaiah 61:1-3 connects mourning and the atonement, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives, and freedom to prisoners; 2 to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn, 3 to grant those who mourn in Zion, giving them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a spirit of fainting. So they will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the lord, that he may be glorified."

2 Corinthians 7:9-13 makes a very direct connection between sin and grief. This passage seems almost as if Paul intended to clarify our beatitude. "I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to the point of repentance; for you were made sorrowful according to the will God, in order that you might not suffer loss in anything through us. For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation; but the sorrow of the world produces death. For behold what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow, has produced in you: what vindication of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what avenging of wrong! In everything you demonstrated yourselves to be innocent in the matter. So although I wrote to you it was not

for the sake of the offender, nor for the sake of the one offended, but that your earnestness on our behalf might be made known to you in the sight of God. For this reason we have been comforted."

Conclusion:

Emotion is NEVER to be a criteria for thought or action.

Emotion should ALWAYS remain subordinate to thought.

Motivation is a system of thought which leads to action.

Sin puts you out of fellowship with God, and God the Holy Spirit.

While you are out of fellowship, God inflicts varying degrees and categories of suffering on your person.

These sufferings cause mental dissonance, and God designs them to get you to wake up.

Once you understand that you are out of fellowship, and that you are receiving divine discipline, your period of mourning begins.

Mourning over sin is a complex of thought about the sin that includes:

The perception of pain over the loss of fellowship.

The perception of pain because of the divine discipline.

The mental mourning over sin then should naturally invoke emotional response in the form of sadness, or mourning.

This complex of thought and subordinate emotion naturally moves the believer toward confession, and this is the intent of God.

Therefore, mourning is a blessing from God, for it brings comfort in the restoration of fellowship. The comfort comes from the comforter, who is God the Holy Spirit.

There is woe to those who laugh, because if they laugh at divine discipline, and while they are out of fellowship they will have little motive to confess. Hebrews 12:5, "and you have

forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, 'My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when you are reproved by Him;'"

Mourning and feelings of guilt after the restoration of fellowship are illegitimate, and should be all left behind.

The third blessing: "Blessed are the humble, because they will inherit the earth."

This really denotes the ability to solve problems without violence or angry reaction - but to solve the problems really and truly through the use of Bible Doctrine in the Soul.

Therefore this meekness really brings the idea of doctrinal problem solving, and reliance on the truth vs. reliance on human viewpoint solutions.

And therefore, there really is the connotation of doctrinal orientation vs. human viewpoint orientation.

It brings the inheritance of the earth.

Inheriting the earth while Satan rules it is no prize. It is not about that.

Neither does being meek bring in the millennium - there is nothing that we can do to accomplish what only Christ can.

Therefore, this is about the inheritance of the earth during the millennium, an inheritance based on the death of Christ.

The fourth blessing, "Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, because they will be filled."

The words for hunger and thirst are pretty standard here - exactly what we understand them to be in the English, with little or no extra emphasis.

This blessing works as a companion to the "poor in spirit". It is the realization of that very state.

No person in this world has righteousness in an of him or her self. That is the essence of being spiritually helpless. The one who hungers and

thirsts after righteousness has realized this, and thus seeks righteousness in God.

This is about positive volition, and even quite a bit about doctrinal dependence.

There are two righteousnesses related to Jesus Christ.

The first is the righteousness which He produced on the cross, and which is imputed to us at the moment that we believe in Him. Rom 5:18, "So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of [eternal] life to all men."

The second righteousness is that which comes through the study of the word of God.

2 Timothy 3:16, "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness."

1 Corinthians 2:16, "For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he should instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ."

This beatitude concentrates on the second righteousness. This is a righteousness which can only come through faith perception.

Hunger and thirst are very excellent metaphors for positive volition, because they convey need, as opposed to simple desire.

Hungering and thirsting for righteousness is a simple honesty with self about a spiritual need. It is the need for Divine viewpoint thinking.

Hungering and thirsting for righteousness leads to fulfillment. God is 100% faithful to positive volition.

The fulfilling that comes from knowing the word of God is a great blessing in itself. To be filled to the point of overflowing is truly great.

Being filled with the Word of God means:

Knowing God - the greatest person you will ever know.

Being able to resist temptation more effectively.

Being able to reduce the impact of sin in your life.

Understanding your destiny in Christ for this life and the next.

Tapping into a great portfolio of blessing for this life and the next.

Adding meaning to every blessing and understanding to every category of suffering.

The development of an invincible Spiritual self esteem.

Becoming the recipient of Divine personal love.

Being able to solve life's problems through doctrine, and not reaction.

Therefore, this is a fantastic blessing indeed.

The fifth blessing: "Blessed are the merciful, because they will be shown mercy."

All of the actions of God are done without conditions.

Unlimited atonement is an expression of Divine mercy, 1 John 2:2, "He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world."

Eternal security is an expression of Divine mercy, 1 John 3:1a, "How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!"

The life and death of Jesus Christ are the ultimate testimony of the love of God.

An extension of your life is often an expression of mercy, so that you may have another chance to use your volition responsibly.

The merciful of the tribulation will be shown mercy in the preservation of their human lives in the tribulation. In fact, human mercy as expressed in charity is very much a measure of Christian maturity during the millennium.

The sixth blessing: "Blessed are the pure in heart, because they will see God."

Almost anyone can appear to be pure. This is not a great accomplishment. But those who are

privately and mentally pure are another category entirely.

Why is anyone pure in heart? It only because they are in fellowship with God. No one is righteous - no one at all. We can only be pure in heart because of the ability of God to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Pure in heart does not refer to spiritual maturity, but rather the state of being in fellowship and cleansed from all sins.

Putting the word in your heart causes personal purity related to spiritual maturity.

Purity of heart is a requirement for prayer, 2 Tim 2:22, "Now flee from youthful lusts, and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart."

Summary of Biblical references to maturity.

Purity may refer to the status of spiritual maturity.

Purity may also refer to the temporal state of being in fellowship with God.

The only extra context we have is the blessing which attends the state. And the blessing is that the pure in heart will see God. "will see God" is the future indicative of OPSONTAI with the simple accusative case of THEON .

So, those who are pure in heart now will see God in the future.

Observation: this future may be in one minute or it may extend to the tribulation, the millennium, or even into eternity.

OPSONTAI however, is from the verb HORAIO, and this verb designates a category of sight that goes beyond on the literal to the figurative. It is seeing God in the figurative sense, and thus what can only be seen through the Word of God.

Question: do you have to be pure in heart before you can become pure in heart? In other words, it is very important to separate the idea of fellowship from the idea of maturity. Both

derive from purity, but they are quite distinct from one another.

Conclusion: this purity of heart is the fellowship which comes from the confession of sin. Thus a connection exists between this and the second beatitude, that to "they who mourn".

Blessed are they who mourn, because they will be comforted [and thus become pure in heart]; blessed are the pure in heart, because they will see God. There is a definite string of blessings here, one balanced on the other.

Purity of heart is the status of being in fellowship with God. It is only while you are in fellowship that you can learn and apply most doctrines.

The seventh blessing: "Blessed are the peacemakers, because they will be called sons of God."

The interpretation of the term is somewhat more difficult. We will begin with the meaning of the word itself.

This is the only place in the Bible where this noun occurs. Its corresponding verb appears in Colossians 1:20.

"For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven."

Christ is the peacemaker through the blood of His cross. Therefore, Paul connects the word to the doctrine of reconciliation.

Christ was the peacemaker through His fantastic victory on the cross. He founded that victory on His non-violent policy for the incarnation.

However, at the second advent, Christ will make peace through His great military victory at the battle of Armageddon. That will be peace through violent means.

If Christ is the peacemaker through the reconciliation, then certainly we are whenever we introduce others to that same reconciliation.

So, peacemakers are purveyors of the gospel.

The peacemakers will be called the sons of God.

And so it comes to this: that this is a special reward for those who lived or will live in any of the dispensations related to Israel.

A person's name held great significance in Biblical times - probably more so than it does today.

And to gain a new title, given by God Himself, would be significant indeed.

To hold the same title as God the Son is truly a fantastic complement. Peacemakers having the same title as THE peacemaker has a certain poetic symmetry to it.

The eighth blessing and its explanation: "Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, because theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. You are blessed whenever they insult you and persecute you, and whenever they ostracize you and they insult you and cast down your name as evil falsely for my sake. Rejoice and exult and leap wildly, because your reward is great in heaven; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

Conclusion: you may be persecuted for two reasons: because you are a Christian, and because you are a mature Christian.

The blessing for this is the kingdom of heaven. This seems curious at first, because the same is awarded the poor in spirit no matter what they might do.

However, there is a contrast. In the first beatitude the emphasis lay on eternal security. In this last one it is on eternity, period.

Next comes the explanation. It begins with the phrase "you are blessed".

Then comes a command that is predicated on the persecution. "Rejoice and exult and leap

wildly, because your reward is great in heaven; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

The second pairing of verbs has to do with wild rejoicing. Matthew's verb concentrates more on verbal expression, while Luke's on physical expression. They both describe an ecstatic kind of rejoicing - the kind that you see when you win the world series.

The reason for the rejoicing is the reward in heaven that waits for those who endure undeserved suffering.

Undeserved suffering leads to great reward in heaven.

And, therefore Christ commands His hearers to rejoice when they encounter it.

Waiting for the Kingdom

The Present Responsibility of Those Who Wait for the Kingdom

Matthew 5:13-16

Translation: "13 You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt becomes foolish, how will it be salty? It is useful for nothing further except when cast outside to be trampled by men. 14 You are the light of the world. A city is not able to hide while laying on a hill; 15 nor do they light a lamp and put it under the peck-measure, but they put it on the lampstand, and it illuminates all that is in the house. 16 So let your light shine before men, so that they might behold your good works and glorify your Father Who is in heaven."

Outline.

The principle of salt, v.13.

The identification of the hearers with salt.

The application of salt to witnessing.

The loss of saltiness due to foolishness.

The uselessness of saltless salt.

The principle of light, vv.14-16.

The identification of the hearers with light, v.14a.

The unhideability principle, v.14b.

The foolishness of lighting and hiding, v.15a.

The usefulness of the fully exposed light, v.15b.

The application to the hearers, v.16.

Exegesis.

This passage is not all what you might think, for it poses a dispensational variable exclusive to the dispensation of the hypostatic union.

Although there is a lot of application into the church age believer's life, you should know from the top that the church age believer has more.

Distinctions.

The Dispensation of Israel concentrated on corporate witnessing. The nation itself was the prime element of light to the world. There are only a couple of notable exceptions like Jonah.

The Dispensation of the Hypostatic Union required individual participation in the internal mission of witnessing to unbelieving Israel. But the followers of Christ also had an ambassadorial function to the whole world of unbelievers.

The Dispensation of the Church requires individual participation in the external mission of witnessing to the unbelieving world. Since this is an external mission, the Bible calls the church age believer an ambassador, 2 Corinthians 5:20.

During the church age, any organization or nation built on strong establishment principles and with a strong missionary movement will have an excellent corporate witness without even trying.

However, the responsibility of personal evangelism lies heavily on the individual, and functions entirely apart from the corporate witness.

Therefore the techniques of personal evangelism set forth in this passage apply equally to church age believers.

This was a difficult time for personal evangelism.

Evangelism of the Jews was very difficult because of the stranglehold of the legalistic Pharisees.

Evangelism of the Gentiles was very difficult because of the national pride of Rome and the insidious idolatry of the time.

It is important to observe that Christ does not introduce the subject of personal evangelism until after He has fully covered the plan of God.

Witnessing is not the plan of God for any believer.

Witnessing has its proper place as the natural outgrowth of the fulfillment of the plan of God, and the believer's love for God.

Witnessing becomes more effective because of spiritual growth.

Witnessing can be a roundabout motivation for spiritual growth.

The principle of salt, v.13.

Christ first identifies His hearers with salt. "You are the salt of the earth." Remember that His hearers are the inner circle of His disciples, and therefore this comparison is restricted to members of the kingdom of God alone.

They are identified with salt, and also their comparison with it is extended to the earth.

The word GEN translates 'earth'. Although it may denote 'Israel' at times, it does not in this context. The other times that Christ employs GEN in this sermon, it is always in the sense of the entire planet.

They are the salt which belongs to the whole earth, and more specifically the people on it.

Now salt has some natural connotations, and some Biblical connotations. We will combine the two before we go on with the passage.

Salt had three useful purposes in the ancient near east.

It preserved food. Since they lived before the age of refrigeration, and far from any usable ice,

they had to preserve their foods by other means. Salt was the answer to this need.

It seasoned food. Salt adds a great deal of seasoning to almost any food. Even many dessert recipes contain significant amount of salt.

It served as a fertilizer. Many fertilizers contain salt as a major ingredient.

We find a fourth purpose in the modern world: traction for roads. It was not needed in ice-free Israel.

Salt was a part of the ritual plan for Israel, Leviticus 2:13, "Every grain offering of yours, moreover, you shall season with salt, so that the salt of the covenant of your God shall not be lacking from your grain offering; with all your offerings you shall offer salt."

Numbers 18:19 provides the interpretation for the inclusion of salt in the Levitical offerings, "All the offerings of the holy gifts, which the sons of Israel offer to the Lord, I have given to you and your sons and your daughters with you, as a perpetual allotment. It is an everlasting covenant of salt before the Lord to you and your descendants with you."

Obviously, the preservative power of salt is emphasized in this covenant.

Salt therefore represents the faithfulness and integrity of God in standing behind His covenants with Israel.

2. 2 Chronicles 13:5 confirms this very thing, "Do you not know that the Lord God of Israel gave the rule over Israel forever to David and his sons by a covenant of salt?"

Christ uses the term twice in Mark 9:49-50, "For everyone will be salted with fire. Salt is good; but if the salt becomes unsalty, with what will you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another."

Salted with fire is a reference to salt as a seasoning. Salted with fire refers to undeserved suffering for blessing. Undeserved suffering seasons the believer - i.e., makes him better.

The second use is a reference to doctrine as a seasoning in the heart of the believer. Only doctrine can cause unity among Christians.

Paul also uses it in Colossians 4:6 as a symbol for seasoning, "Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned, as it were, with salt, so that you may know how you should respond to each person."

Salt represents the tailoring of the words of the personal evangelist, so that each time the gospel is given it is unique.

This method is far superior to the dissemination of gospel tracts, because the message is personalized, and accounts for whatever the individual may need to hear as a part of the presentation.

Now when Christ told His hearers that they were the salt of the earth, He meant that they were the seasoning for it. Their spreading of the Gospel would bring good to their country, and to the whole world.

Now Christ continues: "but if the salt becomes foolish, how will it be salty? It is useful for nothing further except when cast outside to be trampled by men."

That's right. Christ said foolish. This is the only reference in all of ancient Greek literature up to that time where the verb MORAINO describes a loss of flavor.

There is a reason. Christ wanted to make a connection between cosmic involvement for the believer and his loss of seasoning power.

Therefore Christ depicts the loss of seasoning power with the verb which means 'foolish'.

Your involvement in the cosmic system (Satan's domain) destroys your effectiveness in personal evangelism.

The translation is very precise on that point: "if the believer becomes foolish, how will he be effective in personal evangelism?"

It is noteworthy to point out that the word 'again' does not appear in the original Greek. Although it is often included in English

translations, it skews the meaning of the passage.

Christ is saying precisely this: that your residence in the cosmic system temporarily destroys your Christian witness. You do not have the ability to recall doctrine for the purpose of evangelization.

Christ is not saying anything at all about recovery from the cosmic system, or the lasting effects of cosmic involvement on personal evangelism.

Note this: when you recover from sin through confession, your ability to give the gospel is completely restored.

If you have gone a long time in the cosmic system, your arsenal of doctrines may be well depleted or quite stale, and that also lends itself to weakness; but! God the Holy Spirit is the power factor in evangelism through His common grace ministry, and therefore there is no lack of power in your evangelization.

You are therefore useless to God in the realm of personal evangelism when you are out of fellowship.

The principle of light, vv.14-16.

Christ begins this passage in the same way as He did the preceding: He identifies His hearers with the inanimate object of His illustration.

So, His listeners are light. The direct association of the two technically makes this a metaphor.

Furthermore, they are the light of the world. He employs the noun KOSMOU as a synonym for GES. This noun still depicts the entire world, and is definitely not restricted to just Israel.

There is one significant reference to light in the Mosaic Law: it is the golden lampstand.

Materials: It was made of pure gold.

Description.

It was on the South side of the Holy place.

It was identical to the modern menorah. It had a main shaft which had on each side three projecting branches.

It had a system of oil-holding cups, which were under each of the lamps. These cups were shaped like almond blossoms and buds.

Even the wick trimmers and trays were made of pure gold.

Use.

The lampstand was used to light the Holy place.

The incense altar, and the table of showbread were lit by this lampstand.

Symbology.

Note that this is made of pure gold only. It represented God the Holy Spirit. There was no wood, and therefore, no humanity.

God the Holy Spirit provides the light for our daily lives. With light, we have true understanding. Human beings depend very much on sight for understanding. Light is very necessary for sight.

The light is shed on the table of showbread, and thus the Spirit provides light for understanding the Word.

The light is shed on the incense altar, and thus the Spirit provides light for the production of righteousness through the Word.

Note that the Spirit provides light for the life and ministry of Jesus Christ.

Next, Christ relates the unhideability principle. A city is unable to hide while laying on a hill. The picture comes to mind of the modern city with all of its lights lit up at night. As long as that city is on the hill it cannot be hidden in any way.

This relates to the personal witness of the believer in Jesus Christ. You are on the hill when you are in fellowship and under the ministry of God the Holy Spirit.

The city on the hill is fellowship, because this metaphor contrasts the preceding one with regard to content. Since the preceding one is about being out of fellowship, and talks about the weakness of the witness of the one out of fellowship, so this one must be referring to

fellowship, and the strength of the witness of the one in fellowship.

There is also a second illustration with light at its core. The lamp is a metaphor for the ministry of the Spirit related to personal evangelism.

Lighting a light is analogous to the moment of salvation for the believer. It is at that moment that the believer receives the ministry of the Spirit. The lamp is re-lit each time the believer confesses his sins.

It is quite foolish to light a lamp and then put it under a cover. To do so would not only eliminate its true effectiveness, but would shortly extinguish the lamp through suffocation.

However, if you put a lamp on a lampstand, you make it effective enough to light everything that is in the house.

This is analogous to the believer who is under the ministry of the Spirit through fellowship.

Again, your personal witness is nothing without the ministry of the Spirit, and you must be in fellowship to tap that.

Without the ministry of the Spirit you are completely helpless to use the doctrines in your soul in the course of a personal evangelism encounter.

"all that is in the house" Is not a reference to people; this is a dative plural adjective and definite article combination - PASIN TOIS. It is instead a reference to things, and so it connects with the doctrine in the soul of the believer.

The lamp is the Holy Spirit; you light it by maintaining and re-establishing fellowship.

The Holy Spirit gives light to all that is in the house of your soul. He uses everything that is there in a witnessing encounter.

The final statement that Christ makes on the subject is in verse 16: "So let your light shine before men, so that they might behold your good works and glorify your Father Who is in heaven."

A very important part of this translation is the meaning of HOUTO.

It denotes that Christ is about to apply his illustration to His listeners.

It takes the metaphor of the preceding verses and makes it real.

"your light" is of course the ministry of God the Holy Spirit specifically related to your 'good works'.

Christ employs the imperative of entreaty to politely communicate a command. In other words, this is not really an option in the Christian life.

The ministry of the Spirit in your soul is to shine before men. This means that you do not stifle that ministry by getting out and staying out of fellowship.

If you remain in fellowship, the ministry of the Spirit is going to shine; and good works are going to result.

KALA ERGA is translated 'good works'. KALA is really a weaker word for good. AGATHOS is the usual word for good manufactured from spirituality.

However, it is the right word for describing outward beauty, so it is appropriate here.

Works of outward beauty or good can be many: anything that you do under the power of the Spirit can be a part of this classification.

Works of Christian service, including the function of your spiritual gift; charity; service related to citizenship.

Anything you do that imitates the character of God.

The point is that these works of outward good are visible before men.

This is not something that you must try to do! This is simply what happens when you are under the doctrinal guidance of God the Holy Spirit.

You must not be shy when given the opportunity to let your light shine. To do so is

to reject the authority of God the Holy Spirit, and that means sin.

Lighting your light and displaying it for all to see has a purpose: it is so that men might glorify your Father Who is in heaven.

Men glorify God by believing in Jesus Christ.

Men glorify God by fulfilling His plan.

Christ and the Law of Moses

The General Policy of Law in the Kingdom; Christ and the Law of Moses

Matthew 5:17-20

Translation.

"17 Do not assume that I came to destroy the law or the prophets; I came not to destroy but to fulfill. 18 For truly I say to you until heaven and earth pass away certainly not one jot nor one tittle will pass away from the Law, not until everything happens. 19 Therefore whoever might destroy the least one of these commandments and so teach men, he will be called the least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever might do and teach, this one will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. 20 For I say to you that if your righteousness does not greatly exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you will definitely not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

Outline.

Christ's relationship with the Law of Moses: the general principle, v.17.

The lasting endurance of the Law, v.18.

Man's responsibility to the Law, v.19.

The status of the destroyers of the Law.

The status of the keepers of the Law.

The value of the Law related to salvation, v.20.

Exposition.

"17 Do not assume that I came to destroy the law or the prophets; I came not to destroy but to fulfill."

Christ had already been the target of opposition from the Pharisees; some of the things He had said were revolutionary. Many began to assume that He was going to destroy the Law.

Because of this, He had to make clear the relationship of His ministry to the Law.

Christ did not come to destroy the law or the prophets.

The freedom code, or the ten commandments was retained entirely.

The spiritual, or the rituals, was retained in content, although the outward form of the ritual was dropped.

The establishment code remained intact, although it would be expanded to include mental attitude sins.

Christ fulfilled the Law and the prophets.

There are hundreds of Messianic prophecies which have been fulfilled by Christ.

Christ fulfilled the prophetic elements of the Law, i.e., the Passover ritual.

Christ also fulfilled the ten commandments by keeping them perfectly throughout His life. He was the one human being with the greatest personal liberty of all time.

And He did it under great personal persecution.

The ten commandments work regardless of personal circumstance. The truth will make you free.

Christ was the greatest citizen of all time, and fulfilled His citizenship to His home nation, which was Rome.

"18 For truly I say to you until heaven and earth pass away certainly not one jot nor one tittle will pass away from the Law, not until everything happens."

There are two clues in this verse as to the durability of the Law:

First, it will outlast heaven and earth - the physical universe plus heaven itself. Heaven and earth pass away at the end of the millennium and the final judgment of

unbelievers at the great white throne.

Revelation 21:1, "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea."

Second it will not pass away until everything happens, that is, every event of human history must come to pass before the Law passes away.

The jot is from the Greek IOTA, the smallest letter of the Greek alphabet. The Hebrew equivalent would have been the YODH.

A tittle is from KERAIA, which is literally horn. It represents any little mark of the Hebrew writing system, including punctuation marks and vowel points.

This is a hyperbole used to communicate that not the smallest part of the Law will be eliminated.

The truth of the Law will never pass away:

God will always be as He is revealed through the Law, for He never changes.

In the same way, sin will always be sin. If God never changes, then neither does the nature of sin.

Likewise, the gospel never changes - Christ is the savior for all dispensations.

The Law communicates many dispensational constants; however, the form of the teaching may change without changing the actual truth that is taught.

Although the truth that is communicated in the Law will never pass away, the ritual system which teaches that truth already has.

"19 Therefore whoever might destroy the least one of these commandments and so teach men, he will be called the least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever might do and teach, this one will be called great in the kingdom of heaven."

This verse contains two simple principles related to the application of the durability of the Mosaic Law.

If you destroy the least one of these commandments, and so teach men, you will be called the least in the kingdom of heaven.

The Greek word LUO is translated here 'destroy'. The original word means to loose or untie something.

You personally destroy one of the commandments of the Law when you consider it as not binding to you; or when you no longer accept it as an authority over your life.

Personal destruction means that you do not mold your life to Scripture but rather mold Scripture to your life. That is, you begin to change Scripture as a rationalization for your failures.

This is for believers; unbelievers never enter the kingdom of heaven. To be the least in the kingdom of heaven is to be completely without reward at the judgment seat of Christ.

It is one thing to destroy a commandment in your soul; it is a much more severe thing to become the devil's ambassador. If you teach the destruction of the truth of the Law, then you are the devil's ambassador.

However, if you are one to do and teach the Law, then you will be called great.

If you do it, it means that you believe it.

If you believe it enough to do it, then you may go on to teach it. If you go on to teach, it means you are an ambassador for it.

If you are an ambassador for the Law, then you will be called great in the kingdom, that is you will receive your full reward.

"20 For I say to you that if your righteousness does not greatly exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you will definitely not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

The explanatory conjunction GAR points to what has gone previously in the passage. In other words, Christ now explains what He has just said.

Christ injects this here so that He can cover a point that He has yet to cover: it is the case of

entrance into the kingdom of heaven. Up to this point Christ has only considered the case of the believer, that is, the one who is already in the kingdom of heaven. Now He has to go back and tell His audience how to get in the kingdom in the first place.

Christ illustrates the need for grace by means of the negative illustration.

You can only enter the kingdom of heaven if your righteousness exceeds that of the Scribes and Pharisees.

From the human viewpoint, the Scribes and Pharisees had the all time record for righteousness produced by human power and intellect.

Only if your righteousness exceeds that of the all time record will you enter into the kingdom of heaven.

What better way to communicate the necessity for grace in salvation than a backhand compliment toward the enemies of Christ?

Christ employs the double negative OU ME. This leaves absolutely no room for doubt concerning the matter. This is a dogmatic and absolute negation.

The Law in the Kingdom of Christ

Matthew 5:21-48

Introduction.

The bulk of this passage has to do with laws of divine establishment. Christ's spiritual code is the beatitudes; He now announces His establishment code.

The foundation for this entire passage lies with the four preceding verses.

In other words, whatever Christ says about the Law in verses 21-48, it is not about breaking a jot or tittle of it. This discourse is not about changes to the substantial truth of the Law.

There will be no change to the definitions of sin. Not in any way. There could not be if God is immutable.

There will be no change to the punishment for violations of establishment laws. The punishment for murder is still a life for a life, with no exception.

Therefore, Christ's discourse here does not introduce a new morality. He does not invent a new category of sin which is the mental attitude sin. He does not!

2 Samuel 11:1-5, "Then it happened in the spring, at the time when kings go out to battle, that David sent Joab and his servants with him and all Israel, and they destroyed the sons of Ammon and besieged Rabbah. But David stayed at Jerusalem. Now when evening came David arose from his bed and walked around on the roof of the king's house, and from the roof he saw a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful in appearance. So David sent and inquired about the woman. And one said, 'is this not Bathsheba, the daughter Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite:' And David sent messengers and took her, and when she came to him, he lay with her; and when she had purified herself from her uncleanness, she returned to her house. And the woman conceived, and she sent and told David, and said, 'I am pregnant'."

The time is one year after the death of David's father, Nahash, king of the Ammonites. David became incensed at the rejection of his consolation by the recognized sons of Nahash, and so he made war against them (2 Samuel 10).

Remember that Joab is David's nephew, and actually a grandson of Nahash by Zeruah, David's sister by birth.

"Then it happened in the spring, at the time when kings go out to battle..." Although David had commanded his army to many victories, and was still a relatively young man, he refused to personally lead his army against the Ammonites. The reason is simple: he knew his revenge motivation against this nation was wrong, and that to destroy them from a personal vendetta was even worse.

David lacked the courage of his convictions, and worse, he sent a man to make war against his own grandfather.

This in itself points to the appropriate nature of Absalom's revolt.

God's discipline is always perfectly appropriate: because of David's sin here, Absalom his own son revolted against him.

Having sent to destroy by warfare his own biological family, and having done so from illicit motives, David paces his roof nervously and there sees a beautiful woman in the act of bathing.

What better way to pass the time than a conquest of his own?

When David discovers that this woman is the Jewish wife of a Gentile warrior, his revenge motivation becomes greater and greater. David does not want this woman because of her beauty, but because she represents everything that David ever hated, including his own mother.

So David chooses to sin the identical sin of his biological father so as to satisfy the lust for revenge in his soul. While his troops fight the war at the front, David fights the war at home, exacting something appropriate in his mind.

The woman conceives, and tells David of the problem.

David has the perfect solution: he plans to hide his sin by bringing her husband back home. Any soldier knows that this will result in an amorous reunion (vv.6-8)!

But Uriah is a true leader of men, and will not take time with his wife while his men are still fighting in the field (vv.9-13).

So David has to silence the man, so that he can perpetrate his lie and cover his adulterous affair.

David arranges for Uriah's death in battle, and Uriah is indeed killed by the Ammonites (vv.14-25).

David has a visit by Nathan the prophet, who predicts the death of his child, and the coming revolt from his own royal family.

David then produces the fifty first Psalm, a Psalm of confession he confession his sin with Bathsheba, and worships God.

However, 2 Samuel 12:21-23 reveals David's disingenuous nature at this time, "Then his servants said to him, 'What is this thing that you have done? While the child was alive, you fasted and wept; but when the child died, you arose and ate food.' And he said, 'While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, Who knows, the Lord may be gracious to me, that the child may live. But now he has died; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he will not return to me.'"

This is wrong. First, David disbelieved the prophet Nathan, who revealed the unchanging Word of God to him. That David should hope against the divine decree and reject the authority of God's appointed prophet shows that he has yet to recover.

Second, David puts on the outward form of repentance in order to get something from God, and when it does not work, he abandons it. This is utter hypocrisy, and reveals that David still remains in the cosmic system.

David then marries Bathsheba after her period of mourning, and the child is born and then dies. David's discipline has only begun.

Joab finally wins victory in the siege of Rabbah, the capital of Ammon, and holds off until David can arrive to apply the coup de grace and thus take credit for the victory. David brings with him all the people of Israel. All the people.

David dashes to Rabbah and does the deed like the evil man he has become. 2 Samuel 12:29-30 is worth our time, "So David gathered all the people and went to Rabbah, fought against it, and captured it. Then he took the crown of their king from his head; and its weight was a talent of gold, and in it was a precious stone; and it was place on David's head. And he

brought out the spoil of the city in great amounts."

David ends his revenge by enslaving the captives of Rabbah, which is recorded in verse 31, "He also brought out the people who were in it, and set them to labor at saws, iron picks, and iron axes, and made them pass by the brick mold. And thus he did to all the cities of the sons of Ammon. Then David and all the people returned to Jerusalem."

Note: the NASB version tries to indicate that David had the Ammonites tortured and killed; this is incorrect by the original Hebrew, which can be confusing.

The key to the original Hebrew is the word MALBEN, which is erroneously translated 'brick kilns'. It should be brick mold...

Now if this does not illustrate the existence of mental attitude sin before the Sermon on the Mount, then nothing does. However, there are many other passages that function in this way.

Genesis 6:5, "...his heart was evil continually."

Psalm 14:1, "The fool has said in his heart 'There is no God'."

Jeremiah 17:9, "The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?"

The first section, verses 21-26, "21 You heard that it was said to the ancients, 'You will not commit murder': and, 'whoever murders, will be guilty before the court.' 22 But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, 'Raka' will be guilty before the Sanhedrin; and whoever says, 'Fool' will be guilty unto the Gehenna of the Fire. 23 Therefore if you are presenting your gift upon the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your gift there before the altar and go first to be reconciled with your brother, and then after coming back present your gift. 25 Come to be like-minded with your adversary at law quickly, during what time you are with him on the way, so that the adversary might never give

you over to the judge, and the judge to the bailiff, and you might be thrown into prison. 26 Truly I say to you, you will definitely not come out of there, until you have paid the last penny."

The outline:

The ancient Law of Moses concerning murder and its penalty, v.21.

The extension of the penalty of murder for mental and verbal sins, v.22.

The application to the realm of priorities, vv.23-24.

The hopelessness of fighting the court of Christ, vv.25-26.

The ancient Law of Moses concerning murder and its penalty, v.21, "You heard that it was said to the ancients, 'You will not commit murder': and, 'whoever murders, will be guilty before the court.'"

Christ quotes from one passage, and then compiles a couple of concepts from several sources.

Christ quotes from the ten commandments, out of Exodus 20:13 and Deuteronomy 5:17.

Then He puts together some other things:

The Lex Talionis, Leviticus 24:17-20, "And if a man takes the life of any human being, he shall surely be put to death. And the one who takes the life of an animal shall make it good, life for life. And if a man injures his neighbor, just as he has done, so it shall be done to him: fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth; just as he has injured a man, so it shall be inflicted on him."

The need for jurisprudence through the courts, Deuteronomy 16:18, "You shall appoint for yourself judges and officers in all your towns which the Lord your God is giving you, according to your tribes, and they shall judge the people with righteous judgment."

Christ has a point. First that not one jot nor one tittle will not pass from the Law; and second, that the Law has certain provisions concerning the act of murder, namely, the provision of

capital punishment after the conduct of proper jurisprudence.

The extension of the penalty for murder to mental and verbal sins, verse 22, "But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, 'Raka' will be guilty before the Sanhedrin; and whoever says, 'Fool' will be guilty unto the Gehenna of the Fire."

The key word of the entire verse is ENOCHOS, which means liable to a penalty of the Law, or guilty.

There are three tiers to the verse with regard to the courts:

The court is the regular court of law, or the local court, from the Greek word KRISIS; the equivalent would be the city or county court.

The SANHEDRIN is equal to the supreme court of any nation. It was the most powerful court of the Jews, and Christ's hearers would identify it as the highest legal authority in Judaea.

There is of course the highest court of all, and that is the court of the Gehenna of the Fire.

The locality of Gehenna was in Jerusalem, and Jeremiah 19:5-6 identifies this place as the final place for the administration of the fifth cycle of discipline on the nation, "They have built the high places of Baal to burn their sons in the fire as offerings to Baal - something I did not command or mention, nor did it enter my mind. So beware, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when the people will no longer call this place Topheth or the Valley of Ben Hinnom, but the Valley of Slaughter."

It was the place of child sacrifice, and the fire is the identification with the burning fires of sacrifice to Baal.

It would become the place where the Jews were slaughtered for their sins by the final attack of the Babylonian armies.

Therefore this represents the administration of the fifth cycle of discipline when the supreme court of heaven steps in and rules because of

the failure of the nation to take hold of the delegated authority through the laws of divine establishment and punish their own criminal offenders.

At each tier, there is a crime that is liable for the penalty for murder.

At the local court level, there will be trials for those who are angry with their brothers.

1. The Greek present participle is ORGIZOMENOS, which denotes a present state of judgmental wrath.

Mental attitude judgmental wrath is the seed from which all murder grows. When one man murders another it is the ultimate and final expression of judgment.

In the millennium, with the world under the rule of Jesus Christ, and the devil incarcerated in Hades, the mental attitude sin of ultimate judgment will result in capital punishment!

The reason for this is simple: there is no overt sin of murder that is not preceded by the mental attitude sin of murder.

Capital punishment is truly a preventative for any sin for which it is a penalty.

Therefore, if capital punishment is extended back to the mental attitude sin part of murder, many more, in fact the vast, vast majority of murders will be prevented. All overt sins start in the soul. If they are stopped there, then far fewer will come to fruit.

This is one of the conditions for the fantastic, ideal conditions of the millennium.

In the millennium, there will be thought police.

The reason that there can be no establishment punishment for mental attitude and verbal sins before the millennium is the inevitable distortion and abuse of jurisprudence that would come about due to the cosmic deceptions of the devil's world.

With a ruler who knows the thoughts and intents of the heart perfectly, with a perfect judge, there is no distortion of jurisprudence.

John the apostle understood this clearly (see 1 John 3:11-15 addenda).

At the human supreme court level, the one who says 'Raka' to his brother will be guilty unto capital punishment; guilty as for murder.

RAKA comes from an Aramaic word, REQA, which means 'empty-headed fool'. This is a pretty vindictive and vitriolic version of verbal sin.

This is a verbalization of judgment from one person to another; it is the verbal expression of the mental attitude judgment. It leads to a murder conviction in a higher court.

This verbalization of judgment is construed to the crime of murder; it is the verbal equivalent of ORGIZOMENOS.

The verbalization of any mental attitude sin is quite an advance in severity. It is a sin which will be liable to the appeal courts, and of course the courts of Christ's kingdom are perfectly efficient. If you are guilty, you will be found guilty.

At the level of the supreme court of heaven, whoever says 'fool' will be guilty unto the Gehenna of the Fire.

The first thing to notice is the exclusion of a target for the epithet. Christ leaves it out for the sake of brevity, but it is intended to be 'brother'.

The word MORE easily translates into the English 'moron'. It is the Greek equivalent of RAKA.

The preposition EIS controls the phrase 'the Gehenna of the Fire'. This simply shows that this is the limit for all judgment; that the Gehenna of the Fire is the final court.

Summary of this verse.

See SLANDER addendum.

Mental attitude or verbal judgment, especially blanket judgment, will be liable to the harshest of penalties in the millennium.

This harsh penalty of capital punishment will be one of the primary reasons for the ideal conditions of the millennium. With a strict limit on mental attitude and verbal sin, that vast majority of strife that characterizes planet earth under Satan will be gone.

Fear not! With Satan and the fallen angels bound, there will be very little temptation from the world. Perfect environment reduces temptation! There will be no such thing as peer pressure at this time!

The combination of the rule of Christ and the incarceration of the devil will keep temptation to an absolute minimum; there will be few instances of capital punishment.

The application to the realm of priorities, vv.23-24, "Therefore if you are presenting your gift upon the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your gift there before the altar and go first to be reconciled with your brother, and then after coming back present your gift."

Now this verse does not regard the subject as sinful; on the contrary, the brother is the one who is sinful, and the subject is the one who has a responsibility to save him.

When you have a wrathful mental attitude, you have something against someone; when you say RAKA to someone, you have something against that person; even when you just say MORON, there is judgment against another.

Now if you are worshipping God, and you remember not that you have mentally or verbally judged someone else, but rather that someone else might have a reason to mentally or verbally judge you, it is time to temporarily interrupt your worship.

Being reconciled with your brother means that you must resolve the case he might have against you. If you have done something wrong to your brother, if he might be tempted to judge you, you must resolve the matter.

The grave consequences of such things in the millennium is enough so that you would want to interrupt your worship to take care of things.

The application during the church age is less so than during the millennium, but James 5:16 still applies: "Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed."

The hopelessness of fighting the court, vv.25-26: "25 Come to be like-minded with your adversary at law quickly, during what time you are with him on the way, so that the adversary might never give you over to the judge, and the judge to the bailiff, and you might be thrown into prison. 26 Truly I say to you, you will definitely not come out of there, until you have paid the last penny."

These verses remain specific to the subject. That is, they are not general statements about the conduct of lawsuits, but specific to inevitability of justice in the millennium.

In other words, they are spoken by Christ with a gleam in His eye.

The adversary is none other than Christ Himself, and the time you are with Him on the way is the time that you have while you are on planet earth.

Since the context takes the process of the court all the way to the Supreme Court of Heaven, the ultimate judge and lawgiver is present in this passage.

Since the subject of the passage is the crowd, and Christ has made the crowd into suspects, the adversary is Christ Himself.

Christ urges his listeners to get to know their adversary at Law on the way to the courts.

The courts here are the courts of eternity.

The Judgment Seat of Christ, the evaluation of all Church Age believers.

The baptism of fire, which is the judgment of all unbelievers of the tribulation, both Jew and Gentile, Mt 25:31-46; Ezek 20:33-48.

The evaluation of all tribulational believers, both Jew and Gentile, Mt 25:31-46; Dan 12:2-3.

At the great white throne, there are three categories of judgments.

The judgment of believers.

All believers who lived before the incarnation, both Jew and Gentile, are judged at this time.

All Millennial believers are judged at this time.

The judgment of unbelievers. All unbelievers in history, except those of the tribulation, are judged at this time. Mt 25:31-46, Ezek 20:32-38, Rev 20:7-10.

The judgment of all fallen angels at the end of the Millennium. Their sentence was passed before time began, but its execution is not carried out until the end of human history.

Christ commands us to become like minded with Him on the way to our eternal judgment. The Greek participle is EUNOON, which describes mental compatibility, comradeship, and even friendship.

Coming to a like-minded state with Christ can only be accomplished through the faith perception of the truth.

The Bible is the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16). It is through our study of God's word that we become like-minded with the Son of God, Jesus Christ.

It is easy to see the wisdom in the fulfillment of this command.

Since Christ is our final judge, the final judge of all mankind, it is imperative to become like-minded with Him on the way to our final judgment.

If you are like-minded with your final judge, your final judgment is certain to go well.

The command to become like-minded with the adversary at Law is especially pertinent because judgment from the Supreme Court of Heaven will be characterized by perfect justice, and by its finality.

Being thrown into jail is the equivalent of eternal condemnation, and no one will escape there until they have paid the last penny. Unfortunately, there is no money in hell, and no way to obtain any.

Christ finishes the discourse with the principle of the inescapability of hell.

The second section, verses 27-30: "27 You heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery'. 28 But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman to desire her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. 29 Now if your right eye causes you to stumble, snatch it out and throw it from you. For it is better for you that one of your members be destroyed and not your whole body be cast unto Gehenna. 30 And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it from you. For it is better for you that one of your members be destroyed and not your whole body be thrown out into Gehenna."

Again Christ begins with a statement from the ten commandments, this one from Exodus 20:14 and Deuteronomy 5:18.

And again, His intent is not to destroy the Law, for nothing is to pass from the Law until the very end of human history.

But once again, Christ is going to extend the penalty into the realm of the mental attitude. He does so with some harsh standards.

He uses the phrase, 'everyone who looks at a woman to desire her.'

The use of PROS plus the infinitive mood indicates purpose. Here it is PROS plus the infinitive mood of EPITHUMEO, which means 'to desire' something.

EPITHUMEO goes beyond a simple acknowledgement of attractiveness.

It describes a legitimate desire to enjoy the charms of the thing or person admired.

So in Christ's kingdom, you can look at another woman, but you cannot do so with the intent of desire.

If the purpose in your heart is desire, then you have already committed adultery in your heart.

It is easy and appropriate to apply some of the principles from the preceding passage.

If mental attitude murder caused one to be guilty before the courts, and incurred the appropriate penalty, then so also would mental attitude adultery.

So it does. And the penalty for adultery from the establishment code is clear:

Leviticus 20:10, "If there is a man who commits adultery with another man's wife, one who commits adultery with his friend's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death."

Deuteronomy 22:23-24, "If there is a girl who is a virgin engaged to a man, and another man finds her in the city and lies with her, then you shall bring them both out to the gate of that city and you shall stone them to death; the girl, because she did not cry out in the city, and the man, because he has violated his neighbor's wife."

So what Christ does here is extend the penalty for adultery into the mental attitude realm. It is important to note that although Christ does not mention guilt before the courts, it is clear that He intends it so.

Also the principle of the stumbling block applies to adultery.

No man or woman should do what might encourage adulterous thoughts in the other.

This includes what is spoken, or what is worn (or what is not worn).

Of course, exercise common sense; it is not necessary for women to wear a beer barrel or a tent, and our society is now so degenerate that even moderate prudence in clothing is enough.

Christ also adds something here that is appropriate to the battle against mental attitude sin during the millennium: "29 Now if your right eye causes you to stumble, snatch it out and throw it from you. For it is better for you that one of your members be destroyed and not your whole body be cast unto Gehenna. 30 And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it from you. For it is better for you that one of your members be

destroyed and not your whole body be thrown out into Gehenna."

Christ depicts a swift and violent act in the snatching out of the eye and throwing it from you; He preaches immediate action.

This is not recommended action for the church age; there is some application here, but not the same kind of violence is required.

The casting of the body unto Gehenna is the casting of the human body, not the resurrection body. The use of the word SOMA here restricts the interpretation of GEHENNA to a receptacle for the human body.

See the doctrine of burial and cremation.

When a body was cast into Gehenna, it was a clear indication that capital punishment had taken place.

Therefore, during Christ's millennial rule, capital punishment will extend to the mental realm for the sin of adultery.

Although there is no straight application to the plucking out of an eye or the cutting off of a hand, there is a common sense application to life in the church age.

If there is something that is a source of temptation to sin of any kind, especially if your willpower has been weakened by cosmic involvement, then you must be separated from that thing.

The epistles confirm this principle.

1 Corinthians 6:18, "Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body."

1 Corinthians 10:14, "Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry."

2 Timothy 2:22, "Now flee from youthful lusts, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart."

Titus 3:3, "For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to

various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another."

1 Peter 2:11, "Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts, which wage war against the soul."

1 Peter 4:1-3, "Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin. so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. For the time already past is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousals, drinking parties and abominable idolatries."

Furthermore, there is the principle of degenerating susceptibility: the more you give in to sin, the more susceptible to sin that you become.

The greater sins breed the lesser sins.

The lesser sins increase the chance that a greater sin might be committed. And a greater sin may include something that is truly a capital crime even in our society!

Romans 1:18-32 contains the doctrine of degeneracy and the principle of degenerating susceptibility. Three times in this passage Paul employs the phrase "God gave them over".

Rom 1:18-19, "The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, {19} since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them.

This is the statement of the subject matter of the following passage.

The wrath of God is the expression of His justice in Divine discipline.

The revelation of God's wrath is not mentioned - perhaps it could be the AIDS virus in ancient times.

The reason for the wrath of God is plain - people have suppressed the truth of God in their own souls through their involvement in the cosmic system.

{20} For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities--his eternal power and divine nature--have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

{21} For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became a vacuum and their foolish hearts were darkened.

This is a clear reference to bitterness, rejection of the truth, the acceptance of the cosmic counterfeits and lies, and spiritual blindness.

These people are believers.

{22} Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools {23} and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles. {24} Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another.

These verses clearly refer to the lust pattern and addiction cycle, with emphasis on the category of stimulation lust.

In verse 24, the word paradidomi indicates that God gives these people over for the purpose of discipline.

The discipline is built in to their acts: atimazo indicates that people in this category of lust mistreat and degrade the bodies of those with whom they engage in their activities. This becomes mutual and inescapable.

"{25} They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator--who is forever praised. Amen. {26} Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. {27} In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent

acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion."

These verses serve as a summary for what has gone before, except with regard to homosexual activity.

Again, there is built-in Divine discipline for this kind of activity.

However, homosexuality brings on another category of degeneracy altogether.

{28} Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done, {29} having become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed, depravity, full of envy, murder, strife, deceit malice, are gossips, {30} slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant, boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; {31} they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless.

A depraved mind is a built-in category of Divine discipline. It is called *adokimon*, and it means that the mind no longer has an conscience related to establishment truth.

A mind without an establishment conscience is a very dangerous thing - look again at all of the anti-establishment activities.

This long list of sins - all destructive to society, are seen as the result of the homosexual lust pattern.

Homosexuality is certainly a very strong sin against what is most obviously natural. It is one of the highest ways to elevate self above society and family and worst of all God.

The verb *paradidomi* describes the giving over of these homosexuals to every kind of sin.

a. God produces the action of the verb; the homosexuals receive it.

This verb means literally 'to hand over a criminal to the custody of the law'.

Here, God hands them over to the custody of their flunked-out minds. *adokimon* means to

fail the grade, or to be so stupid as to be untestable.

So this is a picture of God leaving homosexual lust pattern idiots to their own conscience, which is just about gone.

The result of the list is varied:

Some things are worse than homosexuality, like murder. In this case homosexuality is a step that makes it easier to murder.

Some things are not worse, but still sins, like envy, strife, etc. Once a really bad thing is done, it is then quite easy to do the less bad. Homosexuality makes it easier to sin the lesser sins.

Verse 32: "who, full-knowing beforehand the righteous decree of God that they who currently practice things like this are deserving of capital punishment, they not only do the same, but also approve of those who practice them."

These homosexuals fully know the righteous decree of God. Righteous decree comes from the Greek word for a commandment that is intrinsically righteous - that stands on its own merit, and is just in the eyes of all.

This verse refers back to the homosexuals last named in verse 28.

The relative pronoun *hoitines* always seeks the nearest antecedent for its identification, and this would be lust-pattern homosexuals who produce the long list of sins.

This is because it must either refer to just the last sin in the list, or the producer of all the sins of 29-31. It is the latter.

It is the aorist participle of *epiginosko*, to fully know something. The aorist participle denotes that the knowledge was acquired before the action - that they knew what the penalty was before they did what they did.

This applies to those who currently practice such things.

This comes from the present participle of *prasson*. It means that the overt act of homosexuality is currently practiced.

'Such things' is the articular pronoun *toiauta*. It should be translated, 'things like this'. What things? This whole long list? Some of the things on the list? Or the sin which makes one susceptible to them?

Let's put this on hold for a moment...

They who practice things like this are deserving of capital punishment. Now here is something that is clear: *axioi thanatou* always means deserving of capital punishment.

Many secular writers of ancient Greek employed this phrase, and always it was capital punishment.

In Matthew 26:66 and Mark 14:64, the crowd calls for the capital punishment of Christ, by saying that he deserves death.

In Luke 23:15,22 Pontius Pilate claims that Christ does not deserve capital punishment.

In Matthew 15:4 and Mark 7:10, Christ brings forward an Old Testament death penalty, and treats it as valid for the time. That penalty was death for recalcitrant children, Exodus 21:17.

Matthew 10:21 and Mark 13:12 Christ uses another phrase to show capital punishment when it is undeserved.

In Acts 23:29, Claudius Lysias says that Paul is not *axios thanatou*.

In 25:11,25 Paul himself claims the same thing.

Oaths

Matthew 5:33-37, "33 Again you heard that it was said by the ancients, You will not make false oaths, and, You will make your oaths to the Lord. 34 But I say to you, make no oath at all, neither by heaven, because it is the throne of God, 35 nor by earth, because it is the footstool of His feet, nor into Jerusalem, because it is the city of the Great King, 36 nor will you make an oath by your head, because you are not able to make one hair white or

black. 37 But let your word be yes, yes, no, no; and what is beyond these is from the evil one."

Outline.

The old Mosaic Establishment Code principles.

The principle of making false oaths.

The principle of making oaths to the Lord.

The new Millennial Establishment Code principles.

The prohibition against any oath.

The list of the most common oaths, and the reason for each prohibition.

Heaven.

Earth.

Into Jerusalem.

Your head.

The new command: just say it.

The Explanation.

The context for this passage comes from several Mosaic passages:

Numbers 30:2, "If a man makes a vow to the Lord, or takes an oath to bind himself with a binding obligation, he shall not violate his word; he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth."

This verse includes two concepts: making a vow to the Lord, and making an oath on a binding contract with another human being.

This is an issue where the character of man must imitate the character of God. God always keeps His word, and for normal function between men, there must also be the keeping of one's word.

Making an oath in a human contract, includes making that oath to God, in imitation of His character. It was rather like taking the oath on the witness stand in our own culture.

This was the consumer protection clause of the Mosaic Law, and as long as the people of Israel loved God, they took this seriously.

Deuteronomy 21:21-23, "When you make a vow to the Lord your God, you shall not delay to pay it, for it would be sin in you, and the Lord your God will surely require it of you. However, if you refrain from vowing, it would not be sin in you. You shall be careful to perform what goes out from your lips, just as you have voluntarily vowed to the Lord your God, what you have promised."

Taking a vow to the Lord was a practice whereby someone would swear by some popular formula to do something for God.

Genesis 28:20-22 contains the oath of Jacob: "Then Jacob made a vow, saying, 'If God will be with me and will keep me on this journey that I take, and will give me food to eat and garments to wear, and I return to my father's house in safety, then the Lord will be my God. And this stone, which I have set up as a pillar, will be God's house; and of all that Thou dost give me I will surely give a tenth to Thee.'"

The vow gave an individual an opportunity to imitate God by keeping his own word.

Leviticus 19:12, "And you shall not swear falsely by My name, so as to profane the name of your God; I am the Lord."

This context has a number of miscellaneous commands. This one is in the midst of them.

It is a simple repetition of the others, but gives a little bit more in the way of explanation.

Breaking a vow profanes the name of God. It makes God seem common to unbelievers, because it gives the appearance of a powerless God.

You swear by God's name and do not keep the oath. So you swear and God does not give you the power to keep the oath? Such a weak God.

Bible Oaths Include:

Those of judicial procedure, i.e., the oath in the function of law to determine what is hearsay versus what is evidence.

The oath of allegiance to a sovereign or a superior.

An agreement or stipulation for the performance of an act, Gen 14:22, 24:2.

A vow made in the form of an oath.

A form of oath used frequently in the Bible is "as the Lord lives," found in 1 Sam 14:39, 19:6; 2 Sam 15:21; 1 Kg 18:10.

God's Oath.

Heb 6:16, "For men take an oath by the greater, and to them the oath is given for a confirmation, and that is the end of all dispute."

In other words, in resolving anything, from allegiance to jurisprudence, an oath was used.

To the Jews in Jerusalem in A.D. 67, taking an oath in the name of God was a well known custom for settling a dispute, to confirm a promise, or to resolve some problem in court.

Heb 6:17, "By which solemn oath, God, even more willing to demonstrate to the heirs of the promise the immutability of His decrees, pledged Himself as a guarantee by an oath."

God took an oath as a confirmation or guarantee of His promises, of the validity of Abraham's escrow blessing. He took an oath that the blessings were there on deposit. But being God, He couldn't take an oath by anyone greater; therefore, He took the oath by Himself.

The first immutable thing is God Himself. The second immutable thing is God's promise.

So when God gives a promise, the fact that HE gives it means that promise carries its own immutability.

The second immutable thing, God's promise in time, is the revelation of what God did for you in eternity past.

Again, there are only two immutable things: what God is, and what God says. God and doctrine are the two immutable things.

God demonstrates to us through doctrine what He did for us in eternity past. There is no way in our minds and in our thinking that we could ever come close to penetrating eternity past. Only God knows what He did, because only He

was there. Yet He is willing to demonstrate this to us with something else that is immutable: He reveals it in His Word.

The person of God the Father as the grantor designed our escrow blessings. The revelation about God in the Bible is the means of conveying our escrow blessings to us in time. Why must we have this information? Because without doctrine, we're like a ship without a rudder. We have no true motivation nor any real understanding of how we glorify God.

God is not only immutable, but He is fair. Therefore, He has revealed to us these things pertaining to His plan.

God has a perfect, immutable plan for you. To harness your life to the Immutable is where the blessing and meaning of life begins.

The removal of all oaths for the millennium.

The millennium is a perfect environment, including consumer protection. There is no need for any oath during the millennium.

Christ names all of the popular oaths: heaven, earth, 'into Jerusalem', and 'by my head'.

In each case, He notes why the oath does nothing.

Heaven is the throne of God - there is no oath needed there!

Earth is the footstool for Christ's feet, a clear reference to the millennium. There is no need for oaths during the millennium!

To Jerusalem was an oath sworn during the festal ascent to the Holy City. Jerusalem is the city of the Great King... no need for an oath there.

By my head was another popular oath, but Christ really comes down hard on this one. He makes a statement of grace orientation: swearing by your own head has no power at all!

In the millennium, there will be only 'yes' or 'no' in every dealing.

Anything beyond this is from the evil one.

ADDENDUM: James 5:12, "But before all these, my brothers, do not swear, neither by heaven nor the earth nor any other oath; but let your yes be yes and no, no, in order that you might not fall under judgment."

James considers this very important, because he places it at the top of his list, even though it is much later in his letter. He says *pro pantwn de*, or 'before all these things'.

He then goes on to paraphrase the sermon on the mount, but he gives a different conclusion.

This different conclusion means that there is a different reason for restraining from oaths during the church age.

The reason for the absence of oaths during the millennium has to do with the ideal conditions of that dispensation. What reason could there be for one if there is no cosmic system? No active demons?

James' conclusion is this: *i(/na mh(u(po kri/sin pe/shte*.

The *i(/na* is there to denote that this is a purpose clause. The reason for the prohibition against oaths is about to follow. It is translated 'in order that'.

pe/shte communicates the idea of a figurative fall; a fall from grace if you will.

u(po kri/sin denotes judgment. Let's think this one through. It can be one of two categories of judgments: either God's judgment, or man's.

If this is God's judgment, then swearing an oath during the church age could cause you to lose your reward. Very unlikely.

However, if this is man's judgment, then it certainly makes sense. The judgment of the state can be harsh indeed, especially in the area of real estate (boundary agreements) and business contracts.

Since the church age emphasizes the separation of church and state, any oath that combines church and state is a dangerous one indeed.

If you swear an oath before God to keep a business contract, and then the devil's world

happens, you are bound to that oath regardless, and it could wind you up in some very hot water with the state.

James' prohibition extends to any matter of the state; any matter where the state could cause you come under its judgment.

Because of this u(po kri/sin, there is a limit to the prohibition. If you want to swear an oath in another matter, then do not worry about it.

This prohibition does not extend to oaths about telling the truth in the courtroom, or to the military oath. Neither one of those can cause you to go to jail if you are an honest person.

Judicial Punishment

Introduction.

The Establishment Code of the Mosaic Law contains a system of judicial punishment for crimes and misdemeanors.

This system is God's prescription for degenerate man. Perfect God took into account the shortcomings of man under the sin nature and in the cosmic system.

God decided to delegate the system to man. That is, to make man responsible for policing himself.

Whenever God delegates responsibility to man, it is so that man might gain an appreciation of God.

God does not feel sorry for himself; he does not need our empathy.

However, our empathy helps us to know God, and we are the infinite gainers.

Furthermore, God allowed Satan control of this world, so that God cannot adjudicate the troubles of man by Himself. He must wait until the millennium to do so.

Although God does not administrate justice Himself, He has given man the responsibility, so that human freedom might be maintained.

Human freedom is the highest priority in the angelic conflict. God provides for its preservation by means of delegated authority.

When delegated authority fails to punish, God is authorized to step in and do the job.

God is just to every human being on an individual basis.

God also punishes nations which fail to be responsible in their appointment to justice.

There is a direct correlation between the nation's pivot of mature believers and how well the nation administrates justice.

As the pivot shrinks, so does the administration of justice. Therefore, God steps in to administrate justice, and preserve freedom through the cycles of discipline.

The cycles of discipline are designed to wake the nation up to its failure to please God.

The cycles of discipline also serve in part to administrate justice in place of the failed justice of the nation.

There are two parts to the Establishment Code related to the administration of justice:

The corporate administration of justice.

The personal administration of justice.

The Law includes provisions for Israel as a client nation unto God. Any matter of punishment for spiritual impropriety was specifically because of Israel's corporate testimony during that dispensation.

Since there is now separation of church and state, the punishments for spiritual impropriety are no longer a part of the establishment code.

These punishments are included in this doctrine only for the sake of completeness and historical heritage. Their inclusion is not to imply their implementation for this dispensation.

In conclusion, the Mosaic Law provides the model for the administration of justice in the devil's world. Any nation may employ it with confidence that it will bear the fruits of domestic peace and prosperity. Leviticus 26:3-6, "If you walk in My statutes and keep My

commandments so as to carry them out, then I shall give you rains in their season, so that the land will yield its produce and the trees of the field will bear their fruit. Indeed, your threshing will last for you until grape gathering, and grape gathering will last until sowing time. You will thus eat your food to the full and live securely in your land. I shall also grant peace in the land, so that you may lie down with no one making you tremble. I shall also eliminate harmful beasts from the land, and no sword will pass through your land."

The acceptability of the Mosaic Establishment Code correlates directly to the pivot.

The greater the pivot, the more acceptable this code will be, and vice versa.

Relationship with God makes this covenant of laws a good thing to the people.

Employment of this set of laws causes a national testimony, Leviticus 26:11-12, "[If you walk in My statutes and keep My commandments so as to carry them out...] ...I will make My dwelling among you, and My soul will not reject you. I will also walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people."

Obedience does not bring relationship with God, but relationship with God brings obedience.

Obedience does result in testimony, and obedience on a national scale does bring international impact.

However, this is not the dispensation of corporate testimony, so that this function is limited.

The Corporate Administration of Justice.

The rules of jurisprudence.

For ANY sin to be considered true, there must be at least two eyewitnesses to the act, and usually the Bible prefers three - Deuteronomy 17:6: "On the oral testimony of two witnesses or three witnesses, he who is to die shall be put to death; he shall not be put to death on the oral testimony of one witness."

If you are the only eyewitness to an act, you cannot come to the conclusion that what you saw is true; the requirement for two witnesses testifies to the untrustable nature of your senses, and to the sin nature in man.

Again, you are not allowed to conclude that a sin has transpired.

The Bible does not make much room for the use of physical or circumstantial evidence; eyewitnesses are required. This is the key to a speedy trial.

Therefore, if there is insufficient evidence, you must leave the matter to the supreme court of heaven.

Guilty pleas require no eyewitnesses.

False witness is the submission of evidence or testimony in a court of law, which is known by the witness to be false at the time that he gives it.

The evidence or testimony may be of any make-up - oral, written, or even physical. Exodus 20:16; Deuteronomy 5:20: "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor."

The penalty for false witness is commensurate with the accusation; it goes all the way to capital punishment - Deuteronomy 19:15-21: "A single witness shall not rise up against a man on account of any iniquity or any sin which he has committed; on the oral testimony of two or three witnesses a matter shall be confirmed. If a malicious witness rises up against a man to accuse him of wrongdoing, then both the men who have the dispute shall stand before the Lord, before the priests and the judges who will be in office in those days. And the judges shall investigate thoroughly; and if the witness is a false witness and he has accused his brother falsely, then you shall do to him just as he had intended to do to his brother. Thus you shall purge the evil from among you. And the rest will hear and be afraid, and will never again do such an evil thing among you. Thus you shall not show pity: life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot."

Similar to false witness is the refusal to testify.

The refusal to testify is a serious matter in the legal context of Israel. If a witness knows the truth, but refuses to speak under oath, he has done something tantamount to false witness.

The one who refused to testify was considered an accessory to the crime, and was punishable as such.

Prov 29:24: "He who is a partner with a thief hates his own life; He hears the oath but tells nothing."

Lev 5:1: "Now if a person sins, after he hears a public adjuration to testify, when he is a witness, whether he has seen or otherwise known, if he does not tell it, then he will bear his guilt."

The punishments.

Offenses requiring capital punishment:

Striking or cursing a parent, Exodus 21:15,17. The strike must be with intent to cause violent harm, which is the meaning of NAKAH. The curse is a severe verbal reviling.

Blasphemy, which is cursing the name of God - the verbal expression of extreme bitterness, Leviticus 24:14,16,23; 1 Kings 21:13. This is not simply taking the Lord's name in vain. Interestingly, this was the charge brought against Christ for which He was crucified.

Profaning the Sabbath, Exodus 31:14f; 35:2; Numbers 15:32-36.

'Profane' comes from the Hebrew verb HALAL.

HALAL means to violate in a sexual sense. It is also employed to denote someone who is impure because they have touched the dead.

The Sabbath was Holy because it was the appointed time to spend with God. All concentration on the Sabbath day was to be directed toward Him.

Doing something on the Sabbath that was a distraction from learning about and worshipping God was tantamount to blasphemy, and considered a capital offense.

Witchcraft and False Prophecy, Exodus 22:18; Leviticus 20:27; Deuteronomy 13:1-5; 18:20; 1 Samuel 28:3,9.

Adultery, Leviticus 20:10-12; Deuteronomy 22:22.

Unchastity. This is the area of sexual intercourse apart from the involvement of a married person.

Pre-marital sex, Deuteronomy 22:13-21. If a woman is proved to not be a virgin on her wedding night, then her husband may prove the charge, and have her put to death. Pre-marital sex is still intercourse with someone else's partner in life, even though that has not been revealed by God.

Sex with a betrothed, or engaged person, Deuteronomy 22:23-24.

3. Pre-marital sex with a priest's daughter, Leviticus 21:9.

Rape, Deuteronomy 22:25.

Incest, homosexuality, and bestiality, Exodus 22:19; Leviticus 20:11-17.

Abducting people for slavery, Exodus 21:16; Deuteronomy 24:7.

Idolatry, Leviticus 20:1-5; Deuteronomy 13:2-19; 17:2-7.

False witnessing in capital cases, Deuteronomy 19:16,19.

Murder, Exodus 21:12; Leviticus 24:17; Numbers 35:16-21.

The penalty of being 'cut off from the people'.

This is a simple synonym for capital punishment.

The crimes listed under this synonym are as follows:

Defiance of authority, Numbers 15:30-31.

Incest, Leviticus 18:6-23,29.

Uncircumcision, Genesis 17:14.

Neglect of the Passover, Numbers 19:13; eating leavened bread on the Passover, Exodus 12:15,19.

Sabbath breaking, Exodus 31:14.

Improper observance of the Day of Atonement, Leviticus 23:26-30.

The practice of child sacrifice, Leviticus 20:3.

Witchcraft, Leviticus 20:6.

Violating the sacrifices by eating the fat, Leviticus 7:25, or eating the blood, Leviticus 7:27; 17:14, eating when the eater is unclean, Leviticus 7:20, 22:3-6, eating a sacrifice late, Leviticus 19:5-8.

General neglect of purification, Numbers 19:13,20 and other improper procedures, Leviticus 17:3f; 17:8f.

Methods of capital punishment.

Stoning was the most common mode of execution. By including many people in the execution, there was a strong impression of corporate culpability in the crime. God designed this to be a tool for the creation of positive peer pressure.

In some cases, the bodies of the victims were incinerated, so as to obliterate their memory from the people, Leviticus 20:4; Leviticus 21:9.

In later times, execution was done by means of beheading, 2 Samuel 16:9; 2 Kings 6:31f.

Other penalties, not requiring death.

Flogging, for the loser in a civil dispute, Deuteronomy 25:1-3.

Monetary restitution for any breaking of a Holy thing, Leviticus 5:15-16. But no other fines are a part of the Mosaic Law.

Imprisonment was never a part of the Law, except for detention before and during a trial. Although it is mentioned often in the Bible, it is never commanded!

Imprisonment does not reform criminals; it makes them better at what they do.

Imprisonment does not make restitution; it gives security to those who are imprisoned.

Imprisonment is a paradox. It is not required in a society that is virtuous enough to execute true menaces to society. It only seems a necessity when virtue is breached.

Imprisonment is one of the greatest wastes of money in our country.

Mutilation was authorized for one crime only, Deuteronomy 25:11, "If two men, a man and his countryman, are struggling together, and the wife of one comes near to deliver her husband from the hand of the one who is tricking him, and puts out her hand and seizes his genitals, then you shall cut off her hand; you shall not show pity."

Restitution for theft, Exodus 22:1-4,9.

The Mosaic Law reaches a pinnacle of common sense genius here.

When a theft occurs, there is a system whereby the convicted thief must pay his victim more than what was originally stolen.

The system:

If the thief has not sold or slaughtered or destroyed what was stolen, he is to pay double.

If the thief has sold or slaughtered or destroyed what was stolen, then:

For an ox, he must pay five oxen.

For a sheep, he must pay four sheep.

If anyone is caught with stolen property, he will pay double.

Furthermore, killing a thief while he is in the process of his crimes is completely authorized.

Restitution for carelessness, Exodus 22:5-6.

Payment in kind is required when carelessness causes someone's property to be destroyed.

Payment in kind is a fair method for liability.

The Law Regarding Self-Defense. Exodus 21:23-25; Leviticus 24:19-22; Deuteronomy 19:21; Matthew 5:38-42.

It is natural that law enforcement officials cannot be on the scene of every crime.

The Mosaic Law fairly delegates authority to citizens regarding self-defense, so that criminals might be caught and stopped in the act of their crimes.

The three citations of the lex talionis have to do with personal restitution. It is clear from each that this is so.

The lex talionis is set up this way so as to provide satisfaction in the case of personal injury.

The satisfaction keeps the Hatfields and McCoys from occurring. If there is justice and satisfaction, then there is no need for an ongoing feud.

But Christ puts a new twist on the Lex Talionis when He interprets it.

“38 You heard that it was said, An eye for an eye, and, a tooth for a tooth. 39 But I myself say to you do not stand against evil; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn to him also the left; 40 And while someone wishes to sue you and to take your shirt, give to him also your coat; 41 and whoever presses you into service for one mile, go with him two; 42 give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away the one who wishes to borrow from you.”

This interpretation concentrates not on restitution, but self-defense.

First comes the quotation of the Lex Talionis, usually taken on the corporate side of defense against crime.

The corporate side is the side where proper jurisprudence must take place; where the rules for evidence must be obeyed; and where properly convicted criminals are given their just due.

But the personal side of the Lex Talionis has to do with the exigencies of the situation.

The general rule is that you are allowed to defend yourself with force equal to the threat against you.

This general rule applies only if the threat cannot be stopped in a timely manner by corporate measures, i.e., the police officer, or others from the general populace.

Both of these systems of protection against crime are sides to the same coin. The citizen is authorized to act for the state when the state cannot act in time.

The state is considered to be preferred for the prevention of crime.

Although the Roman Law was good, and although there was much restraint on crime in Israel during the time of Christ, there were still times when the criminal element took advantage of innocent victims.

Because of this, it would be natural for Christ's audience to balk at what He was suggesting: that they refrain even from self-defense.

However, since the system of justice will be so swift and sure during His millennial reign, there will be no need for the self-defense provisions of the Mosaic Law.

Now the first crime mentioned is violence. If someone strikes you, you are not to reply in kind. In fact, Christ will handle things.

The second has to do with a frivolous lawsuit. If someone tries to redistribute your wealth, you would normally fight them tooth and nail in the courtroom.

But, in the millennium, there is no need for that. Christ is the perfect judge, and in His kingdom He judges with perfect fairness and immediacy. Your money and property is safe in the millennium.

Being pressed into service was a problem with Rome. *aggareu/sei* is literally press into service.

It is well-documented that the Romans took advantage of their occupation of Jewish land.

They had much power because of their military domination of the region, and the Roman soldier was not above abusing that power.

Therefore, it was common for Jewish citizens to be pressed into service, both when the Roman military had a legitimate need, and when it did not.

In the millennium, being pressed into service will always come about because of legitimate need, and therefore Christ calls for enthusiastic volunteer service.

Finally, there is the idea of legitimate need. In the millennium, when your neighbor needs something, he legitimately needs it.

There will be no lending business during the millennium. What is legitimately needed will be freely given.

And, the lender need have no worry about the payback, because Christ is on the throne.

Today, we have a system whereby interest is charged on loans, so that the borrower will be encouraged to pay back the money. No need for that when Christ rules.

Let me be clear: there is no compulsion for you to lend money to anyone during the church age. It is a choice that you make based on your wisdom.

Our twisted system: a review.

We fail in the area of jurisprudence.

Trials are much too long.

There is way to much poor evidence allowed in the courtroom.

Too many criminals are released on technicalities.

We fail in the area of judicial punishment.

The prison system is an utter failure. The Bible points out that the only need for prison is to hold suspected criminals for a very short time, until they are tried.

The failure to apply capital punishment where it is deserved is an utter disgrace.

Church Age Distinctions.

The nation is independent from the church during this dispensation.

As such, what the nation chooses for its establishment doctrines is not a function of the church. The system of judicial punishment, military draft and training, taxation, and anything else that comes under the umbrella of divine establishment is left to the nation to decide.

In no way is the church to function as the nation, or usurp national function, during this dispensation.

The church has a limited function in the area of banishment for the protection of its flock.

Both pastors and laymen alike may be banished if it is in the best interest of the local assembly to do so.

In any area where a member or associate of the church has committed a crime that comes under the function of the state, the church is to cooperate in any way possible.

The Mosaic Law defines the best way for any state in any time to be run. Any nation may confidently incorporate any part of the establishment code expecting the best possible results.

Believers in Jesus Christ who are given a say in how their government will be formed or run should always support the side of the establishment code.

Believers in Jesus Christ are always morally responsible in spite of the looseness of their national laws.

Love Your Enemies

Matthew 5:43-48: "43 You heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor' and, 'Hate your enemy'. 44 But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 so that you might become sons of your Father who is in heaven, because He rises His sun on the evil and the good and rains on the righteous and unrighteous. 46 For if you love the ones who love you, what reward do you have? Do not also the taxgatherers do the same? 47 And if you greet your brothers only, what greater thing do you do? Do not also the Gentiles do the

same? 48 Therefore, you be mature as your Heavenly Father is mature.”

Luke 6:27-30, 32-36: “27 But I say to you who hear, ‘Love your enemies, do well to those who hate you, 28 bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. 29 to those who strike you on the cheek, offer also the other, and from the one who takes away your shirt, do not withhold also your tunic. 30 To everyone who asks of you give, and from the one who takes what is yours do not ask for it back. 32 And if you love the one who loves you, what kind of grace is to you? For the sinners also love those who love them. 33 And if you do good to those who do good to you, what kind of grace is to you? The sinners also do the same thing. 34 And if you lend to the ones from whom you hope to receive, what kind of grace? Sinners also lend to sinners to receive their share. 35 Yet love your enemies and do good and lend expecting nothing in return and your reward will be much, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is gracious to the kind and ungrateful. 36 Become merciful just as also your Father is merciful.”

Introduction.

The Luke passage paraphrases and intermingles some of the things that have already been mentioned by Matthew.

This is important: we now come to some personal applications of the Establishment Code for the Kingdom. Luke connects them back to some other things we have covered.

The principle to love your enemies is intertwined with the previous comments about self-defense.

Not only are you to leave your defense with the Lord, but you are also to offer aid and comfort to your enemy.

This is a part of the Establishment Code for the Kingdom, and is not meant for the church age; let me tell you why:

The command to love everyone with virtue love is a dispensational constant. To desire the best

for all men is obviously true whenever and wherever you live.

The command to love your neighbor comes from Leviticus 19:17-18, “You shall not hate your fellow countryman in your heart; you may surely reprove your neighbor, but shall not incur sin because of him. You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the Lord.”

A neighbor would be anyone who is in one of your peripheries: at church, at home, at work, among friends.

The concept of neighbor does not extend far beyond the immediate periphery.

In reality, the English word ‘neighbor’ does not communicate the idea very well. The Hebrew word is RE’A, which is actually better translated as friend.

The command verb in the Hebrew is from AHAB, which denotes personal love. The virtue connotation is weaker than in HESED, but there may be something still there.

So you are to personally love your friends as you do yourself.

There is no doubt that this command from Leviticus has limits.

There is no specific command to hate your enemy. However, the Old Testament is full of passages that allow believers to “hate” their enemies.

David’s imprecatory prayers in the Psalms clearly show that he desires for God to wipe out his enemies!

Psalm 54: “Save me, O God, by Thy name, and vindicate me by Thy power. Hear my prayer, O God; Give ear to the words of my mouth. For strangers have risen against me, and violent men have sought my life; they have no set God before them. Behold, God is my helper; the Lord is the sustainer of my soul. He will recompense the evil to my foes; destroy them in Thy faithfulness. Willingly I will sacrifice to Thee; I will give thanks to Thy name, O Lord, for it is

good. For he has delivered me from all trouble; and my eye has looked with satisfaction upon my enemies.”

In this Psalm, David wishes the worst upon his enemies.

Christ is not quoting when says ‘hate your enemies’, He is simply citing something that was a well-know Old Testament doctrine.

The Hebrew word is SANE’, which means to hate. According to the Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, vol. II, p.880, SANE’ “...expresses an emotional attitude toward persons and things which are opposed, detested, despised and with which one wishes to have no contact or relationship. It is therefore the opposite of love. Whereas love draws and unites, hate separates and keeps distant. The hated and hating persons are considered foes or enemies and are considered odious, utterly unappealing.”

The Greek translation is misoj, which has exactly the same connotation.

In fact, there is an Old Testament verse which is a command to provide logistics to your enemy, Proverbs 25:21-22, “If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink; for you will heap burning coals on his head, and the Lord will reward you.”

However, at the same time, on the battlefield you are authorized to take the life of your enemy. In that situation, you must go all the way in order to prevent your own demise.

The fact is, when you encounter your enemy on the battlefield, you wish the worse for him; you wish him to death.

When your enemy is in the field against you, you wish the worst for him - that he dies of disease before you ever face him; that his army retreats; that his nation surrenders.

In summary, ‘hate your enemies’ is the opposite of love, and is sometimes a necessity in the devil’s world.

The content of this passage is for the millennium; anyone who declares himself an enemy of another during that time will be handled by the Lord. There is no reason for hatred when perfect and timely justice exists.

Hatred is an expression of self-defense. Not that you should ever hate anyone, or seek to make anyone your enemy. But what if someone decides to be your enemy in spite of your application of Romans 12:18, “If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.”?

An enemy is someone who hates you; even someone who wants to destroy you. Listen again to Paul in Romans 12:14, “Bless those who persecute you; bless and curse not.” and verse seventeen, “Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men.” And again in verse nineteen, “Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay’, says the Lord.”

In fact let’s take a longer look at this passage, since it is the only one in the New Testament with a command about our enemies: “9 Love is unhypocritical. While abhorring what is evil, clinging to the good, 10 in brotherly love, being devoted to one another, in honor, leading the way for one another, 11 in diligence, not lagging behind, being fervent in spirit, serving in the lord, 12 rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, busily engaging in prayer; 13 contributing to the needs of the saints, pursuing hospitality [while doing all these things] 14 bless those who persecute you, bless and do not curse. 15 Rejoice with the rejoicing; cry with the crying. 16 While thinking the same about one another, not thinking haughtily but associating with the humble, do not become wise from yourselves. 17 While not repaying evil for evil, thinking what is good before all men, 18 if able from yourself, having peace with all men, 19 never taking your own revenge, beloved, but give a place for [divine] wrath, for it has been written, Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the Lord. 20 But If your enemy is hungry feed him; if thirsty, water him;

for doing this you will heap burning coals of fire upon his head. 21 I do not conquer by means of evil, but you conquer evil by means of the good.

The title of this discourse is 'Love is unhyprocritical'. H) a)ga/ph anupo/kritoj.) It contains eight commands, and all are related to the theme of spiritual maturity.

The outline is as follows:

While doing the things of the Christian life, bless those who persecute you.

The Two Commands Related to Appropriate Emotion.

While having good relationships, grow spiritually.

While not taking your own revenge, give a place for divine wrath.

The Two Commands Related to Logistics for Your Enemy.

Conquer evil by means of the good.

This entire passage is about balancing your Christian life.

There is an internal aspect to your Christian life in the intake of doctrine.

There is an external aspect in the application of doctrine.

There is an internal aspect in your activities within the local and universal church; your friends and Christian fellowship.

There is an external aspect in your interaction with people who reside in the cosmic system.

Five of the commands have to do with the Christian's relationship with those who reside in the cosmic system.

Bless and do not curse those who persecute you. In other words, ask the Lord's blessings upon them; keep on desiring the best for them even though they are your enemy.

Give a place for divine wrath. Let the Lord do the discipline and never take matters into your

own hands. This does not eradicate your Biblical right to self-defense.

Feed and water your enemies; in other words, if it is up to you, do not let your enemy die. Keeping your enemy alive means giving him a chance for repentance.

Conquer evil by means of the good. The good is Bible doctrine, and it is the means to conquering evil in your life.

Although revenge belongs to the Lord, self-defense belongs to you, and self-defense is the immediate context of this Sermon on the Mount passage.

In conclusion, if it is on the battlefield, you may be sure that you can do your duty with a clear conscience. If you or someone else is the victim of crime, and you can intervene so that the criminal is stopped with the appropriate amount of force, even lethal force, then you can do so with confidence that it is your civic duty.

Christ is clearly asking His listeners to leave self-defense behind anywhere.

The list of applications.

Love your enemies.

Do well to those who hate you.

So, if you have someone who hates you, do well to them. The Greek is quite simple: kalwj poieite. kalwj simply indicates something of passing value; something that belongs only to this world. In essence it is the fulfillment of the Old Testament command from Proverbs 25:21-22.

Doing well to your enemies means helping them when their life circumstances (usually through divine discipline) become difficult.

Bless those who curse you (see above).

Pray for those who persecute you.

This is an extension of the command to bless those who hate you.

This is one of the great gimmicks of the Bible. You cannot simultaneously pray for and hate your enemy. You must be in fellowship to pray

for him, and if you hate him you are not in fellowship. So if you are to fulfill this command, then you must do so from a position of impersonal love.

The principle of divine provision. "so that you might become sons of your Father who is in heaven, because He rises His sun on the evil and the good and rains on the righteous and unrighteous."

We are called to love our enemies so that we might become sons of our Father who is in heaven.

The sonship occurs because of imitation. Christ is calling us to imitate the character of God.

Imitation of God's character is a pretty good definition of spiritual maturity. In fact, it is the highest expression of love that any believer can make. Imitation of Divine character is the fulfillment of the greatest commandment.

The specific way in which we are to imitate divine character is in the category of impersonal love toward our enemies.

God rises His sun on the evil and the good and rains on the righteous and unrighteous. Sun and rain are both necessary for the growth of crops; they cause the crop to grow which allows all people to live.

The application of Proverbs 25:21-22 comes directly into view here. Providing logistics to your enemy in his time of legitimate need is a godly act.

This shows that you want your enemy to live; that you want him to have the chance to repent before God and follow you to maturity.

God is not willing for any to perish. He is not willing for any to be cast into the Lake of Fire. He is not willing for any believer to fall short of maturity.

But He honors free will! And when people are negative to His plan, it is a good thing to prolong their lives, unless those people are such a menace that His justice must act.

This applies within the laws of divine establishment. If the Mosaic Law demands the justice of capital punishment, then capital punishment it must be.

However, if someone is your enemy, and they have not committed a capital crime, then it is right to provide for their legitimate needs.

The issue of eternal reward, "And if you love the one who loves you, what kind of grace reward is to you? For the sinners and taxgatherers also love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what kind of grace reward is to you? The sinners also do the same thing. And if you lend to the ones from whom you hope to receive, what kind of grace reward? Sinners also lend to sinners to receive their share. And if you greet your brothers only, what greater thing do you do? Do not also the Gentiles do the same?"

Christ now turns to the issue of heavenly reward - the portfolio of reward for the mature believer.

He says that if you only love those who love you, and do good to those who do good to you, and lend to the ones from whom you hope to receive, and greet your brothers only, then you have no grace reward.

The grace reward comes from a combination of Matthew and Luke. Matthew says *μισθον*, which is the Greek word for reward, or even profit or wages, while Luke says *χαρις*, which is a grace gift.

The combination of these two is good. It tells us that the reward comes from the grace of God, and that without the grace of God, the reward would not be ours.

Think about it. It is His salvation, we only choose it; it is His word and Spirit, we only choose to learn and apply it.

Without His initiative and provision, our efforts at spiritual growth would be for naught.

Even with the concept of reward - that we earned the reward - we must humbly

acknowledge that we earned through appropriating divine power, and divine truth.

It is God's system of merit; it is His system of thinking; it is His system of power.

What kind of reward do we have if we only love those who love us? Well we can fill the blank with the answer 'none'. Christ employs the word *poia* to signify this. It means literally, 'what kind' as a sort of question.

Imitating sinners and taxgatherers and unbelievers is certainly not an imitation of God. When we extend our virtue love only to those who love us, we imitate all the occupants of the cosmic system.

Invisible Impact of Christians

Matthew 6:1-4: "1 Be careful to not practice your righteousness before men for them to observe. For if not, you do not have a reward from your Father who is in heaven. 2 Therefore whenever you practice mercy, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so they might be glorified by men. Truly I say to you, they possess their reward. 3 Now you, while practicing mercy do not let your left hand know what your right is doing, 4 so also let your mercy be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will repay you."

Outline.

Introduction: the command of prohibition.

The bottom line: reward in heaven.

The reward is what they seek - they seek lowly things.

The attitude and practice of the Secret Service.

The reward for Secret Service.

An implication of public service: God cannot see in secret.

Exposition.

Translation, v.1: "Be careful to not practice your righteousness before men for them to observe. For if not, you do not have a reward from your Father who is in heaven."

The verse begins with the present imperative verb *prosexete*. It means to 'take hold of something', 'to grasp a concept', or 'to exercise care'. The present tense tells us that Christ intends for the action to begin immediately if it is not taking right now, and to continue on into the future.

The verb *poiein* translates as 'practice'. This is the present infinitive, and it is the complement of *prosexete*. It completes the thought. So the practice of righteousness is in view here.

Christ has just completed a discourse on the practice of mercy toward one's enemies. This could be one practice of righteousness; there are many others! And it is worthwhile to note that righteousness is a practice.

The motivation for the practice of righteousness is never approbation from men. Their opinions do not count in the long run.

You never do something out of the motivation of wanting others to see it. That is not the attitude of the mature believer.

If you practice righteousness for the purpose of gaining approbation before men, then you do not have a reward.

Translation, v.2: "Therefore, whenever you perform an act of mercy, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they might be glorified by men; Truly I say to you, they have received their reward."

This verse does not say 'give alms.' The church moneymongers must have translated this one. The phrase is *POIES ELEMOSUNEN*.

1. The verb *POIES* is the present subjunctive, and it shows a potential action. "Perform," "enact," "practice," or "do" is proper for this verb. Since it focuses on a single act, practice is out. Because of the verb with which it is coupled, perform is right.

ELEMOSUNEN is the abstract form of 'mercy.' 'Merciness' would be right, if there were such a word in the English. A similar phenomenon is *DIKAIOSUNE*. *DIKAIOS* is 'righteous,' while

DIKAIOSUNE is 'righteousness.' It is little more abstract.

So this word is not a specific word at all, but one that is quite abstract and purposefully vague, because an act of mercy can find application in a very broad spectrum. To make this one specific act of mercy is wrong. A translator would only do so if he had an agenda.

You are forbidden to sound the trumpet before you as you do acts of mercy.

This is a method of advertising in the ancient world. You sound the trumpet before you as you go around town selling your wares.

This is a really poor marketing technique, as it brings attention to the one doing the act, and not attention to God.

The primary realm of impact is angelic. When you perform an act of mercy, it is for the object of your mercy, and for the angels to see. The observation of men who are not rightfully involved is not important at all.

The hypocrites advertise because they want to be glorified by men.

This naturally implies that God is not important to them. This is a really poor set of priorities.

A hypocrite is an actor, someone who puts on a face for the crowd, but who is in reality a totally different person.

Television interviews of actors and actresses are especially interesting because you get to meet the real person, and not the person in the role.

A hypocrite wants to be perceived as a holy person, and is compelled to display his righteousness in public, so that the public knows.

Anyone can do the outward form of the righteous act. The outward form of the righteous act does not always reveal the heart of hearts.

In fact, the desire for approbation within a righteous act almost always reveals a hypocrite.

The hypocrite has received his reward, and glory from man is the balance in full.

APECHO means to receive the balance in full from a debt.

So the hypocrite who gets glory from men receives the balance in full of his reward.

Heavenly reward is so much better than what paltry things that we get on this earth. The things of this earth will all pass away, but God has a system of eternal reward that will be ours forever.

The hypocrite may be a believer; and as such he has his eternal salvation. But the rewards above and beyond that are exceptional beyond imagination, and worth the tradeoff for lack of recognition now.

Translation, vv.3-4: "But while you are doing an act of mercy, do not let your left hand know what your right is doing, so that your act of mercy might be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret might reward you."

Christ employs a genitive absolute at the beginning of this context in order to make some form of contrast. The genitive absolute is a grammatical construction that has no connection with the rest of the sentence. It is employed to show dissonance or disconnection of thought. Sometimes it is a foreshadowing of evil; at other times it makes an ironic statement; and still others it shows that something's is unusual or infrequent.

Here the genitive absolute shows the disconnection between doing good and the desire for approbation.

The left hand is the sin nature; the right hand is the soul in fellowship with God. You are to do your works without allowing any involvement on the part of your sin nature.

Therefore, you must do your good works with no profit at all to your sin nature; there can be absolutely no payoff there.

God the Father is the only one who must see your acts of mercy. He is the only one who

counts, because He is the one who gives the true and lasting reward.

Matthew 6:5-8: "5 And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, because they love to pray after they have stood in the synagogues and on the corners of the wide streets, so that they might show off to men. Truly I say to you, they have received their reward. 6 But you, whenever you pray, go into your private room and after shutting the door pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father Who sees in secret will reward you. 7 And while praying do not babble like the Gentiles, for they assume that in their many words they have an answer. 8 Therefore do not be like them; for your Father knows what needs you have before you ask Him."

Christ paints this image of the hypocrites. They go with much pomp and circumstance to the synagogue or the corner of the wide streets, and they stand like no one has ever done before. They stand up with a flourish, as though the act is a pronouncement in itself.

And after they have stood, they pray, assuming everyone should listen. They love the public nature of their prayers, and every prayer is a sample of excellent praying, full of holy language.

They have their reward in full: public adoration. They will have to dwell on that approbation for all eternity, and feed from it, for it will be the sum total of their reward there.

But Christ says that prayer is between you and God, and that you should go to a private room, your refuge, and there offer your prayers in secret.

God is in secret; pray to Him in secret, and He will reward you. And that reward is one which will last forever.

Christ's second exhortation about prayer has to do with meaningless repetition. He warns against babbling like the Gentiles do. The word is *BATTALOGESETE*, and it means to speak repetitively without purpose. It means to babble on endlessly about meaningless things.

It describes an attempt to pester God until He gives in out of exasperation. The image is of a five year old endlessly pestering his parents. But of course God has integrity.

The Gentiles assume (*DOKEO*) that with many words they have an answer. This is a wrong assumption.

The final principle should be obvious, but many Christians miss it: God knows what you need before you ask. You do not need to keep reminding Him of it.

The Lord's Prayer

"9 Therefore you pray like this: "Our Father who is in heaven; let your name be sanctified; 10 Let Your kingdom come; let Your will be done, as in heaven so upon earth; 11 Give to us today our logistical bread, 12 and forgive us our debts as we ourselves also forgave our debtors; 13 and do not bring us into testing, but save us from the evil."

Introduction:

1. Dispensational constants are those elements of the portfolio of grace assets which are available in every dispensation.

2. Dispensational variables are those elements of the portfolio of grace assets which are not available in all of the dispensations. They may exist in one or more, but not all of them.

3. This prayer is for the disciples of Jesus Christ at that time. Remember, He is revealing His millennial kingdom to them, and so this prayer is going to feature certain dispensational variables related to their situation. These will not apply to us directly.

There are similarities of conditions that make some elements of this prayer agenda relevant to our own dispensation, and we will note them when appropriate.

Christ makes this prayer an emphatic command. He adds the personal pronoun *HUMEIS* to the present imperative *PROSEUCHESTHE*, and it comes out, "You pray..."

1. The inclusion of the personal pronoun is a contrast on the preceding bad examples of prayer.

The logical conjunction OUN also points to what has gone before. Christ is saying, “on the basis of what has gone before, you do something different.’

The present tense of the imperative indicates that this prayer is to be a regular part of the disciples’ lives. The iterative present aspect emphasizes the regularity of the prayer.

The adverb HOUTOS concentrates on similitude without the necessity for exactitude. In other words we are to pray like this, but not exactly like this.

Hence, the rote recitation of the Lord’s prayer is directly against the intent of Christ.

In this prayer He gives His disciples an agenda for prayer, a general outline of how they should pray when they do pray.

Any prayer which is repeated from rote is going to lose its meaning over time. The vitality of your prayer life depends on whether you make this work.

The first part of the agenda is the address.

1. The person addressed is God the Father, and this is certainly a dispensational constant. You should always pray to the first person of the godhead.

Christ locates the Father in heaven. This is an intriguing addition, for it describes Him as entirely apart from us with regard to space. It also functions to distinguish Him from our earthly fathers.

So here is the perfect example of the principle of protocol. You must put the correct address on your prayers.

The second part of the agenda is about spiritual growth.

1. Jesus says, “let Your name be sanctified.’

The verb is HAGIASTHETO. It is in the aorist tense, and it is an imperative verb. So this is a command, and since it is in the third person singular, it is the imperative of entreaty, which designates a polite command.

The verb itself is HAGIAZO in the lexical form. It means to “sanctify,’ or “make holy.’

It may denote what God the Holy Spirit does in His baptizing ministry at salvation: positional sanctification.

It may denote the process of experiential sanctification, which comes through the intake and application of Bible truth.

The verb is passive, so that the subject receives the action of sanctification. The subject is TO ONOMA SOU, “Your name.’ God’s name always represents His very essence.

So the translation is “let your name be sanctified.’

This is a prayer for people to make God’s name holy in their hearts. There is only one way that this can come about, and that is through spiritual growth.

Spiritual growth occurs through faith perception of the truth. God’s name is made holy in our hearts only because of the truth resident there.

Therefore a conclusion:

This part of the agenda may include all aspects of the grace portfolio related to spiritual growth.

You may pray this prayer for yourself, or you may pray it for another. It is equally effective, and guaranteed to work.

We can never order God to sanctify His name apart from the volitional decisions of those involved; we may pray for everything else.

This is the greatest and most important prayer that you can pray for yourself or anyone

else. Spiritual growth is your number one priority.

The third part of the model prayer is related to the kingdom of God.

1. Again there is an aorist imperative of entreaty, this time from the verb ELTHETO.
2. So there is a polite command regarding the kingdom of God and its arrival.

This refers to the second advent of Christ - the millennial kingdom.

You should know that the arrival of the kingdom of God is not contingent on our prayers. God alone knows the day and the hour, and that time is set. We cannot change the unchangeable decree.

Yet, the time is hidden from us, as it was from them. Christ charged His disciples with the content of this prayer, even though they would not see His kingdom in their lifetimes.

But Christ did not and does not know the day nor the hour. It is not a cruelty to include this prayer.

Some prayers orient the believer to the will of God, and place them in the right frame of mind to wait for Him. We have seen this, and this is also the case here.

The phrase "let Your kingdom come" is like saying "when You see fit."

Now we play the waiting game during our lives in the same way. We do not know the time of the rapture, for the day and the hour are hidden from us.

But we too can orient to the sovereign wisdom of God; we too can humbly place ourselves at the mercy of His perfect timing. This one applies just as well to us as to the disciples.

Next is a contingency: "Let Your will become as in heaven so upon earth."

1. The aorist imperative of GENETHETO comes out as "let your will become..."

This is the verb GINOMAI, which depicts the entry of something previously unintroduced. It

is usually something totally new and even unique.

The will of God is the expression of His sovereign and perfect volition.

But God has chosen for the freedom of creature volition, and therefore His will is not always done.

Created beings often do not choose for the right, which makes this prayer valid.

But that is not all. This portion of the prayer is contingent on what has gone before. If God's kingdom does not come, then let God's will become.

Added to this is the phrase, "as in heaven so upon earth." This calls for a mirroring. In heaven God rules supreme. The creatures who live there, angels and saved men, are completely submissive to His will.

Now this also is a legitimate prayer for us in this dispensation. We desire for God's will to be done in the lives of His creatures.

7. This is the companion with the first part of the agenda: "Let Your name be sanctified."

Those who sanctify God's name do His will. This too may become a prayer about the availability of grace assets, but is mostly a reminder of responsibility.

The ensuing part of the agenda has to do with logistics.

1. The aorist active imperative verb DOS is this time a direct command. There is no polite entreaty here.

The adjective EPIOUSION gives further description to ARTON, bread. It defines the exact type of bread.

The adjective is a compound of the preposition EPI and OUSIA, which denotes physical property or existence.

The result of this compound is "for existence." And so this is a matter of physical existence.

You have a right to demand of God the basic necessities for existence. Because you are a creature, He is responsible for those things.

You must of course be willing to work for the access of these necessities, but God is responsible for the work, so that you can access those necessities.

This does not have to do with above and beyond logistics. Rather, just the physical necessities. Since the fall of man, these things must be worked for in some manner, but they are nonetheless available.

With the use of EPIOUSION, this concentrates on physical logistics alone. The rest we have covered. Again, this applies to church age believers equally.

Following the necessary logistics is the prayer for forgiveness: “and forgive us our debts, as we also forgave our debtors.”

1. This is actually a tricky little portion of this model prayer. The tenses are real important, as are some of the lexical issues.

There is a logical progression in this prayer that is not commonly a part of your English translations.

The first part is easy enough: the aorist active imperative APHES is a direct command of God.

The indirect object of the verb is “us.’ We are the benefactors of God’s forgiveness.

The direct object is “our debts.’ Although it is literally “debts,’ it is the debt of sin which is the subject of the prayer. Christ simply uses “debt’ as a metaphor for sin. In Luke’s parallel passage, Luke 11, it is certainly HAMARTIA, and so that clears up the issue once and for all.

You may demand forgiveness from God, since your debts have been paid by the death of Christ on the cross. You don’t have to beg and plead; it is not necessary to do penance. The debt is completely paid in full, and forgiveness is promised to those who confess their sins.

But there is even more here.

(1) The forgiveness of this verse is contingent on whether we forgive others.

(2) It can be rightfully translated, “since we forgave others.’

(3) The most important part of this is the aorist tense of the verb APHIEMI. Its form here is APHEKAMEN, and it is a kappa aorist MI verb.

(4) The aorist tense in the indicative mood portrays past action, so it is definitely dependent on our past forgiveness of others.

(5) Now this is the picture. We may demand forgiveness from God if we have forgiven others.

(6) But if we have not forgiven others, then we remain out of fellowship from Him, and so there is no effective forgiveness.

(7) Holding a grudge perpetuates sin indefinitely. You may confess that sin, but if you continue to hold the grudge you are right back out of fellowship again.

The Final Element, “and do not bring us into testing, but save us from the evil.”

1. The aorist subjunctive of EISPHERO plus the negative adverb ME form a strong prohibition directed toward God.

Although there are several degrees of prohibition, and this is only one short of the strongest. This is strong language indeed to direct at God.

EISPHERO itself has an interesting lexical history:

From Liddell & Scott:

To bring in or contribute, as a description of cooperative effort.

To pay the property tax, again in the collective sense.

To introduce, especially of political measures.

To make a proposition, or to nominate someone.

From Kittel:

Convey a message (bring it into the building).

Bring a sacrifice into the temple for offering.

“Bring” something somewhere, in a very generic sense.

4. PEIRASMON is the direct object of EISPHERO.

In the secular record, it means:

To try or test someone out of distrust.

To test the lines of the enemy with a probe.

In the Biblical record, it means:

Genesis 22:1-19, God tests Abraham (LXX).

This is where God commands Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac.

Abraham proves himself faithful, even unto the sacrifice of his son.

He has a vital identification with the sacrifice of God, because God would have to go through with the same ordeal.

Abraham’s love for God was therefore tremendous. Very few men have equaled this identification.

It is abundantly clear from verses one and twelve that this test came directly from God: “Now it came about after these things, that God tested Abraham... ..for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.”

Psalms 139:23, David asks God to test his heart (LXX).

Verses 23 and 24 read this way: “Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my anxious thoughts; and see if there be any hurtful way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way.”

This is a request to examine David’s soul. The parallelism in verse 23 is decisive. The first

So this requests of God a searching and an examination by testing. An examination by adversity so that any flaws might be discovered, and then eliminated.

1 Corinthians 10:13, temptation or trial as external to man: “No temptation has taken you but human; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.”

There is no such thing as superhuman temptation. God does not allow this.

With the temptation you do receive, there is always a way out..

If you believe in this, then you will certainly begin to perceive its function. You have to learn, however, to look for it.

Here God is presented as one who allows temptation, and restricts temptation, and provides a way out of temptation, but Who does not tempt directly.

James 1:2-4, external temptation or trial: “Consider it all joy, my brothers, whenever you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have a finished product, that you might be mature and complete, lacking in nothing.”

This concentrates on the human perspective of testing, and makes no reference to God at all.

The verb PERIPIPTO depicts someone falling into a difficult situation, and this is certainly the case from human perception. Our trials seem to have a random nature from this point of view.

So in this important verse on temptation there is only a concentration on the proper mental attitude, without looking at the issue of divine involvement in temptation.

James 1:13-14, internal temptation - the sin nature. Temptation emphatically not from God: "Let no one say while being tempted 'I am being tempted from God.' For God is not the author of evil, and He Himself tempts no one. But each one is tempted while being dragged away and enticed by his own lust"

Now this gives an entirely different picture of temptation. It portrays the source of temptation as the lust that is endemic to each human being.

This lust, translated from EPITHUMIA is apparently the sin nature.

The sin nature provides an impulse toward sin, enticing and dragging away the individual by making sin seem attractive.

The rationale given is that God is not the author of evil.

A summary & conclusion on the first half of the final element.

God tests us to see if we fear Him.

It is legitimate to ask God to test you, so as to eliminate flaws.

There is a distinct difference between the trial and the temptation to sin.

The trial or test in life is something that God may bring directly, as in the testing of Abraham, or it may be something that He allows, as in 1 Corinthians 10 and in the book of Job chapters 1 and 2.

h)

These trials are an opportunity to demonstrate your love for Him.

Both the illustration from Job and that from the life of Abraham confirm this with clarity.

The book of James doesn't care whether God brings the test or He allows it; what really matters is our mental attitude during the test.

The temptation to sin is entirely separate from the trial. The trial of the believer is adversity within the setting of the angelic conflict; the

temptation to sin comes from the sin nature, and is an impulse against God.

God could never place within us an impulse to sin; He allows it as a part of the angelic conflict, but He is the author of good and righteous acts.

Satan is the author of sin; he is responsible for the sin nature.

God tests people; their sin nature tempts them to sin.

When God tests you or allows you to be tested, He is looking for good within you, and giving you the opportunity to show your love for Him. During this time you may be tempted by the sin nature, but He always provides a way out of the temptation.

So when Christ prays this forceful prayer, you should understand that He is concentrating not on the test or the trial, but on the temptation to sin.

This prayer is 100% compatible with the verses that we have studied. God does not lead us into temptation; Satan and his minions do.

This prayer does not negate our desire to undergo testing as an opportunity to display the truth in our souls back to God.

The second half of the verse is the flip side.

It begins with the strong adversative conjunction ALLA. This represents a very strong way to contradict what has preceded. So, instead of leading us into temptation...

The aorist middle imperative verb RUSAI communicates a direct command toward God. The command is for deliverance.

This is not an eternal salvation word per se. Rather, it conveys a deliverance from physical or moral danger.

The preposition APO plus the genitive here indicates separation, and is translated "from."

The definite article really is quite significant. It gives exact identity to a noun. The word it modifies is PONEROU, and this is normally an adjective. The problem here is that the genitive

case form is identical in both the neuter and the masculine, so it is impossible to tell whether this is "the evil thing" or "the evil one."

However, there is a way around this. Satan is the head of the cosmic system. If it says "the evil thing," then we could conclude that this was the cosmic system and its destructive influences.

If on the other hand it says "the evil one," it hardly matters, because it stands for Satan and all He represents.

Both "lead us not into temptation" and "but deliver us from the evil" say much the same thing. Temptation leads to the cosmic system.

There are two items to the conclusion:

1. The general force of the prayer.

This prayer contains imperatives of entreaty and imperatives of command.

This prayer shows remarkable force considering that God reigns sovereign over us.

Christ encourages His disciples to pray with force and boldness, even to the sovereign God.

We can pray like this because of two things:

Therefore, get in the habit of praying forcefully when you are confident that the matter is within His will.

2. The agenda given by Christ.

The address is to the Father.

Spiritual growth issues for yourself and for others.

The operation of grace assets.

The function of undeserved suffering.

Praise and worship - the expression of your desire to see Him face to face and many more such expressions of praise.

Evangelism.

This includes grace assets, like common grace.

This includes divine intervention through circumstances and discipline.

This includes human instrumentality for the gospel.

Forgiveness, which comes through confession.

Preservation from temptation, but not from testing.

"9 Therefore you pray like this: "Our Father who is in heaven; let your name be sanctified; 10 Let Your kingdom come; let Your will become, as in heaven so upon earth; 11 Give to us today our logistical bread, 12 and forgive us our debts as we ourselves also forgave our debtors; 13 and do not bring us into testing, but save us from the evil."

The non-ending. "For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever, amen."

This ending is not a part of the original autograph of the Bible.

It was popular in the early (3rd to 7th centuries, AD) Syriac and Coptic translations from

If it gained reception that late, it was not for a legitimate reason. It did not come from the lips of Christ, and He never intended it for us.

Christ's explanation of forgiveness:

Translation: "14 For if you forgive men their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; 15 But if you do not forgive men, neither will your Father forgive your transgressions."

1. The Greek third class conditional sentence contains an if... then clause that represents an uncertain fulfillment. Generally the fulfillment of the "if" depends on the function of human volition.

Each of these verses is a third class conditional sentence. The first is positive, while the second negative.

So if you forgive (and it is your choice to do so) then you will receive forgiveness from God; if you do not forgive (and it is your choice to do so) then you will not receive forgiveness from God.

The word for “transgressions” is PARAPTOMA, and it generally describes sins against God. Even when someone sins against you, ultimately it is an offense against God. This should help you in the realm of forgiveness.

And when you sin against someone else, it is still up to God to forgive you. He is the one who restores fellowship through the power of the Spirit.

Probably the major hurdle that most have about this passage is the relationship between this forgiveness and salvation forgiveness. There is none. This concentrates on the temporal forgiveness, not eternal forgiveness.

Temporal forgiveness is God’s forgiveness of Christians in time. Eternal forgiveness is that permanent forgiveness related to salvation.

1 John 1:9, Hebrews 10:22, and many other New Testament passages treat this subject more thoroughly.

Essentially (see doctrine of fellowship), when we sin, even as Christians we go out of fellowship with God; when we confess that sin, God restores that fellowship.

However, when we hold a grudge, we perpetuate the sin, so that confession does no good; we go right back out of fellowship again.

The perpetuation of other sins apply equally. In other words, you continue to be out of fellowship when you perpetuate a state of sin.

So that, if you perpetuate a state of immorality, you will not receive an effective forgiveness.

Failing to forgive someone is a state of sin against God; it is holding a grudge. It perpetuates sin, and you cannot re-establish fellowship until that state of sin is eliminated.

It is God’s character to forgive; sin is falling short of God’s holy character; if we fail to forgive, we fall short of God’s character.

When someone sins against you, they go out of fellowship; but you also have the opportunity to do the same. When sin goes from one person to another, it can be contagious.

You must understand that their sin was paid for at the cross, and that enables you to completely forgive them. It is not you who is paying for that sin; Christ already did.

It is impossible for anyone who holds a grudge to fulfill the plan of God. You must be at least in fellowship to do so.

Fasting – Christ’s Comment

Matthew 6:16-18, “16 But whenever you fast, do not become like the gloomy hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces in order to appear to men while fasting; truly I say to you, they have their reward. 17 But you while fasting anoint your head and wash your face, 18 so that you might not appear to men while fasting but to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”

Christ begins with the indefinite adverb of time HOTAN: ‘whenever.’ He recognizes that they have a choice to fast.

It is ‘whenever you fast.’ There is no mention of a compulsory fast here, because the fast was not ever a part of the ritual system of Israel.

2, But it was recognized by Christ as a legitimate option. He does not say ‘stop fasting.’ Rather, He regulates their mental attitude for fasting.

The prohibition is a comparison with the gloomy hypocrites.

The adverb HOS compares similarities between two things. So this is a prohibition against becoming like someone else.

The verb is the present imperative of GINOMAI, which describes something as coming into being. This imperative of prohibition warns us against becoming something that we are not.

Since it is a present imperative of prohibition, the action extends indefinitely into the future. It is like saying 'keep on not become like them.' A real equivalent would be 'never become.'

The word for 'gloomy' is SKUTHROPOI. It can be sad, angry, sullen, or gloomy, or really any of their synonyms. It is always related to negative facial expression. The point is, the hypocrites put on a face that is negative. Gloomy seems to fit well, because it matches the sacrificial nature of the fast.

Now the disfigurement comes from the word APHANIZOUSIN, which means literally 'to make unrepresentable.' This is not a literal disfigurement, but the disfigurement that anyone can do. It is making faces. They make unrepresentable faces so that they might appear to men while fasting.

Yet, fasting is not about how you appear before men. The purpose is not to impress men with your sacrifice before God. In fact, the purpose is not to impress God with your sacrifice.

Fasting was never intended as a sacrifice. It was a mini-Sabbath; the setting aside of food for a better concentration on God.

Therefore, if the attitude in fasting is that God will be impressed, it is anti-grace attitude. God is not ever impressed with what we bring to Him; He is rather impressed with our appropriation of His grace. Fasting could never fit into a grace system.

And the idea that man is impressed with fasting and sacrifice is even more hideous.

The ones who fast have their reward: approbation before men. But that is all the reward they will receive. The present tense of APECHOUSIN limits the reception of the reward to the present time. There is no future here.

There is much greater reward for those who have God's grace. It exceeds the emptiness of human approbation by a million-fold.

How empty is any pursuit of lust! Whether approbation or money or stimulation or blood or emotion or power.

There is never satisfaction in lust. There is always satisfaction in the reception of divinely appointed reward, because God is a fair judge.

The proper fasting procedure: anoint your head and wash your face.

This is the ancient equivalent to looking your best. Anointing and washing would be the proper primping for a hot date in ancient Israel.

But this is curious, because it says that you are to do so not to appear before men, but before God in secret.

So there you are, all ready for a date with God, looking your best during your time of fast. The reason is simple: fasting is not a sacrifice! Instead, it is a celebration because it is a time of concentration on God.

And we do have our own parallel during the church age. Whenever you go to study the word of God, or go into secret to pray, you should never put on a public display as though you are making great sacrifices for God. <long sigh> I am going to listen to a tape now.

Your reward is based on what you do before God, and not at all what man might think of that. At some point you have to develop the self-esteem necessary to break free from what people think.

a. This is the point where your love for God exceeds your love for man. Where what God thinks is more important than what man thinks.

b. You must arrive at a place where the thoughts of God are normative for your life, and not the thoughts of man.

c. You may appreciate the thoughts of man insofar as they reflect divine character, for not for their own merit.

The result of the proper fasting attitude is that God will repay you.

What God pays is infinitely better than anything that man or the devil can offer.

God is greater than man; His reward is greater than man.

Therefore, this is a vastly superior reward system.

Grace Provision

Introduction

The overall theme of this passage concentrates on priorities.

Even when the narrative turns to worry, the underlying theme remains in priorities.

A simple way to summarize this passage is to say 'Right priorities eliminate worry.'

Outline.

The Treasure Teaching, vv.19-21.

The Prohibition, v.19: "Do not treasure for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust disfigure, and where thieves break in and steal;"

The Positive Command, v.20: "but treasure for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust disfigure and where thieves neither break in nor steal."

The Summary, v.21: "For where your treasure is there also will be your heart."

The Lamp Illustration, vv.22-23.

The illustration, v.22a: "The lamp of the body is the eye."

The positive application, v.22b: "Therefore if your eye is single, your whole body will be illuminated."

The negative application, v.23a: "But if your eye is evil, your whole body will become darkened."

The summary, v.23b: "Therefore if the light which is in you is dark, how great the dark."

The Keystone of the Passage, v.24: "No one is able to serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will cling

to the one and despise the other. You are not able to serve God and Mammon."

The Application of the Keystone, vv.25-34.

The general statement of application, v.25a: "For this reason I say to you, do not worry what you might eat for your soul, nor what you might wear on your body."

The food application, vv.25b-27.

The first basis for the food application, v.25b: "Isn't the soul more than food and the body than clothing?"

The first illustration of the application, v.26a: "Consider the birds of the sky: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and your heavenly Father sustains them. "

The conclusion to the first illustration, v.26b: "Aren't you better than them?"

The second basis for the food application, v.27: "And who among you while worrying is able to add to his age one bit?"

The clothing application, vv.28-30.

The transition to the application, v.28a: "And why do you worry about clothing? "

The illustration of the clothing application, v.28b-29: "Consider how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin; 29 But I say to you that Solomon in all his glory was not dressed like one of these."

The conclusion from the illustration, v.30: "Now if God so dresses a flower of the field (living today and tomorrow being cast into the furnace) why not much more for you, Littlefaith?"

The final conclusion, vv.31-34.

The negative command, v.31, "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What will we eat?' or, 'What will we drink?' or, 'What will we wear?'"

The negative comparison, v.32a: "For all these things the Gentiles desperately seek;"

The essence of God related to the negative command, v.32b: "and your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things."

The positive command, v.33: "But seek first the kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."

The final statement, v.34: "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself; the evil of it on that day is enough."

II. The Exposition.

Verse 19, "Do not treasure for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust disfigure, and where thieves break in and steal;"

The negative adverb ME plus the present imperative of THESAURIZO adds up to a firm prohibition in the Greek; since this is a present imperative with durative action, the force of the prohibition extends indefinitely into the future, and so causes the idea of 'never treasure for yourselves.

This goes with a dative of advantage of the personal pronoun HUMIN "for yourselves." The act of treasuring is an advantage to the one who does it.

The direct object of the verb is THESAUROUS, 'treasures.' This is a very comprehensive category. There are almost as many treasures as there are people. Listen to this list of 'collectibles' from the Rocky Mountain News classified:

Beer steins, Hot Wheels, Star Wars trading cards, Avalanche limited edition Waterford crystal hockey puck, 1940's coke cooler, Green Bay Packers authentic footballs & helmets, Hummels, baseball cards, jukeboxes, dolls, Barbie dolls, comics, deer head, elk head, McDonalds' toys, slot machines, old phone booth, Richter pewter figurines, Wild Turkey decanters.

2 way radios, jewelry, diamonds, watches, books, coins, stamps, art, perfume and cologne miniatures, antiques of various kinds, etc.

There are two categories of treasures, according to Christ; those that will perish in our lifetime - that moth and rust disfigure; and

those that do not - that thieves break in and steal.

The Greek word APHANIZO means to 'make unrepresentable.' It does not mean 'destroy,' but merely indicates that the reason for its being a treasure is lost. If it is something made out of iron, it oxidizes; out of cloth, the moths eat it.

There are many other ways for worldly treasures to decay, but Christ chooses not to go into an exhaustive list.

So there are worldly treasures which decay and lose their charm.

But what of those things that have lasting value? What of gold and silver and precious stones that last for generations and even millennia?

Nothing is safe in this world.

The thief breaks in and steals; war comes and devours; it is lost at sea in a storm; the divorce settlement snatches it away - and many other causes for loss.

And of course, the greatest cause of loss of all; you die, and even though they remain, you are compelled to leave them.

So the command of this verse is to stop treasuring away for yourselves treasures upon the earth, for they will be lost.

The positive command is second: "but treasure for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust disfigure and where thieves neither break in nor steal."

Our treasures in heaven are imperishable. 1 Peter 1:3-4, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you..."

Since our treasures in heaven are kept there, they are totally apart from any measure of the devil's world.

The resurrection body itself is a great treasure to all believers, but there is much more than that waiting for the one who fulfills the protocol plan for the church age.

See the Order of the Morning Star.

A thief could never break in to heaven; heaven is protection against war, shipwreck, famine, storm, moth, rust, and even divorce (which some will be glad to know).

So the question remains: which is the better treasure to pursue? Is it the earthly, or is it the heavenly?

Verse 21 is a summary of the principle. "For where your treasure is there also will be your heart."

The translation is simple.

For where your treasure is (present tense of EIMI).

There also will be your heart (future tense of EIMI).

So a simple principle: what you treasure, that is, what you desire, will become the seat of all your thinking.

But this is a principle of surpassing importance. Your thoughts follow your desires.

There are six categories of lust: approbation, emotion, blood, money, stimulation, power.

What do you treasure? Whatever you desire, whatever you value - your thoughts will follow.

Essentially Christ is coming down to the basis for motivation. What desire forms a complex of thought in your soul so that you are moved to action?

Desire is formed from conclusive thinking. You evaluate and then judge what you like; and there is your desire. But what you now desire becomes central focus of your thoughts, and there lies the danger.

Now in the context of the passage, if you desire the things of the world, then certainly the world is going to become the central focus of your thoughts.

But if you desire the things of heaven, then there will be a central focus of thought on heaven.

So Christ has reversed His thesis to show a system of perpetuation; that is, the system has its own momentum. Listen: your desires focus your thoughts, and your thoughts form and reinforce your desires.

1 John 2:15-17 is a rehash of these very principles.

15 Do not love the cosmic system nor the things in the cosmic system. If anyone loves the cosmic system, the love of the Father is not in him.

The first part of this verse is command and warning to abstain from having high esteem for the cosmic system.

If you have high esteem for the cosmic system, that is, if you like being involved in it, then you are not in spiritual adulthood.

You cannot enjoy being in the cosmic system and be a spiritual adult at the same time.

The cosmic system is the enemy and opposite of God the Father's plan for your life.

If you are in the cosmic system, then you are an enemy of God, even though you may be a believer.

16 Because everything that is in the cosmic system, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the arrogance of life, is not a part of the Father but is a part of the cosmic system.

John divides the cosmic system into three categories: lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the arrogance of life.

See the genius in this.

There is a kind of lust that comes from within the body - sexual lust.

The lust of the eyes is materialism - what things in life that you desire.

And then there is a generic arrogance of life.

17 And yet the world and its lust is deceiving itself, but the one who does the will of God remains forever.

Again, the cosmic system and its components cause self-deception and self-destruction in the cycle of lust and unhappiness.

Those believers who get involved in the cosmic system lose their rewards for eternity even though they still have eternal life.

By contrast, those believers who stick it out in the plan of God have not only eternal life, but a fantastic system of rewards as well.

Tragically, those who refuse to believe in Christ do not have eternal life, but instead are cast into the lake of fire.

The Lamp Illustration, vv.22-23.

The illustration, v.22a: "The lamp of the body is the eye."

The kind of lamp is the LUCHNOS, a small, hand-held oil lamp. The wick would descend from a notch in the side.

It provided light at night or in any dark place, but it was not a very long-lasting light. It would be more comparable to the modern flashlight than anything else.

So Christ compares the lamp to the eye. The eye is the lamp of the body, providing light.

The eye is the reception point - and it is very common for light to be a metaphor for Bible Doctrine.

Bible Doctrine in the soul is said to be constructed of light

Psalm 43:3, "O send out Thy light and Thy truth, let them lead me; let them bring me to Thy holy hill, and to Thy dwelling places."

Romans 13:12, "The night is almost gone, and the day is at hand. Let us therefore lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light."

Ephesians 5:8, "for you were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light."

1 John 2:8, "the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining."

2 Corinthians 4:6, "For God, who said, 'Light will shine out of darkness,' is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ."

The positive application, v.22b: "Therefore if your eye is single, your whole body will be illuminated."

The word for 'clear' is HAPLOUS. This is a transition zone for the metaphor, so it is difficult to tell whether this word has a physical sense or an ethical sense.

It means literally, 'single,' or more appropriately, 'unplural.' It therefore came to develop many meanings from that original theme.

Simple, or uncomplicated.

Of a single purpose; and from that, pure motive.

Of liquids, pure.

Because this is set parallel to PONEROS in the following verse, it seems that the ethical interpretation is the best.

The eye is a common metaphor of Scripture.

In Genesis 3:5-7 the eyes represent the total process of perception and understanding: "For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil. When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings."

Psalm 119:18 covers the realm of spiritual perception: "Open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things from your Law."

Ephesians 1:18-19 shows that there is a perceptive ability in the heart related to

spiritual matters: "I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might."

In our passage, it seems to be about the perception and understanding of light, which is Bible doctrine.

Now the body is also a metaphor for the entire life of the believer.

Just as the body is biological life, so it may represent the inner life of man; his spiritual life.

The spiritual life of man may include both relationship with God and relationship with the cosmic system.

The singleness of the eye relates to motive.

If you desire light [Bible doctrine], then you will be illuminated [live the quality of the Christian life].

If you have concluded that the doctrinal way of life is the life for you, then you will certainly fill your entire life with light.

And the interpretation of the metaphor is this:

The eye will collect information according to its motive. If the motive of the eye is to accumulate light, then the whole body will be filled with light. Light is a metaphor for Bible doctrine, so that if you are motivated to get doctrine with a singleness of purpose, you will fill your life with doctrine.

Certainly James had this very metaphor in mind when he wrote: "Now if anyone of you lacks wisdom, let him ask from God who gives purely [HAPLOS] to all and who does not insult and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, judging nothing [DIAKRINOMENOS]; for the one who judges is like a wave of the sea, being wind-blown and tossed about. For do not let that man suppose that he will receive anything from God, a double minded man, unstable in all his ways."

Asking from God is the equivalent of the singly motivated eye.

And that God gives purely is confirmation of James' repetition of Christ's principle. the motive of the eye is to accumulate evil, then the whole body will become darkened.

The negative application, v.23a: "But if your eye is evil, your whole body will become darkened."

The evil of the eye is the person motivated to bring in the cosmic counterfeits and lies; to concentrate on the inculcation of the cosmic system.

Naturally, this darkens the life. It is destroyed through the cosmic involvement.

The summary, v.23b: "Therefore if the light which is in you is dark, how great the dark"

What is this 'light which is in you'? This is an interesting phrase to catch our attention!

It is an oxymoron. As defined by Bullinger, in *Figures of Speech of the Bible*, "This is a figure, in which what is said at first sight appears to be foolish, yet when we come to consider it, we find it exceedingly wise. It is a smart saying, which unites words whose literal meanings appear to be incongruous, if not contradictory; but they are so cleverly and wisely joined together as to enhance the real sense of the words."

The light within is the motivating factor of the soul. If you have dark motive toward the counterfeits and lies, then your life will be dark indeed!

The final phrase is TO SKOTOS POSON. That final Greek word is the key. It means 'how great.' And so it is, "how great the dark."

Motive is a thought or complex of thought that leads to action. If your motive is darkness, then the darkness in your soul will be great indeed.

So this metaphor of Christ's concentrates on motive related to the feeding of the soul.

But you can easily perceive how this illustration fits into the overall narrative; how

the treasure and the singleness of perception are one in the same.

Compare these two statements: "For where your treasure is, there also will be your heart;" "Therefore if the light in you is dark, how great the dark." You can perceive that they are opposed to one another in an elementary way, even though they are from different metaphors.

The keystone of the passage is verse 24, where Christ moves away from the metaphor and into a more direct form of communication: "No one is able to serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will cling to the one and despise the other. You are not able to serve God and Mammon."

It does begin with a metaphor, however. The general principle of the metaphor is stated first: "No one is able to serve two masters."

DOULEUO is the verb for serve. Our English serve is greatly watered down. This verb means to 'perform the duties of a slave.' Although the idea of benevolent service is certainly present at the time, this always has the shadow of slavery behind it.

It does not have the idea of benevolent service; as Kittel says, "The meaning is so unequivocal and self-contained that it is superfluous to give examples of the individual terms or to trace the history of the group. Distinction from synonymous words and groups is made possible by the fact that the emphasis here is always on "serving as a slave." Hence we have a service which is not a matter of choice for the one who renders it, which he has to perform whether he likes it or not, because he is subject as a slave to an alien will, to the will of his owner."

The master is KURIOS. Again from Kittel: "In the concept of the lord two things are conjoined in organic unity: the exercise of power as such, and the personal nature of its exercise, which reaches beyond immediate external compulsion into the moral and legal sphere... KURIOS means having legal power."

The institution of slavery was viewed differently in the ancient world, and even through the Bible:

Since there are provisions regulating slavery in the establishment code.

But if slavery were an evil institution, then why would God allow for its regulation? We might seek an answer in two ways: through the doctrine of dispensations, and through a closer examination of the Mosaic provisions.

The dispensational answer is inadequate.

Remember, the establishment code of the Mosaic Law remains a valid option for any nation in the church age.

It was brought over because the millennial kingdom was rejected by the Jews; the restraint of the ruling Christ and the incarceration of the fallen angels must wait until the second advent.

Divine establishment protects the freedom of all so that there might be a perpetuation of the angelic conflict; in essence it prevents the self-destruction of the human race.

The Mosaic Law's establishment provisions were designed for a nation under the spiritual guidance of God; there is not an exact parallel to the Gentile client nations of the church age.

This is why no church age nation may legitimately adopt the spiritual code of the Mosaic Law; indeed, even the establishment code's provisions for spiritual offenders should not come into Law.

The nature of slavery remains the same some 3500 years after the giving of the Law at Mt. Sinai; it is a legitimate establishment issue; therefore, the Mosaic provisions are as valid today as they have ever been.

The New Testament does not adopt mandatory manumission; not in the book of Philemon, not anywhere.

Christian slaveholders may reconsider their position on slaveowning due to Christian convictions, but they certainly have no right to force the freeing of slaves on anyone else.

The New Testament sees the institution of slavery as a legitimate authority; “slaves obey your masters” is mentioned more than once by the apostle Paul: Ephesians 6:5-6; Colossians 3:22; 1 Timothy 6:1.

Therefore, we must study the concept of slavery more closely.

There were two sources of slavery in the ancient world: poverty in peacetime and captured prisoners in war.

· Leviticus 25:39-41, “If a countryman of yours becomes so poor with regard to you that he sells himself to you, you shall not subject him to a slave’s service. He shall be with you as a hired man, as if he were a sojourner; he shall serve with you until the year of jubilee. He shall then go out from you, he and his sons with him, and shall go back to his family, that he may return to the property of his forefathers.” This passage tells us a couple of things.

- That slavery was a welfare system of Israel. That is, when people became impoverished, they could sell themselves to someone else as slaves.

- But not all could be taken as slaves; a Jew could not accept another of his own countrymen as a slave but instead only in the de facto sense. He could be hired as if he were a migrant worker, which is the best parallel to our modern times.

- The analogy to this in our own time is the Christian; you could never in good conscience keep another Christian as a slave. Listen to the explanation in verse 42, “For they are My servants whom I brought out from the land of Egypt; they are not to be sold in a slave sale.”

- By working this way for a private citizen, the impoverished person retained some measure of self-respect; there was then no slavery nor total poverty.

- The year of jubilee occurred every fifty years; it could conceivably be a lifetime of slavery before a person thus obliged could be set free.

- This also represents an irrevocable contract until the jubilee.

· As an effect of war many unfortunates were left in abject poverty. The conquering nation solved this situation by enslaving the people of the devastated land.

Slaves could be bought and sold as property, Exodus 21:7. For instance, a father could sell his daughter or son into slavery to pay off the debts. Nehemiah 5:5.

A woman could sell herself into slavery, Deut 15:12-18, “If your kinsman, a Hebrew man or woman, is sold to you, then he shall serve you six years, but in the seventh year you shall set him free. When you set him free, you shall not send him away empty-handed. you shall furnish him liberally from your flock and from your threshing floor and from your wine vat; you shall give to him as the Lord your God has blessed you. You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God redeemed you; therefore I command you this today. It shall come about if he says to you, ‘I will not go out from you, because he loves you and your household, since he fares well with; then you shall take an awl and pierce it through his ear into the door, and he shall be your servant forever. Also you shall do likewise to your maidservant. It shall not seem hard to you when you set him free, for he has given you six years with double the service of a hired man; so the Lord your god will bless you in whatever you do.”

Slaves were often acquired through trade, purchase, payment of debt, as a gift, through birth, plunder in war, or by self-determination.

Slaves were manumitted by the elapse of time (six years), Exodus 21:24, by the year of jubilee (the fiftieth year), Jeremiah 34:8-10, through physical disability or being maimed, Exodus 21:26. In this case the master was responsible to take care of the slave for life.

Rights of the Master.

· He had the right to hold slaves from foreign lands as personal property. Leviticus 25:44-45:

“As for your male and female slaves whom you may have - you may acquire male and female slaves from the pagan nations that are around you. Then, too, it is out of the sons of the sojourners who live as aliens among you that you may gain acquisition, and out of their families who are with you, whom they will have produced in your land; they also may become your possession.”

- He had the right to leave slaves as an inheritance to his children, Leviticus 25:46: “You may even bequeath them to your sons after you, to receive as a possession; you can use them as permanent slaves. But in respect to your countrymen, the sons of Israel, you shall not rule with severity over one another.”

- He had the right to hold as property the wife and children of all slaves who were unmarried at the time they became slaves, Exodus 21:4: “If his master gives him a wife, and she bears him sons or daughters, the wife and her children shall belong to her master, and he shall go out alone.”

- He had the right to punish or discipline slaves, but not to kill them, Exodus 21:20-21: “If a man strikes his male or female slave with a rod and he dies at his hand, he shall be punished. If, however, he survives a day or two, no vengeance shall be taken; for he is his property.”

The Rights of the Slave.

- He had the right to freedom by the purchase of his redemption, or by the elapse of time, or in the Year of Jubilee, or he could work his way into freedom. And because of the threefold mandates on the release of slaves, the slave always had the hope of freedom.

- The Jewish slave had the right to good treatment, Leviticus 25:43, 46: “You shall not rule over him with severity, but are to revere your God.”

- He had the right to marry, have children and live a normal life, Exodus 21:5.

- He had the right to voluntary slavery where having been freed could choose to remain a

slave, Exodus 21:5ff; Deuteronomy 15:16. His request had to be honored. This was done in front of two witnesses. The mark of this voluntary slavery was having his ear lobe nailed to a door.

- He had the right to worship God without interference from the master, Exodus 12:43-44, “This is the ordinance of the Passover, no foreigner is to eat of it, but every man’s slave purchased with money, after you have circumcised him, then he may eat of it.”

The responsibility of a master to a slave is taught in Ephesians 6:9 and Colossians 4:1.

- Ephesians 6:9, “And master, do the same things to them, and give up threatening, knowing that both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.”

- Colossians 4:1, “Masters, grant to your slaves justice and fairness, knowing that you too have a Master in heaven.”

Even the epistle to Philemon doesn't advocate the abolition of slavery, but emphasizes just treatment of slaves who are believers or otherwise. It also gives strong emphasis on the personal option to free slaves under principles of grace righteousness. However, this is an option to be exercised by the individual slave owner and not the federal government.

Nowhere in Scripture is slavery portrayed as an immoral institution. It is an institution that requires an extra helping of virtue, because of the inordinate amount of power that the master has over the slave.

It is really therefore the unvirtuous nation that should not own slaves; the virtuous can handle it.

Therefore, the slave was under a master’s absolute authority, and could be commanded to do many unfair (though not immoral) things.

With the absolute realm of authority, no slave could serve two masters. This is rather like a farcical sitcom about someone trying to keep two wives and keep them secret from one another.

But here the masters are more cosmic; they are the KOSMOS of Satan, or the plan of God.

You cannot serve the KOSMOS and the plan at the same time. These two, of all masters, put on demands that are diametrically opposed.

When you are in a cosmic system of lust, you cannot please God, nor can you fulfill His plan.

When you are in God's plan there is no way that any of Satan's plan seems savory.

In the verse, there are two sets of words in opposition to one another:

MISO and AGAPAO are the first two; love and hate. These are the mental attitudes related to masters.

ANTECHO and KATAPHRONEO are the second pair; cling and despise. These are a little different; the first is related to touch, while the second is related to thought; but it is the kind of thought that would never touch. These are simply synonyms for the preceding pair.

Christ makes a very important point: the feelings that one has for masters that are so diametrically opposed will certainly polarize after a while. If your two masters are at war with one another, they will give commands in opposition to one another, and you will have to choose.

Now this dovetails with what has gone previously.

Do not treasure for yourselves treasures on earth;

Have a single good motive.

You are not able to serve God and Mammon.

MAMMON is an Aramaic word which concentrates on the business world; it is not private property, but rather a way of doing business. That is the exact formulation of the word in Luke 16:9,11.

Therefore it is representative of the cosmic system, with all of its lusts. This is well supported by 1 John 2:15-17, where the KOSMOS is defined by three systems of lust.

So it is, "You are not able to serve God and the cosmic system.

This is the keystone of the passage, because it summarizes the main principle and links two concepts important to most people.

The accumulation of wealth;

Just staying ahead.

You see, the cosmic system can separate you from God through either system.

The accumulation of wealth can become so consuming that you are distracted from the plan of God.

Just staying ahead may develop into a fatal distraction just the same way.

The food application, vv.25b-27. "25 For this reason I say to you, do not worry what you might eat for your soul, nor what you might wear on your body. Isn't the soul more than food and the body than clothing? 26 Consider the birds of the sky: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and your heavenly Father sustains them. Aren't you better than them? 27 And who among you while worrying is able to add to his age one bit?"

Christ issues a command. The present imperative of MERIMNAO plus the negative adverb ME gives the force of 'do not ever worry.' The action of the present imperative is ongoing, and so extends the prohibition indefinitely.

PSUCHE is the word Christ employs for 'soul.' It is the soul as the seat of life. So this is not about spiritual food, as we might assume from a first reading, but rather about the food that keeps body and soul together.

In ancient Palestine, shelter was not considered one of the essentials. Elsewhere it could be included in this list.

The first illustration of the application, v.26a: "Consider the birds of the sky: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and your heavenly Father sustains them."

The verb TREPHEI describes the action of God the Father in sustaining the birds. It means to feed or sustain someone who is helpless to provide for himself.

This verb is in the present tense, and it describes the continuous action of the Father in His provision for the helpless.

And this even in the devil's world. It is the devil's world, and the Father provides for the helpless animals.

The conclusion to the first illustration, v.26b: "Aren't you better than them?"

This is an idiomatic translation. If it were literal, it would more like this: "Don't you compare favorably with them?" And even that is a fudge.

But the point is this: people are much more important in God's eyes than animals.

So this is a logical argument: if God takes care of the birds, and human beings are much more important than birds, then God will certainly take care of human beings.

There is no dispensational influence in this passage. Christ speaks of current conditions, and not the conditions of His heavenly kingdom.

The second basis for the food application, v.27: "And who among you while worrying is able to add to his age one bit?"

The Greek PECHUN is a cubit. It would more literally be 'one half-yard.' But in the English we do not add spatial measures to our units of time. In the ancient world they were much less picky.

So Christ says that worry does not add one bit to your years, and of course He is perfectly right.

Worry does not add to life or improve life in any way. Instead it has the opposite effect. Worry is perhaps the worse lifestyle choice that you can make. It ruins capacity for life completely.

The inclusion of the matter of logistics at this point is intriguing. Remember, Christ began our passage by concentrating on the matter of treasure. By no means is the matter of logistics comparable with the treasures of this life. One is far below the other.

But Christ has rendered the matter of earthly treasures to the status of a non-issue. So if earthly treasure is a non-issue, then what really is an issue? Well, many would say logistics. But they would be wrong.

You see, Christ begins with earthly treasures, then He states His keystone principle; you cannot serve God and Mammon. You cannot fulfill the plan of God and at the same time please the dictates of the cosmic system.

Now you see that Christ is telling us that the worldly view of logistics is all wrong as well. Logistics is not something to be worried over. Not even in the devil's world.

The bottom line: either it's your time to go, in which case you can do nothing at all about it, or it's not. And if it is not your time to go, then God is going to provide you with the logistics you need.

So Christ is saying here that you can waste a lot of time and energy in worrying about logistics, and that to do so is a great compromise of heavenly potential.

And He is building up to something more. Right priorities in life serve a dual purpose.

The clothing application, vv.28-30.

The transition to the application, v.28a: "And why do you worry about clothing?"

The illustration of the clothing application, v.28b-29: "Consider how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin; 29 But I say to you that Solomon in all his glory was not dressed like one of these."

The lilies of the field grow in one place; they do not go searching here and there for nourishment. They are not the lilies of the garden, carefully tended by the gardener; these are wildflowers.

The lilies find nourishment where they are, and that is it. From their nourishment they grow their beautiful flowers.

Solomon was the wealthiest man of his time, and indeed the wealthiest man in the history of Israel; he was arrayed in the finest splendor, and yet he was not as well-dressed as a lily of the field.

The conclusion from the illustration, v.30: "Now if God so dresses a flower of the field (living today and tomorrow being cast into the furnace) why not much more for you, Littlefaith?"

God dresses the wildflowers in the finest array, and they do not run around frantically trying to provide for themselves.

And those wildflowers are here for only a season, and sometimes less than a season. Many wildflowers in the high Rockies are there for a couple of weeks.

Christ coins a new word, OLIGOPISTOI. It is literally 'Littlefaith.' It is a descriptive word that includes a noun and adjective in one. Kind of like fathead.

This is another great comparison. Human beings are much more important to God than wildflowers; human beings resolve the angelic conflict, and wildflowers do not.

So with the matter of clothing logistics, God will take care of us, unless it is our time to go.

The final conclusion, vv.31-34.

The negative command, v.31, "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What will we eat?' or, 'What will we drink?' or, 'What will we wear?'"

The negative adverb ME plus the aorist subjunctive MERIMNESETE is a very strong prohibition in the Greek language.

This forms a conclusion from the preceding teachings on food and clothing logistics.

The negative comparison, v.32a: "For all these things the Gentiles desperately seek;"

Now Christ turns to the Gentiles.

The Gentiles were the unbelievers of the ancient world, separated from Israel by their attitude toward the gospel.

EPIZETOUSIN describes a frantic search for something; a desperate, seeking action.

The Gentiles frantically, desperately seek after the logistics of life. So this would be a great insult to the Jews around Him. They hated the Gentiles and always sought to distinguish themselves in every way from them.

So Christ mentions that this is the lifestyle of the Gentiles, and that they, the Jews were guilty of the same thing.

And the Jews of all people should have known about logistics and should have been very relaxed about those things.

The essence of God related to the negative command, v.32b: "and your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things."

God is aware of our logistical needs; and we are extremely important to Him.

A knowledge of the capabilities of God is essential to your relaxation about logistics.

But more than that, you must add the attributes of God to the equation.

He loves you; He is gracious; He is orderly; He is sovereign; He is faithful.

Understanding these things adds up to this: He wants the best for you, He knows the best way to provide for you, He has the best plan for that provision, He does it, and He never fails to do it.

The positive command, v.33: "But seek first the kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."

This is the priorities solution to logistics.

It is a simple solution indeed; God is going to take care of you no matter what; and more than that, for Christ includes all the things He has spoken about, including the treasures.

There is a catch, though. You must seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

The kingdom of God and His righteousness has been already presented in this sermon; it is the spiritual code given in the beatitudes.

The spiritual code (see Beatitude Quick Review).

PROSTITHESETAI is the future passive indicative of PROSTITHEMI. The verb means 'to add one thing to another,' or 'to grant something to someone.'

Here it is more likely the latter. God grants us the logistics and even more, the treasures of this life if we keep our priorities straight.

If you keep your priorities straight you are going to make it to maturity. That is really the only trick to the entire process.

The simplicity of the presentation here make that extremely lucid. Seek God's kingdom first, and all these things will be granted to you.

So you must do these things on a daily basis; you must exercise faithfulness in the intake of doctrine, and the rest will work out.

The treasures added are simply a preview of coming attractions in eternity.

The final statement, v.34: "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself; the evil of it on that day is enough."

This final statement operates as a kind of summary. But the final clause is a little mysterious.

I have translated it in a very literal manner; it comes down to a statement concerning the function of evil on every day of your life.

Evil functions every day. Every day of your life has its own challenges; why worry about the challenges of tomorrow, then?

Keep your focus on the tests of today. And the solution to the tests of today is Bible doctrine.

The intake of doctrine today is the solution to the challenges of tomorrow.

Judge Not

Matthew 7:1-6

1 "Do not judge so that you might not be judged. 2 For in what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and by the measure that you measure, it will be measured to you. 3 And why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? 4 Or how will you say to your brother, 'Let me seize the speck out of your eye,' and behold, the log is in your own eye? 5 Hypocrite, first seize the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye. 6 Do not give the holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turning tear you to pieces.

Luke 6:37-42

37 "And do not judge and you will not be judged; and do not condemn, and you will certainly not be condemned; pardon, and you will be pardoned. 38 Give, and it will be given to you; good measure, having been pressed down, shaken, running over, will pour into your lap. For in what measure you measure, it will be measured to you in return." 39 And He also spoke a parable to them: "A blind man is not able to guide a blind man, is he? Will they not both fall into a pit? 40 A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher. 41 And why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? 42 Or how are you able to say to your brother, 'Brother, let me seize the speck that is in your eye,' when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? 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.

Harmonic Conversion "And do not judge so that you might not be judged. For in what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and do not condemn, and you will certainly not be condemned; pardon, and you will be pardoned. Give, and it will be given to you; good measure,

having been pressed down, shaken, running over, will pour into your lap. And by the measure that you measure, it will be measured to you.' And He also spoke a parable to them: 'A blind man is not able to guide a blind man, is he? Will they not both fall into a pit? A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher. And why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how are you able to say to your brother, 'Brother, let me seize the speck that is in your eye,' when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? 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. Do not give the holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turning tear you to pieces.'"

II. Introduction.

Context.

This immediately follows the teaching on priorities.

There is hardly a transition in the Greek; simply the conjunction KAI. It is like saying, "And here's another thing - don't judge."

So this is a swift and complete transition between dissimilar subjects.

Outline. The outline follows a simple parallel structure. Christ comments on the evils of judging, and then gets into the subject of teachability. He does this twice.

The prohibition against judging.

The exhortation on teachability.

The judgmental hypocrite.

The metaphor of the worthless pupil.

Doctrine of judging.

III. Exposition.

The prohibition against judging. "And do not judge so that you might not be judged. For in what judgment you judge, you will be judged;

and do not condemn, and you will certainly not be condemned; pardon, and you will be pardoned. Give, and it will be given to you; good measure, having been pressed down, shaken, running over, will pour into your lap. And by the measure that you measure, it will be measured to you.'"

Christ sets up a simple formula: if you do not judge, you will not be judged.

And of course this implies the opposite: if you judge, you will be judged.

We understand what judgment is from the human frame of reference; but what is the judgment that comes as a result of it?

It is a judgment that is outside of the one who has perpetrated the sin. The passive voice of the verb KRITHETE confirms this. In the passive voice, the subject of the verb receives the action but does not produce it. This is negated in the strongest possible way, showing God's integrity in the matter.

So someone outside of us produces the judgment. This is certainly God.

God produces more than one kind of judgment for believers. There is the judgment of Divine discipline in time; there is also the final evaluation at the judgment seat of Christ.

When we judge out of place, that is a sin. Sin was judged completely and totally at the cross, and cannot be a criteria for our judgment in eternity.

When we commit personal sins, God disciplines us. The reason for this discipline is so that we might return to fellowship with Him.

The discipline that we receive is a judgment; we cannot question the just nature of God's dealing with our personal sins during the span of our lives.

But that discipline is a judgment not to satisfy the justice of God concerning our sins, but rather to motivate us to return to fellowship with Him.

The judgment seat of Christ has a judgment based on our fulfillment of the plan of God. It therefore has no direct connection to any sin that we commit during our time on planet earth.

So if we commit sins, we will receive judgment. And we should certainly refrain from sin in order to avoid the discipline that is sure to follow.

And the discipline that we will receive is always commensurate with the sin committed, whatever sin it is.

God is perfectly just in the giving of discipline.

You can never get away with anything that you do in the realm of sin. This verse confirms that it is never going to be worth it.

And the application extends beyond the idea of sin in judgment to every category of sin.

Next is a similar prohibition against condemnation. KATADIKAZO is the verb here.

This verb concentrates on the condemnation of the innocent, and the premature condemnation of anyone. Therefore, this serves as an explanation of the preceding.

There is certainly a legitimate realm of judgment. God has delegated to mankind the ability to judge within a realm of authority. This demonstrates that the judgment and condemnation is not to fall outside of that realm.

But people who condemn will themselves be condemned. 1 John 2:11, "The one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes."

There is a condemnation that comes in time, and one that comes in eternity. If you are in darkness, you will certainly not gain a favorable review at the judgment seat. And in the mean time you will certainly receive divine discipline in time.

Condemnation cannot extend to loss of salvation. It can extend to everything else.

Now the exhortation extends to the positive side. Pardon, and you will be pardoned. This is a simple extension of the exhortation on forgiveness found at the end of the Lord's prayer. You cannot possibly remain in fellowship and at the same time hold a grudge.

The final exhortation requires an explanation. "Give, and it will be given to you; good measure, having been pressed down, shaken, running over, will pour into your lap. And by the measure that you measure, it will be measured to you."

First, let's eliminate the possibility that this is a money-making scheme. The present imperative of DIDOMI is a command that exhorts both immediate and ongoing action. It is "keep on giving." But there is no specification of the object of giving.

There are, of course, many ways to give from the Christian perspective.

Money is only one way to give. You can volunteer your time, your talent, your skill.

If you do give, God will definitely continue to supply your ability to do so, if that is what He wants you to do.

So even if you give money, and God gives money to you as a result of that, it is definitely not for your enrichment. Instead, He is supplying your pure desire to give. If that desire becomes corrupt, then two possibilities exist:

The money remains as Divine discipline;

The money will be withdrawn.

Second, let's examine Christ's metaphor.

Good measure is METRON KALON. This denotes a proper measurement of a liquid. It is a good and proper measurement according to convention. The vessel is therefore full, but not overflowing.

PEPIESMENON is the perfect passive participle of PIEZO, which means to press down. This action is portrayed as past relative to the main

verb, which is to come. It is an irretrievable action.

So you have a good measure of some liquid, and you use something to compress it.

The next step is *SESALEUMENON*, another perfect participle, which depicts the action of shaking. The vessel has been shaken. This we cannot now undo.

The present participle *HUPEREKCHUNNOMENON* now reveals an action in the process of occurrence. It is overflowing.

And then comes the future indicative of *DIDOMI*, 'will give.' It will give into your lap.

The metaphor then has someone doing two silly things: taking a full vessel of liquid, you press down on the liquid with some flat surface and then shake it. It is going to overflow! This is really quite silly.

But the metaphor represents something quite important with reference to giving.

The good measure is what you give; you give prudently, but without excess or unnecessary discomfort.

Pressing down and shaking that good measure is again the action of the one who holds the vessel; it is the one who gives.

Essentially, this is interfering or messing with what is given.

The result is disaster, the contents of the vessel spill over into your lap. The metaphor clearly shows someone doing something really stupid and paying the price for it.

The moral of the story is never interfere with what God has given you to give. Do not limit it or meddle in it in any way. Just pass it on.

Christ finishes this segment by saying, "For by the measure that you measure, it will be measured to you."

But this too contains a negative connotation. The explanatory *GAR* effects a transition from

the negative illustration to this explanation of it.

So by the measure that you interfere with the giving, God will measure back to you in Divine discipline. The discipline will be quite appropriate to the interference.

God chooses us as His intermediaries. He gives us authority, and employs us in provision for others. In all our endeavors we are to represent His character; when we fail in the discharge of our responsibility, discipline comes in proper measure to remind us of the superior nature of God's grace.

The exhortation on teachability. "And He also spoke a parable to them: 'A blind man is not able to guide a blind man, is he? Will they not both fall into a pit? A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher.'"

The interjection of this brief discourse on teachability and spiritual leadership seems mysterious at first. What has this to do with judgment?

But James 1:5-8 gives us a clue: "(5) Now if anyone of you lacks wisdom, let him ask from the God Who gives to all with single motive and without reproach and it will be given to him. (6) But let him ask in faith, judging nothing; for the one who judges is like a wave of the sea, blown by the wind and tossed. (7) For that man cannot suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord, (8) he is a double minded man, unstable in all his ways."

So this is about those who might desire wisdom; that is, they want to guide their lives by the wisdom of God.

James says let them ask God.

God gives with a single motive - to provide the best for His creatures.

And God gives without reproach; there is nothing that you could have done in the past that is going to cause God to revile or insult you at the moment that you change your mind to follow Him.

Turning your priorities to the truth is a good decision; why would God participate in insulting you at the time? The entire purpose for His discipline in your life was to bring to this moment. There is no longer any need for it at all.

But this one is to ask in faith, judging nothing. Why does my translation substitute judge for doubt? It is so that you can understand the exact meaning of the word DIAKRINO.

In the active voice it means to judge or discern. That is, to use your frame of reference in order to make distinctions.

In the middle voice it means to doubt, and it is in the middle voice here. But here is the crux of the meaning: the middle voice both produces and receives the action of the verb. So it both judges and receives judgment. It depicts the activity of judging self at the same time as it judges another, so that the two are combined.

So that, there is internal judgment that causes external judgment. A judgment in the soul casts a shadow of judgment on the Scripture, so that there is doubt concerning the sufficiency of it.

Judgmental people judge Scripture.

Standing in judgment against Scripture is the opposite of humility, and you can only benefit from Scripture if you are humble toward it.

Your humility must extend to Scripture as originally written and intended.

A judgmental nature against people exists because of personal failure.

The personal failure is combined with denial so that there is a necessity to criticize all aspects of the life of others, outside of the normal realm of authority.

Being hypercritical is but one aspect of this flaw in the soul; people who are unable to cope with their personal failures also have a tendency to project their sins and flaws onto others who do not share these characteristics.

This judgmental nature extends to Scripture, so that the Word itself becomes the object of the

flawed person's hypercritical nature. This extends even to the person of God Himself.

Faults are projected on Scripture, and then the word is discounted.

(10) Also common is the extension of hypercriticism and projection of flaws upon the teachers of Bible doctrine.

(11) This will usually conclude with a statement similar to this: "I think everyone interprets Scripture in their own way."

Now Christ's little parable addresses these issues.

'A blind man is not able to guide a blind man, is he? Will they not both fall into a pit?'

You need an authoritative guide to Scripture. You cannot grow by yourself. This is why pastors exist.

The person who judges teachers of Bible doctrine and makes himself an authority without cause is a blind man.

1 Timothy 6:3-11,17: "(3) If anyone advocates a different doctrine and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, (4) he is conceited and understands nothing; but he has a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words, out of which arise envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions, (5) and constant friction between men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain."

Verses three through five confirm the truth that it is possible to be a 'doctrinal' person and yet have no relationship with God.

There are two points of comparison that Paul makes regarding the doctrine of those who claim to have doctrine but don't, and the true doctrine.

The first point of comparison is the sound words of Jesus Christ;

The second point of comparison is the doctrine conforming to godliness. So if it is not from

Christ, and it is not about godliness, that is, becoming like God in character, then it is not sound doctrine. (e) Paul says that the person without sound doctrine has a few negative characteristics.

He is conceited and understands nothing. Conceited means that he is teaching doctrine for the impure motive of approbation.

the person who teaches unsound doctrine has a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words, out of which arise envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions, and constant friction between men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth.

But there is also a general caveat against anyone who takes the study of the word of God beyond the realm of godliness and into an empty academic pursuit.

This causes many evil things that divide the body of Christ at the local level and even beyond the local level.

And finally, this person supposes that godliness is a means of gain. This is monetary gain, and so this is the transition into the part about money. Godliness - the function of the body of Christ is not intended as a means to material gain. It is not intended as legal tender in the spiritual realm.

These blind guides still tend to be popular; the cause is their ability to make worldly wisdom sound truly wise.

Romans 2:17-24 defines the blind teacher, "(17) But if you bear the name 'Jew' and rely upon the Law and boast in God, (18) and know His will and approve the things that are essential, being instructed out of the Law, (19) and are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, and a light to those who are in darkness, (20) a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of the immature, having in the Law the embodiment of knowledge and of the truth, (21) you, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that one shall not steal, do you steal? (22) You who say that one should not commit adultery, do you

commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? (23) You who boast in the Law, through your breaking the Law, do you dishonor God? (24) For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you, just as it is written."

Paul takes his own countrymen to task here for their hypocrisy.

These Jews have the infinitely wise Law of God; they boast in the favor of God; they even know the Law well enough to become instructors.

They are confident that they lead the blind to the light of the truth, correct the foolish, teach the immature, etc. etc. etc.

But the teacher must practice what he preaches, and these Jews were doing nothing of the sort.

And because of that the Gentiles were blaspheming God, hating Him because of the Lawless activities of these Jews.

And in this these Jewish teachers of the Law were blind, and they were leading the blind.

This passage therefore gives us a good definition of the blind teacher: he is the one who is locked in to the cosmic system.

1 Timothy 1:3-7, "(3) As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus so that you may command certain men not to teach strange doctrines, (4) nor to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies, which give rise to mere speculation rather than furthering the administration of God which is by doctrine. (5) But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. (6) For some men, straying from these things, have turned aside to fruitless discussion, (7) wanting to be teachers of the Law, even though they do not understand either what they are saying or the matters about which they make confident assertions."

Paul gives Timothy the authority to command certain men to stop teaching non-Biblical doctrines.

The word PARAGGELO is simply to command, or to order someone. It is from legitimate and direct authority.

The non-Biblical doctrines are HETERODIDASKALO. HETEROS means different or distinct from the original. This verb portrays the action of teaching doctrine that is not a part of the Bible.

They were paying attention to myths and endless genealogies that had nothing to do with the truth.

- These teachers had probably adopted the Greek or Roman mythologies, and were teaching it as truth. This of course would cause Paul no small amount of indigestion.

- And they were on the subject of the genealogies, which the Jews believed to be of great importance. They traced their genealogies for the purpose of validating their racial purity, a complete non-issue.

The pursuit of myths and genealogies give rise to speculation, which is not helpful in the realm of doctrine.

The administration of God is the OIKONOMIA, a sort of opposite word to KOSMOS. This is the church age dispensation; not the BASILEIA, or kingdom, but the administration which stands in its place until the return of Jesus Christ.

This administration is furthered by PISTIS, which is doctrine; the teacher of truth must concentrate on just that; the truth.

- Furthering the administration is summarized by Paul when he says, "love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith."

- Love from a pure heart is love for God through the truth; love for self in spiritual self-esteem; love for others in the function of virtue.

- The good conscience is the ability to discern truth from a lie. This is a conscience that is full of divine standards and is especially cognizant of what constitutes divine character.

- The sincere faith is literally 'unhypocritical.' It defines faith from the viewpoint of motive. You

must pursue the Christian faith because you love God, and for no other reason.

"For some men, straying from these things, have turned aside to fruitless discussion, (7) wanting to be teachers of the Law, even though they do not understand either what they are saying or the matters about which they make confident assertions."

A teacher of doctrine goes bad when he strays from the three things that Paul has discussed. He is the blind leading the blind at that point.

Fruitless discussion is MATAIOLOGIAN - empty words. MATAIOS is a spiritual phenomenon that describes the vacuum created when the truth is rejected.

These men have created that vacuum by rejecting both the person of God and His word.

They don't understand what they are saying; they do not even understand the source of their dogmatic assertions.

You must as a teacher of doctrine have an ability to understand and analyze spiritual phenomena thoroughly, and communicate it clearly.

Dogma without comprehension or effective communication is totally useless. But note: this does not rule out dogma as a means to teaching; confident assertions are absolutely necessary in the guidance of sheep. Anything less results in confusion.

2 Timothy 4:1-4: "(1) I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: (2) preach the word; stand up to the pulpit in good times and bad times; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great endurance and instruction. (3) For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths."

The shepherd is to preach the word; this is the defining measure of any minister.

EPHISTEMI means to stand up in front of a group. In our frame of reference it would mean stand up to the pulpit. This is to be done in good times EUKAIROS, and bad times, AKAIROS.

No matter what the problem or challenge of the ministry, the solution is in the word and can be solved from standing up before the assembly.

In good times or bad, the minister has to stand before his congregation and offer the effective solutions from the word.

He is to reprove, ELEGCHO; this describes the pointing out of an error. So in the context of the pulpit, the pastor is to demonstrate what is evil through the word.

He is to rebuke, EPITIMAO; this means that the pastor is to employ the word forcefully, going beyond normal politeness in order to place the right tone in preaching against what is wrong.

He is to exhort, PARAKALEO; this means that the minister must stand up as the defense attorney for his congregation, lending his professional knowledge of Bible truth to the needs of the individuals.

And he is to do this, Paul reminds, in all endurance and teaching.

- The word MAKROTHUMIA is governed by a preposition, EN; it therefore is an adverb by nature.

- Also governed by the same preposition is DIDACHE. These two work together to show how all these things are to be accomplished. With endurance and teaching.

- Endurance means that he is to be consistent in his plugging away at Bible doctrine; teaching means that it is to be done in the lecture mode.

The congregation will in time desire to have their ears tickled by myths; pleasing stories that are dramatic by nature.

The myth does not contain truth; it is judged only on the basis of its entertainment value.

So the congregation will want its ears tickled with entertainment from the pulpit, and really, Paul could care less about that.

The reason is that they have no endurance for sound doctrine; HUGIAINOUSES DIDASKALIAS is sound doctrine. It means literally, 'healthy.'

The way that a congregation loses their endurance for sound doctrine is through their pastor; they lose it because their pastor goes weak on the teaching of the word.

A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher.

This is very important, in that it points out the general principle of authority with regard to spiritual growth.

The disciple is below the teacher, learning the principles from him. This was certainly the pattern of Christ's ministry.

So the disciple must have humility, a predisposition to obey his legitimate spiritual authority.

The perfect participle KATERTISMENOS is from KATARTIZO.

It originally meant to take the wrinkles out of your robe by the downward movement of your hands - literally to 'straighten down'.

It came to indicate every kind of straightening or renovation known to the ancient world. But at the heart of this compound verb is the idea that order is being made from chaos.

Here are some of the other New Testament uses of this verb:

- Matthew 4:21, "...mending their nets" Also Mark 1:19.

- Matthew 21:16, "out of the mouths of infants and nursing babes you have straightened praise for yourself." Here the speech of the infant is straightened out into something that can be understood.

- 1 Corinthians 1:10, "Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,

that you all agree, and there be no divisions among you, but you be made straight in the same mind and in the same judgment.”

· 2 Corinthians 13:11, “Put yourselves in order...”

· Galatians 6:1, “Brethren, even if a man is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, lest you too be tempted.”

· Hebrews 13:21, “...(Jesus our Lord) equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight.”

· 1 Peter 5:10, “And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.”

So this depicts the straightening out that must occur before there is proper emulation.

· Everyone enters into the process of spiritual growth with a cosmic complex; that is, a complex of counterfeits and lies accumulated from the devil’s world.

· Inculcation of the truth straightens this out; KATARTIZO is the ideal word to depict this process.

And the perfect nature of this participle indicates that the process must come to completion before there is true emulation.

This then goes hand in hand with the preceding statement; that the blind cannot lead the blind.

For the one who is in spiritual darkness can only get out if his guide has the light.

The one without sight must follow the one who has, so that there is recovery.

Paul gives a couple of guidelines for the role model in his letter to the Philippians.

Philippians 1:29-30, “(29) For to you it has been granted for Christ’s sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, (30) experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me.”

· This is the experiential encouragement element of the role model; to tell those whom you lead that you experience the same kind of sufferings that they do.

· Hebrews 4:15 reiterates the principle with reference to Christ. “For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.”

Philippians 4:9, “The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.”

· This is the emulation of application element of the true role model.

· There are four components to this:

- EMATHETE means to learn something from instruction, from a teacher in a classroom.

- PARELABETE means to ‘take someone alongside,’ or ‘to hand down a tradition.’ This is the informal classroom of example and life.

- EKOUSATE is to hear; this lies parallel to EMATHETE.

- EIDETE is to see, and is parallel to PARELABETE.

· The Philippians are exhorted to practice those things, so that they might have the God of peace with them.

But some care must be taken with regard to the role model.

Insofar as someone imitates Christ, you may imitate them.

Christ is the ultimate role, and we must all strive to be like Him in every way that is legitimate.

But all human role models apart from Christ have feet of clay.

General principle: subjective pre-occupation with self means malfunction toward authority.

Subjective pre-occupation with self has two parts:

· The emotional complex of sin combined with denial. This person is filled with every kind of mental attitude sin, including worry, self-pity, generalized anger, and bitterness toward God. Denial means that they refuse to admit their sinful state.

· This creates an unrealistic self-image, where the self becomes a hero or role model without justification. While holding to this false image, the arrogant person is going to distort his relationship with God, self, and others, to the accumulation of a tremendous amount of dissonance. This is a miserable existence.

Ultimately from this misery an external hero is found. The hero is the one who is to rescue this miserable person from their miserable existence.

· The rescuing hero is immediately saddled with unrealistic expectations; since he is everything that the miserable person ever wanted to be, an expectation of perfection is created.

· But the external hero is only a human being; he has flaws and sins just like everyone else; unfortunately, since the miserable person has an expectation of perfection, there is grave disappointment when the feet of clay are discovered.

· The disappointment exists because the miserable person has projected all of his imagined strengths onto the rescuing hero. Since the rescuing hero is the mirror image of the miserable person's erroneous self-image, more dissonance comes about.

· In order to accept the flaws and sins of the rescuing hero, the miserable person must also accept his own sinful state. This is not often the case, though it is possible, and may be used by God.

More often the miserable person will destroy his idol, and this is called iconoclasm.

· Rather than accept his own sinful state, the miserable person will destroy his idol in a frenzy of judgment, gossip, maligning, and all

kinds of falsehood. Forgiveness of self must precede forgiveness of others.

· This frenzy of sin is rationalized in some way by the miserable person, so that the sin becomes acceptable in his mind.

· These iconoclasts are the bane of all local churches; they are very damaging.

Ephesians 5:1 gives the proper perspective: "Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children." Galatians 4:19 says that Christ should be formed in us - that we should imitate the character of Christ.

So the ultimate objective is the imitation of Christ through spiritual growth.

You are to imitate others only insofar as they imitate Christ; and you really should concentrate on the original and not the copy.

The attitude should be: "He is imitating Christ - that is what I want to do." It should not be: "He is imitating Christ - I want to imitate his imitation."

The judgmental hypocrite. "And why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how are you able to say to your brother, 'Brother, let me seize the speck that is in your eye,' when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? 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."

There are two illicit actions worth noting here; the act of looking and the act of seizing.

Both of these illicit actions are acts of hypocrisy; there is no credibility in them because worse conditions apply in the self than in the problems of others.

Role model arrogance we have already studied; the hypocrisy of judgment we have touched upon, but let's develop it a little more.

Spiritual autonomy includes personal control of your own life while refraining and restraining yourself from controlling and interfering in the

lives of others. This is especially true in non-essential matters.

Every time you interfere and try to control someone else's life, you lose control of your own life. The privacy of your priesthood was designed for you to live your own life as unto the Lord, not to be an expert in telling everyone else how to live theirs!

People will always do things of which you disapprove. Only when you get to spiritual autonomy do you have the restraint to stop interfering in the lives of other people.

Under spiritual autonomy the believer has learned to stop interfering in the lives of others. He has been freed from the arrogant functions of life, and recognizes the rights of others in self-determination. The more you stop interfering in the lives of others, the sooner you have personal control of your own life.

The only control of others is when your authority calls for it. Yet such authority demands so much of your time that you still lose control of your own life.

There are times when interdiction is necessary:

In the giving of the gospel.

In the extension of the plan of God to other Christians.

In the function of encouragement where one believer fills in the gaps of another.

Interdiction requires spiritual adulthood; tact is a great necessity, but even more important the pure motive that comes from a more mature love for God.

Spiritual autonomy restrains that inordinate ambition to control those with whom you have contact. To have positive influence is one thing, but your greatest influence comes once you no longer feel threatened in life.

In fact, it is really the other way around, most of the time; it is mostly people who have lost control of their own lives who have an inordinate desire to meddle in the lives of

others. It is only when that control is regained that the restraint is possible.

But immature people always desire to look into the lives of others; because of their own flaws, their vision is projected outward as a defense mechanism; they cannot abide to look into the mirror and deal with their own complexes of sin. This is one of only many defense mechanisms, the blind fixing the blind. The blind doing eye surgery on the blind.

There are six basic categories of neuroses. Dennis Coon, *Essentials of Psychology*.

Anxiety neurosis (also known as panic disorder).

This is a neurotic pattern characterized by continuous tension or anxiety that occasionally explodes into episodes of intense panic.

Anxiety attacks are the symptoms of this neurosis, and they may last a few minutes or a few hours.

In an attack, the person often feels that he cannot breathe or that he is having a heart attack, going insane, or is about to die.

An anxiety attack can be triggered by almost anything.

Phobic neurosis.

Phobias are irrational fears that persist even when there is no real danger to a person.

Phobias may be attached to almost any object or situation.

Phobias produce symptoms such as heart palpitations, vomiting, wild climbing and running, and fainting.

The phobic person is so threatened that he will go to almost any length to avoid the feared object or situation.

Hysteria, also known as the histrionic personality disorder.

This person has an excessive need for attention.

They are often inappropriately sexually seductive in appearance and behavior.

They are overly concerned with physical attractiveness.

They express emotion with inappropriate exaggeration.

They have rapidly shifting and shallow emotional expression. They throw temper tantrums.

They have frequent flights into romantic fantasy.

They can also experience psychosomatic illnesses, or what is known as a conversion reaction.

This occurs when anxieties or severe emotional conflicts are converted into physical symptoms resembling disease or disability.

The physical symptoms of a conversion reaction usually serve to excuse the person from a threatening situation. Examples: glove anesthesia, and hysterical pregnancies.

Dissociation.

Dissociation is a form of neurosis marked by striking episodes of amnesia, fugue, or multiple personality.

Dissociation is the establishment of an abnormal fantasy life, normally established in childhood, which is used to escape extremely abusive situation.

Obsessive-compulsive disorder.

Obsessions are thought or images that intrude into consciousness against a person's will.

These may center on images of one's own violent death, feelings of being dirty, or just a simple loss of control.

Obsessions usually give rise to compulsions, which are irrational acts a person feels driven to repeat.

Typically the compulsive act helps control or block out anxiety cause by the obsession.

Compulsive rituals make a person feel more secure by keeping activities so structure that unexpected upsets are prevented.

Neurotic depressive reactions.

Here sadness and despondency are exaggerated and prolonged for unreasonable periods of time.

The symptoms of neurotic depression are: lack of energy, unhappiness, limited movement, an extremely negative self-image, loss of sense of humor, and a loss of interest in other people.

Neuroses are developed when a person spends an excessive amount of time in the addiction cycle, including reverse addiction.

Involvement in the cosmic system up through stage five results in an acute disorientation to reality.

If you are arrogant, become bitter towards God, reject His truth, accept the cosmic counterfeits, and let loose of the restraints on your lust pattern, then reality is going to be a foreign concept to you.

It is very, very difficult for a neurotic to recover to a normal life.

It is only through humility and orientation to the truth that the neurotic can recover. This may take many years.

Consistent faith perception of the truth may even be painful, but the pain of the truth is better than the pain of neurosis.

And the meddling in the lives of others is a sin; it is hypocritical according to Christ, and is therefore to be dealt with.

But notice! The last measure of the passage commands us to remove the log from our own eye, and then we can operate on others.

Therefore this passage does allow us to have influence in the lives of others, and it is our duty to do so.

The secret to good influence is understanding the following:

The right motive, which is personal love for God and virtue love for people.

The right sphere of influence, which means understanding the distinction between essential and non-essential issues.

The knowledge which will fill in the essential gaps in another person's lives.

And understanding of the power of the Spirit and the need for inculcation to fuel that power.

Right priorities, which justify and empower all functions of Christian service.

The metaphor of the worthless pupil. "Do not give the holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turning tear you to pieces."

The placement of this after the statement on hypocrisy depicts the connection between the judgmental attitude and negative volition. This we have already studied.

Now Christ tells us not to waste our time on those who are ostensibly negative.

There are two metaphors for the word of truth here; the holy and the pearls.

There are two metaphors for those who have no ability to perceive the truth; the dogs and the pigs.

A dog has no frame of reference for holy things; he does not discern between the holy and the profane. In fact, a dog is basically a scavenger, and he will eat anything that he believes has the least bit of nourishment in it.

The pig does not know a good pearl from a bad one; a fake from a real. The pig is not a very discriminating eater; he eats the slop from the army chow hall.

Those who are spiritually blind cannot perceive the truth; they have hardened their hearts to the point where they do not know the truth from a lie. Worse, they have exchanged the truth for a lie. They have reversed the natural order of things.

And this says that it is not only a waste of time to give truth to the spiritually blind; it is also a

dangerous matter; they may turn and tear you to pieces.

Usually the tearing is of the soul; they must destroy what threatens their blind existence, and so rhetoric is employed.

But there is also physical persecution, and the tearing of the body.

Spiritual blindness must be distinguished from the out of fellowship state.

When you are out of fellowship, you are unable to perceive or apply doctrine;

1 Cor 2:11-16, "For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man, which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in the academic lessons of human wisdom, but in the academic realm of the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things by spiritual means. But a soulish man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God. For they are foolishness to him and he is not able to understand, because they are spiritually examined. And the spiritual one examines all things, but he is examined by no one. For, "Who has known the mind of the Lord, who instructs Him?" But we have the mind of Christ."

The soulish man is the one who is out of fellowship - either by reason of no salvation or post-salvation sin.

And the soulish man does not have the ministry of God the Holy Spirit, so that he can spiritually examine the word of truth.

There is a special ministry of God the Holy Spirit related to those who are out of fellowship (see CGOOF).

Among those who are out of fellowship, there are those who want to recover, and those who do not; those who see the need for God, and those who deny it; those who recognize their sinful state, and those who refuse to.

The spiritually blind have no desire to recover; they often deny their sinful state, or at least that God is the key to recovery; they reject the truth, and become so callused that they cannot understand the truth.

Therefore, it is beneficial to give truth to those who are out of fellowship from God; but not to those among them who are spiritually blind.

But wait a minute, how can we judge those people who are negative to the point of blindness?

They will incriminate themselves by their negative reaction to the truth.

And you never blanket judge those who are presently blind.

There is the employment of prayer as the ultimate weapon in these cases.

And just as they communicate their antagonism toward the truth now, when they are positive, God will find a way to let you know of the new opportunity.

In the mean time, the discipline of God operates toward them in order to wake them up and shake them loose from their blindness.

Sermon on the Mount – Conclusion

Matthew 7:7-29

Luke 6:31, 43-49

I. The Outline of the passage.

A. The completion of the discourse on volition, Matthew 7:7-11.

1. The quest and its promised result, vv. 7-8.
2. The metaphor of human giving; man compared to God, vv. 9-10.
3. The conclusion, v.11.

B. The statement of the golden rule, and final conclusion of the discourse on judging, v.12 (Luke 6:31).

C. The parable of the gates, related to salvation, vv. 13-14.

D. Distinctions among prophets, vv. 15-20 (Luke 6:43-45).

1. The false prophet compared to a wolf, v. 15.
2. The metaphor of the trees and fruit, vv.16-19 (Luke 6:43-44).
3. The correlation of the metaphor to reality, Luke 6:45.
4. The conclusion, v.20.

E. Distinctions for the Kingdom from the tribulational frame of reference, vv.21-27 (Luke 6:46-49).

1. The present attitude, Luke 6:46.
2. The future judgment, v.21a.
3. The standard for the judgment, v.21b.
4. The excuses of the damned at the baptism of fire, v.22.
5. The response of Jesus Christ, v.23.
6. The parable of the foundations, vv.24-27 (Luke 6:47-49).

F. The response of the crowd, vv. 28-29.

II. Exposition.

A. The completion of the discourse on volition, Matthew 7:7-11.

1. The quest and its promised result, vv. 7-8, “(7) Ask and it will be given to you, seek and you will find, knock and it will be opened to you; (8) For everyone who asks will receive and who seeks will find, and to whoever knocks it will be opened.”

a. Whereas Christ has just finished a brief saying on negative volition, this now turns to the subject of positive volition. The principle: God is always faithful to positive volition.

b. Each of these three actions must be directed toward God; God must be the subject matter. However, intermediate means may be employed to introduce others to God, mostly people.

c. The future indicative of the verbs AITEO, ZETEO, and KROUO shows beyond a shadow of

a doubt that God is faithful to those who express an interest in Him.

d. Perhaps the best Scriptural illustration of this principle comes from Acts 8:25-40.

(1) Verses 25-28, "(25) So when they had solemnly testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they stared back to Jerusalem, and were preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans. (26) But an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip saying, 'Get up and go south to the road that descends from Jerusalem to Gaza.' (This is a desert road.) (27) So he got up and went; and there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of Kandake, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure; and he had come to Jerusalem to worship; (28) and he was returning and sitting in his chariot, and was reading the prophet Isaiah."

(a) Philip had been preaching to great effect in Samaria; when the apostles heard of his success, they sent Peter and John down from Jerusalem to further the ministry.

(b) On their way back to Jerusalem, while they were preaching through the villages of southern Samaria, an angel of the Lord spoke directly to Philip, and led him to the desert road that descends from Jerusalem to the sea at Gaza.

(c) Luke includes the fact that it was a desert road to tell us that it was not traveled much at all.

(d) While he was descending this road to Gaza, Philip happens across an Ethiopian eunuch.

(e) This man was everything that a Jew would despise; he was racially and even different in appearance - he was a black man; he was sexually incapable, something the Jews held in high regard; he was a treasury official from the royal palace.

(f) He had been castrated so that he could be trusted in the chambers of the Kandake. Kandake was the title of the queen, not her first name.

(g) This man had been to Jerusalem to worship God according to the Jewish faith. The Ethiopians had a long association with Israel, going back to the time of Solomon, when the queen of Sheba (a kingdom including Ethiopia) visited Jerusalem.

(h) 1 Kings 10 records the visit of that famous queen; she had visited Jerusalem to validate the claims of Solomon's wisdom. After meeting Solomon, this queen said (v.9) "Blessed be the Lord you God who delighted in you to set you on the throne of Israel; because the Lord loved Israel forever, therefore He made you king, to do justice and righteousness." She returned to her own land with the report. Apparently it persisted for a thousand years.

(i) And just at that moment, in no coincidence at all, this court official is reading the scroll of Isaiah.

(j) Now consider what he encountered in Jerusalem; prejudice and disappointment. Remember, the Pharisees are there; Saul of Tarsus is there. The Jews hated foreigners with a passion; they were racists of the worst degree.

(k) It was about a day's ride from Jerusalem to Gaza; this man had taken a lengthy leave of absence from his important work in order to worship in Jerusalem; imagine his grave disappointment on this, the day of his return. He is crushed, but he is trusting Scripture and not people!

(2) Verses 29-35, "(29) Then the Spirit said to Philip, 'Go up and join this chariot.' (30) Philip ran up and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, 'Do you understand what you are reading?' (31) And he said, 'Well, how could I, unless someone guides me?' And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. (32) Now the passage of Scripture which he was reading was this: 'He was led as a sheep to slaughter; and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so He does not open His mouth. (33) In humiliation His judgment was taken away; who will relate His generation? For His life is removed from the earth.' (34) The eunuch

answered Philip and said, 'Please tell me, of whom does the prophet say this? Of himself or of someone else? (35) Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him.'

(a) The Ethiopian had gone to Jerusalem to worship, and that he found no help there in his spiritual quest is now obvious. He is trying to do it on his own, and he cannot. It is certain that no one in Jerusalem had time for him.

(b) And what Jew in Jerusalem could this man of the suffering Messiah of Isaiah 53? And yet the man of the Scripture had only just been there, and had only just died a few years ago.

(c) If ever there was a softball pitch in the history of the gospel, this had to be it. Who is the man? Jesus Christ.

(3) The following verses record the baptism of the eunuch and Philip's passage on to Azotus and the cities of the Mediterranean seacoast.

(4) Ask, and it shall be given; seek, and you will find; knock and it will be opened to you.

2. The metaphor of human giving; man compared to God, vv. 9-10. "(9) Or what man is there among you who when his son asks him for bread, will give to him a stone? (10) Or also, if he will ask for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he?"

a. Again Christ illustrates from the ludicrous. This illustration is fitting to describe the nature of God's response to positive volition.

b. "Hey dad, I'm hungry. Can have some bread?" "Here son, eat this stone instead."

c. "O.K., then, how about some fish?" "Here is a snake instead (tastes like chicken)."

d. It is ludicrous. Now God is our Father, and He is perfect and good.

3. The conclusion, v.11. "Therefore if you while evil know to give good gifts to your children, how much more your Father Who is in heaven will give good things to those who ask Him."

a. We are evil. That is, we are human and weak and have sin natures.

b. From our establishment consciences, totally apart from spirituality, we know to give good gifts to our children.

c. But God is perfect and infinitely better than any of us. And all the human race qualify as the children of God in the figurative sense.

d. He is the creator of our souls, and more our Father than any human parent could lay claim. Human parents only produce the earthly shell; God makes the soul.

e. And if we ask Him for wisdom, he supplies. James 1:5, "But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him."

B. The statement of the golden rule, and final conclusion of the discourse on judging, v.12 (Luke 6:31), "Therefore however you want men to treat you, so also you treat them; For this is the Law and the Prophets."

1. The insertion of the golden rule right here is quite significant, as it brings to a close the discourse on judgment.

2. The expression of virtue love summarizes all that was said in the Law and the Prophets.

3. The Scribes and Pharisees present at this sermon searched the Scriptures all the time, but with illicit motives.

4. On another occasion, the Pharisees would attempt to trick Jesus: Matthew 22:34-40: "(34) But when the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered themselves together. (35) One of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, (36) 'Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?' (37) And he said to him, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' (38) This is the great and foremost commandment. (39) The second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' (40) On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.'"

a. This Pharisee wants Jesus to commit to just one of the ten commandments; Jesus performs a flanking maneuver on him and chooses one from outside the ten.

b. Christ instead chooses another commandment from Deuteronomy that serves as a guide for all function in the Christian life.

5. Love God; love others. That is it - because virtue love is the opposite of judgment.

6. 1 John 4:7-21 review.

7. The law with regard to sinful frames of reference.

a. This golden rule that Christ has issued us remains as the greatest common sense rule for human behavior that anyone has ever given us.

b. But here is what it does not say: however another person wants to be treated, that is how you must treat them.

c. Rather, this golden rule demands consistency between how you desire to be treated and how you treat others. It is a rule that when honestly applied, eliminates all hypocrisy.

d. This golden rule does not apply with regard to sinful and even criminal behavior; you are not required to cater to anyone's sin nature.

e. But idiosyncrasies may or may not come from complexes of sin in the soul. So that, if you would have others tolerate your idiosyncrasies, that is, lay them aside so that they are not an issue to them in any way, you must then have the same attitude in yourself.

(1) Colossians 3:12-13, "(12) And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and believed, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; (13) bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you."

(2) The second exhortation is from verses twelve and thirteen.

(a) Verse twelve contains a command to put on godly character, which of course comes through faith perception of the truth.

(b) Verse thirteen mentions some ways in which that godly character might be applied.

(c) Specifically, Godly character should be applied in these ways:

- ANECHOMENOI means to put up with someone. The idea is that you put up with the non-sinful idiosyncrasies of others; their quirks and oddities. It means literally 'to have again.' I think it may have had something to do with in-laws.

- CHARIZOMENOI concentrates on the sinful side of things. It means to give something free of charge and without expectation of return. Here it is a metaphor for forgiveness

f. Furthermore, Christians must be aware that those without doctrine are weak in their souls; extra sensitivity is therefore required (Laws of Christian Behavior).

C. The parable of the gates, related to salvation, vv. 13-14, "(13) Enter through the narrow gate; "The gate is wide and the way is spacious which leads unto destruction and many are they who enter through it. (14) "The gate is narrow and the way has become constricted that leads unto life and few are they who find it.""

1. The aorist imperative EISELTHATE gives a command that is to happen immediately; since it refers to salvation, the aspect of that verb is punctiliar. Believe in one moment of time.

2. The narrow gate is one that would allow one man at a time; it is the sally port of the ancient world.

3. Two synonyms describe the way to destruction:

- a. PLATEIA - a broad thing or place; a big wide flat area.

- b. EURUCHOROS - roomy or spacious, even comfy; a real-estate agent's word. (erratum for translation)

4. The way to destruction is broad; many have traveled that path; and because of peer pressure and cosmic propaganda of every kind, it is by far easiest one to take.

5. On the other hand the gate to salvation is narrow and constricted.

a. Narrow is STENE, pretty much just like our own idea of it.

b. TETHLIMMENE is the perfect passive participle of THLIBO. This verb describes narrow from the frame of reference of a crowded room or especially a crowded passageway.

(1) Since it is perfect passive, it describes a narrowing from outside influence. Someone is pushing in the walls of the room, making it more cramped. Someone on the outside has constricted the entrance, so that it is more difficult to enter.

(2) So this word concentrates on the narrowing and constricting activities of Satan, whereby the Gospel is defamed.

c. It is Satan's desire to keep all unbelievers from a relationship with God.

(1) The individual branch of the cosmic system builds up a false wall of sin between the unbeliever and God.

(2) The propaganda branch continues to disseminate falsehood so that the unbeliever cannot see the right way out of sin.

6. Although the way unto salvation is narrow and constricted, and few find it, remember what Christ has just said:

a. Those who seek will find it.

b. Did Frost have this in mind when he wrote:

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair;
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, And I
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

Robert Frost (1875-1963)

D. Distinctions among prophets, vv. 15-20 (Luke 6:43-45).

1. The false prophet compared to a wolf, v. 15, "Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in the clothing of sheep, but inside are ravening wolves."

a. The thing about a false prophet is this: you are a sheep, and he is a wolf. As a wolf he wants to kill you and eat you for dinner, perhaps with a little mint jelly.

b. But in order to kill you, the false prophet must make like a sheep in order to put you at ease.

c. The false prophet usually makes his approach through a personality ploy; that is, he puts on the personality that he thinks will put you at ease. It can be any personality, really.

(1) But a personality is only the way a person outwardly expresses themselves, and that does not necessarily match the content of the heart.

(2) In another context, Solomon said the same thing. Proverbs 5:1-6, "(1) My son, give attention to my wisdom, incline your ear to my understanding; (2) that you may observe discretion and your lips may reserve knowledge. (3) For the lips of an adulteress drip honey and smoother than oil is her speech; (4) But in the end she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. (5) Her feet go down to death, Her steps take hold of Sheol. (6) Who does not ponder the path of life; her ways are unstable, she does not know it."

d. In addition, the false prophet will say anything that you think you might like to hear. He will deceive by talking in sympathy toward your plight (see the doctrine of the Clique).

e. A false prophet can be anyone in any position in life, including, but not exclusive to pastors. You may have a co-worker that is a cosmic propagandist; a relative; a friend.

f. What makes someone a false prophet is the dissemination of falsehood. They do not have to have some spiritual office.

g. LUKOI HARPAGES is the Greek for 'ravening wolves.' The latter word describes the ruthless hunger of a predatory animal. Inside there is no mercy and no feeling - and a will to devour (Lost World passage).

h. But Christ goes on to describe the distinction between false prophet and true.

2. The metaphor of the trees and fruit, vv.16-19 (Luke 6:43-44), "(16) You will clearly know them from their fruit. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes or figs from thistles, are they? (17) So also every good tree bears much fruit, but the rotten tree bears evil fruit. (18) The good tree is not able to bear evil fruit; neither is the rotten tree able to bear good fruit. (19) Every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and cast into the fire."

a. The verb EPIGINOSKO is a compound that gives greater clarity to the action of knowing.

b. At its foundation level, it means, 'to really know.' So here is how you can clearly or really know a false prophet.

c. You know them from their fruit. That is, what have they produced within the realm of spirituality? What have they produced for you and for others? What have they produced in their own lives? Are they living the abundant life that is advertised in the word of God?

d. The true prophet bears good fruit; he brings himself and others closer to God.

(1) And it is not that you destroy anyone's privacy by checking for bad fruit and investigating sin with every kind of evil suspicion. That is not a healthy situation.

(2) It is the good fruit that is easily manifest; spiritual growth! The true prophet causes spiritual growth in his congregation; the false prophet cannot!

(3) You don't have to go looking for bad things in the life of the prophet; you just have to consider whether there is vital spiritual growth under his ministry. That will certainly tell you all that you need to know!

e. And then verse eighteen concentrates on ability; that is, false prophets have no ability to bear fruit; true prophets are not able to produce evil fruit.

f. This principle is given further light by Luke in his final verse. We will wait until then to discuss it.

g. Every tree not bearing good fruit is cut down and cast into the fire; so it is with false prophets.

(1) The timing of the verbs in the sentence is as follows:

(a) The present participle POIOUN shows an action in an ongoing state. This is the picture of a tree that is not presently bearing good fruit.

(b) The two verbs, EKKOPTETAI and BALLETAI, are present passive indicatives, and their present tenses indicate that their actions take place at the same time as the not bearing.

(c) So the impression is that God steps in while the false prophet is still at his post. But this is a wrong impression.

(2) We can rule out the possibility of the judgment seat of Christ. It is the analogy of the fruit tree as it applies to the false prophet; but the analogy is not to stretch too far.

(3) We have the removal and burning of the false prophet, but by whom?

(4) The false prophet is removed by us. That is, we are to remove him from our lives. We cut down the tree and burn it.

(5) So this is the analogy. The cutting down of the tree is when you stop listening to him; the burning of the limbs is when you dismantle the complex of counterfeits and lies that he has placed in your soul.

(6) And churches have this responsibility among themselves, to cut down the false prophets from among themselves.

(7) That there are so many false prophets existing in the world, and that they are tolerated by churches and denominations everywhere is a very bad sign. It demonstrates an absence of truth.

(8) 1 John 4 comments on this same doctrine:

(a) Verse 1: "Virtue-Loved Ones, do not trust every spirit but test the spirits to see whether they are from God. Because many false prophets have gone out into the world." A spirit is one who communicates the Word. Introduces the test revealed in v.2. Many false prophets and Christian cults during the church age dispensation.

(b) Verse 2: "This is how we know the spirit which is from God: Every Spirit which confesses Jesus Christ as having come in the flesh is from God." Hypostatic union is the key test for determining the most basic level of orthodoxy. The hypostatic union is the two natures of Christ, both God and man, inseparably united, without transfer or loss of attributes, without loss or transfer of separate

identity, the union being both personal and eternal.

(c) Verse 3: "...and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. And this is the spirit of the enemy of Christ, which you have heard is coming and now is already in the world." The test is not universal. Those who admit the hypostatic union can still be in apostasy, but it is rare. Also, knowing the true doctrine of the hypostatic union does not guarantee spiritual maturity.

(d) Verse 4: "You yourselves are from God, children, and so have overcome them. For greater is the one in you than the one in the world." Being from God means staying within the orthodox doctrines of the faith. If you do that, you will overcome falsehood, and false teachers. The one in us is God the Holy Spirit, who guides us into all truth through His recall ministry.

(e) Verse 5: "They are from the world, and because of this they speak from the viewpoint of the world, and the world listens." The world is the cosmic system. If you are involved in the cosmic system, you will become a propagandist for it, and all others who are involved in the cosmic system will listen.

(f) Verse 6: "We ourselves are from God. Whoever knows God hears us. Whoever is not from God does not hear us. From this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of deception." John is a communicator of the truth, and those who know God will listen under his authority and others like him. Those in the cosmic system will not. The very nature of the matter is that positive people find communicators of the truth; negative people find communicators of the cosmic counterfeits and lies.

3. The correlation of the metaphor to reality, Luke 6:45, "(45) The good man brings forth what is good from the good treasure of his heart, and the evil man brings forth evil from evil; For his mouth speaks from the overflow of his heart."

- a. Now Luke provides us with an excellent conclusion: and it sounds more than a little familiar.
- b. Hasn't Christ just said, in this very sermon, "For where your treasure is, there also will be your heart"?
- c. He meant a simple thing, really. What you desire will become the seat of your thinking.
- d. Now the principle is extended. The treasure of the heart manifests itself in the thoughts, motives, words, and actions of every man.
- e. So that the good man has a good treasure in his heart, and the evil man has evil there.
- f. Here Christ properly concentrates on the spoken expression of the heart; that is, what the false prophet has to say. For it is what the prophet says that is the worst of all. His words do the damage.
- g. Illustration #1, the words of Satan in the garden (see attached sheet, from Origin of Life).
- h. Illustration #2, Wormtongue.
- 4. The conclusion, v.20, "So in conclusion, you will clearly know them from their fruit."
 - a. This is a simple reiteration of the principle.
 - b. The combination of ARA GE indicates the conclusion. It is the opposite of GE ARA, which is contracted to GAR in most cases. GAR tells you that the writer is going to comment further; ARA GE says that this is the final part.
- E. Distinctions for the Kingdom from the tribulational frame of reference, vv.21-27 (Luke 6:46-49).
 - 1. The present attitude, Luke 6:46, "But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord' and do not do what I say?"
 - a. Christ observes a present trend, and then asks a question. There were certainly those in the crowd who fell under this category.
 - b. They were hypocrites who outwardly called Christ KURIE, KURIE, and still refused to do what He commanded.

- c. This was the sermon on the mount; certainly there were those present who gave their 'Amens' to the sermon. Who nodded outwardly with approval as each new revelation for the kingdom was given.
- d. There are two future tenses here, and they describe two actions that go on at the same time. The first is KALEITE, calling. The second is POIEITE, doing.
- e. The calling and the doing are opposites; the one is not consistent with the other.
- f. And Christ asks this question rhetorically; He desires the crowd to honestly consider the motives for their words and deeds.
- g. Now this is a most excellent way to conclude this sermon - with a focus on the inner priorities against the outward show.
- h. 'Doing' here does not mean that Christ's kingdom is a system of legalism. There is a 'doing' that occurs in the soul before any 'doing' occurs outwardly.
- i. Notice how Christ sets it up: that you can outwardly say one thing, but not do it. So the doing more likely concentrates on something inward.
- j. And every good deed begins in the heart anyway. There is no truly good deed where the mental attitude is absent.
- k. Furthermore, Christ ties this to entrance into His kingdom, which comes in the next verse.
- 2. The future judgment, v.21a, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord' will enter into the kingdom of heaven,"
 - a. There is a present tense and a future tense here.
 - (1) The present tense is a participle, LEGON - The concentration is on the present action of 'saying' by a certain class of people.
 - (2) The future tense is EISELEUSETAI, from EISERCHOMAI.

b. So just because you call Christ 'Lord' does not mean that you will enter into His kingdom.

c. Now we must place this in its proper dispensational setting before we can make any further progress.

(1) For the very first time in His ministry, Christ is explaining the nature of His kingdom and offering it to His people. This is the purpose of the sermon on the mount.

(2) But of course His kingdom has not yet come, and apparently from this statement it is exclusive by nature. Not everyone will enter the Kingdom of Christ.

(3) There is therefore a panorama that extends before this moment. By necessity of Old Testament prophecy (Since OT prophecy is a revelation of something in the Divine Decree, it is not contingent on any other event. And as the time is not usually set, there is no date required, as well):

- (a) There must be an atonement;
- (b) There must be a resurrection;
- (c) There must be an ascension;
- (d) There must be a tribulation;
- (e) There must be a second advent;
- (f) There must be a millennium.

(4) And the millennium is the kingdom of Christ.

(a) So it is possible that many present at the sermon could enter into Christ's millennial kingdom.

(b) It could be as few as eight years from this very moment in Christ's life.

(5) Therefore, calling Christ 'Lord' has nothing to do with entering the kingdom, although some who make the statement will on account of their inner attitude. It is the inner attitude which must match up with the outward statement.

3. The standard for the judgment, v.21b, "but [only] the one who does the will of My Father Who is in heaven."

a. Now Christ sets the standard: that is, what constitutes 'doing' so that one enters the kingdom.

b. It is 'doing' the will of God. And Christ has just revealed God's will for the kingdom in this very sermon.

(1) But there is the will of God regarding salvation, and the will of God regarding the Christian life after salvation.

(2) And just which is this one? It is an important question that is only answered by the last phrase of the segment.

c. This only indicates that spiritual maturity is the requirement for survival of the tribulation and entrance into the kingdom

d. The conditions of the tribulation are such that many immature believers will die. God will preserve only those who depend completely on Him.

(1) Matthew 24:9-13, "(9) Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name. (10) At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another. (11) Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many. (12) Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold. (13) But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved."

(2) There is an impossibility that the 'saving' in Matthew 24:13 has to with loss of salvation; eternal security is a dispensational constant.

(3) Furthermore, the use of SOZO is not limited to salvation alone. It can also represent a saving from physical danger or even the dangers of the cosmic system.

(4) Therefore, only those in spiritual maturity will last until the end of the tribulation; the others will die in the persecutions leading up to the second advent.

e. Conclusion: it is only those who remain alive at the second advent that enter into the millennial state. But unbelievers fit this filter just as effectively.

4. The excuses of the damned at this judgment, v.22, “ Many will say to me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, didn’t we prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many miracles in your name?’

a. The day is the Day of the Lord; it is according to Old Testament reckoning everything covered by eschatology from the beginning of the tribulation to the end of the millennium.

b. The plea comes from those who have failed during the tribulation, and they will base their plea on their works that they have done in Christ’s name.

c. And the works are spectacular indeed; in fact, they are manifestations of supernatural things that seem to come from God the Holy Spirit.

d. And it is impossible to see those works as accomplished from other means. Matthew 12:22-29 refutes this. “(22) Then a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute was brought to Jesus, and He healed him, so that the mute man spoke and saw. (23) All the crowds were amazed, and were saying, ‘This man cannot be the Son of David, can he?’ (24) But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, ‘This man casts out demons only by Beelzebub the ruler of the demons.’ (25) And knowing their thoughts Jesus said to them, ‘Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and any city or house divided against itself will not stand.’ (26) If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then will his kingdom stand? (27) If I by Beelzebub cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out? For this reason they will be your judges. (28) But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. (29) Or how can anyone enter the strong man’s house and carry off his property, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder the house.”

e. The result is that they have accomplished all of those things by the power of the Spirit, because God is indeed faithful.

f. So doing great things for God in the way of Christian service is not the same as fulfilling the plan of God for the tribulation believers.

g. In fact, the general nature of the plan of God has the standard for spiritual maturity as a dispensational constant.

h. Since it is quite possible to perform under Christian service with impure motives this becomes an important lesson.

i. In conclusion, God the Holy Spirit is faithful in His various ministries related to Christian service; but anyone at any level of maturity may tap into His power; some of those ministries, like common grace, work completely apart from fellowship; therefore it is possible to be a Christian service superstar and spectacularly immature at the same time.

5. The response of Jesus Christ, v.23, “And then I will say the same thing to them: ‘I never knew you; depart from me you who work lawlessness.”

a. Christ will repeat the same phrase, over and over. The command comes in three parts:

(1) The first part is the evaluation of the relationship; there was never a relationship between Christ and this category of people. This would naturally preclude salvation.

(a) The verb for ‘knowing’ here is GINOSKO in the aorist tense. This is apparently a translation of the Hebrew YADAH - the verb for relationship knowledge.

(b) The adverb of time OUDEPOTE eliminates the chance that Christ ever had a relationship with this person.

(2) The second part is the command which is unique to the baptism of fire: depart from Me. This verb is APOCHOREITE.

(a) It is an ironic statement by Christ, because it is the formulaic verb for demon exorcism. In other words, this is what you normally said to a demon as you exorcised him.

(b) So they exorcised demons in Christ name, for the excitement or approbation or whatever,

and now He is performing an exorcism over them.

(c) So these Christian servants without God are command to depart from the presence of Christ.

(d) Just where they are commanded to depart is found elsewhere in baptism of fire passages.

(3) The third is the evaluation of their works. And this evaluation is pretty stunning. These people have cast out demons and done miracles and even prophesied in Christ's name.

(a) An Christ identifies their working as lawlessness. Being apart from the Law meant no good whatsoever.

(b) And more than that, it makes it perfectly clear that we can do great things for God (apparently), and yet not even have a relationship with Him.

(c) We can do great things for God, and not even be in fellowship with Him.

(d) A reminder: the greatest thing you will ever do for God is fulfill His plan for your life, and that does not add up to Christian service.

b. Now the baptism of fire comes into focus here (see attached doctrine).

(1) The Baptism of Fire is the judgment of the unbelievers of the Tribulation at the Second Advent. They are removed from the earth and placed in fire for 1000 years until the Last Judgment.

(2) This involves both the Jews and Gentiles of the tribulation; and therefore the millennium begins with mature believers only. Matthew 3:11-12, "(11) As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. (12) His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." (Also Luke 3:16).

(3) Baptism in Homeric and Classical Greek. The basic definition was to place one thing into another, so that one or the other would be changed.

(a) This meaning began in Homer's time. Homer wrote of the giant Ulysses who took a piece of hot metal and rammed it into Cyclop's one eye, and called it "baptizing." The eye was changed by the metal.

(b) Homer's Odyssey, book 9, used baptism for hot metal changed by water when a smith dipped a piece of hot iron into water.

(c) Xenophon said that the Spartans baptized their spears by putting them into a bowl of blood. The spears were metaphorically changed into implements of killing by giving them an affinity for blood.

(d) Euripides used the word for a ship changed by its sinking. Its hull was now resting on the bottom, instead of the surface. It was now a completely different ship, one that sailed under the ocean.

(e) So "baptize" in the classical Greek meant to dip one thing into another thing so that the essence of the original thing was changed by the dipping. The change can be either real, or metaphorical.

(4) The time of the baptism of fire is the Second Advent. 1 Thessalonians 1:7-9, "(7) ...and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, (8) dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. (9) These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power."

(5) The Baptism of Fire for the Jews is predicted by the Old Testament prophets.

(a) Ezekiel 20:34-38, "(34) I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you from the lands where you are scattered, with a might hand and with an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out; (35) and I will bring you into the

wilderness of the peoples, and there I will enter into judgment with you face to face. (36) As I entered into judgment with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so I will enter into judgment with you," declares the Lord God. (37) I will make you pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant; (38) and I will purge from you the rebels and those who transgress against Me; I will bring them out of the land where they sojourn, but they will not enter the land of Israel. Thus you will know that I am the Lord."

(b) Isaiah 1:25-28, "(25) I will also turn My hand against you, and will smelt away your dross as with lye and will remove all your alloy. (26) Then I will restore your judges as at the first, and your counselors as at the beginning; after that you will be called the city of righteousness, a faithful city. (27) Zion will be redeemed with justice and her repentant ones with righteousness. (28) But transgressors and sinners will be crushed together, and those who forsake the Lord will come to an end."

(c) Malachi 3:5, "Then I will draw near to you for judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers and against the adulterers and against those who swear falsely, and against those who oppress the wage earner in his wages, the widow and the orphan, and those who turn aside the alien and do not fear Me."

(d) Malachi 4:1-2, "(1) 'For behold the day is coming, burning like a furnace; and all the arrogant and every evildoer will be chaff; and the day that is coming will set them ablaze,' says the Lord of armies, 'so that it will leave them neither root nor branch.' (2) But for you who fear My name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings; and you will go forth and skip about like calves from the stall."

(6) The Baptism of Fire for the Gentiles is mentioned by Christ, Matthew 25:31-46. "(31) But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. (32) All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate

them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep and the goats."

(7) There are five parables that teach the baptism of fire:

(a) The wheat and the tares, Matthew 13:24-30, 36-40.

(b) The good and bad fish, Matthew 13:47-50.

(c) The ten virgins, Matthew 25:1-13.

(d) The sheep and the goats, Matthew 25:31-46.

(e) The talent test, Matthew 25:14-30.

c. Christ is trying to motivate His audience by informing them about the coming judgment of the Baptism of Fire. He is motivating them to believe and initiate a relationship with God through Him.

6. The parable of the foundations, vv.24-27 (Luke 6:47-49): "Therefore whoever hears these words of mine and does them, he will be compared to a wise man, who dug and went deep and founded his house upon the rock; and the rain descended, and the torrent came and the winds blew and burst against that house, and it did not fall, for it had been founded upon the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine does not do them will be compared to a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand without a foundation; and the rain descended, and the torrents came, and the wind blew and burst into that house, and it fell and the fall of it was great."

a. This is a harmony of the two passages from Matthew and Luke.

b. This is the application for the entire Sermon on the Mount. They contain Christ's concluding remarks about all that He has just spoken.

c. Therefore it is a parable about the effect of the Word of God in our lives, from the gospel of salvation to the doctrines leading to maturity.

d. "Therefore whoever hears these words of mine and does them, he will be compared to a wise man, who dug and went deep and founded

his house upon the rock; and the rain descended, and the torrent came and the winds blew and burst against that house, and it did not fall, for it had been founded upon the rock.”

(1) This first section has to do with the person who is positive to the teachings of Christ.

(2) Notice the twofold provision: hearing and doing, AKOUEI and POIEI. They are simple verbs in the Greek. Hear and do (HAPIRU).

(3) The indefinite pronoun HOSTIS is a proclamation of the faithfulness of God - it is 'whoever.' That means if you do it, God will always be faithful in response.

(4) The point of comparison is a PHRONIMO ANDRI, a man of decisive thinking; a wise man.

(5) This wise man dug and went deep and founded his house upon the rock, EPI TEN PETRAN.

(6) The rock is Bible Truth; it is 'these words of mine,' according to Christ. So Christ has given His kingdom offer, and described the tenets of that kingdom in some detail.

(7) The region of Israel has no great floods as we think of great rivers overflowing their banks. They did however have flash floods, much like what we have here in the west; flash floods which are exceptionally powerful by nature.

(8) There are many torrents in this world and even greater ones in the next; there are torrents of suffering that can potentially destroy our spiritual well-being and our most-precious relationship with God.

(9) The house is the house of our spiritual lives - it is really the house of our souls.

(10) Suffering may destroy our mental well-being, the way we perceive and react to the world.

e. The second half of the parable outlines the actions of a fool.

(1) The fool builds his house on the sand without a foundation.

(2) The rain is going to come; sooner or later there will be a flood of suffering that comes.

(3) And the house without a foundation will fall, and the fall of it will be great.

(4) Principle: suffering causes you to check your premises.

(a) Many people ask the question, "How can a loving God allow His creatures to suffer?" In other words, suffering causes a dissonance in the soul.

(b) This is a legitimate question that is answered completely by the Bible, and there are two answers:

- Because they choose to suffer.
- Because suffering is designed for our own good.

(c) Because God is righteous, there exists the concept of absolute right, and a difference between right and wrong.

(d) Because God is just, when people choose against God, they suffer, and when they choose for Him, they are blessed.

(e) God gave people the freedom of choice, and He respects that freedom, even when people make the wrong choice.

(f) When people make bad decisions, they must be made responsible for those decisions, and they suffer.

(g) Suffering, however, is always for our own good, even when it is the result of a bad decision.

(h) Also, suffering often comes through no fault of our own. We can suffer from the bad decisions of others, or from the apparent whim of nature.

(i) Even this category of suffering is for our own good.

(j) No matter when, or for what reason any human being suffers, it is designed by the plan of God for the benefit of that person.

(k) The way that God works suffering for our good is a marvelous revelation of His character.

(l) If we are in the plan of God, then we can understand suffering and benefit from it. In essence, we can turn adversity into advantage.

(m) If we are outside of the plan of God, then the suffering is intensified, because we do not understand why we suffer.

(n) In human history, there are two categories of people. Those who benefit from suffering and those who do not.

(o) In life, suffering is always an agent for change, and you will either be a better or a worse person for it, but never the same.

(5) Doctrinal orientation to life.

(a) Infallibility means that Scripture never fails to work when applied on the basis of accurate interpretation.

(b) Inerrancy means that the original autograph of Scripture contains no errors whatsoever.

(c) Doctrinal orientation means that you seek the truth, and then orient your life to it.

(d) Doctrinal orientation means that there is no question too puzzling for Bible truth to answer.

(e) Doctrinal orientation means that there is no problem too great for Bible truth to solve.

(f) Doctrinal orientation means that the #1 priority in your life is the intake, inculcation and application of Bible truth.

7. The end of the Sermon... Matthew 7:28-29, "(28) And it came about when Jesus concluded these words, the crowds were lightning-struck at His teaching; (29) For He was teaching them as having authority and not like their scribes."

a. The verb EXEPLLESSONTO comes from EKPLESSO. It meant to be struck by lightning, or knocked senseless.

b. So the Sermon on the Mount was a lightning-bolt to this audience - they were shocked by the teaching.

c. And Matthew goes on to explain why. It was dogmatic Bible teaching. EXOUSIAN is the word

Matthew employs to describe that teaching. It is the Greek word for rightful authority.

d. And further description is given by comparison to the Scribes. The Scribes did not teach with authority, and so the people were unused to the concept.

e. Teaching with authority is the only way to effectively communicate anything. When you do so, you convey to your listeners the idea that you believe in what you say, and you know the subject matter well.

f. Sometimes scholarship is the enemy of authority.

g. There are certain elements in scholarship which lead to a righteous dogma.

(1) It must have right motivation.

(2) It must stay within the basic framework of orthodoxy.

(3) It must follow proper and thorough methods without getting lost in the details.

(4) It must understand the principle of necessary detail.

(5) It must have self-esteem.

Christ and the Centurion

Matthew 8:5-13

"(5) And after He entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him beseeching Him, (6) and saying, "Lord, my servant has been stricken paralyzed at home, suffering great pain." (7) And He says to him, "I myself will heal him after arriving." (8) And after formulating an answer, the centurion said, "Lord, I am not worthy for You to come under my roof, but just say a word, and my servant will be healed. (9) For I myself am also a man under authority, having soldiers under me; and I say to this one, "Go!" and he goes, and to another, "Come!" and he comes, and to my slave, "Do this!" and he does it." (10) Now after Jesus heard this, He marveled, and said to those who were following, "Truly I say to you, I have not found such great faith from anyone in Israel. (11) And I say to you, that many will come from east and west and recline

at the table with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven; (12) but the sons of the kingdom shall be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." (13) And Jesus said to the centurion, "Go; let it happen to you as you believed." And the servant was healed that very hour."

Luke 7:1-10

"(1) When all of His words were finished for the hearing of the people, He entered into Capernaum. (2) Now a certain slave of a centurion, who was precious to him, having a severe affliction was continually at the brink of death. (3) After hearing about Jesus he sent to him elders of the Jews, asking Him in order that He might save his slave after he came. (4) And those appearing before Jesus were urgently exhorting Him 'He is worthy for whom you will do this. (5) For he loves our nation and he himself built a synagogue for us. (6) And Jesus went with them. But when He traveled [to a point] not far from the house at all, the centurion sent friends saying to Him, 'Lord, do not be bothered, for I am not worthy for you to come under my roof. (7) Therefore neither did I consider myself worthy to come before You; but say a word, and let my servant be healed. (8) For I myself am also a man under authority having under my own command soldiers, and I say to this one 'Go!' and he goes, and to another, 'Come!' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this!' and he does.' (9) And after hearing these things Jesus marveled at him and after turning to the crowd following Him said, 'I say to you, never in Israel have I found such great faith.' (10) And after returning to the house the messengers found the slave permanently healed.

Exposition.

The centurion was the rough equivalent of a modern captain of infantry. He ruled 100 men. The ISBE describes his duties in this way: "The ordinary duties of the centurion were to drill his men, to inspect their arms, food, and clothing, and to command them in the camp and in the field."

The Roman army was a tough, extremely disciplined force. They kept themselves in superb physical condition, and were the masters of the battlefield during this period of history.

The centurion of this story was a leader of the military outfit in Capernaum. It was tough duty; many miles from home, and in a place that was much different from the shores of the Italian peninsula. The Roman military men were a hated lot, and Capernaum in Galilee was a seething hotbed of rebellion. The Roman soldiers were alienated from the populace, and treated like dirt by them.

But this centurion at least has an awareness of public relations while he is among the Gentiles. He has built the Jews a synagogue and this is evidence to the Jews that he loves their nation.

Christ was well known for healing and miracles, and the word was spreading that He was the messiah, the king of the Jews.

This particular centurion was a conscientious man, who cared very much for his servants. The kind of servant here is not a slave, but a hand-servant or even armor bearer. It is the Greek PAIS. He was honored by the centurion - ENTIMOS means to honor or value highly.

One of them fell terribly ill.

There is a clear association between the healings done by Christ and His atonement on the cross.

The healings of physical ailments foreshadowed the healing of sin on the cross.

The exorcisms foreshadowed the final subduement of demons.

The miracles foreshadowed the fantastic nature of the eternal kingdom.

These things validate because they are supernatural, and no one else could do them. But they are also full of meaning.

The power of the Lord was unto Christ for healing. Luke says it in 5:17: KAI DUNAMIS KURIOU EN EIS TO IASTHAI AUTON.

This is important. Here it says clearly, explicitly, that Christ heals by the power of the Lord, and not by the power of His own deity as the second person of the Godhead. This is the exact representation of the doctrine of kenosis.

Also, there is an implication that there were times when the power was not available. So this was a God given and directed power, and God chose the timing. It includes self awareness of that power. In some way, Christ could detect what was going on, and be prepared to heal.

Matthew's gospel describes the ailment as follows:

BEBLETAI - The perfect passive indicative, third singular of BALLO. It means literally, 'has been thrown.' The nature of the verb indicates a very sudden occurrence, and even an accident. The perfect tense shows that this was believed to be a permanent condition.

PARALUTIKOS means the servant was prostrated by his ailment or accident.

DEINOS BASANIZOMENOS concentrates on what the servant felt - continual terrible pain.

The adverb DEINOS is the same as the one included in the word dinosaur - 'terrible lizard.'

The present passive participle BASANIZOMENOS portrays an ongoing action that is received by the servant. The verb itself describes one thing: physical torture.

Luke's gospel adds these distinctions:

KAKOS ECHON is 'having severe affliction.' The adverb KAKOS here is employed as a noun.

EMELLEN TELEUTAN denotes his status on the brink of death.

The imperfect tense of MELLO demonstrates a continual past action, and so he was continually about to die.

TELEUTAN is 'to end,' but here more properly 'to die.' The present active infinitive complements the preceding verb.

And when he heard about the proximity of our Lord, he immediately placed his hope in Him

for the healing of his servant. When someone is in this kind of condition and pain, it lends a great sense of desperation and urgency to those responsible. Such was the case here.

He sent the local elders of the synagogue to Christ with the news; they had been at his house with concern for the slave. But it took this centurion's initiative to send them. He is a decisive man indeed.

And the elders plead his case before Christ.

The plead urgently, SPOUDAIOS is the adverb; it means speedily or urgently.

They identify the centurion as a man who is worthy due to his love for their nation and because he built their synagogue. Christ no doubt had another definition of worthiness.

Christ offers to come heal him, without hesitation. Christ shows no prejudice to this military foreigner. He desires to come personally.

The intensive use of the personal pronoun EGO indicates Christ's desire to come in person and heal the servant - "I myself will heal him after arriving."

The future active indicative THERAPEUSO tells us of Christ's total confidence in His ability to heal this servant. The indicative mood is the declarative indicative, showing a complete correlation to reality - this definitely will happen.

Now Christ got almost right up to the house; in some way the centurion knew our Lord was near - perhaps he even saw Christ coming down the street with the elders and the crowd.

And so the centurion sent his friends out and through them makes his great statement of faith.

First, he says KURIE. This is the title of respect, given to someone of greater respect or rank. It is quite a statement coming from a Roman centurion, who would have outranked every Jew in the world.

Then he tells Christ not to be bothered, ME SKULLOU. This is the present passive imperative. The implication is that the act of walking that extra hundred yards or so would be a bother.

The centurion identifies the reason as his personal HIKANOS. This is insufficiency or unworthiness or even incompetence.

It would have its own frame of reference for a military man who was used to rigorous personal and professional standards.

This man identifies that he is not up to the standards of the Messiah; this is not only true humility, but it is also the exact kind of humility that is necessary for salvation and spiritual growth.

The centurion realizes that there is nothing he can do to impress the Son of God; that the Messiah has superior standards that he cannot meet.

This is the prerequisite to faith: understanding your own insufficiency. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven!!!

Now this centurion is a commander of men; and he knows how authority works:

You have authority, which allows you to give commands.

And those under your authority had better obey. The Roman army had a rigorous system of discipline. Disobedience could get you killed rather quickly.

And he has correctly identified that Christ has the authority to heal.

Christ has the authority to heal; He commands the healing although not from His deity.

So Christ commands the power of the Spirit toward healing, and it is done, because He has the authority.

And this is faith: the trust in someone else to have the power and authority to exercise command over what you want done.

But Christ does not question the reason for the man's sense of inferiority; rather, He respects it. And more than that, He finds reason to praise this man's faith.

Christ calls the centurion's explanation the greatest expression of faith that He has ever seen.

This is because faith is simply putting your trust in someone else's legitimate realm of authority.

When you trust authority, you let them provide what it is they provide. Children let their parents provide the things that they need. They trust their authority. When parents tell their children what to do, it is because they know what is best for their children. When the centurion gives orders to his unit, it is because he knows what is best for them.

In the case of God, He provides salvation, and all that we need to rehabilitate our souls after salvation. But our trust of Him is required if we are to make these things a part of our lives.

This is why the grace plan of God has been attractive to military men throughout the ages. They have a ready made human frame of reference for these things.

So, faith-authority orientation, and the centurion is more than HIKANOS to reside at the table of Jesus Christ in the kingdom of heaven.

And Christ also compares his faith to that of anyone he has met of Jewish descent. This Gentile Roman soldier has greater faith than anyone Christ has ever met, including Jews.

Note that Christ never once rides this man for being a soldier; that he does not require him to repent from his soldierly ways. This was not required. This man had likely led his men in battle, and was likely to have killed in combat. Yet this is a man of great faith.

And then our Lord says this: "And I say to you, that many will come from east and west and recline at the table with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven; but the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth."

East and west is ANATOLON KAI DUSMON. This is an idiomatic saying that means 'all over the world.'

And the context here is the future - HEXOUSIN 'come' and ANAKLITHESONTAI 'recline' are both future tense verbs.

HEXOUSIN concentrates not on the arrival, but the presence of an affair. "There were 20 guests present at the party."

The everyday citizen did not own chairs. The table was low, so that they reclined at the table.

Reclining at the table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven means that you have survived the tribulation and you are now living in the millennium.

The sons of the kingdom will be cast out into the outer darkness - this is the imprisonment of the Jewish unbelievers from the tribulation; they are cast into Tartarus, and share their prison with the fallen angels.

The wailing and gnashing of teeth occur because of the fear of the last judgment at the great white throne. There is fear and utter regret.

Christ focuses on the sons of the kingdom - those who bear the hereditary imprint of Abraham, and yet do not believe in their Messiah. They carry the same judgment as all other believers.

Christ communicates this as a surprise to his Jewish listeners who are all around him. They may indeed have been shocked to hear this, considering their radical ethnocentrism.

The epilogue is this: "And Jesus said to the friends of the centurion, 'Go, let it happen to you as you believed.' And the servant was healed that very hour. And after returning to

the house the messengers found the slave permanently healed."

GENETHETO is 'let it happen.' This verb portrays the introduction of something new on the scene. It is the aorist passive imperative, third singular of GINOMAI.

The aorist tense here depicts an action occurring in one moment's time.

The imperative of entreaty shows Christ as giving a polite command to someone He respects.

Remember, He has authority to heal this servant; and that power comes from God the Holy Spirit, a fellow member of the trinity.

HOS EPISTEUSAS - 'as you believed' - indicates that the occurrence of the healing is commensurate with the centurion's faith, but you have to be careful here.

Faith is not subjective; that is, it does not depend at all on our efforts or concentration or intensity of thought.

Rather, it is objective, so it depends on what we know about the authority of the powers that can make it happen.

Faith always works insofar as you understand how and under what circumstances the power and authority works in your behalf.

If there is a measure of faith, then, it is only in your understanding of Bible truth.

Your accumulation of truth forms the limits of your faith. The more you know, the more you can believe, the more you have.

So the centurion believed because he understood the function of Christ's authority in healing.

And the servant was healed that very hour. Christ had exercised His authority, and the power came from the Spirit to accomplish His bidding.

So the messengers, friends of the centurion, returned to his home and found the servant permanently healed.

HEURON is 'they found.' A simple description of a past action from the Greek aorist tense.

The direct object is TON DOULON, the servant.

And the description of his healed state comes from HUGIAINONTA.

This is the present active participle.

It describes an ongoing action extending from the present time.

So the servant was not just healed temporarily, but permanently. It was not just a death rally or a temporary state that included a death lapse.

The servant was permanently healed from his malady.

The Raising of the Widow's Son

Luke 7:11-17: "(11) And it came about soon afterward, He came into a city called Nain and His disciples and many crowds came with Him. (12) Now as He drew near the gate of the city, and behold! An only born son, having died, was being carried out for burial by his mother, and she herself was a widow, and a fair-sized crowd from the city was with her. (13) And seeing her, the Lord was deeply moved for her, and He said to her, 'Do not cry.' (14) And coming forward He touched the bier, and those bearing it stood still, and He said, 'Young man, I say to you, be risen!' (15) And the dead man sat up and began to speak, and He gave him to his mother. (16) But fear seized everyone and they glorified God saying 'A great prophet is raised among us.' and, 'God cared for His people.' (17) And this word about Him went out in the whole of Judea and the surrounding countryside."

Exposition:

A. HEXES is an adverb which indicates the passage of a short amount of time. So this occurred right after the healing of the centurion's servant.

B. Nain is from the Hebrew NA'IM, which means pleasant. It was on the top of a local hill about 1500 feet high, where the views all around were very nice. This town was located about 25 miles from Capernaum - two or three

days journey. Although Luke is less exact, they would have arrived about the morning of the third day.

C. Christ was near to entering the gates of the town with His disciples and many crowds. So these crowds have followed from the great events at Capernaum and formed quite an entourage.

D. The way the Greek says it, the events that transpired came all of a sudden. KAI IDOU is 'and behold.' So there they are, innocently walking through the gates of the town, and wham! This event happens.

E. The particulars are real important.

1. A young man has died.

2. He was the only-born son of a widow. MONOGENES is only-born.

3. A fair-sized crowd was following - The Greek word is HIKANOS, or 'sufficient.'

4. They are carrying him out for burial; he is dead indeed.

F. Today's Handbook of Bible Times and Customs says this about the funeral bier and procession on pages 245-246: "Funeral processions were common among the Jews. The body was carried on a wooden bier often consisting of little more than flat boards... ..A bier carried a symbol to indicate the deceased's occupation or social status... ..A funeral march was hardly quiet, for the typical Jew believed in venting his emotions by loud wailing, beating on his chest and even tearing his clothes. Friends, mourners, and even professional mourners joined in expressing a bitter farewell. Even the poorest family was expected to hire at least one mourner. Singer and musical instruments, especially flutes, were also a part of this procession."

G. Christ had an emotional reaction to the situation - most likely because He was thinking of His own mother and the death that He would have to undergo.

1. ESPLAGCHNISTHE describes an emotion that comes from the depths of being - at the very center of the soul.

1. 2. This situation really hit Him hard, and so He says to the widow ME KLAIE, 'Do not cry.'

3. In Christ's mind looms His own death, and His own mother's reaction.

4. This implies that Christ's mother was a widow at this time.

H. And then Christ comes forward and touches the bier (SOROU) and the bearers stood still.

1. What a moment of great drama. With the bearers you can feel the crowd stand still - a hushed silence prevails.

2. And these words are heard by all: "Young man, I say to you, be risen."

a. But wait. The soul of this young man has departed. He is not there except in body, and it has capability to hear.

b. But Christ addresses the young man directly, and gives a command to him.

c. The guy was not faking it! The narration clearly defines him as dead with a capital 'D.' (Actually theta)

d. But His command may have been one of two things:

(1) A command into the spiritual realm, which the young man could hear, even in Hades.

(2) A command which was only for the benefit of those present (which would have been deceptive).

(3) It should really be a combination of the two. There was a reason that Christ made His voice audible, and there was communication heard even in Hades.

I. And at the command the dead man sits up and begins to speak, and Christ presents him to his mother.

1. So immediately the soul has permission to return to the body, and he does.

2. And this animates the body so that the young man sits up and begins to speak.

3. But there must have been some rectification of the body as well, since by that time rigor mortis had certainly set in, and the body was swiftly decomposing. This was a healing as well as a resuscitation.

4. And more than that, the body had been wrapped tightly with spices, which is likely why the young man's words are not recorded. He sat up and said: "Mmphlmp." "

5. But very touching here is the presentation. It says literally that Christ 'gave' the young man to his mother.

6. Touching indeed - 'Woman, here is your son.' What a fantastic gift.

7. And here is something more: John 19:23-26, "(23) Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His outer garments and made four parts, a part to every soldier and also the tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece. (24) So they said to one another, 'Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, to decide whose it shall be'; this was to fulfill the Scripture; 'They divided My outer garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots.' (25) Therefore the soldiers did these things. But standing by the cross of Jesus were His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. (26) When Jesus then saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, 'Woman, behold, you son!'

a. Christ's greatest gift to his mother occurred in this hour; He died for her sins.

b. And in His mind - the gift of a son to his mother some time before.

a. J. Then comes the response of the crowd. "(16) But fear seized everyone and they glorified God saying 'A great prophet is raised among us.' and, 'God cared for His people.' (17) And this word about Him went out in the whole of Judea and the surrounding countryside."

1. This is no kidding around now. A healing is nice and certainly miracles are fun. But raising someone from the dead - some putrefied, rigor-mortised corpse from the dead - that is serious indeed.
2. Now there is more than entertainment; there is respect. And finally with that respect is glorification of God. But is it? Listen closely to their worship...
3. Christ is a great prophet; He is that, but he is indeed more than a prophet. Jesus Christ is the Son of God! And it seems that if one is going to worship God, there must be an accuracy of that worship for God's good pleasure toward it.
4. The statement 'God cared for His people' is one related to the consolation of Israel, and it concentrates on the verb EPESKEPSATO. This is in the same family as EPISKOPOS; it is the verbal form that same noun. So God is the overseer or shepherd of Israel.
 - a. But there is arrogance to be found here as well. Doesn't this imply that God has not been Israel's shepherd for some time? Doesn't that call into question God's ability to provide for Israel, if there was a time that He did not?
 - b. So God cared for His people by sending this prophet who raised a widow's son. What about John the Baptist? What did they say then? And what about the Sermon on the Mount? What did they say then?

Christ on John the Baptist

Matthew 11:2-19

Luke 7:18-35

The report and the response.

The report: "And his disciples reported to John in prison about all these things."

John had been imprisoned for about a year; he had been imprisoned the previous summer by Herod the Tetrarch, Antipas.

Herod the Tetrarch had thrown John in prison because John had criticized him for marrying his brother's wife Herodias.

Herod the Great was his father, and he in many ways personified the trouble in Israel at the time of Christ.

For a long time, hundreds of years, the Jews had lived under the control of one nation or another, and they longed to be truly autonomous.

It seemed like whatever empire had the upper hand in history would rule them.

If it wasn't the Babylonians, then it was the Persians, when the Persians took over.

If it wasn't the Persians, it was the Greeks, when Alexander came rumbling through the ancient near east.

If it wasn't Alexander, it was the Romans, after the death of Alexander and the disintegration of his empire.

They still understood that they were a holy people, set apart for God.

They always remembered that, if nothing else.

They rankled under the rule of Rome, and it especially rubbed them wrong that Herod, the so-called Herod the Great had power over them.

He was worse than a Gentile; he was a half-Jewish Idumaeon, a descendant of Esau, a wild desert-dwelling type. The Jews considered them with no small amount of prejudice.

To make matters worse, Herod was hardly a model human being. He has been called a monster - one who was crafty and cruel, jealous and vain and always quick to seek revenge when wronged.

He came to the throne over the Roman province of Judea through cunning and manipulation of Marc Antony.

He had nine or ten wives. Even the historians lost count after a while.

On the smallest of suspicion he had even his favorite wife, Mariamne, put to death, along with her sons Alexander and Aristobulus.

Even while on his own deathbed, just days before he died he had his own son, his flesh and blood Antipater put to death.

Caesar Augustus was heard to say, "It is better to be Herod's hog than his own son!"

Again at his deathbed he ordered all the principle men in Israel to be rounded up and placed in the local stadium, where they could be surrounded by his soldiers and then slain when he died. The reason: so that there would be great mourning at his death. His sister relented and refused the execution.

To be ruled by someone who was so obviously inferior! Who was so immoral and cruel!

It must have been difficult to read the Scriptures, and to know that their destiny was so great, and yet have the reality so different.

Understand, however, that this was Divine Judgement on the nation of Israel; that they had neglected their relationship with God, and that the situation was appropriate to their spiritual state.

In this case the outward circumstances reflected accurately the inward condition: slavery.

It is no wonder, then, there was a great fascination in the nation of Israel with the prophecies about the Messiah.

- The one who would come and re-establish the greatness of their kingdom and their people.

- A man who would rise up and smite their enemies and make them a free people once again.

- From time to time a fairly great and famous man would rise up, and there would be some excitement about the possibility of his being the Messiah.

- Of course, things would quiet down when he turned out to be quite human, and the slavery of Israel droned on and on.

- After a time there was even a certain amount of cynicism about the whole deal.

- The same phenomenon exists today with the fascination about the end times and the return of Christ.

Herod tried bribing the Jews, so that they would like him, and he could view himself as a successful ruler.

Julius Caesar had given Herod a fantastic and truly royal inaugural celebration back in 37 BC, when Herod took the throne.

He always longed for that past glory, when in fact the traditional Roman warning of "sic transit gloria mundi" applied to him more than any other.

The bribes came in the form of a building program that was the very rival of Solomon's.

- He built monuments and buildings in the Holy Land, and even rebuilt their temple in magnificent fashion, topping it with a golden dome.

- The rebuilding of the Temple was much like the building of the Winchester Mystery House in San Jose, California.

- More was added every year. A higher roof here, an annex there - all very magnificent.

- When Herod died, his relatives took over the folly and the never-ending program continued until it was finally finished in 66 AD, some 87 years after it was begun.

- It is one of the great ironies of history that it was burned down just four years later when Jerusalem was destroyed.

- Other buildings and monuments were undertaken.

- A temple, a forum, and a theatre at Samaria.

- A great Greco-Roman capital, a temple, and port at Caesarea.

- The port was an engineering marvel that even today is remarked upon by the archaeologists who work at the site.

- Luxurious palaces and fortified retreats were built at Masada, Jerusalem, Jericho, and Herodium, which was near Bethlehem.

- In Jerusalem he had baths, a theatre, and a Hippodrome constructed.

· He also promoted Greek and Roman games so that the people might be entertained.

All of these things struck a sour note - as any bribe to a slave will.

· The people really did not want these things. They wanted to be autonomous and free.

· But in order to be truly free, any people must know God, and that was exactly the problem in Israel.

Herod had ten wives and seven sons. Four of those seven would play a role in the New Testament. All of the wives wanted their sons to be Herod's successor. This was a complication.

His first son Antipater was through his first wife Doris.

Herod repudiated her and Antipater when he married Mariamne I, the granddaughter of the famous Hyrcanus. This was in 37 BC Alexander and Aristobulus were born by her.

In 24 BC Herod married Mariamne II, by whom he had Herod Philip.

Just a year later, he married his fourth wife, Malthace, a Samaritan by whom he had Archelaus and Antipas.

And another two years after that, he married wife #5, Cleopatra of Jerusalem, by whom he had Philip the Tetrarch.

The other five wives bore him no sons, and only three are mentioned by name, Pallas, Phaedra, and Elpis. He also had daughters.

Herod's two favorite sons were those by Mariamne I, Alexander and Aristobulus.

Make note: Aristobulus married his cousin, Bernice.

Make note: This union produced a daughter, Herodias.

Herod had a sister, Salome, who hated these two favorite sons, even though her daughter Bernice was married to Aristobulus.

She had designs for her own son, a certain Antipater, to ascend to the throne of Herod. He is not to be confused with Antipater, Herod's first son by Doris.

Salome maligned Mariamne I before Herod, and Herod believed her and had Mariamne I killed.

The two sons were naturally indignant, and threatened to bring charges before Caesar that would cause him to lose his throne.

And as a consequence Herod changed his will so that Antipater by Doris was named the sole heir to the throne. He then sent Antipater to the emperor to have the will ratified.

Realizing that being gone from Herod's presence was a dangerous thing, Antipater wrote slanderous letter against Alexander and Aristobulus from Rome.

As a result of this slander, Herod had these two tried before Caesar Augustus in 12 BC. Amazingly, the court system worked, and they were found not guilty on all counts, and more than that, they were reconciled to their father, and to Antipater as well.

Herod changed his will to name all three sons equally.

But Salome, Herod's sister, was not finished yet. Together with brother Pheroras and son Antipater, the slander began again against the two sons of Mariamne I.

This time they obtained the testimony of one friend of Alexander's, and on the basis of a single eyewitness they convinced Herod that the two were plotting Herod's death and planning to lay claim to the throne before Rome.

Alexander was cast into prison, but thanks to Alexander's father-in-law, he was set free and reconciled to Herod.

In the next round, Antipater convinced his friend Eurycles from Sparta to play Alexander and Aristobulus against Herod. They fell for it, and were caught in the plotting phase.

Herod became so suspicious that he once again imprisoned the brothers, and accused them of treason.

Herod sent to Rome seeking the Emperor's advice regarding his sons, and Augustus gave Herod full authority to deal with his sons as he wished, but advised to him to conduct a Roman trial outside of his own territory. He feared that without a change of venue there would be a rebellion.

The trial was conducted in Berytus (Beirut), and a guilty verdict was passed. The two sons Alexander and Aristobulus were executed by strangulation in 7 BC

Herod's fourth will now named Antipater by Doris his sole successor.

But Antipater was an impatient man...

He held secret conferences with Herod's brother Pheroras. They intended to kill the old man.

Salome, Herod's sister, got wind of these meetings and spilled the beans to Herod.

Thus Herod's relationship with his sole named heir became somewhat strained.

Antipater then arranged to have emperor Augustus summon him to Rome, with the excuse that the new will needed ratification. He was then conveniently out of town.

Pheroras, Herod's brother and Antipater's uncle died. Herod conducted an investigation, and discovered that not only did Pheroras die of poison, but also that same poison had been intended for him.

Herod recalled Antipater under false pretenses, and he thus returned without suspicion. He was thrown into prison, tried the next day and found guilty. It took some time, however to gain permission to execute Antipater, but eventually it was done.

And so Herod had another will drawn up. Since his two oldest living sons had been turned against him by Antipater, that is, Herod Philip by Mariamne II and Archelaus by Malthace, he

excluded them from will #6. Everything now went to Antipas by Malthace.

Herod was by now old and feeble and full of disease. Nothing could ease his discomfort, soul and body.

It was around this time that Christ was born, and everyone was talking about the new-born true king of the Jews. Herod's paranoia was at an all-time high, and so he was motivated to kill all those children in Bethlehem.

And at the same time, two rabbis incited the people to tear down the Roman eagle from the temple gate. The offenders were seized and burned alive.

And just then he made his final will, naming Archelaus of Malthace as king, Antipas of Malthace as Tetrarch of Galilee and Perea, and their half-brother Philip of Cleopatra of Jerusalem as the Tetrarch of Gaulanitis, Trachonitis, Batanea, and Paneas.

k. But of course the last will was disputed, because it was made just five days before Herod's death, and it needed the emperor's ratification.

(1) Archelaus was the de facto ruler during this time. During the next Passover, a crowd gathered before Archelaus and began to demand retribution for the deaths of those killed by his father during the eagle incident.

(2) The crowd turned ugly when Archelaus refused this retribution, and so he ordered the troops in. Three thousand people were killed. Not a good start.

(3) Immediately after this, Archelaus and Antipas went to Rome together, each to claim before the emperor the will which benefited himself. Archelaus said the last will always counts, while Antipas said the last will was not made by a mentally well Herod. It must have been an interesting boat ride. Philip was left behind to manage matters.

(4) While these were in Rome, another riot broke out during Pentecost, and this went on for about two months and many more deaths.

(5) The Jews therefore sent a delegation to Rome, pleading for their lives and their autonomy.

(6) Philip got nervous about everyone being in Rome, so he went too.

(7) Augustus, thoroughly tired by the whole mess by now, issued a compromise.

(a) Archelaus was made ruler over Idumea, Judea, and Samaria with the special title of Ethnarch. He was promised kingship if he ruled well.

(b) Antipas was made tetrarch over Galilee and Perea.

(c) And Philip was given Gaulanitis, Trachonitis, Batanea, and Paneas as tetrarch. (See map)

l. Archelaus reign as ethnarch was characterized by brutality and tyranny, even though like his father he tried to bribe the people by building things.

(1) In AD 6 the Jews and Samaritans joined together in a delegation to Rome, where they complained to the emperor. Antipas and Philip the Tetrarch also went because they felt Archelaus had neglected their territories.

(2) Archelaus was then deposed and exiled to the south of France.

(3) Archelaus territory then became an imperial province under direct Roman rule.

m. Antipas was the ruler over Galilee, the central area of most of Christ's ministry.

(1) He first undertook a rebuilding program to fix the destruction of the revolt of 4 BC. Sepphoris was the largest city of Galilee. It was rebuilt, and since it was just 4 miles from Nazareth it is likely that Joseph, a carpenter, worked on the project.

(2) Tiberias was a new city founded under his building program. But while they were building, the builders struck on the site of an old cemetery, and thus the whole area became unclean to the Jews. He therefore enticed

people there by offering free homes and lands and tax exemption for the first few years.

(3) Antipas married the daughter of the Nabatean king Aretas IV, an Arab. This added to Antipas' realm, and to Caesar Augustus' tax base.

(4) In AD 28 or 29, Antipas decided to go to Rome, and on the way to visit his half-brother Herod Philip, who lived down on the seacoast.

(5) Now Herod Philip had married his brother Aristobulus' daughter, whose name was Herodias. You remember her. Well... Herodias was a very beautiful woman, and Antipas fell in love with her; his own niece and sister-in-law.

(6) Now Herodias was a typical scheming member of the Herod family, and she secretly agreed to divorce Herod Philip and marry Antipas, provided that he divorce the daughter of Aretas IV.

(7) Somehow, Antipas' first wife discovered the plan, and fled to her father. Aretas took the whole deal as an insult, and a few years later attacked and defeated Antipas in a battle.

n. But John the Baptist took offence at this incestual marriage, and let off steam about it. This is why he was thrown into prison - Matthew 14:3.

o. Later Herodias would connive to have John killed as retribution for stirring up the people against her behavior - Matthew 14:1-12.

p. Antipas was greatly fascinated with the ministry of Christ, and longed to see His miracles.

(1) And when Pilate had custody of Christ and understood our Lord to be a citizen of Galilee, he sent him to Antipas, for it was under his jurisdiction. Herod Antipas was there for the feast of the Passover.

(2) Luke 23:8-12 records what happened. "(8) Now Herod was very glad when he saw Jesus; for he had wanted to see Him for a long time, because he had been hearing about Him and was hoping to see some sign performed by Him. (9) And he questioned Him at some length; but

He answered him nothing. (10) And the chief priests and the scribes were standing there, accusing Him vehemently. (11) And Herod with his soldiers, after treating Him with contempt and mocking Him, dressed Him in a gorgeous robe and sent Him back to Pilate. (12) Now Herod and Pilate became friends with one another that very day; for before they had been enemies with each other."

(3) Antipas identified himself with the Jews by treating their enemy as his enemy also. He may also have been outraged that Christ gave him no show.

2. But John's disciples kept him informed with all the happenings on the outside, and especially the happenings in the life of Jesus.

B. John's response is cold: "And summoning some two of his disciples John sent to the Lord, saying, 'Are you the coming one or do we expect another?'"

1. It is cold because he hears all these great things about Christ, and yet he does not see Christ as the Messiah.

2. And why is that? How could you deny Christ as the Messiah when you hear all of these things about him?

3. It had to do with personal circumstances. John was in prison, put there by his enemy and the enemy of Israel. That in John's mind Christ had done nothing to free him (which was the law of volitional responsibility), nor to free his people from the Herodian tyranny was enough to deny Jesus as the Messiah.

4. This is the classic cosmic rationale.

a. John was suffering because of his own stubborn efforts in clinging too long to his ministry, and his shift of focus from the Pharisees to the Herodians.

b. But John refused to see that in his state of spiritual blindness, and so he shifted the blame to Jesus.

c. He concluded that Jesus could not be the Messiah, because He had not freed him, when

that was so obviously what any Messiah should do.

d. Suddenly God was not God because John had not gotten his way. And because of his spiritual malfunction, John had become like his worst enemies, the Pharisees.

5. John must indeed have been suffering from spiritual blindness.

II. Christ's Reply to John. "And after they appeared beside Him the men said, 'John the Baptist sent us to you, saying, 'Are you the coming one or do we expect another?' In that hour He healed many from illness and disease and evil spirits and to many blind He freely gave to see. And after formulating an answer, He said to them, 'After you arrive proclaim to John what you saw and heard; blind men see again, lame men walk, lepers are cleansed and deaf men hear, dead men are raised, poor men are evangelized. And blessed is anyone who does not stumble over Me.'"

A. Now John had heard of the miracles, but not seen them.

1. Remember, John has never seen the miracles of Jesus Christ, other than the approving proclamation and the dove at Christ's baptism.

2. And that incident did not contain a miracle under Christ's initiative, but came direct from the Father.

B. And Christ performed many of the miracles right before John's disciples, so that they could validate the occurrences back to John personally. They had witnessed the entire thing, and the eyewitness is by far the most effective witness of all.

1. By seeing it with their own eyes, the disciples of John could move away from the self-testimony of Christ to their testimony.

2. This harkens back to the testimony of Andrew for Peter. John 1:35ff: "Again the next day John was standing with two of his disciples, and he looked upon Jesus as He walked, and said, 'Behold, the Lamb of God!' And the two

disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. And Jesus turned, and beheld them following, and said to them, 'What do you seek?' And they said to Him, 'Rabbi [which translated means Teacher], where are you staying?' He said to them, 'Come, and you will see.' They came therefore and saw where He was staying; and they stayed with Him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. One of the two who heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He found first his own brother Simon, and said to him, 'We have found the Messiah' [which translated means Christ]. He brought him to Jesus."

3. But now this places a requirement on your own witnessing life within this principle. You have the requirement to be an eyewitness to the gospel from your own life.

a. The gospel is never going to sound genuine if you do not have direct experience with the source.

b. Your communication of the plan of God will not hit home without your experience in its execution.

4. As a result, Christ does John a great favor here; He gives to him the best possible chance of recovery through these acts.

5. Christ gives an indication that this is a grace ministry with the phrase, "and to many blind He freely gave to see." (Luke 7:21).

a. The verb ECHARISATO is in the aorist indicative. It summarizes a simple past action.

b. It describes giving within the grace framework.

c. This verb extends over all the activities described herein. All of these things were freely given.

6. The messengers are commanded by Christ to give proclamation to John. This is not simply passing along a message; it is APAGGEILATE. This is a command from Christ, to be carried out when these messengers arrive at John's prison cell. A proclamation is stronger than a

message, and concentrates with a stronger claim of integrity toward truth.

7. The final phrase is intriguing. "And blessed is anyone who does not stumble over Me."

a. The aorist passive subjunctive of SKANDALIZO does the following:

(1) It describes an action without reference to time. That is, the action could occur at any time; it is open-ended.

(2) It describes potential action, performed by any human being alive at the time of Christ.

(3) It describes action that acts on the subject 'anyone'. It is more literally 'stumbled' The idea is that someone is stumbled by something outside of Christ - that there is no reason to stumble over Christ, but because of the words of others there is a choice to stumble

b. People only chose to stumble over Christ because of what others were saying, and this remains true today. This is the purpose of the propaganda branch of the cosmic system.

c. The Propaganda Branch

(1) Introduction.

(a) The purpose of the propaganda branch is to promote the cosmic counterfeits and lies, and to attack the word of God.

(b) The propaganda branch integrates and cooperates with both the individual and the world branches of the cosmic system.

(c) The propaganda branch is an expression of Satanic genius and the demonic organization.

(d) Human beings are an important element in the propaganda branch.

(2) The Promotion of the Cosmic Counterfeits and Lies.

(a) The cosmic system has an elaborate scheme of counterfeits and lies.

(b) These counterfeits and lies are designed to supplant the truth.

(c) The counterfeits and lies match up with every category of truth possible.

- The Gospel.
 - The plan of God.
 - The power of God.
 - The person and work of God.
 - The person and work of Christ.
 - The person and work of the Holy Spirit.
 - And many more...
- (d) These counterfeits and lies are promoted by every means possible.
- There is a great emphasis today on the media, and especially television.
 - Those who are heavily involved in the cosmic system inevitably become cosmic propagandists.
- (3) The Attack against the Word.
- (a) In order to make the promotion of the cosmic counterfeits and lies fully effective, the cosmic system attacks the Word.
- (b) The attacks against the Word come in two basic categories.
- Attacks to destroy the Word outright. There have been many attempts throughout history to destroy the manuscripts of the Bible.
 - Attacks to undermine the credibility of the Word. These are usually attacks on the supernatural nature of the Divine inspiration of the Word. Liberal theologians are mainly responsible for this branch of the attack on the Word.
- d. There is blessing for everyone who is not stumbled.
- (1) Category one is the salvation blessing, for all those who believe in Jesus Christ.
- (2) Category two is blessings in time from the advance to spiritual maturity.
- (3) Category three is blessings in the millennium for mature church age believers only.
- (4) Category four is blessings in the eternal state, for mature believers of all dispensations.

Christ's Teaching to the Crowd on the Baptist.

"And after the messengers of John left, He began to speak to the crowds about John, 'What did you go out into the desert to witness? A reed stirred by the wind? Really, what did you go out to see? A man wearing white clothes? Behold those in glorious clothing and possessing luxury are in the palace.'"

So now Christ has the opportunity to really set the record straight about John the Baptist, and to let the world know that the great one has failed. And he does not.

Christ's response is to the crowd. Many of them had no doubt shaken their heads in wonder at the demise of such a great man. For if this is obvious to us, it would have been obvious to them.

And Christ wants to make very sure that the crowds do not enter into judgment, knowing what they know about John.

Because judgment is this:

Judgment is the mental conclusion that someone is guilty before the evidence and witnesses are gathered. This can occur in or out of the courtroom, and applies even if you are an eyewitness to the act.

- Ultimately, the right to judge is reserved for our Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge all church age believers at the judgment seat of Christ.
- Many times, people will judge because they fear they will not be vindicated. When you have confidence in the justice of God, then this fear will be removed.
- Jesus Christ will be perfectly fair at the judgment seat. No detail will escape His attention.
- Jesus Christ is the only person who is perfectly qualified to judge the human race.
- He died for those sins.
- He too lived a human life, and was tempted far beyond what we will ever encounter.

· When we overstep the boundaries of our legitimate right to judge, then we presume to take the place of Jesus Christ. James 4:12, "There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you--who are you to judge your neighbor?"

Grudge judgment is the failure to forgive the perpetrator of a sin, when that sin has been judged on the cross. This category of judgment also comes into play when someone assumes that God cannot forgive a sin or complex of sins.

Lifestyle judgment is when one considers his lifestyle as superior to another, when sin is not an issue.

Gossip is the verbalization of any category of judgment to parties that are not fundamental to the case. The intent is to damage the reputation of one who may be guilty, but whose guilt has not been established by proper evidentiary procedures. This applies to ANY sin.

And so Christ asks them a series of rhetorical questions.

The base question is this: 'What did you go out into the desert to witness?'

With the language of this question, Christ paints a graphic picture of people rushing out to the wilderness to eyewitness something spectacular.

In other words, He says this: 'For a bunch of people who are scowling right now at John the Baptist, you sure were in a big hurry to go see him during the prime of his ministry.'

The verb THEASASTHAI means to 'behold' or 'witness' something spectacular or completely out of the ordinary.

The fact that so many people left their everyday lives and went clear out to the desert to see John shows how very earnest they were about the whole deal.

The desert was a journey of several days, and would have been the equivalent of a drive of a thousand miles or even more.

Christ then employs a facetious proposition with this question: 'A reed being shaken by the wind?'

In the desert there are millions of these reeds - and the wind is always blowing.

So it's kind of like: did you go out into the desert to witness something completely commonplace? I don't think so.

But right now you are acting like John is completely commonplace.

And a second proposition follows with a repetition of the base question: 'Really, what did you go out to witness?'

The adversative conjunction ALLA works as a focusing element here, placing the attention of the crowd on the second statement. It should be translated 'really.'

And the facetious question is: 'a man dressed in white?'

· Christ actually answers this one for the crowd. 'Behold those in glorious clothing and possessing luxury are in the palace.'

· Because there is no chance in the world that someone would find someone dressed in such a fine way out in the wilderness. The notion is utterly ridiculous. In fact, John was dressed in rough clothing, fit for his life there, as they all would remember - Matthew 3:4.

So Christ employs strong and biting rhetoric to point out that their original motive for going to all that trouble to see John.

Because they had gone out to see something really great, something that had not been seen in Israel in hundreds of years.

"But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes I say to you, and more than a prophet. He is the one about whom it has been written, 'Behold I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you.' Truly I say to you, among those born of women, no one is greater."

In fact, the crowds went out to see a prophet. They went out to see the first prophet in Israel

in more than 450 years. The first prophet since Malachi's ministry around 435 BC

And not only this, but he was the greatest prophet of Israel, because he was the one to introduce the Messiah personally to the world.

Christ quotes Malachi 3:1 for two reasons. First to make a connection between the last two prophets of Israel; second to identify John's ministry clearly before this crowd.

And by doing this, Christ makes His own identity even more clear.

John had the most sacred duty of all the prophets of Israel, and it is clear that he performed his duty in a most excellent manner.

Well, let's see; among those prophets born of women - let's see - that would be ALL PROPHETS! John is the greatest.

John is the greatest prophet of his time, and really the greatest man of his time.

He is not to be scowled at; and certainly not to be judged, for Christ has rendered all the judgment that is going to happen before the judgment seat occurs.

A comparison of John with those in the coming dispensation: "But the least in the kingdom of God is greater than him. And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of the heavens suffers violence and violent men capture it. For all the prophets and the Law prophesied until John; and if you want to listen, he himself is Elijah, the one who is about to arrive."

*** The dispensational change brings about changes in the angelic conflict, in grace assets, and in rewards. That accounts for the disparity between the dispensation of Israel past and the dispensation of Israel future.

The tribulation is a much tougher dispensation, because of the evil ruling the earth unswayed by good.

Therefore God compensates believers in that dispensation with greater grace.

And because of the difficulty of their mission, there is also greater reward.

Christ transitions to His own dispensation now, so that the crowd might know their own spiritual standing, and live up to it.

For maligning a great figure, even a fallen great figure, is not living up to the standards of the kingdom.

Matthew 5:21-24, "21 You heard that it was said to the ancients, 'You will not commit murder': and, 'whoever murders, will be guilty before the court.' 22 But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, 'Raka' will be guilty before the Sanhedrin; and whoever says, 'Fool' will be guilty unto the Gehenna of the Fire. 23 Therefore if you are presenting your gift upon the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your gift there before the altar and go first to be reconciled with your brother, and then after coming back present your gift."

Christ set this standard during the Sermon on the Mount, and it is the extension of the Law in His dispensation.

The extension of the Law was because of the greatness of Christ's rule.

Principle: Strictness should always be a measure of the people's true capacity to live up to the standard.

Application: People in the millennium will have a fantastically high standard of behavior, but this is only because through Christ's direct rule they will have the capacity to live up to it.

Remember that this is a standard of purity that extends to the mouth and the soul.

In this dispensation we have standards that mainly apply to overt action; the soul remains unregulated by the establishment.

In the millennium, divine establishment will extend to matters of the soul.

Principle: when anyone falls from the grace status of the plan of God, when anyone does this in any dispensation, it is best to teach the principle of doctrine related to the point of his fall.

We have done a study on the fall of John the Baptist, and we have seen in some detail why this man fell from grace. Scripture has done this so that we might see the full picture.

But Christ teaches the doctrine without applying it directly to John the Baptist, displaying an absence of judgment in His procedure while among men.

Even Christ would refrain from judgment until His proper time at the judgment seat. This was a part of His kenosis, the limiting of His divine nature during the incarnation.

So you teach or tell the point of doctrine related to the point of a man's fall without applying it to him directly.

To illustrate this, examine closely what Christ has done with John.

He is the greatest man of his dispensation.

The least in Christ's dispensation is greater than him.

Now apply this to John's downfall:

The nature of Christ's teaching would apply to anyone who acted like John and wanted to cling to the dispensation of Israel.

But it would only apply if it was true to John, and Christ refuses to make that judgment.

There are instances where establishment authority must have its say.

Each establishment realm of authority must have its say if it is proper.

The criminal realm must have its say if a crime has been committed.

The church realm must have its say if one of its leaders has violated the provisions of 1 Timothy 3.

In all other legitimate realms there may be reason for discipline.

In all such cases, there must exist a proper system of jurisprudence, based on biblical principles.

Then Christ summarizes the time of His ministry and even a little before:

That from the days of John the Baptist until the present time just after the sermon on the mount the kingdom of heaven suffers violence and violent men capture it.

The verb BIAZETAI is the present passive indicative. It describes the subject (the kingdom of heaven) as receiving the action, and it means to receive or suffer violence.

So this is Christ's mid-term grading of the people of Israel. The kingdom that He has offered is suffering violence.

We need only remember John 5:17-18, "But He answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working." For this cause therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God."

The two verbs translated "working" are both the same, ERGAZOMAI. They are the present middle indicatives, indicating ongoing, non-stop work to the indefinite future.

The purpose of these verbs is to answer the assertion that we rest because God rested. The essence of the Sabbath is not the cessation of work, but concentration on God.

But Christ's works and God's works should be the objects of concentration, and they certainly are not a violation of the Moses' Sabbath.

Christ uses the personal pronoun EGO in order to emphasize His own work - not in contrast to that of the Father's, but in concert.

So two things here would get the attention of the Pharisees:

- That Christ called God His Father.
- That Christ considered His work equivalent with that of the Father's.

As a result, the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him.

- The more bold Christ became, the more the Jews wanted to kill Him; the more that Christ revealed about the plan of God in Him, the more the Jews wanted to kill Him; the more that Christ set Himself up as a substituted for them, the more the Jews wanted to kill Him.

- So this was not only persecution, but deadly persecution.

Even two years before the death of Christ, the conspiracy to kill Him gained great strength.

Christ spoke the truth - He is a part of the trinity. God is three persons in one Godhead.

- The first person of the Trinity is God the Father. The second person of the Trinity is God the Son. The third person of the Trinity is God the Holy Spirit.

- The three persons of the trinity possess identical essence in one being.

- This divine being has three distinct persons which are autonomous from one another in soul function.

- This distinction in persons is more than just one God showing different facets or modes of His one person.

And violent men try to capture this kingdom.

Now here is a worthy axiom: that every institution of God is under assault from the enemy.

That every good thing of God is constantly under attempt to capture by those who wish to turn it for their own ends.

BIASTAI is violent men; the plural noun form of BIAZO.

And these violent men engage themselves in HARPAZOUSIN. This verb means to seize or capture something by force. But it describes this action as having a purpose. It is robbery or kidnapping, but never to destroy the person or object taken!

So there are those who are trying to take the kingdom of heaven by force, to turn it to their own ends.

There are therefore two categories of attacks against the kingdom of heaven, and these tend to transfer to every dispensation.

The attempt to destroy divine institutions by violence.

- Jewish dispensation illustration: Esther (see doctrine).

- Church dispensation illustration: the persecution of Nero (F.F. Bruce).

- Modern illustration: reader's digest "The War on Christians."

The attempt to capture divine institutions by force.

- Jewish dispensation illustration: the Pharisees (see doctrine).

- Church dispensation illustration: the Judaizers.

- Modern illustration: the downfall of Christian colleges and seminaries - captured by means of money.

- Modern illustration #2: the downfall of local churches. Compromised by emphasis on numbers, or money.

Each of these attacks depend upon the individual and propaganda branches of the cosmic system. They interlock so as to cause a trapping influence on individual lives.

This attack also functions toward your own life through the individual branch of the cosmic system.

Now comes what appears to be an enigma. "For all the prophets and the Law prophesied until John; and if you want to listen, he himself is Elijah, the one who is about to arrive." Let's gather the facts.

The Greek adverb of time is EOS, which is translated 'until.' But this until also indicates stoppage. That is, the action continued until a certain point in time, and then ceased. This

cumulative effect may also emphasize a crescendo.

The act of prophesying is simply the communication of truth about a subject. Here the unstated subject is Jesus Christ. The act of prediction is in view, so that the prophets and the Law prophesied about Christ until John.

So that Christ indicates a culmination for the Law and the Prophets with John's ministry.

This also properly includes the ministry of John as a part of that dispensation.

The aorist verb from PROPHETEUEO summarizes the many past actions of the law and the prophets into one moment of time. And it concentrates on the culmination that action in John the Baptist.

EI THELETE DEXASTHAI is an idiom. Literally it is: 'if you want to receive.' But receive is not a good English word for the phenomenon - listen is much better according to our idiom.

So Christ says that we all have a choice to listen and receive the truth of what He is about to say. He is warning us with this idiom that what He is going to say may be hard to accept.

It is hard to accept because it means the end of their times as they know it.

Recall the parables of the dispensational change: (see the doctrine of wineskins)

Christ makes Elijah a metaphor or type for John; there is a direct comparison between the two.

And an explanation is attached: HO MELLON ERCHESTHAI. This translates literally, 'the one who is about to arrive.'

Matthew 17:9-13 (also Mark 9:9-13), "(9) As they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, 'Tell the vision to no one until the son of Man has risen from the dead.' (10) And his disciples asked Him, 'Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?' (11) And He answered and said, 'Elijah is coming and will restore all things; (12) but I say to you that Elijah already came, and

they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they wished. So also the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands.' (13) Then the disciples understood that He had spoken to them about John the Baptist."

- The three disciples of the inner circle, Peter, James, and John, have just witnessed the transfiguration of Christ and seen Moses and Elijah in their interim state.

- There are two appearances of Elijah that come to bear on this incident.

- The first is the coming of John the Baptist, a type of Elijah.

- The second is the coming of Moses and Elijah in the tribulation, a precursor to the second advent, as revealed in Revelation 11:1-12.

- When Christ says Elijah is coming and will restore all things, it refers to the tribulational appearance of Elijah in his interim body.

- Christ then compares His future sufferings with the past sufferings of John the Baptist; they are both persecutions.

John the Baptist was the one who was 'about to arrive' for a long time. In fact for more than 450 years he held this status. Malachi 4:5 was a favorite verse of the scholarly class of Israel: "Behold I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord."

- The day of the Lord entails all of eschatology, and from the Old Testament point of view, both advents.

- The scholars loved to talk about the one who would prepare the way for the Messiah, because his arrival would mark the beginning of the end.

- This is not unlike the fascination today with the rapture, and even the tendency to place certain prophecies within the church age when they are not.

(10) John evoked a memory of Elijah by his clothes, his asceticism, his ministry in the

wilderness, and his bold rebuke of the powerful.

There is no true reincarnation of Elijah's soul in John the Baptist's body; rather, the one man is a type of the other.

In the tribulation, there is a resurrection of Elijah to prepare the way for the second coming. But neither is this a reincarnation.

John is the dividing element for volition in Israel. "And after all the people and tax-gatherers heard they declared God as righteous, having been baptized by John; But the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected the will of God for themselves, not being baptized by him."

A general rule is now given: those who were positive to John responded positively to what Christ had taught; those who were negative to John's ministry also rejected Christ's teaching.

Of course it is the usual suspects here, the Pharisees.

Being baptized by John is the place of division because it was the command of the day.

A simple principle comes to mind: if you are positive to Bible teaching, it will not matter at all who is teaching it. It could be John or Christ; it could be anyone with any personality.

This is because the truth always wins through the personality of its teacher.

And this is also a matter of irony, that the teaching of Christ has to do with the downfall of John. This is why the dividing line is mentioned.

So the condition goes like this: if you liked the ministry of John, then you will have an appreciation for what Christ has said on the downfall of John. Why? Because they are both the truth.

Christ concludes with an assessment of the response of Israel to His ministry and John's. "Therefore to whom will I compare the men of this generation and to whom are they like? They are like children who are sitting in the market-place and calling out to one another

who say, 'We played the flute for you and you did not dance, we sang a dirge and you did not weep.'

So imagine children playing instruments in a marketplace; really poor music coming from them in flute and voice.

There is no funeral there, nor any celebration, so the demands of the children are inappropriate.

The music is bad and the occasion inappropriate. And then they become indignant over the situation because there is no response from the crowd.

He goes on to explain His illustration: For John the Baptist came not eating bread nor drinking wine, and you say, 'He has a demon.' The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and you say, 'Behold a gluttonous man and a drunkard, a friend of tax-gatherers and sinners. And wisdom is justified by all her children.'"

This points out the utter hypocrisy of those who were negative to the truth.

And a principle: that hypocrites are negative to any form of behavior on the part of those who have true freedom.

Obedience to the law of God creates individual liberty. People who are negative to the law of God are haters of freedom.

So when John the Baptist lived an ascetic life in the wilderness, the hypocrites slandered him, saying that he had a demon.

And when Christ does just the opposite, eating and drinking (alcohol), criticism comes His way. The slanderers go to work, and call him a glutton, drunk, and friend of evil men.

The final statement is about the fruit of wisdom. Wisdom is justified by what it produces. The opposite is also true: folly is condemned by all her children.

A man is condemned by his children, if they are wrong.

1 Timothy 3:4-5, "(4) He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his

children under control with all dignity (5) (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how ill he take care of the church of God?)”

And Christ is saying here that if you wonder about those who are negative to doctrine, then simply examine their fruit.

Is irrational hypocrisy the fruit of wisdom?

The Woes Upon Chorazin and Bethsaida

The Woes upon Chorazin and Bethsaida

Matthew 11:20-24:

(20) Then He began to denounce the cities in which the most of His miracles appeared, because they did not repent: (21) ‘Woe to you, Chorazin, woe to you, Bethsaida; because if in Tyre and Sidon the miracles which occurred appeared among you, they would have long ago repented in sackcloth and ashes. (22) Therefore I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and for Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. (23) And you Capernaum, You will you be lifted as far as heaven, will you? You will fall down as far as Hades... because if in Sodom there appeared the miracles which appeared in you, it would have remained until this day. (24) Therefore I say to you that it will be more tolerable for the ground of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you.”

Introduction.

In this passage we will examine the doctrines of corporate responsibility and final judgment.

Furthermore we will study Old Testament history, to briefly examine the negative examples of Tyre, Sidon, and Sodom.

II. City histories - modern.

Chorazin.

This is the only New Testament reference to this city; there are no Old Testament references at all.

It lies a couple of miles from Capernaum, and was important enough for a special Roman

road connecting it to the main caravan route to Damascus.

Bethsaida.

This town (the ‘House of Fishing’) was founded by Philip the Tetrarch of Herod’s family in honor of Julia, the daughter of Julius Caesar. Philip made it his capital.

It is named as the hometown of Philip, Andrew, and Peter, the disciples of our Lord. It may also be the hometown of James and John.

In Mark 8:22-26 Christ does still another miracle there, healing a blind man by spitting on his eyes and laying His hands on him.

It is across the Jordan from the other cities mentioned by Christ in our passage.

Capernaum.

This was the headquarters of Jesus for the major part of His Galilean ministry, Matthew 4:13, “and leaving Nazareth, He came and settled in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali.” Christ even calls Capernaum His own city in Matthew 9:1.

Matthew worked in a tax office there, and Peter and Andrew had moved there from Bethsaida.

Many miracles are listed as having occurred here:

The exorcism of the demoniac in the synagogue, Mark 1:21-28.

The healing of Peter’s mother-in-law, Mark 1:29-31.

The healing of the paralytic who was let down through the roof, Mark 2:1-12.

The healing of the official’s child, John 4:46-54.

The healing of the centurion’s servant, Matthew 8:5-13.

III. City histories - ancient. “Famous destructions for a thousand, Alex.”

Tyre.

Tyre is a very ancient city on the seacoast of the Mediterranean, northwest of Jerusalem. It is

mentioned in ancient Egyptian texts as far back as the 19th century, BC

During the reign of Hiram I, Tyre became the friend of Israel, and aided greatly in the building of Solomon's temple. 1 Kings 7:13-50.

But the people of Tyre were often a target of prophecy, and that means degeneracy and idolatry.

Ezekiel 26-28 and Zechariah 9 are the two main passages of prophetic judgment against Tyre.

Ezekiel 26:14 is a highlight: "I will make you a bare rock; you will be a place for the spreading of nets. You will be built no more, for I the Lord have spoken," declares the Lord"

Ezekiel 28:11-19 contains the restatement of the prehistoric dirge over Satan as it applies to the king of Tyre.

Zechariah 9:3-4 says this: "(3) For Tyre built herself a fortress and piled up silver like dust, and gold like the mire of the streets. (4) Behold, the Lord will dispossess her and cast her wealth into the sea; and she will be consumed with fire."

In the middle of the fourth century, BC, Tyre was destroyed by siege, and nothing was left. It was one of the more spectacular destructions in history.

Sidon.

Sidon is not too far from Tyre, about 25 miles to the north. Its history is closely associated with its sister city. Often they are mentioned in one breath 'Tyre and Sidon.' But do not be fooled: these two cities often battled.

Sidon is first mentioned in about the 15th or 14th century BC They were first under Egyptian dominance, and then after 1200 BC, Phoenician sway came to bear over them.

With the rise of Israel under king David around 1000 BC, the Phoenician or Philistine power base was broken, so that Sidon established autonomy as a kingdom.

In the mid-eighth century, Sidon had fallen to the kingdom of Tyre under Hiram the second.

When the northern kingdom of Israel fell in 722 and thereafter, Sidon came under the Assyrian empire. With the rise of the Babylonians, Sidon then went that way.

During the Persian revolt of Straton in 351, Sidon was destroyed completely. It was another spectacular destruction of the ancient world.

Isaiah 23 contains a prophecy against both Tyre and Sidon. It predicts their destruction.

Sodom.

There is a big hole where Sodom used to be. It is now the Dead Sea, and the lowest place on earth.

Enough said.

IV. The doctrine of corporate responsibility.

In this passage, Christ concentrates His final judgment on three cities. The punishment is corporate.

Corporate responsibility is certainly a part of Bible Doctrine. We need to examine two major points: the fact of corporate responsibility, and the mixture of individual justice with corporate justice.

The fact of corporate responsibility.

The five cycles of discipline, Leviticus 26:14-39.

The First Cycle, verses 14-17, ""(14) But if you will not listen to me and carry out all these commands, {15} and if you reject my decrees and abhor my laws and fail to carry out all my commands and so violate my covenant, {16} then I will do this to you: I will bring upon you sudden terror in the form of wasting diseases and fever that will destroy your sight and drain away your life. You will plant seed in vain, because your enemies will eat it. {17} I will set my face against you so that you will be defeated by your enemies; those who hate you will rule over you, and you will flee even when no one is pursuing you."

The Second Cycle, verses 18-20. "{18} 'If after all this you will not listen to me, I will punish you for your sins seven times over. {19} I will

break down your stubborn pride and make the sky above you like iron and the ground beneath you like bronze. {20} Your strength will be spent in vain, because your soil will not yield its crops, nor will the trees of the land yield their fruit."

The Third Cycle, verses 21-22. "{21} 'If you remain hostile toward me and refuse to listen to me, I will multiply your afflictions seven times over, as your sins deserve. {22} I will send wild animals against you, and they will rob you of your children, destroy your cattle and make you so few in number that your roads will be deserted."

The Fourth Cycle, verses 23-26. "{23} 'If in spite of these things you do not accept my correction but continue to be hostile toward me, {24} I myself will be hostile toward you and will afflict you for your sins seven times over. {25} And I will bring the sword upon you to avenge the breaking of the covenant. When you withdraw into your cities, I will send a plague among you, and you will be given into enemy hands. {26} When I cut off your supply of bread, ten women will be able to bake your bread in one oven, and they will dole out the bread by weight. You will eat, but you will not be satisfied."

The Fifth Cycle, verses 27-39. "{27} 'If in spite of this you still do not listen to me but continue to be hostile toward me, {28} then in my anger I will be hostile toward you, and I myself will punish you for your sins seven times over. {29} You will eat the flesh of your sons and the flesh of your daughters. {30} I will destroy your high places, cut down your incense altars and pile your dead bodies on the lifeless forms of your idols, and I will abhor you. {31} I will turn your cities into ruins and lay waste your sanctuaries, and I will take no delight in the pleasing aroma of your offerings. {32} I will lay waste the land, so that your enemies who live there will be appalled. {33} I will scatter you among the nations and will draw out my sword and pursue you. Your land will be laid waste, and your cities will lie in ruins. {34} Then the land will enjoy its Sabbath years all the time that it

lies desolate and you are in the country of your enemies; then the land will rest and enjoy its Sabbaths. {35} All the time that it lies desolate, the land will have the rest it did not have during the Sabbaths you lived in it. {36} "'As for those of you who are left, I will make their hearts so fearful in the lands of their enemies that the sound of a windblown leaf will put them to flight. They will run as though fleeing from the sword, and they will fall, even though no one is pursuing them. {37} They will stumble over one another as though fleeing from the sword, even though no one is pursuing them. So you will not be able to stand before your enemies. {38} You will perish among the nations; the land of your enemies will devour you. {39} Those of you who are left will waste away in the lands of their enemies because of their sins; also because of their fathers' sins they will waste away."

These cycles bring corporate punishment onto the nation of Israel for her rejection of God's code of divine establishment. The discipline is upon the nation as a whole.

Principle: participation in any evil organization means that you will share the discipline of it, when God comes to act.

This discipline is designed to motivate the individuals of the organization to reform themselves before Him.

Reformation of any organization comes from the reformation of individual souls.

Those spiritually sound persons who are left in a degenerate organization must function as ambassadors to those who are not.

At the same time, they must consider whether the function of evil is tolerable.

The destruction of Sodom, Genesis 18:16-33, "(16) Then the men rose up from there, and looked down toward Sodom; and Abraham was walking with them to send them off. (17) The Lord said, 'Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, (18) since Abraham will surely become a great and mighty nation, and in him all the nations of the earth will be blessed? (19)

For I have chosen him, so that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice, so that the Lord may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him.' (20) And the Lord said, 'The outcry of Sodom and Gomorrah is indeed great, and their sin is exceedingly grave. (21) I will go down now, and see if they have done entirely according to its outcry, which has come to Me; and if not, I will know.' (22) Then the men turned away from there and went toward Sodom, while Abraham was still standing before the Lord. (23) Abraham came near and said, 'Will You indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked? (24) Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city; will You indeed sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous who are in it? (25) Far be it from You to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous and the wicked are treated alike. Far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?' (26) So the Lord said, 'If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare the whole place on their account.' (27) And Abraham replied, 'Now behold, I have ventured to speak to the Lord, although I am but dust and ashes. (28) Suppose the fifty righteous are lacking five, will You destroy the whole city because of five?' And He said, 'I will not destroy it if I find forty-five there.' (29) He spoke to Him yet again and said, 'Suppose forty are found there?' And He said, 'I will not do it on account of the forty.' (30) Then he said, 'Oh may the Lord not be angry, and I shall speak; suppose thirty are found there?' And He said, 'I will not destroy it on account of the twenty.' (31) And he said, 'Now behold, I have ventured to speak to the Lord; suppose twenty are found there?' And he said, 'I will not destroy it on account of the twenty.' (32) Then he said, 'Oh may the Lord not be angry, and I shall speak only this once; suppose ten are found there?' And He said, 'I will not destroy it on account of the ten.' (33) As soon as He had finished speaking to Abraham the Lord departed, and Abraham returned to his place."

Abraham's real concern is for Lot and his family, and God sees to it that they escape, as is explained in the next chapter.

So every innocent person is taken care of by the justice of God, even in the cases of corporate punishment.

But Lot and his family still suffered; they lost their possessions and their homes, although they had their lives preserved (except his unfaithful wife).

One note: it may be your time to die. If it is, then you may share in the corporate punishment of a nation or city even though you are righteous. Generally, you will have to escape.

The destruction of enemy cities.

Deuteronomy 20:10-20: "(10) When you approach a city to fight against it, you shall offer it terms of peace. (11) If it agrees to make peace with you and opens to you, then all the people who are found in it shall become your forced labor and shall serve you. (12) However, if it does not make peace with you, but makes war against you, then you shall besiege it. (13) When the Lord your God gives it into your hand, you shall strike all the men in it with the edge of the sword. (14) Only the women and the children and the animals and all that is in the city, all its spoil, you shall take as booty for yourself; and you shall use the spoil of your enemies which the Lord your God has given you. (15) Thus you shall do to all the cities that are very far from you, which are not of the cities of these nations nearby."

This provision of the Law makes it clear that there is corporate responsibility for the enemies of God.

Furthermore, you can see that the men of the organization bear the full responsibility of the sword.

Additionally, God is a merciful God. It is a given that the city will fall; that He gives the men a chance to live according to their choice is clear evidence of His mercy.

The men of the city have a chance to take God at His word. If they do not, then it is clear that they hate God, and they will die.

The destruction of idolatrous cities.

Deuteronomy 13:12-16: "(12) If you hear in one of your cities, which the Lord your God is giving you to live in, anyone saying that (13) some worthless men have gone out from among you and have seduced the inhabitants of their city, saying, 'Let us go and serve other gods' (whom you have not known), (14) then you shall investigate and search out and inquire thoroughly. If it is true and the matter established that this abomination has been done among you, (15) you shall surely strike the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword, utterly destroying it and all that is in it and its cattle with the edge of the sword. (16) Then you shall gather all its booty into the middle of its open square and burn the city and all its booty with fire as a whole burnt offering to the Lord your God; and it shall be a ruin forever. It shall never be rebuilt."

This has to do with idolatry among the people.

All the inhabitants of the city are destroyed after proper jurisprudence. All of the spoil of its conquest is killed and then burned as an offering to God.

Principle: idolaters become a burnt offering to God; their folly demonstrates God's justice and righteousness as beneficial to mankind.

Corporate responsibility in the New Testament.

As a part of the Establishment Code of the Mosaic Law.

Toward churches, Revelation 2-3.

In these chapters, Christ sends messages through John to each of the seven churches of Asia.

Revelation 2:4-5 (to Ephesus), "(4) But I have this against you, that you have left your first love. (5) Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will

remove your lampstand out of its place - unless you repent."

Revelation 2:14-16 (to Pergamum), "(14) But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit acts of immorality. (15) So you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans (Gnostic licentiousness). (16) Therefore repent; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth."

Revelation 2:20-24 (to Thyatira), "(20) But I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads My bond-servants astray so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. (21) I gave her time to repent, and she does not want to repent of her immorality. (22) Behold, I will throw her on a bed of sickness, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of her deeds. (23) And I will kill her children with pestilence, and all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds. (24) But I say to you, the rest who are in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not known the deep things of Satan, as they call them - I place no other burden on you."

- The sin with Jezebel was not institutionalized within the church there.
- Rather, many members of this local body went out to visit her and more.
- So there is discipline only against those who go out, and not against the church itself.

Revelation 3:1-3 (to Sardis), "(1) To the angel of the church in Sardis write: He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars, says this: 'I know your deeds, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead. (2) Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die; for I have not found

your deeds completed in the sight of My God. (3) So remember what you have received and heard; and keep it, and repent. Therefore if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you.”

Revelation 3:15-19 (to Laodicea), “(15) I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. (16) So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth. (17) Because you say, ‘I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing,’ and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, (18) I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see. (19) Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent.”

So there is corporate responsibility in churches and nations during the church age. In fact, we can safely extend the principle to every organization.

Principles of Corporate Responsibility.

A corporation is here defined as any organization on earth, from the marriage to the nation.

Individual responsibility supersedes corporate responsibility.

Individual justice supersedes corporate justice.

If members of the corporation participate in evil outside of corporate function, there is no corporate responsibility.

If the corporation functions under the principle of sin, human good, or evil, then all members of the corporation are culpable unto God.

There are degrees of sin: minor graft and murder are distinguished by the Bible, and these kinds of distinctions should be considered in the corporate realm.

The Biblical method of capital punishment is stoning; it has a strong corporate emphasis,

because the individual members of the corporation (family and neighborhood) must participate in the punishment. Stoning points out that criminality has strong influence from the family and neighborhood.

Under corporate responsibility, there are three individual responsibilities:

To grow spiritually and have maximum invisible impact.

To have personal integrity. That is, to conduct yourself within the corporation under the principles of divine character.

To refuse to participate in corporate-sponsored sin.

Crusader arrogance destroys any true positive impact that a believer might have.

Crusader arrogance attempts to destroy the authority systems of a corporation.

Crusader arrogance destroys evil and good together in one fell swoop - the nature of the term derives from the crusades, when armies descended on the Holy Land in order to free it from the Egyptians and Moslems. Many good men died and after nearly 200 years of warfare nothing at all was accomplished. Most Europeans were embittered about the whole experience.

During the Middle Ages, especially around 1000 AD, it became the practice of many Christians and religious types to make pilgrimages to the Holy Land.

Many of these pilgrims were self-righteous and terribly arrogant, and they treated the occupants of Palestine with disdain.

As a result of the conflicts between Christians and Moslems over the pilgrimages, access to the Holy places was limited and even stopped altogether.

This led to an outrage in Europe, and the Pope Urban II made an impassioned appeal at Clermont, in which he made the case for the military capture of Palestine. He summarized his appeal with the words “God wills it!” and

this became the rallying cry of the First Crusade.

The First Crusade is noted for its disorganized waves of armies.

First the lesser lords and commoners went in four groups, each failing spectacularly in turn. The fourth of these turned anti-Semitic and began their crusade by marching through the Rhineland and attacking enclaves of Jews wherever they went. All of these groups suffered from a lack of discipline and leadership, and they inevitably lost their cohesion through desertion and disillusionment.

The greater lords of Europe set out in 1096. Representing many nations and languages, this grand alliance was not much more than a disorganized collection of small regiments of men. After many adventures that seemed to always include internal squabbles, these armies marched through Asia Minor and besieged Antioch, taking it after a great struggle. They went on to Jerusalem, and captured it on July 15, 1099. There was a big argument then on who was to rule the newly captured land.

After this, the outposts in the Holy Land were strengthened, and the crusaders generally took everything that was not nailed down. Many laid claim to parcels of the conquered land, and some became wealthy.

The Second Crusade is noted for what was lost.

While the crusaders left in the Holy Land were trying to consolidate their gains, an enemy came from the west, in Egypt. His name was Saladin.

Saladin attacked with ferocity and quickness. He recaptured Jerusalem in October of 1187. The crusaders were driven back to just a few outposts along the Mediterranean coast.

The Third Crusade was an attempt to take back what had fallen.

The Holy Roman Emperor, Frederick I, "Barbarossa," Philip II of France, and Richard

the Lion-hearted of England all headed up their respective armies of state.

Although Richard dominated the military scene, and was justly noted for his courage in battle, he was also ruthless, and massacred prisoners of war.

Richard defeated Saladin in September of 1191, and although they had made no great territorial gains, Saladin at least agreed to allow Christians access to Jerusalem.

The Fourth Crusade attacked and sacked Constantinople out of rage and greed. It simply caused a great division between Christians east and west, and never reached the Holy Land.

In the next century, there were two movements of children, which were sheer folly and disasters.

"In France a shepherd boy, Etienne, from Cloyes, near Vendome, announced that he was directed in a vision to lead an expedition to crush the Saracens. He and the followers he attracted preached across France, and thousands of children joined him and gathered at Marseilles. They expected the sea to open before them, but when it failed they embarked in seven vessels. Two of these were wrecked off Sardinia, and the other five were captured, evidently by pre-arrangement, and the children taken to the slave markets of Alexandria and Baghdad." - the American Peoples' Encyclopedia, vol.6, p.577.

A second expedition of children got to the sea in Italy, and when it did not open for them, the Pope urged them to go home, and they did.

(10) There were other minor crusades and diplomacies, but all failed to accomplish the initial aim.

(11) And listen: what Biblical mandate was ever in place that people had a necessity toward pilgrimage? How is a pilgrimage, a work, ever a spiritual necessity? It was emotion, and nothing more that drove the crusades. Any believer with truth in his soul could see this and avoid it.

(12) And once a crusade is begun, there is sacrifice involved, and pride goes with that sacrifice, so that it is difficult indeed to retreat.

(13) The American People's Encyclopedia concludes: "The effects of the crusades seem largely negative. At the conclusion of the movement the Holy Land was more thoroughly in Moslem control than at the beginning. The Byzantine empire, the bulwark of Christendom, was irreparably weakened... The treachery and cruelty which marked much of their history, and the apparent futility of the effort, are in marked contrast to the faith, courage, and devotion which were sometimes the reality, and always the ideal, of the crusade."

Crusader arrogance sets up a false premise and takes extreme action to fulfill that premise. The extreme action normally stems from an apparently pure motive.

Usually the false premise includes improvement of the devil's world.

The crusade has a 'no turning back' mentality.

The crusade does not care about ethics related to means. They will achieve their false goals on the basis of corrupt means, even implementing evil.

Crusades not only always fail, but they also always make the situation worse in their failure.

The challenge that every Christian has in the devil's world is this: how to change the people, and even the organizations, without destroy yourself and the organizations. This is accomplished as follows:

Priorities. That is, spiritual growth and relationship with God must be the number one priority in the life of every Christian.

Duty. That is, a sense of duty about ambassadorship. Changing organizations is always about changing lives.

Humility and Authority Orientation. True humility is a predisposition to obey legitimate authority; authority orientation is the

understanding of authority as a divine institution, and its role in preserving freedom.

Esprit de Corps.

Esprit de corps has many characteristics.

Confidence based on the system, and not on personal attributes.

Putting the system above self in impersonal love.

A sense of destiny based on the system, not on self.

Fellowship with others based on the system, not on personal attributes

Perpetuation of high personal standards totally apart from what the world has to offer in the form of peer pressure, status quo, media pressure, current trends, and popularity.

Esteem based on the system rather than on self.

Perpetuation of traditions and lore.

Esprit de corps in the Christian life is based on the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Esprit de corps in the Christian life is accelerated by the consistent filling of the Spirit plus the consistent intake, metabolization, and processing of bible doctrine under a pastor teacher.

Esprit de corps is applied in several ways:

Impersonal love.

A personal sense of destiny.

Spiritual self esteem.

Fellowship with other Christians.

Perpetuation of the standards of the Christian life in spite of what the opinion of the world might have to say.

Esprit de corps in the Christian life has as its prototype the person of Jesus Christ.

Esprit de corps is an important part of many of the problem solving devices for church age believers.

Illustrations of Esprit de Corps.

After the 1982 Beirut Bombing, Marine Corps Commandant P. X. Kelly visited a wounded Marine in the hospital to present his Purple Heart. Covered by tubes and unable to speak, the Marine simply asked for pad and pen. On it he wrote: "Semper Fi."

Marine Corps Lore: Chesty Puller, when shown a flame-thrower the first time, asked, "Where do you put the bayonet?"

The Marine Corps OCS system. The Marine Corps officer program is primarily run by enlisted men; in order to receive a commission as a Marine Corps Officer, you have to get by the enlisted cadre. If you meet their standards, then they figure you are qualified to lead them into battle.

You are a Marine first. As a Christian, you are a Christian first.

Distinctions in the doctrine of final judgment.

Hebrews 9:27-28, "(27) And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment, (28) so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him."

You only die once; you only get one chance in this world, and then comes judgment.

The lesson of verse 28 is that Christ appears twice for salvation; the first advent is the cross, while the second is the rescue of the remnant of Israel at the end of the tribulation.

You get one shot at this life; this is your life!

A Panorama of Judgment.

The judgment of Adam's Original Sin.

Judgement of our sins on the cross.

The self-judgment of our sins in time through confession.

The Judgment Seat of Christ, the evaluation of all Church Age believers.

The baptism of fire, which is the judgment of all unbelievers of the tribulation, both Jew and Gentile, Mt 25:31-46; Ezek 20:33-48.

The evaluation of all tribulational believers, both Jew and Gentile, Mt 25:31-46; Dan 12:2-3.

At the great white throne, there are three categories of judgments.

The judgment of believers.

All believers who lived before the incarnation, both Jew and Gentile, are judged at this time.

All Millennial believers are judged at this time.

The judgment of unbelievers. All unbelievers in history, except those of the tribulation, are judged at this time. Mt 25:31-46, Ezek 20:32-38, Rev 20:7-10.

The judgment of all fallen angels at the end of the Millennium. Their sentence was passed before time began, but its execution is not carried out until the end of human history.

Corporate Judgment.

The judgment of human beings for their participation in evil corporate activity must be woven into the individual judgments.

So when Christ says, "...it will be more tolerable for Tyre and for Sidon in the day of judgment than for you." He means that the individuals of those cities will receive harsh judgment for living there without concern.

But Christ does not mean that the historical populations of those cities are gathered and judged together for their sins.

Remember, individual responsibility supersedes corporate responsibility.

VI. A Brief Exposition. "(20) Then He began to denounce the cities in which the most of His miracles appeared, because they did not repent: (21) 'Woe to you, Chorazin, woe to you, Bethsaida; because if in Tyre and Sidon the miracles which occurred appeared among you, they would have long ago repented in sackcloth and ashes. (22) Therefore I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and for Sidon in the day

of judgment than for you. (23) And you Capernaum, You will you be lifted as far as heaven, will you? You will fall down as far as Hades... because if in Sodom there appeared the miracles which appeared in you, it would have remained until this day. (24) Therefore I say to you that it will be more tolerable for the ground of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you."

The first woe is pronounced against Chorazin and Bethsaida; He compares them to the ancient and evil cities of Tyre and Sidon, and mentions that they would have repented in sackcloth and ashes had they seen the same miracles.

Sackcloth was a kind of garment made of camel or goat's hair. It was a rough garment, and it signified mourning, protest, or repentance. The discomfort and non-social look of the sackcloth indicated that the wearer had turned inward to reflect upon God.

Ashes were smeared on the head or forehead to portray a simple principle: "Ashes to Ashes." They were a reminder that only the soul returns to God.

See the doctrine of Repentance.

A question has been asked: if they would have repented, then why didn't God send miracles to them? Doesn't this breach 2 Peter 3:9, "God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."?

In eternity past, through divine foreknowledge God knew exactly what it would take for each person to repent and be saved.

In the divine decree, God set the minimum standard that gospel information would be provided to all who desired it, that is, at least to all who are positive at God-consciousness.

This is the satisfaction of the justice of God.

However, God could not be fair in the angelic conflict and sweep everyone off their feet, overwhelming them with spectacular miracles and arguments.

So there is a minimum standard of truth that everyone will receive; but it is not possible that all receive the maximum.

In summary, God is not willing that any should perish, but He is restricted by His own sense of honor so that He will not overwhelm anyone.

The people of Tyre and Sidon had all that they needed to repent; even if they did not have the maximum, they had enough.

Verse 22 makes it clear that there are degrees of judgment in eternity.

The comparative adjective ANEKTOTERON shows those degrees.

It comes from ANEKTOS, which is 'endurable, tolerable.'

This adjective is made into the comparative form with the suffix -TER.

So Christ clearly communicates that even in negative judgment there are degrees.

And you would believe it to be so, since God is indeed a just God, and in negative judgment there should be degrees of bad and degrees of punishment.

This is the gist of Revelation 20:12, "And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds."

The spiritually dead are judged according to their works. They cannot be judged according to their sins, because those sins were paid for at the cross.

So the works of unbelievers become their condemnation, because those works were offered as a substitute for the work of Christ. For this reason, they are blasphemy before God. All works substitute the gospel.

Naturally, some unbelievers are more prolific at their substitution efforts than others.

Therefore, the fact that the people of Bethsaida and Chorazin rejected such a compelling presentation of the gospel indicates that they had a substitute fabricated that was equal in their minds to what Christ had given.

The principle: any given substitute gospel must be equal in elaboration to the level of excellence with which the true gospel is presented.

And the elaborate substitute that the citizens of these bad towns had must have been something quite amazing. It was most likely the emotional appeal of the zealot movement that was so prevalent in Galilee during that time.

So a warning: political zealotry is a powerful substitute for spirituality.

The second woe is pronounced against Capernaum.

A quote was popular in Capernaum during that time: You will you be lifted as far as heaven.

Christ has taken the quote from some popular theme about Capernaum. Apparently, this was a catch-phrase around that town. It was apparently employed to denote the entire town, and placed with some condition of zealotry. "If you throw off the Romans, you will be lifted as far as heaven."

Christ places this catch-phrase in a sentence which expects a negative answer. This is accomplished by the placement of the negative adverb ME within the Greek question.

But Christ refutes this, and indicates the evil of their pride.

Isaiah 14:14 comes close to their quote, and this is not good. "I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High."

But of course this is the prehistoric quote of Satan at his rejection of the grace offer of God.

And it is pure evil. The citizens of Capernaum had adopted a slogan straight from the devil's quotebook.

Their system of works had replaced one of the most compelling presentations of the gospel of all time. It is no surprise that they had adopted Satan's very own slogan.

So Christ replies with Isaiah 14:15: "Nevertheless you will be thrust down to Sheol, to the recesses of the pit."

An outline of Isaiah 14:4-20. The pronouncement of the end of the oppressor.

The pronouncement, vv.4b-6, "How the oppressor has ceased, ceased the insolent fury. Yahweh has broken the staff of the wicked, the scepter of rulers. Unceasing blows that smote the peoples in wrath; unrelenting persecution that ruled the nations in anger."

The pronouncement of the end, v.4b.

The source of the end, v.5.

The reason for the end, v.6.

The effect on earth, vv.7-8, "The whole earth is at rest and quiet; they break forth into singing. The cypresses rejoice at you, the cedars of Lebanon... "since you were laid low no hewer comes against us."

The effect upon other nations, v.7.

The effect upon the trees, v.8.

The pronouncement in Sheol, vv.9-10, "Sheol beneath is stirred up to meet you when you come; The shades who were all leaders of the earth rouse to greet you; all who were kings of the nations rise from their thrones. All of them will speak and say to you, "You too have become as weak as we; you have become like us.""

The effect upon the unbeliever kings, v.9.

The response of unbeliever kings, v.10.

The pronouncement to the oppressor, vv.11-12, "Your pomp is brought down, the sound of your harps beneath you; maggots are your bed and worms are your covering. How you are fallen from heaven O Day Star, son of Dawn; you are cut down to the ground, you who laid low the nations."

The fanfare of the pronouncement, v.11a.

The uniform of the pronouncement, v.11b.

The pronouncement proper, v.12.

The reason for the pronouncement, vv.13-15, "You said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven, I will set on high my throne above the stars of God; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds I will make myself like the Most High. But you are brought down to Sheol, to the depths of the Pit.'"

The ambition to the heavenly throne and authority, v.13.

The ambition to the divine capabilities and essence, v.14.

The reality of the judgment, v.15.

The continuation of the Sheol reaction, vv.16-17, "Those who see you will stare at you and ponder over you; Is this the man who made the earth tremble, who shook kingdoms, who made the world like a desert and overthrew its cities, who did not let his prisoners go home?"

The contrast of a career and its end, v.16.

The contrast continued, v.17.

The final divine comment, vv.18-20, "All the kings of the nations lie in glory each in his own tomb. But you are cast out from your sepulchre, loathed like a miscarriage, clothed with the slain, even those pierced by the sword, who go down to the stones of the Pit like a dead body trodden under foot. You will not be joined with them in burial because you have destroyed your land; you have slain your people. May the descendants of evildoers nevermore be named."

The status quo in Sheol, v.18.

The contrast with the king of Babylon, vv.19-20.

So you see, Christ has placed Capernaum with the judgment of the fallen angels at the second advent. In fact, they will be among the

unbelievers filled with dismay at the fall of Satan!

So Capernaum is compared with Sodom, and the ground of Sodom, which was nuked by God, will receive a better judgment than Capernaum.

Everyone knew the former location of Sodom - the bottom of the Dead Sea. To compare the last judgment of the bottom of the Dead Sea with the people of Capernaum is a strong vilification indeed.

The Easy Yoke

Matthew 11:25-30, "(25) During that time Jesus, after formulating an answer, said, 'I confess outwardly to you, Father, Lord of heaven and of earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise men and understanding men and You revealed them to very young children. (26) Yes, Father, so also it became well-pleasing before your face. (27) All things have been given over to Me by My Father, and none fully knows the Son except the Father, nor does anyone fully know the Father, except the Son and in whatever way the Son wishes to reveal Him. (28) Come to Me everyone who is laboring and heavily burdened, and I will give you rest. (29) Take up My yoke upon you and learn from Me, that I am an easy and humble heart, and you will find rest for your souls; (30) For My yoke is flexible and My burden is light.'"

Outline:

Introduction to the prayer, v.25a.

The body of the prayer, vv.25b-26.

The sermon from the prayer, vv.27-29.

The principle of the authority and power of the Son, v.27a.

The principle of the knowledge of the son, v.27b.

The appeal to the slaves of the cosmic system, v.28.

The manumission for cosmic slaves, v.29.

The principle of manumission, v.30.

Verses 25-26, "(25) During that time Jesus, after formulating an answer, said, 'I confess outwardly to you, Father, Lord of heaven and of earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise men and understanding men and You revealed them to nursing babes. (26) Yes, Father, so also it became well-pleasing before your face.'"

The preposition EN plus the dative case phrase EKEINO TO KAIRO denotes time during. So it is translated 'during that time.'

This is at the same time that He is pronouncing woes against Bethsaida, Chorazin, and Capernaum.

The aorist participle APOKRITHEIS is translated 'after formulating an answer.' Christ had thought about the proper response to God on the pronouncement of woes for the three cities of Galilee.

You see, Christ considered this a difficult thing, and He had to formulate the proper prayer in His own mind.

It was difficult because it was rejection, and the rejection of Christ's kingdom was personal to Him. Therefore He experienced temptation with regard to rejection and personal attack.

It was difficult because in letting the justice of God operate toward these towns there was harsh judgment.

You can rest assured that whatever answer Christ formulates, it will be adequate for most questions in the same vein.

Christ confesses outwardly to the Father. This is the verb EXOMOLOGEO in its present active indicative form. Christ exudes a certain self-consciousness in this prayer. The outward confession reflects the inner prayer exactly, and that is what HOMOLOGEO means - to 'say the same thing.'

Christ has decided to make this particular prayer public for our benefit; so that we might learn from His application toward the Father.

And please note: this application is definitely toward the Father, as much application should be.

Take this pattern for yourselves. Go to the Father with your applications. Listen. You are in constant danger of making your spiritual lives an empty academic pursuit. When you leave God out of the application cycle of your lives, you are flirting with that.

Christ confesses outwardly in order to demonstrate that He too applies through prayer.

Jesus addresses the prayer by calling the Father the Lord of heaven and earth. He is here following the pattern of His own recommendations in the Lord's prayer.

But there is an interesting distinction; here Christ concentrates on the sovereignty of God apart above all - the universal kingdom of God. Alva J. McLain, in the fourth chapter of his masterful *The Greatness of the Kingdom* points out some important distinctions of the universal kingdom of God.

This Universal Kingdom exists without interruption throughout all time.

The Universal Kingdom includes all that exists in space and time.

The Divine control in the Universal Kingdom is generally providential.

By the term "providential" we mean control by means of second causes.

(McClain goes on to explain this as the rule of God over nature).

Because in His Universal Kingdom God controls the processes of material nature, He is able by such means to control the circumstances of human existence and thereby direct the stream of history.

McClain illustrates by the book of Esther, and the crucial night of the narrative: "...at stake, in a very real sense, was the entire divine program for the ages. If Israel perished, there would be no Messiah, no redemption, no

Church, no future Kingdom of God among men. With such issues in jeopardy, we might not have been too much surprised to see the arm of Deity breaking forth into the affairs of men with some great supernatural intervention; perhaps something like the deliverance of Israel from the hand of the Egyptian Pharaoh. But nothing of the kind happens. There is not even any mention of God. The writer of the Book of Esther merely records what might be regarded as the master understatement of all time: "On that night could not the king sleep" (6:1). Why he could not sleep, we are not told."

Fire and hail; snow, and vapors; stormy wind fulfilling His word" (Psalm 148:8).

The divine control in the Universal Kingdom may be exercised at times by supernatural means.

The God of the universe is said to be both in the universe and above it. Therefore at any time He may break into the so-called "closed system" of nature with great exhibitions of His unveiled power.

The resort to miracles in the rule of the Universal Kingdom does not mean necessarily that God might not be able to accomplish His purposes by other and less spectacular means. The supernatural method is rather for the purpose of demonstrating publicly that there is a true God in heaven who always will have the last word in human affairs.

The Universal Kingdom always exists efficaciously regardless of the attitude of its subjects.

The rule of the Universal Kingdom is administered through the eternal Son.

This Universal Kingdom is not exactly identical with that Kingdom for which our Lord taught His disciples to pray.

He said, "Thy kingdom come."

But here, Christ says "All things have been given to Me."

As Thieme summarizes: "It is also true that our Lord today, as always, rules in the Universal

Kingdom of God, which is administered through providence. Jesus Christ is the absolute ruler over all, but allows human volition to choose His rule until such time as the forces of evil are bound."

So He is not following the Lord's prayer pattern exactly.

Important note: when Christ depends on the Father during the incarnation, He depends on the function of the Universal Kingdom.

He depends on providence and miracles, because He is shackled by kenosis. He cannot function as the universal ruler while He is on the planet.

So Christ calls the Father the Lord of Heaven and Earth, recognizing His universal rule.

But He must come to recognize His own kenosis at the same time.

And this is a great application, even in the address portion of this public prayer. It is a recognition of His own kenosis related to judgment.

For Christ, there will be a time for judgment, but this is not it. He will not be vindicated just yet - and that is why the mention of the last judgment and not current judgment in divine discipline.

Christ understands the Father as the judge and ruler during the incarnation because He cannot under the rules of kenosis.

We too must function under a semblance of kenosis. God's power is not at our fingertips to chase all problems away as we would like. Kenosis is a necessity while we live in the devil's world.

Rather, we operate under a system of dependency on the power of God the Holy Spirit related to the word of God.

And the word of God solves problems on the level of the soul, so that God can act faithfully after the pattern of His word.

The supernatural essence of divine intervention in the church age is as follows.

Through the transformation of the soul.

Through interdiction in the events of our lives, guiding and shaping us through discipline, blessing, and undeserved suffering.

Christ begins the body of this prayer with the aorist Greek verb EKRUPSAS. This summarizes a past action of God.

During some past time, God hid certain things from the wise and understanding men of the world.

The certain things must have to do with what He has just said about the judgment of the Galilean cities. That is, God hid His final judgment of these cities from wise and understanding men.

Even the wisest and most intelligent men cannot perceive the judgments of God. At least the wise and intelligent ones according to the cosmic standards.

Christ is here concentrating on faith perception - something that even a NEPIOIS (very young child can do. The system of faith perception is crucial to the human race, because it depends only on volition in trust of someone else's merit and integrity.

In Matthew chapter eighteen, verses one through six, Christ comments on the destruction of this child-like faith through child abuse: "(1) At that time the disciples came to Jesus and said, 'Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?' (2) And He called a child to Himself and set him before them, (3) and said, 'Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. (4) Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. (5) And whoever receives one such child in My name receives Me; (6) but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.'"

On this passage, R.B. Thieme Jr. comments, "Childlike faith in parents is natural on the part

of a child and part of the divine institution of marriage and the family. Marriage is the state in which one should have children. The child is dependent on the parents. Consequently, any form of child abuse is betrayal and instant shock for the child. The child has a faith directed toward his parents that he will never have again. Therefore, the most important learning period in the life of a child is between ages one through six. This is when the personality is formed. In child abuse, this faith can be destroyed and puts scar tissue on the child's soul and destroys faith as a system of perception. Child abuse also destroys humility because the child becomes preoccupied with self."

"Humility is not acquired genetically. It is the status of being humble and being humble is the antithesis of arrogance. It is acquired first through authority orientation. For the child, this begins with the parents. Humility must be attained through the teaching and the just and loving function of the authority of the parents. Humility as teachability recognizes two authorities: the authority of the parents and the content of their teaching and the authority of the pastor and the content of his teaching. The greatest humility function of the child is what he learns in the home. Child abuse destroys teachability at the most critical point in life and substitutes arrogant preoccupation with self, a lifetime habit which is almost impossible to break apart from Bible doctrine."

There are at least five categories of child abuse.

Incest or sexual abuse. This includes exposing yourself to your children. Parents, siblings, relatives, or others are victimizing and traumatizing a child through various categories of sexual activity.

Physical abuse. This includes torture, burning of children, bashing, beatings, physical injury, and even murder.

Soul abuse. This is destruction of the child's faith and humility.

This is also failure to function as the FLOT of the soul for your children during their

formative years (ages one through six) as per Mt 18:5; Eph 6:4; and Col 3:21.

This is also failure of Christian parents to evangelize their children and failure to teach your child basic doctrine.

Failure to teach your child's conscience the difference between right and wrong.

Failure to render just punishment when a child is wrong or has violated establishment principles. When people do not punish their children when their children are wrong, the children will accumulate and perpetuate guilt, which is a guarantee of emotional revolt of the soul.

Teaching your child to hate the other parent in a divorce is soul abuse. Children should never be involved or take sides in the problems and antagonisms that occur in marriage. Differences should be solved away from the children.

Failure to teach the principle of authority in the home is soul abuse.

Emotional abuse.

This includes parents seeking to control their children through the emotional complex of sins.

This includes belittling, bullying, isolation, arousing fear by threatening, rage, fear, shame, guilt, defense mechanisms, sleep disturbances, loss of faith and humility necessary for learning, threatening to take away their toys or do harm to a pet dog or cat.

Never make a child feel guilty; to make a child do things because you have instilled guilt in them is not a true sense of responsibility but a neurotic approach. Parents should never motivate their children through anger, hatred, malice, tantrums, or violence.

Parents must never encourage either insensitivity or hypersensitivity.

Children should never be permitted to sulk in self-pity, or to whine or snivel, which is arrogant preoccupation with self.

Parents should never encourage jealousy, bitterness, slander, judging, lying, or any form of vilification of other children. Spanking removes guilt. If the child is not spanked justly, then guilt builds up and results in neurosis.

Neglect and Deprivation.

This includes failure to provide the necessities of life (food, shelter, clothing), failure to teach the basic concepts of life (like good hygiene, vocabulary, how to think), failure to provide protection from abuse (medical care).

There are five thinking skills which a child must learn before they leave the home and go to school: perception, memory, problem solving, decision making, and creativity. Most things we learn in life, we learn at a very early age. Social skills, spiritual skills, thinking skills, must be taught by parents in the home before the child learns competitive skills in school.

Child abuse destroys both social and thinking skills, leaving the child to struggle with the maladaptive defense mechanisms and the competitive skills which handicap their start in life. Competitive skills minus thinking and social skills result in general maladaptation and unsuitable behavior.

When the spiritual skills are missing, it is an even greater disaster. Competitive skills come naturally. All categories of child abuse result in some form of traumatic stress disorder.

It is therefore not through empirical or experimental perception that these things are understood. The greatest scientist in the world could not find doctrine with the finest telescope ever made.

Nor is it through reason. The most amazing philosophical genius in the world could not find doctrine within the confines of his own mind, no matter how hard he concentrated.

Rather, it is through faith that knowledge of the truth comes. Faith is not dependent on the genius of the subject, but rather the trust of the subject plus the genius and integrity of the object. This is what Christ refers to.

Verse twenty-six now focuses on the direct will of God.

EUDOKIA has in focus the faculties of judgment in an individual. The verb DOKEO is related to this word, and it has to do with thinking or supposing in the realm of subjective opinion. In a negative sense, it can mean to presume or assume. When EU is added, it means to come to a positive conclusion. To 'seem well.'

Christ is almost being facetious here in a way, because He is saying, well, Father, in your opinion it looked good. It's just that the Father's opinion is always right.

So God considered things, and it looked good to Him to make faith the basis for perception of spiritual principles.

And you see this prayer is a sermon; it was in the good opinion of God to make faith the basis for perception. One thing immediately comes to mind: that Christ's hearers on that day would need to accept by faith His words on the evil of the three Galilean cities.

Those words were not up for debate; they did not need to be verified by any wise man; Christ said it, and they need to abide by it as children need to abide by faith.

Verse Twenty-seven: "All things have been given over to Me by My Father, and no one fully knows the Son except the Father, nor does anyone fully know the Father, except the Son and in whatever way the Son wishes to reveal Him."

II. Now this does stand as verification from Christ. Ultimately you are going to have to take Christ's word for it, and this should apply to all efforts toward evangelism through apologetics.

Principle: you never have to debate with positive volition!

Principle: never assume you are dealing with dead-set negative volition!

First is the principle of authority: Christ has absolute authority to say what He has said about the judgment of the apostate cities.

PANTA is the adjective-turned noun. It is translated 'everything.'

The verb is PARADIDOMI, which means to 'give over.' It here describes the transfer of authority to Jesus Christ upon His incarnation.

See: The Night before Christmas.

This is kind of interesting when you combine it with an understanding of kenosis.

All things have been given to Christ.

To establish His kingdom on earth;

To accomplish the plan of God for His life. In this case, the 'all things' refers to the portfolio of grace assets, so that Christ could grow to spiritual maturity and take the witness stand for God as the star witness in the angelic conflict.

And it really comes down to the Spirit and the Word. God intervenes on the basis of the word operating in your soul.

But this authority does not extend in all ways to church age believers.

Although we have the same grace assets for spiritual growth, in no way do we have the authority to establish Christ's kingdom on earth. That can only be accomplished through the second advent.

There is an authority, however, to pass on the teachings of Jesus Christ.

Matthew 28:18-20: "(18) And while going together, Jesus spoke to them saying, 'All authority was given to Me in heaven and on earth. (19) Therefore after going make disciples of all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, (20) teaching them to keep everything of what quality I commanded you; and behold I am with you all the days until the completion of the age.'"

This represents the transfer of authority to make disciples of all nations.

In no way does Christ give His disciples the authority to establish His kingdom on earth.

That moment is indeed reserved for the second advent only, as made clear by Revelation 19:11f.

But the authority does encompass the realm of making disciples. This making of disciples is described by two parallel statements:

Baptizing them into the name of the Father and Son and the Holy Spirit.

Teaching to keep everything of what quality I commanded you.

These parallels are two sides to the same coin; they do not however describe successive events.

Baptizing and teaching are intended to be one in the same.

Christ uses BAPTIZONTES in its basic sense of changing something by immersion. It is not intended as some magic formula of speaking during the water baptism of an individual.

The disciples are to be made by changing them by immersion into the name of the trinity.

The name of anyone represented their very essence or character; so the new disciples are to be immersed into the character of God.

DIDASKONTES is exactly parallel in all grammatical respects to BAPTIZONTES. It also gives further explanation to the baptizing action.

So the disciples are to be changed by immersion into the character of the Trinity, and the immersing action is to be teaching along the quality of what Christ had commanded them.

Now this is the authority we have during the church age.

We have the authority to advance in our own spiritual lives.

We have the authority to access the power of the Spirit for the intake and recall of Bible Truth;

Having that authority means that God is faithful to a promise; our free will must act to do both of these things.

We have the authority to perform our ambassadorial functions in disseminating the gospel and finding the lost sheep of Christendom.

We have the authority to function under our spiritual gifts within the validating function of the local church authority for gifts with authority.

We can have tremendous confidence in this: that it worked for Christ.

The delegation of authority to Christ for spiritual growth worked in perfect fashion, so that He resisted the gravest temptations of the enemy.

His temptations were not only extreme by nature, but also complex, and He stayed in the plan of God, even to the cross.

And if it worked at the cross, then it can work for you.

Principle: the Son reveals the Father.

The Son is a revelation of the power of God.

In His miracles, healings, and demon exorcisms.

In His transfiguration. Matthew 17:2, "And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light."

In His resurrection. Romans 1:4, "Christ Jesus... who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord..."

The Son is truly a revelation of the character of God.

In His kenosis. Philippians 2:5-8, "(5) Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, (6) who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, (7) but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. (8) Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."

In His cross.

The Son is a revelation of the plan of God.

In His testing.

In His prosperity.

There is full-knowledge between the Son and the Father, because they existed together in perfect fellowship in eternity past.

This is the foundational model for all love relationships.

This relationship was so great that God the Father desired it to overflow into the creation of angels who could appreciate it as well.

Summary: John 14:1-11, "(1) 'Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. (2) In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. (3) If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also. (4) And you know the way where I am going.' (5) Thomas said to Him, 'Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do we know the way?' (6) Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me. (7) If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him.' (8) Philip said to Him, 'Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.' (9) Jesus said to him, 'Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, 'Show us the Father/' (10) Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works. (11) Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; otherwise believe because of the works themselves.'"

Now let's put this in the immediate context. The Son reveals the Father, so that if the Son has something particularly difficult to say, then you can rest assured that it is a revelation of the policy and plan and attitude of the Father.

And now this: 1 Corinthians 2:16 tells us that Scripture is the mind of Christ. It is a revelation of His mental attitude on every aspect of human life and experience. It also reveals the Father with complete accuracy.

Sometimes Scripture has difficult things to say. It has many passages that are tough-love passages - tough minded passages.

It reveals rugged discipline and even the ultimate discipline for the rejection of Christ as savior. It does indeed reveal the Lake of Fire.

Yet this is the mind of Christ and the plan and policy of the Father. Humility is the only proper course.

Verse 28: "Come to Me everyone who is laboring and heavily burdened, and I will give you rest."

First of all, Christ has the power to do this; all things have been given over to Him.

The labor and heavy burden is the individual branch of the cosmic system.

KOPIONTES is labor and toil - hard and heavy work.

PEPHORTISMENOI is the person under a heavy burden.

This, my friends, is backpacking.

The cosmic system is heavy labor because it takes a lot of thinking to rationalize and perpetuate your existence there.

The cosmic system is heavy labor because it involves a great deal of cognitive dissonance, where the world does not match up with your beliefs.

The cosmic system is heavy labor because it involves a tremendous amount of divine discipline.

The cosmic system involves a lot of emotional pain, and even sometimes physical pain.

The individual branch of the cosmic system tends toward self destruction under six categories of lust:

Approbation lust.

Stimulation lust.

Emotional lust.

Money and material lust.

Lust for blood and violence.

Power lust.

All categories of lust are characterized by their chains to this world. 1 John 2:17, "The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever."

Nothing that is lusted for may ever be brought from this world.

In fact, nothing at all but your human spirit and your soul - and the truth that is in them.

The only true production is the production of intake and application; everything else in this world is quite secondary.

Romans 8:18 puts things in the proper perspective: "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed."

There is greater glory in eternity than all this! Greater glory.

The Old Sin Nature is Satan's secret agent in the flesh.

The Sin Nature resides in the cell structure of the body, and issues temptations to the soul.

There are two general trends to the sin nature:

The trend toward self-righteous arrogance.

The trend toward lascivious lawlessness.

Generally a person will tend toward one or the other during a given period of life. Sometimes one will drive the other in a binary system of sin.

The Law of Volitional Responsibility ensures that the yoke of the cosmic system is heavy indeed. This Law is one of the great principles of the divine decree, set forth as a condition for all of human history.

This Law is set forth in Hosea 8:7, "For they sow the wind and they reap the whirlwind."

And it is a promise that justice will always operate toward human free will. It is a promise from eternity past.

General principles on the cosmic system.

Human history is the resolution of the prehistoric angelic conflict.

In order to vindicate himself and His judgment of the fallen angels, God conceived a plan by which sinful human beings could glorify Him.

In order to justify his rejection of the prehistoric grace offer from God, Satan conceived a system designed to counteract the plan of God.

In God's thinking, human beings can only vindicate him by the free use of volition.

In Satan's thinking, human beings can be restrained from vindicating God if they are enslaved by his system.

Therefore, the purpose of the cosmic system is as follows:

The Purpose of the Cosmic system.

To keep unbelievers from believing in Jesus Christ.

By attacking the gospel.

Destroy it.

Replace it.

The attack against soul: addiction.

To destroy the believer's relationship with God.

Attacks against the faith perception of the truth.

The attack against relationship with God: Personal sin and human good.

The attack against the soul: addiction.

The attack against the plan of God: Operation Counterfeit.

To bring in his own millennium through internationalism.

The cosmic system is a progression of misery that all begins with maladjustment to some

aspect of God's essence, capabilities, or attributes (Review Cosmic System).

But Christ says to us that He will give us rest. This is the future indicative verb ANAPAUSO. It is a standard verb for the notion of rest.

We get rest from the runaround, the evil runaround of the cosmic system.

And we get the ultimate rest of the Sabbath - the time logged in relationship with God.

There are three Sabbaths in the Christian life of the church age:

The Sabbath of dependence on God at any level of maturity.

The Sabbath of the promised land of spiritual maturity.

The Sabbath of the eternal rest.

Verses Twenty Nine and Thirty: "(29) Take up My yoke upon you and learn from Me, that I am an easy and humble heart, and you will find rest for your souls; (30) For My yoke is flexible and My burden is light."

The aorist imperative verb ARATE is a command from Christ.

The aorist tense makes it clear that the hearers are to take this action immediately. It is a sharp command.

The verb itself means to take or pick something up. The picture is take pick up a yoke for yourself - a ZUGON.

Of course, this is something that a beast of burden or a slave could never do. This is one yoke that we must pick for ourselves; one burden that we must choose.

And this means that it has nothing at all to do with slavery. Satan wants to put a yoke on you; God wants you to choose His yoke on the basis of its own merits.

AA. The second command is related to the first. It should not surprise us at all. It is MATHETE, and another aorist imperative. MANTHANO means to learn something through a process of instruction - through a teacher.

So the burden of Christ involves learning on a program of instruction.

The explanation then comes. Christ is an easy and humble heart.

Teaching comes from the heart, and the heart of Christ is easy - PRAUS. PRAUS is a noun often used in the context of animal training. It can apply equally to trainer and animal trained.

With regard to the animal trained, it implies the tame nature of the animal.

With regard to the human trainer, it implies the approach and demeanor of that person.

The heart of Christ is also humble, TAPEINOS. He is a humble, not arrogant teacher.

This makes the process of learning infinitely easier. The humility of the teacher makes the lesson so much easier to digest.

Arrogant teachers are easy to detect, and difficult to take.

And this can be the heart of any teacher of truth... but -

This does not mean the teacher cannot be tough when the occasion calls for it.

And even easy and humble teachers must be tough according to the subject matter. Toughness in teaching may often be an act of compassion.

BB. You will find rest for your souls in the teaching of Christ.

The future active indicative HEURESETE tells of the certain futurity of the Sabbath rest for anyone who takes the learning yoke from Christ.

This is a Sabbath rest from sin that comes to anyone who gets into fellowship.

But the implication is interesting: getting into fellowship demands learning from the word of God. That is the demand of fellowship. This is such a fantastic and strong validation of our lifestyle.

CC. The final verse reinforces the truth of the preceding.

The yoke of Christ is flexible, which is CHRESTOS. CHRESTOS can mean a 'jack of all trades' and a sort of Swiss army knife usability.

The burden is light, which is ELAPHRON. There is no great burden to bear in the plan of God.

The Sinful Woman Forgiven

Luke 7:36-50

Translation: "(36) But one of the Pharisees kept on asking Him that He might eat with him, and entering into the house of the Pharisee He sat down. (37) And behold a sinful woman who was in the city, and... after being sure that He was reclining in the house of the Pharisee, after buying an alabaster jar of perfume (38) and after standing behind at the side of His feet, after crying - she began to wet His feet with tears and with the hair of her head kept on drying off and kissing His feet and anointing with the perfume. (39) And seeing this, the Pharisee who invited Him spoke to Himself, saying, 'If this man were a prophet, he would have known all along who and what kind this woman is who touches Him, that she is a sinner.' (40) And after formulating an answer, Jesus said to him, 'Simon, I have something to say to you.' And he replied, 'Teacher, speak.' (41) There were two debtors for a certain moneylender, one who owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. (42) Not being able to pay him back, he gave grace to them both. Therefore who of them loved him more? (43) After formulating an answer, Simon said, 'I take it that the one to whom he forgave more.' And He said to him, 'You judge rightly.' (44) And after turning toward the woman, He said to Simon, 'See this woman? I entered into your house, you gave me no water for my feet! But she wet my feet with tears, and wiped them with her hair. (45) You gave Me no kiss; but she from when I entered did not stop kissing My feet. (46) You did not anoint Me with oil; but she anointed my feet with perfume. (47) For this thanks I say to you, her many sins have been forgiven, so she loved much, and to him who is forgiven little, loves little.' (48) And He said to her, 'Your sins have been forgiven.' (49)

And those who were reclining at the table with Him began to speak among themselves, 'Who is this man who even forgives sins?' (50) And He said to the woman, 'Your faith has saved you, go in peace.'"

Outline:

The Setting, v.36.

The Incident of the Sinful Woman, vv.37-38.

The Response of the Pharisee, v.39.

The Response in Turn of Christ, vv.40-48.

Christ gets Simon's attention, v.40.

The parable and the question, vv.41-42.

The answer of Simon and approval of Christ, v.43.

Christ's reproof of Simon, vv.44-47.

No water, v.44.

No kiss, v.45.

No anointing, v.46.

No love, v.47.

Christ's affirmation of forgiveness to the woman, v.48.

The response of the Pharisees present, v.49.

Christ's reply to the woman, v.50.

II. Exposition.

The setting of this incident is given by Luke in verse one. "But one of the Pharisees asked Him that He might eat with him, and entering into the house of the Pharisee He sat down."

Since the Sermon on the Mount, there has been:

The healing of the centurion's servant.

The raising of the widow's son at Nain.

The sermon on the fall of John the Baptist.

The woes upon Bethsaida and Chorazin and Capernaum, including the yoke of Christ.

So it cannot have been too long a time since that momentous presentation of the kingdom.

Perhaps two or three weeks, perhaps a little more or less.

Having just given the rebellious Jews of Northern Galilee one more shot at responding to His kingdom offer, Christ finds Himself the guest of a Pharisee.

This is Simon, an unknown Pharisee, probably of Galilean origin. The invitation is likely in response to Christ's woes upon the cities of Northern Galilee, and the offer of His kingdom yoke to those people. You could bet that the Pharisee has some kind of agenda.

The imperfect active verb *EROTA* indicates that this Pharisee was insistent about Christ being his guest at table.

TIS TON PHARISAION tells us that the Pharisee is unknown; that is the function of the indefinite pronoun *TIS*. Luke was unable to put a positive I.D. on the man even though he has a name: Simon. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus are the only other two Pharisees for whom we have names.

So Christ enters and sits down - there is no indication that the meal has even begun before what happens next.

Verses Thirty Seven and Thirty Eight record the actions of a certain sinful woman: "(37) And behold a sinful woman who was in the city, and... after being sure that He was reclining in the house of the Pharisee, after buying an alabaster jar of perfume (38) and after standing behind at the side of His feet, after crying - she began to wet His feet with tears and with the hair of her head kept on drying off and kissing His feet and anointing with the perfume."

The grammatical structure is kind of fun, for Luke employs a little bit of his skill in the area of Classical Greek drama.

He sets it up so that the woman is in the same town, and she makes ready a list of things she must do to go see this Messiah.

The real drama lies in the tears of this woman, and Luke saves that for the end - because this is

a truly remarkable woman, and a truly remarkable incident.

So there is a real sentence here that goes: "And behold a sinful woman who was in the city, and she began to wet His feet, etc."

But in between the giving of her location and the depiction of her actions with Christ is her deliberations and actions and emotions. These are all portrayed by aorist participles in the Greek, which have been translated "after..."

Luke employs the imperative verb *IDOU* to catch the attention of his readers. It is translated 'Behold...'

This woman is given the descriptive adjective *HAMARTOLOS*. She is a sinner. Well this is not just a 'welcome to the club' kind of sinfulness. We are all sinners, and Luke knows that. But she is a sinner in some more spectacular way.

The category of sin is tactfully and respectfully left indistinct by Luke, even though his record of Simon's words later in the passage gives a stronger clue.

Because of Simon's leering portrayal in verse 39, it is apparent that this whole deal has something to do with immorality.

Immoral, yes; a prostitute maybe. But immorality is the category of sin that separates this woman from her society.

First, she makes sure that Christ is reclining at this Pharisee's house.

This is indicated by the aorist participle *EPIGNOUSA*. *EPIGINOSKO* is a verb which means 'full knowledge.'

Here, she makes sure that Christ is at the place where He is rumored to be. When Christ entered any place, rumors would fly and people were talking wherever He went.

Making sure would mean either she sent someone, or more likely she checked by herself.

The second thing she did was to buy an alabaster vial of perfume.

The aorist participle KOMISASA depicts her buying this vial. Apparently there was a source near the home of the Pharisee.

An alabaster jar was an expensive container of crystalline gypsum.

MUROU is perfume; and perfume in the ancient world had three different functions:

Medicinal - as a function of hygiene, the perfumes of the ancient world were based in vegetable and animal fat. Because of the dry climate of the ancient near east, these perfumes were used as lotions to keep the skin and hair from becoming too dry.

Cosmetics - the perfumes of the ancient world were used as deodorants, or at least as masks for body odors; also, certain perfumes were employed as mouthwashes. In burial the perfume had a cosmetic function in masking the smell of decay. Perfumes were employed in love-making, as an additional treat to the senses. The Song of Solomon confirms this several times. Perfume was also applied to clothes and even furniture.

Religion - anointing and incense were a part of religion; in works, trying to please God with a pleasant scent; in grace, representing the fragrance of righteousness going up to God.

So this sinful woman has a plan that includes expensive perfume; normally one would consider that she had an attempt at seduction on her mind. That she was going to give some sort of sensual temptation to our Lord.

So now she has apparently entered the house and is standing behind Christ and to His side. This description is given with the words: STASA OPISO PARA TOUS PODAS AUTOU.

STASA is the aorist participle from HISTEMI. It is translated, 'after standing'

The preposition OPISO places the woman behind Christ as He reclines; the additional preposition describes her as PARA, at His side. So if you can imagine Christ laying on His side, facing the low table of the Pharisee's house, and

the woman behind Him at the side of His feet - TOUS PODAS AUTOU.

The final part of the setup comes from the aorist participle KLAIOUSA, which means to cry.

This verb KLAIO is fairly equivalent to our 'crying,' and it indicates some vocalization of grief or emotion, but not to the point of ecstatic wailing.

This came with tears, and this woman finds herself full of emotion.

And there is more than one possibility for her tears. Either:

She is a sinner in the presence of righteousness, and she has found herself helpless; or:

She is a sinner who has found forgiveness, and these are tears of thankfulness.

Verse 47 answers the query: "...her many sins have been forgiven, so she loved much."

This woman is shedding tears of thankfulness. At some time in the past, she has realized the atoning work that this Messiah will do, and she believed.

Verse 50 confirms that she has already believed: "Your faith has saved you, go in peace."

So here is a premeditated act of worship from a woman who is a new believer.

But Luke still classifies her as a sinful woman. This also can have two possibilities.

That she is still functioning under her sin nature, or:

That the classification is difficult to shake.

But she is here at least in fellowship to give these acts of legitimate thanksgiving to Christ, so it is likely the latter. Luke gives the designation so that we can understand the response of the Pharisee.

The woman began to wet His feet - with the tears of her crying.

TOIS DAKRUSIN more properly goes with the sentence which follows, so that it should be 'she began to wet His feet with tears.'

She would only do this in order to wash the feet of our Lord.

Foot washing was a common thing in the ancient near east, thanks to the custom of wearing sandals, and the general dustiness of the land.

The feet were most often the dirtiest part of the body due to this, and so it was common courtesy to provide for the washing of the feet.

It would also become a metaphor for confession and forgiveness. When Christ washes the feet of His disciples in John 13, He teaches them something very important about the doctrine of fellowship, and it is on account of the actions of this woman that He does so.

Next there are three verbs in the imperfect tense; the imperfect tense portrays continuous action in the past.

EXEMASSEN means to wipe. She wiped His feet with the hair of her head. The idea is that she is crying continuously, and wiping continuously. There was no need for water.

KATEPHILEI means to kiss. She not only wiped His feet, but kissed them as well. This represents great humility indeed.

ELEIPHEN means to anoint. She was continuously anointing Christ's feet with the MURON, perfuming them rubbing them smooth. This is the medicinal function of this oily perfume.

This woman is performing a most humble service for our Lord, and doing it in such a way as to demonstrate her thankfulness for what He will do for her.

She understands that she is forgiven; and she has had faith in the atoning work of the Messiah, yet to be done.

She knows of the suffering Messiah of Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53. She knows that this man will suffer greatly on her behalf, and that she has a

great debt that she can never repay. Isaiah 53 defines what the Messiah will do regarding sin; Psalm 22 defines the how.

Since she has already believed and received forgiveness, the woman is not attempting to propagate some system of works onto Christ.

And these things that she does are humble works; they are stunning in that regard. Washing someone else's feet is the work of a slave.

This went on for some time, and Christ made no attempt to stop this woman from her efforts. And so Simon the Pharisee could contain himself no longer.

The thirty ninth verse contains that comment: "And seeing this, the Pharisee who invited Him spoke to Himself, saying, 'If this man were a prophet, he would have known all along time who and what kind this woman is who touches Him, that she is a sinner.'

Simon the Pharisee speaks to himself, EIPEN EN HEAUTO. Now, he still spoke out loud, but his comment was directed at himself.

The comment itself is a leering one:

The conditional particle EI functions here to introduce the Pharisee's judgmental attitude against Christ.

This is a perfect example of a second class condition, which is the contrary to fact conditional sentence in the Greek.

So the protasis is "If this man were a prophet." But it assumes that this is untrue. Although we know Christ is a prophet, the Pharisee does not think so.

Now there is more. The Pharisee apparently invited Christ into his house to test whether he was a prophet. But this is bogus in itself, for our Lord is the Messiah, and therefore as John the Baptist said, He is much more than a prophet.

The apodosis, or second half of the conditional sentence tells us why Simon has judged harshly against Jesus.

He would have known - EGINOSKEN, the imperfect active indicative of GINOSKO. Really, he would have known all along.

He would have known all along TIS KAI POTAPE HE GUNE HETIS HAPTETAI AUTOU. Who and what kind the woman who touches Him.

POTAPE is a relative pronoun of quality: it denotes usually good quality, but here undermines the morality of this woman.

HAPTETAI is to touch, but it is a sensual word. It means to touch a flint so as to make a spark. To touch fire to kindling in order to bring a flame to light. In the world of touching, it means to touch the skin in a sensual manner.

So Simon identifies this woman as a sinner, and assumes that in spite of all the crying and tears she is touching Christ so as to bring about arousal.

And looking at Christ, he has to wonder why Christ has not brought this supposedly erotic encounter to a halt; so all this goes through the mind of this Pharisee as he witnesses one of the most tender moments in the life of Christ.

And so in the fortieth verse, Christ must reply to this horrible and callused accusation: "And after formulating an answer, Jesus said to him, 'Simon, I have something to say to you.' And he replied, 'Teacher, speak.'"

The aorist participle APOKRITHEIS shows that Christ thought about this callused comment of Simon's. 'After formulating an answer.'

And then He speaks - I have something to say to you. Simon must be a brave man, a Pharisee used to getting his way in debate, and confident of his judgment even now, for he replies, 'Teacher, speak.'

He employs the term of respect to Christ, DIDASKALE. RABBI in the Hebrew. Although he has graded Christ down from Messiah to prophet, and then again from prophet to teacher, the Pharisee still has a kind of respect for Jesus.

The scathing statement of Christ comes out over the next several verses. First is a short parable: "(41) There were two debtors for a certain moneylender, one who owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. (42) Not being able to pay him back, he gave grace to them both. Therefore who of them loved him more?"

This parable is designed to teach Simon a principle that only a Pharisee could appreciate.

A Pharisee would not consider himself much of a sinner, since all of his efforts were funneled into upholding the Law of Moses.

The debtor who owed five hundred denarii (a denarius was a day's wage) would be the sinful woman in their presence.

The debtor who owed just fifty denarii would be Simon the Pharisee.

God is the moneylender. Neither debtor is able to pay the debt, but one has a greater debt than the other.

The word translated 'forgave in the NASB is actually ECHARISATO - to 'give grace.' This parable definitely stays faithful to the doctrine of total depravity. Neither is able to pay the moneylender, so in one sense it doesn't matter what the debts are. All we are like sheep who have gone astray... All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God!

But the sinner with the greater debt likely has an even great appreciation for the gracious attitude of the moneylender.

And this is the woman who is before them now. She had a great debt of the soul to pay to this man before her, and she knew the terrible price He would pay for her debt.

The question at the end is directed toward Simon.

Simon's answer comes in verse 43: "After formulating an answer, Simon said, 'I take it that the one to whom he forgave more.' And He said to him, 'You judge rightly.'"

The answer may be a little bit defensive, because the verb HUPOLAMBANO means 'I take it...' This is not unlike our English idiom.

When someone gives a real obvious hint like holding out the car keys before you and jingling them, you often would say: "I take it that you want me to start the car."

So Simon provides the obvious answer - and Christ says simply: 'You judge rightly.' There is kind of a laconic phrasing to Christ's summary, because He is just about to lambaste this man with a barrage of comments on his hospitality.

And even though what is to follow compares the man's hospitality with that of the sinful woman's, it is really about something else.

It is going to be: "Here you are judging this woman and judging Me at the same time, but I want you to know that she has the greater love for God!"

"(44) And after turning toward the woman, He said to Simon, 'See this woman? I entered into your house, you gave me no water for my feet! But she wet my feet with tears, and wiped them with her hair. (45) You gave Me no kiss; but she from when I entered did not stop kissing My feet. (46) You did not anoint Me with oil; but she anointed my feet with perfume."

The aorist participle STRAPHEIS describes to us that Christ rolled over, away from the table and toward the woman. And while Christ is turned toward the woman, He speaks to Simon.

Then Christ demonstrates verbally toward the woman; perhaps there is a gesture as well. "See this woman?"

The woman has done three things that Simon has not; offered three courtesies that this high-falutin' religious official has not. Christ lists them as an imprecation against the courtesy of this judgmental man, and to teach him the meaning of forgiveness.

The sinful woman has accepted Christ with accuracy; the Pharisee has taken Christ down two notches to 'teacher.' He is the Messiah,

greater than a prophet. And He is a prophet, greater than any teacher.

Take this in the right way, but you must always accept God for Who He is. The woman had an accurate take on the Messiah, especially the suffering Messiah.

God is perfect and infinite; He is living and three persons. God is omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent. He has perfect righteousness and love; perfect grace and order; perfect willpower and He never changes; He has perfect integrity of communication.

And Christ was and is God. He is not just any prophet; and certainly not just any teacher. He is more than a teacher or a prophet, for He is the Son of God and Savior of the world; King of kings and Lord of lords. And all of His words are Wisdom.

By showing Christ this great courtesy, the sinful woman has loved Christ with accuracy. And for this, Christ lauds her as someone who truly loves Him. And this is, of course, the plan of God for all sentient creatures.

The greatest commandment is to love God with everything that you have; and this woman fulfilled that ideal magnificently - adulteress, prostitute, or whatever.

In Christ, it does not ever matter what you have been; it matters what He is. Christianity is not subjective, but objective - it concentrates on God. It is worship with accuracy and even with detail.

Now this woman had no great complex of doctrine in her soul, either. She was doing this humble service for Christ because that is what she had, and she is giving her widow's mite in a way.

Her small offering is given in love and in understanding the doctrine of forgiveness; and this small act is also a legitimate offering of worship. This action, these tears - they are as worshipful as any great hymn or prayer of doctrine.

Her capacity for worship was indeed limited, but at least she is exhibiting a vitality based on her understanding of one thing. And that is good.

This demonstrates the value and importance of having a vital spiritual life before God, no matter what doctrinal resources you might have.

This Pharisee, Simon by name, had failed to pay even the slightest respect to Christ - he had failed to give him even the commonest courtesy of the day.

It is as though Christ were in the same class as this woman, at least to Simon. But even if a prostitute were in your house (for some legitimate reason), you would still show her some small form of courtesy.

But Simon treats Christ with the respect that he would treat a salesman or a telemarketer or even a prostitute. Really, with no respect at all.

And here this woman gives Christ courtesy and it is not even her house! She walks in and realizes that a discourtesy has been done to her savior, and so she takes care of it without even a glance at the master of the house. She does Simon's job in an utterly humble way, and now he treats her like this.

Verses Forty Seven and Forty Eight turn the attention of the narrative back to the sinful woman. "(47) About which grace I say to you, her many sins have been forgiven, so she loved much, and to him who is forgiven little, loves little.' (48) And He said to her, 'Your sins have been forgiven.'"

The first phrase of verse 47 is HOU CHARIN LEGO SOI.

The relative pronoun HOU picks up something that has been previously mentioned and brings it forward so that it is related to the current sentence. Here it is translated 'about which...'

The noun CHARIN is in the accusative case, and it completes the thought of the relative pronoun.

This is the grace of God, as it applied to the woman.

It is the salvation grace of the cross of Jesus Christ.

And then the verb LEGO and pronoun object SOI finish it off, "I say to you."

The second phrase is APHEONTAI HAI HAMARTIAI AUTES HAI POLLAI.

The most important part of the phrase is the verb, which is first.

It is the perfect passive indicative verb meaning to 'forgive.' But here understand the grammar of grace.

The perfect tense gives the portrayal of an action that was accomplished in the past, with lasting results - sometimes even everlasting results.

The sins of the woman are forgiven. In fact, they are forgiven forever, due to the work of Christ.

The saving nature of Christ's substitutionary death accomplishes forgiveness once for all. It is a perfect and lasting work.

The passive voice indicates that the subject does not produce, but rather receives the action of the verb. Her sins were forgiven by God; she did not produce the forgiveness by herself.

The indicative tells us that this is an absolute reality. It is not hypothetical in any sense. The forgiveness is real.

The rest of it is just the subject of the forgiveness: her many sins. Sins are forgiven.

The conjunction HOTI has an unusual connotation here, and that is result.

The result of the forgiveness of her many sins was her great love.

The verb EGAPESEN with the adjective POLU portrays that very thing.

And this is a gnomic aorist, of sorts, for it gives us a general principle about life: that if you are

a spectacular sinner, it is likely that your love for God will be much as well.

It is interesting that Luke employs AGAPAO here, the verb which describes Christian virtue love. This is either love expressed toward virtue, or love expressed virtuously toward that which is not virtuous.

And here is a principle: that the more serious sinners of this world owe a greater debt to God, and when they realize the forgiving of that debt they find it easier to love Him.

The greater the debt, the greater the love is the principle.

This implies that if you have a lesser debt, then it is more difficult for you to love God. But not impossible!

How interesting that the less you have sinned, the more difficult it is for you to love God.

For the requirement for all of us is that we love God with everything that we have, and this is a requirement for all of us. It is just that it is harder for those with a better track record to love God.

So there is an advantage to being a prolific and spectacular sinner. But of course there is no way to get ahead on this if you are already a believer. Romans 6:1-2 squashes this bug of an idea before it gets out of hand: "(1) What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? (2) May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?"

In contrast to this, the mundane and part-time sinner does not usually love as much. This portrays a general trend, but of course even the mundane sinner can come to love God just as much as the more achievement oriented one.

The Pharisee is certainly the one here who does not love much at all, as evidenced by his bypass of the simplest conventions of courtesy toward Christ.

He loves Christ no more than he would love the worst of visitors in his house. Christ is not the Messiah to him; He is not even a prophet.

Then Christ gives a reminder to the woman: APHEONTAI SOU HAI HAMARTIAI.

Again the perfect passive indicative verb indicates the final nature of the woman's forgiveness.

That final forgiveness was based on the integrity of God - it was based on the fact that God was good for His word, and that Christ would go to that cross and die for our sins.

Christ had not died yet, but God would be good for His word about the remission of our sins.

This stands as a reminder to her, even though she was already a believer. Remember, this woman walked into this house a believer, and the washing of Christ's feet represented her expression of love for that forgiveness.

So Christ reminds her that her sins have been forgiven - which is important for any believer in Christ to remember, because you are not done sinning just yet, just because you are a Christian.

This reminder is motivational in two ways.

First, as a reminder to resist temptation - by the love of God.

And second, as a reminder to confess - also by the love of God.

"(49) And those who were reclining at the table with Him began to speak among themselves, 'Who is this man who even forgives sins?'"

The scene shifts briefly back to the men around the table. There are more people at this gathering than just Simon and Christ.

As such, these are likely all Pharisees. This is after Christ has upbraided Simon for his lack of love and lack of courtesy.

This reproof passes through them like a mist, and they hardly notice it. For they hear one thing - that Christ forgives the woman's sins.

In their accurate picture of God, they know that only God can forgive sins. Well, they see this man here before them, passing along the

forgiveness of sins to this sinful woman, and they cannot stand it.

For this man cannot be man and God at the same time - that is blasphemy!

So they ignored the fact that Christ had just given reproof to them - they ignored His legitimate authority over them and bickered about a point of theology that they should have known.

They had conditioned themselves to only look for the Messiah that fit their criteria. And Christ's kingdom was far from their own ideals.

So it is not that a man could not be God at all. These Pharisees understood the doctrine of the Messiah well enough.

But rather, it is that this man could not be the Messiah, and so He is a blasphemer.

And so this is also a lesson that we can learn - to never impute our preconceived ideas into what Scripture has to say - to let the words and the passages speak for themselves.

These Pharisees were indeed practicing EISEGESIS, the imputation of prejudice into interpretation.

They interpreted the life of Christ according to their preconceived notion of what the Messiah would be like. As a result, they missed Him and His benefits completely.

We must always accept God as He is, not as we want Him to be; we must always accept Scripture as it is, not as we want it to be.

“(50) And He said to the woman, ‘Your faith has saved you, go in peace.’”

Christ ends this incident with most appropriate reply of all. It is intended as a contrast to the statement of the Pharisees.

The personal pronoun SOU tells all; it is possessive, in the genitive case. It shows that the faith belonged to her, and to her alone.

The Pharisees had no faith in God or Scripture. Their primary faith was in themselves.

The woman could go in peace, knowing that her faith had a permanent result of salvation. The perfect tense verb SESOKEN establishes this clearly.

The final command is for the woman to go in peace, POREUOU EIS EIRENEN.

There may be a little adjustment we need to make on this, on account of the preposition EIS.

This preposition shows more of an entrance into a state than a status quo.

The verb is a command that shows the earnest desire of Christ - it is a present imperative.

The present imperative concentrates on a command that is to begin right away and continue indefinitely.

So this woman is to go and keep on going in peace. Therefore the command to ‘go’ is closer to ‘live.’

‘Live always in peace’ would be a fair rendition of this command.

The peace here is most likely a reference to the reconciliation unto God that this woman has most recently experienced. This would be a command to perpetuate the reconciliation by staying in fellowship with God.

This is accomplished naturally through the resistance to temptation, and the confession of sin when failure is encountered.

This is remarkably similar to Romans 5:1: “Therefore having been justified from faith, let us have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ...”

There is a pretty good chance that Paul had heard of this woman, and had this incident in mind when he wrote those important words.

III. A Footnote on Footwashing: John Chapter 13.

Verse One: “Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He would depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.”

This is the introduction to the Last Supper, according to John's account. He provides invaluable information that none of the other gospels contain, including this ceremony, and a very long speech.

The introduction to this foot washing is that Christ knew that He was going to die, and that He loved His own disciples very much. In fact, this foot washing would be a demonstration that Christ loved them to the end.

Verses Two through Four: "(2) During supper, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray Him, (3) Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come forth from God and was going back to God, (4) got up from supper, and laid aside His garments; and taking a towel, He girded Himself."

The wheels were turning for the betrayal of our Lord. Judas, under the demon influence of Satan himself is going to betray Him at any time.

Jesus knew that the Father had given all things into His hands, operated calmly and deliberately in this desperate hour.

God had given Him everything - all authority and power to carry out His mission on earth to the last detail.

This is indeed one of the last details before Christ's return to the Father. He has this ceremony, the last few words to say to the twelve, and again to pray with the three, and then to His duty.

So this is important; and in His mind is a certain woman, a sinner full of love for Him.

Verse Five: "Then He poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded."

This simple ritual, this courtesy done by Christ to His disciples, was the work of a servant or even of a slave.

It must have caught them by surprise, but they were somewhat conditioned to follow His

leadership, and not to question what He did. He was, after all, the Messiah.

Christ did not care at all about the dirt and stink on the feet of His disciples. He did not care whether He dirtied His hands by all of that...

Verses Six through Eleven: "(6) So he came to Simon Peter. He said to Him, 'Lord, do You wash my feet?' (7) Jesus answered and said to him, 'What I do you do not realize now, but you will understand hereafter.' (8) Peter said to Him, 'Never shall You wash my feet!' Jesus answered him, 'If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me.' (9) Simon Peter said to Him, 'Lord, then wash not only my feet, but also my hands and my head.' (10) Jesus said to him, 'He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you.' (11) For He knew the one who was betraying Him; for this reason He said, 'Not all of you are clean.'"

The response of Simon Peter is interesting, because he expects an honest answer. He anticipates neither a yes nor a no. It is a basic Greek question.

Simon Peter is befuddled by this behavior of Christ's!

So Christ gives Simon an honest answer: that he cannot know now what Christ is doing, but soon it will become apparent.

This foot washing is meant to precede Christ's work at the cross. Interesting and intriguing, isn't it?

With all the ballyhoo about the communion ritual, this is one that is never talked about, and never practiced hardly at all. Yet this is on that night that Christ is betrayed, it has a connection with the cross, and it is passed on by Christ as a command. Interesting indeed.

Inexplicably Peter reacts in an emotional way against the action of Christ. Perhaps the way that Christ said META TAUTA that Peter understood it to be the death that Christ had foretold in Matthew 16:21 and many other places.

Peter had a history of wanting to prevent the death of Christ, and in his ignorance, he did not understand or refused to understand the necessity of the atonement.

Christ's response to this outburst is concise. Taking part in this footwashing is tantamount to partnership with Christ.

Christ meant this ritual to prepare them for the events of the next day.

And then again Peter errs. He goes overboard completely and wants a bath from head to toe from Christ. He was going to miss the significance of the ritual.

This ritual was significant in its procedure; it was just the footwashing that was important as a representation of something that was about to occur.

The bath would be a representation of salvation; the footwashing a ritual about forgiveness after salvation.

Christ wants to highlight post-salvation forgiveness as a precursor to the cross, so that His disciples will understand the necessity of forgiving one another, and that the possibility of that comes from the cross.

Indeed, this foot-washing has become a new hand-washing with a twist.

The ritual of hand-washing had been around since the advent of the tabernacle, at least.

At the entrance to the holy place, there stood a copper laver, where the priests would wash their hands.

The copper was highly polished, so that when the priests bent over to wash their hands, they would see their own image there.

This was intended to portray and even initiate self-examination.

So this laver for hand-washing was a physical metaphor for the confession of sin unto God.

This foot-washing of Christ's is similar to an extent. It represents not the vertical confession

of hand washing, but rather the horizontal confession of relationships between men.

Christ says that a bath is not necessary; this does not represent salvation. Nor does it represent confession. Rather, it represents forgiveness between men.

But note this detail.

Christ washes His disciples feet to show that He has forgiven them.

It was the reverse with the sinful woman of Luke chapter seven. She washed Christ's feet as a recognition of His atoning work.

Christ wants His disciples to perpetuate this practice so that they will forgive one another based on His work.

But this right here represents forgiveness of post-salvation sin. Post salvation sin was paid for on the cross, just as all pre-salvation sin.

The unlimited atonement extends to our Christian future as much it extends backward to our non-Christian past.

All of it must be forgiven, and that is the nature of unlimited atonement.

Judas is not a believer. Christ knows this. So Judas requires something greater than just the basic forgiveness of Christian sin.

Verses Twelve through Seventeen: "(12) So when He had washed their feet, and taken His garments and reclined at the table again, He said to them, 'Do you know what I have done to you? (13) You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. (14) If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. (15) For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you. (16) Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him. (17) If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.'"

Now finished with this ritual work, Christ settles in to explain.

He prompts them to think about what He has just done - He wants them to think it through, and asking questions is a great way to do that.

Then Christ goes on to answer His own question, in a roundabout way. He gets them to affirm His authority, and then to realize that He has led them by example. If I did this to you, then you should do it for one another.

Now you should all recognize that this ritual never really caught on during apostolic times.

This brings us to a conclusion: that the disciples never understood the ritual to be a command, but rather the reality behind the ritual as a necessity.

And the reality is to forgive the sins of others, as Christ has already forgiven them.

We now have this responsibility to imitate the underlying reality of the ritual.

From time to time we have to wash the feet of other people. That is, we have to come into contact with their dirt and grime that they pick up from walking around in the devil's world.

And it is our responsibility to wash that grime away. It is interesting that the metaphor has us doing the cleaning. In reality, Christ has done that completely through the cross.

But it is a good metaphor in that it has us participating in a dirty and unpleasant job. No one wants to clean up after the sinful spree of another. The fact of the matter is that the responsibility to do so remains.

But listen: the sins of others are not yours to bear. Cleaning their feet is a responsibility and a necessity because of the damage that may result to you and to the relationship if you perpetuate a grudge.

Because Christ has already borne our sins on the cross, we do not have to carry the debt of the sins of others. He has paid the price, and it is not really our debt at all. The sooner the forgiveness is given, the sooner we can be free from carrying the sin of another.

But of course there is a difficulty in this. What if the other person will not admit their wrongdoing? What if they rationalize their behavior, and justify it before you. How then can you forgive?

First, you must always be ready to forgive, as God is ready to forgive every unbeliever. You can do so because Christ has already died for those sins. Your readiness should never grow stale for that very reason.

Second, you must always keep the line of communication open - you should always be able to greet them with a clear conscience so that the issue of their sin may not remain a stumbling block.

Third, you must continue to pray for them, especially since this will prevent you from entering into judgment about the situation.

Fourth, the maintenance of your spiritual momentum is the only vindication you will ever need. Do not be self-righteous or haughty about this, but listen... this refutes any accusation that might be made against your character. Have the confidence of being right before God, and you will not worry at all about the other side.

These things all add up to washing someone else's feet. And it is dirty work, but if it results in the fulfillment of Romans 12:17-18, it is a good work indeed. "(17) Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. (18) If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men."

IV. The Attitude of Christ toward the Pharisees.

Our Lord comes down hard on Simon and his friends around the table.

But always Christ concentrates their attention on the truth. He does not let them get away with a single falsehood.

When you find yourself among the Pharisees of this time, you yourself do the same.

And if necessary, defend the honor of others right in front of them. There is nothing more effective than that.

The Pharisees of this world are almost always hypocrites, and that hypocrisy is an easy thing to find and point out to them.

But you must never cast a blanket judgment over them. Christ was there because He felt He could help them realize what was best for them. He gave them a shot at repentance, even though they were terribly rude to Him.

The Women's Auxiliary

The Women's Auxiliary

The Translation, Luke 8:1-3: "(1) And it came about in the proper order of things, and He kept on going around each city and village, preaching and evangelizing the kingdom of God and the twelve with Him. (2) And some women who had been healed from evil spirits and weaknesses, Maria, the one called Magdalene, from who seven demons were cast out, (3) and Joanna wife of Chouza steward of Herod and Susanna and many others, who were continuously serving them from their own private means."

I. The Exposition.

A. The first sentence is noteworthy in the Greek, because it employs the adverb KATHEXES. It denotes a sequence of events in a logical and proper order.

1. So whatever Luke is about to introduce here, it has a certain proper order following from the incident with the sinful woman at the house of Simon the Pharisee.

2. Since this passage has much to do with women, and the one preceding does as well, we can conclude that the women's auxiliary to the disciples sprang from the interaction with the unnamed woman of Luke seven.

3. The verb EGENETO is the aorist indicative of GINOMAI. This verb is unique in that it portrays something coming into being.

a. It has the connotation of an appearance out of nowhere, or from no discernible quarter.

b. It has the idea of the arrival of something truly new, whether just in one locality, or totally new in the whole world.

c. The idea of a woman's auxiliary was certainly nothing new, not even in the ancient world.

d. But Luke wants us to know of its spontaneous uprising. One day there was no auxiliary, and the next there was. It came about of its own accord.

4. Well actually it came about due to the initiative of some fantastic woman believers.

5. But the point is that Christ did not organize this; He did not form a committee for the formation of a woman's auxiliary.

6. One or several women took note of some of the logistical needs that existed for Christ and His disciples, and they began to fill them.

7. This came about in the proper order of things because of Christ's treatment of the sinful woman. He not only treated her well, but He also exalted her virtues in front of several Pharisees.

8. The Pharisees were the kind of men who used to thank God they were not born women. They held women in no particular esteem, and often mistreated them. In short, they were quite gender-prejudiced.

9. Now the women of Galilee had a champion, and His name was Jesus Christ.

10. In particular note that the sinful women saw a logistical need for Christ and deliberately went about taking care of that humble service of washing His feet.

11. It must have been her example that inspired the other women to participate.

12. Christ kept on going around to the cities and villages. This comes from the imperfect indicative of DIODEUO. That imperfect tense describes continuous past action.

13. Two participles put forth the nature of His travels:

- a. He was preaching, KERUSSON, and evangelizing, EUAGGELIZOMENOS.
- b. Specifically, He was preaching and evangelizing the kingdom of God.
- c. These combine to tell us that he was doing the work of an itinerate minister through these towns. He was evangelizing, so that some might enter the kingdom of God; He was preaching, so that those who already resided there might gain and be built up.

14. The twelve were with Him, ostensibly learning and helping with the work.

B. In the next two verses, Luke names a few members of the women's auxiliary, and just what they were doing, and how: "(2) And some women who had been healed from evil spirits and weaknesses, Maria, the one called Magdelene, from who seven demons were cast out, (3) and Joanna wife of Chouza steward of Herod and Susanna and many others, who were continuously serving them from their own private means."

1. Verse two begins with a general category of women - those who had been healed from evil spirits and weaknesses.

a. The periphrastic construction reveals the radical healing work of Christ.

(1) This here is the pluperfect periphrastic, which contains the imperfect of the verb EIMI and the perfect tense of the participle TETHERAPEUMENAI.

(2) This is a very strong way to emphasize perfective action. These healings and exorcisms were done in a permanent fashion.

b. Two categories of women received healing: those with demons, and those with weaknesses - probably physical weaknesses.

2. The first woman is Maria, the one called Magdelene. Christ had cast seven demons from her.

a. This woman had endured much misery before she met Christ and believed.

(1) She must have reached the pinnacle of unhappiness and addiction in order to allow the demon possession.

(2) And the demon possession suppressed her own control, so that her actions doubtless became worse.

(3) To those on the outside, she had most likely the appearance of insanity; especially with so many different expressions of personality.

b. But one day she had the demons cast from her, and she believed, so that they could not re-enter.

c. She must have wondered just what to do for this man who had done so much for her, and now in a response of love, she reaches out to provide logistics.

d. But she is much more than just a logistical auxiliary; she followed Him even unto Jerusalem, into the great danger of the last week of His life, Matthew 27:55.

e. And when Christ's disciples had fled, Maria followed Christ to His cross, Mark 15:40.

f. After He had died, she still did not think her service to Him was complete, for she watched to see where He would be buried, Mark 15:47.

g. She was among the first to go to the tomb on resurrection day, Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:1. And when she had seen the empty tomb, she ran to tell Peter and John, John 20:2.

h. She returned to the tomb, and there she saw the risen Lord. Her faithfulness was rewarded with this great distinction.

i. Then Christ commands her to go tell His disciples that He would ascend into heaven. She said to them, "I have seen the Lord." John 20:17.

3. Joanna wife of Chouza steward of Herod is the second; she comes from a very distinguished family of servants - they were servants to Herod.

- a. Now Joanna must indeed have been an outcast among the Jewish women of her day, for Herod himself was greatly despised.
- b. Therefore it is ironic that she should find the true Messiah and follow Him. For while all the rest of the Jews were involved in counterproductive political activism, she found the only way to have a great effect.
- c. She is a classic invisible hero - the mouse in the palace that no one knows, and yet she has more impact than anyone.
- d. And just how did the gospel get to this Joanna? Think. It is John the Baptist who was imprisoned by Herod, and the messengers of John who had gone back and forth to Christ. Somewhere in all of that she received the gospel. Perhaps she had even heard the word from John himself.
- e. And this Joanna would have been wealthy indeed.
- f. And needless to say, she went from a horrid boss to the best boss in history. It was a really good career move for her.
- g. She was present when they laid the body of Christ in the tomb, Luke 23:55, and was thus among those who were bringing the spices for the wrapping of the corpse, and told the disciples of the empty tomb, Luke 23:56-24:10.
4. The third mentioned by name is a certain Susanna.
- a. She is not found elsewhere in the gospels, even though she was well enough known at the time of Luke's writing to simply mention her name and have confidence that the readers would know of her.
- b. Since she is not mentioned elsewhere, we can have just a little conjecture. Her reputation as a good person must have continued beyond the time of Christ's life and into the church. Perhaps she was such a solid ecclesiastical citizen that she was well known even thirty years later.
5. Many other women were there, although they are not mentioned by name.

6. These and the many others were continuously serving Christ and the disciples. The verb is DIEKONOUN. This is the imperfect tense from DIAKONOO. It is from the noun form of this verb that we get our word for deacon.
7. These women were serving as deacons - not in the church ecclesiastical sense, but rather in the sense that this Joanna would be familiar with as a steward of the house of Herod. They were continuously taking care of the logistical details of Christ's travelling band.
8. This they accomplished EK TON HUPARCHONTON AUTAIS.
- a. This is translated, 'from their own means.'
- b. So these women did what they could from their own private savings and resources of various kinds, so that the ministry could continue.
- c. They found a legitimate niche in the ministry, and away they went.

Christ Casting Out Demons

Accusations about Christ's Use of Authority to Cast out Demons

Matthew 12:22-37: "(22) Then a man, demonically blind and mute, was brought to Him, and He healed him, so the mute spoke and saw. (23) And all the crowds were thunderstruck and were saying, 'This man is not the son of David, is He?' (24) And the Pharisees after hearing [this] said, 'This man does not cast out the demons except by Beelzebub ruler of the demons.' (25) And after knowing their inward fuming He said to them, 'Every kingdom after being divided against itself is laid waste and every city or house after being divided against itself will not stand. (26) And if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself; therefore how will his kingdom stand? (27) And if I by Beelzebub cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast out? For this reason they will be your judges. (28) But if by the Spirit of God I cast out the demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. (29) Or how is someone able to enter into the house of

the strong man and steal his vessel unless first he binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house. (30) The one who is not with Me is against Me, and the one who does not gather with me scatters. (31) For this reason I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven. (32) And whoever says a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven neither in this age nor in the one coming. (33) Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for the tree is known from the fruit. (34) Brood of vipers, how are you being evil able to speak good? For from the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. (35) The good man casts out good from the good treasure, and the evil man casts out evil from the evil treasure. (36) But I say to you that every useless word which men speak they will pay back concerning the word of it in the day of judgment; (37) for from your words you will be justified, and from your words you will be condemned.”

Mark 3:20-30: “(20)And He came into a house; and the crowd came together again, so that it is not possible for them to even eat bread. (21) And after hearing they went out from His side to seize it [bread]. For they were saying that it was amazing. (22) And the Scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying that He has Beelzebub and that He casts out demons by the ruler of demons. (23) And summoning them He spoke to them in parables, “How is Satan to cast out Satan?” (24) And if a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom will not stand. (25) And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. (26) And if Satan strives against himself and is divided, he will not be able to stand but he has an end. (27) But no one is able, entering into the house of a strong man, to steal his vessels, unless first he binds the strong man, and then he plunders his house. (28) Truly I say to you that every sin will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they blaspheme; (29) but whoever might blaspheme unto the Holy Spirit, he does

not have forgiveness ever, but is guilty of eternal sin. (30) Because they were saying, “He has an unclean spirit.”

Outline.

The setting, Mark 3:20.

The healing, Matthew 12:22.

The response of the crowd, Mark 3:21 and Matthew 12:23.

The response of the Scribes and Pharisees, Matthew 12:24 and Mark 3:22.

Christ’s reply, Matthew 12:25-32 and Mark 3:23-29.

Christ’s insight and summons, Matthew 12:25a and Mark 3:23a.

The parables of division, kingdom, city, and house, Matthew 12:25b-28 and Mark 3:23b-26.

The parables.

The conclusions.

The parable of the house of the strong man, Matthew 12:29 and Mark 3:27

The principle of enemyship, Matthew 12:30.

The blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, Matthew 12:31-32 and Mark 3:28-29.

The reason for Christ’s reply, Mark 3:30.

Principles of the spoken word, Matthew 12:32-37. (cf. Mute)

The tree and its fruit, v.33.

The abundance of the heart, v.34.

The treasury, v.35.

The day of judgment and the spoken word, v.36.

The explanation of the principle, v.37.

II. Exposition.

The Setting.

This incident occurred during Christ’s itinerant ministry in Galilee, which is portrayed so well in Luke 8:1-3.

He is evangelizing and preaching the kingdom of God, the twelve going around to the cities and villages with Him, and the women's auxiliary taking care of logistics.

In one of those villages, in a home, this took place.

Of course, crowds are following Him, hoping for a miracle, healing, or exorcism - and a few hoping for more teaching on the kingdom.

And Christ comes to a house, and there the crowd gathers again. In fact it becomes so crowded that they are not able to eat bread.

Literally, 'It is not possible for them to eat bread.'

Mark portrays this with the dramatic present tense of the verb DUNAMAI. By doing so, he draws his readers in, as though they were part of the story, witnessing the events with him.

We would say something like, 'They are packed into the house like sardines.'

The healing, Matthew 12:22.

While Christ and the crowd occupy this house, a man who is demonically blind and mute was brought to him.

Matthew employs the phrase DAIMONIZOMENOS TUPHLOS KAI KOPHOS.

The participle DAIMONIZOMENOS acts just like an adjective here, modifying TUPHLOS 'blind' and KOPHOS 'mute.'

So it wasn't that the man was just blind and mute, but that he had that affliction because he was demon possessed.

The demon who occupied his soul made it so that he could neither see nor speak.

Umm, it was not that the demon himself was blind and mute, but rather that he caused the state.

A disembodied spirit cannot suffer from afflictions which are endemic to the corporeal realm.

It is reasonable to note that demons may cause bodily afflictions and illnesses. And it may even

be that they can do so without possessing the body.

In the ancient world the line of distinction between deaf and mute was often blurred. There was very little done for those who could not hear, and so impaired speech was the norm for the deaf.

Now Christ healed the man. ETHERAPEUSEN is the aorist indicative verb here, giving a simple portrayal of a past action.

It does not say that Christ cast out the demon, but rather that He healed the man.

This makes it seem like the man's affliction was not a case of possession, but rather of affliction.

So now there are three things that can happen to a person as result of demon activity:

They can receive demon affliction in the form of some physical ailment.

They can receive demon influence in the form of false doctrine.

They can become demon possessed, and relinquish control of their body to demonic control.

And Christ simply heals the man, so that the affliction is gone.

The response of the crowd, Mark 3:21 and Matthew 12:23.

A must be said here about the harmony of these two gospel accounts.

Mark portrays the crowd as hearing Christ; there is no reference at all to a healing from a demonic affliction.

Matthew gives the reason for the crowd's amazement and Mark does not. That is why translators have found it difficult to translate Mark, and they usually get it wrong.

It is only by harmonizing the two passages that Mark's gospel becomes easier to translate.

Mark sets it up this way: the crowd was packed into a house so that they could not eat bread; after hearing [Christ] they went out to seize bread, for they were so amazed.

The aorist participle AKOUSANTES demonstrates that the action of hearing took place before the action of the main verb EXELTHON, 'they went out.' So first they heard or at least eyewitnesses the healing, and then they left the house.

Now this is more than a little funny, because it represents the attitude of the crowd toward Christ's ministry.

The phrase HOI PAR' AUTOU EXELTHON KRATESAI AUTON is often mistranslated.

You can see why. Mark gives a paucity of detail about the event; only by looking at Matthew do we know what really happened in the house.

Furthermore, he is somewhat ambiguous with his pronouns, so that it is difficult to tell to what AUTOU and AUTON refer.

The first part is a little easier, thanks to the preposition PARA. This preposition is a people preposition - it generally denotes proximity to a person. If Mark had wanted to portray departure from a place, like a house, he would have more naturally employed EK.

So it is 'They went out from his side...'

But the next part, KRATESAI AUTON encounters difficulty.

The translation of the aorist infinitive verb is not so difficult; it describes the intent of the crowd: 'in order to seize.' The aorist tense portrays their immediate and urgent intent to seize something.

The object of the verb is again a personal pronoun. Here is the difficulty:

The pronoun in the Greek will most often go back to the nearest antecedent that matches in gender and number.

This particular form may be either the masculine gender or the neuter gender.

If it is masculine, its antecedent is the first personal pronoun in the sentence, AUTOU; if it is neuter, its antecedent is bread, and so should be translated, 'it.'

Amusingly enough, they were packed in so tight they could not eat bread, and when they had heard Christ, they could not wait to leave, so anxious were they to eat.

The aorist infinitive KRATESAI portrays this ravenous crowd with perfection. KRATESAI means to overpower someone or something; the aorist tense adds a sense of urgency to the action.

So here is a Greek idiom on ravenous hunger; and the crowds are ready to get food even if they have to kill it themselves.

Mark explains further, ELEGON GAR HOTI EXESTE.

The translation is 'For they were saying that it is amazing.'

The verb EXISTEMI is without a direct object, it is translated 'amazed,' or even 'crazy.'

Since the subject of the verb is not expressed apart from the verbal form, it can be 'he,' 'she,' or 'it.' And the translator just has to make us his mind which one it is.

From the gospel of Matthew it is abundantly clear that the crowds were amazed, and not Christ. Again the harmony saves us from ambiguity and mistranslation.

The conjunction GAR makes it clear that this is an explanation on the behavior of the crowd in going out to seize the bread.

The imperfect tense of the verb ELEGON depicts a continuous past action - they kept on saying that 'it is amazing.'

So this is kind of the funny part: what they saw was so amazing that they became famished and ravenously hungry.

And this is certainly within the bounds of the common experience of man; you go to see a great movie, an action movie, and you come out hungry because the protagonist has been through so much, and it is a vicarious experience for you.

Perhaps this little passage give us more insight on what it was like to be an eyewitness to the

life of Christ. It was amazing. It would knock your socks clean off. You would walk out of there ravenously hungry, it was so great.

Matthew explains the response of the crowd a little differently.

He employs the same verb, EXISTEMI, to describe their mental and emotional state.

This verb means to stand outside oneself. It is equivalent of our own ecstatic.

They were knocked out - thunderstruck at what had occurred. Perhaps many of the people knew this man who had been blind and mute. That would certainly add to their amazement.

But Matthew concentrates not on their desire to eat bread; rather, on what words they spoke about Christ.

Matthew uses a particle that expresses doubt - one that admits a very small chance that something is true. It is the particle METI.

It was the same particle employed by the Samaritan woman of John chapter four, when she says to her fellow townspeople, "This man is not the Messiah, is He?"

So these people indicate that they see with their own eyes certain miraculous acts that would point out Christ as the Son of David, that is, the Messiah.

But they just cannot believe that Christ is the man. He is not a 'believable' Messiah to them.

Part of this believability factor was predicted in Isaiah 53:2: "He has no stately form or majesty that we should look upon Him, Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him.

As we would say, he just doesn't look presidential, or messianic.

Neither were His teachings what they expected. The teachings disappointed, because they were not in line with their desires.

So instead of saying, these miracles are amazing, Jesus has to be the Messiah - they are saying He doesn't look or teach like our idea of the Messiah, so He cannot be.

The term Son of David comes from the Messianic prophecy that is the Davidic covenant.

The original citation of the covenant is in 2 Samuel 7:8-17; it is reiterated in Psalm 89:19-37.

The people of Israel would have known these passages well, but again they are interpreting not according to objectivity, but according to desire.

The response of the Scribes and Pharisees, Matthew 12:24 and Mark 3:22.

The Pharisees and Scribes had come down from Jerusalem in order to 'check out' Jesus.

They had their own interpretation of the event ready for the people to digest. They were always telling the lesser people of the nation how to think; always giving their 'spin' on what Christ was doing.

Since Christ has just been so hard on Simon the Pharisee, it stands to reason that they would be in the vindictive mode, and looking to discredit Him in a big way.

This outrageous lie is to say the worst about Christ.

According to Mark, they implicated Him as being demon-possessed by Beelzebub, and for that reason he had the ability to cast out demons.

This name means "Lord of the heavenly dwelling." He is an archon mentioned by name in Matthew 10:25; 12:24-27; Mark 3:22; Luke 11:15-19.

This demon is an archon in heaven, and he is likely to be Satan's current lieutenant.

By getting the people to conclude that Christ is the personification of evil, they hope that all ties to Him will be severed, and the people will return to them as their source of truth.

For in that respect is power, and that is what the Pharisees truly desire.

Christ's reply, Matthew 12:25-32 and Mark 3:23-29.

Christ's insight and summons, Matthew 12:25a and Mark 3:23a.

Christ knew the inward fuming of the Pharisees and Scribes.

The aorist participle EIDOS communicates that Christ came to a firm conclusion about the thinking of the legalistic Jewish leadership present.

ENTHUMEISES describes the inward mental and emotional state of the Jewish leadership.

This is an emotional word; the original word THUMEO described the smoking of incense.

This is the word that described Joseph's inward fuming when he found out that Mary was pregnant.

It usually has the negative idea of slowly smoldering anger, but can also give the depiction of the germination of an idea.

Here of course it is the inward fuming of the Pharisees at Christ's success, and their scheming to destroy Him as well. Therefore the word fits both ways.

Christ knew their inward fuming. How did He know? Was it miraculous in some way?

Probably not here; the thoughts of the Pharisees were manifest in their actions.

So from their actions in maligning Christ, our Lord has come to a conclusion about their inward thought life.

And as a result, He summoned them.

Christ is again going to employ the parable to communicate truth.

He does not do it in a demeaning or condescending or patronizing way. It is the hope of Christ that He can turn their way of thinking.

Notice especially that Christ summoned them and spoke to them exclusively. He does not point out their error in front of the crowd.

He is giving them every opportunity to listen to what He has to say, so that they might respond and join Him in His kingdom.

What in the world, Christ knows He is going to the cross for these Pharisees just as much as He is going to die for anyone.

So He gives them a great opportunity to believe, and the personal parable is just the way to do that.

The parables of division, kingdom, city, and house, Matthew 12:25b-28 and Mark 3:23b-26.

The parables.

First there comes a question: Satan is not able to cast out Satan, is he?

The question expects a no answer... it is a rhetorical question designed to stimulate thought, so that the listeners will reach the same conclusion as the speaker.

If someone reaches that same conclusion by thought, then it is more to their benefit. Again this is Christ giving his listeners every good opportunity to believe.

Then follow the illustrations.

The kingdom divided against itself is laid waste. This is the nation under the civil war.

Every Jew would be familiar with this...

In 1 Kings 11, there is the chronicle of the division of the nation of Israel.

Jeroboam had rebelled against Solomon because when he rebuilt the Millo, a crucial kink in the armor of Jerusalem, the forced labor was considered too hard.

Solomon had observed that Jeroboam was an industrious type, and he appointed him foreman over the work, but Jeroboam left.

As he left he encountered the prophet Ahijah, who foretold of his rule over the ten northern tribes.

Israel had left Yahweh for the gods of Gentile nations, and part of the discipline would be the division of the nation.

The southern tribe of Judah would be left with Jerusalem as God's expression of faithfulness to the Davidic covenant, while the rest would go with Jeroboam.

There is also the promise of an enduring house like David's if Jeroboam and his division remained faithful. Solomon sought the life of Jeroboam for his threat to the unified kingdom. Solomon died before he succeeded in this endeavor.

The twelfth chapter contains high drama. Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, gathers the nation at Shechem for what he expects will be his coronation.

Here is a narrative of verses four through fifteen: the people request of Rehoboam relief from their heavy labors in the reconstruction of the Jerusalem wall; they make their service to him conditional - relief or rebellion; Rehoboam tells them to return in three days, and in the mean time takes counsel; the elders of the counsel take the conciliatory view, and advise Rehoboam to settle with his people; unfortunately, his fiery young peers take the opposite view and advise the king to add weight to the already heavy yoke; he accepts their view and answers harshly -

"My father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions." The word of the prophet Ahijah had been established.

The response of the people of the ten northern tribes is equal to the draconian measures of king Rehoboam. Verse sixteen says, "What portion do we have in David? We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse; To your tents, O Israel! Now look after your own house, David!"

The second is the parable of the city - Christ simply communicates that the same principle applies on a smaller model.

The third is the parable of the house, and so the principle applies at every level of size. Family, city, or kingdom cannot stand when divided.

The family divides at the parental level.

Cities and nations divide for various reasons.

These parables communicate the principle of unity.

Unity of world view.

Unity of mission.

Unity of command.

The conclusions. "And if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself; therefore how will his kingdom stand? But if he strives against himself, he has an end. And if I by Beelzebub cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast out? For this reason they will be your judges. But if by the Spirit of God I cast out the demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you."

Christ's conclusion begins with Satan himself; here, the use of Satan denotes his cosmic kingdom and any part of it.

The general principles given apply in the cosmic system and kingdom; they are universal principles.

The satanic kingdom would destroy itself from infighting.

Rather, the satanic kingdom is well-organized and unified. And it wants to destroy your relationship with God.

For if he strives against himself, he has an end, and any Jew with first grade Jewish history would certainly know this fact.

Furthermore, Christ turns the tables on the Jewish leaders. Apparently, their sons were casting out demons.

The reference to sons here probably is as simple as possible - Christ means the Jews of that generation.

But these sons also claimed to be casting out demons.

You see, if Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God was casting out demons using the authority of Beelzebub, then a lesser person would use what or whom?

The idea is that if Christ must use Beelzebub, then someone less could hardly cast out a demon at all.

Christ explains that their sons will judge them.

The future tense verb *ESONTAI* makes it real clear that the judgment is not now but future.

In the biblical doctrine of judgments, there is only one future case where human beings judge others, and that is the judgment of church age believers in the millennium. During that period of time, church age believers in resurrection bodies will rule together with Jesus Christ over the human occupants of planet earth.

But these sons of Pharisees do not fit that judgment well at all, so this narrows our focus.

It is not an eschatological judgment, but rather a judgment of a more practical kind: their degeneracy will stand as a judgment over their father's beliefs.

The generation to which Christ refers is the generation that will engage in armed rebellion against Rome, and subsequently receive destruction.

Principle: your children will render judgment on your life; they will either become a vindication or condemnation of everything that you are as parents.

And this generation of Pharisees and Scribes and common people were terrible parents, because they had an awful philosophical foundation.

Christ's final principle is a sort of warning:

If Christ does cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon them.

Note the preservation of the doctrine of Kenosis - Christ casts out demons not on His own authority, but on the authority of the Holy Spirit.

This is a Greek first class conditional sentence. It prompts the reader or listener to assume the protasis for the sake of argument.

· The protasis is the first half of a conditional sentence - that half which contains the word 'if...'

· So Christ says "If by the Spirit of God I cast out the demons (and why don't you assume this is true for the sake of argument?)."

The apodosis contains the warning: 'then the kingdom of God has come upon you.'

· The apodosis is the second half of the condition, or the 'then' clause.

· Christ makes a logical conclusion - that exorcism by means of the spirit of God is a sign of the kingdom.

· The exorcisms that Christ performed were for more than compassionate reasons; they were kingdom signs.

- Christ is indeed demonstrating that He is the Son of David. There is something that I failed to mention when we undertook the Messianic potential of Christ previously in this passage.

- 1 Samuel 16:14-23 is the record of the only exorcism in the Old Testament: "(14) Now the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit terrorized him. (15) Saul's servants then said to him, 'Behold now, and evil spirit from God is terrorizing you. (16) Let our lord now command your servants who are before you. Let them seek a man who is a skillful player on the harp; and it shall come about when the evil spirit from God is on you, that he shall play the harp with his hand, and you will be well.' (17) So Saul said to his servants, 'Provide for me now a man who can play well and bring him to me.' (18) The one of the young men said, 'Behold, I have seen son of Jesse the Bethlehemite who is a skillful musician, a mighty man of valor, a warrior, one prudent in speech, and a handsome man; and the Lord is with him.' (19) So Saul sent messengers to Jesse and said, 'Send me your son David who is with the flock.' (20) Jesse took a donkey loaded with bread and a jug of wine and a young goat, and sent them to Saul by David his son. (21) Then David came to Saul and attended him; and Saul loved him greatly, and he became his armor bearer. (22) Saul sent to Jesse, saying, 'Let David now stand before me, for he has found favor in my sight.' (23) So it came about whenever the evil spirit from God came to Saul,

David would take the harp and play it with his hand; and Saul would be refreshed and be well, and the evil spirit would depart from him.”

- So David is the only Old Testament believer who exorcised demons, and he did it by means of music and the Spirit of God.

- So Christ now reasons that if by the Spirit of God He is casting out demons, then the kingdom must be upon them, and He Himself must be the Son of David, the Messiah.

The parable of the house of the strong man, Matthew 12:29 and Mark 3:27

“Or how is someone able to enter into the house of the strong man and steal his vessel unless first he binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house.”

This begins with the alternative conjunction E. This demonstrates that this parable is intended as another explanation of why Christ could not possibly be casting out demons by the authority of Beelzebub.

The interpretation of this parable is less obvious, so we should identify the elements and try to match them to the situation at hand.

The first element is TIS - ‘someone’ from the original Greek.

The second element is OIKIA - the house.

The third element is ISCHUROU, the strong man.

And the fourth element is SKEUE, the vessel belonging to the strong man. The clay vessel or jar in the house was where the valuables are kept.

Now the ‘someone’ intends to EISELTHEIN, ‘enter’ the house of the strong man, in order to HARPASAI, ‘steal.’ the vessel.

But it is necessary for that someone to DESE, to ‘bind’ the strong man first, before he can perpetrate the theft.

Now let’s assign the elements.

The house is the house of the human body, a receptacle for the soul.

The strong man is the demon who occupies the house, possessing the body of the individual.

The theft of the valuables in the vessel is the recovery of the man’s sight and hearing and speech - things precious to any soul.

But first, Christ must bind the demon. And in order to bind a strong man, you must be stronger than him.

And so here is the companion to the previous parable. If you are not a demon, you at least must be stronger than a demon in order to cast one out.

The two parables work together so that it is quite lucid that Christ is the Messiah.

If Christ is not Beelzebub, or at least exorcising by means of demonic authority, then indeed He must have some fantastic strength in the spiritual realm, because demons are bad.

The principle of enemyship, Matthew 12:30. “The one who is not with me is against Me, and the one who does not gather with me scatters.”

Christ now turns the tables on the Pharisees with this principle, and it is kind of a scary deal.

This verse assumes the great spiritual strength of Christ, and of course if indeed He is so strong, then you would naturally want Him on your side.

But Christ turns the tables, because the Pharisees must understand a principle if they are going to follow Him.

But if you are not with Christ, then you are His enemy. And if you are the enemy of Christ, the one who has power over demons, then you just might be in a heap of trouble!

Christ is not one that you want as an enemy at all. And yes, Christ does put things in such tough terms.

Furthermore, if you are not on Christ’s team, gathering the flock into the kingdom, then you are one who scatters. In other words, you are working against God.

There is certainly no such thing as neutral ground in the angelic conflict. There are no Switzerlands.

If you do nothing, then Christ is your enemy; if you do nothing, then you are counterproductive to Christ's aim.

Although the gathering and scattering have to do with the dispensation of the kingdom, there are equal applications in this church age dispensation as well.

If you are not growing, you are regressing.

If you are not producing, you are counter-producing.

This verse calls to mind another passage, Revelation 3:15-16, "(15) I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. (16) So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will vomit you out of My mouth."

The lukewarm believer is the distracted believer:

There are many distractions in life; none are worth the loss of reward at the judgment seat of Christ.

Revelation 3:11, "I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown."

Romans 8:18, "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us."

2 Timothy 2:4-5, "(4) No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier. (5) Also if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not win the prize unless he competes according to the rules."

Philippians 3:12-14, "(12) Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus (13) Brethren, I do not regard myself as

having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, (14) I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."

Matthew 6:33, "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you."

Deuteronomy 8:3, "...man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord."

Distractions in life may include the following:

Society and recreation.

Your children and their activities.

Your employment.

The lust pattern of your soul.

Your past.

Marital status.

Monetary problems - too much and too little.

Christian service. Christian service is easier to do than fulfill the plan of God; it is often confused with the plan of God. Therefore many believers become distracted with Christian service and crusader arrogance.

People tests, including:

- Hypersensitivity on your part and the part of others.

- Role model arrogance and iconoclastic arrogance.

- Rejection by others.

- Gossip.

- Unfair authority.

- Racism.

The emotional complex of sins: fear, worry, hatred, guilt, self-pity.

Your health.

Negative volition is the essence of distraction.

You will often receive temptation to become distracted from the plan of God.

Distraction is one of two basic expressions of negative volition. It is a basic form of dishonesty toward your spiritual needs.

The fact of the matter is that you need the word of truth in your life every day; you need to pray and apply doctrine to God every day.

And very little else!!!

The blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, Matthew 12:31-32 and Mark 3:28-29. "For this reason I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven. And whoever says a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven neither in this age nor in the one coming."

If a sin is not forgiven, then that means eternal separation from God. This is the ultimate of all serious matters. If a sin is not forgiven, then that means eternity in the Lake of Fire.

And here in this passage we have the unforgivable sin.

The Pharisees in this incident are slandering a ministry of the Holy Spirit; the exorcisms were accomplished solely by the power of the Spirit.

Furthermore, the exorcisms were a part of the presentation of the kingdom by Christ - they are evangelism signs.

This particular blasphemy against the Holy Spirit could only come during the incarnation and the period of the kingdom offer; this is because the kingdom signs were withdrawn after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD

So slandering or blaspheming these works of the Spirit is in reality a rejection of the common grace ministry of the Spirit. See the Doctrine of Common Grace.

PASA HAMARTIA KAI BLASPHEMIA is quite comprehensive; the adjective is universal.

The future passive indicative APHETHESETAI focuses on the judgment at the Great White

Throne, and the opening of the books of life and works.

Every person's name is written in the book of life; if they refuse to believe in Christ throughout their lives it is erased.

At this juncture, the book of works is opened, and they are judged according to the works they substituted for the cross.

The passive voice indicates that the subject of the verb receives the action. So every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven, because every last one was imputed to Christ on the cross, and He paid for them.

Personal sin is not the issue in eternal salvation; how could God condemn us for anything for which He has condemned His own Son? It would be like saying that a previous judgment is null and void; it would be like saying the work of Christ on the cross was not good enough.

John 3:18,36, "(18) He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God... (36) He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

Personal sin is a fellowship issue, but not a salvation issue. When you commit a personal sin after you have believed in Christ, you get out of fellowship with God; only by confession are you restored to fellowship.

Therefore only one sin can be judged at the Great White Throne; the ultimate arrogance of the rejection of Christ's work on the cross.

The second half of verse thirty-one tells of that one sin. The blasphemy of the Spirit.

BLASPHEMIA represent a slander or defamation of divine character.

God the Holy Spirit had been giving Christ the power to cast out demons. The Pharisees were saying that this had been accomplished by the devil, or at least one of his lieutenants. So they were blaspheming against the Spirit.

Since this ministry of the Spirit was designed for evangelism, defaming it was tantamount to the rejection of the gospel.

Rejection of the Gospel is ultimate arrogance. It blasphemes the precious price paid at the cross.

But next is even more of an enigma.

“And whoever speaks against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him, but whoever speaks against the Spirit of Holiness, it will not be forgiven him, neither in this age, nor in the coming one.”

Speaking, and we assume even blaspheming against the Son of Man is a forgivable sin!?!

But not against the Holy Spirit, not now, not ever.

Now this does not mean that Christ is no longer the only way to salvation; He is still the way, the truth, and the life.

But notice the phrase ‘Son of Man.’ This is a messianic term, and it has to do with the fact that Christ is indeed the Messiah.

The Son of Man is a prophetic term, a reference to Christ’s relationship with Adam.

It occurs 107 times in the Old Testament, but only fourteen times outside of Ezekiel. In those cases outside of Ezekiel, it is almost universally an idiom for ‘human being’. But in one instance in Daniel, it most certainly refers to Adam himself. The one time that it is used in the singular in Daniel is 7:13, and this is the reference for the popular term in New Testament times.

Daniel 7:13-14, “I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven one like a Son of Adam was coming. And He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. And to Him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed.”

- The ‘Ancient of Days’ is an Aramaic title that refers to God the Father as judge of Jesus Christ. Daniel 7:7-22 is the only instance of this title for God the Father. It concentrates on his eternal nature, and His authority over the other two members of the Godhead.

- God would judge the sins of mankind in the Son of Adam on the cross.

- God gave two evaluations of His Son during the incarnation - ‘This is my Son, whom I love, in whom I am well-pleased.’ Once at His baptism, and once at the transfiguration.

- The picture presented in Daniel’s vision is the transfer of authority from God the Father to Jesus Christ the Son. This transfer of authority occurred in heaven most likely immediately before the incarnation. This is something of a Christmas story from Daniel. It is a revelation of the moments before the incarnation of Christ, the sad/glad going away ceremony for the Son. From that moment forward God the Son would never be the same. He would become the God man, and though His deity did not change, His status did. This is the moment when Christ voluntarily restricted the independent use of His divine attributes, and the independent expression of His divine character. This moment was somewhat akin to taking a military oath.

- The earthly transfer of authority took place at Christ’s baptism.

The term ‘the Son of Man’ describes here Christ’s relationship to the first man, Adam.

- Adam was the ruler of this world, but gave over his authority to Satan when he sinned.

- So the millennial authority of Christ as King of kings and Lord of Lords corresponds exactly to this.

- This is Messianic authority that concentrates on the ruling but not atoning aspect of Jesus Christ.

- Christ as the last Adam would certainly atone for the sins of the world, begun with Adam, but the concentration is still on authority.

· Although some would complain that the two are inseparable, Christ does that very thing here.

Now Christ has separated His role as the King of kings and Lord of lords from His atoning death.

He is in effect saying that there is no belief requirement related to His kingship - whether over Israel or over the whole world.

And this is entirely proper for one who concentrates first on salvation, and that is the mission of Christ. Remember, He is evangelizing people into His kingdom - that is His mission in the context of this passage.

Christ does not want to make an issue out of his status as the Son of Man. He is certainly making an issue out of His status as the savior of the world. And that is entirely appropriate.

So here are the direct words of Christ that you certainly do not have to accept Him as Lord in order to be saved.

(10) And this points out a strategy in evangelism.

Once again our evangelism strategy must target issues that receive the common grace ministry of God the Holy Spirit.

Behavior is not an issue with reference to the gospel; belief is.

To make behavioral change a part of the gospel is to stray from the issue, which is the work of the cross vs. human works.

The only repentance that comes at gospel hearing should have to do with the work of Jesus Christ.

Behavior is a post-salvation issue, and even a moral issue outside of the realm of spirituality.

But Christ died for our sinful behavior, so that it cannot possibly be a criteria for salvation. Rather, one sin, the unforgivable sin, is at issue.

The reason for Christ's reply, Mark 3:30. "Because they were saying, 'He has an unclean spirit.'"

And Christ has formed this reply, including the parables and the principles, as a response to the accusation that He has an unclean spirit.

The imperfect tense of LEGO indicates that this was a repeated accusation, and not just a single incident which occurred here.

The picture is that as Christ goes around performing miracles, healings, and exorcisms, the Pharisees and Scribes follow Him, defaming these validating acts from the Holy Spirit.

Christ comes with this reply especially because those words of defamation affect the gospel.

Of course the personal and inner effect is the worst of all - it causes the final judgment to the Lake of Fire.

Principles of the spoken word, Matthew 12:33-37. (cf. Mute) "Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for the tree is known from the fruit. Brood of vipers, how are you being evil able to speak good? For from the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. The good man casts out good from the good treasure, and the evil man casts out evil from the evil treasure. But I say to you that every useless word which men speak they will pay back concerning the word of it in the day of judgment; for from your words you will be justified, and from your words you will be condemned."

The tree and its fruit, v.33.

This is a twist on the old proverb, 'You will know the tree by its fruit.' This is more direct.

The aorist imperative command POIESATE demands that the listeners implement this order immediately.

This denotes an ability to make the tree of your life good by means of your free will. You can make your own tree good, so that it produces good fruit.

So instead of an outside observation, this one gets inside the individual life.

Let's very briefly take up the analogy of the tree for spiritual life.

By 'making' a tree good, everything comes down to where you plant it.

The tree of your spiritual life needs water, soil, and sun.

But you see, YOU make this tree grow, YOU are responsible.

So you must pick a good site with lots of sunshine.

You must plant this tree in good and well-watered soil.

The location of the tree is analogous to exposure to Bible doctrine.

The fruit is made good by pruning and harvesting.

God does the pruning through divine discipline, although we must have a positive volitional response to that activity on the part of God.

God makes the harvest as well, guiding us by the Spirit into productive opportunities.

There are two kinds of fruit in the spiritual life:

Your testimony in the angelic conflict;

Your Christian service (see doctrine of Christian Service).

The abundance of the heart, v.34.

The phrase GENNEMATA ECHIDNON is especially abrasive. Brood or offspring of vipers is certainly not intended as a complement.

But this is not an idle remark, either. It has a certain accuracy to it that goes beyond that ad hominem kind of retort.

The ECHIDNA is a poisonous snake. Its venom can kill you. The Scribes and Pharisees are the offspring of vipers.

They are the offspring of vipers not in a reference to Satan, the serpent and dragon of old, but in reference to the real vipers of the world. Christ is making a metaphor, and that is it.

So a viper is poisonous and can kill you; the poison of the Pharisee is false doctrine, and it can kill you in the temporal and spiritual sense.

Christ next points out an impossibility. That if you are evil, you are not able to speak good.

Two words stand in opposition to one another here: AGATHA and PONEROI.

The former represents good of an intrinsic kind, and in this context even a good that can only be produced spiritually. Because it is related to the spoken word, it is truth itself.

The latter represents evil and falsehood.

Christ comes right out and calls the Pharisees and Scribes evil. And since they are evil, they have an inability to speak the truth.

The abundance of the heart is EK TOU PERISSEUMATOS TES KARDIAS.

The heart or mind overflows into the mouth. What you say is simply an expression of who you are.

So the heart is like a spring of water welling up deep from underground, and the mouth expresses itself like the outflow from that spring. If the spring is alkaline, then the outflow will be nothing less.

If the spring is pure, sweet water, then the outflow will be fantastic.

The treasury, v.35.

This verse stands as an explanation of the principle that Christ has just given.

The good man casts out good from the good treasure; the evil man casts out evil from the evil treasure.

The Greek verb EKBALLEI is 'cast out.' It is meant as a paranomasia or play on words by Christ.

It is a synonym for exorcism. So that, if Christ is good, He exorcises from good.

This stands as a clever refutation of the Pharisees' assertion of Christ casting out demons by Beelzebub. It also doubles as a general principle for all expression in life.

Again AGATHOS and PONEROS stand in opposition to one another, this time with a triple dose. Christ draws distinct battle lines

between Himself and the Jewish legalists present.

The treasury of the heart is the sum total of information in the mentality and conscience.

See Matthew 6:19-21 exegesis, from the Life of Christ series.

Proverbs 10:20, "The tongue of the righteous is as choice silver, the heart of the wicked is cheap."

The conscience and mentality are filled with whatever you put there. If you fill them with truth, then you will have a treasury of good things.

You are therefore defined as good if you fill your heart with good things; this concentrates purely at the intake stage of spiritual growth.

And if you fill your heart with bad things, then you are bad.

And this view takes into account an encompassing view of your life and especially of your intake.

There are 23 hours in the day when you do not take in the truth; what is the nature of that time?

Is it spent in gossip? 'Modern' literature? Watching soap operas? Listening to music that contains anything but virtue?

That other 23 hours is a very important time, because it can completely wash out what you are doing in the word.

Your intake of the word can be overwhelmed by your intake of worldly culture, and our current American culture is overwhelmingly unvirtuous.

God the Holy Spirit then must make do with about a 24 to 1 ratio of information, and that is the Custer battlefield of the soul.

Where your treasure is, there will be your heart also.

The day of judgment and the spoken word, v.36. "But I say to you that every useless word

which men speak they will pay back concerning the word of it in the day of judgment;"

ARGOS is 'idle,' 'lazy,' 'unproductive,' or 'useless.' This adjective modifies RHEMA, the spoken word, or some issue which comes from the spoken word.

Listen again to the third commandment: "you shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain."

It is quite apparent that Christ refers to this commandment when He makes this proclamation; but we must exercise care, because it seems as though there is an expansion of sorts on the prohibition.

The commandment of Moses concentrates on the vain-spoken word to God; here Christ employs the adjective of universality, PAN. It shows an all-encompassing situation. It is 'every useless word.'

This begins to sound very much like the Sermon on the Mount, where Christ set forth His establish code for His millennial rule.

Generally speaking, Christ's establishment code was much stricter than that of Moses.

But wait a minute; the reference to the Day of Judgment undermines this interpretation.

There is no eternal judgment related to the establishment code; the establishment code is for time only.

Let's go back to our context for a moment. The very next verse, verse 37, relates this saying to salvation. It is indeed the last judgment.

So at the last judgment we will be justified on the basis of our vain words.

Now there is a connection between the third commandment and this saying of Christ.

The third commandment is the relationship with God commandment; it says that when you use God's name, it is to be in the context of a relationship with Him.

The very first time that you call upon God is when you respond to the gospel.

He then responds by causing you to be saved.

So at the Great White Throne, the last judgment in history, Christ judges the unbeliever on the basis of every vain word.

This is an entirely just judgment, because anyone one of those words could have been admission of total depravity and an expression of reliance on His work.

Go back to the second half of the commandment of Moses: "for the Lord will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain."

The explanation of the principle, v.37. "for from your words you will be justified, and from your words you will be condemned."

There are two verbs in this verse which describe the two fates at the final judgment:

Justification - DIKAIOTHESE. This is the future passive indicative of DIKAIIO.

The future indicative portrays an action that is certain to happen. There is a prophetic inevitability about this word.

The passive voice makes it clear that the subject is the recipient of the action, and he does not produce it on his own.

Here that subject is multiple - it is every believer who will go before the Great White Throne of Jesus Christ and receive salvation judgment.

By your words you will be justified; these words you speak to God... "I believe in the work of Jesus Christ on the cross."

This brings about the veracity of God toward His word; at that very moment He imputes the righteousness of His own Son to you, and on the basis of that righteousness you are declared justified to spend eternity with Him in heaven.

Condemnation - KATADIKASTHESE. The future passive indicative of KATADIKAZO.

Again the future indicative predicts with certainty and inevitability an event.

And again the passive voice has God producing the action, and here the unbeliever receiving it.

Every unbeliever in history will receive this judgment; every single one of his words will condemn him, because any one of them could have been an expression of belief in the Son.

The stubborn unbelief of this class of human being makes every single one of their words in vain.

Their words therefore come back to condemn them utterly; all of their words - every expression of thought will come back to haunt them before Jesus Christ at the final judgment.

Every word will be considered vain and empty; every word useless because of the yawning gulf of eternity in the Lake of Fire.

Romans 10:5-13 is a part of this: "(5) For Moses writes that the man who does the righteousness which is from the law will live by them. (6) But the righteousness from faith thus says, 'Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?' (This works to bring Christ down); (7) Or, 'Who will descend into the abyss?' (This works to bring Christ up from the dead). (8) But what does it say? 'The word (RHEMA) is near you in your mouth and in your heart. This is the word (RHEMA) of faith which we preach. (9) That if you confess with your mouth 'Lord Jesus' and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. (10) For with the heart he believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses unto salvation. (11) For the Scripture says, 'Everyone who believes upon Him will not be put to shame. (12) For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord is over all, wealth unto all who call upon Him. (13) For everyone who will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved.'"

The Demand For a Sign Refused

Matthew 12:38-45.

(38) Then some of the Scribes and Pharisees answered Him saying, 'Teacher, we want to see a sign from you.' (39) But after formulating an answer He said to them, 'An evil and adulterous generation pursues a sign, and no sign will be given to it, except the sign of Jonah the prophet. (40) For just as Jonah was in the belly of the sea-monster three days and three nights, so also the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights. (41) Ninevite men will stand again in judgment against this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold something greater than Jonah is here. (42) The Queen of the South will rise up in judgment against this generation and condemn it, because she came from the end of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold something greater than Solomon is here. (43) But whenever the unclean spirit comes out from the man, it goes through waterless places seeking rest and it does not find [it]. (44) Then he says, 'I will return into my house from which I came; and when he comes he finds [it] unoccupied, swept, and put in order. (45) Then he goes and takes alongside with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself and after entering they live there; and the last state of that man becomes worst than the first. Thus it will be also with this generation.'"

Outline.

The response of the Jewish rulers, v.38.

Christ's reply, vv.39-45.

The general principle, v.39a.

The application and exception, v.39b-40.

The testimony of the Ninevites at their resurrection, v.41.

The testimony of the Queen of the South at her resurrection, v.42.

The illustration of the unclean spirit, vv.43-45.

The plight of the exorcised spirit, v.43.

The usual idea of the exorcised spirit, and his usual success, v.44.

The foul party of the unclean spirits, v.45a.

The point of comparison with the present generation, v.45b.

Exposition.

Verse 38: "Then some of the Scribes and Pharisees answered Him saying, 'Teacher, we want to see a sign from you.'"

This passage is a continuation of the one we have just finished. It contains the response of the Pharisees to the gospel call and statement of impending judgment by Christ.

Christ says some harsh words toward the Pharisees and Scribes; not too harsh, but appropriately harsh and difficult to swallow.

But Christ's words also represent a dual purpose: to defend the validating ministry of the Holy Spirit, and to also leave His enemies with recourse to believe.

Although most immediate in the context is the statement of Matthew 12:36-37 concerning the vocalization of belief, the Pharisees seem to aim their remarks at Christ's discourse on the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit contained in vv.31-32.

Again the Pharisees employ the appellation 'Teacher,' which is DIDASKALE in the Greek.

You can see that these may well be some of the same Pharisees who were at Simon's house when the formerly sinful woman washed Christ's feet with her tears.

Remember, the Pharisees no longer regard Christ as the Messiah, nor do they even regard Him as a prophet.

As a simple teacher of truth, Jesus would even be below them in their hierarchy of authority and power. To them, Christ may be a teacher, but He is less than a Pharisee or Scribe. The difference would be the same as it is in our culture when we define the difference between a teacher and a scholar.

Therefore DIDASKALE may be a term of respect under normal conditions, but here it becomes demeaning.

With simple language some of the Pharisees and Scribes ask for a sign.

The present active indicative verb THELOMEN portrays a simple desire.

The complementary infinitive IDEIN tells us that they desired something that they could see with their own eyes.

APO plus the genitive of source of the personal pronoun SOU makes it clear that Christ must produce this sign from Himself.

SEMEION is the sign. Some sort of supernatural act, a miracle or healing is in view.

These men cannot take Christ's word for it; neither do they accept what they have likely just witnessed - the exorcism of a demon. They have discredited that very thing, so that Christ must now jump through another hoop of theirs.

Verses Thirty Nine through Forty One: "(39) But after formulating an answer He said to them, 'An evil and adulterous generation pursues a sign, and no sign will be given to it, except the sign of Jonah the prophet. (40) For just as Jonah was in the belly of the sea-monster three days and three nights, so also the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights. (41) Ninevite men will stand again in judgment against this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold something greater than Jonah is here.'"

The aorist participle APOKRITHEIS depicts Christ thinking about what to say. This never really portrays how long Christ thinks, only that He does. Considering Christ's great genius in the spiritual realm, it is probably not too long at all.

Christ makes grave judgment against this generation of Jews.

They are evil, PONERA. The Greek word has pretty much all of the connotation that ours does.

They are adulterous, MOIKALIS. This was a favorite description of Hosea the prophet.

Hosea 3:1, "Then the Lord said to me, 'Go again, love a woman who is loved by her husband, yet an adulteress, even as the Lord loves the sons of Israel, though they turn to other gods and love raisin cakes.'"

The children of the Northern kingdom had turned from Yahweh to worship every kind of foreign god.

They had turned to other gods like an adulterous woman turns to men apart from her husband.

So evil might characterize the legalism of the Pharisees, while adultery the idolatry of the lascivious types; neither were right.

PONERA and MOIKALIS represent two grave errors regarding spiritual life. Both result in failure and harsh judgment for the Christian.

The verb EPIZETEO describes the action of the evil and adulterous generation: it paints a picture of zealous and inordinate pursuit of something illicit.

There are good things to seek in the spiritual life. To pursue the word with zeal is considered a wonderful thing. Psalm 119:10, "With all my heart I have sought You; do not let me wander from Your commandments."

The evil and adulterous generation inordinately seeks a sign. Well this group of Pharisees wanted Christ to do a sign right there before them, even though just a little while before on that very same day he had performed the sign of David, the exorcism of a demon.

And here is something that is no secret at all; someone who is honest with his or her spiritual needs has no need of a sign at all.

We have been living in the age of the invisible God for nearly two thousand years now.

Although there are many wonderful ways to come to an awareness of God, and to see His wonderful works in our lives, there is no visible God or visible supernatural act to cling to.

Christ is offering the truth here, and an excellent way to recover from sinful depravity and human misery.

Basic honesty about your spiritual needs means:

If you have never met God before, it means admitting your sinful separation from God, and your helplessness to remedy that state. From that point being honest means seeing Jesus Christ as the divine solution to the problem of sin.

If you are a Christian in a state of sin, it means removing yourself from that state through repentance and confession.

If you are a Christian struggling with the issues of life in the devil's world, or just wanting to identify your destiny, then it means getting under the authority of a good pastor who can teach you about those important things.

In other words, you need Jesus Christ, you need a solution to post-salvation sin, and you need the word of truth in your life.

The only sign given to the incarnation generation will be the sign of Jonah the prophet.

Jonah was a prophet of eighth century Israel. Apart from his own book of prophecy, he is mentioned only in 2 Kings 14:25: "He (Jeroboam II) restored the border of Israel from the entrance of Hamath as far as the Sea of the Arabah, according to the word of the Lord, the God of Israel, which he spoke through his servant Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet, who was of Gath-hepher."

Since the minor prophet Jonah has the same father's name as the one mentioned in Kings, they are very likely the same man.

Jeroboam II ruled the Northern kingdom Israel from about 793-753 BC. His reign was an Indian summer, where Israel briefly ascended in power and prosperity before their destruction in 722 BC

Jonah's only claim to fame aside from his evangelization of the Assyrians was his

prediction of the success of Jeroboam II in his military campaign.

Jonah had great difficulty in obeying the command of Yahweh; it is not mentioned why he fled to Tarshish (Jonah 1:3), but from his response at the end of his book, it is clear that he disdained the people of Nineveh.

Assyria was a second-rate world power at the time that Jonah went to them and gave them the gospel in the middle of the 8th century, BC. Their glorious days under Tiglath-Pileser I and Shalmaneser I were gone. For fifty or a hundred years, their empire had been experiencing military defeat and domestic trouble.

There had been limited contact between Israel and Assyria before this time, but Assyria was a Gentile nation and certainly a military threat.

The Pharisees and Scribes of Christ's time were throwbacks to Jonah.

Jonah did not want to witness to the Assyrians because they were Gentiles.

Since the Jews were God's chosen people, what would be the purpose of bringing God's good news to someone else?

Jonah is an intriguing choice of comparison by Christ, because he is an appropriate illustration of the Pharisees, and he is a type of Christ in the grave.

Jonah's reluctance to go to Nineveh is racial; he couldn't be more like the Jews of Christ's day in that respect.

Jonah's brief tenure in the belly of the fish is a type or foreshadow of Christ's time in the grave.

Again verse forty reads, "For just as Jonah was in the belly of the sea-monster three days and three nights, so also the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights."

- So Jonah was in the belly of the KETOS, sea-monster for three days.

- And Christ would be in the heart of the earth for three days.

Listen to Jonah's prayer from the belly of the fish (2:2-9), "(2) I called out of my distress to the Lord, and He answered me. I cried for help from the belly of Sheol; You heard my voice. (3) For You had cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the current engulfed me. All Your breakers and billows passed over me. (4) So I said, 'I have been expelled from your sight. Nevertheless I will look again toward Your holy temple.' (5) The waters closed over my life. The great deep engulfed me, weeds were wrapped around my head. (6) I descended to the roots of the mountains. The earth with its bars was around me forever, but You have brought up my life from the pit, O Lord my God. (7) While I was fainting away, I remembered the Lord, and my prayer came to you, into Your holy temple. (8) Those who regard vain idols forsake their faithfulness, (9) but I will sacrifice to you with the voice of thanksgiving. That which I have vowed I will pay. Salvation is from the Lord."

- Jonah uses the language of death. When he went into the water, he was cast into the abyss, the TEHOM or great deep of the sea.

- The doors of the sea close over him, and Jonah is lost for dead - he has descended to the very roots of the mountains, in the pit.

- His cry from the deep was a cry from Sheol itself, so deep was he in the ocean.

- Now Christ would actually die and go to Sheol while his body was in the grave. There, He would preach to fallen angels about His victory on planet earth, 1 Peter 3:19.

On the basis of this great Psalm of Jonah, the fish vomits his body up onto dry land, and he fulfills his mission as a prophet to Assyria.

Assyria would then grow great under Tiglath-Pileser III, and come down and conquer the Northern Kingdom.

The ascension of Assyria is a spiritual ascension that result in prosperity. They are employed by God as the fist of discipline on Israel.

The precarious position of the Northern Kingdom during Jonah's time was a parallel to the precariousness of Israel during Christ's day.

Because of Israel's racist and arrogant attitude toward the Gentiles, and because of their participation in idolatry, they had to be destroyed. They were not only poor witnesses before God, but dangerous to themselves and nations around them. God's justice had to act.

So as Christ says these words about a sign to Israel being the sign of Jonah, they would understand it as a warning.

But listen: one nation at least did repent during Jonah's time - the nation of Assyria.

And it is the hope of Christ that the sign of Jonah will cause a revival.

Fascinating: that Christ is already identifying that it is going to take a lot more than miracles and healings and exorcisms to bring Israel to repentance.

It will take the sign of Jonah, the greatest sign of all. Romans 1:4, "...[Jesus], who was declared the Son of god with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord."

And even the sign of Jonah will not bring about the intended result, due to the stubborn nature of the Jews of Christ's generation.

Verse Forty One: "Ninevite men will stand again in judgment against this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold something greater than Jonah is here."

Jonah was a reluctant prophet; this much is exceedingly obvious. Even on his most successful day, he hates the repentance of the Gentile Ninevites.

Jonah 4:1-4, "(1) But it (their repentance) greatly displeased Jonah and he became angry. (2) He prayed to the Lord and said, 'Please Lord, was not this what I said while I was still in my own country? Therefore in order to forestall this I fled to Tarshish, for I knew that You are a gracious and compassionate God,

slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, and one who relents concerning calamity. (3) Therefore now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for death is better to me than life.' (4) The Lord said, 'Do you have good reason to be angry?'"

Jonah actually preferred to die because he had converted Gentiles to the plan of God.

This really angered Jonah because since he was an eighth century prophet to Israel, he had no converts there.

With this attitude, the human side of Jonah's efforts in Nineveh must have been paltry at best. And yet it was its best work as measured by response.

But the Ninevite men will stand again in judgment against the incarnation generation, because even as Gentiles they understood God's plan and repented.

And for a hundred years' time these Ninevite men supplanted Israel as a client nation unto God.

They would become proud and suffer the fifth cycle of discipline, as predicted by the prophet Nahum.

They will stand again: ANASTESONTAI. This is the resurrection verb in the future indicative.

At some future time the men of Nineveh will rise again in judgment against the incarnation generation.

The resurrection of Israel occurs at the end of the millennium, when all Jewish believers are resurrected unto judgment, along with many others.

There before the Great White Throne will be arrayed all the people of the world.

- Old Testament Gentile believers will be there.
- Unbelievers from the incarnation generation will be there.
- And the Assyrian believers of Jonah's time will stand again, looking proudly toward their savior Jesus Christ.

And think about what Jesus Christ gave them.

He gave them his entire self, trying every day to initiate their salvation.

He had the filling of the Holy Spirit, by which He performed miracles and healings and exorcisms.

He had an incredible amount of doctrine and wisdom in His soul, so that He was fully prepared for every legitimate question and even illegitimate attacks.

And He would die and stay in the belly of the earth for three days - but after three days He would rise again in complete victory over death.

These all were so compelling.

Now we are analogous to the Ninevites; we have hardly anything at all to go on in the way of miracles.

Christ is not present before us.

The temporary spiritual gifts have passed away, leaving only the charlatans and their deceived ones. No one has the power to perform miracles or healings or exorcisms during this period of the church age.

According to the true doctrine of the imminence of the rapture there is no prophecy fulfilled in the church age. Furthermore, any tribulational prophecy must be able to be fulfilled at any time, so that none of it can be linked to technology. It is no more valid to link information from Revelation to our time than to the Middle Ages.

So during this dispensation of the invisible God, it is more difficult to settle on the one true God.

The great way to see the supernatural power of God is by changing your life, truly changing your life by the intake and application of Bible Truth.

So if we repent it is a powerful argument for the greatness of God, because we are like the Ninevites, living in a very degenerate society, and yet seeing an honest need for a relationship with God.

What a powerful witness our repentance then becomes! Without miracles, without much evidence of the supernatural, only on the merit of the truth of God do we repent. How great the glory to God.

The Witness of the Queen of the South on Judgment Day, v.42: "The Queen of the South will rise up in judgment against this generation and condemn it, because she came from the end of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold something greater than Solomon is here."

1 Kings 10:1-10, "(1) Now when the queen of Sheba heard about the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the Lord, she came to test him with difficult questions. (2) So she came to Jerusalem with a very large retinue, with camels carrying spices and very much gold and precious stones. When she came to Solomon, she spoke with him about all that was in her heart. (3) Solomon answered all her questions; nothing was hidden from the king which he did not explain to her. (4) When the queen of Sheba perceived all the wisdom of Solomon, the house that he had built, (5) the food of his table, the seating of his servants, the attendance of his waiters and their attire, his cupbearers, and his stairway by which he went up to the house of the Lord, there was no more spirit in her. (6) Then she said to the king, 'It was a true report which I heard in my own land about your words and your wisdom. (7) Nevertheless I did not believe the reports, until I came and my eyes had seen it. And behold, the half was not told me. You exceed in wisdom and prosperity the report which I heard. (8) How blessed are your men, how blessed are these your servants who stand before you continually and hear your wisdom. (9) Blessed be the Lord your God who delighted in you to set you on the throne of Israel; because the Lord loved Israel forever, therefore He made you king, to do justice and righteousness.' (10) She gave the king a hundred and twenty talents of gold, and a very great amount of spices and precious stones. Never again did such abundance of spices come in as that which the queen of Sheba gave King Solomon."

2 Chronicles 9:12, "King Solomon gave to the queen of Sheba all her desire which she requested besides a return for what she had brought to the king. Then she turned and went to her own land with her servants."

The queen of Sheba was from a Gentile nation; she was indeed a Gentile, and this is important in understanding Christ's reference.

Whereas Jonah is a good example of a very weak witness, as you can see, Solomon is an ideal example of a very strong witness. Listen again to verses 3-5, "(3) Solomon answered all her questions; nothing was hidden from the king which he did not explain to her. (4) When the queen of Sheba perceived all the wisdom of Solomon, the house that he had built, (5) the food of his table, the seating of his servants, the attendance of his waiters and their attire, his cupbearers, and his stairway by which he went up to the house of the Lord, there was no more spirit in her."

Solomon answered all of her questions, which are described as difficult.

Furthermore, she got to see his house, and the conduct of his household servants, and even the way that he treated them.

There were no flaws whatsoever in the witness of Solomon. He has Israel functioning as intended by God - they are truly a light unto all the nations of the world.

And going to the strong witness, even the strongest witness in the history of Israel, Christ is considered even stronger.

Verses Forty-Three to Forty-Five: "(43) But whenever the unclean spirit comes out from the man, it goes through waterless places seeking rest and it does not find [it]. (44) Then he says, 'I will return into my house from which I came; and when he comes he finds [it] unoccupied, swept, and put in order. (45) Then he goes and takes alongside with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself and after entering they live there; and the last state of that man becomes worst than the first. Thus it will be also with this generation.'"

Now this is intended as an illustration. These are general truths about the actions and attitudes of demons.

Christ is the greatest expert on demonology ever, combining Old Testament doctrine and personal experience.

But this is an illustration that describes the mental attitude of the incarnation generation. They are quite negative to the teaching of Jesus Christ, and exceedingly dishonest about their spiritual needs.

Observe that the parallel is between the unclean spirit and the person of Christ's generation. They are considered the same according to a certain mode of behavior.

Verse 43 begins with the word HOUTAN, which is translated 'whenever.' The 'ever' part of it makes it an open case. It is something that is always true as long as the conditions are met.

The aorist subjunctive verb EXELTHE is a gnomic aorist, that states a general truth or axiom. It is what is always true. It means to 'exit,' or 'go out.' This is most likely after the demon has been cast out.

Considering the context has to do with exorcism this is especially likely.

So the demon goes out from the man.

AKATHARTON PNEUMA is unclean spirit. This has a kind of interesting Jewish twist on the old fallen angel idea.

Any person that touched a carcass was considered unclean, and apart from the fellowship of Israel under certain purification rituals were undertaken. See Leviticus chapters 11, 15, 22.

Nor could a Jew come into physical contact with a leper and remain clean.

There are various other regulations concerning unclean things and people. Most of the time uncleanness has to do with physical death. Perhaps the best definition of an unclean animal is that it is a scavenger or comes into contact with carcasses.

The important point is that uncleanness had to do with fellowship. It represents temporary spiritual death, and therefore cannot be tolerated.

Therefore, the unclean spirit is the angelic being who is apart from fellowship with God, and is in a state of spiritual death.

Uncleanness is also associated with idols and demon worship in Zechariah 13:2, "And on that day, says the LORD of hosts, I will cut off the names of the idols from the land, so that they shall be remembered no more; and also I will remove from the land the prophets and the unclean spirit."

The way that Christ says this makes a connection with His Jewish readers. And He interprets the doctrine of uncleanness in just the right way, something that His opponents seldom if ever did.

Although the Scribes and Pharisees understood the legalistic function of the purifications, they had little if any clue to the spiritual significance.

So now the fallen angel - unclean spirit goes out from the man. And whenever it does it experiences the same experience.

It goes through waterless places.

DIERCHETAI means to pass through. This is the present of general truth portraying what always happens when a demon is cast out from a man.

ANUDRON TOPON - waterless places. Now this becomes an interesting description indeed. This is more of a general description of the passage of the unclean spirit through places where there is no satisfaction. It portrays the experience of crossing a desert and being thirsty and having no water at all.

Seeking rest and does not find it.

The present active participle ZETOUN is contemporaneous with the main verb. So while passing through waterless places, the unclean spirit is seeking something.

The object of the participle is ANAPAUSIN. This means to rest or stop with a special iterative sense of 'again.' So it is looking for a rest stop similar to the one it has just had.

Make no mistake; this unclean spirit is desperately seeking another body to inhabit.

The unclean spirit is after all a spirit, and therefore it no longer has its angelic body. It has long ago 'died' in the angelic sense of having body and soul separated.

For that reason, it is completely deprived of sensory perception, and it lusts for that very thing.

It really is kind of a creepy portrayal; the spirit looking and lusting for the sensual experience of inhabiting a human body.

But this particular unclean spirit does not find another body to inhabit, so it must return to the place from whence it came.

Verse 44 contains the soliloquy of the demon:

At the point where the unclean spirit can find no other home for himself, he says to himself... TOTE LEGEI.

The verb EPISTREPHO portrays a return to a place that has previously been visited.

He decides to return to the house from where he came out [EIS TON OIKON MOU HOTHEN EXELTHON]

He calls it 'my house', which is the noun OIKON plus the personal pronoun in the possessive genitive, 'my.'

Of course it isn't his house in the true sense, but it was given to him. That is the nature of demon possession. The demon possesses the house of the human body because he is willingly given control of it by someone.

See the doctrine of demon possession.

So he returns to his house from whence he came out.

The aorist active participle ELTHON portrays an action that occurs before the main verb. So first he comes, and then he finds.

The present active indicative of HEURISKEI denotes a simple act of finding - it concentrates on the very moment that the demon re-enters the house of someone's body. Of course this unbeliever human being must have re-invited that demon in order for him to receive permission to do so.

Well the demon finds the house in perfect order - it is clean and swept and organized.

The body has recovered from his last ravages and his last party. Perhaps the person has recovered from the chemical addiction; perhaps he has ceased the sexual addiction that includes abuse. Perhaps he has gone on a diet from the gluttony.

But regardless the body is in good shape once again, and therefore very well set-up for another round of desperate sensuality.

The forty fifth verse concentrates on the degeneration of the situation.

Before entering the old house again, the unclean spirit goes to wherever the other disembodied spirits hang out. Most likely in Sheol, at Torments.

This is the compartment under the abyss that contains the souls of unbelievers from all of human history. Job 26:5 "The departed spirits tremble under the waters and their inhabitants."

The waters here refers to the surface ocean. Their inhabitants are the sea creatures.

The departed spirits tremble under here.

This place is mentioned in Isaiah 50:11 - 'You will lie down in torment.'

Luke 16 contains a true story about a man who lived there.

Some the rebels of Korah were swallowed up alive by the earth, and were the only ones ever to arrive alive at this place, Num 16:30ff.

David was confident that he would not live in torments after his death, Psalm 16:10.

The resurrection removes the power of Sheol, or physical death, Hosea 13:14.

These unbelievers await the final judgment of the great white throne. They are those who reside in 'Hades' per Rev 20:13. Death is a reference to the living who reside on planet earth.

But nevertheless the unclean spirit goes and takes alongside himself seven other evil spirits.

The verb PARALAMBANEI portrays the taking alongside. It is a kind of chummy verb, where there is companionship. The pronoun HEAUTOU 'himself' emphasizes that very thing again.

The idea is a kind of thing where the one unclean spirit says to others 'Hey guys I found a fantastic body, come on along with me, and we'll have a blast.'

But of course they do not have the man's best interests at heart.

And so after entering they all eight reside there. And the last state of the man becomes worse than the first.

Well this should be obvious; whereas before there was only one, now there are eight.

And eight having a riot in one man's body is a great riot indeed. Eight desperate angelic souls seeking to have sensual experiences of various kinds - eating, sex, art, drama, exercise, sunning, music, and much more, I am sure.

Do the demons decide by democracy what they will do next? Of course not. Do they obey one master? No. They all try to do it at once, so that the poor fool who has let them in is now considered quite insane.

"So also will it be with this evil generation."

The comparative adverb HOUTOS draws a line of comparison between the twice-possessed man and the current generation in Israel.

The future indicative of the verb EIMI points to a certain future reality for the evil generation.

So they are like a man who is demon possessed, and then relieved of his burden because the demon is cast out.

During the time between possessions, the man has an opportunity to stay demon-free forever through accepting Christ as his savior.

But instead of that, he decides to get into shape, and to undergo some kind of regimen of self-improvement, all of which is complete folly.

Self-improvement within the confines of the cosmic system does not improve anything, and in the end you are worse off than when you started.

If ever there was a perfect example of this it would be psychotherapy. There is nothing wrong with the renovation of the soul under the principle of divine grace. There is everything wrong with it under human power and philosophy.

But there are many other things that fall under this umbrella as well. Exercise and diet are cosmic forms of self-improvement when devoid of proper motivation. The apostle Paul was an advocate of exercise, but not for some foul reason of self-improvement. He just wanted to be in good shape so that he could study more.

Makeovers motivated by vanity or adultery are an evil form of self-improvement.

But all of these forms of so-called self-improvement lead to greater degeneracy. And even if it is not within the realm of demon-possession, it is another cycle downward into the cosmic cesspool.

Even as a Christian you may make decisions from a position of weakness and unhappiness; these kinds of decisions always result in greater degeneracy and weakness.

If you make a decision that undermines your priorities, then it is going to result in greater weakness; weakness always breeds weakness.

Col. Thieme has often said, the more you surrender to fear, the more fear will have power over your life.

Well, let's expand that; the more you surrender to unhappiness, the more power unhappiness will have over your life.

The more you surrender to anger, the more power anger will have over your life.

The more you surrender to lust, the more power lust will have over your life.

And when each element of the cosmic lie gains power over your life, you lose willpower, you lose happiness and you lose the greatest thing of all: self-control through the operation of the power of God in your life.

That self-control is fine evidence of the operating power of God.

So the generation that lived at the time of Christ is always looking for happiness, and foolish enough to let the demons back in.

Jesus' Mother and Brothers

Matthew 12:46-50

“(46) While He is still speaking to the crowd, behold His mother and His brothers were standing outside seeking to speak to Him. (47) And someone said to Him, ‘Behold your mother and your brothers stand outside seeking to speak to you.’ (48) And after formulating an answer, He said to the one speaking to Him, ‘Who is My mother and who are My brothers?’ (49) And extending His hand upon His mother He said, ‘Behold my mother and my brothers. (50) For whoever might do the will of My Father Who is in heaven, He is my brother and sister and mother.”

Mark 3:31-35

“(31) And His mother and His brothers came, and standing outside they sent to Him calling Him. (32) And a crowd was sitting down around Him, and they said to Him, ‘Behold your mother and your brothers are outside seeking You.’ (33) And after formulating an answer He says to them, ‘Who are my mother and brothers?’ (34) And looking around at those sitting around Him in a circle, He says, ‘Behold, my mother and my brothers. (35) Whoever

does the will of God, this one is my brother and sister and mother.’

Luke 8:19-21

“(19) And His mother and brothers appeared to His side and they were unable to meet because of the crowd. (20) But he announced to Him, ‘Your mother and Your brothers stand outside, wishing to see You. (21) After formulating an answer He said to them, ‘My mother and my brothers: they are hearing and doing the Word of God.”

Exposition.

The historical record benefits in a few ways from a harmony. You can see where it was the intent of the Holy Spirit to produce a version with complete details, and indeed the task was done.

This little passage easily breaks down into two parts: the situation and reply.

The situation is this: “While He was still speaking to the crowd, behold His mother and His brothers were standing outside seeking to speak to Him, and they were unable to meet because of the crowd. And the crowd sat down around Him. His mother and brothers sent to Him, and someone announced to Him, ‘Behold your mother and brothers are outside seeking to speak to you.”

This is a continuation of the last passage.

Christ went into a house, Mark 3:20.

Many people left, famished, Mark 3:21.

Christ debated with the Scribes and Pharisees over the nature of the exorcism He had performed through the power of the Spirit.

And now He is still there in that same house.

While He is still speaking, telling the Scribes and Pharisees the illustration of the demon-possessed man, Christ's mother and His brothers came up to the house.

But the crowd was around the house, and in the house, and so they were quite unable to reach Him.

For what reason they wanted to see Him, it is not clear; but they have traveled to see their most famous family member.

Perhaps just a friendly family visit.

Perhaps to see for themselves what miracles He was doing.

The crowd was sitting down around Him. You can see in a large room of the house, Christ standing in the middle, and a crowd sitting down around Him. Most are Scribes and Pharisees.

So His mother and brothers send to Him. A messenger comes into the house from outside, and announces to Him, "Behold, your mother and brothers are outside seeking to speak to you."

The last reference to Christ's family occurred in Luke 4:16-31, or so it is assumed. In that passage, Christ returned to Nazareth and was rejected. It was His hometown, and so He certainly would have seen His family then. That was Autumn of 27 AD. It is now likely mid to late 28 AD, so approximately a year has passed.

But Christ did indeed think about His mother. This is in evidence when He heals the widow's son at Nain, Luke 7:11-17.

Of course these people of Christ's family are no slouches.

Mary is a really wonderful believer; of her we already have some history.

Mark 6:3 names four brothers of Christ - James and Joses and Judas and Simon.

John 7:1-13 portrays Jesus going to the feast of booths; this would be about one year from the time of our own passage, because the feast of booths is an October feast.

Verse three of that chapter has Jesus' brothers attempting to persuade Him to do something against the will of God.

Verse five comes out and says that not even His brothers were believing in Him.

But Acts 1:14 has Mary and the brothers of Jesus praying together immediately after the ascension.

And indeed it was appropriate for James the brother of Jesus to write the very first book of the New Testament.

But at this time, it seems likely that Christ's family shares the unbelief of the town of Nazareth. Indeed Christ would say so in just a few short weeks.

Mark 6:4, "And Jesus said to them, 'A prophet is not without honor except in his home town and among his own relatives and in his own household.'

The reply is this: "And after formulating an answer He said to them, 'Who is My mother, and who are my brothers? And looking around at those sitting around Him in a circle while extending His hand upon His mother He said, 'Behold, My mother and my brothers. Whoever does the will of My Father Who is in heaven, this one is my brother and sister and mother. My mother and my brothers: they are hearing and doing the Word of God.'"

Christ thought about this; He formulated an answer. Even with so mundane an event as a family visit.

But this was a difficult family visit, because they did not believe in Him. It is quite possible within the context of Mark 6:4 that even His own mother had strayed from belief in Him under the peer pressure of her fellow townsmen and women.

Many of you may also come from families that do not believe; from having spouses and children and parents and brothers and sisters who do not believe as you do.

Our Lord confronted this same challenge in life.

Indeed, Hebrews 2:17-18 says, "(17) Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to propitiation for the sins of the people. (18) For since He himself was tempted in that which

he has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.”

Hebrews 4:15-16 follows up with this, “(15) For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. (16) Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

Many people find that the unbelief of their families and loved ones is one of the most heartbreaking challenges in life. Christ went through this, and in the end, some at least remained faithful.

There are certain things that you can do to remain faithful to God and give the best possible witness to your family.

Fulfill God’s plan for your life by keeping your priorities straight. An unbelieving family is one of the greatest distractions that this life might offer.

For Christ to see His brothers and maybe even His mother in an unbelieving state must have been emotional and distracting for Him. He did right by stating what He is about to state in our study.

And you will at least receive vindication for your right priorities; if not now, then certainly before the throne of grace in eternity.

Pray for your family; ask God to intervene in their lives in dynamic ways so that they understand His presence in their lives. And do not give up in these prayers. The timing may not be right for years and years.

Remind yourself again and again that attitude is the greatest argument.

As a wife you must apply 1 Peter 3:1-6: “(1) Likewise, you women, obey your own husbands, in order that also if any [of them] disobey the word, through the conduct of their wives they might be won without a word, (2) after observing in respect your pure behavior - (3) concerning which: do not let your

adornment be external, the braiding of hair and the wearing of gold or wearing of clothes, (4) but [let it be] the hidden person of the heart in the imperishable quality of a humble and relaxing spirit, who is of great value in the presence of God. (5) For so [it was] also when the holy women who hoped unto God were adorning themselves by remaining under the authority of their own husbands - (6) like Sarah submitted to Abraham, calling Him Lord, whose children you become by doing good and not fearing a single fear.”

- You can easily perceive that Peter is preaching attitude.

- This is especially emphasized by the exhortation of verse one, ‘they might be won without a word.’ This is Peter’s objective for husbands through the Holy Spirit.

- Winning someone without saying a word is a fantastic accomplishment indeed. It is done through observation; the man observes the pure behavior of his wife, her inner beauty, and is convinced of the virtues of the Christian way of life.

- So the woman’s inner beauty is that she has a humble and relaxing spirit, that is, mental attitude. She is a great person for her husband to be around.

As a husband you must apply 1 Peter 3:7: “You husbands likewise, live together [with your wives] according to a fact: pay honor as with a female weaker vessel, so also with a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers might not be hindered.”

- The husband’s winning attitude is described by Peter as paying honor.

- You believing husbands are to honor your wives (believing or unbelieving) as the gift from God that she is.

- The woman is the first gift to man chronologically; she precedes even Christ according to a time-reckoning.

· She is the second most important gift according to importance. Therefore she is to be honored!

As children you must apply Ephesians 6:1-3: “(1) Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. (2) Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise), (3) so that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth.”

As parents you must apply Ephesians 6:4: “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”

Look for the right time and the right words to speak, if the opportunity should present itself.

The Holy Spirit will guide you in what to say, according to what truth you have accumulated and inculcated in your life.

But whatever is spoken must stay within the guidelines of attitude!

Therefore Christ asks a question to get the ball rolling: “Who are my mother and my brothers?”

This question is rhetorical by nature; Christ does not expect to hear an answer from anyone in the crowd.

But you see, neither does Christ expect anyone to have an answer. It is really the kind of question that is designed to stimulate thought. It is designed so that the crowd will say, ‘Huh? Whaddya mean?’

When you ask a question that has no clear answer, and even would seem like a really weird question, it catches the attention of the audience, and makes them think about where you are going with the true answer.

Matthew 12:49 contains an important detail: Christ extended His hand upon His mother. She at least has entered the room, if not His brothers as well.

By performing this small gesture, our Lord includes Mary in the circle of those who are spiritually nominated into His family.

But not his brothers. And the other passages about His brothers are not good. They at least for now are not a part of His spiritual family. They would certainly be later.

And then Christ opens up His family to a much wider interpretation - all who do the will of His Father, all who hear the word of God and do it.

Look at how Christ interprets doing the will of God; it is hearing the word of God and doing it.

Let’s turn to Romans 12 and see how the first two verses of this chapter corroborate Christ’s take on the will of God.

This wider interpretation is interesting and inspiring.

Christ communicates the principle that Spirit and truth are thicker than blood.

That our true and lasting and eternal family has to do with spiritual matters.

There is the family of all believers, and then there is even the immediate family of mature believers.

The writers of the New Testament stayed faithful to this definition, and the ‘brethren’ became a designation for Christians. It was common for believers of the first century to address one another as ‘brother’ and ‘sister.’

Although the concept is often abused, and commonly comes across as false and silly, at least the idea that we are spiritually related to Christ should remain.

And remember, this is not just about being a Christian; the will of God covers so much more than that.

The will of God has more to do with maturity than just simple belief in Jesus Christ, although that has its part in God’s will, too.

Understanding yourself as spiritually related to Christ should create a sense of esprit de corps in you.

It should stand as motivation to continue your momentum, since spiritual momentum unto

maturity is the real standard for being a brother and sister of Christ's.

It should give you confidence, because Christ successfully completely His battery of tests. He was the prototype, and His testing was severe. If He did it, you can do it too.

It should build up a sense of self-esteem inside of you.

Parables, An Introduction

Matthew 13:1-3a; Mark 4:1-2; Luke 8:4

Matthew 13:1-3a, "(1) At that time, Jesus, after leaving the house, was sitting by the sea; (2) And many crowds were gathered to Him, so that after embarking into a boat He sat down, and all the crowd had sat upon the shore. (3) And He spoke many things to them in parables.

Mark 4:1-2, "(1) And He began to teach again beside the sea; and a large crowd gathered to him, so that after embarking into a boat He sat on the sea, and all the crowd was on the land next to the sea. (2) And He taught them many things in parables and He said to them in His teaching..."

Luke 8:4, "And when a large crowd was coming together and going around to each city with Him, He said through a parable..."

Exposition.

The description is so simple that little commentary is necessary.

Even after the incident with the Pharisees over demon possession, and their attempt to slander His ministry, Christ apparently has more crowds than ever.

He is still in the region of the Sea of Galilee, and indeed this incident takes place near the shore of that sea.

But there is a significant switch in teaching style here that deserves comment. He begins to teach in parables.

A parable is a simple story used to illustrate a principle of doctrine. It represents a simplification of that principle for the sake of

communication. As such, it is certainly a compromise.

A parable is a compromise because it increases the time allotted to teach the doctrine; it focuses on a single principle within that doctrine. It is not nearly as time efficient as teaching a number of principles point by point.

A parable is a compromise because it is seldom a perfect fit. Analogies always have their limits.

This is not the first time that Christ has employed parables, but He does so somewhat sparingly.

It is apparent that Christ employs rhetoric all the time. "Rhetoric is the art of oratory, especially the persuasive use of language to influence the thoughts and actions of listeners." - The American Heritage Dictionary.

The parable may be a sub-category of rhetoric, but it is generally 'dumbed down' so that it is a device that can communicate to everyone.

And there is nothing wrong with such a strategy in evangelization and in teaching Christian basics.

But in the pursuit of spiritual maturity, illustrating everything is quite inefficient, and slows the advance of those who do not need the illustrations in the first place.

You will observe that Christ employs the parable often, and it is appropriate to His audience. But observe also how less common it is for the writers of the epistles to do so. And Luke's history in Acts has the parable even less often.

The parable was a very popular mode of communication among the Jewish scholars of Christ's day.

Now in the modern science of homiletics, that is, the public speaking of sermons, there is generally more emphasis on the parable than is necessary.

There should be a strong emphasis on rhetoric and effective public speaking.

But taking the time to illustrate every principle in every sermon almost makes certain their immaturity.

Imagine forty minutes a week of Bible teaching, and perhaps fifteen or twenty or more minutes of that in the illustration!

There is no possibility of producing a mature believer at such a slow pace.

There is no possibility, because the intake from the cosmic system will overwhelm such a pitiful effort.

Many people get emotional about illustrations, because illustrations quite often are most effective when they play to the emotions. To remove the emotional from a person's life is a difficult and chancy surgery indeed, and yet that surgery can be spiritual life-saving.

But Jesus Christ used the parable for those who had yet to establish a spiritual autonomy.

But this would be the first time that Christ used the parable to teach kingdom information. It represents a striking departure for Him, and a recognition by Him that the people were not listening.

Parable of the Sower

Matthew 13:3b-23

Mark 4:3-25

Luke 8:5-18.

The Outline.

The parable of the sower.

The seed on the road.

The seed on the rocks.

The seed on the thorns.

The seed on the good earth.

Christ's repeated proclamation.

The interrogation concerning the parables.

The identity of the inquisitors.

The big question.

The answer:

Distinctions among souls and the necessity of parables for some.

The explanation of the consequences of rejection.

The prophecy of the negative volition of Israel.

The judgment of the disciples by Christ, they are categorized in the worst way.

The blessing of sight and hearing for some.

The explanation of the parable:

The seed sown on the road.

The seed sown into the rocks.

The seed sown into the thorns.

The seed sown into good earth.

A general explanation concerning communication from God.

The consequences of hearing the word.

II. The Exposition.

The parable of the sower.

The seed on the road: "Behold, the sower went out to sow. And while he is sowing some [seed] fell beside the road and was trampled, the birds after coming devoured them."

We are going to save the interpretation of this parable until the end, where it receives clarity through the mind of Christ. Here, we will concentrate on the image alone.

It begins with the verb IDOU, which aims to gain the attention of the listeners. It is an imperative verb that means 'Look.'

Now the sower goes out to sow. This is his profession, and this was a common sight in Israel. Everyone knows what Christ is talking about. It would be as though we said: "The gardener went out to mow."

You will have to impute an ancient concept to this narrative: a man with a bag or vessel of seed, walking along and casting the seed as he goes.

For the sake of efficiency, the seed is scattered by hand with no great scientific precision.

It is not that this poor sower is particularly sloppy in what he does; it was the practice to be inexact, and even sometimes to an extreme.

EN TO SPEIREIN, is 'while sowing.' It is like saying, right in the middle of what he was doing... some seed fell on the road.

Luke adds the idea that the seed on the road gets trampled. An obvious inclusion that was left out by the other two chroniclers of this speech. We will see how trampling fits into the interpretation later.

But nonetheless the birds come and devour the seed.

It is not just that the birds eat the seed; they devour it. The verb KATEPHAGEN makes this description.

The aorist tense of this verb fits the meaning very well. The tense describes an action that occurs in a moment's time. The bird fly onto the road and devour the seed.

The verb itself means to 'eat down.' It has in mind an eating without the act of chewing. 'Gobble down' is a really good translation of the concept.

So the birds come and in a moment's time the seed is gobbled down.

And notice also the modern practice of the scavenger birds to eat what is left on the road. The road is open, and with the eyesight of a bird is a really easy place to find food. The birds know to come there for that very reason.

The seed on the rocky places: "And other [seed] fell upon the rocky places where it did not have much earth, and it sprouted for a short time because it did not have depth or moisture. But after the rising of the sun it was scorched and withered because it had no root."

On the rocky places there is a different challenge for the seed. Here there is OUK GEN POLLEN, 'not much soil.'

The adverb EUTHEOS depicts the very temporary nature of this plant. It is the adverb 'immediately.' But here it is really 'for just a moment.' Notice the cause of the action - it did not have much earth.

So the plant does not spring up quickly because it has so little soil; rather it springs up for a very short time. Its span of life is brief indeed.

Two accounts add reasons of a different kind; depth and moisture. Well really it is this: the lack of soil does not allow the root to grow and expand, so that there is an absence of moisture. The one results in the other.

The rising of the sun scorches and then withers the new plant. It is destroyed.

This happens every spring when I bring out all the flowers that I have nursed along in my basement through the winter. After investing months of work to produce seedlings, the sun hits them, and poof! They are gone in a few hours' time.

The seed in the thorns: "And others fell upon the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked them."

This is a little more straightforward, and all of the accounts are in complete agreement as to the nature of the hazard.

The thorns choke the new plant; they steal its soil, they steal its water, they steal its sun. Because it is a young plant, it cannot compete.

"And still others fell upon the good earth and bore fruit, some a hundred, some sixty, and some thirty."

But of course the sower is bound to hit the right soil eventually, especially since that is his intent.

And the seed that falls on the good earth, the earth with the right amount of sunlight, rich with nutrients and the right amount of water - that seed is going to produce a healthy plant.

And the healthy plant always bears fruit.

Christ says that the plants produce varying amounts of fruit, but they do indeed produce fruit.

Christ's repeated proclamation: "And while saying these things, He was calling out, 'The one who has ears let him hear.'"

At the same time that He is stating the parable, Christ is calling out. This comes from Luke 8:8.

The present participle LEGON has its action occurring at the same time as the main verb EPHONEI. So the saying and the calling out happen simultaneously.

The content of Christ's call is simple, 'The one who has ears, let him hear.'

So if you are able to hear, then you are politely commanded to listen.

The polite command comes from AKOUETO; this is the Greek imperative of entreaty.

Christ is telling anyone within earshot that they really need to hear this parable - that it is something of surpassing importance for them.

The interrogation concerning the parables.

The identity of the inquisitors. "And when He became somewhat alone, after the disciples came, those around Him and twelve interrogated him."

Now isn't this strange? Our Lord has finally found a way to get rid of the crowds. He tells one parable, and He becomes somewhat alone.

Mark 4:10 contains the reference: KATA MONAS. This prepositional phrase gives the idea that Christ has become somewhat alone; it is literally 'according to alone,' or 'after the pattern of aloneness.'

Even the disciples have wandered off during this brief parable - nobody at all thought it of surpassing profundity.

Remember that Christ has decided to employ the mode of communication that was popular among the Pharisees of the day.

Indeed, He may have done this in response to their accusations about His ministry. Because

they accused Him of working from the authority of the prince of demons, He then adopted their method of teaching.

And this in turn caused the crowds to filter away! It was as if Christ had used tear gas instead of a parable!

Well, the smoke has cleared, and there are now just a few folks left; and his disciples thought that the parable was a good intermission, and so they went away too. But now they are back.

And they are said to interrogate Him; the participle EPEROTON comes from Luke 8:9. It means to 'question intensely.'

The big question. 'For what reason do You speak to them in parables?'

Yep, here it is. The big profound question from the disciples and those few who remained around Him.

And our understanding of this question should be tempered by the fact that Jesus gave this parable and everyone seemed to go away.

This is not so much a question of curiosity as one of accusation. You can perhaps see the scowls on their faces as they ask: "Why did you just do that?"

And you see how hard it is for us to fathom this situation, because in a historical irony, we are in love with parables. Since we love parables so much (indeed, perhaps too much), it is difficult for us to see the reason for the question.

But the disciples had a reason; they were now alone, and the crowds had dispersed, and they wanted to know exactly why Christ had shifted to the condescending teaching style of the Pharisees.

The Answer:

Distinctions among souls and the necessity of parables for some. "And formulating an answer, He said to them, 'Because has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of the heavens, but to those outside it has not been given and so everything comes in parables.'"

Christ first formulates an answer; the aorist tense of the participle APOKRITHEIS does this. It shows that He gives at least a passing thought to the answer before He speaks it.

The perfect passive indicative of the verb DIDOMI indicates a very strong action on the part of God. Together with the dative of advantage of the personal pronoun HUMIN, it is translated 'to you it has been given.'

Now God is the one who produces this action; He has given the disciples the ability to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.

The perfect tense shows that this is a past action with lasting results. And this makes a great amount of sense, because anytime that you can perceive the plan of God for your life, it is going to have a wonderful result. So the perfect tense is important here.

Now it is just to the disciples that this has been given... Well to the disciples and anyone like them.

- It is not that Christ chose them to be disciples and so God gave them some special perceptive ability.

- It is that because they chose to believe, God gave them certain spiritual assets for the perception of the kingdom plan.

A further clue about this perceptive ability is in the phrase 'but to those outside.'

- This must be those outside of the direct will of God - those who are not believers, or, who if they are believers are also out of fellowship from God.

- The idea of fellowship was not foreign at all to the Jews. It was a part of their temple worship. If we could take a walk through the tabernacle today, its symbolism of the plan of God for mankind would be striking to those of us who understand it.

- The tabernacle is entered through a wide gate, 30 ft. across. Immediately to the front as one enters is the copper altar, which, together with its sacrifices, makes a striking depiction of salvation.

- Just 10 or 20 feet past this altar is the copper laver, which stands at the entrance to a smaller tent. The copper altar is the portrayal of confession, and it is necessary to confess one's sins before going any further in the plan of God.

- The smaller tent contains all of the elements which represent the post-salvation plan of God. Only the Levitical priests were allowed in this tent, and this in itself portrays an important observation on the plan of God: that though many are saved, not very many of those continue on in the plan of God.

- We have seen the word of God represented in the table of showbread. We have seen the work of the Spirit depicted in the golden lampstand. We have studied the portrayal of the works of righteousness in the incense altar. All of these are the elements in the Holy place, which represent the advance to spiritual maturity.

- The most holy place, or holy of holies and the holy place are separated by a thick veil, which conceals the indwelling presence of the Shekinah Glory. The most holy place is smaller still than the holy place. In fact, only one man, the high priest, was allowed into the holy of holies, and that man only once a year on the day of atonement. This place alone is reserved for Jesus Christ. The veil which separates the inner tent was split when Christ died on the cross, which was a sign to the Jews of the suspension of the dispensation of Israel.

- The writer of Hebrews states that the body of Christ (His life and death) forms a bridge into the most Holy Place, so that all might enter the plan of God, and advance to maturity, Heb 10:20-21.

- The furniture in the Holy place is arranged so that it complements the most holy place. All believers are a reflection of what Christ Himself has accomplished. All believers depend on Him.

- Through the tabernacle the Jews had a wonderful portrayal of God's plan for their lives. This portrayal was a clear and accurate depiction of God's will for their lives. They were to come to know Him, and enjoy a relation with Him through understanding the

Symbology of the tabernacle and its furniture. This Symbology was designed first and foremost for them in their time. Even though we may look at these things and know them even better because of our perspective through the completed canon of Scripture, they had plenty of information to understand and through it to know God and advance in His plan.

Just to make this concept clear:

- People outside the plan of God have scar tissue on their souls.
- Because of this, they experience spiritual blindness; their repeated cycles in the cosmic system blind them to spiritual truths from the Bible.
- The cycle goes like this: they reject the person of God, and then they reject His word; the rejection of God's word demands a replacement, so they accept the cosmic counterfeits and lies provided by the devil.
- People inside the plan of God have certain spiritual assets that help them to perceive the spiritual information from God. The ministry of God the Holy Spirit is an example.
- The parable is designed to penetrate the armor of the cosmic counterfeits and lies.

The reason for the parables is that some have at hand what they need to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, while others do not.

If you do not have what you need, then you need a parable.

The explanation of the consequences of rejection. "For whoever has, it will be given to him, and he will have in abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him."

Let's begin by defining the haves and the have nots in this passage.

The haves are those who have the spiritual assets related to the perception and intake of the word.

The have nots are those who reside outside of fellowship with God, and are lacking what they need to process the word of God.

The one who has will receive more, and in abundance. This is truly the blessings which are received on account of the fulfillment of the plan of God.

Spiritual blessings, especially knowing God.

Earthly blessings, like intellectual, business, professional, romantic and many other categories of prosperity.

Eternal blessings, a multitude of ways in which God can bless you forever.

The one who does not have will lose everything.

The very fact that you are alive represents a fantastic opportunity to fulfill God's plan and experience the destiny that He has for you.

And even greater opportunity exists for every believer in Jesus Christ.

At the moment you are saved, your blessings for eternity are placed on reserve for you.

If you fail to reach spiritual maturity, then you lose those blessings. What you have is taken away from you.

You can never lose your salvation.

The prophecy of the negative volition of Israel. "For this reason I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear nor do they understand, and for them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, the one saying, 'In listening, you hear and definitely do not understand; and seeing you see and do not comprehend. For the heart of the people has become dull, and with the ears they barely hear, and they closed their eyes, otherwise they would see with their eyes and hear with the ears and understand with the heart and return and I would heal them.'"

Christ begins by reiterating the reason for the parables. He talks about those who have accumulated scar tissue on their hearts so that they are spiritually blind and hard of hearing.

So they actually listen to what Christ has to say; the sound waves of His voice enter their ears, and their ears work; their eyes receive the information from observing His miracles.

But even with a great bombardment of information, they have no comprehension of what it really mean. They do not understand at all that this information could have a great impact on their lives.

The quote comes from Isaiah 6:9-10.

The translation of this passage is descriptive:

- In the first line there is a double negative OUMI, which is very emphatic in the Greek. "Hearing you hear and definitely do not understand."
- The same applies in the second line. It is not like they are just not paying attention; the malfunction goes much deeper than that. There is in fact no understanding whatsoever, either through the hearing or the seeing.
- The aorist tense verb EPACHUNTO shows the past action of the heart of the people becoming dull. But it is not in the perfect tense. This indicates that the situation is not irreversible.
- Their hearing has become BAREOS, which is weighty, burdensome, or difficult. It is such a burden to listen!
- These are the lazy thinkers - people who hate to listen to doctrine because it requires work. And boy is the world ever full of these.
- And this lets us know immediately that thinking about truth really does take work, and that God requires from us this work of thinking.
- This contains the aorist tense of AKOUO, 'to hear.' Again the aorist tense simply notes a past fact, but does say that this is an irreversible state. The grace of God is adequate to reverse this laziness.

- Their eyes closed, EKAMMUSAN. The aorist tense once again.

- You close your eyes when you do not want to see something. Closing your eyes is portrayed here as a voluntary action.

- People who do not want the truth close their eyes to it. Perhaps it will hurt too much; perhaps they need the cover so that they can participate in their favorite category of sin.

- And notice now the order of things in verse fifteen:

- See with your eyes or hear with your ears;

- Understand in your heart;

- Turn;

- God does the healing.

- Now this is the true pattern of grace.

- Academic understanding of a concept;

- Application wisdom of the same concept;

- Repentance, or changing of the mind;

- God responds in grace.

The context of the quote comes from the commissioning of Isaiah.

But it has some shadowy overtones for anyone who might be listening closely and checking their Isaiah scrolls during the time of Christ.

Go on to verses eleven and twelve in that sixth chapter of Isaiah, and you will see what I mean: "(11) Then I said, 'Lord, how long?' And he answered, 'Until cities are devastated and without inhabitant, houses are without people and the land is utterly desolate. (12) The Lord has removed men far away, and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land.'"

In other words, this is the commission of Isaiah that is to last until the fifth cycle of discipline comes upon the southern kingdom of Judah.

And Christ adopts the commission of Isaiah for His own, and in the same moment identifies His generation with Isaiah's. Isaiah's generation was not a good generation at all.

Isaiah 28:1-2 testifies to this: "(1) Woe to the proud crown of the drunkards of Ephraim, and to the fading flower of its glorious beauty, which is at the head of the fertile valley of those who are overcome with wine! (2) Behold, the Lord has a strong and mighty agent; as a storm of hail, a tempest of destruction, like a storm of mighty overflowing waters, He has cast it down to the earth with His hand."

Or verses seven and eight of that same chapter: "(7) And these also reel with wine and stagger from strong drink: the priest and the prophet reel with strong drink, they are confused by wine, they stagger from strong drink; they reel while having visions, they totter when rendering judgment. (8) For all the tables are full of filthy vomit, without a single clean place."

And in the end the northern kingdom of Ephraim was utterly destroyed, and the southern kingdom of Judah nearly so.

Your heart becomes dull through repeated cycles of cosmic involvement:

Rejection of God's person, like denying that He is a loving or omnipotent God.

Rejection of God's truth, which is a necessity after rejecting His person.

Substitution of counterfeits and lies, to fill the vacuum left by rejecting the truth.

The participation in the cycle of lust and unhappiness, leading to the weakening and destruction of the will.

Each cycle of cosmic involvement dulls the heart even further, so that the condition worsens.

It is most common for people in this category to identify that they have 'tried religion (or Christianity) and it did not work for them.' This is the motto of the dull of heart.

It is worthwhile to take notice of the objective, which is stated in the end: "otherwise they would return and I would heal them."

The judgment of the disciples by Christ, they are categorized in the worst way. "And He says to them, 'you do not understand this parable, and how will you comprehend all the parables?'"

This was a parable that was so easy to understand. Well, Christ thought so. Notice that He did not interpret the parable the first time around; He does not do so because He thinks it is elementary in interpretation.

But this was only the first of many parables. And if the disciples do not understand this easy and obvious one, how will they ever understand others which are potentially harder to understand?

Furthermore, this is an entry-level parable; it is about comprehension of spiritual truth in the kingdom of God. If you do not have a grasp of grace perception mechanics, then it is moot to move on to other things.

The two tenses of the verbs in this sentence (in Mark 4:13) work together to demonstrate the entry-level nature of this parable.

The first verb is the perfect indicative *OIDATE*, which because of its meaning is translated as a present tense - 'You do not know...' So this is the present condition of the disciples' comprehensive ability.

The second is the future active indicative of *GINOSKO*. These two, when taken together, show a necessary sequence. This parable must be comprehended first before going on to the others.

This represents a hard rebuke of the disciples.

The blessing of sight and hearing for some. "But blessed are your eyes that see and your ears that hear. For truly I say to you that many prophets and righteous men longed to see what you see and they did not see, and to hear what you hear and did not hear." (From Matthew 13:16-17)

Here is a grand dispensational distinction; here is a great advantage to those who live during the incarnation.

The exclamatory adjective MAKARIOI proclaims a state of blessedness on the eyes and ears of the incarnation generation.

But the blessing is a counterpoint to Isaiah 6:9-10. It is only the eyes that see and the ears that actually hear which are blessed. There certainly must be perceptive comprehension in order the blessing to come.

This is really the nature of much if not all blessing in the plan of God. Blessing requires comprehension.

In order to receive your appropriate prosperity for time and eternity, you must comprehend the plan of God in all of its elements. You must have that impact comprehension that brings change to your life and especially your mental attitude.

The rationale is given in verse seventeen - many prophets and righteous men longed to see what you see and they did not see, and to hear what you hear and did not hear.

Christ begins it with a formula: 'Truly I say to you.' The first word is AMEN. The source for our English 'Amen,' the concluding word to our prayers. He does this get their attention - to tell them that what He is about to say is of transcending importance.

This is an irony; for the prophets of the Old Testament did not see Christ with their eyes - they had no opportunity to take it to the point of impact comprehension.

But they longed to see it. The verb is EPETHUMESAN - this means not only desire, but beyond desire. They had an inner fire to see the face of the Messiah, and to hear His voice. THUMEO means to burn like incense. When you add the preposition EPI to the equation, it comes out even stronger. This is an unquenchable and fiercely hot inner fire.

And Christ does this in order to restore a proper sense of importance to the day and especially to the content of the parables.

Because the disciples had taken the first parable lightly. There is evidence to conclude that they left right in the middle of it!

So Christ rocks them a little bit here. What the prophets and righteous men of old would have given to be here now! Isaiah - Jeremiah - Hosea - David - Moses - what they would have given!

- When Isaiah prophesies in his eleventh chapter, how he urgently wished to see Him every day, functioning under wisdom... "Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit. The Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him, The spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and strength, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. And He will delight in the fear of the Lord, and He will not judge by what His eyes see, nor make a decision by what His ears hear..."

- When Jeremiah in his thirty first chapter predicted a new covenant for Israel, how he earnestly desired to be there on the day that Christ gave the details in His sermon on the mount. Jeremiah would have paid attention on that day!!!

- When David wrote the twenty second Psalm - he longed to be where the disciples would not tread - at the cross. How he longed to hear his Savior say the all important words... "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

- When Job in the nineteenth chapter utters his reply to Bildad's accusation, you can feel the heat of his inner fire to be at the tomb with Maria of Magdala on the morning of the third day... "I know that my redeemer lives, and at the last He will take his stand on the earth."

Christ's Interpretation of the Parable of the Sower. "Therefore you yourselves listen to the parable of the sower. The sower sows the word. Everyone who hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches what has been planted in his heart, in order that they might not be saved after believing. This is the seed sown beside the road. And the seed sown upon the rocky places, this is the one who hears the word and

immediately receives it with joy, believing for a while, but he has no root in himself but is short-lived, and after tribulation comes or persecution because of the word, immediately he stumbles. And the one sown into the thorns, this is the one who hears the word, and the care of the world and the distraction of wealth or the lust concerning the rest chokes the word and he becomes unfruitful. And the seed sown upon the good earth, this is the one who hears the word and understands, who indeed bears fruit and makes a hundred, and sixty, and thirty.' And He was saying to them, 'The lamp does not come in order to be placed under a bushel, or under a bed, is it? Isn't it [brought out] in order to be placed on a lampstand? For it is not a secret unless in order to be revealed, nor does a secret exist, but to come to light. If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear!' And He was saying to them, 'See that you hear. In what measure you measure it will be measured to you and it will be increased to you. For who has, it will be given to him; and who does not have, even what he has will be taken from him.'"

The introduction.

Our Lord begins with an exhortation to listen. Again, He wants them to pay attention to what He has to say.

He employs the intensive use of the personal pronoun, adding HUMEIS to the built-in pronoun of the verb, translated 'You yourselves.'

Here is an exhortation to take personal responsibility for what is heard.

No one can advance to spiritual maturity for you. Only you can take yourself there.

God requires you to become autonomous in the spiritual realm, passing your own tests with the truth that is in your own soul.

This represents the second admonishment against laziness in this passage.

This is the truth of the matter: we all stand alone at the judgment seat of Christ; we will

each of us be responsible for our own spiritual journeys.

The sower sows the word; this is the key that unlocks the parable. Seed the gospel.

The seed on the road. "Everyone who hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches what has been planted in his heart, in order that they might not be saved after believing. This is the seed sown beside the road."

This sort of rings a bell... 'hearing and not understanding.' This comes right from the quote in Isaiah.

The reason for the lack of understanding lies with the scar tissue on the heart of the hearer. It is not the fault of the evangelist that the gospel has not been understood.

This tells us that the gospel has a limited shelf life in the heart; that the devil will snatch away what is left on the road.

And it tells us that the seed of the gospel is not implanted and cannot grow until there is understanding.

It is certain that the devil has various ways of devouring the word, so that it is taken away from the attention of the hearer.

Now this is prevention on the part of Satan; at no time is this person saved, even though there is an attempt at evangelism here.

Luke 8:12 contains the phrase HINA ME PISTEUSANTES SOTHOSIN.

HINA is a particle which introduces a purpose clause. This indicates the purpose of the snatching away.

The aorist participle PISTEUSANTES depicts an action which occurs prior to the main verb SOTHOSIN. So the believing occurs before the not being saved.

By placing the negative adverb ME before the participle, the negation is intended to govern the entire phrase, so that it is really 'after not believing, they might not be saved.'

The point is that Satan does not want this person to believe and as a result be saved.

In the original telling of the parable, Luke also included the idea of trampling with the snatching away. In no gospel is this specifically explained.

But we can impute a good idea to it, if we are careful. Trampling is an action of disrespect.

If your nice coat falls from the coat rack, and people tread on it, they are not respectful of your property, especially if the action is intentional.

The devil tramples the seed on the road; it maligned by him before it can be understood.

The seed on the rocks. "And the seed sown upon the rocky places, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, believing for a while, but he has no root in himself but is short-lived, and after tribulation comes or persecution because of the word, immediately he stumbles."

Now this person believes. They are said to EUTHUS META CHARAS LAMBANON AUTON - 'immediately receiving it with joy.'

The participle LAMBANON portrays an action simultaneous with AKOUON, 'hearing.' So this one hears the word and immediately, right at the same time, believes.

The prepositional phrase META CHARAS AUTON tells us that the individual in question accompanies his decision to believe in Christ with joy. He is glad to have salvation.

Just to make things really clear, Luke includes the phrase PROS KAIRON PISTEUOUSIN 'they believe for a short while.'

This is the sustaining of belief beyond salvation; they continue in grace orientation.

Salvation is no longer an issue. It is sealed and secure forever at the moment of initial belief in Jesus Christ.

We can define post-salvation belief here as the continuation of positive volition.

The development of root is analogous to the intake of Bible truth. Metabolized truth in the soul is the root system of the new believer.

Persecution and tribulation are the scorching suns of any believer's life. It takes deep roots indeed to endure them.

Notice especially the phrase in Mark 4:17, DIA TON LOGON - 'because of the word.'

This is an ironclad guarantee; when the word is implanted, persecution is sure to follow.

It is Satan's plan to persecute new believers. He wants their new faith destroyed, so that they will not advance to the witness stand of maturity and give a testimony of love for God against him.

If you are a new believer, you had better prepare yourself, because people are going to come out of nowhere and test you. Every time that someone makes a good decision to follow God, Satan immediately makes plans to shine a scorching sun on that person's faith.

God is faithful, and He will not allow you to be persecuted or tested in any way beyond your capability. But you must use your time in order to take hold of the grace that God has provided for that day.

Look: if God provides the grace, and you decide against it, then God is not responsible for your spiritual demise. You are.

The grace is provided from the very beginning, but you must take hold of it, and be persistent in its pursuit.

The seed in the thorns.

This the straightforward one. The believer becomes distracted by the things of this world.

There is the MERIMNAI of this world. These are worries and anxieties. There are two ways to take care of the details of life.

By responsibly tending to them with a relaxed mental attitude about the outcome.

By excessive worry, even when you are not working toward the objective.

The worries of life are the details of life: logistics, what people think of you or did to you, how you look, how well you are aging, how well your car is running. Anything that is tied to this world - what Mark's gospel (4:19) calls TOU AIONAS.

There is also the PLOUTOU. These are the riches - things above and beyond salvation.

Getting rich is a pursuit that is certainly tied to this world, since none of the worldly riches that you accumulate will go to eternity with you.

Accumulating wealth in this world is one of the all-time emptiest of pursuits. That is, if it is accumulated for the purpose of wealth itself. God is not impressed with your accumulation of wealth or material goods. None of it can possibly add up to heavenly good.

The accumulation of wealth and the pursuit of materialism takes time, and it adds up to nothing at all.

But there is nothing wrong with being rich... as long as there is no compromise whatsoever in the spiritual realm.

God actually blesses people with wealth and material gain, and others come by it through hard work without compromising their relationship with God. These blessings are meant to be enjoyed.

Sometimes God gives material and monetary prosperity as a responsibility in giving. He usually makes it clear when there is a match between what He has given and a special ministry need.

Finally there is the remaining EPITHUMIAI. These are lusts.

This compound word designates the idea of illicit lust. The preceding categories may have legitimacy in moderation, but this is when you want something that you cannot morally have.

Of course the pursuit of illicit and immoral gain is not only a distraction but it keeps you from fellowship with God for the duration of the pursuit.

No matter what the category, all of these things add up to distraction; the time spent in pursuit of these things is not worth it, and takes away from concentration on God.

This all adds up to loss of reward at the judgment seat of Christ. And really, it doesn't matter what distracts you, because whether it is cares of this life, the pursuit of riches, or even illicit lust, it is not worth it.

The riches to be gained in your heavenly reward so exceed what you can accumulate in this life, that there is no point of comparison. The rewards of the next life are exceedingly and abundantly beyond what we could ask or imagine.

A summary of the bad earth.

You need to understand that each of these conditions add up to bad decisions on the part of the individual who loses out.

On the part of the road-seed, there is the bad decision not to understand what is heard, and the devil takes advantage of that bad decision.

On the part of the rocky-place seed, there is the bad decision to neglect the development of the root system, so that devil can scorch them with persecution.

On the part of the thorn-seed, there is the bad decision to become distracted.

Therefore understand that the analogy compares soil with bad decisions. You make your own soil by your own decisions in life.

It is never just bad luck that someone's faith is devoured or scorched or choked out. It is their bad decision to allow the enemy to take advantage of them to the point where their faith is destroyed.

The seed on good earth.

The good earth therefore is the believer who makes good decisions and sets his or her priorities straight.

This good earth produces fruit. This is a picture of plant reproduction. Christians with their priorities straight reproduce themselves; that

is, they are productive in the Christian realm because of their great success.

These people are happy, and God has blessed them with blessings appropriate to their lives. They are beacons of light to the world because of their success in fulfilling the plan of God.

But there is even greater production in the realm of blessing for time and eternity.

Some Applications of the Parable to Evangelism.

There is in reality one evangelism strategy here, and two transition strategies.

People get fouled up in three ways:

They listen to the gospel, but refuse to understand it.

They believe in the gospel, but refuse to grow and develop their newfound faith.

They believe in the gospel and grow some, but then they become distracted by the world.

With regard to the first category, the one thing you must do is persist in the giving of the gospel, and especially pray that God might intervene in that person's life to bring their attention to the truth again and again. Of course, you must always respect their free will, and if they do not want to listen to the gospel and are tired of the subject, then leave it until God works in their lives.

With regard to the second category:

You must be prepared to answer their transitional questions, such as:

What happened when I believed?

What should I do if I sin?

What is required of me now that I am a believer?

Can I lose what I have gained through belief in Christ?

You should be prepared to motivate them by developing in them a personal love for God.

With regard to the third category:

This is less transitional, because the distraction syndrome may not manifest itself for years into a person's Christian walk.

If they will not come to Bible class (and they know they should), then there is a challenge there.

The best thing that you can do is be a personal demonstration of the benefits of the life dedicated to the truth. Let them see by the fruit of your Christian life that living day by day in the truth is a really wonderful thing.

If they see the difference between your mental attitude and theirs, and understand the difference between your quality of life and theirs, then it is easy to mark the reasons for them.

Never do this in a self-righteous or 'I told you so' attitude.

A general explanation concerning communication from God.

"And He was saying to them, 'The lamp does not come in order to be placed under a bushel, or under a bed, does it? Isn't it [brought out] in order to be placed on a lampstand? For it is not a secret unless in order to be revealed, nor does a secret exist, but to come to light. If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear!' And He was saying to them, 'See that you hear. In what measure you measure it will be measured to you and it will be increased to you.'"

Mark 4:21 describes Christ as speaking this last part constantly; this is the force of the imperfect tense verb ELEGEN. This was not just a one time saying of Christ; He spoke this often.

So Christ often reminded His disciples of the principle of the lamp and the lampstand.

This reminder is put into action by means of two questions and then the principle that answers the questions.

The questions work together as a team; the first question expects a 'no' answer, while the second expects a 'yes'. The combination is effective because it allows Christ's listeners to walk through the conclusion with Him.

The principles are twins, two principles stating the same things twice.

The first is a silly question, designed to catch attention by its silliness: "The lamp does not come in order to be placed under a bushel, or under a bed, does it?" This creates a need for correction.

The second is a reality question, designed to fill the void created by the first: "Isn't it [brought out] in order to be placed on a lampstand?"

The principle applies the metaphor of the lamp and lampstand to the truth, and especially to kingdom mystery doctrine.

In this metaphor, the lamp is the kingdom mystery doctrines that Christ has just recently revealed, starting with the Sermon on the Mount. So He has lit the lamp and it is now out.

How silly to light a lamp and place it under a bushel, or under a bed. The purpose of the lamp is to give light, and so it is always placed to best advantage to fulfill the purpose.

For many long ages the mystery doctrine of the kingdom was a hidden secret. It existed so as to come to light, but at the proper time. God never has a secret unless He intends to reveal it.

Although God the Father knew the content of the kingdom mystery doctrine a long time before it was revealed, He let Old Testament saints know of its existence in order to motivate them.

This is the proper follow on to the principle of the prophet's longing. That so many prophets longed to see the Messiah reinforces this principle.

Then Christ gives his standard phrase, the one He had been shouting throughout the parable of the sower: "If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear!"

Because He picks this up again here, and because this was iterated throughout the Parable of the Sower, you can understand this pretty well as a device to point attention backward to that body of information.

Because the prophets longed to see what you have seen, and because God has now placed this kingdom mystery doctrine on a lampstand, pay special attention to these parables.

Christ is no longer shouting this phrase out to the crowd, but rather to His disciples and just a few others only. It is exclamatory by nature, providing the final emphasis to the necessity of the parable.

The consequences of hearing the word. "For who has, it will be given to him; and who does not have, even what he has will be taken from him."

And here He makes a final point: that understanding and applying kingdom mystery doctrine certainly will have eternal consequences.

If a believer from Christ's time entered eternity with his soul full of kingdom mystery doctrine and his life full of a testimony for Him, then reward would be given.

If anyone from Christ's time entered eternity without it, then there would be loss.

For the unbeliever, a permanent loss of opportunity and potential relationship with God.

For the believer, the loss of reward.

2 Timothy 2:4-5. "(4) No soldier on active duty entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier. (5) Furthermore, if anyone competes in the athletic games, he does not receive a winner's crown unless he trains according to the rules."

Romans 8:18, "For I consider the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us."

The Order of the Morning Star is an example of that future glory, and why we must train like we are in the military now:

The order of the morning star is given to the believers who undergo evidence testing under

the personal supervision of Satan, and who persevere even unto the end.

Our lord's testing in the desert is the pattern after which we follow. The royal title of Jesus Christ for the church age is "bright morning star", given for his perfect performance in the desert.

Revelation 22:16, "I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the [spiritual] root and the [physical] offspring of David, the bright morning star."

Numbers 24:17, "A star shall come forth from Jacob." (from Balaam's prophecy).

Matthew 2:2, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw his star in the east, and have come to worship Him."

2 Peter 1:19, "And so we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts."

By following in the footsteps of Christ all the way through evidence testing, you receive the same reward, under the title of Jesus Christ. This reward includes the following.

A uniform of glory, Revelation 3:4,5, "But you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments; and they will walk with Me in white; for they are worthy. He who overcomes shall thus be clothed in white garments... and I will not erase his name from the book of life,"

Presentation to God the Father and the elect angels in a heavenly honors ceremony during the tribulation.

Revelation 3:5. "...and I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels."

Colossians 3:4, "When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you will also be revealed with Him in glory."

A royal title, Revelation 2:17, "To Him who overcomes... I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it."

The provision of hidden manna, Revelation 2:17, "to him I will give some of the hidden manna."

The original manna was the logistical provision to Israel for the wilderness journey.

Since that time, manna came to represent spiritual as well as logistical provision. Psalm 105:40 does this, as well as Ezra in Nehemiah 9:20.

It is most likely that the hidden manna depicts a category of truth that has remained hidden throughout human history.

- It is a category not necessary to the spiritual function of any human being in any time in human history.

- And yet, it is an astounding category of truth that is a unique privilege to know.

This is fantastic indeed, since it is a part of the blessings for eternity.

Co-rulership with Jesus Christ in the millennial state:

Romans 5:17, "For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ."

1 Corinthians 4:8, "You are already filled, you have already become rich, you have become kings without us; and I would indeed that you had become kings so that we also might reign with you."

2 Timothy 2:12, "If we endure, we shall also reign with Him."

Revelation 3:21, "He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne."

Revelation 2:26-27, "And he who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to pieces, as I also have received authority from My Father."

Special privileges in the millennial and eternal state.

Revelation 2:7, "To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God."

- The Paradise of God is the Garden of Eden, which still exists today. It is the Garden in which Adam and Eve resided, and is now guarded by the cherubs with the flaming swords.
 - In this garden is the tree of life, which was forbidden to the man and woman after the fall, because it causes eternal life, Genesis 3:22. Sinful man plus eternal physical life would equal an eternity of sinfulness. God prevented this from His mercy!
- Revelation 3:12, "He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and it will definitely not go out from it [the temple] anymore; and I will write upon it the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name."
- In the new temple of God, there will be pillars as monuments to those who are a part of the order of the morning star.
 - The pillars will be permanent - they will stand forever.
 - On the pillar will be an inscription of God's name, the name of the New Jerusalem (which is not yet revealed), and the new name of Jesus Christ.
 - Since the Greek says I will make him a pillar, with a double accusative, it indicates that the pillar will be a stature in the likeness of that believer.
 - So whenever people and angels come to worship in the eternal state at the eternal temple, they will be reminded of the church age believers who made it all the way to maturity and gave a fantastic testimony to God.

Parable of the Seed

Mark 4:26-29

"(26) And He was saying, "Thus the kingdom of God is like a man who casts seed upon the earth, (27) and he lays down and rises up night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows - how? He himself does not know. (28) The earth is productive automatically, first a blade then a stalk then a full grown wheat grain on the stalk. (29) Now whenever the crop matures, he immediately sends the sickle, because the harvest has stood together."

Introduction:

This is the second of the kingdom parables, following the parable of the sower.

Its intent is to teach a truth about the kingdom of God; the millennial kingdom which Jesus the Messiah is introducing to the world at this time.

Remember that although this is the millennial kingdom of Christ some of these things may indeed be dispensational constants - things which are true in every era of human history.

We may therefore find many truths that apply to us in these parables.

II. The Interpretation.

The imperfect tense of the verb LEGO here depicts Christ as saying this particular parable over and over. Again there is the record of repetition unto inculcation.

Christ compares the kingdom of God to a man who casts seed upon the earth. All of the verbs in this verse and the next are in the subjunctive mood. Mark does this in order to communicate the fictional nature of the parable, because the subjunctive is the mood of unreality. It delineates action that is not real. He is not talking about any man in particular, but a fictional man, an example for the sake of illustration.

The point of comparison is to the man, not to the seed. ANTHROPOS is the predicative nominative of this first sentence. So we will concentrate on the perceptions and actions of the man, and compare them to the kingdom of God.

The first thing that the man does is cast seed on the ground.

Next, he lies down at night and gets up in the morning. This is a literary way to tell us that some time has past. The few days and weeks of the germination period of the seeds goes by.

Then the man comes out one morning and notices that the seeds have sprouted, and on succeeding days he sees those young sprouts grow. His perception is interesting, though. He has no clue as to how all of this has happened.

From his point of view, the earth has automatically produced a blade and then a stalk and then a stalk laden with grain.

Now the verb KARPOPHOREI is in the present indicative.

This indicative mood tells us that this is not hypothetical, but a general principle of plant growth.

AUTOMATE means that the ground is seen as producing this plant all by itself. This is an observational truth, even though there are many more details than meets the naked eye.

But it does not matter to him how it has occurred, when the crop has matured, he goes and gets his sickle and harvests the crop.

This man is a typical farmer. He has no master's degree in agronomy or a PhD in botany. He really does not know how the plants grow - it is a great wonder to him. But by golly when those stalk-heads are full with the grain he sure knows what to do - he gets his sickle and starts harvesting.

Now the kingdom of God is like this man - not like the plants, but like the man.

This cannot be the point of view of God toward the kingdom of God; God is not at all ignorant of how things work in His kingdom.

Therefore, it must be the viewpoint of man, and even of believers who reside in the kingdom and observe its happenings.

The harvest then would be the vagaries of human volition as observed by anyone in the kingdom of God.

Think about it: this parable follows the parable of the sower, which classifies bad and good decisions related to the kingdom of God.

From the outside, we may observe that a person is distracted from the plan of God - their life is in the thorns. Or we may observe that their life is the seed sown on the road and they are refusing to understand the impact of the gospel they have heard.

But how can we know every influencing factor? Even if we may know some, we can never know the microcosm of someone's decision making.

The human mind is incredibly complex. Add to it years of unique experience that no one else can experience, and you can see the difficulty in understanding the decisions that people make.

Although we can observe results, it is not often that we have a clear picture of the reason. This parable exhorts us not to take concern over what we do not understand. Rather, it is up to us to do our duty.

As the farmer does not understand the microcosm of the growth of his crop, and yet he goes out with his sickle and harvests, so also are we to bring in the spiritual harvest of the kingdom of God.

This is certainly a dispensational constant, true as ever in our time as in the time of our Lord.

You do not have to be a great psychologist in order to plant the seeds and bring in the harvest of the Lord.

You do not have to have the least bit of education in order to take up your own sickle.

Although the human soul is complex, and the reasons for becoming a bad patch of ground for the gospel seed are many, there are no excuses for negative volition. God in His holiness will not allow a single excuse to impugn the integrity of the work of His Son on the cross.

Their excuses are not really our business. There are going to be excuses that you will never understand and never come to know. But it will be obvious that the excuse is in operation when the person becomes one of three bad soil types.

A person refuses to understand the gospel; does it matter why?

A person refuses to undertake spiritual growth immediately after they are saved; does it matter why?

A person becomes distracted and rejects the doctrinal way of life; does it matter why?

Their excuses will make them accountable before the judgment seat of Christ, or even the Great White Throne.

The farmer is accountable for the harvest, and not for understanding the microcosm of botany.

Likewise, we will be accountable for our spiritual harvest, but not for understanding the microcosm of psychology behind the positive or negative volition.

Being accountable for the harvest means doing your duty as an ambassador for Christ and as a team member in a local church.

When you have an opportunity, give the gospel. Make your own opportunities and let the Holy Spirit do the rest.

When you run into excuses and negative volition, you can take appropriate action:

When you get the chance, reiterate the truth. Their excuses do not matter.

Continue to demonstrate in your life what the benefits to a relationship with God are. Show everyone what it is like to be content in God and live an abundant life. Demonstrate to them by your happiness just what the eternal advantage is.

Continue to pray that God will intervene in their lives so that they will realize that they are living lives full of excuses, and relinquish them.

But you do not have to become involved to the point where you are analyzing their excuses and counseling their negative volition. Christ specifically says here that this is not a requirement.

Parable of the Tares

Matthew 13:24-30; 36-43.

Introduction:

Two parables have been told related to the kingdom of God; they form the immediate context for this third one.

The first was the parable of the sower, where Christ related bad decisions to spiritual failure.

The second was the parable of the seeds, where Christ told His followers how to deal with excuses.

Now we turn to a third parable that has a close relation to the first two. In this one, we will study the actions of the enemy related to Christ's desire to produce a spiritual population for His kingdom.

This parable is more of a dispensational variable than the others, because it focuses on a group called 'sons of the kingdom,' which is pretty narrow. There is also an unfolding of certain elements of the end times which will bear a looking into.

Verse twenty four introduces this third parable: "He presented another parable to them, saying: "The Kingdom of the Heavens is compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field."

Matthew kicks off the narration with the aorist indicative of PARATITHEMI - 'present.' Christ presented another parable to them.

The idea of this verb is to lay something next to someone as a gift or an offering.

So Christ offers this to His disciples; He makes a formal presentation to them.

The adjective ALLEN modifies PARABOLEN. This adjective denotes another something in the same category as the first something.

The something here is a parable with agriculture as its point of illustration. But also there is a spiritual comparison.

The spiritual point of comparison is in the realm of evangelism, according to the proper interpretation of the first two parables.

So here is a man who sowed good seed in his field; sowing seed is of course giving the gospel.

The twenty fifth verse goes on with the narrative: "But while the men were sleeping his enemy came and sowed weeds also among the wheat and left."

TOUS ANTHROPOUS denotes men plural - the men who work for the landowner. These men are asleep when a second sowing is done.

EPISPEIRO denotes a sowing of seeds on top of the original one. What can be done?

The weeds become evident after a while. They cannot possibly be noticed immediately, since they are just seeds among seeds.

And once the weeds are noticed coming in among the wheat - well that's what happens in verse 26.

ZIZANIA is according to A.T. Robertson's Word Pictures of the New Testament "...darnel,' a bastard wheat... This bearded darnel, *lolium temulentum*, is common in Palestine and resembles wheat except that the grains are black. In its earlier stages it is indistinguishable from the wheat stalks so that it has to remain till near the harvest."

The most obvious interpretation of this element seems to be Judas Iscariot.

He was indistinguishable from the other apostles, and yet he was the seed of the devil.

Verses 26-29 record the recognition of the disaster, "(26) And when the wheat grew up and bore fruit, then the weeds also became evident. (27) And the slaves of the landowner after coming forward said to him, 'Lord, didn't you sow good seed in your field?' (28) And he said to them, 'An enemy man has done this. But the slaves say to him, 'Therefore do you want

us to go out and gather them up?' (29) And he said, 'No. Lest while gathering the weeds you might also root out the wheat with them.'

So time passes and the wheat grows and the weeds are recognized. Thus a meeting ensues.

The slaves of the landowner come forward with an honest question - because they did not do the sowing, the landowner did.

Remember verse 24, 'a man sowed good seed in his field.' This work was done by the landowner alone, and the slaves had nothing at all to do with it.

So in seeing the weeds there, the slaves are compelled to ask whether he sowed good seed.

The landowner would naturally understand their question, and would say - "Of course not." Well actually he says, 'An enemy man has done this.'

The slaves would then as matter of course desire to know their responsibility. All of those weeds would add up to an awful lot of work for them, and they need to know how it is to be done.

The landowner concludes that pulling the weeds will pull up the crop of wheat with them, and so he has a plan.

The thirtieth verse contains that plan: "Let both grow together until the harvest, and in the time of the harvest I will say to the harvesters, 'Gather first the weeds and bind them into bundles in order to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn.'"

So it turns out that the work will not fall on the slaves at all, but rather on another group of workers altogether, the harvesters.

There is some danger and loss in letting them grow together; the weeds will choke out some of the wheat as they grow. But it is better than losing the entire crop.

The weeds are to be gathered and bundled and burned first, and then the wheat is gather into the barn.

The interpretation of this parable comes in Matthew 13:36-43. Christ there identifies the elements of the parable in this way:

The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man - Christ Himself.

The field is the world, and the good seed is the sons of the kingdom, while the weeds are the sons of the evil one.

The enemy who sowed them is the devil, and the harvest is the end of the age. The harvesters are the angels.

This does much for us in the way of understanding what is going on here, and how we can apply these truths.

How this parable applies to our function as ambassadors for Christ.

Again this parable concentrates on the issue of responsibility.

You will notice that Christ never identifies the slaves in His interpretation. They must be human beings as well, even though they do not do the work of the harvest. Perhaps they are a category of angels who do not participate in the final harvest of mankind.

The landowner is Jesus Christ, and He always plants good seed.

He plants good seed through us, His ambassadors in His absence. And He insures the goodness of the seed through the common grace ministry of God the Holy Spirit.

The good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, people who because of their belief, and more than that, because of their maturity are chosen to rule with Christ during the millennium.

Our Lord was at that time hoping to develop a ruling class, an aristocracy for His kingdom. Since He is royalty, He intended to make these mature believers His royal family.

But there was negative volition among the Jews, and they rejected His policy. Therefore the church age began.

Two timelines will help you to understand the contingency of the church age.

The Jews are positive to Christ's kingdom.

Christ dies, and pays for the sins of mankind through His death on the cross.

He rises again on the third day, and ascends on Pentecost to right hand of the Father, where He sits down on His own exalted throne as King of kings and Lord of lords.

The tribulation ensues shortly thereafter, and continues for its 7 required years.

Christ returns for the second advent, and the millennium begins, with the mature Jewish believers as co-rulers with Jesus Christ.

The millennium goes on for its 1000 years and concludes after the Gog and Magog revolution.

The final judgment occurs, including the judgment of all unbelievers, the judgment of all Old Testament believers, and the passing through of all believers into the eternal state.

The Jews reject Jesus Christ (the historical result).

Christ dies, and pays for the sins of mankind through His death on the cross.

He rises again on the third day, and ascends on Pentecost to right hand of the Father, where He sits down on His own exalted throne as King of kings and Lord of lords.

The church age follows for its appointed period of time, known only to the Father.

The rapture of all church age believers ends the church age, and the tribulation ensues thereafter, and continues for its 7 required years.

Christ returns for the second advent, and the millennium begins, with the mature Gentile believers from the church age as co-rulers with Jesus Christ.

The millennium goes on for its 1000 years and concludes after the Gog and Magog revolution.

The final judgment occurs, including the judgment of all unbelievers, the judgment of all

Old Testament believers, and the passing through of all believers into the eternal state.

Jesus Christ never directly causes anyone to believe in Him or to become the sons of the kingdom; all who believe and mature do so freely and without direct cause. He does influence them through the provision of the gospel and intervention in their lives, but that is not the same as overruling volition.

The field is the world; the KOSMOS according to Matthew 13:38. In this field there are good seed and bad seed.

The good seed is planted by the Son of Man, and the bad seed is planted by the devil.

It is the desire of the Son of Man to harvest only the good wheat, the sons of the kingdom.

But this parable has a stronger grounding in dispensationalism than the others, because of the phrase 'the end of the age.'

Christ is here desiring 'sons of the kingdom,' which excludes even some believers.

The enemy man is the devil. He plants the bad seed into the world of human history.

Through his system of counterfeits and lies, through his development of false necessities, the devil deceives man.

As a result of the devil's activities, there are many false 'sons of the kingdom.'

These false sons of the kingdom are virtually indistinguishable from the true ones. They speak the same language, have the same edifice of morality, etc.

There are many today in this church age who are analogous to this. Religious and moral types who put on a personality facade that is very deceptive to their real motives and lives.

Spirituality means that you have a vital relationship with God the Father through His Son Jesus Christ. Spirituality means being consistent in fellowship and fulfilling the plan of God through persistent study of God's word under your right pastor.

The Satanic counterfeits are many and subtle.

The counterfeit gospels.

Mankind is perfect, and therefore does not need a savior (this for the really stupid).

Mankind is imperfect, but can save himself.

Various systems of good works.

- Works of compassion, such as feeding the poor and helping the helpless.

- Works of religion, such as baptism, fervent prayer, feeling sorry for your sins, etc.

Psychological growth and self-improvement.

Asceticism, or giving up various things in life; even things that are perfectly acceptable in God's eyes.

God does not exist, and there is no after life (communist conclusion), and therefore no need for a savior.

Mankind needs a savior, but must add something to the saving work of Christ, such as works, asceticism, rites of passage, or schlock psychology, such as the baptism of the spirit, speaking in tongues, and other ecstatic experiences.

The counterfeit plan of God.

The Pseudo-purposes.

To grow psychologically.

To witness to others and perpetuate Christianity.

To do good works.

To participate in the rituals of the church.

To give up lots of things.

Pseudo-spirituality.

Spirituality by morality.

Spirituality by rituality.

Spirituality by good works.

Spirituality by mentality.

Spirituality by asceticism.

Spirituality by personality and charisma.

Pseudo-characteristics.

Consistency in fellowship with God is replaced by consistency in the cosmic system, 1 John 1:6, "If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth."

Spiritual self-esteem is replaced by the personal love/personal hate binary system.

The personal sense of destiny is replaced by dispensational ignorance or disorientation.

Contentment independent of circumstances is replaced by unhappiness and circumstantial dependency.

Grace orientation is replaced by humanistic orientation.

Objective mental ability is replaced by subjectivity, emotionalism, panic, and mental disability.

Integrity is replaced by compromise without virtue.

Humility is replaced by human arrogance.

Doctrinal orientation is replaced by experiential relativism.

The historical counterfeits.

Evolution replaces creationism.

Revisionist histories replace consensus histories.

False conclusions based on humanism replaces the concept that Jesus Christ controls history.

So Christ decides to leave the bad wheat in the world until the final harvest.

Why do the wicked remain on planet earth?
Why do the wicked prosper?

Jeremiah asked this very same question in Jeremiah 12:1, "Righteous are You, O Lord, that I would plead my case with you; indeed I would discuss matters of justice with You: why has

the way of the wicked prospered? Why are all those who deal in treachery at ease?"

Jeremiah was the prophet who endured the destruction of the Jewish kingdom of Judah, the southern kingdom of the divided monarchy of Israel.

He witnessed the destruction of Jerusalem, and even remained on the ruins of that great city for a while. This is where he wrote the book of Lamentations.

Col. Thieme has suggested three reasons for this:

Identification with an invisible hero. This is the blessing by association of the mature believer.

Logistical grace blessing from God, imputed to the divine righteousness in every believer. Even wicked believers may receive logistical grace blessing.

They are evil in an evil society, and so they prosper within the framework of that society. Because it is the devil's world, Satan has the power to bless them.

All three of those reasons provide testing to believers in the plan of God. You must never get your eyes on others, because it will distract you from fulfilling the plan of God.

It is a strong temptation to feel sorry for yourself as a believer who is doing the right things and see the wicked prosper.

The temptation becomes even greater when you experience lean times by yourself.

You think to yourself: "I deserve what they are getting; they do not live the same sacrificial life that I am living for God, and yet they have everything. This is unjust!"

Principle: the wicked cannot take their blessings with them.

Principle: God will bless you with blessings in time and in eternity; it is a promise from His integrity!

Principle: with the grace assets, you are the richest person in the world.

So God leaves the wicked on planet earth in order to provide testing to growing and mature believers.

Their blessing may become blessing for you, if you continue to focus on God's plan for you life.

Because when the wicked prosper it is a test of undeserved suffering, and it offers to do many things for you.

They are designed to refine the testimony of the believer, in preparation for the witness stand, 1 Pet 1:6-9.

They eliminate hidden arrogance and flaws in the character of the believer.

They are a preview of what the believer can expect on the witness stand.

They accelerate the spiritual growth of the believer.

They develop spiritual muscle in the life of the believer.

They develop personal love for God in the heart of the believer.

The sufferings bring about great blessing from God, and therefore should be endured with a smiling face.

It is also a good idea to keep in mind that you are suffering for the sake of the one that saved you, Philippians 1:29, "For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for Him"

Should you become distracted by the prosperous wicked, you will lose your blessings for time and eternity.

The wicked lack capacity for blessing. They do not enjoy what they have and are filled with fear about losing them.

Death waits ominously to devour them and all the blessings that they have. Their prosperity will be completely ravaged by death.

Death has no victory over the believer in Jesus Christ, 1 Corinthians 15:54-55, "(54) But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on

immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, 'Death is swallowed up in victory. (55) 'O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?'"

AA. The final verses of this passage give us a reason to undertake a quick review of eschatology.

The purpose of the end times is to bring final glory to God in the angelic appeal trial. The end times follow the outline of the closing phases of a trial.

The tribulation forms the final arguments of Satan. It is his presentation of the earth's environment under his complete control. This will turn into an unmitigated disaster, because Satan, though the most brilliant of a brilliant race, is not capable of ruling this planet, even when everything is under his control.

The tribulation begins with the rapture of the church. This is where all church age believers are taken from the earth and meet Jesus Christ in the physical universe. It is there that they will receive their resurrection bodies.

The second advent of Jesus Christ ends the tribulation. The battle of Armageddon results in the total destruction of the armies of Satan, and he and his fallen angel minions are imprisoned in the Abyss. Thence follows two judgments.

The baptism of fire, which is the judgment of all unbelievers of the tribulation, both Jew and Gentile, Matthew 25:31-46; Ezekiel 20:33-48.

The evaluation of all tribulational believers, both Jew and Gentile, Matthew 25:31-46; Daniel 12:2-3.

The millennial rule of Jesus Christ forms the closing arguments of God in the angelic appeal trial.

With the fallen angels bound, and Christ together with the mature believers from the church age ruling over the planet, the environment is truly fantastic. The establishment code for the millennium has total and successful implementation.

There is no more war, and on top of that, there is prosperity of every kind. Man and nature will live in complete harmony.

This makes a complete rebuttal of the chaos of the Satanic attempts at perfect environment.

And then there is a final judgment. At the great white throne, there are three categories of judgments.

The judgment of believers.

All believers who lived before the incarnation, both Jew and Gentile, are judged at this time.

All Millennial believers are judged at this time.

The judgment of unbelievers. All unbelievers in history, except those of the tribulation, are judged at this time. Matthew 25:31-46, Ezekiel 20:32-38, Revelation 20:7-10.

The judgment of all fallen angels at the end of the Millennium. Their sentence was passed before time began, but its execution is not carried out until the end of human history.

So now we have a frame of reference for the last part of what Christ says. "(41) The Son of Man will send His angels, and they will gather from His kingdom all the stumbling blocks and those who manufacture lawlessness (42) and they will cast them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be the weeping and the gnashing of the teeth. (43) Then the righteous will shine forth like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. The one who has ears, let him hear."

This is the end of the millennial kingdom, where all the unbelievers of the millennium are gathered up and judged.

They are cast into the furnace of Fire, where there will be [forever] the weeping and gnashing of teeth.

But the righteous enter into eternal bliss with the Father; they will shine forth like the sun in the kingdom of the Father.

And then Christ finishes with the exhortation toward hearing.

BB. And this is the true application of the parable: it is the business of the Son of Man to execute final judgment on all the people of the world. He has not given us that authority at all.

Blanket judgment is when you conclude that someone is beyond the point of no return.

There is no such as that of someone who is beyond the ability of grace. God's grace can always act as long as that someone is alive and able to comprehend truth in an academic sense.

Therefore, unless the matter is a case for the establishment authorities, or within a realm of our personal responsibility, we are to stay clear of judging.

The Bible issues stern warnings about judgment. Listen to a few:

Matthew 7:1-2 "Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."

You receive Divine discipline for the mental attitude sin.

You receive Divine discipline for the verbal sin.

You receive Divine discipline for the sin of the other person.

It is not worth it.

Romans 14:10-13, "You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. It is written: "'As surely as I live,' says the Lord, 'every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God.' So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God. Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way."

1 Corinthians 4:5, "Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God."

Ultimately, the right to judge is reserved for our Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge all church age believers at the judgment seat of Christ.

Many times, people will judge because they fear they will not be vindicated. When you have confidence in the justice of God, then this fear will be removed.

Jesus Christ will be perfectly fair at the judgment seat. No detail will escape His attention.

Jesus Christ is the only person who is perfectly qualified to judge the human race. He died for those sins. He, too lived a human life, and was tempted far beyond what we will ever encounter.

When we overstep the boundaries of our legitimate right to judge, then we presume to take the place of Jesus Christ. James 4:12, "There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you--who are you to judge your neighbor?"

Parable of the Mustard Seed

Matthew 13:31-32

"(31) He presented another parable to them, saying, "The kingdom of the heavens is like a mustard seed, which a man after taking sowed in his field; (32) which is the smallest of all the seeds but whenever it has grown is greater than the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the heaven come and rest in its branches."

Mark 4:30-32

"(30) And He was saying, 'How should we liken the kingdom of God, or in what way should we place it? (31) [It is] like a mustard seed, which whenever it might be sown upon the earth, though it is smaller than all of the seeds of those upon the earth, (32) yet whenever it is sown, comes up and becomes greater than all of the garden plants and forms large branches, so that the birds of the heaven are able to rest under its shade.'"

Introduction.

Well, another parable from the agricultural frame of reference; this from the herb garden at the house and not the crop in the field. This may more properly be a city or town parable than a country parable.

Christ does not interpret this parable - He considers that part of it obvious, and so leaves it to the reader. But we are not left without the ability of comparison.

The previous parable was the parable of the weeds, where the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom.

In the parable of the sower, the seeds represent the gospel. But our present parable follows more closely on the weeds, and so we should take that as the principle of greater influence.

Again Mark uses the Greek imperfect tense of the verb 'LEGO,' 'to say.' The imperfect tense tells us that Christ spoke this parable to the disciples again and again.

This would account for the apparent discrepancies between Matthew's and Mark's accounts.

The language differs somewhat significantly between the accounts; but if they record two separate statements of the parable at about the same time, there is no difficulty at all.

Exposition.

Mark employs a combination of grammar that is called the deliberative subjunctive. Its purpose is rhetorical and it generally ponders an ethical theme. The deliberative subjunctive puts a question in the subjunctive mood.

This serves as a rhetorical device; a way to get your audience thinking about what you are saying.

This deliberative question has Christ asking His audience - 'What is the right way to illustrate the kingdom of heaven?'

When He goes on with the illustration of the mustard seed, you immediately assume that this is the perfect illustration of the kingdom of heaven.

The essence of this parable is easy.

The mustard seed is a small seed.

Surprisingly, it grows into the greatest of all the garden plants (those known to the people of Christ's geography).

It becomes useful to the birds as a home and for shade.

Let's look at some of the details.

The mustard seed is the smallest (MIKROTERON) of all the seeds which are upon the earth (EPI TES GES).

The mustard seed was indeed the smallest in their ancient frame of reference for seeds.

EPI TES GES is not necessarily a reference to the entire world; in fact, the Jews commonly referred to their country as 'the land.' The Greeks translated this phrase as TES GES.

So Christ's proclamation does not cover the entire earth at all, but just that portion which encompasses the Holy Land.

The mustard tree is the greatest (MEIZON) of all the garden plants (LACHANON).

Again Christ's proclamation is limited. The mustard plant grows to a height of 4-15 feet in the promised land, and that is under ideal conditions.

This has to do with the cultivation of a house garden. The LACHANON is the sphere of the plants of the garden, and therefore does not include the plants of the field and regular agriculture.

Both gospels employ the verb KATASKENOO to describe the resting of the birds in the mustard plant. This means to 'camp' or 'rest.' The idea comes from the military bivouac - an overnight but not necessarily permanent resting spot.

This parable is therefore a description of God's spiritual plan for the kingdom:

See the Review of the Beatitudes.

The spiritual code for the millennium - that little bit of truth - brings forth a big and restful tree.

In fact, Christ has already presented us with the restful nature of His plan; it is His yoke that is easy...

Matthew 11:28-30, "(28) Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. (29) Take My yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. (30) For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

The learning yoke of Christ has to do with the rehabilitation of the soul. The soul under the cosmic system is in a burdensome slavery; thanks to rehabilitation and reestablishment of the proper relationship with God, the burden is removed and rest ensues.

The mustard seed is therefore the gospel, and when it grows up it produces peace and rest in the soul.

Philippians 2:12, "So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling."

Romans 5:1, "Therefore having been justified by faith, let us have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Poise and psychological tranquility are key elements of spiritual maturity; they are signs of a strong personal love for God. 1 John 4:18, "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love."

And personal love for God is the fulfillment of the greatest commandment, Deuteronomy 6:5, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might."

The Remaining Parables

Matthew 13:33-35, "(33) He spoke to them another parable: the kingdom of the heavens is like leaven, which a woman after taking hid it into three pecks of meal, until it was all leavened. (34) Jesus spoke all these things in parables to the crowds and apart from parables He spoke nothing to them, (35) so that what

was spoken through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, 'I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been hidden since the foundation of the world.'"

Mark 4:33-34, "(33) And He was speaking the word to them with many such parables as they were continuously able to hear. (34) But He was not speaking to them apart from the parable, but He was explaining everything privately to His own disciples."

Matthew 13:44-52, "(44) The kingdom of the heavens is like a treasure which has been hidden in the field, which a man after finding hid, and from his joy goes and sells all which he has, and buys that field. (45) Again, the kingdom of the heavens is like a merchant man seeking fine pearls; (46) and after finding one pearl of great value, after going forth he has sold everything which he had, and he bought it. (47) Again the kingdom of the heavens is like a dragnet which after being cast into the sea and after gathering [fish] of every kind; (48) which after it has been filled, after being dragged up on the beach and after sitting down they gathered the good into a container, but the rotten they threw out. (49) So also it will be at the end of the age; the angels will come forth and take out the evil from the midst of the righteous (50) and cast them into the furnace of the fire; in that place there will be the weeping and the gnashing of the teeth. (51) Do you understand all these things?' They said to Him, 'Yes.' (52) But He said to them, 'For this reason every scribe after becoming a disciple in the kingdom of the heavens is like a man who is the head of a household, who casts out from his treasury new things and old things.'

An outline:

The parable of leaven.

Christ's strategy for the parables.

As many as the people could hear.

A full explanation to His disciples in private.

The fulfillment of a prophecy.

The parable of the hidden treasure.

The parable of the pearl of great value.

The parable of the dragnet.

The parable.

The explanation of the parable of the dragnet.

Christ's questioning of His disciples and their brief reply.

The last parable - the parable of the Scribe.

II. The exposition.

The parable of the leaven.

"He spoke to them another parable: the kingdom of the heavens is like leaven, which a woman after taking hid it into three pecks of meal, until it was all leavened."

The leaven is the point of comparison; not the woman or the meal. The leaven is hidden into three pecks of meal.

ALEUROU is the wheat flour, or meal used in making the bread of the ancient world.

The word peck comes from the Greek SATA, interestingly enough.

The word itself denotes a certain measure of grain equal to about 12 quarts of dry measure. It was a pretty fair amount of grain, if you consider 36 quarts dry measure of meal. This is more than a bushel in our U.S. units of measure.

But its similarity to SATAN cannot be missed. It would be ludicrous and irresponsible to say that the kingdom of the heavens is placed inside of Satan himself. There is nothing personal in this paranomasia, or play on words.

But listen: here is a picture of how the kingdom of God influences the devil's world.

The kingdom is the leaven, which operates through all believers with momentum, but is especially effective through mature believers.

When the word of God operates in the soul of a believer there is a strong dynamic toward affecting others.

As a growing and mature believer, you may have a profound affect on the world around you.

You may do so through your proficiency and integrity and courage in a job that could change the course of history.

It could be in the area of technology; you may achieve a technological or perhaps a medical breakthrough that causes many lives to change for the better.

It could be in the area of statesmanship; you may achieve diplomatic or legislative significance.

It could be in the military realm. You do not have to be a high ranking officer or NCO to change the course of a battle or a war. God simply has to implement His perfect sense of timing for you as a soldier to change history.

You may do so by saying the right thing in the right way at the right time.

You may be the cause of many becoming mature; you may be the cause of many who come to a belief in Jesus Christ.

You may change the course of history because someone listened to your establishment viewpoint, and decided to stay the course with regard to marriage, family, and nation.

You may do so because God blesses you by association, and so your neighborhood, and your city, and your country might receive blessing because of your dogged determination to advance to spiritual maturity. Job 1:1-2:6 cf. 42:10-17.

Those who love God the most cause magnificent blessing to distribute around them.

Although few will realize it in the human realm, the angelic realm remains entirely informed concerning human affairs and human blessings.

God energizes change through the course of human events. He disciplines and blesses nations in the devil's world, but mainly through the existence and function of believers.

The blessings and disciplines are done through impersonal love, and designed to focus thought on the spiritual issues of a person's life.

The objective of divine intervention in human history and human lives is to change a life or many lives by making people think about the spiritual issues of their lives.

But they must have influence from others in order to make the change. Someone must provide information so that the change is in fact available.

Christ's strategy for the parables. "And He was speaking the word to them with many such parables as they were able to hear, but He was explaining everything privately to His own disciples. So that what was spoken through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, 'I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been hidden since the foundation of the world.'"

Mark employs the Greek phrase TOIAUTAIS PARABOLOAIS POLLAIS - many such parables.

Christ spoke many parables just like the ones we have been sampling. As a matter of fact, Matthew's gospel makes the record complete.

This is a great example of why more than one gospel writer was an excellent idea on the part of God the Holy Spirit.

Had it been up to Mark, the parables recorded after this point would not have been a part of the canon of Scripture.

Whereas Mark decided to keep the narrative moving, Matthew thought it best to provide a complete chronicle of the information.

Next is the phrase KATHOS EDUNANTO AKOUEIN - just as they were continuously able to hear. This too is an important concept in this phase of Christ's ministry.

The imperfect tense of DUNAMAI shows an ongoing action. Christ wanted them to take in as much as they were continuously able to hear.

This is a stepped up operational pace for the ministry of Christ, and it sets a standard for every ministry in history.

The operational pace of a ministry should have the same objective as here.

Since soul rehabilitation is of paramount importance, and inculcation toward the fullest love for God, and since the means of these great things is the intake and application of God's word - what is stopping any ministry from emulating this virtuous course?

To His disciples He explained the nature of these parables in private.

They were the ones with a heightened interest in the meaning of the parables. Remember, the crowd was fulfilling the prophesy of Isaiah about hearing and seeing and not understanding.

But His disciples had a deeper interest in the principles of the kingdom, and so they received the full explanation.

Until anyone from the crowd expressed a further interest, they would receive no further explanation.

Perhaps some of the crowd figured out the meanings of the parables for themselves. A parable may be deciphered without too much trouble...

Matthew is quick to point out that Christ's parabolic ministry is the fulfillment of a prophecy from Psalm 78:2: "So that what was spoken through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, 'I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been hidden since the foundation of the world.'"

Matthew is often motivated to do this very thing, because he has a Jewish readership.

It is Matthew's objective to have his Jewish readers accept that Jesus was their Messiah.

By showing time and again that Old Testament prophecies were fulfilled in Christ, Matthew leads them effectively to that conclusion.

With these parables, Christ is revealing things which have been hidden since the foundation of the world.

The kingdom of God is Jesus Christ's direct rule over mankind; it is His millennial kingdom.

There are two policies for that kingdom:

A spiritual code, which was unveiled in the beatitudes.

An establishment code, which was unhidden in the remainder of the Sermon on the Mount.

Those policies were conceived by God the Father at the foundation of the world.

Matthew employs the phrase APO KATABOLES KOSMOU in order to do this - literally, 'from the foundation of the world.'

KATABOLES is foundation, and it concentrates entirely upon the original creation of planet earth, some 4.5 billion years ago.

God made this planet for the angels, Job 38:4-11. Long before the advent of man, while God was making this planet for a superior race of creatures, God conceived the plan of the millennial kingdom of His Son.

Long before the fall of Satan, and long before the fall of Adam in the Garden, God wanted His Son to rule this planet in glory.

Although the millennial rule of Christ will serve as the perfect counterpoint to the chaos of Satan's tribulation, it would have brought glory to God's name even without the fall of creatures.

The original context of the 78th Psalm adds further light to our passage.

The Psalm is about the guidance of God even to an unfaithful people. At 72 verses, it is one of the longest of the Psalms.

"(1) Listen, O my people, to my instruction; incline your ears to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old, (3) which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us."

But you can see there is a difference, because the Psalm seems to indicate that the information was well known to the people of Israel, while Matthews seems to say that it has

lain hidden since the foundation of the world and only just then revealed in Christ.

Verse five of the Psalm tells of the source of the information and thereby gives a clue: "For He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers that they should teach them to their children..."

There are two beginnings to the revelation in this Psalm: the first is with Jacob, who became Israel. The second is with the Law, which came through Moses in 1400 BC

These denote the beginning of a new dispensation - the dispensation of Israel.

And here is what you should concentrate on: the information regarding the dispensation of Israel had lain hidden since the foundation of the world until it was revealed in Jacob and in the Law of Moses.

For that reason, it was a parallel to the kingdom doctrines revealed by Jesus Christ.

All dispensation information was conceived by God at the foundation of the world.

It is only at the onset of that dispensation that the information is set forth to the world.

So Matthew is saying that Christ is at the beginning of a brand new dispensation; that He is the Messiah, and that He has brought His kingdom.

The parable of the hidden treasure, Matthew 13:44, "The kingdom of the heavens is like a treasure which has been hidden in the field, which a man after finding hid, and from his joy goes and sells all which he has, and buys that field."

Some time ago, a treasure was hidden in a field. Someone comes and finds it, and before he can claim the treasure he must own the property. So he goes and sells all his possessions so that he might buy the field. You have heard this story many times with many different variations.

In Perry Eberhart's classic book, *Treasure Tales of the Rockies* there are more 125 tales of lost mines and treasures centered in the state of Colorado alone.

Some treasure tales are true, a very few are enough to produce hundreds and thousands of stories of lost treasure.

So here is this nervous, nervous man, who finds a treasure which has been hidden in a field. So he hides it again, and then buys the field. Then the treasure is legally his.

Well, now, the kingdom of the heavens is like that treasure.

It is so valuable that it is worth more than everything you have.

And as a matter of fact, many people do give up all they have in order to purchase the field that contains that treasure.

The value of the kingdom of the heavens is beyond all worldly wealth. Consider:

The wilderness temptation of Jesus Christ.

The three temptations of Christ in the wilderness follow the three failures of Israel in their wilderness journey:

They failed the manna test, which was a rejection of the logistical provision of God.

They failed the golden calf test, which was an embracing of idolatry. As a result, Moses broke the tablets of the Law which God had given.

They failed the test of Aaron's rod, which was a rejection of divinely appointed authority.

Christ was tempted after this same pattern:

He was tempted with regard to the stones and the bread: Luke 4:2-4, "And He ate absolutely nothing during those days; and at the concluding of them, He hungered. And the devil said to Him, 'If You are the Son of God, speak to this stone that it might become bread.' And Jesus answered him, 'It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone.'"

· At the end of forty days of eating absolutely nothing, our Lord was very hungry. It was the

kind of hunger where all you can think about is food. At forty days without food, even the healthiest of human beings is at the extreme limit of endurance.

- The temptation itself is related to the principle of kenosis; Christ does not have the authority to do this thing apart from the power and timing of the Spirit.

- The devil knows that the Divine Power is available, but that its use would invalidate the purpose of the incarnation. Again and again Satan says this about the stones; this temptation lasted longer than just a moment.

- In the later temptation His Scriptural reply is abbreviated, as though He is at the very end of His endurance, or because it is not necessary to repeat the whole thing.

- This test relates to the logistical test of Israel:

- The Israelites had something to eat every day. Manna was the world's greatest health food. It was the same thing, but it was something.

- Christ had nothing to eat for forty days and forty nights. Therefore, His test was far greater than what they endured. He ate the same thing every day: Nothing.

- Placing the manna inside the ark of the covenant foreshadowed this test of our Lord. It commemorated Christ's victory in the desert, and it looked forward to the redemption of this failure at the cross, as represented by the mercy seat.

- The essence of the temptation had to do with the temptation to use His divine attributes or rely on what God provided His humanity.

- The very reason for the incarnation would have been undermined and destroyed had Christ given in here. The cross and the Christian way of life would have instantly become meaningless.

- Note that Christ quotes from Deuteronomy 8:3.

- The context of this verse is Moses' final exhortation to the children of Israel before their occupation of the promised land.

- All three of Christ's replies will come from this speech.

- These three things denote readiness for the blessings of the land of milk and honey:

- First, there is worship of the one true God and abstinence from idolatry. This is personal love for God.

- Second, there is humble acceptance of the circumstances of your life, good or bad, and acceptance of delegated human authority, good or bad.

- Third, there is a devotion to the word of Truth, and acceptance of God's logistical grace.

- This scripture was originally learned and inculcated by Christ, probably at a very young age.

- At this appropriate time, the Spirit recalled this passage into Christ's spiritual frame of reference, His human spirit. Christ instantly understood the issue.

- Now the issue remained: Would He apply what had been recalled? The answer is of course. He even quotes the passage directly to the devil.

- Deuteronomy 8:1-10, "All the commandments that I am commanding you today you shall be careful to do, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the Lord sword to give to your forefathers. And you shall remember all the way which the Lord your God has led you in the wilderness these forty years, that He might humble you, testing you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. And He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live on bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord. Your clothing did not wear out on you, nor did your

foot swell these forty years. Thus you are to know in your heart that the Lord your God was disciplining you just as a man disciplines his son. Therefore, you shall keep the commandments of the Lord your God, to walk in His ways and to fear Him. For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, flowing forth in valleys and hills; a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey; a land where you shall eat food without scarcity, in which you shall not lack anything; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills you can dig copper. When you have eaten and are satisfied, you shall bless the Lord your God for the good land which He has given you."

Luke 4:5-8, "And he led Him up and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to Him, 'I will give You all this domain and its glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. Therefore if You worship before me, it shall all be Yours.' And Jesus answered and said to him, 'It is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God and serve Him only.'"

- There is only one instance of temptation here. The show occurred in one moment of time. Ahem, he did not want Christ to look too closely. Again the used car salesman analogy.

- Christ would be given delegated authority from Satan over all these kingdoms, along with the glory of them. Let me point out that the glory of the devil's world is only a veneer.

- The enemy did not receive the kingdoms of the world because of meritorious service. He deceived Adam, and received the authority because of Adam's irresponsible sin.

- All of the kingdoms of the world would belong to Christ at the right time, and only when His chosen people would accept Him as the Messiah.

- This particular condition was not yet fulfilled, and in fact the early indicators were not looking good. In other words, this was attacking Christ at a potential weak spot. The

greatness of the world made the temptation all the more agonizing.

- That Christ would continue in poverty for the rest of his life is a testimony to his fantastic resolve. Part of this test had to do with timing, and part of with idolatry. It harkens back to the failure of the golden calf.

- Christ's solution to this problem comes from Deuteronomy 6:13. Let's read that passage beginning in verse 10. "Then it shall come about when the Lord your God brings you into the land which He swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give you great and splendid cities which you did not build, and houses full of all good things which you did not fill, and hewn cisterns which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant, and you shall eat and be satisfied, then watch yourself, lest you forget the Lord who brought you from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall fear only the Lord your God; and you shall worship Him, and swear by His name. You shall not follow other gods, any of the gods of the peoples who surround you, for the Lord your God in the midst of you is a jealous God; otherwise the anger of the Lord your God will be kindled against you, and He will wipe you off the face of the earth."

- Note that the blessings of the Promised Land are neither earned nor deserved. Yet they are given freely by God.

- The offer from Satan is something similar, but infinitely less because of the object of worship. The satisfaction that comes from a relationship with God is so great as to add to one's appreciation and enjoyment of the attendant blessings. In the worship of idols, all the things turn to dust.

- Christ applies the perfect passage for this specific temptation, another great testimony to the work of the Spirit and the level of inculcation that Christ has reached.

Luke 4:9-12, "And he led Him to Jerusalem and stood Him upon the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, 'If You are the Son of God, throw

Yourself down from here; for it is written, bear You up, Lest You strike Your foot against a stone.' And Jesus answered and said to him, 'It is said, You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

- Note that in this test the enemy is using Scripture against Christ. It is an oft-used ploy, and it seldom fails. This points out the necessity for a prepared pastor to prepare you.
- The enemy quotes Psalm 91 in the temptation. Verses 11 and 12 are quoted but taken out of context. The whole Psalm goes like this, "He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, 'He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.' Surely he will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. If you make the Most High your dwelling - even the Lord, who is my refuge - then no harm will befall you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. You will tread upon the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent. 'Because he loves me,' says the Lord, 'I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life will I satisfy him and show him my salvation.'"
- This Psalm is about trust in God, and how God responds to those who love Him.
- Especially pertinent is the conditional clause of verse 9: "If you make the most high your

dwelling" This means that the following verses depend on the fulfillment of this condition.

- Christ could not demand that God send his angels to cushion up his fall... that would be putting God to the test, as what happened in the wilderness at the waters of Meribah.
- This test appears to be about the establishment of Christ's earthly authority. A good miracle in front of thousands of temple worshippers including the most important men in Israel would well establish Christ's authority among the Jews.
- How soon they forget. Christ was only forty days before the object of the triple miracle of His baptism. The heavens split open; the voice of God spoke; the Spirit descended in the form of a dove. Yet this miracle, probably in front of those same leaders who were now below in the temple court, did not convince the people to follow Christ.
- The spiritual gift of miracles would establish Christ's authority at the proper time. This was not that time. The gift of miracles functions under the sovereignty of the Spirit so that He chooses the time the place and the miracle to be performed.
- The devil is trying to promote Christ before God could promote Him. The devil is attempting to foist onto Christ an Aaron's rod that budded scenario. He is attempting to do so by quoting Scripture that sounds right.
- Christ rightfully sorts this one out, and quotes Deuteronomy 6:16. The full passage through verse 19 goes like this: "Do not test the Lord your God as you did at Massah. Be sure to keep the commands of the Lord your God and the stipulations and decrees he has given you. Do what is right and good in the Lord's sight, so that it may go well with you and you may go in and take over the good land that the Lord promised on oath to your forefathers, thrusting out all your enemies before you as the Lord said."

- Again this is a quote from Moses final speech in preparation for the second generation to enter the promised land.

- This time it was done right by Christ. He passed the tests that Israel failed.

- In a completely appropriate way, the three items in the ark of the covenant represent both the failure of Israel and the triumph of Christ.

- Christ not only paid for our sins, but He also produced the righteousness which would be imputed to us at salvation.

- In producing that righteousness Christ established a way of solving problems which He would leave as a heritage for all church age believers.

Christ's wilderness temptations are a reminder that He was offered logistics, prosperity, and success at the compromise of His integrity and relationship with God. This He could not do. But as a result of His faithfulness to God, there is reward.

Philippians 2:5-11, "(5) Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, (6) who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, (7) but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. (8) Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (9) For this also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, (10) so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, (11) and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Hebrews 12:1-2, "(1) Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, (2) fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame,

and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

Romans 8:18, "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us."

1 Peter 1:7, "in order that your testing of faith, much more valuable than gold (which being refined even through the testing of fire) might be found unto praise and glory and honor in the revelation of Jesus Christ;"

We can categorize the treasure of the kingdom of the heavens in the following way:

Blessings for time:

Spiritual Blessings.

Spiritual blessing means maximum spiritual function and awareness. Spiritual blessing means maximum use of the problem solving devices provided by God for spiritual adulthood.

Your relationship with God is fantastic and is based upon a tremendous confidence that, while you have never seen God, you know Him and understand Him as He has revealed himself in Bible truth.

You have a relationship with self that is honest and virtuous. This means that your ability to evaluate yourself is functioning at its maximum potential. This means that you are able to recognize your own limitations and adapt your life to them.

You have maximum production in Christian service.

Maximum function of your spiritual gift.

You have a fantastic personal sense of destiny, and you are able to related the events of your life to the angelic conflict.

Maximum virtue and God-centered vindication instead of self-righteousness.

Worldly Blessings.

Establishment prosperity includes the blessings of privacy and freedom; the

enjoyment of both life and property; protection from crime, reprisal, violence, and vindictiveness from others; contentment under national disaster; and acceptance by one's own peers, whether they like you or not.

Professional prosperity is maximum success or efficiency in a profession, whether law, medicine, engineering, science, military, teaching, law enforcement, athletics, art, music, literature, etc.

Business prosperity, means success in business as an owner or an executive of a large corporation; or where pertinent, success as a salesman, administrator, laborer, etc.

Social prosperity is the possession of loving, faithful, reliable, and stable friends, and maximum enjoyment of your relationships with them. It is the ability to handle all sorts of social situations. Your great happiness and enthusiasm for life is expressed both vocally and in silence with friends.

Mental prosperity is the ability to concentrate; to organize both your thinking and your life; to synthesize, to analyze; mental courage; the function of wisdom in the exercise of the intellect; the development of common sense; and an excellent sense of humor. Mental prosperity includes freedom from the mental sins of fear, worry, and anxiety. The development of normality in life comes from thinking objectively. You will become more observant and aware of others, and therefore not do the things that hurt them. You will have a relaxed mental attitude and a true sense of humor.

Cultural prosperity is maximum capacity for good entertainment; the enjoyment of the best in music, art, literature, drama, history, and whatever your hobbies, from gardening to astronomy.

Health prosperity is given to some mature believers. But if you have violated too many principles of health already, you may not have good health, but you will have the ability to cope with your lack of good health. This prosperity means nervous energy and nervous

stability, though not necessarily freedom from pain. You can be in good health and have pain.

Romantic prosperity can mean a wonderful relationship with a member of the opposite sex. It means freedom from mental attitude and verbal sins, which are the areas that destroy romance much more than the obvious overt sins of unfaithfulness and adultery. Romantic prosperity is perpetuated under all circumstances of life.

Blessing by association.

The spiritual periphery refers to those associated with the mature believer in the local church, prayer meeting, prep school, mission board, or in some Christian service organization.

The family periphery refers to those associated with the mature believer as husband, wife, father, mother, children, relatives, and even pets.

The social periphery refers to friends associated with the mature believer.

The geographical periphery refers to those associated with the mature believer in his neighborhood, city, county, state, or nation.

The professional or business periphery refers to those associated with the mature believer in business, in schools, on athletic teams, medical clinics, law firms, law enforcement organizations, engineering firms, banks, corporations, symphony orchestras, and military organizations.

There is blessing by association after death. This is called heritage blessing. Loved ones who are left behind receive the greatest insurance policy which is provided by association with the mature believer after his death. Blessing by association continues after the death of the mature believer; it extends to the next generation, and sometimes to the third generation.

National Impact of the Invisible Hero. The overflow of wisdom from the person in spiritual maturity often lands in the national

arena. God has a way of placing mature believers in some rather spectacular places.

- Joseph, Moses, and Daniel are three very good examples of mature believers having national impact.

- In each case, God placed them where they had a direct effect on the Pharaoh or king.

International Impact of the Invisible Hero. While mature believers live in client nations, client nations in time of spiritual prosperity send out missionaries.

- Missionaries evangelize foreigners in their native lands, and set up churches from those gospelizing efforts. Those churches grow and produce mature believers, so that there is now an effective basis for impact within that country. Because of the missionary, there has been international impact.

- But statesmen and military men and businessmen may all also have impact by interacting with foreigners. You may also have international impact by evangelizing a foreigner on your soil; when they return to their native land, they bring the gospel and the plan of God with them. This was the international impact of Solomon on the Queen of Sheba, and Philip on the Ethiopian Eunuch in Acts chapter eight.

Angelic Impact of the Invisible Hero.

- By advancing to the witness stand in the angelic appeal trial, and giving an accurate testimony under demonic cross-examination, the mature believer has wonderful impact in the angelic realm.

- Angelic impact is the greatest category of blessing by association, and is fantastically rewarded in time and eternity.

Blessings for eternity.

Many of the blessings for time may be transferred into eternity. When they are, they are greatly multiplied.

The greatest blessing of eternity is the removal of the veil between the believer and God. 1

Corinthians 13:12, "For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known.

And yet there are many more blessings that have to do with recognition: because you have been an invisible hero in this life, God makes you a visible hero in the next. Mature believers attain instant celebrity status in the eternal kingdom.

As a result, they wear crowns and pure white garments; they have statues in the eternal temple and are presented to God by Jesus Christ in a special honors ceremony; they have special privileges to the paradise of God and the tree of life.

And all of these things are eternal and never pass away. You have become a hero forever.

The parable of the pearl of great price, Matthew 13:45-46, " (45) Again, the kingdoms of the heavens is like a merchant man seeking fine pearls; (46) and after finding one pearl of great value, after going forth he has sold everything which he had, and he bought it."

This one is remarkably like the last, but is included by Christ in the same speech for emphasis.

One particular note is that the merchant goes to the point of no return; he has sold everything which he had. The perfect tense of PIPRASKO clearly demonstrates that he has irrevocably sold everything of quality in his possession.

The relative pronoun of quality is HOSA. It shows that he has not sold all in his possession but everything of quality. In reality, he has had the ancient equivalent of a garage sale.

The key note of these two parables strikes the same: something valuable must be exchanged for the greater gain. Let's examine the potential sacrifices related to the spiritual life.

Time. It does take a daily investment of time to study the word and pray. Furthermore, it takes time to operate in Christian service.

Sin. Since the realm of sin is forbidden, all matters of sin must be surrendered. In essence you must give up the devil's system in your life.

The laws of Christian behavior.

Christians are called upon to have a higher standard of behavior when they are around other people. Two categories of human beings are affected:

Unbelievers.

Weaker believers.

As ambassadors, we represent the kingdom of heaven to other human beings, who are not in the plan of God, whether believers or unbelievers.

So that no ill might be spoken against our home country, the kingdom of heaven, we are asked to give up certain things while in their presence.

So that no one outside of the plan of God might use our behavior as an excuse to stay outside, we are asked to give up certain things while in their presence.

Although nothing specific is mentioned, anything that is not a sin, and yet may be considered objectionable are to be surrendered. Naturally sin should be avoided.

Loss of esteem in the world's eyes. Being a Christian means enduring ridicule for your faith. Especially during times when Christians have stained their own reputations through degeneracy. In times like these, Christians must endure prejudice.

Lifestyle versus priorities. There are certain legitimate functions of lifestyle that can be distracting to the priorities of the Christian. There are hobbies and recreational pursuits that can distract; there are career paths that are actually destructive to spiritual growth.

Even geographical factors may cause a legitimate distraction.

But in exchange for this, we may pursue a Christ-like life, and leave behind:

Guilt and regret with reference to sin.

Fear and worry from many causes.

The internalization of stress which leads to health and even mental health problems.

Anger and bitterness about your handicaps and difficulties in life.

Injustice, because of the guarantee of vindication which we have received from.

And in exchange for this we gain all of the rewards I have mentioned above. The relationship with God through Jesus Christ is a pearl of great price, but the price is much more than worth it.

The Parable of the Dragnet, Matthew 13:47-50, "(47) Again the kingdom of the heavens is like a dragnet which after being cast into the sea and after gathering [fish] of every kind; (48) which after it has been filled, after being dragged up on the beach and after sitting down they gathered the good into a container, but the rotten they threw out. (49) So also it will be at the end of the age; the angels will come forth and take out the evil from the midst of the righteous (50) and cast them into the furnace of the fire; in that place there will be the weeping and the gnashing of the teeth."

Matthew's employment of the aorist participle gives maximum dramatic effect. All of these participles (casting, gathering, filling, dragging, sitting) lead up to the main verbs, which are gathering and throwing out.

Matthew is repeating what He remembers from Christ's layout of the parable. It is in reality Christ's dramatization. All of the aorist participles are the every day details of the fisherman's life. And remember the setting of these parables - Christ is standing in a boat and preaching to those on shore. This parable is therefore an excellent match to the scene and to the audience.

So the fishermen cast a dragnet on the sea and gather fish of every kind. The net is then full and dragged up on the beach. The fishermen sit

down and gather the good fish into a container but the rotten they threw out.

This parable reiterates the truth of the parable of the weeds, the interpretation of which occurs in Matthew 13:36-43.

But here is a strong reminder that there is a judgment at the end of the age, and that we will be responsible for our decisions. This is the flip side to the idea of reward.

Yes, there is reward for those who love God; but here is a strong warning from our Lord - that the unbelievers of the age are cast into the furnace of fire.

This is the end of the millennial kingdom, where all the unbelievers of the millennium are gathered up and judged.

They are cast into the furnace of Fire, where there will be [forever] the weeping and gnashing of teeth.

But the righteous enter into eternal bliss with the Father; they will shine forth like the sun in the kingdom of the Father.

Imagine the elect angels doing this thing. They have endured the prehistoric angelic conflict and seen billions of years of degeneracy; they have also endured the thousands of years of the angelic appeal trial in human history. They have always stood for what was right, and they are by the side of God always.

But there is significance here; the angels have to do this, and it is not done directly by God.

At first thought it seems a grim and even terrible duty. But whenever God gives a responsibility it is so that His creatures can gain an appreciation for Him. The angelic creatures will at this moment gain a great lesson in divine responsibility for creatures.

The elect angels will know many of these unbelievers by name and by reputation. Perhaps they participated in their lives in some direct manner. There is no pleasure in this duty; the casting away represents no failure on the part of God, but rather the end result of a lifetime of negative volition. But God is not

willing that any should perish, and is not pleased with joy when they do.

It pleases God to do His duty, even when that duty is terrible. Our execution of criminals under the principle of capital punishment is the closest that we human beings will ever come to this responsibility.

This also connects the judgment of humanity with the angelic conflict, and points to the stark reality of that conflict.

The Final Parable, Matthew 13:51-52, "(51) Do you understand all these things?' They said to Him, 'Yes.' (52) But He said to them, 'For this reason every scribe after becoming a disciple in the kingdom of the heavens is like a man who is the head of a household, who casts out from his treasury new things and old things.'"

Christ is very earnest to make His disciples understand these things, and in verse 51 He double checks their understanding.

He requires honesty about their spiritual growth, so that He can assess whether He needs to communicate more information on the subject of the Kingdom of Heaven.

The disciples evaluate themselves and all say that they know the information.

But their reply is so laconic that it seems a little suspicious. They use the one word answer NAI - 'Yes.' Like a teenager's one word answer, this could mean trouble. They understand, but they have no great impulse to discuss the information. Hmmm.

Strengthening this suspicion is Matthew's employment of the adversative conjunction DE. Since this immediately follows the disciples' answer, it seems that Christ is aiming this last parable at them and specifically their too quick and too short reply.

This parable concentrates on the Scribes; perhaps there were a few present in the small circle who listened to these parables.

A scribe who becomes a disciples is like the head of a household, an OIKODESPOTE. This head of the household is an ANTHROPOS, in

contrast with Matthew 13:27, where the head of the household is the Son of Man, Jesus Christ (as interpreted in verse 37).

The OIKODESPOTE is the owner and ruler of the house. Although we have developed a negative way of thinking about a despot, that is not necessarily included in the original.

The owner of the house goes through his treasury, and casts out new things and old things. He is getting rid of everything. Perhaps if you supplant the word 'basement' or perhaps 'attic' for the word treasury, you will have a better picture of the idea.

The home owner just wants the attic or basement or storage area clean. This is human nature; suddenly it does not matter whether the thing in there is new or old; it MUST go! Even new things of value are tossed out for the sake of cleanliness.

Well now this picture describes the repentant scribe just right, and indeed any repentant person coming from a legalistic background.

In cleaning the attic of their soul, they are prone to discard the valuable things of old. Think of a moral scribe who casts out his morality as a part of the house cleaning of repentance; think of an expert in the Law of Moses who tosses out his knowledge of the Scriptures. Of course there are many valuable pieces of knowledge that the Scribe could safely retain as parts of his every day spiritual life.

The Scribe would need to switch his motivation, and make a few rearrangements with regard to doctrine; he would need to revitalize his spiritual walk so that he communicated to God much more often. But throw everything out? Not necessary; even foolhardy.

The Gentile, the one who is locked into the lascivious lawlessness side of the spiritual realm and who has little or no prior knowledge of God, this one must throw out much more.

Now how is this parable the response to Christ's disciples too quick reply to His question?

They have responded too quickly, perhaps, for His taste, and He is unsure of the honesty of their statement.

He is obviously looking at some former Scribes and legalists as He makes this statement.

And this reply is like saying, "You think you know everything but you don't."

The former Scribes in this audience are prone to have thrown all their knowledge out of the attic of their brains. Therefore if they say they have understood anything, it is a danger that they have understood nothing. Christ wants them to think again.

III. A Summary of the Parables and Their Meaning.

The parable of the seeds. "An evangelist goes out to evangelize. Sometimes the gospel goes to those who are not interested, and refuse to perceive the information beyond the point of polite listening, if that. Soon they have forgotten they ever heard it, and refuse to listen any more. Sometimes the gospel goes to someone who immediately receives it with joy, but refuses to grow; persecution comes on account of their faith, and God allows the persecution because they have had a fair amount of time in which to prepare for it. Their persecution destroys their faith, and they are Christians who turn out to have no effect on the world. Sometimes the gospel goes to those who receive it and even grow in the initial phase of their walk with God. But later they become distracted by the many cares of this world, and so they fall away from their relationship with God. And then there are those few who take their faith seriously and keep their priorities straight; these are the ones who fulfill the plan of God, and as mature believers have a tremendous impact on the world around them. Through them many come to believe and advance.

The parable of the growth of the seed. As givers of the gospel we do not have to know all of the details of someone's response. We are the workers, and we must do our duty unto God. The details of why one believes and another

creates excuses should not matter to us. Don't get involved in excuses; just give the information.

The parable of the weeds. It is never the place of the gospel giver to judge the one who rejects. That will always remain the business of Jesus Christ, who is the only qualified judge for all men. We are never to cast final judgment over anyone's life as long as they are alive, for that life represents opportunity.

The parable of the mustard seed. From that obscure day when we receive the gospel comes great things. The gospel grows inside of us through the daily pursuit of the word, so that our relationship with God becomes very powerful. And our lives become restful places for many who are tired from living in the devil's world. They gravitate to us because of our love for God, and because we are a shady rest to them. From this powerful relationship with God comes much impact on the weary and heavy-laden of this world.

The parable of the leavened bread. We are in this world to give impact. It is the devil's world, but we have the possibility of changing history through the gospel. That is God's intent through our lives. The presence of even one mature believer can make a tremendous difference in the lives of many.

The parables of the treasure in the field and the pearl of great price. We are asked to sacrifice much for the sake of our everyday walks with God. It is worth every bit of sacrifice that we have to offer, for what we have gained in salvation and what we will gain in eternal reward makes it worth it.

The parable of the dragnet. Be sober in regard to your spiritual walk, for you, too, will undergo judgment. The consequences of that judgment may be grave indeed.

The parable of the homeowner. Be careful that you do not throw out good things with bad when you enter the plan of God. As a believer from a legalistic background you may be tempted to throw out the good things from your heritage, but it is wrong to do so.

Calming the Storm

Matthew 13:53: "And it came about when Jesus finished these parables, He left there.

Matthew 8:18: Now Jesus, after seeing the crowds around Him gave orders to depart for the other side.

Matthew 8:23-27: (23) And after embarking with Him into the boat, the disciples followed Him. (24) And behold! A great shaking (SEISMOS) occurred on the sea, so as to swamp the boat by the waves, but He Himself was sleeping. (25) and after coming to Him, they woke Him saying, 'Lord, save! We are perishing!' (26) And He says to them, 'Why are you cowardly, little faiths?' Then after rising He rebuked the winds and the sea and there came about a great calm. (27) Now the men marveled, saying, 'What sort of man is He that the winds and the sea obey Him?'

Mark 4:35-41, "(35) And He says to them on that day, after evening had come, 'Let us pass through [the sea] unto the other side.' (36) And after leaving the crowd they [the fishermen] took Him along since He was [already] in the boat, and other boats were with it. (37) and there came about a great gale of wind and the waves were cast over into the boat, so as to almost fill the boat. (38) And He Himself was in the stern upon the pillow sleeping. And they woke Him and they said to Him, 'Teacher, is it not a concern for You that we are perishing?' (39) And after being aroused, He rebuked the wind and said to the sea, 'Hush, be silenced.' and the wind abated and there came a great calm. (40) And He said to them, 'Why are you cowards? Do none of you have faith?' (41) And they were afraid with great fear and were saying to one another, 'Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?'"

Luke 8:22-25, "(22) And it came about in one of those days that He and His disciples entered a boat and said to them, 'Let us go over to the other side of the lake.' And they were launched out. (23) Now as they were sailing He fell asleep... [ominous musical theme] And a gale force wind came down into the lake and were

continually being swamped and continually in danger. (24) And after coming [to Him] they roused Him saying, 'Stand up, stand up, we are perishing!' And after waking up He rebuked the wind and the wave of the water; and they stopped and it became calm. (25) And He said to them, 'Where is your faith?' And after being afraid they marveled saying to one another, 'Who then is this man that He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey Him?'"

Outline.

The circumstances regarding their departure for the far side of the Sea of Galilee.

The pressure of the crowds.

The convenience of the boat.

The event of the storm.

The advent and danger of the storm.

Christ's disposition during the storm.

The disciple's reaction to the storm and rousing of Christ.

Christ's response to their reaction.

The calm.

Christ's rebuke of the disciples.

The fear of the disciples and their doubts.

Exposition.

Introduction.

This storm represents a great confused jumble of thoughts and ideas coming from three different sources, two of whom represent eyewitnesses and a third who interviewed other eyewitnesses for his story.

There is further confusion because Matthew has rearranged his material and departed from the chronological arrangement of the other gospels. Because of this, his gospel records the events in three different places and from two different chapters. It is only because of the work of Mark and Luke that we can draw chronological order from the chaos of Matthew's arrangement efforts.

In the midst of a crisis, even people who were only a few feet from the others may differ in the order of events and even the substance of the points of the crisis. The three gospels have some of those confusing elements, but through the miracle of inspiration, you can see that they harmonize into a cohesive account.

We can be thankful for the harmony, because it reveals the big picture, an advantage that a single gospel would not have.

A related principle is that every crime is a crisis, and the two-eyewitness system is necessary because of the frailty of human perception in the midst of the many confusing events of a crisis.

The circumstances regarding their departure for the far side of the Sea of Galilee.

The pressure of the crowds.

Christ finished His parables, from Matthew 13:53, "And it came about when Jesus finished these parables, He left there." As you may recall, He gave these parables from a fishing boat just off the shore of the Sea of Galilee. The crowds were arrayed on the beach before Him. He finished His parables, and had to make a decision on what to do next.

Christ surveyed the crowds before Him, and determined that it would be best to leave for the other side, Matthew 8:18, "Now Jesus, after seeing the crowds around Him gave orders to depart for the other side."

His exact words come from Mark 4:35, "And He says to them on that day, after evening had come, 'Let us pass through [the sea] unto the other side.'"

Our Lord gave a polite command in the form of the hortatory subjunctive verb *DIELTHOMEN*.

With this verb, Jesus Christ exhorted His disciples to undertake this course of action. He wanted very much to do this.

But you should know that this does not represent a weakness or cowardice on the part of Christ.

Christ did not make decisions based on weakness. He was not afraid of the crowd, nor was He tired of the crowd; they were simply in the way of what He wanted to do.

Luke's gospel confirms the hortatory subjunctive in 8:22, "And it came about in one of those days that He and His disciples entered a boat and said to them, 'Let us go over to the other side of the lake.' And they were launched out."

The convenience of the boat.

In Mark's gospel there is a little mystery that tempts us to conclude that there is a contradiction. Verse 36 says, "And after leaving the crowd they [the fishermen] took Him along since He was [already] in the boat, and other boats were with it."

The verb PARALAMBANO means to take someone along with you on a journey of some sort. If you assume that the disciples have said this, then it appears that they are leaving at their initiative and not Christ's.

But the subject of the verb is not made clear by Mark - he left it out, because he thought it would be obvious to the readers. And indeed it should be - the owners of the boats are the obvious subjects of the verb.

The owners of the boats perceived that Christ was already in the boat, and that they were already going to the other side of the Sea, and so they decided to take Him along.

With this convenience at hand, the disciples then embarked into the boat and followed Him, Matthew 8:23.

The event of the storm.

The advent and danger of the storm.

As they were sailing, Christ fell asleep, Luke 8:23.

Luke 8:23 has a premonitory genitive absolute. Here the genitive absolute functions as an ominous musical theme to tell us that something terrible is about to happen. PLEONTON DE AUTON APHUPNOSEN.

Premonitory means that the grammatical structure functions as a premonition for the readers, warning them that in spite of the tranquility of the present scene, there is danger about. This was a common construction employed by Luke before the Pharisees and the Scribes would enter the scene.

Then a storm suddenly comes up, and remember, it was night. Weathering a terrible storm at night in a sailing vessel can be a terrifying experience.

Matthew 8:24 describes the surprising nature of the storm with a single word: IDOU. This was the Greek word which expressed surprise. It is translated 'Behold.'

Luke identifies the source of the wind as coming down onto the lake in verse 23 of the eighth chapter of his gospel. The verb KATABAINO means 'descend.' The wind swept down from the hills around the lake.

The wind itself was a great gale.

Mark and Luke agree with reference to vocabulary: it is a LAILAPS ANEMOU in Luke, and a LAILAPS MEGALE ANEMOU in Mark. The LAILAPS is a gale. It would be mistaken to label this a hurricane or a tornado since neither of those phenomena occur in the region. It was a great gale of wind.

Matthew says a great shaking occurred. Peter and Luke were used to boats, and they both knew how to describe this phenomenon with the correct vocabulary. Here Matthew identifies himself as a landlubber, because he employs the word SEISMOS to describe his own experience on the boat. SEISMOS means 'earthquake' in the Greek. Matthew experiences an earthquake at sea - of sorts. He has ridden out an earthquake before, and this storm at sea is the closest thing to that experience.

All three gospel writers agree that the boat was on the verge of being swamped by the waves of the sea. The waves were coming over the rail of the boat, and causing it to founder. Luke 8:23 adds: "[those in the boat] were continually in danger." The verb EKINDUNEUON is in the

imperfect tense, portraying a past action in a continual state. They were in a continual state of physical danger from the storm. The danger was real.

During the winter months on the Sea of Galilee, the owners of small fishing vessels did not often go very far out on the water. The storms could muster quickly and be quite deadly. There was a certain amount of lore regarding these storms and the men who had been lost in them.

Christ's disposition during the storm.

But Christ had fallen asleep, and even during the storm He remained asleep.

Christ was also a landlubber. Remember that He was a carpenter from the Galilean hill country to the west. He would not have been used to the boats at all, and yet He is completely relaxed during this calamity. Even with the boat rocking and the waves passing over the rails and swamping the boat, He was still asleep.

Mark records in 4:38 that Christ was in the stern. The preposition EN goes beyond a simple riding function as we understand it. Often in English in the stern means on the stern. Here it means in the stern in a more literal sense. There must have been a small cabin, or at least an overhang. From archaeology we know that a typical boat on the sea of Galilee during the time was about 27 feet in length. Hardly a large boat, but certainly enough length to accommodate a small cabin.

So there is Christ in the boat, and it is rocking and swaying violently, but His head is on a pillow or cushion, and He is still fast asleep.

The disciple's reaction to the storm and rousing of Christ.

Apparently, the disciples saw the situation as hopeless, and so they went back to the cabin or overhang in the stern of the boat.

There are three versions to what the disciples actually said:

Matthew: "Lord, save! We are perishing!"

Mark: "Teacher, is it not a concern for You that we are perishing?"

This is arguably a funny thing to say, since it seems so dignified.

Consider that the ultimate source is Peter, and he was easily the most excitable of all the disciples, this is interesting.

Were it not for the fact that we know this to be inspired, we would question its veracity.

But someone among them had a cool head.

Luke: "Stand up, stand up, we are perishing!"

I would say that since all three are equally true, the scene plays like this: the disciples go in and rouse Christ; as He wakes, at least three of them blurt out these things at the same time. You can only imagine the confusion that was part of this scene.

Christ's response to their reaction.

Christ first has words for the disciples, "Why are you cowardly, little faiths."

DEILOI is the first of the two descriptive terms that Christ inveighs against the disciples. It is the coward. The disciples are afraid that they might die, and this has affected their thinking.

OLIGOPISTOI is the second. It is a derisive term that is literally translated 'little faith.' You should perceive this as an almost child-like word employed in a taunt. Christ is prodding His disciples with this word.

This word also occurs in Matthew 6:30, "But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you, little faith?"

And again in Matthew 14:31, where Peter doubts as he is attempting to walk on the water like Christ - "Immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and took hold of him, and said to him, 'Little faith, why did you doubt?'"

So you can imagine that this is in the middle of a great crisis and the boat is about to sink, and the storm is roaring and the boat is shaking,

and the disciples are shouting altogether at Christ... and Christ takes time to rebuke His disciples for their lack of faith.

And then Christ has words for the storm. He rises then rebukes the storm.

The verb is EPITIMAO, and it means to speak words harshly; to go beyond an honorable mode of speaking.

The actual words that Christ spoke are contained only Mark's gospel, chapter four and verse 39: SIOPA, PEPHIMOSO. They are really quite close in meaning.

The first is almost always spoken to a person, and it is designed to get them to stop talking. The present imperative here commands the person to stop talking, and to stay silent continuously.

The second comes from PHIMOO, but is a command to a third party to silence a different person who is talking out of place. This is the perfect imperative, which is very powerful, and essentially comes to mean, 'stop forever.'

The first is Christ talking to the storm like the storm is a person. The second is Christ commanding a third person to silence the storm. Herein lies some theological trivia.

- Storms can be the domain of God, if He chooses to intervene with testing by means of a storm.

- Listen to Psalm 148:8, "Fire and hail, snow and clouds; stormy wind, fulfilling His word."

- Also Isaiah 28:2 has something to say, "Behold, the Lord has a strong and mighty agent; as a storm of hail, a tempest of destruction, like a storm of might overflowing waters, He has cast it down to the earth with his hand."

- Revelation 7:1 reveals that angels are the agents of the storm, "After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, so that no wind would blow on the earth or on the sea or on any tree."

- God also provides protection in the midst of the storm.

- Isaiah 4:6, There will be a shelter to give shade from the heat by day, and refuge and protection from the storm and the rain."

- Isaiah 25:4 also testifies, "For You have been a defense for the helpless, a defense for the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shade from the heat; for the breath of the ruthless is like a rain storm against a wall."

- But take note: this planet is the devil's world; the enemy of all that is good may cause harm through a storm. Listen to these passages:

- Job 1:12, "Then the Lord said to Satan, 'Behold, all that he has is in your power, only do not put forth your hand on him.' So Satan departed from the presence of the Lord."

- And now examine Job 1:18-19, "(18) While he was still speaking (the messenger to Job), another also came and said, 'Your sons and your daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, (19) and behold, a great wind came from across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell on the young people and they died, and I alone have escaped to tell you.'"

- So you can perceive that the weather on our planet is much more than just a system of random winds and precipitation; it is often bent to a purpose by angels, both fallen and elect. It is no wonder, then, that it is so difficult to be a weather man!

- Our Lord was cognizant of these facts, because He was a supreme expert on Old Testament doctrines. Based on this knowledge, Jesus Christ could sleep through a storm.

- The command was first for the benefit of the disciples - Christ was talking to the storm as though it were a person.

- And then the second command is directly to the elect angels in charge of the storm.

- This storm was certainly present for a spiritual reason, and the disciples, being

ignorant of Old Testament doctrine, failed to understand that.

This was a prayer; and commands in prayers are not all that uncommon.

- Consider the Lord's prayer, which has several commands.

- "Give us today our logistical bread..." This contains the aorist imperative of the verb DIDOMI. And this is how we are supposed to pray. In prayer you may command God.

- "Forgive us our trespasses..." This also has an aorist imperative, this time from APHIEMI.

As a result, a great calm came over the waters. Mark describes the happening with the verb GINOMAI, which tells us that the calm appeared out of nowhere (but we know the reason) What a tremendous contrast! First the storm and then the calm. No wonder it is described as a great calm. So there they were on the suddenly glassy sea, without a whisper of wind. The disciples would have been standing in front of Christ, bedraggled and dripping wet, and really appearing quite silly in sight of the circumstances.

The calm.

Christ's rebuke of the disciples.

Before the disciples could say "Holy Mackerel" or some other appropriate statement of utter surprise, Christ speaks.

He says, "Why are you cowards? Do none of you have faith?"

This is an appropriate reiteration of the statement of only moments before. So Christ says it while the storm is raging, then He calms the storm, and then He says it again in the silence. This was certainly a calculated strategy. How truly effective it must have been! What impact those words must have had!

The rebuke strikes at the faith of the disciples.

Remember that faith is based on truth; you need information on which to place your faith, before you can exercise it.

Had the disciples understood the principle of the storm, they would have been able to relax and sleep under the stern shelter with Christ.

And this faith is supposed to replace fear. The juxtaposition of fear and faith shows that faith casts out fear.

1 John 4:18 says it in another way, "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love."

We should conclude then, that love contains faith; that is, love is a complex of truth in the soul. Metabolized truth directed toward God in a personal way. Our personal love from God is only developed through our study of the truth.

1 Corinthians 13:1-3 implies that love is the application of all truth in the context of personal love for God, "(1) If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging symbol. (2) If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. (3) And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing."

But this rebuke bears no immediate results...

The fear of the disciples and their doubts.

The disciples failed to understand this prayer of Christ's.

They marveled, according to Matthew 8:27. The verb is THAUMAZO, and it means to consider something with a mental attitude of awe. Something has occurred here that gave the disciples an appreciation of awesome power at work.

Mark puts it a different way with his gospel; He says, EPHOBETHESAN PHOBON MEGAN, 'they were afraid with great fear.'

This tells us immediately that they were failing with regard to faith and love, because faith and love drive out fear. Their fear was based on ignorance and failed application.

Christ's exhortation went right over their heads, and the fear of the storm was transferred to a fear of Christ Himself, who to them had commanded the storm.

Christ in reality had placed the situation in the Father's hands with great confidence, and the elect weather angels took care of the rest.

Now the disciples ignorance about the storm has been compounded by their ignorance of Christ.

They say, "Who is this, then, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?"

It is as if they no longer know Christ; as if this incident has confused them about Him completely.

But something does not settle well with this conclusion: the disciples had already witnessed many miracles from Christ.

He had healed and done miracles.

He had even cast out demons, demonstrating His authority through the Spirit over them.

So you have to ask, 'What is the big deal about another miracle?' Indeed, had they forgotten their own wilderness history? Wasn't there a supernatural pillar of cloud guiding Israel every day on their way through the desert journey?

There was. So this should be no surprise and certainly no cause for fear.

Some additional thoughts on application.

We do not have the authority to command angels. But we certainly have authority in prayer to call upon God, and to command Him in matters that we are certain.

Christ called upon God here; and God commanded His angels to stop the wind and the storm.

Christ in the state of kenosis could not employ His deity to stop the storm Himself. That would have been a breach of integrity with regard to the rules of the incarnation.

It is not we who command the weather angels. Rather, it is our responsibility to put things in the Lord's hands.

When the inclement weather comes your way, you must remember that there is one of two possibilities:

It is your time to go home to heaven.

God will protect you through the storm.

The Demons and the Swine

Matthew 8:28-34

Mark 5:1-20

Luke 8:26-39.

Outline.

The Setting, "And they sailed down to the other side, into the country of the Gadarenes and Gerasenes, which is opposite of Galilee..."

The Attack of the Demon-possessed Men:

The timing of their attack, "And immediately after He disembarked from the boat and came out onto the land, two men from the city who were demon-possessed opposed Him while coming out of the tombs..."

The description of the primary attacker, "[he was] exceedingly violent and had not put on any clothing for a long time; he was not living in a house, but in the tombs. And on one was able to bind him any longer with a chain, because he had been bound many times with shackles and chains and kept under guard, and the chains and shackles had been torn apart him and torn in pieces, and driven by the demons into the desert; and no one was able to subdue him, so that some were not strong [enough] to pass through that road. Through the whole night and day he was in the tombs and in the mountains crying out and cutting himself with stones."

The demons' first entreaty of Christ, "Now seeing Jesus from afar he ran and bowed down before Him, and behold! Crying out in a loud voice [the demons], they said, 'What is for me and for you (this is not your affair), Son of the Most High God? Do You come here before the

appointed time to torment us? We implore You by God, do not torment us!' For He was commanding the unclean spirits to come out from the man."

Christ's response to the first entreaty, "And Jesus interrogated him, saying, 'What is your name?' And he says to Him, 'Legion, because we are many.'"

The second entreaty of the demons, "And they were exhorting Him not to order them to enter into the abyss. And there was on the mountain far away a herd of many swine, feeding. And the demons exhorted Him, saying, 'If You cast us out, send us into the herd of swine, so that we might enter into them.'"

Christ's granting of the desire, and the result, "And he allowed them and said to them, 'Go.' And after the demons had left the man they entered into the swine, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea, about two thousand, and they were drowned in the sea."

The response of the swineherds, "And the swineherds fled them and announced everything and especially the things about the demon-possessed men to the [people of the] city and to the countryside."

The reaction of the city folk, "And the people of the city came out to see what was happening, and they came to Jesus and found the man from whom the legion of demons had been cast out sitting down at the feet of Jesus, clothed and mentally well, and they were afraid."

The report of the eyewitnesses to the city folk, "And the ones who saw [it happen] reported to them how the demon-possessed man was saved, and about the swine."

The judgment of the people, "And all the people of the surrounding countryside of the Gerasenes asked Him to leave from their mountain, because they were seized with great fear; and after embarking into the boat He returned."

The entreaty of the formerly possessed man, "And while He embarked into the boat the man

who had been demon-possessed exhorted Him so that He might be with him."

Christ's reply, "And He did not allow him, but He said to him, 'Go into your house with your own [family] and announce to them what sort of things the Lord has done for you and what sort of mercy He has done for you.'

The man's obedience, "And he went away preaching in each city of the Decapolis what sort of things Jesus did for him, and everyone marveled."

II. The Exposition.

The Setting, "And they sailed down to the other side, into the country of the Gadarenes and Gerasenes, which is opposite of Galilee..."

If you recall Christ and the disciples have just weathered a terrible storm at sea. As they walk off the boat, some of the disciples no doubt were tempted to kiss the dry land. But their period of ordeal is not over just yet.

There is a difference between the account of Matthew, and Mark and Luke's accounts. Matthew names the country as that of the Gadarenes, while Mark and Luke name it as the Gerasenes.

Both of these regions lie in the Decapolis, the 'ten cities' region that was east of the Jordan River and populated mainly by gentiles.

All three identify the event as happening right next to the Sea of Galilee; the accounts are so similar in other key aspects that they can hardly be separated from one another. They are indeed the same event.

The reason for the difference is more difficult to ascertain, but there is an answer that allows us to guard the inerrancy of the text.

These two regions were Greek city-states within the Decapolis. In fact, each of the ten cities were.

Gadara is one of the city-states that bordered on the Sea of Galilee, Gerasa was a long way from there to the southeast; maybe thirty miles or so.

Because these were small city-states, the borders were never very exact; furthermore, Gerasa was one of the more important of the ten, and is one of the best preserved archaeologically today.

When Mark and Luke make their statements, they are referring to the Gerasene region as a synonym for the Decapolis; as the most vital city of the region, its name would inevitably become associated with the entire area, and therefore it would encompass the smaller region of Gadara, where the event actually took place.

So they get off the boat, no doubt exhausted from their ordeal at sea; wet, bedraggled, and glad to be ashore. They may be vulnerable...

The Attack of the Demon-possessed Men:

The timing of their attack, "And immediately after He disembarked from the boat and came out onto the land, two men from the city who were demon-possessed opposed Him while coming out of the tombs..."

Mark employs the adjective EUTHUS to tell us that this happened right after they left the boat.

Christ came out the boat and onto the land, and two men approached.

Now Matthew's gospel records that there were two demon-possessed men, and the other two writers only one.

Matthew remembered a second, silent man who was not significant to the narrative, but present nonetheless.

The others may have remembered, but since he said nothing left him out.

In any event the silent second man did not figure at all in the later narrative, and even Matthew does not mention him again.

These men were from the city. The nearest city of the Decapolis was Hippo, a city right on the Eastern shore of Galilee. It is most likely that they were from there, because the city must be right on the shore, and neither Gerasa nor Gadara fit the bill for that.

Again let me emphasize that the difference in the region names does not necessarily place the Bible in error. An analogy to this situation might come from our own United States.

The Decapolis was the equivalent of our own nation. The main city of the Decapolis was Gerasa, and that would equal our own Washington D.C.

Gerasa and the Decapolis became interchangeable terms for the nation.

But there were also states within this nation. The Gerasene state, with Gerasa at the center, and the Gadarene state with Gadara as its central city.

Down at the shore of the Sea of Galilee there was the small town of Hippo, one of the ten city-states of the Decapolis; just to the south of this little town was the border of Gadara.

The event took place in the nation of Decapolis, also known as the greater region of Gerasa. But the actual place was in the state-region of Gadara, and on top of that, the nearest town was Hippo, even though the town itself was in another state-region.

The description of the primary attacker, "[he was] exceedingly violent and had not put on any clothing for a long time; he was not living in a house, but in the tombs. And no one was able to bind him any longer with a chain, because he had been bound many times with shackles and chains and kept under guard, and the chains and shackles had been torn apart him and torn in pieces, and driven by the demons into the desert; and no one was able to subdue him, so that some were not strong [enough] to pass through that road. Through the whole night and day he was in the tombs and in the mountains crying out and cutting himself with stones."

First, this demon-possessed man was CHALEPOI LIAN - exceedingly violent.

The adjective CHALEPOI describes a hard man - like a hardened criminal. Sometimes this simply referred to personality, and at other times it had the implication of violence.

This word is further modified by an adjective which was reserved for extreme occasions. It is 'exceedingly.' This was an exceedingly hard and violent man. He was dangerous indeed.

And by the way, this information could only have come after the fact; Christ and His disciples could not have known any of these details as this naked man approached them.

So here is the situation, they climb off the boat, and there are two men approaching them, at least one of whom is naked. And of course Christ is thinking, 'There's something you don't see every day.'

Second, Luke notes that he had not put on any clothing in a long time. The long time here is a little vague, as it could denote weeks, months, or years.

The weather outside was cool, since it was likely winter. This only points out the superhuman strength of a demon-possessed man, something which will become even more evident in a moment.

But perhaps something more is here. The demons desired to convey the idea of a truly demented human being and intimidate anyone from coming around the area of operations.

Third, Mark and Luke identify that the man had his house among the tombs.

This lends a spooky air to the scene. The man lives among the dead - how very ghoulish! Too bad this isn't a Halloween sermon!

But there is a reason for everything; the demons inside this man don't live in the tombs because the dead are better at conversation!

Again, I believe there is an intimidation factor here. The demons know that this will strike fear into the hearts of the superstitious unbelievers who inhabit this region.

Remember that the people on this side of the Sea of Galilee are gentiles. They are unbelievers with no background in Bible truth at all. They would be especially vulnerable to this kind of behavior.

The demons inside this man are quite clever, and they have an agenda to intimidate the people in the surrounding area. This is their idea of entertainment.

With this pattern, it is clear to see that these demons are locked into a system of power lust. Demon-possessed people often represent this pattern. Adolf Hitler was almost certainly an example of this; Saddam Hussein may be another.

Other demons follow other patterns of lust; this one wanted to dominate the people of his region through fear and intimidation. He wanted them to fear him utterly.

Fourth, the local populace had made efforts to restrain him, but the demons inside the man caused him to have superhuman strength.

They bound him with chains and shackles and placed him under guard.

Each time, the demons inside the man would strengthen him, and cause him to break the chains in pieces and tear off the shackles. He would then defeat his guard, and the demons would impel him out into the surrounding arid wilderness.

This piece of information is here so that we will understand that Christ succeeded in solving a problem that a city and even a region could not.

The human efforts of these unbelievers cannot cope with a spiritual problem. This is true in a more general sense. An unbeliever who is lost in sin is completely helpless to remedy the problem of total depravity.

Where the human efforts to solve the problem had completely failed, Christ would succeed and amaze the failures.

It is curious to see that these locals did not kill this demon-possessed man. He was causing so much havoc and he had likely paralyzed trade in the region, because he shut down a road.

There were three major north-south roads in the region. All ten of the cities of the Decapolis lay on these roads. If this man managed to shut

down one of those road, then trade would have been curtailed quite significantly.

There was really only one reason for these ten cities to exist, and that had to do with trade. These towns were the road-side stands of the desert region. The modern equivalent would be the southwestern gas station or curios shop. If the road no longer ran through there, the town would be in a desperate situation.

Even at the threat of their own lifestyle, they would not kill this man to remove his threat. They tried binding him and guarding him, but that failed.

Fifth, he was in the tombs and mountains crying out and cutting himself with stones.

Again, the self-mutilation is designed to intimidate. This behavior is so bizarre that people did not dare even approach the man.

The present participles here denote actions that were constant; he was always doing these things. The self-mutilation had a purpose of intimidation; it certainly follows the pattern of everything else these demons were doing in this man.

Because the mutilation was constant, he would have been a bloody mess at all times. How intimidating indeed to see a naked, bloody, shouting man living in the graveyard and having broken shackles and chains on his body!

The demons' first entreaty of Christ, "Now seeing Jesus from afar he ran and bowed down before Him, and behold! Crying out in a loud voice [the demons], they said, 'What is for me and for you (this is not your affair), Son of the Most High God? Do You come here before the appointed time to torment us? We implore You by God, do not torment us!' For He was commanding the unclean spirits to come out from the man."

Mark's gospel records that they saw Jesus from afar. There was immediate recognition of Jesus.

Now, they did not know that Christ was on His way in any supernatural fashion. They had to use the faculty of sight in order to do so.

But they saw Him from afar, and knew immediately that the man getting out of the boat was the Messiah and the Son of the Most High God.

Realizing that His presence endangered their scam, the demons are anxious to attempt to ward Him away.

The demons impelled this man to run up from afar, and of course the approach of a bloody, chain-dragging, shouting, naked man would startle anyone.

Would he attack? Was he in need of help? Had he been robbed and beaten? It was impossible to know.

Christ held His ground, and at the last moment the man stopped and bowed down at His feet, and began to beg Christ.

All the accounts agree that the man cried out with a loud voice. This entreaty has the force of a crying out loud man's voice.

The first thing spoken is word for word in all three gospels: TI EMOI KAI SOI. It is literally, 'what is for me and for you.' But this is an idiom. It really means, 'this is none of your business,' or, 'what is my business is not your business.'

The demons want to make it clear that they have staked out their own territory, and that they have an operation going on that Christ should not interfere with.

The demons are most anxious and begging because they have invested no little amount of time and effort into the domination of the region.

But why should they say this to Christ? Why would they believe that anything is not His business?

As the events turn out, Christ concludes that it is His business, and more than that, He intervenes. It seems the demons were wrong as to their conclusion.

There is one important conclusion that we can derive from this statement: demons, though

they are vastly intelligent beings, are susceptible to self-deception and blindness.

Here these demons had gone to great pains to get their operation going with this man, and now they were beginning to exert power over this gentile region.

They have deceived themselves to believe that this is not the domain of God, and that since it was Satan's world, they could operate freely.

Furthermore, they naively attempt to bring Christ into their world of deception. He is not going to buy it.

After the initial appeal, the demons address our Lord as 'Son of the Most High God.' Even they recognize this...

But there is a fawning sort of attitude here; these demons hate Christ and all that He represents. There is no respect in this appellation at all.

The demons recognize their impotence here, and so become sycophantic, kissing up to Christ.

They also perceive Him as temptable and deceivable. This reveals that the demons are participating in this spiritual conflict as though there is true free will in the person of Christ.

Furthermore, the demons have lived before human history; there would be soul memory related to angelic prehistory and the relationship with the Godhead at that time.

These fallen angels know for a fact that free will is not a sham, and that Christ in His humanity is temptable. They always act like it, and they have an awful lot at stake in this spiritual conflict.

What I am saying is that the demons were not wrong in the fact that Christ Himself had free will.

(10) After this lofty address, they demons provide support for their appeal. It is their very nature to act as lawyers... "Do You come here before the appointed time to torment us? We implore You by God, do not torment us!"

The appointed time is the time of the judgment of the fallen angels at the judgment of Christ.

Although the sentence is passed on the fallen angels in prehistory, it is not carried out until the great white throne at the end of human history.

· Matthew 25:41, "Then he will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels...'"

· Revelation 20:10, "And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever."

These demons understand that they have a certain amount of time before their sentence will be passed, and that they have a certain amount of leeway to operate before then.

The reason for the freedom to operate has to do with the angelic conflict; the ostensible reason that demons participate in human history.

The demons implore Christ by God. That is, they think they are in the right with regard to this matter; they believe they have the freedom to do what they are doing with this man.

· The verb HORKIZO has a legal connotation; it means to adjure or implore someone by invoking a legal precedent or a legal authority.

· They have a long history of interaction with Christ, probably billions of years. And here they are arguing again. They think they are right, and they are seeking justice from a man who has the power to ruin their lives.

They ask Christ not to torment them.

· The verb for torment is BASANIZO, and it also has a legal connotation; it is the torture that one endures while being cross-examined.

· There is also a physical torture associated with this word, rather like the inquisition, where physical pain was associated with a confession of Christ.

· But what kind of torture would Christ bring down on these fallen angels? Aren't they already condemned to an eternity in the lake of fire?

· Part of the answer lies in the next statement, which explains that Jesus was casting them out as the man approached.

· Later in the narrative we will discover that there is a 'legion' of demons in this man, maybe up to two thousand in all.

· Picture in your mind's eye that as the man approaches, Christ is casting out the demons, one by one. Where these are to go after being cast out is the abyss, as we will discover.

· But as some of the demons are cast out, the remaining ones are getting nervous; they do not want to be cast out so that they will enter into torment.

· The casting out causes torment in one of two ways.

- It simply causes the spirit to become disembodied, and so it is complete without sensual perception. The emptiness of a soul without a body is a terrible emptiness indeed.

- There is also the more tangible torment of residence in the abyss.

Christ's response to the first entreaty, "And Jesus interrogated him, saying, 'What is your name?' And he says to Him, 'Legion, because we are many.'"

Jesus is interrogating the spokesman from all the demons. The direct object is singular.

The verb is EPEROTAO, which is an intensive form of the verb EROTAO, 'to ask.' To ask intensely is often to interrogate.

The content of the interrogation was brief and to the point: TI ONOMA SOI. It is quite like the TI EMOI KAI SOI that the demons threw at Christ just before. This is really quite a clever repartee' on the part of Christ.

TI ONOMA SOI is literally, 'What is a name for you?'

So Christ fixes His clear gaze upon the demon and asks for his name. The personal pronoun SOI is singular, so that Christ is asking only the spokesman for his name.

This demands personal responsibility for this rampage, and Christ consider the spokesman responsible.

And Christ knew already that there were more than one demon in the man, because He had been casting demons out from him.

Therefore notice the evasive nature of the reply, when the spokesman says LEGION ONOMA MOI HOTI POLLOI ESMEN - 'Legion is a name for me, because we are many.'

The spokesman demon avoids the personal responsibility by stating that he is Legion...

He does not feel at all compelled to give a straight answer to Christ's severe inquiry. On the contrary, he is evasive and even arrogant with this.

The second entreaty of the demons, "And they were exhorting Him not to order them to enter into the abyss. And there was on the mountain far away a herd of many swine, feeding. And the demons exhorted Him, saying, 'If You cast us out, send us into the herd of swine, so that we might enter into them.'"

The demons then send forth an exhortation, which is PARAKALEO in the Greek. Mark puts the verb in the imperfect tense, showing that they kept on doing this over and over. Many demons may have been using the vocal cords of the man at this time.

Luke dug up one detail that is missing from the other two synoptic accounts; that the demons begged Christ not to order them to enter into the abyss. This is an important detail indeed.

Suddenly the demons realize that what they have done may cause them to be cast into the jail that is reserved for especially offensive demonic behavior.

That is the nature of the abyss. It was the place where the angels from the Nephilim conspiracy of the antediluvian civilization were incarcerated. In that conspiracy, demons seduced human women and produced half-angelic offspring, causing much violence and chaos on the earth. This is recorded in Genesis chapter six.

The angels who are jailed in the abyss reside there in chains of thick darkness until the tribulation, when they are released. 2 Peter 2:4-5 testifies to this

The only break that these abyss dwellers have had in all that time was when Christ made His victorious proclamation after His death on the cross, 1 Peter 3:18-19.

The abyss will again be filled during the millennium, because at the second advent of Jesus Christ, all of the fallen angels will be cast there and reside there for the duration. Revelation 20:1-3 makes this clear.

Being cast into the abyss is a bad thing for a fallen angel. They are cast there as disembodied spirits, and live without sensory perception for all that time. There is a mental dimension to this kind of torment that must be terrible indeed.

So these angels exhort Christ not to order them there.

They realize that He has the authority to do this terrible thing to them, and they realize that they may have crossed the line with their activities inside this Decapolite.

There is some guilt that these demons have, where in their souls they have related their own violent rampage to antediluvian times.

The pre-flood period was a time of domination for the fallen angels and it was filled with wanton violence. This demon possession really does have some similarities, and the demons who have perpetrated it are now worried.

They have an alternate idea; they desire to be sent into the herd of swine that was feeding a far mountainside.

Apparently, anything is better than the abyss. These demons would rather be in pigs than there.

So they suggest this in a hopeful manner to Jesus Christ, knowing that He has the authority by God the Holy Spirit to cast them out, and to incarcerate them into the abyss with the other violators of the rules of engagement of the angelic conflict.

Part of God's guidance of Christ to this spot obviously had to do with these demons, but they were in violation and were not sent to the abyss. More, the guidance had to do with evangelism, and using Christ's control of these events to further the gospel.

Christ's granting of the desire, and the result, "And he allowed them and said to them, 'Go.' And after the demons had left the man they entered into the swine, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea, about two thousand, and they were drowned in the sea."

Suprisingly, Christ grants the desire. But there is of course a hitch here.

This happens in three parts, and it happens so fast that you hardly catch what has occurred.

First, Christ grants the desire, and tells them to go. He uses the present imperative HUPAGETE, so that this is definitely a command. Because this verb is plural, it is clear from the original that He said this to all of them.

Then the demons leave the man and enter the swine;

Then all hell breaks loose, for whatever reason, the swine rush down a steep bank and into the sea, where they are drowned.

There is a great irony here that has to do with the demons' demise; they had begged Christ not to cast them into the abyss, and yet they all end up in a watery grave.

You see, the abyss was always associated with the deepest part of the ocean in the Old Testament. Many passages testify to the existence of a great body of water under the surface of the earth:

Exodus 20:4, "You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth (fallen angels incarcerated in the Abyss)."

Psalm 24:1-2, "(1) The earth is the Lord's, and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it. (2) For He has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers."

Psalm 136:6, "To Him who spread out the earth above the waters..."

And right in the middle of the Ten Commandments there is a reference to the angels who are in the abyss... the watery abyss.

So the prison of the abyss is a watery prison, and that is part of the unpleasantness there.

So it is more than a little ironic that all these demon-possessed pigs rush down into the water, where they are drowned.

And this was not the choice of the demons. Was it so horrible for them that they experienced what it was like to be a pig and chose immediately to drown themselves, or what there a different power at work?

It seems unlikely that there was a demon-inspired mass pig suicide here; the demons wanted so very much to be inside those pigs.

It is rather more likely that God the Holy Spirit had a plan to teach the demons a lesson...

It is important to note that since the demons were not cast into the abyss, they did not deserve the abyss.

But what they were doing through this man was questionable indeed, and pushing the limits on God's patience with them.

Therefore, God planned to issue a warning to them; He wanted them to taste what it was like to enter into the abyss, and He used the swine to achieve this.

With such a graphic lesson, it would be a long time before these demons would flirt with crossing the line of the rules of engagement again.

The response of the swineherds, "And the swineherds fled them and announced everything and especially the things about the demon-possessed men to the [people of the] city and to the countryside."

So here are these swineherds: they are peacefully tending their herd on the side of a mountain, when...

Far away they see the famous demon-possessed man of the region accosting the leader of a small group of men. And they think to themselves: 'Here we go again...'

But instead of the expected violent outcome, the leader of the group of men speaks and gestures and before you know, their swine go crazy, and plunge down into the sea.

It is obvious that the demons have been cast out, causing the insane behavior of the swine.

So the swineherds flee; they have seen enough and off they go into the city; likely Gergesa or Hippo on the eastern shore of Galilee.

They go into the city and the countryside, and announce what happened.

The verb is APAGGELLO. This verb denotes the function of a messenger or even of a town crier.

They have the great scoop about the end of the reign of terror, and so they go and announce it to the city, and to the people in the region that was dominated by this demon-possessed man.

Their announcement especially concentrates on the demon-possessed man. In reality, they have missed the significance of this.

Remember that this is a Gentile region. Indeed the presence of swineherds betrays this in a rather spectacular fashion. There was never a need for swine in Israel with their strict dietary laws, because the swine was an unclean animal.

So these Gentiles do not know of the Messiah of the Jews, or if they have heard of Him, they do not associate this incident with Him.

Since God the Holy Spirit has the authority with regard to these demon-exorcisms, we can consider His timing significant. It is His intention to expand Christ's ministry to include the Gentiles.

Christ is the King of kings and Lord of lords. He is authorized by the two crowns of His bloodline to rule over Jew and Gentile alike.

There is a great symbolism in this demon exorcism. Christ has set the region free from the domination of demons; He will also set them free from the domination of sin. Now in this part of His ministry, Christ makes the bold proclamation that He is for all the peoples of the world.

But of course the local peoples miss these distinctions. The focus of the swineherds is on the demon-possessed man; he has been rendered powerless. And the peoples' interpretation of this pronouncement is going to be interesting indeed.

The reaction of the city folk, "And the people of the city came out to see what was happening, and they came to Jesus and found the man from whom the legion of demons had been cast out sitting down at the feet of Jesus, clothed and mentally well, and they were afraid."

So the city folk hear from the swineherds what had happened. They want to go directly to the scene of the event, and so there they go out to see what was happening.

Notice that they really didn't go out to see Jesus; they didn't go with the intent of thanking Him for restoring peace and prosperity to their city.

Because the demon-possessed man had shut down the road to their city, commerce had been restricted, and the city was more or less held hostage to this rampage. There would have been a fair amount of people just sitting around inside the safe confines of the city gates.

They behold a significant sight; the verb THEOREO always denotes the witnessing of a sight of importance, of something that will not be forgotten. This is significant to them.

And here is what they see. The demon-possessed man is sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and mentally well.

SOPHRONOUNTA describes the man's mental state. This is a sound and well-functioning mind. It is someone who is able to exercise wisdom.

And lo and behold, the man has clothes on. The rampage of the first streaker in history has come to an end.

And they were afraid.

But why? Shouldn't they be overjoyed that the rampage has come to a peaceful end, and they can now go about their everyday lives in peace?

They think irrationally here, but this is what they think: that the man who had the power to bring this about is a more powerful man than the last. That much is a good conclusion.

But they also conclude that they have something to fear from this powerful man. They are afraid because they see the corruptive potential of all power.

This is not at all like the Jew's reason for the rejection of Jesus Christ.

We might observe that the Pharisees rejected Christ because they feared being supplanted by Him - they feared the loss of power.

And the people of Israel rejected Christ because they did not see Him as the means to get what they wanted, which was political autonomy from Rome.

When Christ told those people that the change had to come spiritually before it ever would politically, they closed their ears and their eyes to His plan.

Now these people have their reason for rejecting Christ too, it is just not the same reason.

These Gentiles are afraid because they mistakenly categorize Him as sharing the same nature as the demon-possessed man.

The report of the eyewitnesses to the city folk, "And the ones who saw [it happen] reported to them how the demon-possessed man was saved, and about the swine."

As the city folk arrive at the scene, they are greeted by the eyewitnesses to the event. These people report to the city folk how the demon-possessed man was saved, and the nature of the event with the swine.

And now they have all the facts at hand. They can be forgiven; they received the initial report from the hysterical and panicked swineherds, but now comes a more calm and objective treatment of the subject. Surely now they will respond in a proper manner. But they do not.

The judgment of the people, "And all the people of the surrounding countryside of the Gerasenes asked Him to leave from their mountain, because they were seized with great fear; and after embarking into the boat He returned."

We now the situation gets even worse with the information. The information only confirms their fears, and they are seized with a great fear.

They ask Him to leave from their mountain, and of course the boat is still there at hand.

For all appearances it seems as though the expedition to the Gentile region of Decapolis is finished and a failure. But it is not.

The entreaty of the formerly possessed man, "And while He embarked into the boat the man who had been demon-possessed exhorted Him so that He might be with him."

Just as Jesus is getting into the boat, the formerly demon-possessed man exhorts Jesus to come along.

Here is a second exhortation from the same man; the first, as you recall, came from the demon possessing him. And now the exhortation is to follow Christ.

Perhaps he is fearful lest more demons come his way; perhaps he is grateful and he wants to

learn more about the plan of God. But no. There is a plan.

Christ's reply, "And He did not allow him, but He said to him, 'Go into your house with your own [family] and announce to them what sort of things the Lord has done for you and what sort of mercy He has done for you.'

Well now, Christ commanded His disciples to follow Him; why not this man? Didn't Christ trust him?

Actually this man is going to be the very first missionary. Christ recognizes that the man is going to be a powerful witness on His behalf among his own people.

Christ realizes something in a humble way: that what He could not do personally, this man could do to great effect.

Christ, even Christ with His great wisdom and vast storehouse of Old Testament doctrine is not going to have an effect here.

The people of the region have asked our Lord to leave; He wanted to stay, but He will not go against their wishes.

And this man, with no formal training, is going to go out and change his world; in the not-too-distant future, Christ is going to return to the Decapolis in Mark 7:37-8:9. The only reason that He will have a new opportunity there is because of what this man is doing while He is absent.

Christ informs the man to go back to his own family, and tell his family what has occurred.

There is more here than meets the eye; in order to reach the point where the man would so easily allow about 2,000 demons to enter in to himself, this man must have been a terrible degenerate.

So when he goes back to his own house and his own family, there is more than just a gladness about the removal of the demons; there is a gladness about the recovery from degeneracy as well. This is double measure of God's grace.

The man's obedience, "And he went away preaching in each city of the Decapolis what sort of things Jesus did for him, and everyone marveled."

Now the formerly demon-possessed man goes forth and preaches in each city of the Decapolis about Jesus Christ.

The man really was preaching, and telling everyone of the quality of spiritual care that he received from the Messiah of the Jews.

And everyone in all of those ten cities marveled. The man was after all well known - he was quite infamous during his days of rampage.

This was all that Christ needed. His re-entry into the region was much better received the next time around.

And this says something about the way in which missionary activity is to take place.

The Healing of Jairus' Daughter

Matthew 9:18-26

Mark 5:21-43

Luke 8:40-56

Exposition.

The Setting:

The circumstances. "And after Jesus crossed over in the boat again to the other side, a great crowd was gathered upon it, and He was by the sea."

Now this is a little intriguing: the crowd waited for Him - but how could they have known? Did He say, 'I'll be back'? We have no record of such a promise...

Remember, they stayed a day on the shore, while Jesus preached the parables. That night they crossed the Sea of Galilee, where the event with the demon-possessed man played out in a very short time.

Now they cross right back over. The Sea itself is only about six or seven miles across at its

widest. The masts and sails of a small vessel would be easily visible on a clear day.

So they spotted the vessel which carried Christ coming back that very morning - and in a little while it came closer and arrived.

The crowd had simply spent the night on the beach, and as they wakened they saw the same boat coming from the direction which it left. They had really had no time at all to disperse.

There are a number of cities nearby which this may take place: Tiberias to the southwest; Magadan to the west; Capernaum and Bethsaida to the northwest; or perhaps Bethsaida Julias to the northeast. But even by land reckoning, these cities are separated by not more than a hard day's journey. Wherever this spot was on the seashore it would have been accessible by all of these towns.

The attitude of the crowd. "And the crowd welcomed Him for all were waiting eagerly for Him."

Since the boat was returning the crowd began to anticipate His return. They had spent the night thinking about His parables, and perhaps wondering if He would do another miracle or healing.

Luke 8:40 describes the eagerness of the crowd with PROSDOKEO, to 'think toward' something. This was the Greek equivalent of 'looking forward' to something, like we say in the English.

Whatever the motive, they were still there, and anxious to see and hear Him.

The Plight of Jairus.

The arrival of Jairus. "And one of the rulers of the synagogue came, named Jairus, who was always at the disposal of the [other] rulers of the synagogue."

They have returned to the Galilean side of the sea, and so one of the towns near the sea shore has a synagogue. It doesn't really matter which town, but there is an important side note to make here. Christ has a history with this region

- and that history translates into fame. Think about it:

Christ healed the child of the royal official from Capernaum. That time it was a male child who was at the point of death, and the child never did die. John 4:46-54.

Peter's mother in law was healed at Capernaum. Mark 1:29-34.

Somewhere in Galilee Christ cleansed the leper, which caused much publicity, Mark 1:40-45.

At Capernaum again, Christ forgave and healed a paralytic, Mark 2:1-12. The scribes took great offense, because they said that only God can forgive sins.

Christ went to Jerusalem where the Pharisees tried to kill Him for alleged blasphemy, John 5.

Christ had to flee back to Galilee, where immediately there was a controversy because His disciples picked grain on the Sabbath, Mark 2:23-28.

Later, He healed a man's withered hand in a synagogue in Galilee, Mark 3:1-6. This is particularly pertinent, because even if it wasn't Jairus's synagogue, he would have learned of this healing from the synagogue rulers in the other towns. There is still a reasonable chance that this happened right before Jairus' eyes.

In Mark 3:7-12, great multitudes from Galilee were following Him.

The Sermon on the Mount occurred on a mountain somewhere near the Sea of Galilee.

(10) Christ healed the centurion's servant in Luke 7:1-10. This took place in Capernaum.

(11) At Nain, just a few miles from Galilee, Christ raised the widow's son, Luke 7:11-17.

(12) Chorazin and Bethsaida failed to repent in Matthew 11:20-30. This after He had done most of His miracles there.

(13) Somewhere in Galilee, Christ met with the Pharisees, where the formerly sinful woman anointed and kissed His feet, Luke 7:36-50. These Pharisees would have been acquainted

with the synagogue rulers of the region, and some may have been present at this table as guests of honor. Jairus would have heard about this.

(14) Christ had an itinerant ministry in Galilee, and the women's auxiliary was formed, Luke 8:1-3. Christ's respectful treatment of women was by this time quite well known, and Jairus would have been aware of this with respect to his own daughter.

(15) Then there was the controversy over the exorcism in which the Pharisees claimed that Christ was casting out by the authority of the prince of demons, Mark 3:20-30. This like everything else added to Christ's fame.

(16) All of this adds up to one thought about Jairus: he knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that Christ could help his daughter, regardless of her state.

There is a twofold description of Jairus:

Matthew says, 'one of the rulers.'

Mark says, 'one of the rulers of the synagogue.'

Luke says something a little different: 'He was always at the disposal of the synagogue-rulers.' This description puts him not quite as one of the rulers, but as a kind of under-officer of the rulers.

Either way, his life is filled with religious matters. From the ISBE, volume four:

A rabbi could come from any segment of the community. Leadership rotated among influential and educated members in each community rather than being imposed by some overarching institution or system. The rabbi was the spiritual and practical head of the community.

There were three categories of rulers in every synagogue:

- The head of the synagogue, who supervised services, maintained order, and was only a short step below the Scribes of Jerusalem.

- The minister, who was in charge of the structure and contents of the synagogue. He

also signaled the beginning and end of services, and ran the services.

- The elders, who were the mainstays, the wise old men of the synagogue. It was from these that the synagogue minister and ruler were chosen. It is most likely that Jairus was one of the lesser elders of the local synagogue, at the disposal of the men with great authority and experience.

Worship in the ancient Jewish synagogue consisted of prayer and teaching.

- The leaders of worship would read prayers from the Psalms and any Scripture that suited the current theme.
- But there was also a sermon employed to educate the people regarding religious matters.
- The sermon could be given by anyone in the synagogue, but only by one who had already devoted some study and thought to the text or through a rabbi. There was no ordination requirement.
- The passage would be interpreted verse by verse in the language of the people.

The plea of Jairus. "And seeing Him, he fell at His feet and exhorted Him to come into his house with strong words, 'My daughter has come to the last, I came in order that after coming You might lay hands upon her that she might be saved and might live.'"

So this man Jairus falls at the feet of Jesus. This represented a more than significant sacrifice of pride on his part.

The party of the Pharisees were diametrically opposed to Christ; the Scribes and Pharisees had even wanted Jesus dead for quite some time.

But this man does not fool around; he does not go to begging Christ only after all other kinds of pleas have failed. He goes straight to it.

Make no mistake that this is more than a sacrifice of pride - this act of humility represent a clean break from his old life, for he will be ostracized for going to Jesus.

If the Pharisees would be evil enough to plot against Christ's life, then it would be nothing for them to censure a man who was associated in a small way with Him. Jairus knows full well what the consequences of this action will be.

Jairus exhorts Christ with strong words - PARAKALEI POLLA.

The verb means to call alongside an expert in your realm of need. Usually this has to do with legal help, but here it is another category - spiritual medical help.

The adverb POLLA describes how the exhortation was accomplished: 'greatly,' or 'with much force.' When you combine this with the man's body language, you can see how he was in that begging tone of voice.

Jairus says, "My daughter has come to the last."

Matthew indicates that Jairus told the Jesus that she was dead. Mark has him saying that she was at the very brink of death. Matthew communicates the man's feelings while Mark his actual expression.

You can say that your daughter is about to die with a fallen tone of voice, and your listeners will understand that the situation is hopeless. That is what Matthew understood, and he converted that into his text.

And then he wants Jesus to lay hands on her, so that she might be saved and live.

It is not necessary at all for Jesus to touch the girl; He has healed more often than not by word. A quick random sampling will reveal this:

The royal official's son at Capernaum was healed from miles away;

Peter's mother-in-law by touch;

The man with the withered hand simply by obeying in stretching out his hand;

The widow's son was raised by a word.

So does Jairus have a misconception about this? Perhaps not, because the laying on of hands is also an idiom for 'doing' something.

Indeed the doctrine of laying on of hands with regard to deacons in the church is about giving them guidance and leadership early in their service.

But the power is not necessarily in touch, so much as it is in the sovereignty of God the Holy Spirit. And in any assumption on how the healing is to be done there is a misconception.

But this does not necessarily interfere with the faith of the man; and that is what our Lord chooses to emphasize.

The plight of Jairus. "Because the only born daughter to him, about twelve years old, indeed she was dying."

Luke is the one who explains that Jairus daughter is an only-born daughter. This is kind of a twist that comes from this Greek word MONOGENES.

If you recall, the widow's son at Nain was an only-born son to her, and Jesus had compassion because He recognized His own mother in that situation.

There is significance and symbolism here in this only-born daughter.

Significance because she is a she. This becomes a bold statement that gender does not at all matter with regard to the plan of God.

Symbolism because the only-born daughter of Jairus is analogous to Christ as the only-born Son of God.

But there is even more symbolism in the age of the girl - she is twelve years old.

Because Luke mentions her age, he thinks it is important. The number twelve is significant to the Jews, because of the twelve tribes of Israel, but Luke is not writing to Jews.

Mark mentions the girl's age in relation to her ability to walk around, but there is no other relevance to the girl's age indicated by him.

But Luke does, and there are two possible points of relevance.

First, it was at the age of twelve that Christ first went to Jerusalem; it was His coming of age year. There may be something to this, because Luke's gospel is the only one that records the incident at the temple - Luke 2:41-51.

Second, it related to the length of time that the woman with the hemorrhage had suffered. This seems even more likely from the content.

But if these two women do relate their age and length of ailment is this nothing more than a coincidence? Luke is not like that - he doesn't record a coincident for its own sake; and remember that God the Holy Spirit has inspired Luke.

Let's begin with Hebrews 11:17-19, "(17) By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; (18) it was he to whom it was said, 'In Isaac your descendants shall be called.' (19) He considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type."

Jairus' daughter is a type of Isaac; Isaac is a type of Christ. The significance of Jairus' daughter is that she is only born, and about to die.

Luke is relating her age to the age of Isaac at the time that his father was about to sacrifice him.

Both Isaac and this girl were only-born; both were twelve; both about to die.

Under the guidance of the Spirit, Christ wants this to be a symbol to Israel of his relationship to the sacrifice of Isaac.

Every year the priests of Israel sacrificed hundreds of rams to commemorate God's provision of a ram as the substitute for Isaac.

Whereas Abraham did have to give his only-born son, God did. Abraham learned what a terrible thing it was to have to sacrifice what is most precious to him. He had an appreciation for what God had to do in Christ.

Abraham trusted completely in the promise of God regarding his only-born son. He knew that God would be faithful.

And Abraham received Isaac back from the dead in a figurative sense - and so would God in a literal sense.

Jesus' decision. "And Jesus after rising followed him, and the disciples likewise."

Christ had the power in the Spirit to stop the girl from dying as He had done with the royal official's daughter earlier.

But he decides to follow Jairus back to his house, and deal with the situation there. He thought it important to stay within the man's perception of what He was and how He healed.

And more than that, Christ was under the guidance of the Spirit to do this in representation of His own coming ordeal.

The Incident on the Way.

The crowded conditions on the way. "And a great crowd followed and was pressing in on Him."

So of course now that everyone knows that Christ is going to do a healing, and so everyone wants to be in on it.

The entire crowd from the seashore is now moving to the city nearby, following and pressing in on Jesus. Perhaps they are asking Him questions, perhaps cheering; they have been a great nuisance to Christ, and He generally does not like them.

But on this day He is going to have compassion on a man of faith, and at the same time He is going to make a healing into a nearly unmistakable symbol of salvation and healing from sin.

The description of the afflicted woman.

Her condition. "And a woman who was continuously with a flow of blood for twelve years."

She had a flow of blood, or a hemorrhage; although the accounts do not specify, it most

likely continuous vaginal discharge of blood. This had been ongoing for twelve years.

Now this flow of blood was not life-threatening. Think about it; this was ongoing for twelve years, but even after twelve years she is able to walk and go with the crowd.

The devastating part of this affliction is the impact on the woman's life, because of the regulations from the Mosaic Law.

The period of menstruation rendered an Israelite woman ceremonially unclean for seven days and therefore excluded her from worship in the sanctuary and from fellowship with other Israelites.

Leviticus 15:19-24, "(19) When a woman has a discharge, if her discharge in her body is blood, she shall continue in her menstrual impurity for seven days; and whoever touches her shall be unclean until evening. (20) Everything also on which she lies during her menstrual impurity shall be unclean, and everything on which she sits shall be unclean. (21) Anyone who touches her bed shall wash his clothes and bathe in water and be unclean until evening. (22) Whoever touches any thing on which she sits shall wash his clothes and bathe in water and be unclean until evening. (23) Whether it be on the bed or on the thing on which she is sitting, when he touches it, he shall be unclean until evening. (24) If a man actually lies with her so that her menstrual impurity is on him, he shall be unclean seven days, and every bed on which he lies shall be unclean."

The only social intercourse that this woman could legally have was with other women who were menstruating; she could not legally have sexual relations with a man; in a society where having children was of the utmost importance she could have none at all.

This woman is not identified as an old woman. She is a woman of childbearing age, but she is not allowed to be a woman in any way.

All three accounts protect the woman's privacy; she may be somebody whose name we know, and she may not. But there is no connection

between this woman and any other woman of the New Testament.

The woman is connected in an interesting way with Jairus' daughter - she has had the flow of blood since the year of the birth of that girl.

Her fruitless quest for relief. "and after suffering much under many physicians and after spending all of her money and after achieving nothing but after more coming into the hand,"

She has desperately tried to remedy this situation; her personal wealth meant nothing, and she spent it all.

There was no little amount of shame associated with these efforts, and the crude and unusual treatments of the day most likely added a great deal to her revulsion toward her own body.

She must have been hopeful and hopeless in turns.

And after all the investment the only return that she obtained was more blood.

Her conclusion about Jesus. "after hearing about Jesus, after coming with the crowd behind, she touched His garment; for she said, 'If I touch even His garments I will be saved.'"

But this woman in her hopelessness finds faith. She does not believe that she can be helped by the doctors; there is really nowhere left at all to turn.

And then she knows beyond a shadow of a doubt that Christ is the answer. She has heard that this man has the power to heal, and look at the crowd! They know that He can heal Jairus' daughter, and there is a corporate momentum.

The faith of the crowd is an interesting phenomenon; they all believe in Christ's healing power, but they have the wrong motives attached to being eyewitnesses. To them it is a circus show. But this same faith is contagious to this woman, who genuinely needs what power Christ has through God the Holy Spirit.

Notice that she has a desire to keep this matter private - that she does not want anyone to know of her affliction, because it is so private.

Observe this woman's interpretation of Christ's power; again she concentrates on His touch. Even though it is not necessary at all, she concentrates on touching Christ.

The result of her action. "And immediately the flow of her blood was stanching and she knew in her body that she was healed from the affliction."

Here is something very important that we must interpret. Christ healed this woman without a conscious decision.

Was there something in Him that would heal anyone who touched Him? No. But actually this little incident points out something important: that the sovereignty of God the Holy Spirit was intimately involved in the healing ministry of Jesus Christ.

And do not forget at all that Christ never employs His power as God to heal or to do a miracle of any kind. He was given that power in His humanity thanks to God the Holy Spirit.

Jesus' response to her action.

His perception of the healing. "And immediately Jesus, after fully knowing in Himself the power had gone out from Him,"

Now this confirms that this had nothing at all to do with Christ. God the Holy Spirit made the decision to heal this woman on the basis of her faith.

The verb EPIGINOSKO describes the full knowledge of Christ - He realized completely what had happened because He was familiar with the sensation. There was a definite sensation involved with being a medium for the Spirit's healing power.

It certainly was not her power - it was her faith, but not her power. And it is not right that the healing power was automatic in Christ according to touch. Christ was in crowds all the time.

So we can describe this by saying that Christ was aware that the Spirit had healed someone through Him, and that the only way this could happen is by the avenue of touch.

His statement to the crowd. "after turning on the crowd, He said 'Who touched my garments?'"

Christ has even more specific information about the incident. He knows that the touch was to His garments, and not to His body.

Now again let's eliminate the silliness here. This was not a magical robe that caused healing to anyone who touched it.

But the Holy Spirit healed through the robe.

It was not necessary that the woman touch the robe; this is the false doctrine of healing. But for some (good) reason God the Holy Spirit honors this woman's faith and decides to overlook her misconception about the doctrine.

The motivation of the woman's action has to do with privacy. God the Holy Spirit is going to intervene in the woman's life in a good way, but not the way that she wanted.

So Christ wants to know who touched His garments. There was a principle behind the healings of Jesus Christ - they explained something about His future atonement. It was therefore necessary to make them public.

Christ is aware that the Spirit has acted, and in humility to the guidance of the Spirit, He asks the question of the crowd. Christ knows that if the Spirit has done a healing, then He wants it to be known!

The replies of Peter and the disciples. "And while all were denying it Peter said, 'Master, the crowds are crowding You and pressing.' And His disciples said to Him, 'You see the crowd pressing on You and you say, 'Who touched Me?'"

Everyone around Christ denies that they had touched Him, which is almost comical, because there must have been many who did. Remember, the crowd was pressing in on our Lord.

And while all are denying it, Peter pipes in with His statement.

He uses the word EPISTATA, 'Master,' to address Christ, which is a strong term of humility toward authority. At the same time, Peter's tone is puzzled.

So Peter gives Christ a gentle reminder that the whole crowd is pressing in on Him, and that four or five or more were touching Him at any given time.

The other disciples chime in, and if possible they are stronger in their questioning of Christ. Their tone reaches into a sinful realm, because they question Christ in a sarcastic manner. Somehow, they decide not to trust Him, and it is an unfortunate misunderstanding on their part.

Jesus' explanation and continued search. "But Jesus said, 'Someone touched Me, for I knew after power had gone out from Me.' And He was looking around to see the one who had done this."

So Jesus has to patiently explain to His disciples that a healing has occurred, and why He knows that this is so.

He identifies to them what we know from the narrative He had experienced.

He now begins to look around to see the one who had touched His garment. He is hoping that there will be some evidence of guilt on a face in the crowd. Christ is an expert on human behavior, and He knows He has a shot to identify this person by looking around.

The woman's self-disclosure.

Her realization of being caught. "And the woman after she saw that she was not hidden,"

The woman realizes that she was not hidden. You can see Christ gaze into the crowd, and stop when His gaze reaches her. She had done this thing, and there was no hiding it.

From her perspective - why did she stay? This is a woman with a conscience, and a woman of great faith. She easily could have filtered

through the crowd and remained completely hidden, but she remained.

Her fear and knowledge the healing. "after fearing and trembling, after knowing what had happened to her,"

In Mark 5:33 we have this description - she is at first filled with fear and trembling. She is so afraid that she has done something wrong.

She came to the conclusion that her healing would come with a touch by her own initiative, but this was not necessarily true because Jesus could heal by the word of His mouth.

It hardly seemed real that this had actually happened. Just like that it happened, and then this man is demanding to know who touched Him, and she feels like she is in trouble. She has no idea why Jesus would want to know who had touched Him. Is His power to heal in some way a limited reserve? What will happen?

She is trembling, Mark says, because she knew what had happened to her. The discharge of power into her, and the immediate knowledge that she had been healed caused fear.

And this is not a good respect, but a real fear. The woman has faith but she is by no means mature, because then her perfect love for God would cast out all her fear. She does not have perfect love; just a faith that Jesus Christ can heal her. Spiritual maturity was certainly not the issue for her healing, but it became one almost immediately.

And God the Holy Spirit chose her because He knew that once she reconciled herself to the publicity and embarrassment she would be a fantastic witness for Christ.

Her response and declaration of the truth to Christ and to all. "went and fell down before Him, and said to Him the whole truth, and declared before all the people the reason she touched Him and that she had been immediately healed."

So Christ looks at her and she is filled with fear and trembling, and she decides to come clean completely.

She goes through the crowd to Christ, and falls down before Him, imitating the humility of Jairus.

And it is worth mentioning that she does imitate Jairus; only minutes before, that man had fallen before Jesus Christ, making his humility public even at the hazard of the loss of esteem and even more so his position in the local synagogue.

Now she sacrifices another kind of pride, because she described a problem with her reproductive health. And this was in a time when that was considered very, very private.

And there is more - when she touched Christ, she had the potential to make Him ceremonially unclean - this may have been the reason that she was so scared - the potential to make the Messiah unclean. Perhaps that is the reason she understood Him to be asking - because she mistakenly identified that He knew within Himself to be unclean.

So she tells the whole truth - she confesses her perpetually unclean condition, and what she had done in her desperation.

She must have had a courage born of desperation, because she had made many people unclean by her presence in that crowd, and she had therefore risked their ire. Furthermore, she had risked the ire of the Messiah Himself!

But she knows that there is one fact on her side, and one reason that she can come forward with the whole truth: she had been healed. She knew within herself that the flow of blood had stopped.

She would have seen revulsion on the faces of many in the crowd, had she dared to look. But she did not see anything like that on the face of the Messiah. She saw approval and appreciation for that courage.

(10) And the approval of the Messiah trumps the disapproval of thousands. This is certainly true as a general principle.

(11) Spiritual self-esteem is confidence in your own spiritual standing; it is looking at yourself through God's eyes. This is why she must have been able to overcome the disdain of many. She knew by looking at Christ that she had done the right thing.

(12) Hebrews 12:1-2, "(1) Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, (2) fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

(13) It is an objective of your spiritual life to make the opinion of your savior more important to you than anyone else's, so that His opinion has a governing effect on your life.

Christ's final words to her. "But He said to her, 'Have courage; daughter, your faith has saved you; go into peace and be well from your affliction.' And the woman was saved from that very hour."

Matthew's gospel has the phrase, 'Have courage, daughter.' The Greek phrase is THARSEI, THUGATER. THARSEI is a present imperative verb, so it expresses Christ's desire for the woman to begin and especially to continue in courage.

Remember how afraid she was about her affliction, how she trembled with fear!

But this verb also has the connotation of confidence and self-esteem, and our Lord here supports her as she talks about her problem.

He knows once He hears of her affliction just what the crowd's reaction will be, so He encourages her on the one hand, and keeps the crowd off her back on the other.

Then Christ lauds her again by telling her that her faith has saved her and to go into peace. He said this precise phrase to the sinful woman at the house of the Pharisee.

The woman's faith is responsible for her saving. Now here there is more of a physical connotation than with the sinful woman, but remember physical healing and spiritual healing are closely connected in the ministry of our Lord.

Isaiah 53:4 was quoted by Matthew when he described Christ's healing of Peter's mother in law: "(4) Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried; yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. (5) But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed. (6) All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him." This connects physical healing and healing from total depravity.

This woman placed her total trust in Christ with regard to her affliction. She knew He had the power to heal her. But Christ indicates with this phrase that there is more to her faith in Him than just a desire for physical healing.

Ephesians 2:8-9 puts a proper light on this moment: "(8) For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that [salvation] not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; (9) not as a result of works, so that no one may boast."

This woman had lived her life in fear and self-disgust and utter frustration. She had tried every human viewpoint solution that there was, and none had borne fruit. In this act of trusting God there is a reconciliation.

She did not make a deal with God; she did not attempt to trade her fealty for her healing. She simply believed without conditions and this resulted in her miracle.

The final command is for the woman to go in peace, POREUOU EIS EIRENEN.

There may be a little adjustment we need to make on this, on account of the preposition EIS.

This preposition shows more of an entrance into a state than a status quo.

The verb is a command that shows the earnest desire of Christ - it is a present imperative.

The present imperative concentrates on a command that is to begin right away and continue indefinitely.

So this woman is to go and keep on going in peace. Therefore the command to 'go' is closer to 'live.'

'Live always in peace' would be a fair rendition of this command.

The peace here is most likely a reference to the reconciliation unto God that this woman has most recently experienced. This would be a command to perpetuate the reconciliation by staying in fellowship with God.

This is accomplished naturally through the resistance to temptation, and the confession of sin when failure is encountered.

This is remarkably similar to Romans 5:1: "Therefore having been justified from faith, let us have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ..."

There is a pretty good chance that Paul had heard of this woman, and had this incident in mind when he wrote those important words.

So now two women have received these exact same comments from Christ. One because she was a sinner, and another because she was ill and a sinner. And this woman's faith saved her from that very hour. Both the physical and the spiritual were joined in this woman.

And one more symbol. If Christ can heal this woman who has such a repulsive ailment, then there is no sin which causes Him to flinch or shy away.

The Occurrence at Jairus' House.

The arrival of the messenger, the terrible news, and the conclusion of the messengers. "While He was still speaking they arrived from the synagogue-ruler saying 'Your daughter died; why do you still trouble the teacher?'"

As Christ is telling this woman to 'go into peace,' messengers arrive from the house of the synagogue-ruler with terrible news.

The daughter who was about to die has just died. But there is more here, because an attitude is reflected in what else they have to say: 'Why do you still trouble the teacher?'

Do these synagogue people really have a concern for Jesus? Because that is what the words say...

The teacher has too many important things to do; don't trouble Him. Don't distract Him from His important work. Right?

But if these synagogue people had been familiar with Jesus' ministry, then surely they would have understood that death was no boundary for the healing powers of the Messiah. He had raised the son of the widow at Nain, after all.

But they are not excused because of their ignorance. They call Christ DIDASKALON, 'teacher.' He is not considered by them to be the Messiah, or even to be a prophet. He is downgraded to simple 'teacher.' No better than any other guy who teaches in the synagogue, and that could be almost anyone in a synagogue congregation.

Furthermore, if Christ is only a DIDASKALON, then He is a lesser man than Jairus, because Jairus as a ruler of the synagogue, even as a simple elder, would have had a higher station than a teacher.

They have no legitimate concern for Christ and His all-important time; their motivation is to get Jairus away from Him. They perceive Christ as a danger to their synagogue ruler, and so they make an attempt at separation here.

This terrible news is good news for Jairus' people, because it gives them a chance to redeem their synagogue-ruler!

Jesus' encouraging reply. "But Jesus, after overhearing the word being spoken says to the synagogue ruler, 'Do not fear, only believe, and she will be saved.'"

Of course, Christ is on to all of their petty machinations, and He knows exactly what to do. Remember, our Lord is an expert on human nature, and even on the less savory expressions of it.

The verb PARAKOUO describes Christ's overhearing. But this also means to pay no attention to something, and this double meaning is effective here. Christ overhears what is said, and then ignores it. He overrules with His own words.

And He does not even reply them; they are not important, but Jairus is. Christ tells Jairus: "Do not fear, only believe, and she will be saved."

Once again we have the zone of exclusion between faith and fear. Perfect faith, perfect love casts out all fear. This was the theme only the night before this, when the storm occurred at sea.

And you should recall that there has been a very frustrating delay on the way to help the girl. Christ knows of the urgency of the situation here, but He sees that He must minister to the woman with the hemorrhage first, and the God the Holy Spirit has chosen that assignment for Him.

The tumultuous situation at the house. "Now after coming into the house, He did not allow anyone to follow after Him to enter except Peter and James and John the brother of James and the father of the child and the mother. And they came into the house of the synagogue-ruler, and they beheld a commotion."

Christ allows only the inner circle of His disciples to follow into the inner room where the girl lay. These three, Peter, James, and John, were privileged to see many things that the others did not. Among other things they alone witnessed the transfiguration and were asked by Christ to pray with Him in the Garden of Gethsemane.

The mother and the father of the child were also allowed to enter. This was not to be the business of the crowd after all. They had missed the healing of the woman on the way,

because it was private between her and the Spirit. And now Christ will not allow this dog and pony show to enter the house of mourning.

Christ has a sense of dignity and respect and certainly He is thoughtful of these parents even if He knows there is to be a joyous outcome.

He knows that the child will be raised, but He does not want His noisy crowd to interfere with the one that He has notice inside the house.

Today's Handbook of Bible Times and Customs says this about the funeral bier and procession on pages 245-246: "Funeral processions were common among the Jews. The body was carried on a wooden bier often consisting of little more than flat boards... ..A bier carried a symbol to indicate the deceased's occupation or social status... ..A funeral march was hardly quiet, for the typical Jew believed in venting his emotions by loud wailing, beating on his chest and even tearing his clothes. Friends, mourners, and even professional mourners joined in expressing a bitter farewell. Even the poorest family was expected to hire at least one mourner. Singer and musical instruments, especially flutes, were also a part of this procession."

Christ's response to the noisy mourners. "And seeing the flute players and the crying and great wailing, He says to them, 'Go back out! Why are you troubled and crying? The child is not dead but is sleeping.'"

Christ now looks inside the house, and sees that the mourners have already gathered. Apparently the girl's death was expected, because they were organized well enough to have the mourning take place in a very short time after the girl's death. Perhaps less than an hour has passed since the girl passed away; perhaps much less than an hour.

Our Lord also understand that this is a false kind of grief. Professional mourners were a sham and really an insult to death. He treats them with disdain and tells them to get out. This certainly would have been a temptation regardless of what Christ knew!

And He does something that is almost comical - He tells professional mourners who are charlatans at best to stop being troubled and to stop crying.

But there is another issue: up to this point the narrative has made it clear that the child has indeed died. Well at least that is the truth according to the report of those who came from Jairus' house - the messengers from the synagogue ruler. And of course all these people here sincerely believe the child has died. Who is right?

We can depend on this: that Christ has no motive to lie, and even if He did he would not. The girl is in that nether world just before death; her soul has not left her body even though her body has ceased virtually all function. Her heartbeat is indiscernible, as is her breath. She is pale and completely unresponsive to all attempts at resuscitation.

Now sleep is used to describe the believer in death in anticipation of resurrection:

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, "(13) But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. (14) For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. (15) For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. (16) For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. (17) Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. (18) Therefore comfort one another with these words."

1 Corinthians 15:51-53, "(51) Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, (52) in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised

imperishable, and we will be change. (52) For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality."

However, Christ makes a distinction between death and sleep with His very words!

But one more insight: Christ was speaking words of comfort here. There were those who were mourning with legitimacy, and His words are intended for them. And the comfort comes in the form of the truth, the truth that the girl has not yet died.

The mourners' ridicule of Christ and their removal from the scene. "And laughing at Him knowing that she died - but casting them all out,"

The mourners ridicule Jesus Christ, even though they are wrong. Their mourning was inappropriate because it was false and the girl was not dead after all.

There are participles here which describe the ongoing laughter - present participles in the nominative case which form the subject of the sentence. This all depicts something that starts and then continues.

The laughter starts - ridicule of Christ's conclusion - after all, this guy just walks in and says something that is so obviously untrue. This is mean laughter.

And then the sentence stops. Modern conventions of punctuation have tried to fix this problem, but the intent in both Mark and Luke is to interrupt one sentence with another so that we know Christ has interrupted the laughter. The sentence describing their laughter stops to grammatically portray the cessation of laughter and more.

The new sentence says - 'but casting them all out, He took alongside the father of the child and the mother and those with Him and entered where the child was.'

Christ cast out all those who were laughing. They were rude, and full of disbelief. He casts them out of the house.

This same verb, EKBALLO, is employed time and again with reference to demon possession. The word picture cannot be missed here that Christ exorcises these bad and hypocritical people from the house. They are certainly under demon influence!

PARALAMBANO describes what Christ does with Jairus and his wife. He 'takes them alongside.' It does not describe Him as saying anything at all, but rather acting. By gesture and by eye contact, Christ takes these people alongside, so that they follow Him into the inner room.

Christ leads; He indicates to them all that there is work to be done, and so into the girl's room they go. Those with Him do not need to be told twice.

The raising of the child. "after seizing the hand of the child He sounds off to her, 'Talitha, koum' which being translated is 'Little girl, I say to you, rise!' And her breath returned and immediately the girl stood and began walking around; for she was twelve years old. He ordered her to give to her to eat."

Christ seizes the hand of the twelve year old. The aorist participle KRATESAS describes this action. This is an almost violent action. It is a swift and business-like snatching of the hand.

And not only that, He sounds off to her. EPHONESAN is the verb and it means to speak very loudly, or even to yell.

These two demonstrative actions are striking. They are so full of energy and decisiveness. Christ wants them to see His faith in His sweeping action and to hear His faith in the loud and confident tone of voice.

The actual words from the Aramaic are preserved by Mark: TALITHA KOUM. They are spoken directly to this girl! They are spoken as though the girl herself can hear these things with her own ears. She could only do this if she were alive.

Christ speaks directly to her, and even though she is unconscious and at the very door of death, He commands her to rise.

Luke adds the detail that at this very moment the breath of the girl returned. This sounds like the soul of the young woman - and if so, this comes back to indicate that she has died according to a technical definition.

But there can be no contradiction whatsoever; either she died or she did not.

Luke's gospel has Christ saying that she did not die, but also that her breath returned. But perhaps the return of her spirit does not mean that she has actually died.

More likely is this: that PNEUMA means breath here. It is well within the realm of meaning that this is so. Even though the girl has stopped breathing, her soul is still present, and she is only unconscious.

And the moment that her breath returns, she stands and begins walking around. This is certainly evidence that she is now alive and well! All the illness and all the weakness are gone in a moment's time, and she is restored to full health.

And then Jesus commands that she be given food to eat. She has apparently been ill for a long time, and there has been a period of time when she has not been eating. She is completely well at this point so that she can take and hold solid food.

The response of the parents and Jesus' final admonition. "And immediately her parents were astounded with great ecstasy, but He announced to them to say nothing about the event."

EXESTESAN EUTHUS EKSTASEI MEGALE forms the response of the parents. "They were immediately astounded with great ecstasy."

EXESTESAN and EKSTASEI are related; the former is the verb and the latter is the noun in the same word group. The verb means to 'stand outside oneself.' And the noun describes that state.

What they saw after they gave up hope was their daughter returned from certain death,

returned after everyone had assumed her dead and begun even to mourn her.

And now this girl is alive and breathing and walking around; and simply because Jesus Christ said 'Talitha Koum.'

But something strange: Christ announced to them to say nothing of the event, and that no one should about it.

Obviously, this would be difficult since the mourners for the girl were right outside, and they would either have to bury the child or let her live out her life. Folks would be able to put two and two together from the incident, and know that Christ was the only one who could have accomplished this thing.

But Christ does not want the publicity. After all, it is bad enough with the crowds as it is. We have already seen what an impediment they are to His ministry, and they have begun to affect His travel plans.

It does not help at all that the crowd is motivated to follow Jesus for the wrong reasons, and that they are not interested in the necessity of His atonement or any other proper thing like that. To them, Christ is a circus act; He is entertaining, but not a life changer.

Christ could just stay in one place and have everyone come to Him, but He has places to go and people to announce the kingdom to, and He does not want the crowd to be in the way so much.

With Jairus as a synagogue official in this town, there is a greater danger for the kind of publicity that Christ does not want. Because Jairus was a celebrity in his own right, there is the potential for an even greater crowd to follow our Lord. He does not want this.

Healing Incidents

Matthew 9:27-34

Exposition.

The Incident of the Blind Men.

Their plea, v.27, "And while passing on from there, two blind men followed after Jesus,

crying out and saying, 'Have mercy on us, Son of David!'"

So Christ leaves Jairus's house and moves on. It does not indicate His ultimate destination within this passage, but the next part of the narrative has our Lord in Nazareth - that is where He will eventually go.

Whether the crowd has dispersed is not evident; it seems like Christ is alone, or at least only with His disciples. In any event, two blind men followed after Jesus - but what is wrong with this picture?

How could they follow if they were blind? Apparently unmentioned are their guides. Family or friends could guide them to Jesus Christ hoping that He would do something about their condition.

So He goes on His way and these two follow after Him, and they cry out. The word is KRAZO, and it really does denote desperation here. These men are desperate for relief from their condition.

Although the substance of their plea is common enough, 'Have mercy on us,' what they call Jesus is interesting indeed - 'Son of David.'

This way of addressing Jesus Christ was a way of identifying His lineage and right to the throne of Israel.

John 7:42, "Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the descendants of David, and from Bethlehem, the village where David was?"

Romans 1:3, "Concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh."

2 Timothy 2:8, "Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descendant of David, according to my gospel."

It is impossible to know for sure the motive that these blind men have for this mode of address. It is either respect or flattery, and Christ knows it could go either way. He is going to reserve judgment until He can inquire further.

Jesus' testing of their faith, and their reply, v.28, "And after coming into the house the blind men approached Him, and Jesus says to them, 'Do you believe that I am able to do this?' They said to Him,

So Christ comes into a house, and the blind men approach Him.

And so Jesus tests their faith with the question. By this He will know for certain whether they are grace oriented.

But when you are blind, grace orientation seems almost an assumption. Christ does not assume, but asks them whether they trust in His ability to heal them.

They answer simply and quickly and respectfully, NAI, KURIE.

Jesus' healing of them, and His admonition, vv.29-30, " (29) Then He touched their eyes, saying According to your faith let it happen to you.' (30) And their eyes were opened. And Jesus warned them, saying, 'Let no one know that you see!'"

Again there is touch. He touched their eyes. You can imagine Christ reaching out with both hands, and their moment of anticipation, because they do not know what He is going to do. Then they feel His touch, and instinctively their eyelids close.

And with the touch the words, KATA TEN PISTIN HUMON GENETHETO HUMIN.

The sentence describes a pattern, and the pattern is the faith of these two men.

Christ communicates not to the men, but to God. This is a prayer.

The imperative of entreaty is the function of the verb GENETHETO. This is a polite way of issuing a command, and the command is a prayer command to God.

Christ has supreme confidence in the faith of these men; He places that confidence in God, knowing that God the Father will be completely faithful to the faith of these men.

And so these men hear the words as Christ touches their eyes, and then His touch recedes, and their eyes instinctively open again... and they can see.

It doesn't say how long their condition had lasted, but with blindness it would hardly matter. A lifetime or a matter of weeks would not make a difference to their desperation, and now to their most definite joy.

And He adds a command to them. Again publicity is a great concern for Jesus, and He has apparently shucked the crowd for the time being. But if these men should make public their healing at Christ's hand, then He is likely to be mobbed again.

Their disobedience, v.31, "But after they went out [from the house] they spread it around in that whole area."

Again we don't know the motive, we can only observe the disobedience. They went out from the house and spread it around the whole area. They did so right away.

DIEPHEMISAN is the verb which means 'spread around.' It means literally to 'speak throughout.'

So these men leave the house and go on a tour of the whole region, and speak everywhere they go about how Jesus healed them of their blindness.

It's not like Christ was using reverse psychology on them, and He wanted them to spread publicity about Him. They disobeyed, and gave disrespected to the compassion of Jesus Christ.

The Incident of the Demon-possessed Mute.

His condition, v.32, "And behold! While He was going they brought to Him a dumb man who was demon-possessed."

This is really as good a place as any to arrange this little incident. Since Matthew's gospel is arranged topically, it does not follow a chronology of Christ's life. Sometimes it is difficult to determine the chronology of events from Matthew's gospel alone.

And yet here we have an event that is only in Matthew's gospel. We will put it here, but it could be anywhere. To be honest, it feels like this occurs more toward the beginning of Christ's ministry, because of the response of the crowd.

In any event, there is a man who cannot speak, and he has a demon. The demon is the one who causes this affliction - it is the demon that is mute, or at least refuses to speak.

Christ had to know that the problem was demonism. Perhaps God the Holy Spirit gave Him guidance to this end, or perhaps people who knew the man could tell Him.

The exorcism and its effect on the crowd, v.33, "And after casting out the demon the dumb man spoke. And the crowd marveled, saying, 'Nothing like this was revealed in Israel.'"

It seems so simple a miracle. Christ casts out the demon, and then the man speaks. It is obvious to all present that the demon caused the problem in the first place.

The crowd marvels: this comes from the verb ETHAUMASAN. They thought this was something fantastic, and they say these words: OUDEPOTE EPHANE HOUTOS EN TO ISRAEL. 'Nothing like this was revealed in Israel.'

They review the history of their nation, and find nothing like this. Nothing from Moses until the present time that matches this criteria of a demon exorcism.

But of course they are wrong on one count, because they have forgotten their Old Testament.

The exorcisms that Christ performed were for more than compassionate reasons; they were kingdom signs.

Christ is indeed demonstrating that He is the Son of David. There is something that I failed to mention when we undertook the Messianic potential of Christ previously in this passage.

1 Samuel 16:14-23 is the record of the only exorcism in the Old Testament: "(14) Now the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an

evil spirit terrorized him. (15) Saul's servants then said to him, 'Behold now, and evil spirit from God is terrorizing you. (16) Let our lord now command your servants who are before you. Let them seek a man who is a skillful player on the harp; and it shall come about when the evil spirit from God is on you, that he shall play the harp with his hand, and you will be well.' (17) So Saul said to his servants, 'Provide for me now a man who can play well and bring him to me.' (18) The one of the young men said, 'Behold, I have seen son of Jesse the Bethlehemite who is a skillful musician, a mighty man of valor, a warrior, one prudent in speech, and a handsome man; and the Lord is with him.' (19) So Saul sent messengers to Jesse and said, 'Send me your son David who is with the flock.' (20) Jesse took a donkey loaded with bread and a jug of wine and a young goat, and sent them to Saul by David his son. (21) Then David came to Saul and attended him; and Saul loved him greatly, and he became his armor bearer. (22) Saul sent to Jesse, saying, 'Let David now stand before me, for he has found favor in my sight.' (23) So it came about whenever the evil spirit from God came to Saul, David would take the harp and play it with his hand; and Saul would be refreshed and be well, and the evil spirit would depart from him."

So David is the only Old Testament believer who exorcised demons, and he did it by means of music and the Spirit of God.

So Christ now reasons that if by the Spirit of God He is casting out demons, then the kingdom must be upon them, and He Himself must be the Son of David, the Messiah.

The response of the Pharisees, v.34, "But the Pharisees were saying, 'By means of the authority of the demons He casts out the demons.'"

The Pharisees, on the other hand, do not believe them to be kingdom signs, but rather again claim that Christ is casting out by the authority of the demons.

This by now is an old accusation, and one that Christ completely refuted not so long ago in His ministry. Well, here it comes again.

And do you remember how cleverly and accurately Christ refuted those accusations? This occurred in Mark 3:20-30.

That a house divided against itself cannot stand.

That if someone is casting out demons, then the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

If you are not a demon, you at least must be stronger than a demon in order to cast one out.

And if you are not with Christ, then you are His enemy. And if you are the enemy of Christ, the one who has power over demons, then you just might be in a heap of trouble!

He finally tells them that He is giving the gospel, and they are interfering; they are blaspheming against God the Holy Spirit, and preventing others from being saved. This kind of sin has the gravest of consequences.

Christ Returns to Nazareth

Matthew 13:54-58

Mark 6:1-6

Exposition.

The transition to Nazareth, and who was with Him, "And He went out from there and came into His home town, and His disciples followed Him."

This is all pretty straightforward as far as translation is concerned, but what seems strange is that Christ is returning to Nazareth at all. It is strange considering what happened the last time He was there:

Luke 4:16-31a, "And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, he entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read. And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the book, and found the place where it was written, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to

the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are downtrodden, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord.' 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 upon Him. And He began to say to them, 'Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.' But all were speaking well of him, and wondering at the gracious words which were falling from His lips; and they were saying, 'Is this not Joseph's son?' And He said to them, 'No doubt you will quote this parable to Me, 'Physician, heal yourself!' We heard certain things were happening at Capernaum, do them here in your home town as well.' And He said, 'Truly I say to you, no prophet is welcome in his home town. But I say to you in truth, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the sky was shut up for three years and six months, when a great famine came over all the land; and yet Elijah was sent to none of them, but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian. And all in the synagogue were filled with rage when they heard these things; and they rose up and cast Him out of the city, and led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city had been built, in order to throw Him down the cliff. But passing through their midst, He went His way."

What a disaster, and He said some very frank things about the people of His hometown, and they were so angry that they even tried to kill Him.

A year or more has passed, and time enough for passions to settle down somewhat. In the interim, Christ's fame and popularity have grown. He has spent months and months in the region of Galilee, healing and teaching.

It was His former custom to teach in the synagogue. As a young man, He was often allowed to give dissertation there on various Old Testament passages and subjects. But on

that previous occasion, He finally identified Himself as the Messiah, and the people were not interested.

Because they were so interested in miracles, they were distracted from His Bible teaching, and as a result He told them that He would not do any miracles at all.

They were outraged at this prohibition, and tried to kill Him, but He slipped away before anything could happen.

So the conclusion is that it took courage to go back there.

On observation: on the previous occasion, He had no disciples with Him. It was just after He escaped from Nazareth that Christ first called the four, Simon Peter, Andrew, James, and John. Although Christ was no coward, and He had no compulsion to go alone, there were twelve entering Nazareth this time, that that would likely deter any attempts on His life.

His teaching in the synagogue and the response of the crowd, "And after the Sabbath came, He began to teach in the synagogue, and many while hearing Him were 'knocked out,'"

He taught once again on the Sabbath, which was His old custom back home. As a young man, it was very common for Him to teach in the synagogue and now He has returned to do the same thing.

The people of Nazareth had no idea as to what they had. This young man who was so very knowledgeable of the Old Testament taught often, but they were pointedly uninterested in His ideas.

Yet the sermons of the young man Jesus had to be dynamic so as to change lives. How sad that so few benefited from what was the greatest pulpit ministry in history. Perhaps only His mother and one or two more really understood what He was saying.

While they heard Christ, they were 'knocked out.' The verb is EXEPLESSONTO. The uncompounded form of this verb simply means to 'strike someone with force.' That is, it

portrays the violent act of hitting someone. EKPLESSOMAI meant to hit them and knock them out.

But of course this could be good or bad. They could be struck violently in taking offense, or they could be struck violently and knocked out in amazement.

Well, this passage goes on to say that they are having a negative reaction to His teaching.

We can assume that Christ taught a solid and appropriate message here. We can assume that there was plenty of spiritual growth available in this message. But these people of Christ's hometown hate it with a violence.

This message has caused them rage and vitriol that left them knocked out - beside themselves.

And this gives us insight on the town where Christ grew and developed into a young man. To say that it was spiritually arid would be an understatement.

But how He developed character by preaching all those great sermons to people who were flatly uninterested!

And yet in this most arid of spiritual climates, Luke 2:51-52 has this to say about our Lord: "(51) And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth; and he continued in subjection to them; and His mother treasured all these things in her heart. (52) And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men."

He grew in favor with god and men. He had a good reputation among the men of Nazareth. But couldn't this have to do with the establishment and business side of Christ's life?

Another possibility is that they only developed this negative attitude after Christ became famous. They could handle His sermons, and they were supportive of Him, but when He became famous, they became petty and judgmental. But this seems less likely than the other possibility.

Regardless, they did not like what He had to say, and for the most petty of reasons.

“saying, ‘From where did these things come to Him and what is the wisdom given to Him and the miracles such as what happens through His hands? Isn’t He the carpenter, and the son of the carpenter and Mary, and the brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And aren’t His sisters with us? Therefore when did all these things come to Him?’ And they took offense at Him.”

The crowd stated their reasons, and they are plain for us to see and analyze. They say, “Where did these things come from?” The demonstrative pronoun TAUTA points to the object most immediately at hand, and they go on to define it as the wisdom given to Him and the miracles such as what happens through His hands. We will look at each in turn.

First is the wisdom given to Him.

So if you think about it, the crowd knows that this is wisdom and insight that comes from the mouth of their hometown boy.

And even though they know that it is wisdom, they cannot stand the fact that it comes from Him.

And they deny Him as having much to do with that wisdom. Their denial goes beyond the point of grace orientation.

They employ this phrase (recorded in Mark 6:2) TIS HE SOPHIA HE DOTHEISA TOUTO. “What is the wisdom given to Him?”

The passive voice of the articular participle DOTHEISA indicates that they did not believe Christ to be the source of this SOPHIA, wisdom.

And this is where they are incorrect. Wisdom is applied truth. Look at this:

You make four decisions with regard to the truth:

- To Hear it;
- To Believe it;
- To Inculcate it;
- And to Use it.

God the Holy Spirit does two things.

- He processes it after you believe in it;
- He recalls it when you need it, before you use it.

God the Father does four things with regard to the truth.

- He is the source of the all truth;
- He caused it at various times to enter human history;
- He sustains it in human history.
- He brings us to it through guidance and discipline.

Now you can summarize this by saying:

That God is the source of truth, and the ultimate source of all wisdom.

That God enables us so that we are brought to the truth, and can process it, and apply it.

That we are responsible through our free will for taking what is provided, for believing and inculcating, and for using it.

It is fair to say that without God, there would be no truth, and without His grace we could have no wisdom whatsoever.

But it is also fair to say that we obtain wisdom by means of good free will decisions, and that we possess wisdom.

Because of the negative tenor of these comments, we can assume that they think the wisdom could not possibly have come from Christ. What follows is their analysis of Christ’s roots.

They identify that He was a carpenter, and His father was the carpenter.

So this is menial and humble labor. His father was a carpenter, and He had followed in His Father’s business.

Now when we think of carpentry, we think of building houses and decks and even more ambitious projects.

But this was not the case, since most homes in Israel were not made of wood, so much as of

stone and brick. There was, after, a shortage of trees that could be made into beams.

The noun TEKTON encompasses a wide variety of skills, including crafts and artifice. Wood-carving, weaving, and perfume-making are just a few of the things possible.

What is difficult is that Christ does not allude to His former profession in His discourses and conversation. There is no solid clue as to what this was.

This comment from the people of Nazareth is meant to be demeaning. They are identifying this as a common profession; even an inferior one. It is a background from which you would not expect greatness.

Their implication is that this is not fair. These people apparently have an elitist view of the Messiah. He is, after all, supposed to be the king of the people of Israel. And He is, after supposed to be a descendant of King David.

How could this lowly man, a man of such a low profession, be the Messiah? How could He be wise, and have such miraculous powers? You can almost feel their bitterness.

It would be like a janitor, or the guy who does your lawn, or a construction worker ended up being the Messiah. You just don't expect that guy to be the Messiah.

They also go through a checklist of names in Jesus' family.

Mother, sons, and daughters are all mentioned. But of course this is part of discourse that registers incredulity at Christ the wise man, and Christ the miracle worker.

They look at His family, and their conclusion is that this is just not right. They cannot believe that the Messiah came from this family.

How they turn up their noses at this notion. Once again there is a general attitude of elitism about Christ. It couldn't be, and it is wrong!

This does not mean that Christ came from a bad family; it does indicate that His was a family of generally low estate. There may have been

plenty of virtue, and I am sure that if Mary was involved, there must have been a good upbringing.

Can you imagine, however, being a brother or sister to Jesus Christ? Wow. How truly challenging to be imperfect, and to have a sin nature, and to live in the same house with the boy Messiah! Only Christ's guardian angel had it harder... James is the only one we know for sure came out right. He wrote the first epistle of the New Testament.

One note: two different names are employed by Matthew and Mark for one of Christ's brothers. Matthew says Joseph while Mark says Josés. The latter was probably a nickname.

So they have maligned Christ, His family, and His profession. How could they do this? Christ was after all a good man.

And then it says that they took offense at Him. The verb is SKANDALIZO, which means to stumble, or take offense. This of course sounds familiar. Where was this quoted?

Jesus Christ is one of two stones in everyone's life: The cornerstone or the stumbling stone.

As the cornerstone, He is the foundation for thought, motive, decision, and action.

As the stumbling stone, He is the object of bitterness and motivation for cosmic involvement.

1 Peter 2:6-8 identifies this syndrome: "(6) Therefore it is contained [somewhere] in Scripture, 'Behold I place a stone in Zion, a choice precious cornerstone, and the one who believes in Him will certainly not be ashamed.' (7) Therefore, the honor is for you who believe, but for those who disbelieve, 'The stone which the builders rejected, this became the chief corner,' (8) and, 'The stone of bruises and rock of stumbling;' they stumble against the word, disobeying into what also they were appointed."

Principle: Christ causes people to stumble because His life is confrontational. His life

confronts us with eternal choices, and causes us to surrender our pride, totally surrender.

Taking offense means putting up a defense.

This is the nature of the cosmic system; to lie about Christ's true nature, and about His work. Especially though His work.

And with every lie comes a supermarket, a megamall of substitutes. There are substitute of every shape and color imaginable. Ways to attempt to replace what Christ has done.

And with the replacements there must be a denigration of Christ's character and His work; even of His reality as a person.

This is the rational nature of a human being. You have to do something with Christ, because He is there, and He does not go away.

Now Christ analyzes their words: "But Jesus said to them, 'A prophet is not dishonored except in His home town and among His own relatives and in His own house.'"

Wow. This is pretty extensive. Our Lord expands this criticism to include His hometown, His relatives, and His immediate family.

Even His immediately family. This puts more of a face on the people who are surprised at His success.

Some were maligning His family, but Christ certainly here includes His own immediately family among those who were not welcoming Him.

There were some brothers and sisters who were maligning Christ with the others; questioning His Messiahship.

Christ had a heart for these people. After His last disastrous visit, He had no extraneous motivation to return. He came back because they were His people, and He wanted them to join His kingdom.

And there is risk involved here, especially considering the serious threat to His life which occurred last time He came to visit.

So He comes with the purest of motives, and a willingness to risk for these people. These are the ones He knows best. After all, He spent 27 years with them, and He has spent only a year or two with His disciples.

There was a certain amount of nostalgia here. Christ was experiencing old memories, fond and not so fond. But He comes back to Nazareth, and they reject him again.

This had to be one of the more difficult disappointments of His life up to this point. And yet He took it with grace.

The limited healing ministry in Nazareth, and the reason for the limit, "And He was not able to do any miracles there because of their unbelief (Except after laying hands on a few sick people He healed them.) And he marveled because of their unbelief."

Here is a reminder that no healing was done apart from the belief of the one with the ailment.

The reason is simple: Christ's healing ministry represents the healing atonement of the cross. The cross does not automatically save everyone, just as Christ did not automatically heal everyone. Both require belief.

This makes Christ's miracles and healing ministry a very potent vehicle for the gospel, and at the same time incriminates the people of Nazareth all the more.

This is reminiscent of the time that Christ pronounced woes upon Chorazin and Bethsaida, because there were many great miracles done there, and yet they did not repent.

And yet a distinction must be made. At least in those towns there was enough faith so that great miracles could be done. This could barely be said of Christ's home town. Therefore they were even worse off than the two accursed towns of Northern Galilee.

And those towns were truly accursed, and pronounced as more cursed than Tyre and Sidon for the day of judgment.

Christ marveled because of their unbelief. This is the statement of Mark 6:6a, and the Greek word is the aorist indicative ETHAUMAZEN.

This means to perceive something as completely extraordinary, and even to have the inward emotional reaction on account of the perception.

If it is a good thing to marvel at, then there is joy; if bad, then revulsion. Christ here experienced a negative emotional reaction to what His senses perceived concerning His hometown people.

Now consider: Christ had seen all kinds of negative response to His ministry, and the Pharisees were even trying to kill Him. He had pronounced woes upon three cities in Northern Galilee because they were so stubborn regarding the object of His ministry.

And yet this unbelief is considered by Christ to be completely extraordinary. These were bad people indeed!

And yet certain principles must always apply:
They cannot be the object of blanket judgment.

If possible, the gospel must be given opportunity with them again and again.

The Final Galilean Ministry

Matthew 9:35-38

Mark 6:6b

Exposition.

“And Jesus was going around all the cities and villages in a circle, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every sickness.”

This was a circular ministry. Mark brings out this detail with the word KUKLO. You are familiar with this word because you know ‘Cyclops,’ which means ‘round-eye,’ and of course anything in the ‘cycle’ word group.

So Christ went around the villages in a circle; He had a set path according to certain villages and cities that He would visit. These formed a rough circle. It is not clear which cities and

villages these are, but they are certainly in Galilee.

It is now winter coming into the spring of AD 29. Christ has been active in His ministry for almost two years.

It was His strategy to go into the synagogues and teach, and to preach His gospel of the kingdom, which He had introduced late in the previous autumn. He has been preaching the gospel of the kingdom for about four months.

There is a semantic difference between teaching and preaching.

Teaching is DIDASKON, which signifies teaching with authority. Teaching communicates and elucidates principles, leaving the motivation to students.

Preaching is KERUSSON, which signifies teaching with exhortation. Preaching is much more pushy than teaching; it cajoles and inspires to action.

When Christ went into the synagogues, He taught. The atmosphere in the synagogue demanded that method. It is opposite of what we are used to in our churches, but imagine that the synagogue is a school, and you will have a grasp of the situation.

When Christ was in the open air, He preached so as to motivate the crowds, especially regarding the good news of the kingdom.

The kingdom was good news - it was His offer of a millennial rule to the people of Israel.

And Jesus Christ was motivational in His speaking. You can well imagine just how skilled He was. He surely must have been a marvel at preaching, considering His knowledge and insight into Scripture.

Furthermore, He was authenticating all of this with His healing ministry, and every disease and illness was healed by Him. They all powerfully pointed to the healing of the cross.

“Now seeing the crowds He had compassion concerning them, because they had become

completely distressed and downcast like sheep without a shepherd.”

Now this is a first indeed. The crowds have been a hindrance to Christ, and always something to avoid. He has had places to go and sermons to preach. Always the crowd is in the way; always they have the wrong motivation for seeing Him.

The present participle IDON is from the root verb HORAIO, which means to both see and understand. Christ saw something for the first time in the crowd that He had been seeing all along. Christ has not changed, but the crowd finally has. Now for the first time they are developing a desire for a relationship with God.

He identifies that there is a leadership vacuum among them - that they are like sheep without a shepherd. And He has compassion for them. The word is ESPLAGCHNISTHE, which means ‘guts,’ the innermost part of man. Deep inside Himself, our Lord had emotion toward the crowd.

Two pluperfect periphrastic participles describe the countenance of the crowd in the strongest of terms.

This peculiar grammatical construction of the Greek language focuses the reader’s attention on the action of the verb. This time, it is pluperfect, so it concentrates on a perfect state in the past. The proper translation is “They had become utterly...”

The first participle is ESKULMENOI, which means to be harassed. The original meaning of the verb SKULLO is to ‘flay.’ So when the bad news of life come one after another, it like being skinned. So Christ scans the crowd, and they look like they’ve been skinned by the events of their day.

The second is ERRIMMENOI, which comes from HRIPTO. This verb has a broad etymology with a common theme.

The original idea was to toss away garbage - to throw away anything that was no longer useful.

The Greeks employed this verb to denote a newborn child that had been ‘exposed’ by the parents - left out in the elements as a kind of post-partum form of abortion. The modern equivalent is tossing a newborn into a dumpster.

It also came to describe the sick person who is cast down by his illness, and yet one more thing.

It described the abandoned flock, which with no shepherd would just lie down and wait whatever disaster would come their way.

So now this is the flip side of their lack of direction, and their constant distortion and ignorance of Christ’s ministry.

This was a generation of Jews who were lost. They had no decent leadership in the whole country. They had an identity as a people, and understood their glorious past and their great destiny. But it wasn’t happening.

They had David and Solomon looking over their shoulders; the pressure of the glory of the past, and the promise of the great kingdom of the future.

That promise represented pressure on this generation, because of the failure of the Maccabean times, and the pressure and exploitation of Rome.

This generation knew that they were slaves to Rome; they knew it whenever they saw the Roman fighting man in uniform; whenever they looked and saw another one of Herod’s buildings; whenever they paid taxes.

And they knew that they had not been equipped for greatness by their own leadership. Although the Scribes and Pharisees had attempted to put an iron grip on them through guilt and their monopoly on the temple, they had failed.

These rugged and rebellious Galileans knew that the Pharisees were to a certain extent a sham, and they did not have such a great effect on them. This points out the moral dimension

of leadership - that honest people will not follow corrupt leadership.

And the Roman leadership was morally corrupt to an extreme. The Herodian dynasty of the region has seldom been exceeded in history for the issue of immoral degeneracy, just as the Pharisees have seldom been exceeded for the issue of moral degeneracy. It was that kind of time.

But they were all thinking - what do we have to do to be free? What do we have to do to get what God has promised?

So there is a real leadership vacuum among the people of this region at this time, and the people of the region have been cast out like garbage, so that they are exceedingly depressed.

But let's consider why they have not followed Christ - at least up to this point.

We can classify Jesus Christ as the greatest leader of all time; and these Galilean crowds are like sheep without a shepherd. Then why hasn't Christ become their shepherd?

Christ's leadership begins in the spiritual realm; it requires a relationship with God the Father through Him in order to work.

Furthermore, our Lord is leading into a spiritual realm. The content of His preaching about the kingdom concentrates on the spiritual distinctions of His kingdom.

Yes, these crowds are in a leadership vacuum, but they neither do they want to go where Christ is leading.

There are many unbelievers here, as evidenced by how many believe for the first time when they are healed by Christ, or when they meet Him personally.

But even Christ's disciples have trouble with the parables, and with faith that goes beyond salvation.

"Then He says to His disciples, The harvest is great, but the workers few; therefore bind the

Lord of the harvest so as to cast out workers into His harvest."

Christ identifies the possibility of positive volition among these crowds. He knows that their mode of function is according to their cosmic frame of reference.

That is, He makes a mature evaluation of their cosmic *modus operandi*. "Cosmic people act like it." These crowds are living under the authority of their cosmic frame of reference and responding as expected. Christ decides not to judge them for this, but rather to see their potential contained within their volition.

He considers this harvest to be great. He considers the historical trends involved with these people, and determines that they are the kind of people that are ripe for the gospel.

There were thousands of people that followed Christ; not to far in the future, He will feed five thousand of them.

But why doesn't He just give them the gospel while they are gathered about Him at every stop? A crowd is an efficient gathering. He could just do this, and wham! They will all become believers.

Part of the answer is that the workers are few. Christ is a worker; His disciples are workers, but they are few. He says this in such a way as to make them understand that although His preaching and teaching are excellent, there is a need among them to receive evangelism in a more personal way.

Principle: people who are in the cosmic system are weak. A combination of things must fall together in order for a person to believe in Jesus Christ, or to turn their lives around from reversionism.

They must have come to a point of humility, of readiness in their lives. This is the abode of God. He is the one who works the circumstances of lives so that men are humble.

They must hear the gospel by one means or another. Sometimes a person will wait for just the right method before they will respond. This

is a reflection of their weakness that they want to hear the gospel on their own terms.

1 Corinthians 9 has a brief passage on the principle of meeting people where they are. Let's go there.

Christ employs the imperative mood of the verb DEETHETE to communicate a command. The meaning of the word is 'bind,' 'tie,' or even 'compel.' The idea is that you force someone to do something.

Again Christ communicates the idea commanding God the Father with reference to prayer. This also was very clear in the Lord's prayer, where so many of the clauses were in the imperative mood of command.

The idea exists in Christ's mind because He has a perfect understanding of the integrity of God.

God's integrity is His perfect attitude toward His own communication. God is always honest and forthright and clear in the way that He communicates.

And God the Father always keeps His word. What Christ says here is that we need to take advantage of that divine veracity, and because God the Father will keep His word, we can bind Him to it.

So what is the principle of binding with regard to the gospel?

God is not willing that any should perish but for all to come to repentance - 2 Peter 3:9.

There are many in the crowd willing to listen to the gospel if it is brought to them personally.

There aren't enough workers to bring in the abundant gospel harvest.

God can find the workers - it is His realm. So - keep God to His word; He will be faithful.

He asks them to pray for the Lord to 'cast out,' EKBALLO, workers into the harvest. The idea is that the leadership of God is quite compelling. The workers will be so impressed with the need, that they will go to the harvest as though they were shot out of a catapult. God often leads in this manner.

But there is one more principle at work here. When you want someone to do something, have them pray for the fulfillment of that need.

This is a fine principle of leadership. Christ told His disciples to pray, and He did it with a great smile and a gleam in His eye, because He knew that they must be the harvesters.

Of course the next incident in the life of Christ is the commissioning of the twelve for their work of the harvest. When you compare the commissioning with this prayer, you can see what Christ is doing.

Christ sees a need, and the men who can fulfill that need. He figures that if He can get them to pray for the fulfillment of the need, the Lord will do the rest. And indeed God is faithful to His word, and the twelve disciples are willing.

The Commissioning of the Twelve

Matthew 10:1-42

Mark 6:7-11

Luke 9:1-5

Outline.

The Disciples and Their Mission.

The summons, the organization, the empowerment, and the purpose. "And after calling together His twelve disciples He began to send them out two by two and He gave to them power and authority over unclean spirits so as to cast them out and to heal every disease and every malady. And He sent them to preach the Kingdom of God and heal the weak."

The personnel. "Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: first Simon the one named Peter and Andrew his brother, and James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, Philip and Bartholomew, Thomas and Matthew the tax-collector, James the son of Alphaeus and Thaddeus, Simon the Cananean and Judas the Iscariot who also betrayed Him."

The Personal Instructions for the Mission.

Instructions for the way.

The objective people of the mission. "Jesus sent the twelve out after He gave them personal instruction, saying, 'Do not go out into the way of the Gentiles and do not go into the city of the Samaritans; but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. "

The content of the message. "And as you are going, preach, saying, 'Near is the Kingdom of Heaven.'"

The empowerment of the message. "Heal the weak, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons; freely you received, give freely."

The demand of grace on the recipients of the message. "Do not acquire gold nor silver nor copper for your money belts, nor a bag for the way nor two coats nor sandals nor an [extra] staff, for worthy is the worker of his wages."

The general procedure in the villages. "And into whichever ever city or village you enter, find out who in it is worthy, and remain there until you depart. And while entering the house, greet it. And if indeed the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it, but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. And whoever does not receive you nor listen to your words, while exiting the house or that city shake the dust out of your feet as a testimony against them. Truly I say to you, it will be better for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city."

The Hazards of the Mission, and their Remedies.

The hazard of the disciples' naivete'. "Behold I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; therefore become intelligent as the serpents and innocent as doves. And pay close attention to men; For they will betray you to the courts and they will scourge you in their synagogues."

The weakness of the disciples' words. "And you will be led before governors and even kings for My sake to testify to them and to the Gentiles. But whenever they give you over, do not care how or what you might speak; For it will be given to you in that hour what you might speak;

for you are not the ones speaking but the Spirit of your Father Who speaks in you."

The hazard of betrayal from within the family. "And a brother will betray a brother unto death and a father a child, and children will rise up against parents and kill them. And you will be hated by all because of My name; but the one who remains until the end, this one will be saved."

Divine guidance through persecution. "And whenever they persecute you in this city, flee into the next; for truly I say to you, you will not complete the cities of Israel until the Son of man comes."

Preparation for persecution. "A disciple is not above his teacher, nor is a slave above his master. It is enough for the disciple that he become like his teacher and the slave like his master. If they have called the ruler of the house Beelzebub, how much worse they will call the household members!"

Words of encouragement and assurance of vindication.

The assurance of eternal vindication. "Therefore do not fear them; for there is nothing having been concealed that will not be revealed and hidden which will not be made known.

The encouragement toward forthrightness. "What I say to you in the dark you say in the light, and what you hear [whispered] in the ear, you preach upon the housetops."

The distinctions regarding temporal and eternal loss. "And do not fear from the ones who kill the body, but who does not have the power to kill the soul; but fear rather the one who has power to kill both the soul and the body in Gehenna. Aren't two sparrows sold for a cent? Yet one of them does not fall upon the ground apart from your Father. And indeed every hair of your head is numbered. Therefore do not fear; you yourselves are much different from sparrows."

The reassurance of eternal vindication. "Therefore everyone who confesses in me

before men, I will confess also in them before My Father Who is in heaven; And whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father Who is in heaven.”

The divisive nature of the Kingdom of God. “Do not think that I came to cast peace upon the earth; I did not come to cast peace but a sword. For I came to set a man against his father, and daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, and a man’s enemies are his household-members.”

The results of the priorities according to the divisions. “The one who love his father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me, and the one who loves a son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me; and who does not take his cross and follow after Me, he is not worthy of Me. The one who find his soul destroys it, and the one who destroys his soul in my behalf finds it.”

The reward of the faithful. “The one who receives you receives Me, and the one who receives Me receives the one who sent Me. The one who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive the profit of a prophet, and the one who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man will receive the reward of a righteous man. And whoever in the name of a disciple gives to one of these little ones even a cup of cold water, truly I say to you, he will certainly not lose his reward!”

II. Exposition.

The Disciples and Their Mission.

The summons, the organization, the empowerment, and the purpose. “And after calling together His twelve disciples He began to send them out two by two and He gave to them power and authority over unclean spirits so as to cast them out and to heal every disease and every malady. And He sent them to preach the Kingdom of God and heal the weak.”

As you may recall, Christ and the twelve are embarked on a circuit of the towns of Galilee. At one of the stops along the way, He summons

them together, which is portrayed by the verb PROSKALEO.

His strategy was to send them out two by two. This detail we gain in Mark’s gospel, where it says DUO. When you come back to Matthew’s gospel and examine the list of disciples there, you will notice right away that they are listed in pairs.

These are the operational pairs of this new gospel ministry. Christ intended to send them out like a reverse ark, two by two into the world.

This convention of Christ’s sets up a system of responsibility and support for each pair. They may rely on one another for many things in the course of their travels, but it would mostly be encouragement to carry out the mission.

Christ equipped each man with power and authority to cast out demons and heal every disease and every malady.

This was the same power which Christ had, and which came ultimately from God the Holy Spirit.

Notice the coupling of power and authority that comes from Luke’s gospel. Luke thought it important to reinforce the principle of authority in the wielding of power.

Paul had this to say about authority in Romans 13:1-2: “(1) Let every soul subordinate himself to the ruling authorities. For there is no legitimate authority except through God, and the present authorities have been established through God. (2) Therefore the one who disobeys legitimate authority opposes what God has delegated, and those who oppose will bring judgment on themselves.”

EXOUSIA occurs here as ‘legitimate authority.’ It is a word that denotes individual rights, and the liberty to decide for oneself.

It also describes the ability to exercise power and authority. In this use there is the connotation of skill and even Divine right.

Finally, it indicates legitimate authority, which is given within the framework of the laws of Divine establishment.

This would function just the same as it did in the ministry of Christ - to validate and illustrate.

As validation, these powers would clearly point out that they were from God, and therefore validate their kingdom message.

As illustration, they would point to the purpose of the first advent of the Messiah, which was to heal the great ailment of mankind, total depravity in sin.

And then Luke weighs in again with an important detail - that He sent them out to preach the kingdom and heal the weak.

Now in Luke's gospel, there already exists a mention of the healing ministry, and so it seem a little redundant to mention it again in the very next sentence. But Luke is not the redundant type.

The word for weak is ASTHENEIA, which may have three different meanings, depending on the context.

Physical weakness. Usually this is due to some physical ailment.

Sickness or illness. This is a pretty common use of the word.

The weakness or helplessness of the sinful state, divided into two categories:

- The weakness of total depravity prior to salvation.
- The weakness of being out of fellowship after salvation.

Here ASTHENEIA focuses on total depravity, and so Christ had an evangelistic purpose for this mission to go alongside the kingdom purpose. The ultimate purpose was the kingdom purpose.

The personnel. "Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: first Simon the one named Peter and Andrew his brother, and James the

son of Zebedee and John his brother, Philip and Bartholomew, Thomas and Matthew the tax-collector, James the son of Alphaeus and Thaddeus, Simon the Cananean and Judas the Iscariot who also betrayed Him."

See the doctrine of the twelve disciples.

There is not much to say about these pairings other than was is readily apparent from observation.

It is in Matthew's gospel that we would expect to find the most insight on the life of Thomas, because they were ministry partners for this period.

Christ also exercises wisdom in pairing the brothers Peter and Andrew, and James and John. Since they all had been in business together, working together in evangelism would have been natural.

Philip and Bartholomew would also have been an interesting combination, since both these men had Gentile names, and there was a strong possibility at least for Bartholomew to be a Gentile. And now they were missionaries to the wayward Jews. There is more than a little irony in this possibility.

The Personal Instructions for the Mission.

Instructions for the way.

The objective people of the mission. "Jesus sent the twelve out after He gave them personal instruction, saying, 'Do not go out into the way of the Gentiles and do not go into the city of the Samaritans; but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.'"

Christ has a fair set of instructions for His disciples; He knows that they are embarked on something new, and it will be a great challenge for them.

For nearly two years they have had the opportunity to observe Christ in action in everything that they are about to do. They have had the perfect example of a gospel ministry set before them almost every day. There is not one thing in this set of commands that Christ has not lived every day for the past two years.

And now they receive His personal instruction. The verb is PARAGGELLO in the Greek, and it actually draws meaning from the military realm. Literally, it is, 'to send from beside you.' So it has the idea of giving orders and then sending them out to execute those orders.

But here along with those orders is some excellent communication on what to expect. Christ does not simply give orders and expect them to obey in rote fashion.

By communicating clearly Christ gives them flexibility, and more importantly, the courage that they need to fulfill their mission.

There are three racial categories here: the Gentiles, the half-Jewish Samaritans, and the full sons of Abraham, the Jews.

God never makes an issue out of race, and Christ never meant to imply that those other groups were unworthy of the gospel.

If you recall, Christ has already participated in giving the gospel to the Samaritan woman of John chapter four, and He did indeed do the same thing when He healed the Gentile centurion's servant in Matthew 8.

There is no prejudice here whatsoever. But it is Christ's objective to bring the lost sheep of Israel back into the fold. The people have gone astray.

The people of Israel are called the sheep in Psalm 100:3, "Know that the Lord Himself is God; it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture."

The very last verse of the 119th Psalm contains the lost sheep metaphor: "I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek Your servant, for I do not forget Your commandments."

(10) Jeremiah 23:1-6 is especially compelling, because it is the prophecy of this action: "(1) 'Woe to the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of My pasture!' declares the Lord. (2) Therefore thus says the Lord God of Israel concerning the shepherds who are tending My people: 'You have scattered My

flock and driven them away, and have not attended to them; behold, I am about to attend to you for the evil of your deeds,' declares the Lord. (3) 'Then I Myself will gather the remnant of My flock out of all the countries where I have driven them and bring them back to their pasture, and they will be fruitful and multiply. (4) I will also raise up shepherds over them and they will tend them; and they will not be afraid any longer, nor be terrified, nor will any be missing,' declares the Lord. (5) 'Behold, the days are coming,' declares the Lord, 'When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch; and he will reign as king and act wisely and do justice and righteousness in the land. (6) In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely; and this is His name by which He will be called, "The Lord our righteousness.'" Jeremiah 50:6-7, 17, 44 say a few of the same things.

God places responsibility squarely on the heads of the shepherds of the land. This is the religious leadership of the time.

Jeremiah was the prophet of the destruction of Judah, the southern kingdom of Israel. He witnessed their final discipline at the hands of Babylon.

Verses five and six look at the Messiah of Israel. He is the one who will bring together the scattered flock and lost sheep of Israel. Here then is more messianic identification by Christ.

There is a spiritual prerequisite for the restoration of Israel; this is what the Jews of Christ's time refused to realize.

The sheep of Christ's time are scattered and lost because of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. Their religious and moral degeneracy has caused the flock, the common people of Israel to go astray.

Christ aims His disciples at the lost sheep of Israel so that they will be gathered once again under His shepherding Messiahship.

This will ultimately occur at the second advent, and careful study of verses three and four will reveal the regathering of Israel as the second

advent, and the rule of the shepherds as the millennium.

Currently, God is raising up shepherds in the form of mature church age believers. We will be the undershepherds of Christ's millennial rule. That these undershepherds would be Gentiles was not a decided issue at the time of the prophecy.

(11) Ezekiel chapter thirty-four is a prophecy against the shepherds of Israel, the religious leadership of Israel which had failed their flock. This failed leadership was again and again the reason for the lost sheep.

(12) There is an echo here from Isaiah 53:6, "All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him."

(13) Zechariah 10:2-4 is very much like the Jeremiah 23 passage: "(2) For the teraphim speak iniquity, and the diviners see lying visions and tell false dreams; they comfort in vain. Therefore the people wander like sheep, they are afflicted, because there is no shepherd. (3) My anger is kindled against the shepherds, and I will punish the male goats; for the Lord the hosts has visited His flock, the house of Judah, and will make them like His majestic horse in battle. (4) From them will come the cornerstone, from them the tent peg, from them the bow of battle, from them every ruler, all of them together."

The content of the message. "And as you are going, preach, saying, 'Near is the Kingdom of Heaven.'"

This is a truly honest statement, because there is the potential of having the two advents of Christ separated only by about seven years. The tribulation and second advents are still an option for God because the volition of Israel has not completely rejected Christ.

So the kingdom of heaven is truly near in a chronological sense to the nation of Israel. Israel has a real opportunity to live in the kingdom during their lifetimes.

In a secondary sense the kingdom is near even today. It is near for all individuals because of the imminence of death, and because of the imminence of the rapture.

And Matthew wanted his Jewish readers to understand this with clarity. He employs the adverb of time EGGIKEN to do so.

This has a remarkable similarity to a more famous passage in the 28th chapter of Matthew. It is worth placing here. Matthew 28:18-20: "All authority was given to me in heaven and on earth. Therefore after going instruct all the Gentiles, baptizing them into the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to keep all which I commanded you. And behold I myself am with you all the days until the conclusion of the age [dispensation]."

This passage contains one command - that the disciples should disciple all the Gentiles. The Greek word MATHETEUSATE (disciple) is the only one in the true imperative mood in the passage. This verb means to instruct, or teach someone.

This command is directed to Christ's disciples alone, but it extends well to every church age believer.

The command to instruct is based on the authority of Christ. All authority was given to Him in heaven and on earth. The passive voice of DIDOMI indicates that Christ did not act on his own divine authority, but took that which was given to him by the father.

This was the authority to offer the millennial kingdom to the Jews. Now this authority is transferred to the Gentiles. So the realm of authority is knowledge and instruction. It is important to note that the disciples were not given the authority to bring in the kingdom by themselves. The beginning of the kingdom is not dependent on human agency.

The command to instruct has a certain quality of lifestyle. The aorist participle POREUTHENTES shows that this action

precedes the command to instruct. It is similar but not identical to our passage in Matthew 10.

There is no command to go. It is assumed that these disciples will go out into the world. With regard to geography, God leads and you end up there. With regard to methodology, God commands.

The command to instruct is more fully explained by two present participles. The action of a present participle occurs at the same time as the main verb of the sentence. No matter what else you understand from the two participles, understand that they are simply giving a full explanation of the way in which the instruction is to take place.

- The first participle is BAPTIZONTES, which is from BAPTIZO 'really baptize'.

- This is not the literal water baptism, but a 'change by immersion,' which is closer to the original meaning of the word. The change is inward, and it has to do with character.

- The phrase 'into the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit' describes the kind of change that is to take place.

- The Greek word ONOMA is our English name. In the ancient way of thinking, a 'name' represented the true nature of its bearer. It was not just a label or designation without meaning, used to separate one from all others.

- In the Hebrew way of thinking a person's name revealed his character, personality, and even destiny.

- The preposition EIS denotes change. Usually it shows movement from one place to another, but here it reveals movement from human, worldly character to the divine.

- The change in the believer is brought about by immersion into the divine character. This can only take place by faith perception - the MATHETEUS command already mentioned.

- The second participle is DIDASKONTES, which means to teach with authority. This more properly describes both the MATHETEUS and the BAPTIZONTES. These two participles are

not separate commands, but explanations of one command. They both depend on that command.

The first part of the explanation tells us that the discipleship is to be a change by immersion into the divine character. The second part tells us how that immersion is to take place - teaching with authority.

The Gentiles are to be taught to keep all that Christ had commanded the disciples. They are to be taught how to be obedient to the commands of Christ.

Note that teaching precedes obedience. You cannot be obedient without the truth. Obedience cannot logically precede faith perception, because faith perception is the prerequisite for any obedience.

Christ then gives a final word of encouragement. "and behold I myself am with you all the days until the conclusion of the age."

The empowerment of the message. "Heal the weak, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons; freely you received, give freely."

So along with the power and authority comes a command to use it.

Key to this command is the rationale - grace overflows. If you received freely, that is, if you had grace orientation as the recipient of grace, then there is a compulsion to give as freely as you have given.

There is a little insight to be gained by observing the Greek adverb which is translated 'freely' here. It is DOREAN, which comes from the noun 'gift.'

A gift is something that you give free charge, no strings attached.

Christ has invested the disciples with great power; spectacular power. They could easily convert this into many forms of personal advantage: money-making, womanizing, political advantage - you name it.

But no price is ever to be attached to the gospel; no price in any way.

There are many applications in the modern world, even after the temporary spiritual gifts have ceased.

Any kind of church ministry cannot charge money in exchange for anything that includes the gospel or is associated with their ministry.

Christian music is especially criminal today; any concert or musical media that places a price on its product is wrong! It is anti-grace to set a price on what God has freely given.

I am quite sure that our Lord would consider today's Christian music industry one with the moneychangers of the temple. He would clear them out! Every one of them is going to be accountable to the judgment seat of Christ for their mixture of the gospel with money.

Music is a very powerful medium for the gospel, and its power is not too far distant from the power of the temporary spiritual gifts.

In similar fashion, the permanent spiritual gifts of pastor-teacher and evangelism carry with them power and authority, and can be used to personal advantage in every category. And yet no exchange is to be associate with them.

Acts chapter eight records Peter's response to a solicitation to exchange money for the power of the Holy Spirit. Acts 8:9-24 has the record, "(9) Now there was a man named Simon, who formerly was practicing magic in the city and astonishing the people of Samaria, claiming to be someone great; (10) and they all, from smallest to greatest, were giving attention to him, saying, 'This man is what is called the Great Power of God.' (11) And they were giving him attention because he had for a long time astonished them with his magic arts. (12) But when they believed Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, men and women alike. (13) Even Simon himself believed; and after being baptized, he continued on with Philip, and as he observed signs and great miracles taking place, he was constantly amazed. (14) Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent them Peter

and John, (15) who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. (16) For He had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. (17) Then they began laying their hands on them, and they were receiving the Holy Spirit. (18) Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was bestowed through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, (19) saying, 'Give this authority to me as well, so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit.' (20) But Peter said to him, 'May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! (21) You have no part or portion in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. (22) Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray the Lord that, if possible, the intention of your heart may be forgiven you. (23) For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bondage of iniquity.' (24) But Simon answered and said, 'Pray to the Lord for me yourselves, so that nothing of what you have said may come upon me.'"

It is apparent that Simon the Magician had the lust pattern of approbation. As an unbeliever, he wanted to be known as someone great; but he was a charlatan - his magic was not real.

Then one day Christian men give the gospel to his audience, and they believe. Magicians are skeptics, and they are experts on what is truth and what is a lie. That Simon the Magician believes in Jesus Christ is one of the greatest testimonies in the New Testament. After living a lie all his life, Simon sees his crowds follow the gospel, and he knows the real deal. He has an honest moment, and is saved forever.

And then something even greater happens, the Holy Spirit comes upon them, and Simon the skeptical magician sees something truly supernatural for the first time in his life. And he responds in an entirely cosmic manner - he wants the approbation that will go with this kind of power.

He does not really want money. That was not his area of weakness.

So he offers money for the power of the Spirit, and here is where Peter steps in with strong words and complete integrity. He will not allow this trespass on God's power. That power does not exist to further man's ambition, and it is not ever for sale.

Those who desire to further God's kingdom with pure motives never have to buy the power, and those who have the information to do so never want to sell it.

Only a man who was apart from grace orientation would want to buy what was freely given.

John 2:13-16 reinforces this idea. The incident of the cleansing of the temple occurred at the very beginning of Christ's ministry.

Verse 13, "And the Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up into Jerusalem"

- The Passover had to be a rather poignant time for Christ. On His mind would rest the burden of the sins of the world, for He knew that He would have to pay for them in the not too distant future.

- He was expecting to go into the temple and worship God, and remember His role in saving mankind.

Verse 14, "And He found in the temple the ones who were selling oxen and sheep and doves, and the ones who were seated, the money changers."

- The temple had become the very center of an extremely corrupt system. It was the ultimate monopoly, and the evil priests manipulated that monopoly into a money-making machine.

- The Law proscribed that only sacrifices without spot or blemish were worthy for sacrifice in the temple.

- The chief priests manipulated this by making sure that no one had a worthy animal. They sent their inspectors to school for months so that they could identify the defects of any given animal. Actually this just became an excuse for disqualifying the animals brought by the heads of households.

- They also came to charge the people for the inspection of their animals. This evil led many to just give up and buy the animals that the temple provided, without even trying to bring their own.

- This was wrong, wrong, wrong. The whole point of the sacrifice was that it would come from the family; that the man would know the animal personally; that he would see the cost of sin, and greatness of God's sacrifice in sending His own Son.

- Of course the prices on these animals was greatly inflated, and the chiefs priests made a great profit from them.

- Furthermore, the chief priests and officials made it so that the animals could only be bought with the official temple currency, and the exchange rates were quite exorbitant. Thus, the moneychangers.

- With the clinking of coins and the mutter of exchange and the baa-ahing of sheep and the cooing of pigeons and the mooing of cattle you could hardly hear yourself think in the house of worship. There was record of more than three thousand head of sheep in the temple at one time. What cacophony! What corruption!

- So, Christ walks into His Father's house, the house designed for learning about His sacrifice, and He finds the worst kind of corruption. What follows is not an act of anger, but justice.

Verse 15, "And He made a scourge from ropes and He cast all of them out from the temple and the sheep and the oxen, and He poured out the coins of the money-changers and He overturned the tables."

- Physical wreckage is much preferred over spiritual corruption.

- There were a bunch of money-changers, and only one Christ, but they did not attempt to stop Him.

- Was Christ an imposing figure, or were they so shocked by this action that they did not respond?

· The scourge of ropes could have been a fearful weapon, when wielded by one with skill. How did our peaceful Lord acquire such experience?

· Christ had been a carpenter by trade. It is likely that He had great strength in His hands and arms, because the profession was even more rigorous then than it is now.

· John rather humorously adds the driving out of the sheep and oxen; he makes a funny because you already expected them to be driven out. Christ drives out the wimpy bankers and money-changers and inspectors, and even the oxen and sheep. He drives them like the stupid cattle they are.

· By pouring out the coins and overturning the tables, Christ made it impossible for them to determine whose money belonged to whom. He effectively destroyed their profits.

Verse 16, "And to those who were selling doves, He said, 'Remove these things from here [in any direction], do not make the house of My Father a house of merchandise.'"

This decisive action of Christ's demonstrates His total belief in the grace system. It is clear that the Pharisees were attempting to take advantage of the people in order to make a profit.

Christ considers this heinous enough to take violent action against. Even when the people of Nazareth or the Pharisees come against Him to kill Him, Christ does not react in violence. But here He does.

The demand of grace on the recipients of the message. "Do not acquire gold nor silver nor copper for your money belts, nor a bag for the way nor two coats nor sandals nor an [extra] staff, for worthy is the worker of his food."

Now here is the other half of the equation. The gospel worker is not to allow the villages to take advantage of him. He is to take only what is absolutely necessary for the journey, and nothing else.

The idea is that God will motivate logistics through grace-oriented believers, so that they have enough to live.

This is apparently a proverb of the day that Christ employs for the benefit of His disciples.

The key phrase is AXIOS HO ERGATES TES TROPHEIS AUTOU.

The ERGATES was the agricultural laborer of the day. It was acceptable for the agricultural worker to eat from the plants which he harvested, and to provide food logistics for his family in this manner.

TROPHEIS is food, the logistical supply of the worker. It is worth it for the land owner to allow this to occur, because he benefits from the work of the harvester.

So the worker is AXIOS, 'worthy' of his food.

In the same way the gospel worker is worth his logistics. The people of the towns and villages of Galilee will so benefit from the ministry of the disciples that they will gladly supply simple logistics.

There is one issue of harmony that needs to be resolved. Matthew and Luke both have Christ telling the disciples that they should not even acquire a walking staff for their journey, while Mark says the staff is the only exception.

There is no linguistic resolution to this problem. The gospel of Mark is very clear in its language regarding the staff exception.

But Christ gave directions on more than one occasion, and in Mark's case, Christ decided it would be better at the time to take a single staff. On another occasion, He told them to take no staff at all.

Another possible solution comes through two figures of speech, the hyperbole and the epanorthosis.

· With the hyperbole, Christ tells His disciples they are to take nothing at all save the clothes on their back. He goes to an extreme by saying 'not even a staff.'

· Then for the sake of clarity He goes with the correction, or epanorthosis. Mark's gospel is the correction: a single staff.

The general procedure in the villages. "And into whichever ever city or village you enter, find out who in it is worthy, and remain there until you depart. And while entering the house, greet it. And if indeed the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it, but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. And whoever does not receive you nor listen to your words, while exiting the house or that city shake the dust out of your feet as a testimony against them. Truly I say to you, it will be better for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city."

Part one: find kingdom believers, and stay with them.

EXETASATE means to inquire, or examine. The disciples are to go into villages and ask around, verbally inquire as to who is AXIOS, worthy.

AXIOS is pretty generic. But Christ does define worthiness in Matthew 10:37-38. "(37) The one who love his father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me, and the one who loves a son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me; (38) and who does not take his cross and follow after Me, he is not worthy of Me."

· So worthiness means that the person has Jesus Christ as his top priority - above family, above everything.

· So we can define these as kingdom believers with momentum of spiritual growth.

And you can see that this is quite wise. The kingdom believers can provide logistical support and spiritual encouragement. They may even become active team members in the evangelistic efforts.

Meetings may be held at their houses; they will be perfect for follow-up on the new believers, supporting them and so on.

Part two: testing procedures.

The disciples are to go into a house, and give a greeting.

Although the substance of the greeting is not specified, it is to be one which enables the owner of the house to identify himself as a kingdom believer.

Any number of greetings may serve. Even just being straightforward and saying, "Hi. Do you believe that Jesus is the Messiah?" would be sufficient.

In any event, there will be either a positive or a negative response.

· With the positive response, the peace of the disciples is to come upon the house.

· In the negative case, the peace is to return to the disciples.

· Whatever this peace may be, it is something that the disciples can give or take back. It is genuinely up to them.

- The imperative of entreaty has Christ giving them a polite command regarding the going and returning of peace. ELTHATO and EPISTRAPHETO are the two imperative mood verbs here.

- Because of the imperative mood, you can see that the disciples have the volitional power to bring this peace.

· Luke 7:50 and 8:48 give clues as to the true nature of this peace. In each case, Christ tells someone He has just healed to go into peace. They are to enter into the inner peace that comes with a good relationship with God.

· The peace is going to be just like what the Greek word SUNANAPAUSOMAI portrays in these verses:

- Romans 15:32, "...so that I may come to you in joy by the will of God and find refreshing rest in your company."

- 1 Corinthians 16:18, "For they have refreshed my spirit and yours. Therefore acknowledge such men."

- 2 Timothy 1:16, "The Lord grant mercy to the house of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains..."

- Philemon 7, "...because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you, brother."

· The peace is the refreshment that the disciples can bring to the hearts of those with whom they stay. They eat meals and talk about Christ and the Kingdom; they sit around at night before bedtime and do the same. They share their enthusiasm as they relate their memories of two years on the road with the Messiah.

· And of course it is a peaceful refreshment to these kingdom believers. It is as close as many of them will get to the Messiah.

Part three: testify against the unworthy.

There is an act that is to symbolize an attitude toward the negative people of Galilee.

If they do not receive or listen to the kingdom ministry then some action is to take place.

The action is either to take place at the doorstep if the house is negative, or at the edge of the village if the village is negative.

They are to shake the dust from their sandals, so that those people understand that the disciples do not want to have the least bit to do with them. They even want to forget the dust that came from that house or village.

There is a completeness to this that is similar to the cremation practice of the Old Testament. Cremation was authorized only to forget a capital felon, and there was no burial, no monument, and no body.

So people who reject the kingdom plan are to be totally forgotten. The disciples are no longer to have anything to do with them at all.

The verb EKTINAXATE is aorist. It portrays a simple action in the past. The simplicity of that is the simplicity of forgetfulness.

But there is more here than a vengeful shaking of dust. The focus on forgetfulness also prevents the holding of grudges.

Because negative people can become ugly, and do ugly things to those who bring them the good news of the gospel.

To be able to forget the abuse of the ungodly has also a purpose in avoiding discouragement. By forgetting completely the people of the last town, there is a new focus on the next. Maybe there will be positive people in the next.

The final comment, "Truly I say to you, it will be better for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city." harkens back to a similar saying that Christ put out against the cities of northeastern Galilee, Chorazin and Bethsaida. This occurred in Matthew 11:20-24: "(20) Then He began to denounce the cities in which the most of His miracles appeared, because they did not repent: (21) 'Woe to you, Chorazin, woe to you, Bethsaida; because if in Tyre and Sidon the miracles which occurred appeared among you, they would have long ago repented in sackcloth and ashes. (22) Therefore I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and for Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. (23) And you Capernaum, You will you be lifted as far as heaven, will you? You will fall down as far as Hades... because if in Sodom there appeared the miracles which appeared in you, it would have remained until this day. (24) Therefore I say to you that it will be more tolerable for the ground of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you."

Since Sodom and Gomorrah were the extreme worst towns in Old Testament times, it will be terrible for them in the days of judgment. Just thinking of their earthly eradication as a preview for their eternal judgment makes one quiver at the thought.

And it will be worse for the villages that reject Christ.

The Hazards of the Mission, and their Remedies.

The hazard of the disciples' naivete'. "Behold I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; therefore become intelligent as the serpents and innocent as doves. And pay close attention to men; For they will betray you to the courts and they will scourge you in their synagogues."

The disciples are sheep, PROBATA. This focuses on their naivete, their ignorance to the ways of

the world. Even though they have been with Christ for two years, and they have witnessed how awful people can be to the Christian who is witnessing on behalf of his Savior, Christ has been a buffer, protecting them from the worst.

There are wolves in the world, LUKON. Lycanthrope, the werewolf, has its origins in this world. There are people who are motivated to destroy professing Christians.

There are various expressions of the wolf:

The motivation of the wolf is hatred for God. There can be a million reasons for this in the mind of the wolf, but all are wrong. The wolf is always deluded.

There are those who are simply murderous; they desire to kill Christians like the Neros of the world. These are the ones who lust for power, and live in a lawless atmosphere.

There are those who are slanderous; they love to lie and to destroy the reputations of Christians. This can be done through mass media, or on an individual basis.

There are those who participate in seduction. They tempt Christians to join them in their cosmic wallow - in adultery and fornication, in greed, and in many other cosmic expressions.

As a remedy, the disciples are to become intelligent as serpents. The word 'intelligent' is from PHRONIMOI. This mirrors the Hebrew word `ARUM in Genesis 3:1 - "The serpent was more clever than any other creature in the garden." ARUM means intelligent in a clever way.

PHRONIMOI is neutral; it is neither good nor bad - it depends on how you apply the ability.

They are to be intelligent as serpents, meaning that they should come to understand the ways of their enemy, and avoid their attempts at destroying them.

They are also to be innocent as doves. But 'innocent' is really not a very good translation of AKERAI OI.

The alpha or 'a' at the beginning of the word is like our English 'un.' It negates the meaning of the word. This is called the alpha privative in the Greek.

It is literally, 'without horns.' The idea not of innocence, but of a lack of dangerous ability.

The disciples are not to be violent. They are to be like the dove, who has no horns at all, and no way to defend himself.

This combination of smarts and non-violence is designed to keep the disciples intact through all the wolves of the world and their destructive intent.

They are to pay close attention to men, which is PROSECHETE.

Men will betray them to the courts, the SUNEDRIA. These were the highest Jewish courts in the land, where even capital punishment could be meted out.

Men will scourge them in the synagogues. The Sanhedrin was in Jerusalem, and the synagogues were spread throughout Israel. This is the lesser of the two punishment possibilities. The synagogue did not have the legal power to bring capital punishment, but they could scourge someone.

And indeed these things, betrayal, scourging, and capital punishment, would happen to Jesus Christ Himself. He would suffer what possibilities He predicted for His disciples' witnessing campaign.

Paying close attention to men meant looking out for betrayal. Betrayal would come from within - from close friends and even disciples.

And Christ gave these instructions even to Judas Iscariot! How very ironic that He warned the betrayer against betrayal.

It is difficult to know whether Christ saw Judas as the betrayer just yet. When it came down to the end, He knew it, but the betrayal is still a year to the future.

The weakness of the disciples' words. "And you will be led before governors and even kings for

My sake to testify to them and to the Gentiles. But whenever they give you over, do not care how or what you might speak; For it will be given to you in that hour what you might speak; for you are not the ones speaking but the Spirit of your Father Who speaks in you.”

There is a great issue in the Messiah. He is to be the King of kings and Lord of lords. He is therefore a threat to every ruler in the world, whether petty or grand.

The governors and kings will want to know of this Messiah of the Jews, and to see if their own power and lifestyle is threatened.

Both Jewish and Gentile leaders will want to know about Christ, and the throne room can be such an intimidating place for fishermen and laborers from the backwaters of Galilee.

Bartholomew may be the only disciple who is in his element among the aristocracy of the land.

They have fine clothes, and fine speech. In the throne room there is much evidence of wealth, and military power.

They will stand in throne rooms, but they will be there as prisoners and suspects; considered traitors of the ruler on the throne.

And the words that the disciples speak will be in defense of themselves and their Messiah. Their very lives will be at stake, and them with only the speech of rugged Galileans.

They will not have the gift of Paul, who testified before every level of the governments of his time.

Paul was a former member of the Sandhedrin, the high court of Israel. He was skilled in speech and rhetoric; he understood the legal subtleties of his day. As such, he was superior to Peter and the other Galileans.

Christ tells them of the grace gift of God related to speech - the ministry of God the Holy Spirit.

Principle: spiritual words and principles are superior to clothing finery and aristocratic elocution.

This is the exclusive realm of God the Holy Spirit. He is the one who recalls truth from the soul.

It is truth and truth alone that the disciples will need. The impact of spirit-assisted truth in the souls of all men is a truly awe-inspiring thing.

(10) The common grace ministry of the Spirit is not exactly the same as this.

You will notice that this ministry works within the speaker, aiding him in what he will say.

The common grace ministry of the Spirit is not subjective, but objective: it works within the one spoken to. John 16:8-11 defines this well: “(8) And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; (9) concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; (10) and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me; (11) and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged.”

The common grace ministry is restricted to the church age; Christ makes this clear by saying ‘when He comes...’ The Spirit was not operational in this fashion while Christ was present on the earth, and the ministry of Matthew Ten is operational during the disciples’ ministry at least a year before the absence of Christ could allow common grace.

(11) This is a ministry that was available in the church age as evidenced by the book of Acts 4:8, “Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them...”

(12) Indeed, you may rely on the Spirit to work within you in much the same way today.

(13) But understand that He can only use the truth that is present in your soul - He will employ what you have truly digested as a Christian.

(14) There is great power in the testimony of metabolized truth. You as a believer will have words of impressive quality if they include the sure knowledge of their operational efficacy.

(15) How great it is to look someone level in the eye and tell them of the wonders of God's plan, and what He has done for you in grace.

(16) When Christ says to them, 'For it will be given to you in that hour what you might speak;' He wants them to know that they may as well not practice what they are going to say; that it holds no advantage. God the Holy Spirit may have entirely something else in mind on that date.

(17) The only practice needed is the faith perception of the truth; that much will be more than enough for the Spirit to use.

(18) Realizing that the Holy Spirit is speaking through you, and that the speech does not originate in you will overcome any hurdles to self-esteem that the speaker may have.

(19) It is therefore not you and your reputation that is on the line; it is God the Holy Spirit's.

The hazard of betrayal from within the family. "And a brother will betray a brother unto death and a father a child, and children will rise up against parents and kill them. And you will be hated by all because of My name; but the one who remains until the end, this one will be saved."

Christ now returns to the issue of the hazards. He makes it known that the worst of the hazards will come from within the family.

There will be betrayal - PARADOSEI - unto death. Not just handing someone over for questioning, but even unto death.

This points out how very threatening Christianity may become - how awful the motivating hatred of God!

Think about betraying your own brother to death because of what he believes, or your child or parent! Yet this is the nature of the cosmic system of Satan. This is what He aims to do.

Of course, such hatred can never exist among Christians; Romans 12:18 makes it clear - "If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men." We can have no hatred

toward those whom we love, no hatred toward those whom we wish to join us in our love for God and His plan for our lives.

This should give you an appreciation for the country in which you live, because our persecution is so very little here. It is increasing, but it is not a threat to our lives, thanks to the establishment principles which underpin our laws. We are not yet hated by all because of the precious name of our Savior.

There are three main ways to reckon the verb SOZO in Scripture:

As eternal salvation.

As rescue from physical danger.

As rescue from the moral decay in the cosmic system.

This passage concentrates on the second in the list, the rescue from physical danger.

Because of this comment, it appears that this passage has a tribulational cast to it; this principle at least has to do with that.

Because Christ still sees the tribulation as reality for His disciples, the ministry shift to the church has yet to occur.

Divine guidance through persecution. "And whenever they persecute you in this city, flee into the next; for truly I say to you, you will not complete the cities of Israel until the Son of Man comes."

This flight preserves life and allows the message to go on. The objective of this mission is to save Israel from destruction by means of spiritual strength.

But this is not exactly like the flight of Israel in the tribulation where the primary purpose is to save lives, period.

A reminder of the way in which the disciples are to handle persecution comes from the Sermon on the Mount: "Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, because theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. You are blessed whenever they insult you and persecute you, and whenever they

ostracize you and they insult you and cast down your name as evil falsely for my sake. Rejoice and exult and leap wildly, because your reward is great in heaven; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

The preposition ENEKA describes an exchange of one thing for another. A very literal translation would be, “Blessed are those who have been persecuted in exchange for their righteousness.”

Luke puts this same word in the exchange position with the Son of Man - and so righteousness and the Son of Man are synonyms here.

So, you have righteousness because you hungered and thirsted for it (according to the previous beatitude), and as a result you receive persecution.

Or, you have a relationship with the Son of Man, and you receive persecution because people hate Him and they express it toward you.

The blessing for this is the kingdom of heaven. This seems curious at first, because the same is awarded the poor in spirit no matter what they might do.

However, there is a contrast. In the first beatitude the emphasis lay on eternal security. In this last one it is on eternity, period.

If you suffer because you are Christian, it can lead to no small amount of misery. A simple knowledge that the kingdom of heaven awaits you is valuable indeed.

This would be especially valuable for those who might have endured the rigors of tribulational persecution - the kingdom of heaven would be known to be only a few years off, at most.

Principle: knowledge of eternity is the only real foundation of happiness for those who are persecuted.

Next comes the explanation. It begins with the phrase “you are blessed”.

Luke use four different ways to describe persecution:

- HOTAN MISESOSIN ANTHROPOI is ‘whenever men hate you.’ The verb ‘hate’ is MISESOSIN, and is a fairly square translation of the concept.

- HOTAN APHORISOSIN is literally ‘whenever they separate from you.’ The idea is that others choose to separate themselves from you because of your faith. Your friends and family leave you - your boss fires you - your country banishes you.

- ONEIDISOSIN is next. It translates as reproach or revile, but ultimately it comes down to slander. When you reproach another for his legitimate and true faith, you slander his character and make a false accusation.

- EKBALOSIN TO ONOMA HUMON HOS PONERON is the final persecution possibility. It translates as ‘they cast out your name as evil’ This is pretty much the same as the last one, with a little more emphasis on general slander, as opposed to taking shots at Christianity.

Then comes a command that is predicated on the persecution. ‘Rejoice and exult and leap wildly, because your reward is great in heaven; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.’

The reason for the rejoicing is the reward in heaven that waits for those who endure undeserved suffering. Undeserved suffering leads to great reward in heaven. And, therefore Christ commands His hearers to rejoice when they encounter it.

A further rationale for the rejoicing is that persecution is nothing new, and that the prophets of old endured it as well. Persecution only comes to those who do things right. Divine discipline goes to those who are wrong, but the discipline is not aimed at your Christianity.

The prophets of old did things rightly, and they received persecution on account of it.

The attitude toward the persecutors is revealed in Matthew 5:43 and Luke 6:27-30, 32-36: “5:43 You heard that it was said, ‘Love your

neighbor' and, 'Hate your enemy'. 27 But I say to you who hear, 'Love your enemies, do well to those who hate you, 28 bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. 29 to those who strike you on the cheek, offer also the other, and from the one who takes away your shirt, do not withhold also your tunic. 30 To everyone who asks of you give, and from the one who takes what is yours do not ask for it back. 32 And if you love the one who loves you, what kind of grace is to you? For the sinners also love those who love them. 33 And if you do good to those who do good to you, what kind of grace is to you? The sinners also do the same thing. 34 And if you lend to the ones from whom you hope to receive, what kind of grace? Sinners also lend to sinners to receive their share. 35 Yet love your enemies and do good and lend expecting nothing in return and your reward will be much, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is gracious to the kind and ungrateful. 36 Become merciful just as also your Father is merciful."

The statements of Matthew 5:43 have a background from the Old Testament.

- The love command is issued in Leviticus 19:17-18, "You shall not hate your fellow countryman in your heart; you may surely reprove your neighbor, but shall not incur sin because of him. You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the Lord."
- The hatred command is not directly from the Old Testament, but is a misinterpretation of the doctrine of self-defense.
- The Old Testament authorized national self-defense and personal self-defense. Sometimes in self-defense you must exercise lethal force, and the interpreters of the day misconstrued this into hatred. Thus 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'

The doctrine of self-defense will be abrogated during the millennial rule of Jesus Christ. All thieves and thugs will be culpable before the visible throne of the Son of God, and He will

handle all matters of justice in a personal and effective manner.

Since Christ does not rule visibly, we still have the responsibility of self-defense.

But nonetheless the command to love our enemies is valid in a very Christian way:

- Because you have experienced the very best in your life through your relationship with God, you are motivated to bring that to every human being.
- You realize that your enemy is a slave of Satan, and is as redeemable as any other human being. He has as much potential as anyone thanks to grace.
- The apostle Paul is the classic example of a persecutor turned to a man of God. Acts 7:54-8:3 records the death of Stephen at the command of Saul: "(54) Now when they heard this [the speech of Stephen] they were cut to the quick, and they began gnashing their teeth at him. (55) But being full of the Holy Spirit, he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; (56) and he said, 'Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.' (57) But they cried out with a loud voice, and covered their ears and rushed at him with one impulse. (58) When they had driven him out of the city, they began stoning him; and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul. (59) They went on stoning Stephen as he called on the Lord and said, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them!' Having said this, he fell asleep. (8:1) Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death. And on that day a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. (2) Some devout men buried Stephen, and made loud lamentation over him. (3) But Saul began ravaging the church, entering house after house, and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison."
- And yet Paul went on to be the great apostle.

· This is also the great example of the principle of persecution as divine guidance. If persecutors make so much trouble for you that you must move on, then God has someone somewhere else that is positive to the gospel.

The end limit for the persecution is the coming of the Son of Man. The term 'Son of Man' reveals the following:

That Christ is indeed the Messiah.

And that the Messiah is the God-man in hypostatic union.

And that Christ is the Son of Man from Daniel 7:13-14.

That Christ has authority during the incarnation.

That the Messiah is the atoning Messiah.

That the Messiah will have the authority to judge in the coming kingdom.

Whenever Christ employed this term, every one got excited, because the Daniel seven passage was exceptionally popular at the time.

Preparation for persecution. "A disciple is not above his teacher, nor is a slave above his master. It is enough for the disciple that he become like his teacher and the slave like his master. If they have called the ruler of the house Beelzebub, how much worse they will call the household members!"

Christ reverses this principle of rank and humility to warn of the greater severity of persecution for His followers.

First comes the two general principles of rank. The realm of the teacher and the realm of the master. Christ recognizes the reality of rank and authority; He recognizes the axiomatic nature of the relationship between people of varying ranks.

Second is the principle of imitation: the disciple is to become like his teacher and the slave like his master. It is important to recognize that this is the objective for us as disciples of Christ.

We are to imitate our Teacher and Master, Jesus Christ with regard to the way that He lived His life. We are to imitate His complete humility and dependence on God, and His perfect character in the discharge of all of His responsibilities.

But then comes a principle that returns to the realm of persecution. If they revile the master, then how much more will they revile the slaves?

The slave or the disciple of Beelzebub is a fool for following the devil. In a sense he is worse than Beelzebub, because he is of lower rank and privilege.

Christ is telling His disciples that they can expect worse persecution than even what He has endured!

Words of encouragement and assurance of vindication.

The assurance of eternal vindication. "Therefore do not fear them; for there is nothing having been concealed that will not be revealed and hidden which will not be made known."

This exhortation gives the eternal rationale toward the persecution.

There is the threat of death from persecution. Though they may kill the body, the soul remains forever, and God has all of eternity to compensate the martyr.

The aorist subjunctive mood with the negative particle ME makes a very strong negative. Christ is being very intense here with this command.

The perfect passive participle KEKLUMMENON describes the supreme efforts of man to hide his inglorious deeds.

Man may persecute and kill and attempt to hide what he has done.

But God will reveal it. The future passive indicative verb APOKALUPHTHESETAI makes this certain.

The declarative indicative mood shows a certain reality to what will occur in the future with regard to the acts of man.

And the passive voice designates that the revelation will come from a source outside the perpetrators. God will be the revealer - He will say, "Let there be light!" and there will be light.

Christ employs a parallelism to confirm and emphasize what He has spoken. The second half of the parallel has two changes:

It employs the adjective KRUPTON in place of the participle KEKLUMMENON.

It substitutes APOKALUPHTHESETAI with its synonym GNOSTHESSETAI.

These together are translated 'there is nothing hidden which will not be made known.

You may have complete confidence that all the hidden deeds of men will be revealed and made known.

See the doctrine of the judgment seat of Christ.

The encouragement toward forthrightness. "What I say to you in the dark you say in the light, and what you hear [whispered] in the ear, you preach upon the housetops."

As a result of their confidence in eternal vindication, the disciples may be confident with regard to what they say in this life.

The metaphor of light and darkness is here employed in an unusual fashion - not as good and evil, but rather as private and public.

Christ's training of His disciples is by necessity private. For their protection and as a matter of efficiency.

This lesson concerning the eternal advantage seems to apply in countless realms. The lesson is that the eternal advantage should give you a sense of self-esteem about who you are in Christ.

It applies in all realms of undeserved suffering, including persecution.

It applies in the realm of sacrifice for the sake of the study of the word.

It applies in the realm of doing the right thing regardless of the sacrifice, the true integrity of application.

Preaching from the housetops was a method for reaching as many people as possible with one speech. This was before the era of the public address system and the cassette tape.

The distinctions regarding temporal and eternal loss. "And do not fear from the ones who kill the body, but who does not have the power to kill the soul; but fear rather the one who has power to kill both the soul and the body in Gehenna. Aren't two sparrows sold for a cent? Yet one of them does not fall upon the ground apart from your Father. And indeed every hair of your head is numbered. Therefore do not fear; you yourselves are much different from sparrows."

Again Christ broaches the subject of fear; especially fear of death.

Because no human being present and alive on this planet is able to give a report concerning the nature of life after death, the matter remains a great mystery.

The mysterious nature of death makes it a matter of fear for many. Ignorance breeds fear and superstition, and there is no greater matter for fear and superstition than death.

But God's word fills this void of ignorance, so that we need not fear. And Christ here gives them the word of God.

Gehenna was the highest court of all, and that is the court of the Gehenna of the Fire.

The locality of Gehenna was in Jerusalem, and Jeremiah 19:5-6 identifies this place as the final place for the administration of the fifth cycle of discipline on the nation, "They have built the high places of Baal to burn their sons in the fire as offerings to Baal - something I did not command or mention, nor did it enter my mind. So beware, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when the people will no longer call this place Topheth or the Valley of Ben Hinnom, but the Valley of Slaughter."

It was the place of child sacrifice, and the fire is the identification with the burning fires of sacrifice to Baal.

It would become the place where the Jews were slaughtered for their sins by the final attack of the Babylonian armies.

Therefore the Jeremiah passage represents the administration of the fifth cycle of discipline on Israel.

But here Christ employs Gehenna in a figurative sense to indicate something even worse - the final judgment of the unbeliever, the Lake of Fire.

There are two judges in view, two realms of power.

The human judge, with his realm of power over the physical;

The judge of the human race, who is Jesus Christ, with His complete realm of power over the physical and the spiritual.

Often, these judges are at odds with one another; they have differing objectives and differing motives in life.

When we find ourselves the object of both classes of authority, and they differ in their desires for us, our duty is clear.

The a fortiori argument of the sparrow compares men and sparrows. If God cares for the sparrow, then how much more for men, who are greater than sparrows? There is no sparrow who falls to the ground apart from the Father.

Even the death of the least of God's creatures requires His consent.

You will therefore not die without God's consent.

If God gives His consent to your death, then how might you prevent it?

This should never prevent you from fighting for your own life according to principles of good conscience, but when God gives His decree

concerning your right time, then that is surely it.

(10) God has the hairs on your head numbered; surely if He has this knowledge, He is in direct control of what happens to you.

(11) In any circumstance of persecution, you must have a focus on the divine ability to protect you; you must have an understanding of just how great His perceptive and protective powers are.

(12) This faith will remove the fear and allow you to do your duty unto Him.

Faith removes fear; love removes fear.

Faith and love are not far removed from one another. Love is dependent on faith, and love guarantees the purity of the faith.

The reassurance of eternal vindication.

"Therefore everyone who confesses in me before men, I will confess also in them before My Father Who is in heaven; And whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father Who is in heaven."

This again returns to the judgment of Christ, where Jesus Christ will do one of two things:

Confess you before the Father;

or deny you before the Father.

To be confessed to the Father by Christ is confirmation that He will personally presented you to God the Father at a heavenly honors ceremony.

Revelation 3:5. "...and I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels."

Colossians 3:4, "When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you will also be revealed with Him in glory."

The divisive nature of the Kingdom of God. "Do not think that I came to cast peace upon the earth; I did not come to cast peace but a sword. For I came to set a man against his father, and daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, and a man's enemies are his household-members."

Now here is a change - Christ talks tough to His disciples so that they will understand again the nature of the enemy arrayed against them.

Christ indicates that He came to earth to make war among men. And indeed this is true; even when you take into account the nature of the first advent and the cross of peace.

This does not change the nature of 2 Peter 3:9, "God is not willing that any should perish..." He does indeed want everyone to become humble before Him.

Christ came in order to win our salvation; our reconciliation and peace before God. But the cross was also an act of war.

Now the sword which Christ mentions does not represent physical violence and warfare. Rather, there is a representation of spiritual warfare.

Spiritual warfare divides families as long as the enemy exists within that family. Spiritual distinctions divide families at least until all are with Christ.

This does not abrogate the responsibility of virtue love toward all members of the human race, including your family.

Perhaps this statement can be summarize by the statements of James 4:6-10, "(6) But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, 'God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.' (7) Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee. (8) and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. (9) Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. (10) Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord and He will exalt you."

Christ did indeed come to make war against the arrogant.

During the first advent, the nature of that war was entirely spiritual. The ultimate operation of that war was at the cross.

The cross is a great act of war against the arrogant. Ultimately, it is destructive of their anti-grace ideas, because it is all grace.

At the second advent, the warfare will be physically violent, swift, and decisive. Jesus Christ is the greatest warrior of all men; He will win the greatest victory of all time, and leave millions of the enemy dead on the battlefield of Armageddon.

And you must realize that two realms are at war: the arrogant and the humble. These may well be within your family.

With Jesus Christ, you have a new and greater and more permanent family. It is the family of God. The family of God is greatly superior to any relationship that is based solely on the things of this world.

This does not preach a total separation from your family; only a separation from their worldly ways. You cannot take part in that!

You must also make the realization that there is a possibility of eternal separation from the unbeliever elements of your family; your greater allegiance must go to God, since you will not be separated from Him in eternity.

Here are the main factors that separate you from the unbeliever elements of your family.

Your belief system, which is in a loving God and a loving savior in Jesus Christ.

Your modus operandi, which is grace.

Your motivation in life, which is love for God.

Your destiny, which is blessing for time and eternity.

You must embrace every virtue from your family, and separate from their worldliness.

The results of the priorities according to the divisions. "The one who love his father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me, and the one who loves a son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me; and who does not take his cross and follow after Me, he is not worthy of Me. The one who find his soul destroys it,

and the one who destroys his soul in my behalf finds it.”

Christ demands love. Not from a lack of self-esteem on His part - not because He feels threatened or is neurotic in some way.

Christ chooses the family because it is most often the closest relationship that people have.

It is curious and significant that He does not choose the husband-wife relationship. The two are one flesh by the decree of God, so Christ avoids contradicting the will of God.

He demands love because love for Him is truly beneficial, and pays dividends for both time and eternity.

This is a matter of priorities; Christ does not prevent us from loving our families - He only warns us concerning our priorities.

If we love our families to the point where we cause neglect in our relationship with God, we have made a grave mistake that will reach into eternity.

You cannot take your family with you. They may decide on their own to join you, but you have no power to bring them into eternity.

The power of God to compensate you in eternity for the loss of your family in time is your source of comfort.

It is your love for Christ that makes you worthy of Him. If He is your top priority in life, you will be worthy of Him, and receive His approval at the judgment seat of Christ.

Then comes something completely out of the ordinary; Christ tells His disciples that they must take up their cross and follow after Him. Taking up the cross is equated with worthiness.

But Christ has not died on the cross yet. You would think that this sounds much more like a post-resurrection saying than it does one that is before His death on the cross.

How did Christ know? The cross was a common method of capital punishment, and because of its tortures, it was universally feared.

And He says, ‘Follow after Me.’ This indicates that He has already taken up His own cross, and is walking with it.

Taking up a cross is a reference to the practice of the day, which was to force the convicted criminal to carry his cross from the place of judgment to the place of execution.

Carrying the cross was a symbol of public ridicule.

But here Christ wants His disciples to carry their crosses with *esprit de corps*.

By this time, Christ had surmised that He was going to die on cross. He understood the significance of the 22nd Psalm, and had identified that it applied to Him. He had seen other men die on crosses, and with a chill of recognition seen the exact match between the prophecy and the reality.

This made His prayers in Gethsemane all the more real. He knew of the physical ordeal, and more than that, of the spiritual ordeal that was ahead.

The Romans employed the following procedures in crucifixion.

Flogging as the precedent to the actual crucifixion, and it was their custom to flog the back the of victim to a point where the blood flowed freely. This, though it seemed cruel, actually hastened the death of the crucified, and usually shortened their torture by many hours.

The victim was then required to carry his cross-beam (the upright beam was always planted in the ground beforehand) to the place of execution. This symbolized his culpability before the public - that he was fully to blame for the torture and death to come.

The executioners would then force the victim to the ground, and fasten him to the cross-beam - commonly by use of ropes, and less often by means of nails through the wrist joint. At this point the man and his cross beam were lifted to the upright.

At this point the victim was often offered a mixture of wine and narcotic, in order to deaden his senses through the ordeal. It is important to note that Christ refused this offer.

The cross beam was then secured to the upright, often by means of pre-positioned blocks of wood, and the victim's feet were bound or nailed together. Archaeological evidence indicates that it was not always the practice to secure the feet to the upright. They were nailed together, yes, but not also to the upright of the cross.

Not often mentioned in Christian circles, but appearing often in the historical accounts of crucifixion is the use of a SEDICULA. This was a peg or block of wood positioned mid-way on the upright with the purpose of a support for the buttocks of the victim. This was especially heinous, for it kept the victim alive for an inordinate amount of time. The SEDICULA was mutually exclusive with the securing of the feet to the upright. The SEDICULA was not mentioned in the death of Christ, and was most likely not used in His case. It make be unlikely, because Christ died quite swiftly for a victim of crucifixion. The record stay on a cross was nine days - an altogether remarkable feat.

The agony of the cross was due to several factors:

The pressure on the hands or wrists and feet due to gravity. Without the SEDICULA, the entire weight of the body was on the fastenings of the wrists. If this was a nail type of fastening, the agony was due to the tearing of the flesh. If a rope fastening, then the agony was due to the loss of circulation. In both the arms and legs, there was the commonality of extreme stress on the joints, and even dislocation.

The inability to draw a good breath. With the arms spread out and the back hard against the upright, there is a difficulty in moving the chest muscles which work together to draw breath. If the feet were fastened to the upright, then the agony of tearing flesh would have to be endured in order more effectively to breathe. With all of the trauma, heavy breathing would be the

norm. With crucifixion, heavy breathing is quite difficult. When the executioners broke the legs of the victim, it was to speed the death by suffocation.

Exposure. Victims were most often stripped of all clothing before they were crucified. In cooler climates or seasons, victims could easily expire due to hypothermia. Also, victims who survived for a few days would finally succumb to thirst.

Public shame. Hanging naked on a cross in a public place, unable to relieve yourself in private, all of these would induce much mockery.

Illness and disease. The longer the victim lasted, the more susceptible he was to illness and disease. Tetanus and lockjaw must have been common; infected wounds due to the presence of flies and other insects must have been common as well.

Extreme fatigue. Remaining in one position for 24 hours a day would render the muscles completely useless.

Taking up your cross willingly was to admit your guilt of your own volition. This of course was never done.

And yet this is what Christ tells His disciples to do. What a great thunderbolt this was from Christ.

Association with Christ means association with the cross, and Christ knew it long before He would take up his own cross.

The cross is a legitimate reason for boasting in the Christian life, Galatians 6:14, "But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world."

The cross causes our death to the world, and the world's death to us.

We now live a new life, a life that is unto God.

kp The cross stands as a symbol of our experiential victory over sin:

Romans 6:3-7, "(3) Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? (4) Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. (5) For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, (6) knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; (7) for he who has died is freed from sin."

2 Corinthians 13:4, "For indeed He was crucified because of weakness, yet He lives because of the power of God. For we also are weak in Him, yet we will live with Him because of the power of God directed toward you."

Galatians 2:20, "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who lived me and gave Himself up for me."

Galatians 5:24, "Now those who are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires."

The cross stands as the supreme symbol of Christ-like character:

Philippians 2:5-8, "(5) Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, (6) who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, (7) but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. (8) Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."

Hebrews 12:1-3, "(1) Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, (2) fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and

perfect of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (3) For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart."

So when you take up your cross and follow Jesus Christ, it is a symbol of your humility toward God's plan for your life, and your separation from the world by means of a symbolic death

The reward of the faithful. "The one who receives you receives Me, and the one who receives Me receives the one who sent Me. The one who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive the profit of a prophet, and the one who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man will receive the reward of a righteous man. And whoever in the name of a disciple gives to one of these little ones even a cup of cold water, truly I say to you, he will certainly not lose his reward!"

There is a connection between Christ and His disciples: they are His substitutionary representatives to the all the people that they minister to. They are His ambassadors.

Furthermore, there is a connection between God and Christ; Christ is the ambassador for God, and the ultimate ambassador, He is God's Son.

There is reward for those who receive the disciples. Christ employs two proverbs or common truths in order to communicate this principle of reward.

The profit of the prophet goes to those who receive the prophets in the name of the prophet.

This may seem a little confusing. Therefore, a principle - not all those who receive the prophet receive them fully.

Prophets are celebrities, and there is much to gain by receiving them into your home - approbation, social standing, even an increase in commerce.

But receiving a prophet in his own name means receiving his message in your own heart - really believing and implementing what he has to say.

It is only this person who receives the reward of the prophet - who shares in the bounty that comes from God through the prophet.

The reward of the righteous man goes to those who receive the righteous man in the name of the righteous man.

Again there is advantage to receiving a righteous man. Advantage that goes beyond the spiritual realm to the earthly.

On account of that, only the one who receives the righteous man and his message receives the reward of the righteous man.

With regard to Christ, you must be more than just a Christian by name. If you apply the Christian name to yourself for personal advantage, you will certainly not receive the heavenly reward of Christ.

Indeed you may well miss out on salvation, if you do not accept the essence of the salvation offer;

You may well miss out on eternal reward above and beyond salvation, if you do not accept the essence of the plan of God.

Calling yourself a Christian because your shadow once darkened the halls of a church does not make you a Christian. Calling yourself a Christian because your parents baptized you a Christian as an infant does not make you a Christian.

You are not a Christian because you call yourself one; indeed you are only a Christian if you have trusted in Christ's work for your eternal salvation.

And to be a mature Christian, you must have a Christ-like character that has been tested by the fire of undeserved suffering.

The name of the prophet and the name of the righteous man has to do with the core of their being and their mission; the name was tantamount to essence.

The final statement is interesting: "And whoever in the name of a disciple gives to one of these little ones even a cup of cold water, truly I say to you, he will certainly not lose his reward!"

It seems the focus is Christian charity toward children. But perhaps it is best to focus on the word Christian.

For this simple act of charity must be done in the name of a disciple in order to produce the intended effect.

There must be proper Christian motivation for every act of charity: 1 Corinthians 13:1-3, "(1) If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. (2) If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. (3) And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing."

Notice that charity does not gain a reward, it only prevents you from losing it!

This is a really important distinction!

The mature Christian is the one who advances in God's plan and produces Christ-like character; furthermore, he is the one who endures undeserved suffering and maintains his love for God.

Charity is the application of the doctrine of grace to the truly helpless. It is one facet of divine character and the attitude of the spiritually mature.

A charitable attitude alone does not define you as a mature believer.

Eternal reward above and beyond salvation goes to those who have mature Christ-like character in all facets.

But, you may lose your reward if you begin to slip in one category, such as charity. Therefore the distinction of loss of reward, and the proper

placement of motivation with reference to charity.

III. The prepared ambassador for Christ:

Understands the issue of grace orientation.

Understands the need to leave behind and completely forget those who are negative.

Keeps moving, not spending undue time on the negative.

Understands the nature of negative volition.

It may be expressed in disinterest.

It may be expressed in antagonism.

Murderous antagonism.

Slandorous antagonism.

Proselytizing antagonism.

Is confident that the Spirit will guide his words, and that spiritual information is all the eloquence that he needs.

There is danger of persecution from even the closest of friends and family; be prepared for the need to choose between family and Christ as a matter of priorities.

Be prepared for greater persecution than even what Christ experienced.

Understands the eternal advantage, and how it allays the fears related to ambassadorship.

Herod and John the Baptist

Matthew 14:1-2

“(1) During that time Herod the Tetrarch heard the news of Jesus, (2) and said to his servants, ‘This is John the Baptist; He was raised from the dead and for this reason the miracles are working in him.’”

Mark 6:14-16

And king Herod heard [the news of Jesus], for His name became perspicuous, and they were saying, ‘John the Baptist is risen from death and ‘for this reason the miracles are working in Him.’ (15) But others were saying, He is Elijah;’ and others were saying ‘He is a prophet like

one of the [old-time] prophets. (16) But Herod, after hearing [these things] was saying, ‘The one whom I beheaded, John, he is risen.’”

Luke 9:7-9:

“(7) Now Herod the Tetrarch heard all the happenings and he was going through difficulty because the things said by some that John was raised from the dead, (8) and by some that Elijah had appeared, and others that one of the prophets of old had risen again. (9) And Herod said, ‘I personally beheaded John; but who is this man concerning whom I am hearing such things?’ And he kept on seeking to see Him.”

Exposition.

An identification and biography of Herod the Tetrarch.

This is the son of Herod the Great, Herod Antipas. He was the Tetrarch over Galilee and Perea, where the majority of the events of Christ’s life took place.

Herod the Great had ten wives and seven sons. Four of those seven would play a role in the New Testament. All of the wives wanted their sons to be Herod’s successor. This was a complication.

His first son Antipater was through his first wife Doris.

Herod repudiated her and Antipater when he married Mariamne I, the granddaughter of the famous Hyrcanus. This was in 37 BC Alexander and Aristobulus were born by her.

In 24 BC Herod married Mariamne II, by whom he had Herod Philip.

Just a year later, he married his fourth wife, Malthace, a Samaritan by whom he had Archelaus and Antipas.

And another two years after that, he married wife #5, Cleopatra of Jerusalem, by whom he had Philip the Tetrarch.

The other five wives bore him no sons, and only three are mentioned by name, Pallas, Phaedra, and Elpis. He also had daughters.

Herod's two favorite sons were those by Mariamne I, Alexander and Aristobulus.

Make note: Aristobulus married his cousin, Bernice.

Make note: This union produced a daughter, Herodias.

Herod had a sister, Salome, who hated these two favorite sons, even though her daughter Bernice was married to Aristobulus.

She had designs for her own son, a certain Antipater, to ascend to the throne of Herod. He is not to be confused with Antipater, Herod's first son by Doris.

Salome maligned Mariamne I before Herod, and Herod believed her and had Mariamne I killed.

The two sons were naturally indignant, and threatened to bring charges before Caesar that would cause him to lose his throne.

And as a consequence Herod changed his will so that Antipater by Doris was named the sole heir to the throne. He then sent Antipater to the emperor to have the will ratified.

Realizing that being gone from Herod's presence was a dangerous thing, Antipater wrote slanderous letter against Alexander and Aristobulus from Rome.

As a result of this slander, Herod had these two tried before Caesar Augustus in 12 BC. Amazingly, the court system worked, and they were found not guilty on all counts, and more than that, they were reconciled to their father, and to Antipater as well.

Herod changed his will to name all three sons equally.

But Salome, Herod's sister, was not finished yet. Together with brother Pheroras and son Antipater, the slander began again against the two sons of Mariamne I.

This time they obtained the testimony of one friend of Alexander's, and on the basis of a single eyewitness they convinced Herod that the two were plotting Herod's death and

planning to lay claim to the throne before Rome.

Alexander was cast into prison, but thanks to Alexander's father-in-law, he was set free and reconciled to Herod.

In the next round, Antipater convinced his friend Eurycles from Sparta to play Alexander and Aristobulus against Herod. They fell for it, and were caught in the plotting phase.

Herod became so suspicious that he once again imprisoned the brothers, and accused them of treason.

Herod sent to Rome seeking the Emperor's advice regarding his sons, and Augustus gave Herod full authority to deal with his sons as he wished, but advised to him to conduct a Roman trial outside of his own territory. He feared that without a change of venue there would be a rebellion.

The trial was conducted in Berytus (Beirut), and a guilty verdict was passed. The two sons Alexander and Aristobulus were executed by strangulation in 7 BC.

Herod's fourth will now named Antipater by Doris his sole successor.

But Antipater was an impatient man...

He held secret conferences with Herod's brother Pheroras. They intended to kill the old man.

Salome, Herod's sister, got wind of these meetings and spilled the beans to Herod.

Thus Herod's relationship with his sole named heir became somewhat strained.

Antipater then arranged to have emperor Augustus summon him to Rome, with the excuse that the new will needed ratification. He was then conveniently out of town.

Pheroras, Herod's brother and Antipater's uncle died. Herod conducted an investigation, and discovered that not only did Pheroras die of poison, but also that same poison had been intended for him.

Herod recalled Antipater under false pretenses, and he thus returned without suspicion. He was thrown into prison, tried the next day and found guilty. It took some time, however to gain permission to execute Antipater, but eventually it was done.

And so Herod had another will drawn up. Since his two oldest living sons had been turned against him by Antipater, that is, Herod Philip by Mariamne II and Archelaus by Malthace, he excluded them from will #6. Everything now went to Antipas by Malthace.

Herod was by now old and feeble and full of disease. Nothing could ease his discomfort, soul and body.

It was around this time that Christ was born, and everyone was talking about the new-born true king of the Jews. Herod's paranoia was at an all-time high, and so he was motivated to kill all those children in Bethlehem.

And at the same time, two rabbis incited the people to tear down the Roman eagle from the temple gate. The offenders were seized and burned alive.

And just then he made his final will, naming Archelaus of Malthace as king, Antipas of Malthace as Tetrarch of Galilee and Perea, and their half-brother Philip of Cleopatra of Jerusalem as the Tetrarch of Gaulanitis, Trachonitis, Batanea, and Paneas.

But of course the last will was disputed, because it was made just five days before Herod's death, and it needed the emperor's ratification.

Archelaus was the de facto ruler during this time. During the next Passover, a crowd gathered before Archelaus and began to demand retribution for the deaths of those killed by his father during the eagle incident.

The crowd turned ugly when Archelaus refused this retribution, and so he ordered the troops in. Three thousand people were killed. Not a good start.

Immediately after this, Archelaus and Antipas went to Rome together, each to claim before the emperor the will which benefited himself. Archelaus said the last will always counts, while Antipas said the last will was not made by a mentally well Herod. It must have been an interesting boat ride. Philip was left behind to manage matters.

While these were in Rome, another riot broke out during Pentecost, and this went on for about two months and many more deaths.

The Jews therefore sent a delegation to Rome, pleading for their lives and their autonomy.

Philip got nervous about everyone being in Rome, so he went too.

Augustus, thoroughly tired by the whole mess by now, issued a compromise.

Archelaus was made ruler over Idumea, Judea, and Samaria with the special title of Ethnarch. He was promised kingship if he ruled well.

Antipas was made tetrarch over Galilee and Perea.

And Philip was given Gaulanitis, Trachonitis, Batanea, and Paneas as tetrarch. (See map)

Archelaus reign as ethnarch was characterized by brutality and tyranny, even though like his father he tried to bribe the people by building things.

In AD 6 the Jews and Samaritans joined together in a delegation to Rome, where they complained to the emperor. Antipas and Philip the Tetrarch also went because they felt Archelaus had neglected their territories.

Archelaus was then deposed and exiled to the south of France.

Archelaus territory then became an imperial province under direct Roman rule.

Antipas was the ruler over Galilee, the central area of most of Christ's ministry.

He first undertook a rebuilding program to fix the destruction of the revolt of 4 BC Sepphoris was the largest city of Galilee. It was rebuilt,

and since it was just 4 miles from Nazareth it is likely that Joseph, a carpenter, worked on the project.

Tiberias was a new city founded under his building program. But while they were building, the builders struck on the site of an old cemetery, and thus the whole area became unclean to the Jews. He therefore enticed people there by offering free homes and lands and tax exemption for the first few years.

Antipas married the daughter of the Nabatean king Aretas IV, an Arab. This added to Antipas' realm, and to Caesar Augustus' tax base.

In AD 28 or 29, Antipas decided to go to Rome, and on the way to visit his half-brother Herod Philip, who lived down on the seacoast.

Now Herod Philip had married his brother Aristobulus' daughter, whose name was Herodias. You remember her. Well... Herodias was a very beautiful woman, and Antipas fell in love with her; his own niece and sister-in-law.

Now Herodias was a typical scheming member of the Herod family, and she secretly agreed to divorce Herod Philip and marry Antipas, provided that he divorce the daughter of Aretas IV.

Somehow, Antipas' first wife discovered the plan, and fled to her father. Aretas took the whole deal as an insult, and a few years later attacked and defeated Antipas in a battle.

But John the Baptist took offence at this incestual marriage, and let off steam about it. This is why he was thrown into prison - Matthew 14:3.

Later Herodias would connive to have John killed as retribution for stirring up the people against her behavior - Matthew 14:1-12.

Antipas was greatly fascinated with the ministry of Christ, and longed to see His miracles.

And when Pilate had custody of Christ and understood our Lord to be a citizen of Galilee, he sent him to Antipas, for it was under his

jurisdiction. Herod Antipas was there for the feast of the Passover.

Luke 23:8-12 records what happened. "(8) Now Herod was very glad when he saw Jesus; for he had wanted to see Him for a long time, because he had been hearing about Him and was hoping to see some sign performed by Him. (9) And he questioned Him at some length; but He answered him nothing. (10) And the chief priests and the scribes were standing there, accusing Him vehemently. (11) And Herod with his soldiers, after treating Him with contempt and mocking Him, dressed Him in a gorgeous robe and sent Him back to Pilate. (12) Now Herod and Pilate became friends with one another that very day; for before they had been enemies with each other."

Antipas identified himself with the Jews by treating their enemy as his enemy also. He may also have been outraged that Christ gave him no show.

A review of the life of John the Baptist.

His ministry.

John the Baptist's ministry was the fulfillment of prophecy; it signified and pointed to the arrival of the Messiah.

John the Baptist had a ministry from God to prepare Israel for the millennial kingdom and its king.

The ministry of John the Baptist had nothing to do whatsoever with the church. In essence it is in its own watertight compartment apart from the church. It drew its precedence from the dispensation of Israel.

John drew his sense of destiny from an Old Testament prophecy concerning his ministry. Isa 40; Mal 3:1. "Prepare the way for the Lord."

Since John and Jesus were cousins, it is likely that they knew one another as children and young men. John knew exactly who the Messiah was, and probably long before he ever preached his message.

John began his ministry of repentance and baptism in the Spring of 26 AD

You must understand that John was the greatest prophet of the age of Israel. His person and message were greater even than Isaiah or Jeremiah or any other. Our Lord testified to this in Matthew 11:11.

John had a great following; he was wildly popular among the people of Israel and even among some Romans.

His mission was to point the way to one even greater. From the seeming greatest to the even greater.

Long after John was gone, people still gravitated towards his ministry, even to the exclusion of Christ. In some ways, people still do, whenever they are legalistic and place great value on outward acts of piety.

His downfall, John 3:26-31.

Verse 26: "And they came to John and said to Him, 'Rabbi, He who was with you beyond the Jordan, about whom you yourself have testified, behold, He is baptizing and all are coming to Him.'"

These guys are out of fellowship about losing their ministry to Christ and His disciples.

Their concentration and focus is entirely on John, in the first part. 'He who was with you...' 'About whom you have testified...'

But then they notice that this ministry is tapering off and they do not like it. "He is baptizing [sneering tone], and all are coming to Him."

But something else. Christ has now begun His own ministry. Why is John still at work? Why has John not ceased now that Christ has begun? Perhaps this is John's one flaw. He did not know when to hang it up.

Verse 27: "John answered and said, 'No man can receive a single thing unless it has been given to him from heaven.'"

This is a hard line grace answer. The real man in question is Jesus Christ.

It reveals the unasked question of the disciple-Jew alliance: Why Christ and not John?

John tells them: All are going to Christ because it comes from heaven.

Verse 28: "You yourselves witnessed me saying, 'I myself am not the Christ, but that I have been sent ahead of Him.'"

Again, John draws attention to Christ, and his relationship to Christ. Here he reprises his role as the way-paver, even for some of his disciples.

The conclusion is that John says the right things, but that he has appearance of being self-centered. If John was doing the right thing at this time, this would be a marvelous statement; but since he is not, we may call it somewhat self-centered.

John has applied his mission in this way: he sees himself as the one who must prepare the way for every individual in Israel. That before anyone goes to Christ, they must go through him.

He sees a continuing role for himself in Christ's kingdom. He is the screener, the way paver, the man who prepares the hearts of all for Christ, even as Christ is on the scene.

Christ is there to be seen face to face; His ministry is in the open. Why should Israel go through a human being to see Him?

Verse 29: "The who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, the one who stands and hears him rejoices with joy through the sound of bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine has been made full."

The bride at this point is Israel; the groom is Christ; the friend is John.

The friend is what we would call the best man. In the Jewish wedding, the friend would stand next to the bridegroom and hear his vows. At this he would rejoice, as any best man would.

John says:

That he does not have the prize at this wedding of all weddings: Christ does. The bride is Israel.

But that he still rejoices for Christ, and that the joy of hearing Christ's voice has been made full at this time.

Again, though, there is hint of bitterness. John perhaps has indulged in self-pity here. Oh, he is not the bridegroom, and he does not get the bride, but at least he vicariously experiences the bridegroom's joy. "Even though I do not get Christ's joy, I am happy for him. My limited joy has been made complete."

Why the negative assessment of John's statement? Because of his actions. If John had ceased his ministry at the beginning of Christ's ministry, then these statements could have been taken in the most positive light possible. Now because of John's action, they have the appearance of tarnish and rust. There is a dark side to them.

John may say this marvelous thing, but it seems as though he is still in love with the bride, and dating her though she is walking down the aisle.

Verse 30: "It is necessary for that one to increase, but for me to diminish."

Note the two verbs that reflect the necessity.

The first is AUXANO, to grow. This verb described the growth of living things, of plants and trees, of children. It shows a gradual growth over a period of time.

The second is ELATTOO, to shrink. This too is a verb of gradual change. It describes the action of shrinking over time, of growth in reverse.

What John has done here is nothing less than put a spin on the events of the past few days. But let's look again at the facts!

In verse 23, people are coming out of nowhere to be baptized by John.

In verse 26, they are all going to Christ.

This is not a gradual growth and diminishment! This is an all at once radical change!

But why does John put his spin on these events? It can only be because he wants to hold

on to the following and the ministry that he thinks he has.

John sees his accession as gradual; what has already happened was immediate and absolute.

John uses a rather impersonal mode of reference to Jesus Christ. It is the far demonstrative pronoun, EKEINON.

In fact, in this entire discourse, John uses the word Christ only once, and never the word Jesus.

In verse 27, John says, "a man cannot receive a single thing." The application is Jesus.

In verse 28, John says, "I myself am not the Christ." But the real focus of the sentence is John, through his use of the intensive pronoun.

In verse 29, John employs a short parable, where Christ is the bridegroom, but Christ is never mentioned by name.

In verse 30, John uses the far demonstrative.

Jesus was John's own cousin. They were family, and yet John the Baptist uses only titles and roundabout ways to describe our Lord.

John uses emphatic, intensive, and self-centered modes of expression to describe himself.

(10) Apparently, all the popularity and approbation had gone to John's head. He would lose that same head about a year later.

What follows now is an injection of John the Apostle's. He inserts his own discourse, and in a way it concentrates on what the Baptist has just said. In opposition to John's self-centered words, the Apostle concentrates very much on the person and character of Christ.

Verse 31: "The one who comes from above is above all; the one who is from the earth is from the earth and speaks of the earth. The one who comes from heaven is above all."

A. Now for John the Apostle's editorial comment. He tells us in this verse that what the Baptist has just said it cosmic propaganda, and entirely wrong.

First is Christ. Christ comes from above, and is above all. He is above the selfishness and pettiness of the Baptist. He is above all human flaws.

Second is the Baptist. He is from the earth and he speaks the worldly point of view. Make no mistake. John paints the Baptist here as he is: worldly and trapped in the cosmic system. Spouting forth to his last few followers the propaganda that he hopes will keep them.

Third is Christ again, and you can see immediately John the Apostle's desire to keep his gospel centered on Christ, and above all in its own right. John needed to get out the truth on the last days of the Baptist's ministry, but did so in such a way that was objective and did not linger on the sad details of the demise of this great prophet of Israel.

Knowing what we now know now will make it easier to understand why in a few more days John will be thrown into prison, and his enigmatic message to Christ once there.

When John is in prison, he really loses his focus, and his faith.

Luke 7:18-35: "(18) And his disciples reported to John about all these things. And summing some two of his disciples John (19) sent to the Lord, saying, 'Are you the coming one or do we expect another?' (20) And after they appeared beside Him the men said, 'John the Baptist sent us to you, saying, 'Are you the coming one or do we expect another?' (21) In that hour He healed many from illness and disease and evil spirits and to many blind He freely gave to see. (22) And after formulating an answer, He said to them, 'After you arrive proclaim to John what you saw and heard; blind men see again, lame men walk, lepers are cleansed and deaf men hear, dead men are raised, poor men are evangelized. (23) And blessed is anyone who does not stumble over Me. (24) And after the messengers of John left, He began to speak to the crowds about John, 'What did you go out into the desert to witness? A reed stirred by the wind? (25) Really, what did you go out to see? A man wearing white clothes? Behold those in

glorious clothing and possessing luxury are in the palace. (26) But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes I say to you, and more than a prophet. (27) He is the one about whom it has been written, 'Behold I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you.' (28) I say to you, among those born of women, no one is greater. But the least in the kingdom of God is greater than him.

John the Baptist has lost his perspective from Jesus. This is because he hears all these great things about Christ, and yet he does not see Christ as the Messiah.

And why is that? How could you deny Christ as the Messiah when you hear all of these things about him?

It had to do with personal circumstances. John was in prison, put there by his enemy and the enemy of Israel. That in John's mind Christ had done nothing to free him (which was the law of volitional responsibility), nor to free his people from the Herodian tyranny was enough to deny Jesus as the Messiah.

This is the classic cosmic rationale.

John was suffering because of his own stubborn efforts in clinging too long to his ministry, and his shift of focus from the Pharisees to the Herodians.

But John refused to see that in his state of spiritual blindness, and so he shifted the blame to Jesus.

He concluded that Jesus could not be the Messiah, because He had not freed him, when that was so obviously what any Messiah should do.

Suddenly God was not God because John had not gotten his way. And because of his spiritual malfunction, John had become like his worst enemies, the Pharisees.

John must indeed have been suffering from spiritual blindness.

Herod hears the news of Jesus. "During that time Herod the Tetrarch heard the news of Jesus, for His name became perspicuous, and he

was going through difficulty because of the things said by some: and they were saying, 'John the Baptist is risen from death,' and, 'for this reason the miracles are working in Him,' and 'He is Elijah,' and still others, 'He is a prophet like one of the [old-time] prophets.'"

What makes Herod Antipas nervous is that he has recently ordered the beheading of John the Baptist, and indeed this was carried out in his presence.

How utterly out of touch is this man with the spiritual doings in his kingdom!

The name of Jesus had become PHANERON, 'perspicuous.' The fame of Christ had grown throughout the land, and it was only two years previous that John the Baptist had much the same kind of fame.

Herod was going through a difficulty in his life, DIEIPOREI. The original verb is APOREO, which means to be at a loss, uncertain, full of doubt.

This is perhaps an understatement.

The uninformed were claiming that John the Baptist had risen from death, or he is Elijah, or he is a prophet like one of the old-time prophets.

These speculations are somewhat old. Folks had been talking the same way about Christ ever since His ministry had begun.

And you should certainly note that they are rationalizations on the true nature and ministry of Christ.

People will go to great mental lengths in order to deny that Christ is the Messiah, and the Son of God and Savior of the world.

For our own generation, there are many more explanations of Christ, and all are shams that avoid the true issue of His life.

The issue of Christ's life is the character of God.

The conscience of God contains His norms and standards for thought, word, and act. This is righteousness. When the righteousness of God is expressed toward others, this is justice. The conscience of God evaluates all of His

perception and experience, inward and out, with Himself and with others.

The motivation of God is the complex of thought that moves Him to action. This is the interaction of His conscience with His perfect perception of the true needs of others. The true needs of others causes God to intervene on their behalf.

The analytical ability of God is expressed by the term grace. Grace is not just what God does for us, but how He does it as well.

God both perceives our problems and provides for their solution perfectly.

God is absolutely proficient at problem solving. His approach concentrates on His thinking, His Merit, and His power. He recognizes the value of human volition, and integrates what He knows will work with the possibility and responsibility of human will.

So God analyzes what He knows will work, and proposes it to the human race.

God's mind is in a perfect state of organization. Order is the perfect application of grace expressed in the plan of God.

Let's examine this portion of God's character in a little more detail.

In warfare there is a desperate need for victory; therefore strategists have over time developed certain immutable principles related to the attainment of victory. These we may apply as though they are from God, because God is the best of all at war.

- He understands the principle of objective.
- The objective constitutes the guide for the interpretation of orders, for the formation of decisions, and for the employment of the means available.
- God has a set objective for every human life. This is understood as predestination. The objective is completed love for Him, love for Him in any situation in life. This is spiritual maturity. Therefore, every part of grace is aimed at this objective.

- This in turn fulfills His objective, which is vindication in the angelic appeal trial.
- He understands the principle of offensive.
- Offensive action is the only means by which a decision is gained in warfare. The offensive increases the effectiveness of the force that adopts it because it raises morale, permits concentration of effort, and allows freedom of action.
- Our application of this principle is to gain and perpetuate spiritual momentum inside His plan.
- Spiritual momentum is defined as the demand of truth, the spiritual necessity of moving forward. One days' spiritual growth demands, makes necessary the next.
- You take the offensive whenever you learn and apply the truth. This is the means by which you attain the objective.
- Offensive means having right priorities and setting aside the distractions of life.
- He understands the principle of mass.
- Mass defines combat power. The concept includes the numbers, the weapons, the tactical skill, the fighting ability, the resolution, the discipline, the morale, and the leadership of the fighting force.
- Successful employment of mass means putting maximum mass at the proper time and place to achieve the objective.
- Mass for the Christian means the combination of divine power and human concentration toward the application of truth during undeserved suffering.
- Mass means that all of the appropriate elements of grace come together at the point of attack to produce maximum love for God.
- He understands the principle of economy of force.
- The economy of force is the efficient means by which military mass is deployed in a main effort. Men and means are directed in such a

way that there is no compromise to the main effort, and as little as possible elsewhere.

- Economy for the Christian means focusing your life on the point of attack, which is spiritual growth.
- He understands the principle of movement.
- This refers to the maneuver of combat arms and their support. This means to bring military mass into close contact with the enemy to secure a decisive result, and to put the mass where it can attack with maximum advantage. This always has the idea of being in the right geographical location for the achievement of the objective.
- The movement of the Christian focuses on the geographical will of God. And the geographical will always has to do with the objective. You must always place yourself geographically at the point where you will have the maximum opportunity to fulfill God's plan.
- He understands the principle of unity of command.
- Unity of command is more than cooperation (see principle #10). It is the responsibility of each command toward fulfillment of the objective under a single commander.
- Each command has a single commander who is responsible for the direction of his command toward the objective. Each command is to remain unified under that commander.
- In the spiritual realm, this is the church under the headship of Jesus Christ, and the local church under the headship of the pastor.
- In the local church, the pastor is responsible for directing his flock toward the objective of spiritual maturity, mature love for God. The responsibility of the flock is to remain unified under that command in humility.
- He understands the principle of surprise.
- Surprise in some form is essential to obtain maximum effect in battle with minimum loss. Surprise occurs in many categories of military

activity: time, place, direction, force, tactics, and weapons.

- God has applied the principle of surprise with regard to progressive revelation, having portions of His truth concealed, even to the angels, and even to His Son.

- Our application of surprise is in the content of our soul. We have the right to privacy as Christians, and this privacy of the priesthood extends to the angelic realm; we think in our own souls apart from the intrusion of any creature save God Himself.

- With privacy, we have the advantage of surprise during testing, so that there is a progressive revelation of our hearts through the course of our lives.

· He understands the principle of Security.

- Security is defined in military science and tactics as all measures which are taken to guard against observations, surprise, and hostile interference with effective maneuver. Security is designed to gain and maintain the power of freedom of action.

- Eternal security is what God does for us in order to make us free. At the moment we believe, we may have the confidence that our salvation remains secure forever.

- Dismantling the cosmic complex and keeping it at bay is what we must do to keep our offensive operation of spiritual momentum secure.

- Because sin entangles us on the course to our destiny, we must keep its power to a minimum in our lives. When sin is minimized, we maximize our freedom of action, especially related to our spiritual advance.

· He understands the principle of Simplicity.

- Simplicity means that all military plans, at any level of command, must be simple and free from complicated maneuvers. Orders have to be direct and free from contingencies. Frequent changes of plan should be avoided, and the unity of command should be observed.

- "But the greatest commandment is this: to love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and might."

- That is elegantly simple. Love God.

- We love God through our pursuit of the word.

- We love Him through our application of the word.

- We love Him through expressing praise and thanksgiving.

- We love Him through spreading the word in ambassadorial function.

- We love Him through depending on Him when we are helpless.

- We love Him through our enduring love for Him in both the distractions of prosperity and the darkness of adversity.

- As long as you love God as He truly is, you will be within the bounds of the simplicity of His plan.

· He understands the principle of cooperation.

- By cooperation is meant that all elements of a mission work together for the achievement of the objective. This includes the principle of teamwork. Cooperation within a command is attained when everyone interprets his orders in an intelligent manner, and executes them in accordance with the spirit and the intent of the authority issuing them.

- Between independent commanders, cooperation is attained by each working for a common objective without reference to personal ambition.

- This is the necessity of virtue love in the local church. The mission of the local church is for each individual of that body to achieve the objective of mature love for God

- Therefore, personal ambition must be set aside, along with every form of illicit judgment. Forgiveness must go out toward failure, and tolerance toward idiosyncratic behavior.

- There must also be virtue in the great body of Christ when two people from different local churches are in contact with one another.

- They must always approach the differences in the ministry with virtue, so that there is no undue bickering and inordinate competition.

Chaos always comes about as a result of sin and wrong priorities in life; order enters in when truth is applied. Satan brings chaos, and God order.

Now God has the absolute and infinite power to bring about the desire of His will. This is His sovereignty.

God has volition, and since He is perfect, God's volition always acts in a right manner.

God's will is always supreme over creature volition. It is God's sovereign choice, however, to allow creatures free will.

There is often a gap between desire and execution. God's willpower always bridges that gap.

People of good character always have willpower. Understanding justice and love and grace and order is useless without bringing it to bear by means of will.

The temperament of God is immutable, and therefore He does not change. This characteristic applies to His willpower when it is tested, and we call it faithfulness.

Faithfulness is willpower extended over time.

Faithfulness is not affected by adversity, nor is it distracted by prosperity.

God loves us both when we sin and when we love Him. He is faithful even when we deny Him.

Faithfulness is a desirable characteristic in creatures. Indeed we must have it in order fulfill God's plan, and to succeed in any endeavor in life.

Illustration: this ministry.

God has integrity in communication.

He is forthright, clear, sufficient, and honest when He communicates.

And of course He always keeps His word. This is His veracity.

There are often attacks against the character of Christ, but just as often, and perhaps even more often, there are attacks against the hypostatic union. The cults will either attack the deity or the humanity of Christ in such a way as to undermine His mediatorship and His example for the behavior of men.

Jesus Christ was and the Son of God, the Savior of the World. He was both fully man and fully God. He died as the mediator between God and man.

Herod's paranoid response: "But Herod after hearing [these things] was saying, 'I personally beheaded John; but who is this man concerning whom I am hearing such things? The one whom I beheaded, John, he is risen. For this reason the miracles are working in him.' And he kept on seeking to see Him."

See the section on the beheading of John the Baptist.

So Herod hears of Jesus, and remembers his personal involvement with the beheading of John the Baptist. He even tells a little fib; that he personally beheaded John, when in fact it was the royal executioner who actually did the deed.

But Herod certainly saw the head on the platter, and recognized it as belonging to John the Baptist. He knew objectively that the man was dead.

The next part of his thinking is with regard to Christ. "Who is this man concerning whom I am hearing such things?"

The delegation of John's two disciples had returned to the household prison, and reported to John about what they saw and heard from Jesus. Did Herod hear about this? Surely he would be able to see that there were two different men here!

Later, John was gruesomely murdered at the decree of Herod.

And after this, Herod concludes that John has risen. Herod has a colossal complex of guilt. His conclusion was that John had risen from the dead, and that God was out to get him.

Guilt is the true producer of all ghosts; Herod manufactures this ghost from his guilt, and partly from his desire to hear the message of the Baptist.

But now it is too late, and Herod fears the God of the Jews, thinking that this will be an awful end to his life in some way. Remember that "fear involves punishment" - 1 John 4:18.

Guilt can become the motivating factor in your life, impelling you toward many foul actions. Indeed, many people in this world are enslaved by a guilt complex.

There are two actions which resolve the problem of guilt in the life of any believer in Jesus Christ.

The ability to relate his sins to the atonement of the cross, and realize that the burden of sin was borne by Jesus Christ.

The establishment of spiritual momentum as the good faith measure of pure motive and proper attitude toward grace.

According to Herod's reasoning, having risen from the dead John now has the gifts of miracles and healings.

And then Herod does something curious: He keeps on seeking to see Jesus, whom he thinks is John. This is remarkable. He wants to see this man who has risen from the dead.

Perhaps Herod wants to make a positive identification, so as to absolve his guilt.

Perhaps Herod wants to kill him again.

Perhaps he desire to gain his forgiveness.

But what is again truly remarkable is the unbelief about Jesus. Herod would rather believe that the ghost of John the Baptist has

risen to torment him than he would accept that Jesus is the Messiah of the Jews.

There had been quite a propaganda campaign just before the time of the first advent. False messiahs and failed leaders galore. Indeed the shadow of the messiah loomed over the Herod family as much as anyone.

This blinded them to the hand of God in the life of Christ. Only a few who looked for the true and the good could see Him as He truly was.

The Beheading of John the Baptist

Matthew 14:3-12

Mark 6:17-29,"

Exposition.

The Reason for John's Imprisonment.

Herod sent out men to arrest and seize John the Baptist. He was then chained and placed in prison.

It was this incident that caused Jesus to go through Samaria on His way to Galilee. It was on account of this that He spent time with the Samaritan woman at the well, and brought the town of Sychar into His kingdom. This is narrated in Matthew 4:12 and John chapter four.

Herod Antipas had married Herodias, his sister in law and niece. She had left Philip the Tetrarch, Herod Antipas' half brother, for him.

Herodias was just a little bit older than Christ, now about 34-35 years of age. She hated John the Baptist because he had preached against her immoral and incestuous behavior.

John preached, saying OUK EXESTIN, 'it is not right.' This was by John's reckoning against the very laws of nature, and so it was.

This was more than just sex, it was a capital crime according to the law of Moses. Leviticus 18:16 defines this marriage as incestual: "You shall not uncover the nakedness of your brother's wife; it is your brother's nakedness." Verse 29 defines the punishment as requiring a 'cutting off from the people.'

So here is this ruling family over Galilee; they are only half-Jewish, which made them the target of awful prejudice from the racist Jews. They are incestuous, in direct contravention to the law of God. They should be executed under capital punishment, but this ruling family lives above the laws of the Jews.

Now John the Baptist has virtually joined the party of the Pharisees in their crusade against this kind of immorality.

John has lost the focus of his ministry since the rapid ascension of Christ's popularity.

According to Josephus, John was no longer baptizing for the remission of sins, but preaching that his baptism cleansed the body, while righteous behavior cleansed the soul. John had moved to legalism in an attempt to retain his following.

John is immensely popular, so that Herod Antipas and Herodias fear the people will turn against them if they listen to the strident sermons of this man.

Therefore they must stop him, and he is seized and chained and thrown into prison. It is clear that John is imprisoned at the royal quarters.

In the royal quarters there was a certain royal steward by the name of Chuza. His wife was named Joanna, and it turns out that she is a believer in Jesus Christ.

A steward was an OIKONOMOS, a manager of the royal household. All logistical matters were a part of his domain.

When Herod ordered the seizure and imprisonment of John the Baptist, the matter was delegated to Chuza.

While John was in prison, his care was the responsibility of Chuza.

If we were to construct a probable course of events it would be like this:

John is imprisoned. He is befuddled by his imprisonment and the end of his ministry. So much so that he has doubts that Jesus is truly the Messiah.

But after John sends his disciples and they return with the news of the healings and miracles, his doubts vanish like a desert mist, and he is once again on the path to his destiny. This transpires over the course of not more than a few days.

It is after this that John turns his contact with Chuza and his family into a gospel opportunity, and Chuza's wife Joanna becomes one of the women's auxiliary in support of Christ's ministry.

"For Herod continually feared the crowd, because they held him as a prophet, and knowing him as a righteous and holy man, he kept him safe, and after hearing about him he was very perplexed, and he gladly heard him."

Herod gladly heard John the Baptist. The adverb is HADEOS, which means glad in a cheerful but not ecstatic sense.

Herod was not overflowing with joy when he heard John the Baptist, but he did so cheerfully.

And Herod really did listen to the Baptist, as indicated by the genitive case of AUTOU. When the verb AKOUO takes its object in the genitive, there is a sense of listening more carefully, and even obedience.

There is a distinct possibility that Herod believed at this point. But even if he did it was swiftly forgotten.

But then Herod Antipas' birthday came around, and it turned out to be a fateful day.

The word EUKAIROU designates this as not only a special day due to it being the time of Herod's birthday, but also a fateful day in the history of Israel. They were about to lose their greatest prophet of all time.

Now there were great festivities planned for the day, and dignitaries, both civilian and military had arrived to participate.

There were MEGISTASIN, people of great standing. That is, famous people from around the land. Maybe Simon the Magician was present, up from Samaria; maybe others who had gained fame during that time.

There were CHILIARCHOIS, that is, the high-ranking Roman military officers who were stationed in Galilee. A chiliarchos was literally, a 'ruler of a thousand.' The modern battalion commander is about right for this rank - perhaps a colonel. Well, there were more than just one of these.

There were PROTOIS TES GALILAIAS - the 'first men' of Galilee. These were the public leaders, the people on the 'A' list at all the parties.

Now there would be tax-gatherers - men who knew Matthew. There were Romans. No question that there would be some from the leaders of the Sadducees, the religious group that believed in social assimilation and living for this life alone.

With the reputation of the Herodians, it would certainly be an interesting proposition to go to one of their birthday parties; who could tell what kind of degeneracy would be encountered? Perhaps these guests would be nervous indeed.

At some point in the festivities, the daughter of Herodias came in to dance. Her name was Salome.

The name Salome does not appear in the Bible. Rather, Josephus mentions her in his histories of the Jews.

Salome is identified as a KORASIOU. This is the diminutive form of KORE, which describes a young woman, usually a virgin. From this we can conclude that Salome was very young, perhaps barely a teenager, or perhaps even just short of that.

The most probable type of dance of the day was the PANTOMIMUS, a "solo enactment of a popular story theme in stylized mimicry, often with dramatic and sensual movements and postures".

There would be a tremendous amount of charm in the story-telling and sensual dance of this girl. Indeed, if she had learned anything from her mother, it would be sexual allure, considering the reputation of Herodias.

Herod was exceedingly pleased with her; and who knows the reaction of the guests? The Sadducees would have gulped it down like some sumptuous after-dinner fare. The Romans would react with more stoicism. But none would desire to offend at this grand event.

Now the rest is a nightmare - an awful revelation of the degeneracy of this family.

Herod is pleased with the dance of Salome. The verb is ERESEN, from ARESKO, which means to take pleasure in a person or thing.

Now Herod was pleased, but there may have been ulterior motive; Salome is the daughter of Herodias by Herod Philip. He certainly would desire to please this little girl and so gain by the praise.

His praise turns out to be effusive. He offers her up to half of his kingdom as a reward for her dance.

Herod most likely feels safe in this proposal, since this girl is his step-daughter, and so the kingdom will remain with him.

This is not the first time in Bible history that such an offer has been made.

Beckon back to the time of Esther; Esther pleased King Xerxes so much that he offered her anything she desired, up to half of his kingdom.

The irony in all of this is that the book of Esther contains the account of an anti-Semitic plot.

It is ironic because the request from Salome is going to require the death of the greatest man of the age of Israel. And that is about as anti-Semitic as you can get!

You see, at the banquet of Xerxes, Queen Esther begged for her life, and for the life of her people, the Jews. She begged for life, knowing that Haman had hatched a plot to destroy them.

But this Salome will be quite different. She begs for the death of the greatest man of all the age of Israel. By Christ's account, John is greater than Moses or Elijah, Isaiah or Daniel or

Zechariah. Greater than any prophet in the 1400 years previous.

But this is going to play out in tragedy, and you can almost feel the dread as Salome leaves the room.

Well Salome goes back to her mother, and asks her just what would be good to ask, and immediately you get the impression that these two have hatched a plot.

And you know by her request that Herodias is an evil woman. It wasn't enough for her that John was cast into prison at her command; it was her measure of revenge to take his life.

And indeed this was revenge, for she had a long-standing grudge with this prophet of God, and she was going to see it through.

This was not only a failure to forgive, which is the case for every grudge; it was a failure to forgive when the suffering was deserved.

That's why this is tragic from every angle. John the Baptist lost his focus, and moved his ministry from Christ to the Herodians; Herodias hated what he had done, unveiling her evil before all the people so that she was completely hated by them.

Leviticus 19:18 puts it very well: "You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the Lord."

Instead, vengeance belongs to the Lord, and be confident that He will repay.

Luke 6:37, "Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven."

Whenever you fail to forgive, you have committed a failure to orient that other person's sin to the cross.

Truly you are attempting to bear the burden of the cross, which was already carried by Jesus Christ Himself.

And you should know that it is common for those with guilt complexes to hold grudges against others.

But Herodias didn't just demand the execution of John. She demanded that his severed head be brought on a platter to be seen by all these birthday guests.

- And so it is clear that her motivation not only includes revenge against John, but also against Herod Antipas, her husband.

- She knew that this request would bring great shame upon him before all of his honored guests. She knew that they would say nothing of the incident - nothing to his face, that is.

- She knew how this would fester within Herod, and how he would eat away at himself over it.

- She was motivated to destroy this man whom she had been so anxious to marry not so long ago. Probably less than a year. This reveals a great hatred.

- To Herodias, men are a way to gain power; men are weak before her charms, easily manipulated; but never are men to be trusted, never to be loved. She is chained to their power in a male-dominated society, but she overcomes by means of their weakness.

"And after entering immediately with speed before the king, she asked, saying, 'I want right away in order for you to give to me upon a platter the head of John the Baptist.'"

- Mark portrays the speed with which things happened after the agreement between mother and daughter.

- The girl enters the dining room META SPOUDES - with speed. In fact, Mark's gospel even says EUTHUS - 'immediately.' This adverb shows decisiveness and swiftness to conclusion.

- And more than this - Salome makes her demand, and demands that it be done EXAUTES 'right away.' This is literally, 'from this point in time.'

- So included in the demand is the timing of the act. Salome wants that head immediately.

- It snatches the breath away to realize the soul of this young girl. For she has added the speed

and the demand for immediate action all by herself.

- It tears out the heart to realize what utter degeneracy she has at her young age. How decisive she is toward this callused and heinous request!

Herod does not want to do this.

There are two reasons why he rationalizes the necessity of the act.

- First, because of his oath. He feels he must have integrity toward his word.
- Second, because of the dinner guests. He feels that to renege on the oath would be to lose face before all of these dignitaries, both Roman and Jewish.

But of course this is an act of utter immorality, and entirely aside from the holy character of God.

- There is a verse that is the perfect counterpoint to this whole incident. 1 John 5:14, "This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us."
 - Well Herod Antipas had no standards, and so you could ask anything of him, and he would give it, even if it was evil.
 - There is no limit from the throne of grace. You may have it all if it is according to God's will.
 - But God's ability to answer your requests never extends to the realm of evil. His integrity will not allow it.
- Herod has an absence of self-esteem to do the right thing.
- You must have a detachment of will in order to bring about what is right in your life.
 - That is, your decision-making process must be apart from worldly factors.
 - You cannot make decisions on the basis of what other people think, or what the world demands.
 - Herod, the ruler of this region, the man of highest rank present, does not have the self-

esteem to eat his pride and tell this little girl that she is wrong to request what is evil.

- He is afraid of what these lesser-ranking persons are going to think of him. He sees breaking this oath as a weakness, when in reality the girl has broken the oath before him.
- She has broken the spirit of integrity within the oath, and therefore abrogated Herod's necessity toward veracity.
- Self-esteem comes from a sense of what is right, and especially who is important.
- If you see yourself as God sees you, then you will gain resolve in staying on the side of right.
- But Herod was more worried that his dinner guests would see him as a weak man, than whether he should do the right thing.
- It would have been so easy to say to take the girl aside and tell her that this could not be so.
- This would not be the end of Antipas weakness. In the Passover after next, Antipas is in Jerusalem when the trial of Jesus takes place. As a courtesy, Pontius Pilate sends Christ to Antipas, deferring to his rulership of Galilee, Christ's home province.
- Luke 23:8-12, "(8) Now Herod was very glad when he saw Jesus; for he had wanted to see Him for a long time, because he had been hearing about Him and was hoping to see some sign performed by Him. (9) And he questioned Him at some length; but He answered him nothing. (10) And the chief priests and the scribes were standing there, accusing Him vehemently. (11) And Herod with his soldiers, after treating Him with contempt and mocking Him, dressed Him in a gorgeous robe and sent Him back to Pilate. (12) Now Herod and Pilate became friends with one another that very day; for before they had been enemies with each other."
- So Herod has a chance to set Jesus free and redeem himself of his weakness against John the Baptist. He fails, and as a result, Jesus would die.

That this young girl could even make this request of her uncle indicates that she is a monster-child.

- No one ever says no to Salome. She knows how to tantrum; she knows how to manipulate; she knows how to pout.

- If Herod says no to Salome here, he risks a nuclear tantrum. He would rather have some prophet die than undergo that.

- Even if he should insist on the wrongness of it, he knows that he will pay dearly for it.

- Herod has made this magnanimous offer to his niece because of the dinner guests. He wants to impress them with the greatness of his generosity.

- Now she asks of him something awful. But he cannot lose out on his scheme to impress them, so he goes through with it.

So Herod sends for the executioner to follow through with the request.

The prison was a part of the palace compound; it would take a while for the executioner to walk there, summon John to a suitable place of execution, place his head upon a platter, and then return to the girl.

You can perhaps imagine John in his prison cell. Resting, praying, exercising - all according to a daily regimen. And in comes the executioner with sword. It is time.

John has barely time to think and pray - the briefest of prayers comes from his lips and then the infamy is performed.

It is at that moment that his soul is placed into an interim body, and he is transferred to Paradise in Hades.

There he meets the presence of God face to face and comes to know the truth about himself and about Jesus. He has left the sinful flesh behind.

There he receives the reception of a hero as the greatest prophet in the age of Israel.

You can perhaps imagine a delegation of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. Moses and David,

Elijah, Elisha, and Samuel stand at the forefront. All around are Hosea and Amos and Zechariah; Habakkuk and Zephaniah and Malachi. There also are Nahum and Joel and Jonah. Obadiah, Haggai, and Micah stand there, all stand in respect.

All these great men desire to question the Great One, the one who prepared the way for the Messiah. All of them defer and listen humbly as John tells of his personal contact with the one who will be King of kings and Lord of lords.

And then jump forward in time to just a year and a little more later.

It is another day in paradise. There is worship, and there is conversation. Conversation, I think, to which the angels would long to listen.

The men there speak of their times and their longing for the Messiah and the details of his life.

Suddenly there is a grumbling in Torments, across the Great Gulf Fixed; the everyday moan of the damned is momentarily silenced, and an impossibly bright light appears. John, Elijah, and the rest rise again with a thrill and gather to the edge of the Gulf.

Could it be? Who is it? Is it... Yes. Yes it is! A stunned silence follows His words, and then He approaches across the Gulf. The great crowd of Old Testament saints gathers around the Savior.

And in that time He pronounces that the work of salvation is done. A shout! A cheer goes up, and every knee bows and every tongue there confesses that Jesus Christ is Lord.

It is now time to leave this Paradise and go on to Heaven, and the Savior leads them all in a victorious procession. What triumph and what joy! What purity of worship.

But back at the palace, back at the birthday party again, as the stunned guests sit and lay at the remains of their dinners, in comes the executioner with John's head on a platter.

You can only imagine the horror of the dinner guests as they see this spectacle before them.

Even the hardened CHILIARCHS of the Roman Army must be appalled at what they observe here, for the palace is no place for this kind of violence.

Herod and Herodias ruled Galilee for ten more years or so, until Herodias schemed to gain her husband true kingship through the Roman emperor.

Gaius became disgusted with the scheming of this woman, and he distrusted Antipas greatly.

Instead of kingship, Gaius gave Antipas exile to Gaul, and in Lyon. Herodias chose to join him, even after being offered exemption from the exile of her husband. From that moment they are never mentioned again by the chroniclers of history. But in a way they are.

They lived in Lyon, in central Gaul, in the middle of a different nowhere from Tiberias in Galilee.

A century and a half later, Lyon became famous for its persecution of Christians - persecution unto death. The heritage of Herod Antipas and his niece/sister in law/wife lived on.

And then one day, Herod Antipas dies; and also Herodias and Salome in their times. And they go to Torments in Hades.

There they three reside for centuries, full of fear and anticipation; still the hatred reigns in their souls.

And one day there in Torments they hear a commotion - an assembly is called, and all are forced to attend. Herod Antipas and his second wife and her daughter grudgingly gather around a man, and Herod has some shreds of recognition.

Here is the man that he always wanted to see, standing before him even now. Herod Antipas leans forward in spite of himself, to listen again.

But there is no speech this time; only a massive figure in chains, chains of darkness, so that the figure is obscured. Yet Herod knows with fear that this figure is Satan, the great hope of the sinfully enslaved. And the chaining of the Great Enslaver represents the total defeat of their

false hope. Herod and Herodias and Salome are crushed at this moment, and the agony of what is to come in a 1000 years is multiplied greatly.

The 1000 years passes with the agonizing emotion of the anticipation of something truly awful. And then Herod Antipas is called before the Great White Throne, and he finally gets his audience with Christ.

- And yet Herod is completely humble before this King of kings and Lord of lords. He cannot stand before this throne as king; he cannot demand from Christ an accounting of His ministry.

- There before Herod Antipas is the evidence of his folly in the nail holes in the hands and feet of the Savior of the World.

- Herod is no longer the one to be feared, the one in control.

- The sentence is passed, and he is cast into the Lake of Fire for an eternity of pain. So he will exit the scene of history.

A Transitional Passage.

The Translations:

Mark 6:30, "And the apostles gathered before Jesus and reported to Him all the significant things they did and taught."

Luke 9:10a, "And after the apostles returned they gave an account to Him of the significant things they had done."

Harmony: "And after the apostles returned, they gathered before Jesus and reported to Him all the significant things they did and taught."

Exposition.

So a period of time has passed since Christ sent out the disciples to preach to the towns in Galilee.

There is no record of what Christ was doing at this same time; perhaps the exact same thing.

The disciples gather back to Christ and give a report on the significant events of their lives - what they did and what they taught.

They did miracles and performed healings; they taught about the Kingdom of Christ. They told Him of the responses of the crowd - of victories and defeats along the way.

How they must have loved to see Him listen; how they must have glowed when He approved, and even when He made corrections.

Christ gave them also the camaraderie of mutual experience. They were now truly fellow-workers in the gospel. He is developing initiative and leadership in them by this way. They know now that they are like Christ in His work.

Our lives should be like this through prayer.

We should often report the significant events our lives to God the Father.

The victories and defeats, and the concerns which we encounter along the way.

We should also note the significance of our mutual experiences with Christ. That is, we should realize that nothing we have encountered has eluded the experience of the Son of God.

Jesus' Withdrawal from Galilee

Matthew 14:13-14: "(13) Now Jesus, after hearing [them] withdrew from there in a boat into a deserted place by Himself; and the multitudes, after hearing, followed Him on foot from the cities. (14) And after going out [from the boat] He saw a great multitude and felt compassion for them and He healed their sick."

Mark 6:31-34: "(31) And He says to them, 'You yourselves go by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a short while.' For there were many coming and going, and they did not have significant time to eat. (32) And they left in the boat for a deserted place by themselves. (33) And they saw them going, and many recognized them and ran there together on foot from all the cities, and preceded them. (34) And after going out [from the boat], He saw a great crowd and felt compassion for them, because they were like sheep having no shepherd, and He began to teach them many things."

Luke 9:10b-11: "(10) And after receiving them He withdrew by Himself into a city called Bethsaida. (11) And the crowds after knowing [this] followed Him; and after welcoming them He was speaking to them concerning the Kingdom of God, and curing the ones having need of healing."

John 6:1-3, "(1) After these things Jesus went out to the other shore of the Sea of Galilee of Tiberias. (2) Now a great crowd followed Him, because they were witnessing the signs He was doing upon the weak. (3) And Jesus went onto the mountain and there He sat with His disciples."

The disciples' ministry had become much like Jesus'. They had healed the sick and done miracles and cast out demons, and as a result, the crowds began to gather.

The disciples were so swamped that they did not have significant time to eat. They had absolutely no time to themselves.

This being true, they surely had no time before God, either, and so they were in a state of spiritual and logistical compromise.

Christ has experienced this in His own ministry, so He knew exactly what to do. He told them to go to a deserted place and rest for a short while.

During that rest they could spiritually and physically restore themselves.

Two related principles come out:

There are needy people in the world; needy physically, emotionally, logistically, and spiritually. If you are able to meet those needs through ministry, you are going to be swamped. In the devil's world, you will never run out of people to minister to.

But you must learn to withdraw from your ministry to recharge yourself spiritually and physically. The needy will still be there when you get back, and the Lord can take care of them in between. You must withdraw every day for spiritual growth, and from time to time to replenish yourself in other ways.

Your ministry will vanish if you neglect your relationship with God, because the river of your ministry flows from the spring of your time with the Father.

And this applies equally to all ministries related to Christian service and spiritual gifts.

It doesn't matter if you are an anonymous person with the gift of helps or a well-known evangelist. You will not only fail to reach the objective, but you will compromise your reward at the judgment seat.

Ultimately, you will let others down because of that. Ministries fail because congregations eat their pastors alive, and he lets them.

Now the rest mainly has to do with geography.

Jesus and His disciples are both on the Tiberias shore of the Sea of Galilee. Tiberias is on the southwest side of the Sea.

They go in separate boats to escape from the crowd.

The disciples leave first, and the text does not indicate which direction they go. We can only construe it from the fact that they end up at the same location as Jesus. Since Jesus headed toward Bethsaida, and the disciples left from there with Him to go up onto a mountain, they must have headed toward the same place.

But the Sea of Galilee is very small, and any boat is visible from any place on the shore. As the boat with Jesus' disciples deployed, the crowds saw the direction, and began to run around the shore to the other side.

It was very likely a calm day, because the crowds were able to make their way around the shore by foot, and still precede the sailboats that were taking a more direct route.

The disciples land at Bethsaida or thereabouts, and once more they are swamped by the crowds. Their attempt to escape has temporarily failed.

But Christ waits until after the disciples have left, and He follows behind. The crowds also

anticipate His arrival, and so they are waiting for Him just the same as His disciples.

But Christ sees the crowds, and He feels compassion; again they are like sheep without a shepherd.

These peoples are in a leadership vacuum; neither the Romans or the Jews are providing leadership to meet the needs of the people.

As such, they are lost, unable to find their way in the helplessness of their sins.

So Christ has a twofold remedy to this problem:

First, He teaches them many things about the kingdom. He sees this body of truth as the solution to their problems.

Second, He heals their sick. This second so that they will certainly grasp what He is saying about the kingdom. This is a clue that atonement really is a part of Christ's kingdom ministry. Atonement was necessary to bring Israel into the millennium.

So as a matter of course the crowds now follow Jesus - because He was healing their weak.

Not necessarily because of His kingdom ministry.

At the very core of this description is a rejection of the kingdom ministry. This is also a good example what happens today in another fashion.

People tend to fall in love with the accoutrements of church without getting to the heart of the matter.

They love the society of good people without finding love for God Himself.

They love the peace of a sanctuary without knowing the God Who causes the peace.

They love the stability of liturgy and ritual without learning its lessons and while neglecting the greater informational power of church age mystery doctrine.

They love the approbation that they get from their ministers without realizing the need for autonomy before God.

At last Jesus and His disciples go up onto a mountain. This is somewhere near Bethsaida.

It could be up the Jordan River a number of miles, on or near Mt. Hermon. It could be one of the small hills nearer to Bethsaida. The mountain itself is not specified.

From the narrative which follows, it is clear that Jesus and His disciples would not be alone on the mountain.

The text does not say whether it was their desire to escape the crowds, but perhaps this is so. There would be no other clear reason to go to the mountain.

Jesus sat down with His disciples. He has time alone with them, teaching and training important things, theological and practical.

This now becomes the setting for a remarkable series of events that will culminate in the Bread of Life discourse.

The Feeding of the Five Thousand

Matthew 14:15-23

Mark 6:35-46

Luke 9:12-17

John 6:4-15.

Exposition.

Introduction.

Look for two things here: an interesting symbolism of the Passover, and a specific preparation for the bread of life discourse.

Christ is going to take advantage of this miracle that God has provided, and communicate terrific doctrine from it.

So take note of the way this works; an opportunity presents itself; Christ performs the miracle by the power of the Spirit, and then a lesson will be taught. This is standard fare for the incarnation.

A quick note is necessary on the harmony. The synoptic gospels have a generic viewpoint on the interchange between Christ and the disciples; no one speaker is mentioned. They

are portrayed as coming to our Lord as a group, and talking as a group.

But the gospel of John does one better; it identifies the speakers within the group as Philip and then Andrew. In the harmony, the viewpoint of John's gospel is taken, and the other omitted entirely.

The setting: "Now the Passover was near, the feast of the Jews. Now after evening came and the hour was very late."

You may recall that Christ has recently sent out His disciples on their evangelistic efforts, and they have returned.

Also, Christ and the disciples have failed in their endeavor to escape the crowds, even though they crossed the Sea of Galilee on boats. So now the crowds have gathered again.

John's gospel records that the Passover feast of the Jews was near.

We have a rare chronological marker in this. It is Passover, Spring of AD 29; is nearly one year from the death of Jesus Christ by crucifixion.

And there is also something remarkable in this. It is that time of year in which the people of the land should be thinking about going up to Jerusalem for the Feast of feasts.

They should be gathering what they need, and making arrangements to stay with family, or at least at an inn. They should be remembering the Psalms of Ascent, and heading for the spiritual capital of the world.

But instead they are following Christ around the countryside, seeing His miracles and listening to His teaching. There is a frenzy here that disregards even the most important religious event of the year.

No wonder the Pharisees were so concerned! They knew that they were going to have low attendance at their version of an Easter service, and that really bothered them.

The setting is a mountainside on the Northern shore of the Sea of Galilee, not too far from Capernaum. There is a crowd arrayed there,

waiting in anticipation for Christ to do something or at least to say something.

It is getting late. Mark says it is late, while Luke says the day was starting to decline. You can mark the time as right at dusk on the basis of this.

The disciples' request concerning logistics for the crowd. "the disciples came to Him saying, 'The place is deserted and the hour is already past; release the crowds, so that after they go forth into the surrounding countryside and villages they might lodge and buy food for themselves, because we are in a deserted place.'"

The disciples here make some observations about the condition of the crowd, but I think it is legitimate at least to say the following:

The crowd has been there for a day; they have no great need for immediate logistics. If they don't eat, they won't die.

The same could be said for lodging. A night out under the stars would probably do them a fair amount of good. They could all huddle together for warmth and be fine. Only if it were raining would shelter be an issue, and rain was not all that common.

These are relevant because they uncover the souls of the disciples. At the very core of this all is a single fact: if the crowd wanted to do that, they would have done so on their own initiative.

Therefore we can conclude that the disciples were for some reason anxious to get rid of the crowds. And this we already knew from the previous passage in our Life of Christ series.

They are mistaken about one thing: they say, 'release the crowds.' They say this to Christ when the crowds are staying because they want to. The verb is APOLUSON, and in this context it connotes letting the crowd disperse, to become a non-crowd.

The disciples see this as a golden opportunity to get rid of this crowd so that they can all

finally have some peace and quiet. But Christ does not.

Christ now sees an opportunity to teach something new to His disciples, and so He waits.

Jesus' Response and Testing of His Disciples. "Therefore Jesus, after lifting up His eyes and beholding that a great crowd came to Him, says to Philip, 'Where should we buy bread in order that we might feed these?' And this He said testing him; for He knew what he was about to do. Philip answered Him, 'Two hundred denarii of bread is not sufficient for them that each might receive a little.'"

John's gospel takes over the narrative now.

Jesus lifts up His eyes and beholds the crowd. Two participles set the scene with a dramatic sweep.

The first aorist participle is EPARAS, He lifts up His eyes. You can see Christ on the mountain, concentrating on something at hand - perhaps a scroll of the Old Testament scriptures; perhaps a conversation.

He looks up to see what His disciples are talking about, and there is the crowd. The aorist participle THEASAMENOS records His surprise and the significant nature of the crowd. It always denotes the seeing of something important and significant to the viewer.

Philip is the one. Jesus chooses to test him. Perhaps because he is the nearest; perhaps because he needed the test.

John 1:43-46, "(43) The next day He purposed to go into Galilee, and He found Philip. And Jesus said to him, 'Follow Me.' (44) Now Philip was from Bethsaida, of the city of Andrew and Peter. (45) Philip found Nathanael and said to him, 'We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote - Jesus of Nazareth, the son Joseph.' (46) Nathanael said to him, 'Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?' Philip said to him, 'Come and see.'

John 14:7-11, "(7) If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now

on you know Him, and have seen Him.' (8) Philip said to Him, 'Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.' (9) Jesus said to him, 'Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, 'Show us the Father?' (10) Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works. (11) Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; otherwise believe because of the works themselves.'"

Philip was one of the seven to serve table to the widows of the early church, Acts 6:1-6.

Philip went to Samaria and preached the gospel after the scattering from Saul's persecution. He was very powerful, and the people responded with joy. Acts 8:4-8.

After he believed, Simon the magician joined Philip's evangelistic tour.

After the Samaritan tour, God the Holy Spirit guided Philip south and west of Jerusalem to give the gospel to the Ethiopian eunuch.

When the eunuch went on his way home, Philip preached his way northward along the Mediterranean seacoast until he reached Caesarea, which is almost even with the Sea of Galilee.

Jesus asks Philip where they might buy bread to feed all of the crowd. You can see right away that this is not a serious question.

It is not a serious question, because the crowd is so large, and their treasury so small. Jesus knows His question is ludicrous from the moment it passes His lips.

In fact, He employs the adverb of place POTHEN to emphasize this very thing: He says, 'Where...'

The only reasonable answer is nowhere, and that is what Jesus intends to demonstrate with the adverb. There is no place on earth that they can buy bread at such a low price so as to feed

all the people that are arrayed on the mountain before them.

Any fool would know that this was not a real possibility, and so the question is largely rhetorical.

But Philip has a tendency to take everything at face value.

And this He said testing him; for He knew what he was about to do.

John has the insider's view as Christ's closest friend. Christ wanted to test Philip, who took everything at face value, and often took an analytical human viewpoint.

Christ knew of this miracle beforehand; He knew exactly what the Spirit was going to do through Him.

This forms a counterpoint to the woman with the hemorrhage. In that incident, Christ had no idea what the Spirit was going to do. The Spirit saw the woman reach out to touch Christ, and made the sovereign decision to heal her.

Christ had to be humble to the leading of the Spirit, but here there is knowledge beforehand of what will be done. Christ has His will involved in the performance of this miracle.

Christ sees the appropriate symbol of the bread, and of spiritual food. He knows that this will be just right as a lesson for His disciples and for this crowd. And He knows that the Spirit will honor the symbol because it is in perfect line with the will of God.

"Philip answered Him, "Two hundred denarii of bread is not sufficient for them that each might receive a little."

To get an idea of the amount of money here, a denarius was about a day's wage; perhaps 50 dollars by today's American standard of minimum wage. Two hundred denarii would come out to about a thousand dollars, or somewhat less than twenty cents a head, considering women and children. Twenty cents worth of bread is not a great amount. This is Philip's point.

But more than this is the fact that Philip takes Jesus seriously. He misses the point about the ludicrous nature of the question.

“But after formulating an answer He said to them, ‘They have no need to leave. You yourselves give to them to eat.’ One of His disciples says to Him, Andrew the brother of Simon Peter, ‘There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two preserved fish; but what are these things for so many?’ For there were about five thousand men outside of women and children.

Before the command comes a factual statement: they have no need to leave. So Christ gives the disciples a cue that He is quite serious this time, even though the statement and the command will seem funny.

Now our Lord changes the question into a command, because He is turning to His miracle and His lesson.

Remember that Jesus has only just put a ludicrous question to Philip; now He puts a totally ludicrous command to them, in order to test their faith.

But it is a command.

Now you would think that by this time, after being with the Messiah for nearly two years, that the disciples would not hesitate to obey. That somehow they would be sensitive to His peculiar way of doing a miracle. All it takes is a simple trust.

And especially after he made such an issue out the silliness of trying to feed them by buying enough bread for each to have just a little.

Especially key is the statement of Christ that there is no NEED to leave.

The Greek phrase is OU CHREIAN ECHOUSIN APELTHEIN.

There is great wisdom in this, and it is the true set-up for the bread of life discourse. They have no need to leave, but they do have need of truth. So let’s take this assumption and develop it a little.

There are two major reasons why you need God’s word.

First, because it leads unto salvation.

Second, because it leads unto eternal reward.

But there are many other benefits.

God’s word gives you a clear understanding of your origins as a human being.

God’s word gives you a clear understanding of your destiny as a believer.

God’s word gives you a clear understanding of yourself, your weaknesses and your strengths.

God’s word warns you against self-destruction and equips you against it.

God’s word gives you recovery from degeneracy.

God’s word gives you wisdom in all avenues of life: love, work, and play.

God’s word is the source of true and lasting peace in life.

God’s word supplies a place of calm in every storm of life.

God’s word provides confidence and capacity for enjoyment in all times of prosperity.

(10) God’s word furnishes comfort in every hurt and grief of life.

Therefore, all of us should have a doctrinal orientation to life. This is based on God’s perfect communication to us.

Doctrinal orientation to life is the total trust and dependence on the Word of God in answering life’s questions and solving life’s problems.

Doctrinal orientation to life assumes that there is no problem so great or complex that the Word of God cannot provide the solution.

Doctrinal orientation to life assumes that there is not question about life that God cannot answer.

Doctrinal orientation to life gives believers confidence about the future, come what may.

Doctrinal orientation to life results in dedication to the faith perception of the truth.

Doctrinal orientation results in good decisions from a position of strength, and a better orientation to God's direct will for your life.

Doctrinal orientation to life approaches life from the viewpoint of priorities.

The command is for the disciples to give the crowd to eat.

Christ commands them to find the food from their own resources, and this apart from purchasing it from their own treasury.

So they must fall back on their own resources, and this is where Andrew enters the picture.

Andrew is an interesting disciple, because he does one of most important things of all time - he introduces his brother Peter to Christ.

John 1:40-42, "(40) One of the two who heard John speak and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. (41) He found first his own brother Simon and said to him, 'We have found the Messiah.' (42) He brought him to Jesus."

When Andrew finds the Messiah, the first thing he did was get his brother. And by doing so, Andrew had role in changing the world.

Andrew has a basic obedience, but his rational mind at the same time protests. "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two preserved fish; but what are these things for so many?"

There is a constant tension between the disciples' obedience and their rational thinking.

All of their lives they had been conditioned to think and believe in a way that excluded the miraculous and supernatural.

Remember that these men lived in an age devoid of prophets and supernatural manifestations of God's work. So it had been for many generations, since the prophet Malachi ceased his work.

This represents an ingrained pattern of thinking for these adult men. They are 20, 30, 40 years old, and used to thinking in such rational patterns.

Their way of solving problems has to do with the earthly and natural frame of reference, and they find much difficulty in shaking loose from that.

Whether it is calming the storm or feeding the five thousand or walking on the water, the disciples have difficulty in seeing that Christ has the power of God to do miracles.

But really important in this doing of miracles is the reason. According to a system of priorities, miracles are done in order to focus on relationship with God.

This miracle is a fine example. The people are gathered to hear the word. Christ is not going to disappoint them. Since it is more important for them to hear of Christ's kingdom, a miracle should be done here.

And this is the way in which Christ desires His disciples to think. If the reason is right, God has the power to bring it about.

It would not be until the resurrection that the disciples would fully understand this principle. And even then it took some convincing.

This event is all the more remarkable in that it occurs after the disciples had been sent out, and performed their own miracles and healings. You would think that if they had seen God's work through their own hands, they would begin to assume that it would go through the hands of Christ.

"For there were about five thousand men outside of women and children."

Jesus' orders concerning the food and the crowd: "And He said, 'Bring them here to me.' And Jesus said, 'Order the crowds to recline on the grass group by group in numbers not above fifty.' For there was much grass in the place. And the disciples did so, reclining them all. They fell company by company by the hundred and by the fifty."

Our Lord desires to set this up in an orderly fashion. He wants this done with maximum efficiency.

He first orders the loaves and fishes brought to Him; He is going to be the originating point of the distribution - the source of the miracle.

And second He tells His disciples to arrange the crowd just so - group by group in numbers not above fifty.

There are perhaps eight or ten or even fifteen thousand people out there; five thousand men alone.

So Christ is suggesting more than one hundred groups of fifty. This mountain must be arranged like a sporting event.

And Christ says for them to recline on the grass. This is for the purpose of a meal. They must have been standing, waiting restlessly for something to happen. And would it ever.

It is John who mentions that there was much grass in that place. Anyone familiar with the countryside would understand that unless there is grass, this is going to be no picnic. Grass is a blanket on which the people may recline.

Mark records that they fell company by company by the hundred and by the fifty.

It should not be too great a surprise that they disobeyed. The crowd was a little bit disorderly in carrying out this command.

But there they are, arrayed before Christ in their own groups. You can feel the rustle of anticipation moving through the groups.

Being organized in such a manner, they knew that something was about to happen, and that it had to do with food.

This crowd of five or ten thousand is not so great. Every person there will be able to perceive this miracle. Imagine the layout of Coors Field; that edifice is set up for 50,000 baseball fans. If only ten thousand show up, all of them will have excellent seats where they can perceive clearly what the players are doing.

So it is with this arrangement. They will all see Christ break the bread and the fish and know for certain that there is only so much in those few loaves and fishes. You see, they will know - certainly know - that this is a miracle.

The blessing and breaking of the bread, and the distribution of the food unto all: "After receiving the five loaves and the two fish, after looking up toward heaven He gave the blessing, and after breaking the loaves He kept on giving them to the disciples that they might set them before the crowd, and the two fish He divided for all, as many as they wanted."

Christ gave the blessing after looking up toward heaven.

This provides a quick insight into Christ's posture during prayer.

Our custom of bowing in humility came not from Christ, and not from Paul.

1 Corinthians 11:3-13, "(3) Now I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the husband is the head of a wife, and God is the head of Christ. (4) Every man who holds down the head while praying or prophesying is ashamed of his head. (5) But every woman who prays with an uncovered head is ashamed of her head. (6) For if a woman does not cover her head also let her be sheared; but if the shearing or shaving is shame for a woman, then let her be covered. (7) For a man ought not to have his head covered, being the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man. (8) For man is not from woman, but woman from man. (9) For indeed man was not created for the woman, but woman for the man. (10) For this reason the woman ought to have authority over her head because of the angels. (11) However, a woman is neither apart from man, nor is man apart from a woman in the Lord; (12) For as the woman is from the man, so also the man comes through the woman; and all are from God. (13) Judge for yourselves in this: is it fitting for a woman to pray uncovered before God? (14) Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him, (15)

but if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her? For her hair is given to her for a covering. (16) Now if anyone presumes to be contentious, we do not have such a practice, nor do the churches of God."

This passage is about authority orientation. Authority goes from God to Christ to man to woman. There is a concentration here not on the church but on the marriage relationship.

Holding down the head is a symbol of shame; the leader in the church ought not to do such a thing - the one prophesying or praying.

But a woman who prays with an uncovered head is ashamed of her head. This stands as a reference to authority; the woman is never to pray outside of the authority of her spiritual head; an uncovered head is one without authority.

We say this: we say that authority is an umbrella which covers our head. Paul had a similar idea - that authority is covering for the head.

So the husband is the spiritual authority in his household, and he ought not to pray with his head hanging down, as though he were ashamed of his authority, Jesus Christ.

But the woman who prays out from under the authority of her husband is ashamed of her husband.

And Paul says that the woman who is out from under the authority of her man should have her hair sheared, because it will teach her about shame. But if she does not like having her head sheared, then she must submit to her husband's spiritual authority.

But the man should not have his head covered; that is, he should not have his wife in authority over him; the reason is clear: the man is the image of God.

And don't we know that the image of God has to do with ruling authority?

So the man is the image and glory of God (in his imitation).

But the woman is the glory of the man (in her imitation of him).

The woman came originally from the man; she is Adam's rib.

This order of creation sets an order of precedence and the pattern for authority.

As the first-born son has the right to inheritance, so also the first-born of the race have rights to authority.

Jesus Christ is the first-born of all creation and the first-born of the dead, Colossians 3:15-18.

The conclusion is that the woman was made for the man, and not vice-versa; and because of this she must remain under the man's authority.

Verse 10 just about interprets the whole passage: "For this reason the woman ought to have authority over her head because of the angels."

This translation is quite literal; there is not the least hint that it should be interpreted as 'symbol of authority' or some other legalistic nonsense.

The woman fell prey to Satan, the fallen angel in the garden. Paul points out her vulnerability here.

She needs authority to prevent that deception. Since Paul states the reason for the necessity of authority over the woman, see how ludicrous it comes out if you take this as a literal head-covering: 'Since the woman is vulnerable to the fallen angels, she needs a veil or head-covering.' This will save no woman! Ever!

Verses 11 and 12 seem to mitigate the requirement, but instead they strengthen it. Now through childbirth the woman can have authority over a man; at least while he is a child. She can perpetuate the gentleness of men toward her fairer sex by means of raising male children in the right way, teaching them to respect womanhood and giving them something to respect.

Paul comes to an intermediate conclusion in verse 13: "Judge for yourselves in this: is it

fitting for a woman to pray uncovered before God?"

In verse fourteen Paul illustrates from nature: long hair looks beautiful on a woman; because a woman's hair is significantly different from a man's.

And he says that long hair is dishonor to a man, but glory to a woman.

This does indeed set the general standard for hair length; a man's hair must be generally short and a woman's generally long. There is plenty of room for individualism within this guideline.

A man wears his hair short in order to demonstrate his rulership over nature and authority over the woman.

A woman wear her hair long in order to demonstrate her humility to her man.

kp Now if anyone presumes to be contentious, we do not have such a practice, nor do the churches of God.

Here Paul expresses the final word of authority on the matter. If you disagree, no one has such a practice.

In other words, neither Paul personally, nor none of the churches have a different practice from what was stated in the passage.

In other words, if you disagree, tough. No one is going to go with you in the matter.

The Biblical concept of blessing (see separate doctrine).

And all ate and were satisfied, and since they were filled, He says to His disciples, 'Gather the excess fragments, that nothing might be destroyed.' Therefore they gathered and they filled twelve baskets of fragments from the five loaves of barley which were left over by the ones who had eaten, and also from the fish.

All ate and were satisfied, the second detail being important in light of how many people were there.

Matthew 14:20 uses ECHORTASTHESAN means to eat your fill or be satisfied by eating.

The people ate and gained not only nutritional satisfaction, but also psychological. That is, they felt full.

In fact compare this with Revelation 19:21, "And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh." You can see the intent of the writer here. There was so much flesh that all the birds were filled with it.

This was indeed a miracle. Five loaves and two fish might be enough for ten people to eat and gain some satisfaction, but comes nowhere close to feeding one thousand times the same number.

This satisfaction is intended as a symbol.

It is the symbol of satisfaction for eating of the bread of life, the word of God.

It is the symbol of the conditions of the kingdom of God. That is, the millennial kingdom of Jesus Christ.

You see, in the history of the world, there has always been famine and poverty; hunger has always been present among the nations of the world.

War also ravages the face of the earth. Yet here is Christ demonstrating that where there is only a little food, it is enough for thousands to eat to satisfaction. This will be the nature of His kingdom.

The millennium.

Introduction.

The millennium is a future 1000 year dispensation that is characterized by perfect environment.

The Bible has many predictions about the millennium - there is a fair amount of information on the subject.

The millennium has not yet occurred - there is absolutely no historical evidence that would

support the theorem that the millennium has already occurred.

- A period of 1000 years of peace and prosperity would have surely been documented.
- Logically, the millennium can only be in the future. Christ could not have returned yet, nor could he have brought in the millennium before he was born.

The Bible unequivocally portrays the millennium as a real event in the future history of planet earth.

- There is no credence to the argument that there will never be a millennium and that world history simply goes into the eternal state.
- Neither is there any indication that the millennium is only a metaphor.

It is impossible for mankind to bring in the millennium through his own strength.

It is crystal clear from the Revelation passages that the millennium comes as the result of the second advent. Revelation 19:11-20:6 lays out the sequence of events so that there can be no mistake. "(11) Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! He who sat upon it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. (12) His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems; and he has a name inscribed which no one knows but himself. (13) He is clad in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. (14) And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, followed him on white horses. (15) From his mouth issues a sharp sword with which to smite the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron; he will tread the wine press of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. (16) On his robe and on his thigh he has a name inscribed, King of kings and Lord of lords. (17) Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and with a loud voice he called to all the birds that fly in mid-heaven, 'Come, gather for the great supper of God, (18) to eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the

flesh of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all men, both free and slave, both small and great.' (19) And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who sits upon the horse and against his army. (20) And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence had worked the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur. (21) And the rest were slain by the sword of him who sits upon the horse, the sword that issues from his mouth; and all the birds were gorged with their flesh. (20:1) Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain. (2) And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, (3) and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years were ended. After that he must be loosed for a little while. (4) Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom judgment was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their testimony to Jesus and for the word of God, and who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life, and reigned with Christ a thousand years. (5) The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection. (6) Blessed and holy is he who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and they shall reign with him a thousand years."

Humanity is totally incapable of bringing in a millennium.

- We do not have the mental capacity to do so - even with computers we are no better off.
- As long as the devil is in the world, he is well able to outsmart any human group that relies on their own wits.

· And think: the devil has been trying to bring in his own millennium for more than ten thousand years, and he has miserably failed. If he cannot do this with his superior intellect, then how can we?

Without the visible leadership of Christ, even believers are incapable of administrating the entire world into a perfect environment.

The advent of the millennium was delayed by the rejection of Christ and His kingdom by the Jews during the first advent.

The environment of the millennium.

The millennium will provide a perfect environment, for three main reasons:

- The whole earth is under the leadership of Jesus Christ.
- All the fallen angels are placed into prison under the earth.
- The earth is populated only by believers in Jesus Christ.
- The baptism of fire removes all unbelievers - this occurs at the second advent. Ezekiel 20:34-38, "(34) I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you out of the countries where you are scattered, with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and with wrath poured out; (35) and I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there I will enter into judgment with you face to face. (36) As I entered into judgment with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so I will enter into judgment with you, says the Lord GOD. (37) I will make you pass under the rod, and I will let you go in by number. (38) I will purge out the rebels from among you, and those who transgress against me; I will bring them out of the land where they sojourn, but they shall not enter the land of Israel. Then you will know that I am the Lord." See also Matthew 25:31-46
- Only 144,000 Jewish believers remain - Revelation 14.

The perfect environment means the following:

- Ideal spiritual environment.

- The best environment possible for evangelism and spiritual growth - visible and glorified Christ ruling in perfect environment.

- This does not mean that there will be no unbelievers. Some may even grow up in this perfect environment and reject Him. Volition will continue to function in both positive and negative ways.

- Added to this will be universal knowledge of God, Isaiah 11:9, "They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea."

- Incredible spirituality with an even greater outpouring of the ministry of God the Holy Spirit - far greater than ever before. Joel 2:28-29, "(28) And it will come about after this that I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; and your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions, and even on the male and female servants I will pour out My Spirit in those days.

· Wonderful family life as the keystone to a one world government under the laws of Divine Establishment.

· Perfect establishment justice through the great judge, Jesus Christ, and His delegated authorities, church age believers.

- Isaiah 2:4, "And he will judge between the nations, and will render decisions for many peoples; and they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, and never again will they learn war."

- Isaiah 11:1-2, "(1)Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit. (2) And the Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding. The Spirit of counsel and strength, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord."

- 2 Timothy 2:12, "If we endure we will also reign with Him."

- Revelation 2:25-27, "(25) nevertheless what you have, hold fast until I come. (26) And he who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations; (27) and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to pieces, as I also have received authority from My Father."

- Revelation 3:21, "He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne."

- Revelation 5:10, "You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth."

- Revelation 20:4,6: "(4) Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ... (6) Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years."

· Universal peace

- Psalm 46:9, "He makes wars to cease to the end of the earth; He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in two; He burns the chariots with fire."

- Isaiah 2:3, "And many peoples will come and say, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us concerning His ways and that we may walk in His paths.' For the law will go forth from Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem."

- Hosea 2:18, "In that day I will also make a covenant for them. With the beasts of the field, the birds of the sky, and the creeping things of the ground. And I will abolish the bow, the

sword and war from the land, and I will make them lie down in safety."

- Micah 4:3, "And He will judge between many peoples and render decisions for mighty, distant nations. Then they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nations will not lift up sword against nation, and never again will they train for war."

· Universal prosperity, Psalm 72:7,16. "(7) In his days may the righteous flourish, and abundance of peace till the moon is no more... (16) May there be abundance of grain in the earth on top of the mountains; its fruit will wave like the cedars of Lebanon; and may those from the city flourish like vegetation of the earth."

· Longevity will once again become common. Isaiah 65:20, "No longer will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his days; for the youth will die at the age of one hundred and the one who does not reach the age of one hundred shall be thought accursed."

· No handicaps, Isaiah 35:5-6, "(5) Then the eyes of the blind will be opened and the ears of the deaf will be unstopped. (6) Then the lame will leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute will shout for joy."

· Nature will return to its pristine state.

- Romans 8:19-22, "(19) For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. (20) For the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope (21) that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. (22) For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now."

- Isaiah 11:6-8, "(6) And the wolf will dwell with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little boy

will lead them. (7) Also the cow and the bear will graze, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. (8) The nursing child will play by the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child will put his hand on the viper's den."

- Isaiah 35:1-2,7: "(1) The wilderness and the desert will be glad, and the Arabah will rejoice and blossom; like the crocus (2) it will blossom profusely and rejoice with rejoicing and shout of joy. The glory of Lebanon will be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They will see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God... (7) The scorched land will become a pool and the thirsty ground springs of water; in the haunt of jackals, its resting place, grass becomes reeds and rushes."

- Isaiah 65:25, "'The wolf and the lamb will graze together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox; and dust will be the serpent's food. They will do no evil or harm in all My holy mountain,' says the Lord."

· And all this in spite of man being sinful - yes, still sinful. The human body will remain the same in that the sin nature is transmitted, and babies are still born spiritually dead.

The people of the millennium.

· The millennium begins with the 144,000 surviving Jews who were the remnant of the tribulation,

- Isaiah 10:20-22, "(20) Now in that day the remnant of Israel, and those of the house of Jacob who have escaped, will never again rely on the one who struck them, but will truly rely on the Lord, the Holy One of Israel. (21) A remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, to the mighty God. (22) For though your people, O Israel, may be like the sand of the sea, only a remnant within them will return; a destruction is determined, overflowing with righteousness."

- Isaiah 11:11-12, "(11) Then it will happen on that day that the Lord will again recover the second time with His hand the remnant of His people, who will remain, from Assyria, Egypt,

Pathros, Cush, Elam, Shinar, Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. (12) And He will lift up a standard for the nations and assemble the banished ones of Israel, and will gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth."

- This reestablishes Israel as God's client nation and they function as originally intended.

· The ruler of the millennium will be Jesus Christ.

· All of the fallen angels spend the millennium locked in the prison of Tartarus, Rev 20:1-3, "(1) Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. (2) And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; (3) and he threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time."

The purpose of the millennium.

· The purpose of the millennium is to prove once and for all that when God rules, perfect environment ensues.

· The millennium is God's final argument in the angelic conflict.

· The millennium shows, once and for all, that God was just to the fallen angels in eternity past when He passed judgment on them.

- They had no cause to rebel under the just and perfect prehistoric rulership of God.

- Even when they did rebel, God dealt with them justly and doubt offered them grace in spite of their rebellion.

- The millennium is the greatest display of all of God's grace.

The end of the millennium is marred by the Gog and Magog revolution, Revelation 20:7-10. This violent attempt at the overthrow of God's government ends with the final judgment. The eternal state ensues.

Therefore the men seeing what sign He performed were saying, 'He is truly the prophet who is coming into the world.' Therefore Jesus after knowing that they are about to come and seize Him in order to make Him king, He immediately ordered the disciples to embark into the boat and to precede Him to the other side to Bethsaida, until what time He might release the crowds. And after releasing the crowds He went up onto the mountain by Himself to pray. And after evening came He was alone there."

The prophet who is coming into the world is a messiah reference. If your memory is sharp, you will recall this same appellation from John the Baptist's inquiry. "Are you the coming one, or should we expect another?"

The men saw His sign - the sign of the bread, and they decided that Christ was indeed the Messiah.

It is John alone who recalls this distinction in his gospel.

The aorist participle *IDONTES* tells us that two things happen in sequence. The crowd sees Christ perform this miracle, and then they make their conclusion.

They saw and then concluded that He was the Messiah.

From all the previous miracles this was not so.

From changing the water into wine until the present there is no 'Messiah' movement for Christ.

Has there been a dramatic change in their attitude and world perception? It seems not, from Christ's reaction.

Jesus figures out that they are about to come and seize Him in order to make Him king.

The aorist participle *GNOUS* implies that Jesus did some thinking in order to perceive their intent. The aorist tense participle shows antecedent action to the main verb, just like *IDONTES* above.

So the crowd thinks about the miracle, and then they perceive that Christ is the Messiah.

Then Christ thinks about the crowd, and then He perceives that they are about to seize Him in order to make Him king.

He figures this to be a bad thing, and acts with immediate action.

He orders the disciples to immediately get into the boat for the purpose of flight to the Bethsaida side of the Sea.

What gives here? Isn't Messiahship the point? Isn't this exactly the goal? Well, I would say that it depends on the people you are going to rule.

Christ identifies the motive of this crowd in John 6:26, "Truly truly I say to you, you seek Me not because you saw signs, but because you ate from the bread and you were satisfied."

Their motive is frivolous. They want to eat. They see Jesus as their meal ticket.

In our time, our hard work is not directly related to our provision of food, because we are by and large not farmers.

But in the time of Christ, a good chunk of the people had to farm, and it was hard, sometimes even backbreaking work. It was before the John Deere tractor era, remember.

As a result of this, the provision of an abundance of free food would certainly be a boon. Few people had other bills to pay. No phone, no electricity, no gas, no water, no waste disposal. Just taxes and food, and a few sundry other items like clothing.

This crowd had identified that their toil on this earth was finished, thanks to this miracle. If He could do this once, He could do it again.

Now they recognize Christ as a provider, but their acceptance of this logistical supply does not mean in any way that they had accepted the spiritual creed of the Kingdom.

Christ does not want just anyone. He wants people for their beliefs, not for their desires.

So this definitely represents a twist of negative volition. They wanted Christ as king for the wrong reason.

Some reflections:

In a nation, you can have a great constitution, and still be degenerate, thanks to the weakness of the people.

You can have a great king or president, and if the people are weak and degenerate, the nation is nothing.

In any organization, the weakness of the masses will overcome the goodness of the leadership.

The issue of motivation becomes paramount.

Christ's Galileans were motivated by their laziness, and by their desire for easy logistics. They were motivated by their stimulation lust, always wanting to see a miracle, but never really seeing its significance, even when it is painfully obvious.

They lack the pure motivation of personal love for God. They lack the initiative and discipline which leads to spiritual momentum.

This cross-applies to church ministries.

In an effort to build up membership, church leaders often resort to extraneous motivational techniques.

They work from the social angle, or from the entertainment angle, in order to produce numbers in membership and attendance.

But then the reason that the crowds are there is completely wrong.

A church full of people who need to be entertained, and who accept the social life over the spiritual life is a bad church. People who are there for the wrong reasons are a distraction to the others who have their priorities straight.

Bad people love society too.

Bad people love entertainment too.

But bad people universally hate the truth.

You can keep bad people away simply by teaching the truth all the time.

There is a right reason to belong to a local assembly of believers. Spiritual growth unto spiritual maturity.

In the course of obtaining the objective, you may of course enjoy the society of other believers; you may also partake in various forms of virtuous entertainment, so long as your priorities remain.

This does not mean that the church is only for mature believers. On the contrary, it is for believers of all stages of spiritual growth. But the people of the church are all to share the same priority: development of personal love for God through the intake and application of God's word.

This also stands as a refutation to the missionary credo that you must take care of a person's basic needs before you can give them the gospel.

Many mission efforts go toward feeding people so that they will listen to the word.

A starving man who is honest about his spiritual standing will love the gospel. A fat and full man who is not will reject it.

There is no immediate connection between basic needs and the gospel.

This should stand as no discouragement toward charity.

Christian charity is an effort to meet the basic needs of starving people to keep them alive.

Keeping a person alive is a good thing, because it extends their opportunity to hear and receive the gospel.

This analysis of Christ also has important ramifications for any political body during the church age.

It comes down to the people. Why? If the greatest ruler in the world rejected a ruling offer from His own people, then we can certainly conclude that the people are important.

The king or ruler(s) is most often a reflection of the people.

The greatest ruler of all times, the King of kings and Lord of lords, Jesus Christ - He rejected this opportunity because of the people.

It is important now to make some proper distinctions between the kingdom of Jesus Christ then and now.

In the gospel records the proclamation of the Kingdom was inseparably connected with its King.

The good news of the Kingdom was announced to Israel alone.

This preaching of the Kingdom to Israel laid upon that chosen nation the demand for a decision.

The ministry of Christ and His message of the Kingdom met with opposition from the very beginning.

This tide of opposition toward our Lord's good news of the Kingdom grew steadily to a definite crisis. First, reference is made to those who were nearest to Him. Second, the attitude of the people in General is described... Third, and most important, there came a definite crisis of opposition on the part of the religious leaders of Israel.

What has been said above, of course, will raise the problem of contingency.

After He made that offer clear, the people of Israel rejected it, and in fact demanded and got His death. They rejected the offer for the following reasons:

The high spiritual requirements our Lord laid down as essential for entrance into the kingdom.

- The Sermon on the Mount established a spiritual code and an establishment code.

- Christ revealed the spiritual code in the beatitudes.

- Much of what follows the spiritual code is the establishment code.

- The offer of Christ was this: that if they would live according to the spiritual and establishment code of the Kingdom, He would give to them millennial conditions.

He therefore refused to establish a kingdom merely social and political in character.

His denunciation of the current religion with its traditionalism, legalism, and ritualism Luke 11:37-54, "(37) Now when he had spoken, a Pharisee asked Him to have lunch with him; and He went in, and reclined at the table. (38) When the Pharisee saw it, he was surprised that He had not first ceremonially washed before the meal. (39) But the Lord said to him, 'Now you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and of the platter; but inside of you, you are full of robbery and wickedness. (40) You foolish ones, did not He who made the outside make the inside also? (41) But give that which is within as charity, and then all things are clean for you. (42) But woe to you Pharisees! For you pay tithes of mint and rue and every kind of garden herb, and yet disregard justice and the love of God; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others. (43) Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the chief seats in the synagogues and the respectful greetings in the market places. (44) Woe to you! For you are like concealed tombs, and the people who walk over them are unaware of it.' (45) One of the lawyers said to Him in reply, 'Teacher, when You say this, You insult us too.' (46) But He said, 'Woe to you lawyers as well! For you weigh men down with burdens hard to bear, while you yourselves will not even touch the burdens with one of your fingers. (47) Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets, and it was your fathers who killed them. (48) So you are witnesses and approve the deeds of your fathers; because it was they who killed them, and you build their tombs. (49) For this reason also the wisdom of God said, 'I will send to them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will kill and some they will persecute, (50) so that the blood of all the prophets, shed since the foundation of the world, may be charged against this generation, (51) from the blood of Abel to the blood of

Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the house of God; yes, I tell you, it shall be charged against this generation. (52) Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge; you yourselves did not enter, and you hindered those who were entering,' (53) When He left there, the scribes and the Pharisees began to be very hostile and to question Him closely on many subjects, (54) plotting against Him to catch Him in something He might say."

His scathing arraignment of the ruling classes (Matt 23).

His association with and compassion for the outcasts of Israel (Matt 9:10-13; Lk 15:1,2).

His exalted claims for Himself (John 5:16-18; 10:24-33; 18:37).

Because of this, the earthly millennial kingdom was placed on hold, and a new dispensation began.

The church age is that dispensation. It is designed to develop co-rulers for Jesus Christ. It has a special plan for that development that makes it unique from the other dispensations as far as spiritual growth is concerned. 2 Tim. 2:12, "If we endure, we shall also reign with Him."

Church age believers have their citizenship from the kingdom of heaven, but they are currently living in the devil's world, Php 3:20, "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ."

It is the role of the church believer to represent their home nation before others in a foreign country. It is not their role to take over that foreign country.

Church age believers are therefore ambassadors, but not yet rulers, 2 Cor 5:20.

Jesus' response to this effort: "He immediately ordered the disciples to embark into the boat and to precede Him to the other side to

Bethsaida, until what time He might release the crowds. And after releasing the crowds He went up onto the mountain by Himself to pray. And after evening came He was alone there."

Christ had to get away from these ill-motivated people. He gives immediate orders.

He is very eager to get the disciples away from these people, and also Himself. But He first takes responsibility for the crowd.

By staying with the crowd, Christ gives His disciples time to get away to Bethsaida, to the east.

He knew that they would stay with Him after the miracle of the bread and fish.

And He went up onto the mountain by Himself to pray.

Jesus Christ is under stress here! He is a man, and this event represents a disappointment.

The greatest stress relief of all time is the prayer, and here our Lord turns to His Father in heaven.

This is a bit of fancy, but the prayer was certainly like this: "My Father who is in heaven; let Your name be sanctified; let Your kingdom come; let Your will become, as in heaven so upon earth; give to us today our logistical bread, and forgive us our debts as we ourselves also forgave our debtors; and do not bring us into testing, but save us from the evil."

For this prayer remained the desire of Christ's heart, regardless of the two years of disappointment.

The crowd had done everything wrong for two years, and this is a culmination.

Yet this was a test, and Christ had to endure.

So Christ was alone on the mountain that night, talking with God the Father.

This was a rare and precious occasion in the life of Christ.