

**Superina Paolo**

**THE GOSPEL OF**  
**JESUS CHRIST**

**A unified Gospel, according to  
Mark, Matthew, Luke, John**



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## THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH AND THE UNIVERSAL COMMUNION

In the Name of the Father and of His Son, Jesus Christ



**As, at the beginning, there was perfect harmony between Yahweh and His whole creation, so it will be at the end, when all will live a new life of full spiritual communion with Yahweh and with each other**



Penang: 04.1995 - 03.1996  
Caserta: 04.1997 - 06.1999

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**THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH**  
**AND**  
**THE UNIVERSAL COMMUNION**  
**In the Name of the Father**  
**and of His Son, Jesus Christ**

**THE GOSPEL OF**  
**JESUS CHRIST**  
**A unified Gospel, according to**  
**Mark, Matthew, Luke, John**

**Jesus Christ's life and teaching made easier to read and understand  
by merging the four Gospels' narrative into one.**

**Text based on:**

The Holy Bible. New International Version

**Notes and explanations based on:**

The Study Bible. New International Version

The Daily Study Bible. William Barclay

Thoughts. Superina Paolo

Superina Paolo

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**PERSONAL INTRODUCTION:** What follows is not intended and does not want to be a new or original study of the New Testament books, but simply what I have learned from them and of them, then put in writing.

#### **AUTHOR'S NOTE**

When we want to read about Jesus Christ in the New Testament, we have to refer to and go through the four Gospels and the beginning of Acts. I always felt the need for having only one text which would include everything in chronological order. And, at a certain point, I decided to write a "unified" text on my own.

The main characteristics of this unified version are:

- 1- The text is taken from "The Holy Bible. New International Version." Few alterations were necessary because of some of my personal beliefs as they are expressed in my work "Thoughts," or other problems:
  - a- To God is given back His Name: Yahweh.
  - b- NIV's "Holy Spirit" is always changed into "Holy Spirit of Yahweh," or "Spirit of Yahweh," or "Yahweh."
  - c- Some words and phrases of not immediate understanding are given differently.
  - d- The word "love" (and its derivatives: to love, loved, etc.) is used in many situations and takes on many, even deeply different meanings. In this book it is used only in two cases: 1) In the man-woman relationship. 2) In the parents-children relationship. In all other cases, other words are used, depending on the context: affection, fondness, benevolence, goodwill, to be fond of, to cherish, to like, etc.
  - e- Some chapter titles are in slightly different positions than on NIV, to improve understanding and/or chronology.
- 2- Notes and explanations are mainly taken from:
  - a- The Study Bible, New International Version.
  - b- The Daily Study Bible, William Barclay.
- 3- The text is arranged as much as possible in chronological order. When this is not clear or sure, an arbitrary, though logical, order is assumed.
- 4- When the same event is reported by more than one of the New Testament writers, the unified text includes at the best all the details given by all the writers, and their individual texts appear in Appendix.

**Note:** For a proper comprehension of some New Testament passages and concepts which do not appear to be "Christian" or "Good News," is important to remember that:

- 1) We usually don't realize how near Christianity was to becoming only another kind of Judaism. All the first Christians were Jews and all their traditions would have convinced them to keep the Good News for themselves, excluding completely the Gentiles.
- 2) All New Testament writers viewed the whole period beginning with Jesus Christ's birth as "the last days." They understood this period to be the "last" of the days because neither former prophecy nor new revelation concerning the history of salvation indicated the coming of another era before the return of Jesus Christ.
- 3) The actual meaning of what they wrote is still too often concealed by considerations derived from Old Testament ideas -it could not have been easy, for the writers of the New Testament Books, to detach themselves immediately and completely from the ideas they grew up with.

## **INTRODUCTION TO THE BIBLE**

### **Origin, purpose, composition.**

The Bible is a collection of books, a "library" of many different types of tellings -myths, history, laws, parables, drama, poetry, proverbs, gospels, letters, etc.- written over a very long period of time in the past, thousands of years ago. Of course, we have to understand that our present "modern" way of telling and listening would be quite different, depending on whether the passage concerned is history, or parable, or poetry, etc. Anyway, it has to be clear that in all these different forms and ways we encounter Yahweh's Word. Within each of these main divisions, within each book, and even within chapters of the same book, there is still more diversity. The reason is that the books of the Scripture were assembled by piecing together the words of different story-tellers.

For example, in the first 5 books of the Bible, known as the Pentateuch (the Torah -the Law- for the Jews), there are four underlying sources:

- the stories which were written at the time of King David (1000 BC) when Israel was one whole nation,
- the stories which were written in the Northern Kingdom of Israel at about 750 BC, before its fall to the Assyrians,
- the Deuteronomy stories, written somewhat later in the Southern Kingdom of Judah,
- the Priestly stories which were written by priests of the new Temple that was rebuilt in Jerusalem, after the return from Exile in 535 BC.

The Bible roots its origin in storytelling because, long before they were written down, biblical stories were alive in the mouths of master-tellers and the ears of the listeners. Stories were passed on from one generation to the next. The stories of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob lived at least 750 years in oral tradition, before the historians in the court of Kings David and Solomon began to write them down at about 1000 BC or 950 BC. The events of the Exodus and the settlement in the Promised Land were proclaimed for 200 years before reaching the written form. The events of David's time and those of the prophets went rather quickly into handwritten scrolls. But it was not until the time after the Exile, at about 500 BC, that all these materials were put together and edited in the kind of documents we now possess.

Anyway, the stories of the Bible are not a collection of unrelated tales, but they give the history of Yahweh's chosen people. When we say that the Bible is historical, we say that it is the past remembered, but remembered for the sake of Yahweh's story within the purpose of the Bible which is to bring us into union with Yahweh.

Similarly the early Christians were not so much concerned with providing written records of Jesus Christ's life for posterity as with spreading his message: the Good News of the Kingdom of Yahweh being open to all people of the Earth. Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians is the earliest of all New Testament writings. It was written from Corinth at about 51 AD. The earliest Gospel is Mark's. It was written about 65 AD at Rome. And the Revelation is the last of New Testament writings. It was written at the end of the first century.

The list of books of the New Testament was established by the end of the fourth century, at the Synod of Hippo in 393 AD. In the Old Testament, the Catholic Bible has 7 more books than most non-catholic versions (Tobias, Judith, Wisdom, Sirach, Baruch, and 1 & 2 Maccabees). The bishops at the Council of Trent declared in 1546 AD that the 73 books which had been used to that time by the Christian Church were canonical and inspired Word of Yahweh.



The Bible then is the story of Yahweh's creation and of His interventions in mankind, told in the stories of human beings. It is clear that, to understand it properly, we have to understand the words, check out the idioms and the metaphors that are used, perhaps look up a strange word or two, and try to reconstruct the situation that would make sense of the message. When we have done this, the letter can come alive; we can then hear the writer speaking to us. So it is that interpreters of the Bible must first try to understand the meaning of the text itself. Then we are free to move on to the meaning of the text for us.

Also when we make the reading of the Bible a prayer, we allow it to become a vehicle of communication between Yahweh and us. The key to prayer is listening. The key to praying the Bible is to listen closely to Yahweh's Word addressed personally to us.

The Bible is the Word of Yahweh communicated to us. The Bible consists of the Old Testament and the New Testament. The word Testament means "Covenant" and refers to the special relationship that Yahweh has established with us first through Moses and then through Jesus.

### **The Old Testament.**

The Old Testament tells the story of Yahweh's revelation of Himself and of His plan leading to the coming of Christ. It contains 46 books, written by various authors over a period of many centuries.

The Pentateuch Books begin with the primitive history of mankind. They continue with Yahweh's choice of His people. Their high point is the making of the old covenant at Mount Sinai. They also contain religious legislations covering the way of life of Yahweh's chosen people (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy).

The Historical Books give a general history of Israel. They tell us the conquest of the Promised Land, the development of the Kingdom of Israel as an ancient power under the reign of Kings David and Solomon, and the divided Kingdoms of Israel and Judas, the destruction of these kingdoms, followed by the captivity in Babylon, and finally the return, and the rebuilding of the Temple and of Jerusalem (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Maccabees).

The Prophetic Books explain how Yahweh intervened in history through His prophets. They were men of Yahweh who exhorted, inspired, and tried to reform Yahweh's people at times of great crisis (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonas, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi).

The Wisdom Books are collections of wisdom sayings. They also contain poetry, prayer, liturgy, and songs (Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Esther, Tobit, Judith, Baruch, Wisdom, Sirach, Psalms).

### **The New Testament.**

The New Testament gives the early Christian Church's point of view about Jesus Christ's life and teachings. It contains 27 books, written between 50 AD and the end of the first century.

The 4 Gospels give a rough outline of Jesus Christ's life and teachings. 3 of them, called synoptic Gospels, closely resemble one another; though each author has his own distinctive arrangement and purpose.

Mark, the earliest Gospel, was written in Rome. It is mainly concerned to show that Yahweh has come and saved us through Jesus; everything leads up to the climax -Jesus Christ's suffering, death, and resurrection.

Matthew was written for the Jewish Christian community in Antioch. It was written particularly to show that Jesus was the promised Messiah.

Luke was directed to the Pagan converts. It shows Jesus as the Savior of all mankind. It was written at about the same time as Matthew, probably in Rome.

John is the more spiritual of the Gospels. Its purpose is to show that Jesus is the Son of Yahweh. It shows a developing Christian theology about Jesus Christ. It was written at the end of the first century.

The Acts of the Apostles, also written by Luke, takes where his Gospel stops. It tells of some outstanding incidents at the beginning of the Christian Church.

The 13 Epistles of Paul are letters written to early Christian communities or to individuals. They are letters of instructions, guidance and admonition, written to strengthen the faith of the early converts and to put down errors. They were either dictated by Paul himself, or written by his followers from the teachings he gave to them.

The Letter to the Hebrews was written by an anonymous author to teach the Jewish Christians -some of whom were thinking of going back to Jewish faith- that Jesus completed the Jewish faith by making the final sacrifice for sin.

The 7 Catholic -General, or Universal- Epistles are letters addressed to the Church in general (1 of James, 2 of Peter, 3 of John, and 1 of Jude). Attributed to these apostles, these letters were written by their followers.

Revelation is a totally distinct kind of literature. Revelation is "apocalyptic" -a kind of highly symbolic writing, which often seems bizarre to the modern reader- and gives a series of figurative visions in symbolic and mysterious language. It is mainly meant to encourage and console the early Christians struggling under the Roman persecutions and only then describes what will happen at the end of the world.

### **The time between the Testaments**

In Biblical history, approximately 400 years separate the time of the last prophet, Nehemiah, from the birth of Jesus Christ. Sometimes they are called "the silent years," because of lack of contemporary prophets. During this period, Israel ceased to be an independent nation and became a minor territory in a succession of larger empires: Persian domination (450-330 BC), Alexander the Great and Hellenistic period (330-166 BC), Hasmonean period (166-63 BC), Roman period (63 BC-...).

The Diaspora (dispersion) of Israel, begun in the exile to Babylon, accelerated during these years until the Jews "filled every land and sea." A Greek translation of the Old Testament was produced -the Septuagint- for the Greek-speaking Jews of Alexandria. (Jewish legend says that 72 scholars produced the Greek translation in 72 days. The Latin word for 70, "Septuaginta" became the name attached to the translation). All the Jews out of Israel, cut off from the Temple, concentrated their religious life in the study of the Torah (the 5 books of Moses) and in the life of the synagogue.

### **Translation of the ancient texts into modern languages.**

The basic text for the Old Testament is the Masoretic Text, written in Hebrew. This language -written without vowels, spacing and punctuation- presents a particular problem: sometimes the words of the written consonantal text can be divided differently by assigning different sets of vowels.

The basic text for the New Testament is in Greek.

The primary concern of the translation is that it has to provide a faithful rendering of the meaning of the Hebrew and Greek texts. Another typical problem is that sometimes

the original meaning cannot be precisely known, not only because the meaning of some words and phrases cannot be determined with a great degree of assurance, but also because the underlying cultural and historical context is sometimes poorly or completely not understood. After ascertaining as accurately as possible the meaning of the original, the translation has to express that meaning in a manner and a form clearly understood by the contemporary readers.

The required effort necessary to understand the real meaning of a text can vary greatly, depending upon the nature of the text and its relationship to normal communication -law, judicial, technical texts are always written in their own particular ways. Some texts merely need to be read to be understood. Others require very detailed analysis. Some use normal, every-day language, grammar and sentence structure, and distinctive forms of expression. Some texts employ symbolic and metaphoric language. Others carefully employ language and words so as to limit severely the range of meaning and the potential for multiple interpretations and misunderstandings. Some texts seek to persuade, some to entertain, others to induce some particular response and action.

The proper translation of an ancient text into a modern language encounters many problems and difficulties:

-because of "cultural and historical gap," writer and reader do not share a common world of expression and experience. Ideas, practices, and customs of the ancient civilizations are not easily and clearly understood by modern people, who are part of a different culture. The same concepts are expressed in different ways. Special ideas, practices, and customs which would be clearly understood by a person reading the document in the original culture, can easily confuse a reader in a different one. The more remote and different is the culture of the writer from that of the reader/interpreter, the greater is the difficulty encountered in interpreting and translating the text. The gap between past and present means that there are substantial differences in practices and perspectives, customs and conventions, and so on. On top of this, different books of the Bible were originated over a very long period of time, each with different historical contents. We must be aware that:

-documents are sometimes the products of collective and historical grows. This means that documents are, on occasion, not the product of a single author, nor even of one particular period of time. In the ancient world, there was a great tendency for works to be the product of collective grows. Writers often sought not to be original. And they frequently edited and combined older works which, sometimes, were themselves already edited and augmented works. This means that ancient works were frequently the products of a long and complex editorial process and contained layers or strata of materials and traditions. The result can occasionally be seen in anachronisms in the text, differences in style, and even contradictions in the contents. Furthermore:

-in antiquity works were sometimes produced as if they were the work of someone else, generally a venerable figure from the past;

-some texts are considered sacred, thus different in some way from all other texts. Those texts need special interpretation as they can be written either metaphorically or realistically;

-around Scriptures, there always develops a tradition of both what the texts say and how they are to be read.

**Modern translations in English.**

There are many translations of the Bible in modern English:

-RSV (Revised Standard Version). It follows the philosophy of formal correspondence to reflect the meaning and the nuances of the original languages. It is a literal translation and stays very close to the Hebrew and the Greek.

-NJV (New Jewish Version). It adheres strictly to the traditional Hebrew text. It retains the imagery of the Hebrew rather than to render it by approximated English equivalents.

-JB (Jerusalem Bible) and NAB (New American Bible). They follow the philosophy of the dynamic equivalence. The translator first understands the original as precisely as possible and then says it in the modern language. Focus is on the thought conveyed in the text, there is no need to reflect the word order nor the vocabulary of the original.

-NEV (New English Version) and TEV (Today's English Version). They seek to state the original text in today's standard form of English.

-NIV (New International Version). It tries to be the best possible compromise between literal translation, dynamic equivalence to the original, and fluent translation in modern English while reflecting the vocabulary, word order, and even the obscurities of the original text.

**Old Testament Books**

|              |     |               |      |
|--------------|-----|---------------|------|
| Genesis      | Ge  | Song of Songs | Ss   |
| Exodus       | Ex  | Wisdom        | Wis  |
| Leviticus    | Le  | Sirach        | Sir  |
| Numbers      | Nu  | Isaiah        | Isa  |
| Deuteronomy  | Dt  | Jeremiah      | Jer  |
| Joshua       | Jos | Lamentations  | La   |
| Judges       | Jdg | Baruch        | Bar  |
| Ruth         | Ru  | Ezekiel       | Eze  |
| 1 Samuel     | 1Sa | Daniel        | Da   |
| 2 Samuel     | 2Sa | Hosea         | Hos  |
| 1 Kings      | 1Ki | Joel          | Joel |
| 2 Kings      | 1Ki | Amos          | Am   |
| 1 Chronicles | 1Ch | Obadiah       | Ob   |
| 2 Chronicles | 2Ch | Jonah         | Jnh  |
| Ezra         | Ezr | Micah         | Mic  |
| Nehemia      | Ne  | Nahum         | Na   |
| Tobias       | Tob | Habakkuk      | Hab  |
| Judit        | Jud | Zephaniah     | Zep  |
| Esther       | Est | Haggai        | Hag  |
| Job          | Job | Zechariah     | Zec  |
| Psalms       | Ps  | Malachi       | Mal  |
| Proverbs     | Pr  | 1 Maccabees   | 1Mac |
| Ecclesiastes | Ecc | 2 Maccabees   | 2Mac |

**New Testament Books**

|                 |     |             |     |
|-----------------|-----|-------------|-----|
| Gosp. Mark      | Mk  | Philippians | Php |
| Gosp. Matthew   | Mt  | 1 Timothy   | 1Ti |
| Gosp. Luke      | Lk  | 2 Timothy   | 2Ti |
| Gosp. John      | Jn  | Titus       | Tit |
| Acts            | Ac  | Hebrews     | Heb |
| 1 Thessalonians | 1Th | James       | Jm  |
| 2 Thessalonians | 2Th | 1 Peter     | 1Pe |
| Galatians       | Gal | 2 Peter     | 2Pe |
| 1 Corinthians   | 1Co | 1 John      | 1Jn |
| 2 Corinthians   | 2Co | 2 John      | 2Jn |
| Romans          | Ro  | 3 John      | 3Jn |
| Ephesians       | Eph | Jude        | Jd  |
| Colossians      | Col | Revelation  | Rev |
| Philemon        | Phm |             |     |

## **INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW TESTAMENT**

The word Gospel means "Good News." The four Gospels (written by Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John), which are the first four books of the New Testament, and the initial part of Acts (written by Luke), which is the fifth book, tell us almost everything we know about Jesus Christ. They tell us the Good News that Jesus, the Son of Yahweh, was born on Earth where he died for our sins, for the final salvation of all people. The actual purpose of the Gospels is to spread the Good News, not to write Jesus Christ's biography.

A comparison of the four Gospels shows that Mark, Matthew, and Luke are noticeably similar, while John is quite different. The first three Gospels correspond extensively in language, in the material they include, and in the order of the events. (However, chronological order is not followed in any of the Gospels.) Because of this, they are called "Synoptic Gospels," those that can be "seen together." The most common current view is that the Gospel of Mark and a hypothetical document, called Quelle (German for source), were used by Matthew and Luke as guidelines for their Gospels. Matthew has 1068 verses, and Luke 1149; between them they reproduce 582 out of 661 Mark's verses, which almost entirely deal with the events of Jesus' life. But there are more than 200 additional verses common to Matthew and Luke, and these deal with Jesus' sayings. Clearly, here Matthew and Luke are drawing from a common (not existing any more) source-book of the sayings of Jesus.

Acts, usually called "The Acts of the Apostles," gives a series of glimpses of the great moments and personalities of the early Church. It is the follow-up, we can say the book number 2, of Luke's Gospel.

### **The Gospel according to Mark.**

Mark was the son of a lady of Jerusalem whose name was Mary, and whose house was a meeting place of the early Church (Acts 12:12). Mark was also the cousin of Barnabas, and he accompanied Paul and Barnabas during the initial part of their first missionary journey, till Pergas in Pamphylia. Mark was in Rome with Paul when he wrote the letters to the Colossians (Colossians 4:10), to Philemon (Philemon 24) and to Timothy (2 Timothy 4:11). Even more important, Mark was very close to Peter (1 Peter 5:13), and his Gospel is nothing other than a record of Peter's preaching material; of what Peter preached and taught about Jesus. (Papias, in the second century, went on collecting all the information available about the early days of the Church and wrote: "Mark, who was Peter's interpreter, wrote down accurately, though not in order, all that he recollected of what Jesus Christ had said or done. For he was not a hearer of the Lord or a follower of his. He followed Peter, who adapted his teachings to practical needs, without any attempt to give the Lord's words systematically.")

In Mark's Gospel we have what Mark remembered of Peter's preaching material. This Gospel was written (in Greek language) in Rome most probably about AD 65, just shortly after Peter died. The main recipient of it was the Church of Rome, to which Mark explains Jewish customs and translates Aramaic words. His main concern is to show that Yahweh has saved us through Jesus.

### **The Gospel according to Matthew**

Matthew, whose name means "Gift of the Lord," was a tax collector who left his work to follow Jesus. In Mark and Luke he is called by his other name, Levi. Matthew was

one of the 12 apostles and, since he was an eyewitness to the events of Jesus' life, it is hard to understand why he had to depend so heavily on Mark's account. Papias, again, gives us a very important information when he writes: "Matthew collected the sayings of Jesus in the Hebrew tongue." So, then, it seems that it was none other than Matthew who wrote that book which was the source from which all of them drew. This means that Matthew's Gospel follows Mark for what refers to the events of Jesus' life, and Matthew's own collection of sayings for what refers to Jesus' teaching.

Matthew's Gospel was written (in Greek language) for the Jewish Christian community in Syrian Antioch, most probably about AD 70. It was written particularly to demonstrate to the Jews that all the prophecies of the Old Testament are fulfilled in Jesus, and that, therefore, he must be the promised Messiah. The main interest of Matthew is in the Jews. Yet this does not mean that this Gospel is restricted to the Jews only; the Gospel has to be preached to the whole world (Mt 24:14) to make disciples of all nations (Mt 28:19).

### **The Gospel according to Luke**

The author's name does not appear in the book, but all the evidence points to Luke. Luke was a non-Jew by birth, well educated in Greek culture, a physician by profession, Paul's "dear friend Luke, the doctor" (Colossians 4:14), and "fellow worker" (Philemon 24). He was a companion of Paul from his second missionary journey to his first imprisonment in Rome, a loyal friend (2 Timothy 4:11).

Luke is the only New Testament writer who was not a Jew. His Gospel was probably written (in Greek language) in Rome, in the 70s or the 80s. It is specifically directed to a man called Theophilus, most probably a high official in the Roman government. The message of this Gospel was intended for his own instruction (Lk 1:4) as well for the instruction of the other non-Jews among whom the book would be circulated. Luke wanted to show that the acceptance of the non-Jew Christians in Yahweh's Kingdom is based on the teaching of Jesus, that the preaching of the Gospel is for the whole world, and that Jesus is the Savior of all mankind. It is clear that Luke wrote mainly for the non-Jews. Theophilus was a non-Jew, as was Luke himself, and there is nothing in his Gospel that a non-Jew could not grasp and understand. Unlike Matthew, Luke is not greatly interested in the life of Jesus as the fulfillment of Jewish prophecy. He very seldom quotes the Old Testament at all. He traces the descent of Jesus to Adam, the founder of the human race, not to Abraham, the founder of the Jewish race.

### **The Gospel according to John**

The author of this book is the apostle John, "the disciple whom Jesus cherished" (Jn 13:23;19:26;20:2;21:7,20,24), even if it was most probably written, under the supervision of the aged John the Apostle by John the Elder, a member of the Church of Ephesus. John was the younger son of Zebedee, a well off fisherman on the sea of Galilee. With his brother James he followed Jesus, becoming one of the inner circle of the disciples.

The main characteristic of John's Gospel is that it looks quite different from the other three. It omits many things that they include. It has no account of the birth of Jesus, of his baptism, of his temptations; there is nothing of the Last Supper, of Gethsemane, and of the Ascension. It has none of Jesus' parable stories which appear in the other three Gospels. In the fourth Gospel Jesus' speeches are quite long and argumentative. On the other hand, John gives in his Gospel something which is missing in the other three; an account of what Jesus did at the beginning of his ministry, that is, before the imprison-

ment of John the Baptist. Furthermore, John gives a more accurate account of the duration of Jesus' ministry. From the other three Gospels it appears that it lasted only one year, when, actually, it was a matter of almost three years. We can say that however much John's Gospel differs from the other three, the difference is because he had more direct knowledge.

John's is the more spiritual of the Gospels. Its purpose is to show that Jesus is the Son of Yahweh. It was written (in Greek language) in Ephesus toward the end of the first century, circa AD 85 or later. It was written in a way that would appeal to Greek thinkers, for them to be introduced directly to the values of Christian salvation without being routed through Judaism. One of its many characteristics consists of the quite developed level of theology, focused mainly to rebuke the various heresies which were spreading around at that time. It was written to communicate not only what Jesus did say but, more important, what Jesus meant.

### **Acts (The Acts of the Apostles)**

Although the book never says so, from the earliest times Luke has been considered the writer. As Luke's Gospel, even Acts is addressed to Theophilus. In Acts Luke takes pains to show that the Christians are good and loyal citizens of the Roman Empire. Luke was writing in the days when the Christians were disliked and persecuted. In the meantime he wants to show that Christianity is for all men of every country. But the real purpose of Acts is to report the words of the risen Christ and the descent of the Spirit of Yahweh -spiritual communion Yahweh/man- on all men willing to receive Him.

Luke did write Acts (in Greek language) most probably in Rome and in sequence with his Gospel, which means in the 80s or 90s.

**Note:** To give a more complete narrative of Jesus Christ's activity, also the initial part of Acts is considered (after Resurrection, Ascension, the coming of the Spirit of Yahweh at Pentecost).



**THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST**

**A unified Gospel, according to  
Mark, Matthew, Luke, John**

***Introduction - Jesus is conceived******Introduction*** [Luke 1:1-4]

**(Lk1:1)** Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, **(2)** just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the Word. **(3)** 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, **(4)** so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.

**Lk 1:1-4.** As it was common to historical works at the time, Luke begins his report with a short formal preface, to explain clearly his purpose for writing it. He declares that, even though other reports had already been written on the subject, there was the need for a new one prepared following a more accurate method of approach and based on the best sources of information available. Luke had no direct contact with Jesus, but he went through the most careful historical research, recording the testimony of some of the actual eyewitnesses of the facts who were still, during his time, serving Yahweh by preaching and spreading the word of Jesus Christ. The preaching of the apostles and interviews with other people associated with Jesus' ministry were directly available to him. He declares to the recipient of his work -the "most excellent Theophilus"- that his account is exact in historical detail, having been checked in every possible way, and that it is complete, extending back to the very beginning of Jesus' life.

**Lk 1:1.** 'Things... fulfilled among us': Facts prophesied in the Old Testament and now fully accomplished.

**Lk 1:2.** 'Handed down': A technical term for passing on information as authoritative tradition.

**Lk 1:4.** 'So that you may know': Clearly, Luke's Gospel was written to strengthen the faith of all believers and to answer to the attacks of the unbelievers.

***The Son of Yahweh*** [Mark 1:1 John 1:1-5;10-14;16-18]

**(Mk1:1)** The beginning of the Gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of Yahweh.

**(Jn1:1)** At the beginning there was Yahweh's Logos(\*), and the Logos was with Yahweh, and the Logos was Yahweh. **(2)** The Logos was with Yahweh at the beginning.

**(3)** Through Yahweh all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made. **(4)** In Him was Life, and that Life generated the Light of men. **(5)** He, the Light, shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood and has not overcome him.

**(10)** He came in the world, and though the world was made by Yahweh, the world did not recognize him. **(11)** He came to that which was Yahweh's own, but Yahweh's own did not receive him. **(12)** Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of Yahweh **(13)**-children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of Yahweh.

**(14)** Yahweh generated a man who made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only begotten Son, who came from the Father, full of gra-

ce and truth. (16) *From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another.* (17) *For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.* (18) *No one has ever seen Yahweh., but the One and Only begotten Son, who is at the Father's side, has made Him known.*

(\*): John's "Logos" is left un-translated because of the impossibility of rendering it by one word only. For its meaning, see comment to Jn 1:1-2 and 1:3.

**Mk 1:1.** '*Gospel*': From the Old English "godspel," "good story" or "good news," which actually translates the Greek. Mark's opening words -this is the beginning of his work- clearly identify the subject of his writing, "Jesus Christ" and his most important characteristic, "The Son of Yahweh."

**Jn 1:1-2.** '*At the beginning*': This phrase identifies the beginning of Yahweh's creation and has to be read in parallel to Genesis 1:1-2. It is, then, clear and evident that John's "Logos" is Genesis' "Spirit of Yahweh." The Greeks used "Logos" not only for the spoken word, but also to indicate the rational principle that governs all things. The Jews used it also as a way of referring to Yahweh, as a periphrasis for His Name, Yahweh, which could not be pronounced. Thus John used a term which was meaningful to both Jews and Pagans. '*The Logos was with Yahweh*': The Spirit of Yahweh is Yahweh Himself. Repetitions on Jn 1:1-2 reinforce this concept.

**Jn 1:3.** '*Through Yahweh...*': He, Yahweh, is the Creator of everything and everybody. By reading Psalm 33:6 we can understand the exact meaning of "Yahweh's Logos" when applied to His creative activity: "By the WORD of the Lord were the heavens made, their starry hosts by the BREATH of His mouth." Due to the verbal structure typical of the Hebrew language, when the text speaks of "the Word of the Lord," an action, namely the action accomplished by the Word, is always implied at the same time.

**Jn 1:4.** '*In Him was Life*': Yahweh is the Creator of all living beings; is the Generator of life. Yahweh has given birth -that is, life- to His Son Jesus Christ, the Light of men. And from Jesus comes all spiritual illumination.

**Jn 1:5.** '*Light. Darkness*': Jesus' light shines in the darkness of the sinful situation existing on Earth where the human system is opposed to Yahweh, to the light of Jesus Christ. This darkness can't understand Jesus, but can't even win him.

**Jn 1:10** '*He came in the world*': The human Son of Yahweh, Jesus, born on Earth, came to the world, to the people of the world. But most of men, in spite of Jesus' divine descent, did refuse him and his Father.

**Jn 1:11.** '*Yahweh's own*': Everything was created by Yahweh, everything is His own, beginning with Israel.

**Jn 1:12-13.** '*All who received him*': But to those who did receive and welcome Jesus, to those who did believe in him (in his name), Yahweh gave the right to become His own spiritual children. Membership in Yahweh's family is by grace, is the gift of Yahweh. It is never human achievement, yet the imparting of the gift is dependent on a man's reception of it, as the words "received" and "believed" make clear.

**Jn 1:14;16.** '*Yahweh generated*': Yahweh did generate His Son Jesus of a human mother. And Jesus did spend his life on Earth, man among men. '*We have seen*': The disciples have seen Jesus' glory (by the miracles performed and by his resurrection), the glory of the Only Son of Yahweh. '*Full of grace and truth*': Jesus was full of the grace of Yahweh, and he is passing this grace to all men (so that, through him, they can become children of Yahweh). Furthermore, Jesus is the embodiment of the truth, of truly living following the will of Yahweh.

**Jn 1:17.** *'For the Law...':* In the old way, life was governed by the Law, which had to be strictly obeyed. But with the coming of Jesus we no longer seek to obey the Law of Yahweh like slaves; we seek to answer Yahweh's affection like sons. It is through Jesus Christ that Yahweh the Law-Giver has become Yahweh the Father, that Yahweh the judge has become He who looks for the souls of men.

**Jn 1:18.** *'No one has ever seen...':* A declaration that, of all men, only Yahweh's Son knows Him as He is. Only Jesus knows Him, and he has made his knowledge available to all men. Jesus is so intimate with Yahweh that Yahweh has no secrets for him. Therefore, Jesus is the only one person in all the universe who can reveal to us what Yahweh is like and how Yahweh feels towards us.

**The birth of John the Baptist foretold** [Luke 1:5-25]

**(Lk1:5)***In the time of Herod king of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah; his wife Elizabeth was also a descendant of Aaron. (6)Both of them were upright in the sight of Yahweh, observing all the Lord's commandments and regulations blamelessly. (7)But they had no children, because Elizabeth was barren; and they were both well along in years.*

**(8)Once, when Zechariah's division was on duty and he was serving as priest before Yahweh, (9)he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to go into the Temple of Yahweh and burn incense. (10)And when the time for the burning of incense came, all the assembled worshippers were praying outside.**

**(11)Then an angel of Yahweh appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. (12)When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear. (13)But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to give him the name of John. (14)He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, (15)for he will be great in the sight of Yahweh. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Spirit of Yahweh even from his mother's womb. (16)Many of the people of Israel will he bring back to Yahweh their God. (17)And he will go on before Him, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearths of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous -to make ready a people prepared for Yahweh."**

**(18)Zechariah asked the angel, "How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years."**

**(19)The angel answered, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of Yahweh, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news. (20)And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their proper time."**

**(21)Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah and wondering why he stayed so long in the Temple. (22)When he came out, he could not speak to them. They realized he had seen a vision in the Temple, for he kept making signs to them but remained unable to speak.**

**(23)When his time of service was completed, he returned home. (24)After this his wife Elizabeth became pregnant and for five months remained in seclusion. (25)"Yahweh has done this for me," she said. "In these days He has shown His favor and taken away my disgrace among the people."**

**Lk 1:5.** *'Herod king of Judea':* Herod the Great reigned from 37 to 4 BC and his king-

dom included Samaria, Galilee, much of Perea and Syria. The time referred to here is about 7-6 BC. *'Zechariah, Elizabeth, Priestly division of Abijah'*: Zechariah was a priest; every male descendant of Aaron was automatically a priest. There were so many priests in Israel that, from the time of king David, they were organized into 24 divisions. A priest had to marry only a woman of absolutely pure Jewish lineage. It was specially meritorious to marry a woman also a descendant of Aaron, as was Elizabeth, Zechariah's wife.

**Lk 1:6.** *'Upright... blamelessly'*: Both Zechariah and Elizabeth were faithful and sincere in keeping Yahweh's ordinances.

**Lk 1:7.** *'They had no children'*: Lack of children was generally considered to indicate divine disfavor and often brought social reproach. And they could not hope any more to have a son, because of their age.

**Lk 1:8.** *'Division... on duty'*: Only at Passover, at Pentecost, and at the Feast of Tabernacles the priests were serving all together. For the rest of the year each division served 2 periods of 1 week each.

**Lk 1:9.** *'Chosen by lot'*: Within the divisions, because of the high number of priests, all the duties were determined by lot. *'Burn incense'*: It was one of the chosen priest's highest duties to keep the incense burning on the altar in front of the Most Holy Place, in the Court of the Priests. Ordinarily a priest, because of the assignments determined by lot, would have this privilege very infrequently.

**Lk 1:10.** *'Time for burning incense'*: Every morning and evening a burnt sacrifice of a male lamb was made for the whole nation, together with a sacrifice of flour, oil, and wine. Before the morning and after the evening sacrifice, incense was burned on a particular altar, the Altar of Incense. *'The assembled worshippers... outside'*: The worshippers, who did not have access to the inmost court, were praying in the next one, the Court of the Israelites.

**Lk 1:11.** *'An angel...'*: Zechariah was attending to this duty when an angel appeared to him. It was Gabriel (Lk 1:19), whose name means "Yahweh is my hero" or "mighty man of Yahweh," one of the only 2 angels identified by name in Scripture: Gabriel and Michael.

**Lk 1:12.** *'Fear'*: An understandable, natural reaction to something so unexpected and unusual.

**Lk 1:13.** *'Do not be afraid'*: This words of reassurance appear a number of times both in the Old and in the New Testament. *'Your prayer'*: To have a son. *'John'*: The meaning of the name John is "Yahweh's Gift" or "Yahweh is Gracious."

**Lk 1:14.** *'Joy and delight to you'*: Joy for having a son, delight for the importance of his mission. *'Many will rejoice'*: Because of the spiritual help he will give to them when accomplishing his important mission for Yahweh.

**Lk 1:15.** *'Great in the sight of Yahweh'*: Not only a son is given, but a son who will be in the special favor of Yahweh. What more for a Jewish priest? *'Never to take wine...'*: John had to be subject to the Nazarite vow of abstinence from alcoholic drinks. *'Filled with the Spirit of Yahweh'*: John had been specially chosen by Yahweh for a particular prophetic mission. As such he did receive Yahweh's special support from the moment of his conception.

**Lk 1:16.** *'Will he bring back'*: A number of Israelites will follow his request to repent, and so will be reconciled to Yahweh.

**Lk 1:17.** *'In the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts...'*: John was actually to have a function of preacher of repentance similar to the one of Elijah (Malachi 4:5-6)

and to fulfill Isaiah's prophecy (Isaiah 40:3-5) by announcing the coming of the Messiah.

**Lk 1:18.** *'How can I...'*: Zechariah, because of his and his wife's age, did not believe immediately to the angel, and asked for a sign. This was a serious lack of faith for a priest of the Temple.

**Lk 1:19.** *'I am Gabriel'*: The angel introduces himself, to justify the authority of his actions. He is one of the few angels who live in the presence of Yahweh (Thoughts. Looking at the Bible, Ideas and Interpretations. Creation of the Angels).

**Lk 1:20.** *'Now you will be...'*: As punishment for his lack of faith, Zechariah was left mute till the birth (actually, till the ceremony of circumcision) of his son.

**Lk 1:21.** *'The people were waiting'*: The worshippers were waiting for Zechariah to come out of the Court of the Priests and to pronounce the usual Aaronic blessing.

**Lk 1:22.** *'When he came out...'*: From his attitude and conditions, it was clear to everybody that something exceptional had happened to him, that he had had a vision.

**Lk 1:23.** *'Time of service completed'*: At the end of his week of service in the Temple.

**Lk 1:24-25.** *'After this...'*: After becoming pregnant, Elizabeth remained in seclusion at home as a sign (unknown to us) of devotion and gratitude that Yahweh had taken away the disgrace of her childlessness.

### ***The birth of Jesus foretold*** [Luke 1:26-38]

**(Lk1:26)***In the sixth month, Yahweh sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, (27)to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. (28)The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! Yahweh is with you."*

**(29)***Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. (30)But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with Yahweh. (31)You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. (32)He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord Yahweh will give him the throne of his father David, (33)and he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever; his Kingdom will never end."*

**(34)***"How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"*

**(35)***The angel answered, "The Spirit of Yahweh will come upon you, and the Power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the Holy One to be born will be called the Son of Yahweh. (36)Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month. (37)For nothing is impossible with Yahweh."*

**(38)***"I am Yahweh's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said." Then the angel left her.*

**Lk 1:26-35.** This section speaks clearly of the virginal conception of Jesus, which was due to the direct involvement of Yahweh. The angel Gabriel is sent to Mary to announce that she was chosen by Yahweh and will have a child whose father will be Yahweh Himself. Yahweh had decided to make a special entry in the world, conceiving a Son who will be, at the same time, both human and divine.

**Lk 1:26.** *'In the sixth month'*: Six months after the time of John's conception.

**Lk 1:27.** *'Virgin pledged to be married'*: There had to be no sexual relations during a Jewish betrothal, which lasted a year, but it was a binding relationship that could be

broken only by divorce. The two betrothed were legally bound (pledged) to each other, but not yet living together as husband and wife.

**Lk 1:29.** *'Mary was...'*: It was no vision, no dream. An angel was actually sent to Mary. This shows the very special relationship between Yahweh and Mary. *'Troubled'*: Mary does not appear to be frightened by the angel's apparition, only surprised. *'What kind of greeting'*: She could not understand the meaning of the angel's greeting without receiving further explanations.

**Lk 1:30-31.** *'Do not be afraid'*: The angel reassures Mary and immediately explains what will happen to her. *'Jesus'*: Jesus is the Greek form of Joshua, which means "Yahweh saves."

**Lk 1:32.** *'The Son of the Most High'*: Jesus will be the Son of Yahweh and the promised Messiah. *'Throne of David'*: As promised in the Old Testament, the Messiah will descend from David. In effect, Mary was a descendant of David, as was Joseph. So Jesus could rightly be called a son (descendant) of David.

**Lk 1:33.** *'He will reign... for ever; his Kingdom will never end'*: Jesus will be given a position of high authority (second only to the Father) in Yahweh's Kingdom, which will never end.

**Lk 1:34.** *'How will...'*: It is clear that Mary did not ask in disbelief, as Zechariah did.

**Lk 1:35.** *'The Spirit of Yahweh will come upon you'* and *'the Power of the Most High will overshadow you'* are synonymous. This double repetition of the same concept is typical of Jewish literature. The child to be born will actually be the Son of Yahweh with the human race through Mary.

**Lk 1:36.** *'Elizabeth your relative'*: It is not surely known whether she was a cousin, aunt, or other relation.

**Lk 1:37.** *'Nothing is impossible with Yahweh'*: It is impossible to speak of impossibilities where the action in question is the action of Yahweh.

**Lk 1:38.** *'I am Yahweh's servant'*: Mary accepts faithfully what is requested to her, without asking for any proof or "sign."

### **Mary visits Elizabeth** [Luke 1:39-45]

*(Lk1:39)At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, (40)where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. (41)When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Spirit of Yahweh. (42)In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! (43)But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? (44)As the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. (45)Blessed is she who has believed that what Yahweh has said to her will be accomplished!"*

**Lk 1:39-40.** *'Mary got ready and...'*: Shortly after the angel's Annunciation, Mary went to Elizabeth's house, during the last period of her pregnancy, to help her.

**Lk 1:41-45.** It is clear that Elizabeth was fully aware -she was inspired by the Spirit of Yahweh- of Mary's special condition, and of the two totally different kinds of Yahweh's intervention in her and in Mary's case. At the sound of Mary's voice, Elizabeth's baby leaped for joy in his mother womb. Only the special relation between Yahweh and John -filled with the Spirit of Yahweh from the moment of his conception- and Yahweh's fatherhood of Jesus can explain this remarkable response in the unborn baby.

**Mary's song** [Luke 1:46-56]

*(Lk1:46)And Mary said: "My soul glorifies Yahweh (47)and my spirit rejoices in Yahweh my Savior, (48)for He has been mindful of the humble state of His servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, (49)for the Mighty One has done great things for me -holy is His Name. (50)His mercy extends to those who fear Him, from generation to generation. (51)He has performed mighty deeds with His arm; He has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. (52)He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. (53)He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty. (54)He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful (55)to Abraham and his descendants, forever, exactly as He said to our fathers." (56)Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months and then returned home.*

**Lk 1:46-55.** This song is a hymn of praise, known as the Magnificat because in the Latin Vulgate translation the opening word is "Magnificat," which means "Glorify." The song is structured like a psalm in the Old Testament. It is permeated of figurative Old Testament phraseology, yet it contains the fundamental moral and social Christian precepts which, at the time, were revolutionary.

**Lk 1:50.** *'Those who fear Him':* Those who revere Yahweh and live in harmony with His will.

**Lk 1:51.** *'He has performed mighty deeds with His arm':* Figurative description of Yahweh's power. *'He has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts':* Christianity is the end and death of pride. This is a moral revolution, because it challenges the intimate thoughts of people, not their external appearance and actions.

**Lk 1:52.** *'He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble':* Christianity puts an end to the world's labels and prestige. This is a social revolution; when we realize what Jesus Christ did for all men, it is no longer possible to speak about social grades.

**Lk 1:53.** *'He has filled the hungry... has sent the rich away empty':* This is an economic and social revolution. A non-Christian society is acquisitive; each man is out to amass as much as he can. In a Christian society no man should have too much while others have too little.

**Lk 1:54-55.** The song ends with the assurance that Yahweh will keep His promises to His people.

**Lk 1:56.** Mary stayed with Elizabeth until John's birth, then went back home in Nazareth.

**The birth of John the Baptist** [Luke 1:57-66]

*(Lk1:57)When it was time for Elizabeth to have her baby, she gave birth to a son. (58)Her neighbors and relatives heard that Yahweh had shown her great mercy, and they shared her joy.*

*(59)On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him after his father Zechariah, (60)but his mother spoke up and said, "No! He is to be called John."*

*(61)They said to her, "There is no one among your relatives who has that name."*

*(62)Then they made signs to his father, to find out what he would like to name the child. (63)He asked for a writing tablet, and to everyone's astonishment he wrote, "His name is John." (64)Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue was loosed, and*

he began to speak, praising Yahweh. (65)The neighbors were all filled with awe, and throughout the hill country of Judea people were talking about all these things. (66)Everyone who heard this wondered about it, asking, "What then is this child going to be?" For Yahweh's hand was with him.

**Lk 1:57-66.** In Palestine a birth was an occasion of great joy, especially when the new born was a boy. When the birth was announced, neighbors, friends and relatives gathered at the house for congratulations and rejoicing. In the case of a boy, he was circumcised and received his name on the eighth day. In the case of a girl, she could be named any time within thirty days. It was accepted practice in those days to name the son after the father or other relatives. Instead, this time, with everybody's surprise, the name given to Zechariah and Elizabeth's son was totally unrelated to the family. It was -as the angel had ordered in the Temple- John, which means "Yahweh's Gift." At that moment the punishment imposed to Zechariah did end, and he spoke again. Understandably, the people participating to the ceremony and living nearby were surprised by this fact which, anyway, they were sure was a demonstration of particular favor from Yahweh.

**Lk 1:57.** 'Gave birth to a son': As promised by Yahweh through the angel Gabriel.

**Lk 1:62.** 'They made signs': It appears that Zechariah was left not only mute, but also deaf.

**Lk 1:64.** 'Immediately his mouth opened': After he had demonstrated that he was following the will of Yahweh, giving his son the requested name.

### **Zechariah's song** [Luke 1:67-80]

(**Lk1:67**)His father Zechariah was filled with the Spirit of Yahweh and prophesied: (**68**)"Praise be to Yahweh, the God of Israel, because He has come and has redeemed His people. (**69**)He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David (**70**)(as He said through His holy prophets of long ago), (**71**)salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us (**72**)-to show mercy to our fathers and to remember His holy covenant, (**73**)the oath He swore to our father Abraham: (**74**)to rescue us from the hand of our enemies, and to enable us to serve Him without fear (**75**)in holiness and righteousness before Him all our days. (**76**)And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Messiah to prepare the way for him, (**77**)to give His people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, (**78**)because of the tender mercy of Yahweh our God, by which the raising sun will come to us from Heaven (**79**)to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace."

(**80**)And the child grew and became strong in spirit; and he lived in the desert until he appeared publicly to Israel.

**Lk 1:67.** 'Filled with the Spirit of Yahweh... prophesied': Prophecy did consist mainly in proclaiming Yahweh's words; only seldom in predicting future events. The prophets, because of the work of the Spirit of Yahweh on them, were able to express and proclaim Yahweh's word and will, that otherwise they could not have formulated on their own.

**Lk 1:68-79.** 'Praise be...': This hymn is called the Benedictus because the opening word in the Latin Vulgate translation is "Benedictus," which means "Praise be." It is structured like a prophecy in the Old Testament, using the same kind of figurative phraseology. Zechariah had a great vision for his son. He thought of him as the prophet and the messenger who would prepare the way of Yahweh's Messiah. The Jews were waiting



for the coming of the Messiah, Yahweh's anointed king. They believed that, before he came, a messenger would announce his coming and prepare his way. Many believed that Elijah would return to do so. Zechariah saw in his son the one who would prepare the way for the coming of Yahweh's king.

**Lk 1:68.** *'Redeem His people'*: Not limited to national security (Lk 1:71), but including moral and spiritual salvation (Lk 1:75,77).

**Lk 1:69.** *'Horn'*: A symbol of strength. *'In the house of David'*: Jesus, the Messiah from the house of David, has the power to save.

**Lk 1:70-73.** *'As he said...'*: As prophesied centuries earlier, and as promised to Abraham.

**Lk 1:74-75.** *'To rescue us'*: Bringing liberation from every oppression and bondage as well as deliverance from sin. *'To serve without fear...'*: Zechariah conceived the intervention of the Messiah as liberation from foreign domination. From this point of view, only a free Israel could have the possibility to follow properly Yahweh's will.

**Lk 1:76-77.** *'Called a prophet of the Most High'*: John will be a prophet, a person proclaiming the word and the will of Yahweh; whereas Jesus, the Messiah, will be called "the Son of the Most High." John will go around preparing the public mission of Jesus Christ, who will announce salvation through the forgiveness of sins.

**Lk 1:78.** *'The rising sun'*: Referred to the coming of the Messiah.

**Lk 1:79.** *'Those living in darkness'*: The lost, separated from Yahweh. *'Path of peace'*: Peace in Hebrew does not mean only freedom from war and trouble; it means all that make for a man's highest good.

**Lk 1:80.** *'He lived in the desert'*: John's parents, old at his birth, probably died when he was young, and he apparently grew up in the Desert of Judea, which lies between Jerusalem and the Dead Sea. *'Until he appeared publicly'*: John's preaching and announcing the coming of the Messiah marked his public appearance. He was about 30 years old when he began his ministry.

**Jesus is born**

**The birth of Jesus Christ** [Matthew 1:18-25 Luke 2:1-7] See page 374

**(Mt1:18)** *This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Spirit of Yahweh. (19) Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.*

**(20)** *But after he had considered this, an angel of Yahweh appeared to him in a dream, and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Spirit of Yahweh. (21) She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save His people from their sins."*

**(22)** *All this took place to fulfill what Yahweh had said through the prophet: (23) "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" -which means, "Yahweh with us."*

**(24)** *When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of Yahweh had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. (25a) But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son.*

**(Lk2:1)** *In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (2) (This was the first census that took place while Quirinus was governor of Syria.) (3) And everyone went to his own town to register.*

**(4)** *So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David. (5) He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. (6) While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, (7) and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. (Mt1:25b) And he gave him the name Jesus.*

**Mt 1:18-19.** *'Pledged to be married. Her husband':* Here Matthew uses the terms husband and wife of Joseph and Mary before they were legally living together as husband and wife, that is, before the end of their betrothal year. *'To be with child through the Spirit of Yahweh':* Matthew stresses the fact that the birth of Jesus is the work of Yahweh, of His Spirit. Both in Hebrew "ruach" and in Greek "pneuma" the word for "breath" and "spirit" is the same. The Spirit of Yahweh, described as His Breath in the Old Testament, is the Creator of the world, of the universe, and the Giver of life. *'Righteous':* To the Jews this meant being zealous in keeping the law. *'Divorce her quietly':* He would sign the necessary legal papers but not have her judged publicly and stoned.

**Mt 1:20.** *'In a dream':* This is the method Yahweh used for speaking to Joseph. *'Conceived from the Spirit of Yahweh':* The announcement of Jesus' special conception is given to Joseph, who will be his legal father.

**Mt 1:21.** *'Jesus':* This is the Greek form of the Jewish name Joshua, which means "Yahweh is Salvation." The child to be born will grow into the Savior who will save Yahweh's people from their sins; born not to be a king, but to be the Savior.

**Mt 1:22.** *'Fulfill':* Jesus is the fulfillment of the Old Testament prediction about the Messiah.

**Mt 1:23.** *'The virgin...':* This quotation is from Isaiah 7:14, the first of at least 47 quotations, most of them messianic, that Matthew takes from the Old Testament.

**Mt 1:24-25a.** *'Joseph... did what...'*: Joseph is a "righteous" man; he follows faithfully, now and later, all of Yahweh's instructions. *'He had no union... until...'*: After Jesus' birth, Joseph and Mary had sons and daughters, Jesus' half-brothers and sisters (A prophet without honor. Mk 6:1-6a; Mt 13:53-58).

**Lk 2:1.** *'In those days'*: Luke is the only Gospel writer who relates his narrative to dates of world history. *'Caesar Augustus'*: The first Roman Emperor (31 BC - AD 14). He did replace the Republic with an imperial form of government. He expanded the Empire to include the entire Mediterranean World, and established the famed "Pax Romana." *'Census'*: Used for military service and for taxation purposes. The Jews, however, were exempted from Roman military service. Yahweh uses the decree of a pagan emperor to fulfill the prophecy of Micah 5:2 about Bethlehem being the place of birth of a "ruler over Israel," Jesus Christ.

**Lk 2:2.** *'Quirinus'*: This census took place during the first term of this Roman officer, 6-4 BC. A second census took place during his second term, AD 6-9.

**Lk 2:3.** *'Own town'*: People had to go and register in the town of their ancestral origin.

**Lk 2:4.** *'Bethlehem'*: The town where David was born, was at 3 days of traveling from Nazareth. *'Judea'*: The Greek-Roman designation for the southern part of Palestine, earlier included in the Kingdom of Judah.

**Lk 2:5.** *'With Mary'*: Mary too was of the house of David and was required to enroll. In Syria, the Roman Province in which Palestine was located, women older than 12 years were required to pay poll tax and therefore to register.

**Lk 2:6-7.** *'Cloths'*: Strips of cloth were regularly used to wrap a newborn infant. *'Manger'*: For the feeding of the animals. This is the only indication that Jesus was born in a stable. Very early tradition suggests that it was a cave, used as a stable.

**Mt 1:25b.** *'Jesus'*: See comment on Mt 1:21.

### **The shepherds and the angels** [Luke 2:8-20]

**(Lk2:8)** *And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. (9)An angel of Yahweh appeared to them, and the glory of Yahweh shone around them, and they were terrified. (10)But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. (11)Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. (12)This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."*

**(13)** *Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising Yahweh and saying, (14)"Glory to Yahweh in the highest, and on Earth peace to men, on whom His favor rests."*

**(15)** *When the angels had left them and gone into Heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which Yahweh has told us about."*

**(16)** *So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. (17)When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, (18)and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. (19)But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. (20)The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising Yahweh for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.*

**Lk 2:8.** *'Shepherds'*: All through these readings we must notice the rough simplicity of

the birth of the Son of Yahweh. Even the first announcement of Yahweh came to some shepherds who, because of their work, were despised by the orthodox people of the day. By "living out in the fields" the shepherds were quite unable to keep the details, the meticulous hand-washing and the rules and regulations of the ceremonial law. It was to very simple men of the fields that Yahweh's message first came. These shepherds were most probably attending to the flocks reserved for Temple sacrifices, which were kept in the fields near Bethlehem throughout the year. *'Keeping watch'*: Against thieves and predatory animals.

**Lk 2:9-10.** *'An angel appeared... the glory of Yahweh shone'*: This angelic appearance has a particularity. The air around the angel (later many angels) and the shepherds was shining, to communicate happiness for the birth of the Son of Yahweh. *'They were terrified. Do not be afraid'*: Fear is an understandable reaction to angelic appearances, and some encouragement was needed.

**Lk 2:11.** *'Town of David'*: King David was born in Bethlehem. *'Savior'*: Many Jews were looking for a political leader to deliver them from Roman domination, while others were hoping for a Savior to deliver them from sickness and physical hardship. But the announcement concerns the Savior who will deliver men from sin and spiritual death. *'Christ the Lord'*: Christ is the Greek form for Messiah. Both mean "The Anointed One." The term "Lord" which was usually reserved for Yahweh, is now used also for Jesus, who is the Lord of all men.

**Lk 2:12.** *'As sign to you'*: The angel gives them enough information to find the place and the baby.

**Lk 2:13.** *'Great company of heavenly host'*: In Israel, when a boy was born, the local musicians congregated at the house to greet him with music. But Jesus was born in a stable in Bethlehem and, therefore, that ceremony could not be carried out. The angels came to sing for him and to gather people to greet his arrival on Earth.

**Lk 2:14.** *'Glory to Yahweh...'*: This brief hymn is called the "Gloria in Excelsis Deo" from the first words of the Latin Vulgate translation, meaning "Glory to Yahweh in the Highest." *'In the Highest'*: Referred to Heaven, where Yahweh dwells. *'Peace to men on whom His favor rests'*: Peace is assured to all, as it clearly results from the Greek text: "And on Earth peace, among men [His] goodwill." In that period, the Roman world was experiencing the "Pax Romana," marked by external tranquility. But the angels are proclaiming a deeper, more lasting peace than that - a peace of mind and soul made possible by the newly born Savior. The Davidic Messiah was called "Prince of Peace" by Isaiah, and Jesus Christ did promise peace to all men. But Jesus Christ also brought conflict, for peace with Yahweh involves opposition to Satan and his work.

**Lk 2:15-16.** *'The shepherds'*: As it was expected, they followed the instructions received and went to Bethlehem to see and greet the baby.

**Lk 2:17-18.** *'They spread the word'*: And they spoke of their exceptional experience with all the people they met, inviting everybody else to go and greet Jesus.

**Lk 2:19.** *'Treasured... pondered'*: Mary takes note of all these events which, without any doubt, give her plenty to think about the future role of her son.

**Lk 2:20.** *'Returned'*: To their flocks.

### ***Jesus presented in the Temple [Luke 2:21-40]***

**(Lk2:21)** *On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise him, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he had been conceived.*

(22)When the time of their purification according to the Law of Moses had been completed, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to Yahweh (23)(as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to Yahweh"), (24)and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: "A pair of doves or two young pigeons."

(25)Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Spirit of Yahweh was upon him. (26)It had been revealed to him by the Spirit of Yahweh that he would not die before he had seen Yahweh's Messiah. (27)Moved by the Spirit of Yahweh, he went into the Temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, (28)Simeon took him in his arms and praised Yahweh, saying: (29) "Sovereign Lord, as You have promised, You now dismiss Your servant in peace. (30) For my eyes have seen Your salvation, (31)which You have prepared in the sight of all people, (32)a Light for revelation to the Pagans and for glory to Your people Israel."

(33)The child's father and mother marveled at what was said about him. (34)Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, (35)so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too."

(36)There was also a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, (37)then she was a widow, and now she was eighty-four years old. She never left the Temple but worshipped night and day, fasting and praying. (38)Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to Yahweh and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

(39)When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth. (40)And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of Yahweh was upon him.

**Lk 2:21.** *'On the eighth day'*: Every Jewish boy was circumcised on the eighth day after his birth, and on that day the boy received his name.

**Lk 2:22-24.** *'Their purification'*: Following the birth of a son, the mother had to wait 40 days before going to the Temple to offer a sacrifice for her purification. If she could not afford a lamb and a pigeon (or dove), then two pigeons (or doves) would be acceptable. *'To Jerusalem'*: The distance from Bethlehem to Jerusalem was only about 5 miles (8 km). *'Present him to Yahweh'*: The firstborn of all men and animals were to be dedicated to Yahweh. The animals were sacrificed, but the human beings were to serve Yahweh throughout their lives. The Levites actually served in the place of all firstborn males in Israel.

**Lk 2:25-27.** *'The consolation of Israel'*: The comfort the Messiah would bring to his people at his coming. *'The Spirit of Yahweh was upon him'*: It was Yahweh's initiative, as for all the Old Testament prophets; not in the way common to all believers after the Christian Pentecost. *'Revealed to him... Moved by the Spirit of Yahweh'*: Simeon was given a special insight by Yahweh so he would recognize the "Messiah."

**Lk 2:28-29.** *'Simeon... praised Yahweh'*: This hymn of Simeon has been called the "Nunc Dimittis," from the Latin Vulgate translation, meaning "You now dismiss." He was now ready to depart in peace, having had the possibility to see the Messiah with his own eyes.

**Lk 2:30-32.** *'Salvation... all people'*: As a Pagan himself, Luke was careful to emphasize the truth that salvation was offered to the Pagans as well as to the Jews.

**Lk 2:33.** *'Child's father and mother'*: Joseph was Jesus' legal father. Joseph and Mary, even if aware of the real paternity of Jesus, are understandably marveled by this kind of facts.

**Lk 2:34.** *'Falling and rising of many in Israel'*: Jesus raises up those who believe in him, but is a stumbling block for those who disbelieve. *'Sign... spoken against'*: Jesus points to the Father and His forgiveness for sinners, but those who oppose him also oppose the Father.

**Lk 2:35.** *'A sword will pierce your own soul too'*: Mary, as well as Jesus, will have to suffer deep anguish; the first reference in this Gospel to Jesus' suffering and death.

**Lk 2:36-37.** *'A prophetess, Anna'*: We do not know anything about her except what these verses tell. *'Never left the Temple'*: Herod's Temple was quite large and included rooms for various uses, and Anna may have been allowed to live in one of them. The statement, however, probably means that she spent most of her time attending and worshipping in the Temple.

**Lk 2:38.** *'She gave thanks... and spoke'*: It is clear that Anna, as Simeon, was given a special insight by Yahweh enabling her to recognize the Messiah. *'Jerusalem'*: Here it stands for the whole nation of Israel.

**Lk 2:39.** *'They returned to Galilee... to Nazareth'*: To note that Luke does not mention the coming of the Magi, the danger from Herod, or the flight to and the return from Egypt, which appear in Matthew.

**Lk 2:40.** *'The child grew and became strong; filled with wisdom'*: Without any doubt Jesus' body was in particularly good shape and his mind particularly acute; anyway, both had to develop following the rules imposed by the human nature. Jesus had to grow and develop as any child. Only at a certain point of his physical and intellectual development he became aware of his special relation with Yahweh.

### ***The visit of the Magi*** [Matthew 2:1-12]

**(Mt2:1)** *After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem (2) and asked, "Where is the one who has been born King of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose in the east and have come to worship him."*

**(3)** *When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. (4) When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. (5) "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written:*

**(6)** *'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of My people Israel.'*

**(7)** *Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star has appeared. (8) He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and make a careful search for the Child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him."*

**(9)** *After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. (10) When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. (11) On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshipped*

him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gift of gold and of incense and of myrrh. (12) And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

**Mt 2:1.** *'Jesus was born in Bethlehem'*: Matthew says nothing of the events in Nazareth. Possibly wanting to emphasize that Jesus came from the tribe and territory that produced the line of Davidic Kings, he begins with the event that happened in David's city. It is clear that the Jews expected the Messiah to be born in Bethlehem and to be from David's family. In the history of Israel, and in the mind of the people, Bethlehem was uniquely the city of David. The little town of Bethlehem, which means "The House of Bread," stood high on a ridge more than 2500 feet (825 meters) high. The town had a long history. There Jacob had buried Rachel, and there Ruth had lived after marrying Boaz. There King David was born and there, from his lineage, Yahweh was to send the Messiah, the great deliverer of His people. *'King Herod'*: Herod the Great (37 - 4 BC) was a non-Jew, an Idumean, who was appointed king of Judea by the Roman Senate in 40 BC and gained control in 37. Like most rulers of the day, he was ruthless. He did murder his wife, 3 sons, mother-in-law, brother-in-law, uncle, and many others, not to mention the babies in Bethlehem. His reign was also noted for its splendor, as seen in the many theaters, amphitheaters, monuments, pagan altars, fortresses, and other buildings he erected or refurbished -including the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem, begun in 20 BC and finished 68 years later, after his death. *'Magi from the east'*: Traditionally, they were wise men, probably astrologers, skilled in philosophy, medicine, and natural science, perhaps from Persia or southern Arabia, both of which are east of Palestine. In those ancient days all men believed in astrology, that they could foretell the future from the stars, and that a man's destiny was settled by the star under which he was born. *'Came to Jerusalem'*: Since they were looking for the "King of the Jews," they naturally came to the Jewish capital.

**Mt 2:2.** *'King of the Jews'*: The Magi were Pagans who came to worship Jesus as Lord. *'His star'*: If some brilliant star appeared, breaking the apparently unvarying order of the stars in the sky, it did look as if Yahweh was breaking into His own order, announcing some special event. Probably this "star" was not an ordinary star, planet, or comet. We do not know what the Magi saw; anyway, it was a natural, even if exceptional phenomenon, used by Yahweh to attain His purposes. *'Come to worship'*: It seems very strange to us that some people could set out from the East and follow a "star" to find a king, but we have to understand that the mentality at the time was quite different than our present one.

**Mt 2:3.** *'Herod... was disturbed'*: He was afraid that this little child was going to interfere with his life, his power, his position as a king. *'All Jerusalem'*: All the people of his court and entourage were very fearful of his bad temper and ruthlessness.

**Mt 2:4.** *'Chief priests'*: Sadducees who were in charge of worship at the Temple in Jerusalem. *'Teachers of the law'*: The Jewish scholars of the day, professionally trained in the teaching and application of the Old Testament Law. Their authority was strictly human and traditional.

**Mt 2:5-6.** *'But you, Bethlehem...'*: This prophecy from Micah 5:2 had been given seven centuries earlier.

**Mt 2:7-8.** *'Then Herod...'*: He gave to the Magi the information requested, but asked them to report to him where exactly the child could be found, with the secret intention of murdering him.

**Mt 2:9-10.** *'The star... went ahead... stopped'*: It seems that the star disappeared from their view when they reached Jerusalem, to reappear only later and show them the way to follow till the actual place. *'Overjoyed'*: For the certainty of having reached their destination, when they realized that the star did not move any more.

**Mt 2:11.** *'The house'*: The Magi did not visit Jesus on the night of his birth, but some time later in the "house" in effect (see "The escape to Egypt" v. Mt 2:16) Herod ordered to kill all boys two years old or younger (not few days or months old or younger). *'Gold... incense... myrrh'*: The 3 gifts gave rise to the legend that there were 3 "wise men." But the Bible does not indicate the number of the Magi, and they were almost certainly not kings.

**Mt 2:12.** *'Warned in a dream'*: To note that, this time, the message of Yahweh is addressed to non-Jews.

### **The escape to Egypt** [Matthew 2:13-18]

**(Mt2:13)** *When they had gone, an angel of Yahweh 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."*

**(14)** *So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, (15) where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what Yahweh had said through the prophet: "Out of Egypt I called My Son."*

**(16)** *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 in his vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi. (17) Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled:*

**(18)** *"A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more."*

**Mt 2:13.** *'An angel appeared in a dream'*: In the ancient world there was no doubt that Yahweh did send His messages to men in dreams. *'Escape to Egypt'*: Joseph, Mary, and Jesus in their hour of peril did what for centuries other people of their country did. When peril, tyranny, or persecution made life intolerable for the Jews, they sought refuge in Egypt. The result was that every city in Egypt had its colony of Jews.

**Mt 2:14.** *'Left for Egypt'*: We do not know when this happened nor where they did settle.

**Mt 2:15.** *'Death of Herod'*: In 4 BC. *'Out of Egypt I called my Son'*: This quotation from Hosea 11:1 originally referred to Yahweh calling the nation of Israel out of Egypt at the time of Moses. But Matthew applies it also to Jesus. He sees the history of Israel (Yahweh's children) recapitulated in the life of Jesus (Yahweh's only Son). Quite often Matthew uses as a prophecy about Jesus any text which can be made verbally to fit, even when it had nothing to do with the question in hand. This is because Matthew knew that almost the only way to convince the Jews that Jesus was the promised Messiah, was to prove it through the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies.

**Mt 2:16.** *'When Herod realized...'*: As it was to be expected from such a ruthless and ferocious king, Herod took all the possible and necessary actions to be sure to have the boy who was going to be king killed. First, through the Magi, he did try to identify the boy himself. When this failed, he gave order to kill indiscriminately all the boys who could be that one.

**Mt 2:17-18.** *'A voice is heard...'*: Here Matthew quotes Jeremiah 31:15, who was picturing the people of Jerusalem being led away in exile.



**The return to Nazareth** [Matthew 2:19-23]

**(Mt2:19)** After Herod died, and angel of Yahweh appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt **(20)** and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who were trying to take the child's life are dead."

**(21)** So he got up, took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. **(22)** But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning in Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Having been warned in a dream, he withdrew to the district of Galilee, **(23)** and he went and lived in a town called Nazareth. So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets: "He will be called a Nazarene."

**Mt 2:19.** 'After Herod died': When he died, in 4 BC, the kingdom over which he had ruled was split up. The Romans had trusted Herod, and they had allowed him to reign over a very considerable territory, but they did not trust his children. So, as already organized by Herod himself, his kingdom was divided in 4 parts under Archelaus (son), Herod Antipas (son), Herod Philip II (son), and Lysanias (relation unknown).

**Mt 2:20-21.** 'Go to... Israel': Finally, it was possible for them to go back to their country, Israel.

**Mt 2:22.** 'Archelaus': This son of Herod the Great ruled over Judea and Samaria for 10 years (4 BC - AD 6). He was unusually cruel and tyrannical, and so was deposed. Judea then became a Roman Province, administered by prefects appointed by the emperor. 'Galilee': The northern part of Palestine in Jesus' days, were Herod Antipas, a much better king, reigned.

**Mt 2:23.** 'Nazareth': This town lay in the hills in the south of Galilee, quite close to the Mediterranean Sea. 'He will be called a Nazarene': These exact words do not appear in the Old Testament. Probably they refer to several prefigurations/predictions that the Messiah would be despised, for in Jesus' days "Nazarene" was virtually synonym of "despised."

**The boy Jesus at the Temple** [Luke 2:41-52]

**(Lk2:41)** Every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover. **(42)** When he was twelve years old, they went up to the Feast, according to the custom. **(43)** After the Feast was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it. **(44)** Thinking he was in their company, they traveled on for a day. Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends. **(45)** When they did not find him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for him. **(46)** After three days they found him in the Temple Court, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. **(47)** Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. **(48)** When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you."

**(49)** "Why were you searching for me?" he asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's House?" **(50)** But they did not understand what he was saying to them.

**(51)** Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart. **(52)** And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with Yahweh and men.

**Lk 2:41.** 'Feast of the Passover': By Law all adult Jew males, living within 15 miles (24 km) of Jerusalem, were commanded to attend every year at the Feast of Passover. Sure-

ly the distance prevented those living far away to attend, but most of the Jews tried very hard to be there, usually accompanied by their families.

**Lk 2:42.** *'12 years old'*: At age 12 a Jewish boy became man, taking his active place in the religious community.

**Lk 2:43-45.** *'After the Feast'*: Usually the women in a caravan started out much earlier than the men because they traveled more slowly. The men started later and traveled faster, and the two sections met only at the evening camp. It was Jesus' first Passover of full religious participation. No doubt Joseph thought he was with Mary, Mary thought he was with Joseph, and they discovered only at the evening camp that he was missing. So they decided to go back to Jerusalem and search for him.

**Lk 2:46-47.** *'Three days'*: One day traveling away from Jerusalem, a second traveling back, and a third looking for him. *'Sitting among the teachers'*: During the Passover season it was the custom of the Sanhedrin to meet in public in the Temple Court to discuss, in the presence of all who would listen, religious and theological questions. There was Jesus. *'Listening... and asking questions'*: This is the regular phrase for a student learning from his teacher. *'Amazed at his understanding'*: Jesus was surely more mature than the other boys of his age; anyway, we absolutely do not have to think of it as a scene where a precocious boy was dominating a crowd of his seniors.

**Lk 2:48.** *'His parents... astonished'*: After 12 years of normal family life, they were not prepared for his independence.

**Lk 2:49-51.** *'In my Father's House'*: Jesus pointed to his personal duty to his Father in Heaven. He contrasted his "my Father" with Mary's "your father." At 12 years of age he was aware of his unique relationship to Yahweh. But he was also obedient to his earthly parents who, anyway, did not understand the actual meaning of his phrase. *'Treasured in her heart'*: As for what happened during Jesus' circumcision.

**Lk 2:52.** *'And Jesus grew'*: Although Jesus was of divine descent, there is no indication that he had all knowledge and wisdom from birth. He seems to have matured like any other boy.

**Note:** Here we have seen Jesus 12 years old. Next we will see him as a man of thirty. What happened to him, what did he do during all those years, when he did grow up to adult manhood?

1) Jesus did fulfill the duties of the eldest son. It seems more likely that Joseph died before all the family members had grown up. In the story of the Wedding at Cana in Galilee there is no mention of Joseph, although Mary is there, and it is natural to suppose that Joseph had died. So Jesus became the village carpenter in Nazareth to support his mother and his younger brothers and sisters. First, he had to fulfill his duty to his family.

2) Jesus was learning what it was like to be a working man, to have to earn a living. If Jesus was to help men, he must first know what men's lives were like. He did not come into a protected cushioned life; he came into the life that any men must live. He had to do that, if he was to understand the life of ordinary people. Jesus worked in Nazareth for all the silent years in order to know what life was like and, understanding it, to be able to help.

**John the Baptist prepares the way and denies being the Christ**

*See page 374*

[Mk 1:2-8 Mt 3:1-12 Lk 3:1-20 Jn 1:6-9;15;19-28]

**(Lk3:1)** *In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar -when Pontius Pilate was*

governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and Tracoonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene- **(2)**during the High Priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the Word of Yahweh came to John son of Zechariah in the desert.

**(Jn1:6)**There came a man who was sent from Yahweh; his name was John. **(7)**He came as a witness to testify concerning that Light, so that through him all men might believe. **(8)**He himself was not the Light; he came only as a witness to the Light. **(9)**The true Light that gives light to every man who comes into the world. **(15)**John testifies concerning him. He cries out, saying, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me surpasses me because he had been before me.'"

**(Mk1:4)(Mt3:1)(Lk3:3)**John the Baptist came in those days. He went into all the country around the Jordan, baptizing in the desert region of Judea, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, **(Mt3:2)**and saying, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near."

**(Mk1:2-3)(Mt3:3)(Lk3:4)**This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah. As is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet: "I will send My messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way -a voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him. **(Lk3:5)**Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill made low. The crooked roads shall become straight, the rough ways smooth. **(6)**And all mankind will see Yahweh's salvation.'"

**(Mk1:6)(Mt3:4)**John clothes were made of camel's air, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey.

**(Mk1:5)(Mt3:5-6)**The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem and the whole region of the Jordan went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.

**(Mt3:7-9)(Lk3:7-8)**But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them and to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you that out of these stones Yahweh can raise up children for Abraham. **(Mt3:10)(Lk3:9)**The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire." **(Lk 3:10)**"What should we do then?" the crowd asked. **(11)**John answered, "The man with two tunics should share with him who has none, and the one who has food should do the same." **(12)**Tax collectors also came to be baptized. "Teacher," they asked, "what should we do?" **(13)**"Don't collect any more than you are required to," he told them. **(14)**Then some soldiers asked him, "And what should we do?" He replied, "Don't extort money and don't accuse people falsely -be content with your pay."

**(15)**The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Messiah.

**(Jn1:19)**Now this was John's testimony when the Jews of Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. **(20)**He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, "I am not the Messiah." **(21)**They asked him, "Then who are you? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" He answered, "No." **(22)**Finally they said, "Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" **(23)**John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, "I am the voice of one calling in the desert, 'Make straight the way for the Lord.'"

**(24)**Now some Pharisees who had been sent **(25)**questioned him, "Why then do you baptize if you are not the Messiah, not Elijah, nor the Prophet?"

**(Mk1:7-8)(Mt3:11)(Lk3:16)(Jn1:26-27)** John answered them all, "I baptize with water for repentance, but among you stands one who you do not know. After me will come one who is more powerful than I, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie, and whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Spirit of Yahweh and with fire. **(Mt3:12)(Lk3:17)** His winnowing fork is in his hands, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into his barn, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

**(Lk3:18)** And with many other words John exhorted the people and preached the Good News to them.

**(Jn1:28)** This all happened at Bethany on the other side of the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

**(Lk3:19)** But when John rebuked Herod the tetrarch because of Herodias, his brother's wife, and all the other evil things he had done, **(20)** Herod added this to them all: he locked John up in prison.

**Lk 3:1-2. Jn 1:6.** *'In the fifteenth year'*: At the time, historians frequently dated events by giving the year of the ruler's reign in which the event happened. The date that best fits the chronology of the life of Jesus is AD 25-26. *'Tiberius Caesar'*: The Roman Emperor. *'Pontius Pilate'*: The Roman prefect who ruled in Judea, Samaria, and Idumea after Archelaus was deposed by Rome. *'Herod tetrarch of Galilee'*: At the death of Herod the Great (4 BC) 3 of his sons (Archelaus, Herod Antipas, Herod Philip II) and Lysanias were given jurisdiction over the divided kingdom. Archelaus was tetrarch (ruler of a fourth part) of Judea, Samaria, and Idumea; Herod Antipas of Galilee and Perea; Herod Philip II of Iturea and Trachonitis; Lysanias of Abilene. (Nothing more is known of this Lysanias than his name has been found in certain inscriptions. Herod Philip II was another son than Herod Philip I, who never ruled and was the first husband of Herodias -whose second husband was Herod Antipas). *'The High Priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas'*: Annas was High Priest from AD 6 until he was deposed by the Roman officer Gratus in AD 15. He was followed by his son Eleazar, his son-in-law Caiaphas, and then 4 more sons. Even though Rome had replaced Annas, the Jews continued to recognize his authority; so Luke included his name as well as that of the Roman appointee, Caiaphas. *'The Word of Yahweh came to John. A man who was sent from Yahweh'*: Yahweh was the source of John's preaching and the authority of his baptizing. Yahweh's message came through John as for the Old Testament prophets. *'Desert'*: It refers to a desolated uninhabitable area, not necessarily a sandy, waterless place.

**Jn 1:7-9;15.** *'As a witness to testify'*: John the Baptist's ministry was to testify to Jesus. People did not have to believe "in" John, but through him. *'He was not the Light'*: Formal declaration that John Baptist is not the Christ, the expected Messiah. *'Light'*: Christ is the "Light of men," from him comes all spiritual illumination, against the "darkness" of sin. He is the Light of the world, the Light who enlightens every man born into the world. *'He who comes after me surpasses me...'*: John the Baptist began his public activity earlier than Jesus Christ but, being his forerunner, he will become less important -the purpose of his preaching and baptizing being over- after the beginning of Jesus' ministry (after Jesus was in front of -"before"- him to be baptized).

**Mk 1:4. Mt 3:1. Lk 3:3.** *'Desert of Judea'*: An area that stretched some 20 miles (32 km) from the Jerusalem-Bethlehem plateau down to the Jordan River and the Dead Sea, perhaps the same region where John the Baptist had lived until the beginning of his public mission. *'John... came. He went'*: Mark, as John, has no Nativity narrative, but be-

gins with the ministry of John the Baptist. *'Baptizing'*: John's practice of baptizing those who came to him in repentance was so characteristic of his ministry that he became known as "the Baptist" or "the Baptizer." *'The desert region'*: The arid region west of the Dead Sea. *'Repentance'*: It involves deliberate turning from sin to righteousness, and John's emphasis on repentance recalls the preaching of the prophets. Yahweh always grants forgiveness when there is repentance. *'Baptism of repentance'*: John was preaching repentance-baptism, that is, baptism that was preceded or accompanied by repentance. Baptism was not new to John's audience. The Jews new of baptism for Pagan converts (it symbolized their cleansing from the pollution of their past life), but had not heard that the descendants of Abraham -the Jews- needed to repent and be baptized. John's baptism presupposed repentance. He would not baptize those who failed to give any evidence of repentance. John's baptism represented the change of heart, that includes sorrow for sin and the determination to lead a holy life. The baptism was accompanied by "confession": to himself, to those whom he had wronged, and to Yahweh. *'Forgiveness of sins'*: Jesus Christ would deliver the repentant person from sin's penalty by dying on the cross.

**Mt 3:2.** *'Repent'*: To make a radical change in one's own life as a whole. *'Kingdom of Heaven'*: A phrase found only in Matthew, where it occurs 33 times. Mark and Luke refer to "the Kingdom of Yahweh," a term Matthew uses only 4 times. The Kingdom of Heaven is the rule of Yahweh and is both a present reality and a future hope. The idea of Yahweh's Kingdom is central to Jesus' teaching.

**Mk 1:2-3. Mt 3:3. Lk 3:4-5.** *'Isaiah the prophet'*: All the 4 Gospels quote Isaiah 40:3. Mark's first phrase comes from Malachi 3:1, followed by Isaiah 40:3. Luke quotes 2 additional verses, Isaiah 40:4-5, and applies them to John the Baptist. What Isaiah says about Yahweh applies to Jesus, His Son. The passage cited speaks of the messenger, the desert, and the Lord. Each of these is further stressed in the following verses. "Prepare the way for the Lord" and "Make straight paths for him" are equivalent. The language of these verses has in view the ancient custom of sending representatives ahead to announce and prepare the way for the visit of a monarch. Before a king made a journey to a distant country, the roads he would travel were improved. Similarly, the preparation for the Messiah was made in a moral and spiritual way by the ministry of John, which focused on repentance and forgiveness of sin and the need for a Savior.

**Lk 3:6.** *'All mankind'*: Yahweh's salvation was to be made known to both Jews and Pagans -a major theme of Luke's Gospel.

**Mk 1:6. Mt 3:4.** *'Camel's air... leather belt'*: Worn by Elijah and other prophets. *'Locust and wild honey'*: A man living in the desert did not hesitate to eat insects, and locusts were among the clean food. John's simple food, clothing, and life-style were a visual protest against self-indulgence.

**Mk 1:5. Mt 3:5-6.** *'The whole... all the people'*: This obvious hyperbole indicates the high interest created by John's preaching. For 4 centuries Israel had no prophets, and now one was coming. *'Jordan River'*: The main river in Palestine, it begins in the snows of Mount Hermon and ends in the Dead Sea. Its closest point to Jerusalem is about 20 miles (32 km).

**Mt 3:7-9. Lk 3:7-8.** *'Pharisees and Sadducees'*: The Pharisees were a legalistic and separatist group who strictly, but often hypocritically, kept the Law of Moses and the unwritten "traditions of the elders." The Sadducees were more worldly and politically minded, and were theologically unorthodox -among other things denying resurrection, angels, and spirits. *'You brood of vipers'*: John had lived in the desert, and from the de-

sert he takes his phraseology and examples. Here we have the message of John to the people. Nowhere the difference between John and Jesus stands out so clearly because, whatever the message of John was, it was not a gospel. It was not good news, but news of terror; and only the promise of the incoming Messiah did make it bearable. *'The coming wrath'*: A reference to both the destruction of Jerusalem -which actually occurred in AD 70- and the final judgment. *'Produce fruit in keeping with repentance'*: Repentance is the only, but inexorable, condition of Yahweh's forgiveness and restoration of His favor. The Jews held that repentance brings a real change in life. *'We have Abraham as our father'*: Salvation does not come as a birthright (not even for the Jews) but through faith in Yahweh. To the Jews Abraham was unique. So unique he had been in his goodness and in his favor with Yahweh, that his merits were considered sufficient not only for himself, but for all his descendants also. Even for the weakest of the Jews. *'Out of these stones...'*: Symbolic for "The true children of Abraham are not the Jews as Jews, but all men (including the Pagans), to whom Yahweh's benevolence goes."

**Mt 3:10. Lk 3:9.** *'The ax is already at the root of the trees'*: A symbolic way of saying that judgment is near for those who give no evidence of repentance. *'Fire'*: A symbol of judgment and punishment.

**Lk 3:10-14.** *'The crowd asked. John answered'*: There are 3 outstanding things about John's message. 1)It began by demanding that men should share with one another. Yahweh will never absolve a man who is content to have too much while others have too little. 2)It ordered a man, not to leave his job, but to work out his salvation by doing that job as it should be done. Let the tax collector to be a good tax collector, let the soldier be a good soldier. It is a man's duty to serve Yahweh where Yahweh has set him. And it was John's conviction that nowhere can a man serve Yahweh better than in his day's work. 3)John was quite sure that he himself was only the forerunner. So he painted a picture of judgment, but it was a judgment which a man could meet with confidence if he had discharged his duty to his neighbor and if he had dutifully done his day's work. *'Two tunics'*: A tunic was something like a long under-shirt. Since two such garments were not needed, the second should be given to a person in need. *'Tax collectors'*: Taxes were collected for the Roman government by Jewish agents, who were especially detested for helping the pagan conqueror and for frequently defrauding their own people. *'Soldiers'*: Limited military forces were allowed for certain Jewish leaders and institutions as those of Herod Antipas, the police guard of the Temple, and escorts for tax collectors. The professions of tax collectors and soldiers as such were not condemned, but the common unethical practices associated with them were.

**Lk 3:15. Jn 1:19-20.** *'The people were waiting... and wondering...'*: The preaching and baptizing of John the Baptist was attracting plenty of people. These people were giving to John a position far higher than he himself had claimed; they were saying that he was the Messiah. John had to contrast this wrong view. *'The Jews'*: This phrase occurs about 70 times in John's Gospel. Sometimes it is used in a favorable sense, sometimes in a neutral one. But most often John uses it for the Jew leaders who were hostile to Jesus. Here it refers to their delegation sent by the Sanhedrin to look into the activities of an unauthorized teacher (John, son of Zechariah the priest, in the eyes of the religious authorities, was in fact a priest and it was very natural that the priests should come to find out why he was behaving in such an unusual way). *'Levites'*: Descendants of the tribe of Levi, who were assigned to specific duties in connection to the Tabernacle and the Temple. They also had teaching responsibilities, and it was probably in this role that

they were sent with the priests to John the Baptist. *'I am not'*: It is used in an emphatic way; there is an implied contrast with Jesus, who is always given the higher place. John always stresses his actual function of Messiah's forerunner, to be sure nobody can have any doubt about it.

**Jn 1:21.** *'Are you Elijah?... I am not'*: The Jews believed that Elijah had not died and that the same prophet would come back to Earth to announce the end of time. In this sense, John properly denied that he was Elijah. When Jesus later said that John the Baptist was Elijah (Jesus and John the Baptist. Mt 11:14; The Transfiguration. Mk 19:11-13; Mt 17:10-13), he meant it in the sense that John was the fulfillment of the prophecy of Malachi (Mal 4:5; The birth of John the Baptist foretold. Lk 1:17), not Elijah himself. *'The Prophet'*: The Prophet of Deuteronomy 18:15-18. The Jewish people expected a variety of persons to be associated with the coming of the Messiah and, between those, a very powerful "Prophet." John the Baptist emphatically denies being that "Prophet."

**Jn 1:22-23.** *'Who are you?'*: John had come to testify about Jesus, yet they kept asking him about himself. His answers became progressively more terse. The Baptist applied the prophecy of Isaiah 40:3 to his own ministry of calling people to repent in preparation for the coming of the Messiah. John the Baptist concentrated on helping people come to the Messiah.

**Jn 1:24-25.** *'The Messiah'*: Means "The Anointed One." In the Old Testament times anointing signified being set apart for service, particularly as king or priest. But people were looking for not just "an" anointed, but for "The Anointed One," the Messiah.

**Mk 1:7-8. Mt 3:11. Lk 3:16. Jn 1:26-27.** *'John answered...'*: He told men that his baptism soaked them with water, but that one was coming who will saturate them with the Spirit of Yahweh; and while water could cleanse a man's body, the Spirit of Yahweh could cleanse his soul. *'With water for repentance'*: John the Baptist presupposed repentance, and he would not baptize the Pharisees and Sadducees because they failed to give any evidence of repentance. *'With the Spirit of Yahweh'*: All through their history the Jews had looked for the time when Yahweh would come, expectation that was fulfilled in a dramatic way at Pentecost. *'And with fire'*: Here fire is a symbol of divine presence, as at the descent of the Spirit of Yahweh by tongues of fire at Pentecost. *'Whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie, and whose sandals I am not fit to carry'*: A menial task, fit for a slave. It was a rabbinic saying that disciples would perform all sorts of service for their rabbis (teachers), but that loosing sandals thongs was expressly excluded. So, John said: "One is coming whose slave I am not fit to be."

**Mt 3:12. Lk 3:17.** *'His winnowing fork'*: Here it is figurative for the day of judgment at Jesus Christ's second coming -the Old Testament prophets and the New Testament writers sometimes compress the first and the second comings of Jesus Christ so that they seem to be one event only. *'His wheat. The chaff'*: The wheat represents the righteous, the chaff the unrepentant. Many Jews thought that only Pagans would be judged and punished when the Messiah came, but John declared that judgment would come to all who did not repent, including the Jews.

**Lk 3:18.** *'Exhorted'*: Always in his distinctive way, scolding people and menacing them of eternal punishment. How different Jesus' message is!

**Jn 1:28.** *'Bethany'*: 2 different Bethany are mentioned in the Gospels. The site of this one is not known, except that it was located on the east side of the Jordan.

**Lk 3:19.** *'Rebuked Herod... because of Herodias'*: Herod Antipas had married the daughter of Aretas IV of Arabia, but divorced her to marry his own niece, Herodias, who was already his brother's (Herod Philip I) wife.

**Lk 3:20.** *'Locked John in prison':* According to Josephus, John was imprisoned in Machaerus, east of the Dead Sea. This did not occur until sometimes after the beginning of Jesus' ministry, but Luke mention it here in order to conclude his section on John's ministry before beginning his account of the beginning of Jesus' ministry. He later briefly alludes to John's death (John the Baptist beheaded. Mk 6:14-29; Mt 14:1-12; Lk 9:7-9).



***Jesus is baptized***

***The baptism of Jesus*** [Mark 1:9-11 Matthew 3:13-17 Luke 3:21-22] See page 376  
 (Mk1:9-11)(Mt3:13-17)(Lk3:21-22) Then, at that time, when all the people were being baptized, Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?"

Jesus replied, "**Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.**" Then John consented and Jesus too was baptized by John in the Jordan.

As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water, and he was praying. At that moment Heaven was torn opened, and he saw the Spirit of Yahweh descending on him in bodily form like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice came from Heaven and said, "**You are My Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.**"

**Mk 1:9-11. Mt 3:13-17. Lk 3:21-22.** 'At that time': Jesus probably began his public ministry in the summer of AD 26, when he was approximately (probably slightly more than) 30 years old. As far as we know, he had spent most of his previous life in Nazareth. 'Jesus came...': When Jesus came to be baptized, John was startled and unwilling to baptize him. It was John's conviction that it was him who needed what Jesus could give, not the contrary. From this point of view, the baptism of Jesus seems difficult to understand. In John's baptism there was a call to repentance, and the offer of a way for the forgiveness of sins. But Jesus, the Son of Yahweh, did not need to repent, and did not need forgiveness from Yahweh. John's baptism was for sinners conscious of their sins, and therefore it does not seem to apply to Jesus at all. But, actually, this was an opportunity for Jesus to identify himself, in his baptism, with the men he came to save, in the moment they were realizing that everybody, both the Pagans and the Jews, needed to be reconciled to Yahweh. Furthermore, this occasion marks the beginning of Jesus' Messianic ministry. 'To fulfill all righteousness': Jesus' baptism had to indicate that he was consecrated by Yahweh and officially approved by Him, as it was especially shown by the descent of the Spirit and the words of Yahweh. All Yahweh's requirements for the Messiah were fully met in Jesus. 'And he was praying': Only Luke notes Jesus praying at the time of his baptism. Jesus in prayer is one of the special themes of Luke. 'Heaven... open': Symbolic. Because of the direct communication from Yahweh (in Heaven) to Jesus (a physical man on Earth), it had to be Heaven to "open" and enter in some way in communication with the physical realm of Earth. 'The Spirit of Yahweh descending on him': This is Jesus' official anointing for his ministry, a consecration he will claim in the synagogue of Nazareth (Jesus rejected at Nazareth. Lk 4:15-30). The Spirit of Yahweh came upon Jesus to equip him for his work as the divine-human Messiah. At that time the Spirit of Yahweh descended on him "like a dove," and Luke specifies "in bodily form." There is a certain symbolism here. The dove is the symbol of peace, of gentleness. The message of John was one of the axe laid to the root of the tree, of terrible sifting, of consuming fire. It was a message of doom and not of good news. Jesus Christ will conquer, but his conquest will be a peaceful conquest. 'Lighting on him': The Spirit of Yahweh made Itself in some way visible and came down "flying" as a dove would have done. Anyway, it is clear that it had even some other characteristics, as emitting a kind of light on Jesus. 'A voice came from Heaven': Two other times the Gospels record the declarations of a voice coming from Heaven and addressing Jesus: on the Mount of Transfiguration (The Transfiguration. Mk 9:2-13; Mt 17:1-13; Lk 9:28-36)

and in the Temple during Jesus' final week (Jesus predicts his death. Jn 12:20-36). 'You are My Son, whom I love': Here Yahweh Himself proclaims Jesus as His own Son. In the moment of his baptism, Yahweh spoke personally and directly to him. Surely, not only the few words recorded by the Gospels, but much more. The voice of Yahweh came to him and told him about his position and his mission. Actually, the initial part of it is a quotation from Psalm 2:7. Every Jew accepted that Psalm as a description of the Messiah, the mighty king of Yahweh who was to come. 'With you I am well pleased': This is a quotation from Isaiah 42:1, which is followed by a description of the Suffering Servant of the Lord. So in his baptism there came to Jesus two certainties, that he was indeed the Chosen One of Yahweh and that the way in front of him was the way of the Cross.

**The genealogy of Jesus** [Matthew 1:1-17]

*(Mt1:1) A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the Son of David, the Son of Abraham: (2) Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, (3) Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar, Perez the father of Hezron, Hezron the father of Ram, (4) Ram the father of Amminadab, Amminadab the father of Nahshon, Nahshon the father of Salmon, (5) Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab, Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth, Obed the father of Jesse, (6) and Jesse the father of King David. David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife, (7) Solomon the father of Rehoboam, Rehoboam the father of Abijah, Abijah the father of Asa, (8) Asa the father of Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat the father of Jehoram, Jehoram the father of Uzziah, (9) Uzziah the father of Jotham, Jotham the father of Ahaz, Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, (10) Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, Manasseh the father of Amon, Amon the father of Josiah, (11) and Josiah the father of Jeconiah and his brothers at the time of the exile to Babylon. (12) After the exile to Babylon: Jeconiah was the father of Shealtiel, Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, (13) Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, Abiud the father of Eliakim, Eliakim the father of Azor, (14) Azor the father of Zadok, Zadok the father of Akim, Akim the father of Eliud, (15) Eliud the father of Eleazar, Eleazar the father of Matthan, Matthan the father of Jacob, (16) and Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.*

*(17) Thus there were fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Christ.*

**The genealogy of Jesus** [Luke 3:23-38]

*(Lk3:23) Now Jesus himself was about thirty years old when he began his ministry. He was the son, so it was thought, of Joseph, the son of Heli, (24) the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Melki, the son of Jannai, the son of Joseph, (25) the son of Mattathias, the son of Amos, the son of Nahum, the son of Hesli, the son of Naggai, (26) the son of Maath, the son of Mattathias, the son of Semein, the son of Josech, the son of Joda, (27) the son of Joanan, the son of Rhesa, the son of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, the son of Neri, (28) the son of Melki, the son of Addi, the son of Cosam, the son of Elmamad, the son of Er, (29) the son of Josua, the son of Eliezer, the son of Jorim, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, (30) the son of Simeon, the son of Judah, the son of Joseph, the son of Jonam, the son of Eliakim, (31) the son of Melea, the son of Menna, the son of Mattatha, the son of Natham, the son of David, (32) the son of Jesse, the son of Obed, the son of Boaz, the son of Salmon, the son of Nahshom, (33) the son of Amminadab, the son of Ram, the son of Hezron, the son of Perez, the son of Judah, (34) the son of Jacob,*

*the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham, the son of Terah, the son of Nahor, (35)the son of Serug, the son of Reu, the son of Peleg, the son of Eber, the son of Shelah, (36)the son of Cainan, the son of Arphaxad, the son of Shem, the son of Noah, the son of Lamech, (37)the son of Methuselah, the son of Enoch, the son of Jared, the son of Mahalel, the son of Kenan, (38)the son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of Yahweh.*

**Mt 1:1-17. Lk 3:23-38.** The Jews were exceedingly interested in genealogies, because they were very particular with the purity of lineage. If in any man there was even a small apportion of foreign blood -through male lineage- he did lose the right to be called a Jew, a member of the people of Yahweh. This was absolutely binding for the priests, who were to descend from Aaron only.

A surprising characteristic of Matthew's genealogy is the fact that it includes names of women. This was absolutely not normal. In Israel, women had no legal rights, they were the possession of their fathers or husbands. Even more amazing is who these women were: Rahab was a prostitute of Jericho (Joshua 2:1-7). Ruth was not even a Jew, but a Moabite, an alien and hated people (Deuteronomy 23:3). Tamar was a deliberate seducer and an adulteress (Genesis 38). Bathsheba, the mother of Solomon, was a sinner, the woman seduced by David from Uriah, her husband. Matthew shows here many barriers going down: between Jews and Pagans, between male and female, between saint and sinner. Somehow Yahweh can use for His purposes, and fit into His scheme of things, even those who have sinned greatly. In effect, Jesus "came not to call the righteous, but the sinners."

There are several differences between Luke's genealogy and Matthew's. Matthew begins with Abraham (the father of the Jewish people), while Luke traces the line in reverse order and goes back to Adam, showing Jesus' relationship to the whole human race. From Abraham to David, the 2 genealogies are almost the same, but from David on they are different. Perhaps this is because Matthew traces the legal descent of the house of David using only heirs to the throne, giving the royal descent of Jesus, while Luke traces the complete line of Joseph to David. More likely, however, is that Matthew follows the line of Joseph (Jesus' legal father), while Luke emphasizes that of Mary (Jesus' blood relative). Although tracing a genealogy through the mother's side was unusual, so was the virgin conception. Luke's explanation here that Jesus was thought to be the son of Joseph, brings to mind his explicit virgin conception statement (The birth of Jesus foretold. Lk 1:26-38) and suggests the importance of the role of Mary in Jesus' genealogy. Anyway, there are two things to be noted about the genealogy given by Luke: 1) It stresses the real humanity of Jesus, the fact that he was a man among men. He was no phantom or semi-god. Jesus was a true man. 2) Matthew stops at Abraham; Luke goes right back to Adam. To Matthew, Jesus was a Jew, to Luke he is a man, part of mankind. Luke removes all national and racial boundaries even from the ancestry of Jesus.

**Mt 1:1.** *'The Son of David'*, a messianic title, and *'The Son of Abraham'*: Because Matthew was writing mainly for the Jews, it was important to identify Jesus in these ways.

**Mt 1:16.** *'Joseph, the husband of Mary'*: Matthew does not say that Joseph was the father of Jesus, but only that he was the husband of Mary and that Jesus was born of her. In this genealogy Matthew shows that, although Jesus is not the physical son of Joseph, he is his legal son and therefore a descendant of David.

**Mt 1:17.** *'Fourteen generations... fourteen... fourteen'*: Matthew's genealogy is arranged most carefully, in 3 groups of 14 people each, and is meant to prove that Jesus descen-

ded from David, to fulfill the prophecy about the Messiah being son of David. The division in 3 groups reflects his concern for systematic arrangement. The number 14 may have been chosen because it is twice 7 (the number of completeness) and/or because it is the numerical value of the name David. Anyway, it was common practice to write "telescoping" genealogies to achieve the desired number of names. It is well understood that, actually, there were many more generations than those reported by Matthew.

**Lk 3:23.** *'About thirty years old'*: Thirty was the age when a Levite undertook service (Numbers 4:47) and when a man was considered mature. *'So it was thought'*: Luke had already affirmed the virgin conception (The birth of Jesus foretold. Lk 1:26-38), and here makes clear again that Joseph was not Jesus' physical father.

**The temptations of Jesus** [Mark 1:12-13 Matthew 4:1-11 Luke 4:1-13] See page 377

**(Mk1:12-13a)(Mt4:1-2)(Lk4:1-2)** Then Jesus, full of the Spirit of Yahweh, returned from the Jordan and at once was led by the Spirit of Yahweh in the desert, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them, after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.

**(Mt4:3)(Lk4:3)** The tempter, the devil, came to him and said, "If you are the Son of Yahweh, tell these stones to become bread."

**(Mt4:4)(Lk4:4)** Jesus answered, "**It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of Yahweh.'**"

**(Mt4:5-6)(Lk4:9-11)** Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, the Holy City, and had him stand on the highest point of the Temple. "If you are the Son of Yahweh," he said, "throw yourself down from here. For it is written: 'He will command His angels concerning you to guard you carefully; and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'"

**(Mt4:7)(Lk4:12)** Jesus answered him, "**It is also written: 'Do not put Yahweh your Lord to the test.'**"

**(Mt4:8)(Lk4:5)** Again, the devil took him to a high place, a very high mountain, and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. **(Mt4:9)(Lk 4:6-7)** And he said to him, "All this I will give you, if you will bow down and worship me. I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. So if you worship me, it will all be yours."

**(Mt4:10)(Lk4:8)** Jesus answered him, "**Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship Yahweh your Lord, and serve Him only.'**"

**(Mk1:13b)(Mt4:11)(Lk4:13)** When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time. Then he was with the wild animals, and angels came and attended him.

Before to begin the study of the temptations of Jesus, we have to analyze the meaning of the word "temptation." In English this word has a uniform and consistently bad meaning; to push a man to do wrong, to seduce him into sin, to persuade him to take the wrong way. The Greek word used here is "peirazein," which has quite a different meaning. It means to "test" far more than to "tempt." Many times what we call temptation is not meant to make us sin, but to make us good. Not to weaken us, but to make us emerge stronger and finer from the test. So the whole episode is not so much the "tempting," but the "testing" of Jesus.

We have already seen certain great milestones in the life of Jesus. In the Temple when he was 12, he realized that Yahweh was his Father in an unique way. At his baptism by

John came Yahweh's personal and official approval. At this time Jesus is near to begin his public ministry. The temptation story shows Jesus rejecting the way of power and glory and accepting the way of complete obedience to Yahweh. We have to notice two points on Jesus' temptation: 1) What we know has to come straight from him; and he must have told his disciples about this experience. 2) Even at this time Jesus must have been conscious of having quite exceptional powers. The whole point of Jesus' temptations is that they could have come only to a man who could do astonishing things, whose powers were unique, and who had to decide how to use them. We must not think that the three temptations came and went quickly, as isolated events. We must rather think of Jesus deliberately retiring in the wilderness of the desert and wrestling for a number of days with the problem of how he could convince people to follow him. It was a long battle -which actually ended only at the moment of his death on the cross. In effect, in this particular case, the devil "left him until an opportune time."

The significance of Jesus' temptations, especially because they occurred at the beginning of his public ministry, has to be understood in terms of his choosing and deciding which kind of Messiah he wanted to be. Jesus was Yahweh's Messiah, and he knew it, but he had to decide -on his own- which methods to follow. Satan was trying to push him to wrongly use his powers, in this way jeopardizing his mission. Jesus' temptation was real, not merely symbolic. Even if he had no inward desire or inclination to sin, he was tempted in every way, just as we are. He was confronted by the tempter with a real opportunity to sin. And, although Jesus was the Son of Yahweh, he defeated Satan by using a weapon that everyone has at his disposal: the Word of Yahweh. He met all three temptations with Scriptural truth from Deuteronomy. He would not accomplice his mission by using his supernatural powers for his own needs (changing stones into bread), or to win a large following by miracles or magic (flying down the Temple pinnacle), or by compromising with the world (bowing down and worshipping Satan).

**Mk 1:12-13. Mt 4:1-2. Lk 4:1-2.** *'Full of the Spirit of Yahweh'*: Jesus, who was coming back from his baptism, was in full spiritual communion with his Father. Luke always emphasizes the work of the Spirit of Yahweh, not only in the Gospel, but also in Acts, where the Spirit of Yahweh is mentioned 57 times. *'At once'*: A distinctive characteristic of Mark's style is his use (some 47 times) of a Greek word that has been variously translated "at once," "immediately," "quickly," "just then." *'Was led by the Spirit'*: This testing of Jesus, which was decided by Yahweh his Father, has as its primary background Deuteronomy 8:1-5, from which Jesus also quotes his first reply to the devil. There Moses reminds the Israelites that Yahweh led them in the desert for 40 years "to humble you and test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep His commands." *'Tempted by the devil'*: Yahweh surely tests His people, but it is the devil who surely tempts them to do evil. *'Forty days. Forty days and forty nights'*: It is a phrase which is not to be taken literally. It is the regular Hebrew phrase for "a considerable time." The number recalls the experiences of Moses (Exodus 24:18;34:28) and Elijah (1 Kings 19:8), as well as the forty years of Israel's testing in the desert. *'In the desert'*: The desert of Judea. *'For forty days he was tempted'*: Luke states that Jesus was tempted for the 40 days he was fasting, and in his narrative the three specific temptations recounted in Matthew and Luke seem to have occurred at the close of this period, when Jesus' hunger was greater and his resistance lowest. The sequence of the second and third temptations differs in Matthew and Luke. Matthew probably followed the chronological order, since at the end of the temptation on the mountain (Matthew's third) Jesus told Satan to leave. To emphasize a certain point the Gospel writers often

bring various events together, not intending to give a chronological sequence. Perhaps Luke's focus here is geographical, as he concludes with Jesus in Jerusalem.

**Mt 4:3-4. Lk 4:3-4.** First temptation. *'If you are the Son of Yahweh'*: Meaning "Since you are the Son of Yahweh." The devil is not putting in doubt Jesus' divine sonship, but is tempting him to use his supernatural powers as the Son of Yahweh for his own ends. *'Tell these stones to become bread'*: The devil always makes his temptations to seem attractive; and the limestones of the desert of Judea -which is not a desert of sand- looked as little loaves. The tempter actually says to Jesus: "If you want people to follow you, use your wonderful powers to give them material things." *'It is written'*: Jesus answered with Scripture, as he will do on each of the three occasions, quoting from Deuteronomy. *'Man does not live...'*: Jesus' answer comes from Deuteronomy 8:3, "A man will never find life in material things." Here, at the beginning of his ministry, Jesus is subjected to a test and shows himself to be the true Israelite who lives "on every word that comes from the mouth of Yahweh" (Deuteronomy 8:3). If Jesus had wished to give men bread, he could have done it, without any problem. Jesus was faithful to Yahweh and thus demonstrated his qualification to become the Savior of the human race. It was, moreover, important that Jesus would be tested/tempted as all men are, so he could become their representative and able to help those who are being tempted. Just as Yahweh gave the Israelites manna in a supernatural way (Deuteronomy 8:3), so also men must rely on Yahweh for spiritual feeding. Jesus relied on his Father, not on his own powers, for provision of food. This was a double temptation: 1) To use his powers selfishly and for his own use, and that is precisely what Jesus refused to do. 2) To use his powers to buy people giving them material things. This would have been a mistake. It would have been to bribe men to follow him, when he was calling men to a life of giving, not of getting.

**Mt 4:5-7. Lk 4:9-12.** Second temptation. *'Holy City'*: Jerusalem. *'The highest point of the Temple'*: The Temple, including the entire Temple area, had been rebuilt by Herod the Great. The courtyard had been greatly enlarged, to about 330 by 500 yards (300 by 460 meters). To accomplish this a huge platform had been erected to compensate for the sharp falling off of the land to the southeast. An enormous retaining wall made of massive stones was built to support the platform. On the platform stood the Temple building, the porches and the courtyards flanked by colonnades. *'Throw yourself down'*: Satan was tempting Jesus to test Yahweh's faithfulness and to attract public attention dramatically, to make something exceptional and become a celebrity. Under the pinnacle of the Temple there was a drop of 450 feet (140 meters) down into the Kidron Valley below. This was the temptation to give people sensations. *'For it is written, "He will command His angels..."'*: This time Satan also quotes Scripture, though he misused Psalm 91:11-12. *'Do not put Yahweh your Lord to the test'*: Jesus' answer comes again from Deuteronomy (6:16), "No, you must not make senseless experiment with the power of Yahweh." Yahweh's rescuing power is not something with which to play and experiment. It is something to be quietly trusted in the life of every day. Jesus saw quite clearly that if he produced sensations he could be an immediate, but temporary, wonder. Sensationalism never lasts. Who seeks to attract men to himself by providing them with sensations has adopted a way without future. To retain his followers he must produce ever greater and greater sensations.

**Mt 4:8-10. Lk 4:5-8.** Third temptation. *'High place. Very high mountain'*: Possibly one of the abrupt cliffs near Jericho that present an unsurpassed view. *'All the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. All their authority'*: Of course, there is no mountain from which all the kingdoms of the Earth could be seen, but surely Satan was making appro-

priate use of his powers, making actually possible this overall view; inclusive of what can't surely be seen from a mountain, "their authority and splendor." It was the world that Jesus came to save, and he saw the whole world in one picture. *'All this I will give you if you bow down and worship me. I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. It will all be yours':* Here it is essential to remember that the very essence of our religion, and of the reality of the life, sacrifice, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ are a direct consequence of the rebellion of the cherub Lucifer and of his further activity. Satan was created by Yahweh as the Cherub Lucifer who, in our part of the universe (let say, the Solar System) was second only to Yahweh Himself. During the creation of the solar system, Lucifer was given by Yahweh, as His main collaborator, the responsibility for the practical implementation of the creation and for the evolution of the first stages of it. The consequence of this responsibility is that, in biblical language, the solar system was "given" to him from the beginning, and that, consequently, he had, and has, power over it. After the rebellion, Lucifer did not lose the powers he had, did not lose his authority over the solar system. And, as at the time of his rebellion, he wants to be worshipped, to be at the same level of his Creator. Without his rebellion, there would not have been any necessity for Jesus Christ to sacrifice himself on the Cross for the redemption of the human race which, in this case, would not have had any necessity to be redeemed. *'Bow down and worship me':* Satan doesn't want to be worshipped in secret, but openly, for everyone to see. The devil was tempting Jesus to avoid the suffering of the Cross, which he came specifically to endure. The temptation offered an easy short-cut to world domination, to acquire terrestrial power by worshipping the devil. This is the temptation to compromise, to try to win men by compromising with the standards of the world. The devil said, "I have got people in my grip. Do not set your standard so high. Strike a bargain with me, just compromise a little bit, and people will follow you." Jesus' answer came, for the third time, from Deuteronomy (6:13); men have to worship only Yahweh: "Yahweh is Yahweh, right is right, and wrong is wrong." There can be no compromise in the war against evil. *'Away from me, Satan!':* After taking his final decision, Jesus did chase away Satan. He had decided that he must never bribe men into following him; that the way of sensations was not for him; that he could not compromise in the message he preached and in the faith he demanded. That choice inevitably meant the Cross -but the Cross inevitably meant the final victory. True Christianity cannot bend down to the level of the world; it must lift the world to its own level. Nothing less will do.

**Mk 1:13. Mt 4:11. Lk 4:13.** *'He left him until an opportune time':* Satan continued his testing throughout Jesus' ministry, culminating in the supreme test at Gethsemane. *'Wild animals':* In Jesus' days there were many wild animals in Palestine, including lions. Only Mark reports their presence in this connection; he emphasizes that Yahweh kept Jesus safe in the desert. *'Angels came and attended him':* As they had attended Israel during the 40 years in the desert.

### ***Jesus the Lamb of Yahweh [John 1:29-34]***

**(Jn1:29)** *The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of Yahweh, who takes away the sin of the world! (30) This is the one I meant when I said, 'A man who comes after me has surpassed me when he was before me.' (31) I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel."*

**(32)** *Then John gave this testimony: "I saw the Spirit of Yahweh come down from Hea-*

ven as a dove and remain on him. (33) *I would not have known him, except that the One who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The man on whom you see My Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptize you with the Spirit of Yahweh.'* (34) *I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of Yahweh.*"

**Jn 1:29.** *'The next day':* Meaning immediately after Jesus' 40 days of fasting in the desert and the temptations of Satan. By this time his baptism and his temptations were already past, and Jesus was ready to begin his mission. *'Lamb of Yahweh':* An expression which belongs exclusively to John. He is saying that Jesus will be the sacrifice that would atone for the sins of the world.

**Jn 1:30-31.** *'This is the one... the reason I came...':* Once again John makes clear what his only function was. It was to point men to Jesus Christ. He didn't claim any greatness or important place for himself. *'A man who comes after me surpasses me...':* John the Baptist began his public activity earlier than Jesus but, being his forerunner, he will become less important -the purpose of his preaching and baptizing being over- after the beginning of Jesus' ministry (after Jesus was in front of -"before"- him to be baptized). *'I... did not know him':* John the Baptist was a relation of Jesus, and he must have been acquainted with him. What John was saying is not that he did not know who Jesus was, but that he did not know that Jesus was the Messiah until he saw the sign mentioned in Jn 1:32-33.

**Jn 1:32.** *'I saw the Spirit of Yahweh...':* He actually saw the Spirit of Yahweh (made in some way visible) come to Jesus and remain on him. In Jesus' case it was a permanent connection, a permanent "communion" with Yahweh, in contrast with the temporary connection between the Spirit of Yahweh and all Israel's prophets, which was operative and lasted only for the time necessary to fulfill their mission.

**Jn 1:33** *'The One who sent me... told me':* Yahweh had suddenly revealed to him that Jesus was none other than His Son. *'I would not have known...':* All this was explained to John. *'He... will baptize with the Spirit of Yahweh':* The fulfillment of this event was the descent of the Spirit of Yahweh over the disciples on the day of Pentecost.

**Jn 1:34.** *'I have seen...':* As a consequence of having seen, John knows for sure that Jesus is the Son of Yahweh, and he brings forward his testimony.

### **Jesus' first disciples** [John 1:35-42]

**(Jn1:35)** *The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. (36)When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look, the Lamb of Yahweh!"*

**(37)** *When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. (38)Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, "What do you want?" They said, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are you staying?"*

**(39)"Come,"** he replied, **"and you will see."** *So they went and saw where he was staying, and spent that day with him. It was about the tenth our.*

**(40)** *Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. (41)The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ). (42)And he brought him to Jesus.*

*Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas" (which, when translated, is Peter or Rock).*

**Jn 1:35.** *'Two... disciples...':* One was Andrew (Jn 1:40). The other is not known, but



from early times it has been thought that he was John, the author of this Gospel. *'His disciples'*: In the sense that they had been baptized by John and looked to him as their religious teacher.

**Jn 1:36-37.** *'Look, the Lamb of Yahweh'*: Once again we see John the Baptist pointing beyond himself. *'They followed Jesus'*: To speak to his disciples about Jesus like that was to invite them to leave him and follow this new and greater teacher. There was no jealousy in John, he had come to attract men not to himself, but to Jesus Christ.

**Jn 1:38.** *'Turning around, Jesus asked'*: Jesus did something entirely characteristic of him; he stopped walking and spoke to them. They were too shy to approach him directly and followed respectfully at some distance. *'What do you want?'*: By turning to them and taking the initiative, Jesus made things easier for them. *'Rabbi... were are you staying?'*: They called him Rabbi, Teacher, a title of respect. They did not wish to speak to Jesus only on the road, exchanging a few words. They wished to stay longer with him and talk more deeply about him, themselves, and their problems.

**Jn 1:39.** *'Come...'*: By inviting them to the house where he was staying, Jesus gave them a better opportunity to know him and his mission. *'The tenth hour'*: It was about 4.00 PM when they left him.

**Jn 1:40-41.** *'Andrew...'*: After one day with Jesus, Andrew was fully convinced that Jesus was the Messiah and he could not wait any longer; he had to share this discovery -or revelation- with his older brother, Simon.

**Jn 1:42.** *'Jesus looked at him'*: Seeing what the man was and which his inner possibilities were. *'Cephas, Peter, Rock'*: In the Gospels, Peter was anything but a rock. He was impulsive and unstable. In Acts, he is depicted as a pillar of the early Church. Jesus named him not for what he was at the time, but for what he would become (thanks to the action of the Spirit of Yahweh on him, of the communion with the Spirit of Yahweh). His change of name denotes a new relationship with Yahweh.

***First trip to Galilee******Jesus calls Philip and Nathanael [John 1:43-51]***

**(Jn1:43)** *The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, "Follow me."*

**(44)** *Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. (45) Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the One Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote -Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."*

**(46)** *"Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked. "Come and see," said Philip.*

**(47)** *When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, "Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false." (48) "How do you know me?" Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, "I saw you while you were under the fig tree before Philip called you."*

**(49)** *Then Nathanael declared, "Rabbi, you are the Son of Yahweh; you are the King of Israel."*

**(50)** *Jesus said, "You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You shall see greater things than that." (51) He then added, "I tell you the truth, you shall see Heaven open, and the angels of Yahweh ascending and descending on the Son of Man."*

**Jn 1:43.** *'Jesus decided to leave for Galilee':* This was Jesus' first trip to Galilee after the beginning of his ministry. *'Finding Philip... Follow me':* There, in Galilee, Jesus found and called Philip. No further detail is given about the circumstances.

**Jn 1:44.** *'Bethsaida':* A village on the northeast coast of the Sea of Galilee.

**Jn 1:45-50.** *'Philip found...':* Philip, like Andrew, could not keep the good news to himself (Jesus' first disciples. Jn 1:35-42). So he went and found his friend Nathanael and told him that he believed to have discovered the long promised Messiah in Jesus, the man from Nazareth. *'Nathanael':* In John's Gospel he is one of the first group of disciples; in the other three Gospels he never appears at all. Many explanations had been given, the most probable of which is: Nathanael was brought to Jesus by Philip, and in the other Gospels the friend of Philip is Bartholomew. Now, Bartholomew is actually a second name (it means son of Tholmai or Ptolemy). So most probably Nathanael and Bartholomew are the same person. *'Son of Joseph':* Joseph was Jesus' legal father, and in the community Jesus was identified as "Jesus son of Joseph" (there were no surnames or family names at the time). Nathanael was contemptuous. There was nothing in the Old Testament saying that the Messiah should come from an undistinguished place as Nazareth. Nathanael himself was from Cana, another Galilean town, and, in country places, there is always jealousy and rivalry between town and town. Nathanael's reaction was to declare that nothing good could come out of Nazareth. Philip did not argue, he simply said: "Come and see with your own eyes." So Nathanael came. And Jesus could read in his heart, in his mind, see exactly as the man was. And he told him. *'Under the fig tree':* This kind of tree was leafy and shady, and it was the custom to sit, rest, and meditate under the protection of its branches. Nathanael was surprised that Jesus could know him so well only seeing him once. Obviously, it was not so much that Jesus had seen him under the fig tree that surprised Nathanael, as it was the fact that Jesus had read and understood his inmost thoughts and dreams. And Nathanael understood, without any doubt helped by having Jesus in front of him, that he had to be the expected Messiah. *'Greater*

*things'*: By quoting the old story of Jacob who had seen the golden ladder leading up to Heaven (Genesis 28:12-13), practically Jesus said: "Nathanael, I can do far more than read your heart. I can be for you and for all men the way, the ladder that leads to Heaven." Jesus himself is the bridge between Heaven and Earth, the only "mediator" between Yahweh and men.

**Jn 1:51.** *'Heaven open'*: During Jesus' ministry the disciples will plainly see Heaven's (Yahweh's) testimony to Jesus. *'The angels of Yahweh ascending and descending'*: As in Jacob's dream (Genesis 28:12-13), thus marking Jesus as Yahweh's Elect One. *'Son of Man'*: Jesus' favorite self-declaration.

**Jesus changes water to wine** [John 2:1-11]

**(Jn2:1)** *On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, (2)and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. (3)When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine."*

**(4)"Dear woman, why do you involve me?"** Jesus replied, **"My time has not yet come."**

**(5)**His mother said to the servants, **"Do whatever he tells you."**

**(6)**Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from two to three metretres.

**(7)**Jesus said to the servants, **"Fill the jars with water";** so they filled them to the brim.

**(8)**Then he told them, **"Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet."** They did so, **(9)and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside (10)and said. "Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now."**

**(11)***This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him.*

**Jn 2:1-10.** The scene is a village wedding feast. Jesus was perfectly at home at such an occasion; he liked to share in the happy rejoicing of a wedding feast. It happened in a humble village, not in some great and rich occasion and in the presence of vast crowds. The first public manifestation of Jesus' powers took place within a home. It happened to save a humble Galilean family from the shame of running without wine on that day. It was in sympathy, in kindness, in understanding for simple folks that Jesus acted.

**Jn 2:1.** *'Cana in Galilee'*: It was a village quite near to Nazareth. *'A wedding'*: In Palestine a wedding was a really important occasion. A newly married couple did stay at home and for a week they kept open house. *'Jesus' mother...'*: It is clear that Mary held some special place in this wedding. She had something to do with the arrangements, for she was worried when the wine was finished; and she had authority enough to order the servants what to do.

**Jn 2:2.** *'Jesus and his disciples... invited'*: Jesus and the group of his disciples were already well known in the area. It was natural to invite such people to a wedding. To note that there is no mention of Joseph. The explanation most probably is that by this time Joseph was already dead.

**Jn 2:3.** *'When the wine was gone'*: For a Jewish feast wine was essential; to be left without wine at a wedding would have been a terrible humiliation for the newly-weds. *'They*

*have no more wine'*: So Mary instinctively turned to Jesus for help when something went wrong. She knew her son. It was not till he was thirty years old that Jesus left home; and all these years Mary lived with him.

**Jn 2:4.** *'Dear woman, why do you involve me?'*: This is the literal translation of a common conversational phrase, and the real meaning of the answer is: "Leave things to me, and I will settle them properly." The word "woman" is also misleading. It sounds very rough and abrupt. But it is the same word that Jesus used on the cross to address his mother. It is, actually, a form of respect. It should be better to translate it as "lady." *'My time has not yet come'*: The time to begin with public miracles.

**Jn 2:5.** *'Do whatever he tells you'*: Even if Mary did not know what Jesus was going to do, she believed in him so much to order the servants to follow his instructions. She was quite sure that he would do the right thing.

**Jn 2:6.** *'Six water jars. For ceremonial washing'*: For a lengthy feast with many guests a large amount of water was required for this purpose. *'2 to 3 metretes'*: About 20 to 30 gallons (75 to 115 liters).

**Jn 2:7.** *'Fill the jars with water'*: John makes it clear that only water was put into them.

**Jn 2:8-10.** *'Then he told them...'*: All this detailed description of the facts is to give full testimony and to leave no doubt about the miraculous event.

**Jn 2:11.** *'Signs'*: John always refers to Jesus' miracles as "signs," a word emphasizing the significance of the action rather than the marvel. *'His glory'*: The glory of his powers, of his being Yahweh's Messiah. It was at a wedding in a Galilean village that Jesus first showed his real powers; and it was there that his disciples caught a first glimpse of what he was.

### ***Jesus clears the Temple*** [John 2:12-25]

**(Jn2:12)** *After this he went down to Capernaum with his mother and brothers and his disciples. There they stayed for a few days.*

**(13)** *When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem.*

**(14)** *In the Temple courts he found men selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. (15) So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the Temple area, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. (16) To those who sold doves he said, "Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father's House into a market!"*

**(17)** *His disciples remembered that it is written: "Zeal for Your House will consume me."*

**(18)** *Then the Jews demanded of him, "What miraculous sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?"*

**(19)** *Jesus answered them, "Destroy this Temple, and I will raise it again in three days."*

**(20)** *The Jews replied, "It has taken forty-six years to build this Temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?" (21) But the Temple he had spoken of was his body.*

**(22)** *After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the Scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.*

**(23)** *Now while he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many people saw the miraculous signs he was doing and believed in him. (24) But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all men. (25) He did not need man's testimony about man, for he knew what was in a man.*

**Jn 2:12.** '*Capernaum*': Situated on the shore of the lake, 20 miles (32 km) away from Cana. '*His brothers*': They were the sons of Joseph and Mary, younger half-brothers of Jesus. Four of these brothers are named in 'A prophet without honor' (Mk 6:1-6a; Mt 13:53-58), were sisters are also mentioned.

**Jn 2:13.** '*Passover*': According to the law, it was compulsory for every adult male Jew who lived within 15 miles (24 km) of Jerusalem to attend the feast. The Passover was the greatest of all the Jewish feasts, and plenty of Jews were going to celebrate it in Jerusalem (inclusive of many who lived far away and in other countries). Sometimes more than 1 million Jews assembled in the Holy City to keep the Passover. This was Jesus' first Passover in Jerusalem during his ministry.

**Jn 2:14.** '*Cattle, sheep and doves*': All these animals were required for sacrifice. The Jews who came from far away needed to buy sacrificial animals near to the Temple. But the merchants were selling them in the outer court (the Court of the Pagans) of the Temple itself, not outside it. The animals offered in sacrifice had to be unblemished. The Temple authority had appointed inspectors to examine -and to charge for- the victims which were brought by the pilgrims. And it was sure that any victim bought outside the Temple would be rejected after examination. Another problem was the price charged by the Temple sellers, which was real extortion. And this was done in the name of religion. '*Exchanging money*': There was the Temple tax, of half a shekel, that every Jew had to pay in Jewish coins. Pilgrims arrived from all over the world with all kinds of coins which had to be changed into local currency. This made money changers necessary. They should not, however, have been working in the Temple itself. Furthermore, these money changers did charge heavily -not honestly- for changing money. What enraged Jesus was that pilgrims to the Passover who could ill afford it were being charged at an exorbitant rate, and even this in the name of religion.

**Jn 2:15-16.** '*He made a whip*': All that moved Jesus to terrible anger, and he chased away everybody from the Temple court. '*Turn my Father's House in a market*': In the Temple there was worship without reverence. In that court of Yahweh's House at Jerusalem there would be arguments about prices, disputes about the value of the various coins; the clatter of the market place. Furthermore, all this buying and selling was going on in the Court of the Pagans, which was the only place into which a Pagan could go. It was the only place of prayer open to a Pagan willing to pray and, in these conditions, it was a place where no man could worship Yahweh.

**Jn 2:17-18.** '*His disciples...*': They remembered the words of Psalm 69:9, which referred to the Messiah, and they were surer than ever that Jesus was in fact the Anointed One of Yahweh. '*The Jews*': It is quite certain that an act like the cleansing out of the Temple would produce an immediate reaction in the chiefs of the Jews present. The Temple authorities asked what right Jesus had to act like that and demanded that he should at once prove his credentials (of being the Messiah) by some sign.

**Jn 2:19-22.** '*Destroy this Temple...*': Jesus' reply constitutes the great problem of this passage. What did he really say and really mean? We have to remember that in Jn 2:21-22 there is John's explanation, written long afterwards. There is no doubt that Jesus spoke words which were very like these, words which later could be twisted into a destructive claim (Jesus before the Sanhedrin. Mk 14:53-65; Mt 26:57-69; Lk 22:54,63-71; Jn 18:12-16,19-24). What Jesus really meant was that his coming had put an end to this materialistic way of worshipping Yahweh and put in its place a spiritual kind of worship; that he put an end to animal sacrifices and priestly rituals and put in their place a direct approach to Yahweh which does not need a Temple and a ritual of sacrifice.

*'Forty-six years'*: Actually, the Temple was not finally completed until AD 64. The meaning is that work had been going on for 46 years. *'His body'*: Jesus was not referring to the literal Temple, but to his own body. Years later Jesus was accused of saying that he would destroy the Temple and raise it again, and mockers repeated the charge as he hung on the cross. Jesus certainly never said he would destroy the material Temple and rebuild it. What is clear is that Jesus did expect that the Temple would pass away, as he had come to render its worship unnecessary and obsolete; and therefore he would never say that he would rebuild it. Jesus came to put an end to the function of the Temple in Jerusalem and to make the whole Earth the Temple where men can be in the presence of Yahweh, the living God. It is the presence of the living, risen Christ which makes the whole world into the Temple of Yahweh. *'Recalled'*: Jesus' disciples did not see that at the time; they could not. They had to wait till after Jesus' resurrection to understand the real meaning.

**Jn 2:23.** *'Miraculous signs'*: John does not relate of any miracle that Jesus did in Jerusalem at the Passover season; but Jesus did do miracles there and there were many who, when they saw his powers, believed in him. *'Name'*: In ancient times an individual's "name" summed up his whole person.

**Jn 2:24-25.** *'But Jesus...'*: Jesus knew that there were many who were attracted only by the sensational things he did, and who did not understand the way that he had chosen; that there were many who would have followed him while he continued to produce miracles but who, if he had begun to talk to them about service and self-denial, about surrendering to the will of Yahweh, about a cross and carrying a cross, would have left him on the spot. *'He knew all men'*: Jesus knew human nature. He knew the instability of the human heart. He did not want a cheering crowd, but a small company of people who knew what they were doing and who were prepared to follow him to the end.

### ***Jesus teaches Nicodemus [John 3:1-21]***

**(Jn3:1)** *Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council. (2)He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from Yahweh. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if Yahweh were not with him."*

**(3)** *In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the Kingdom of Yahweh unless he is born again."*

**(4)** *"How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!"*

**(5)** *Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the Kingdom of Yahweh unless he is born of water and the Spirit. (6)Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. (7)You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' (8)The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."*

**(9)** *"How can this be?" Nicodemus asked.*

**(10)** *"You are an Israel's teacher," said Jesus, "and do you not understand these things? (11)I tell you the truth, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. (12)I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? (13)No one has ever gone into Heaven except the One who came from Heaven -the Son of Man. (14)Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, (15)that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life."*

**(16)**For Yahweh was so fond of the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. **(17)**For Yahweh did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. **(18)**Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of Yahweh's one and only Son. **(19)**This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men chose darkness instead of Light because their deeds were evil. **(20)**Everyone who does evil hates the Light, and will not come into the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. **(21)**But whoever lives by the truth comes into the Light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through Yahweh."

**Jn 3:1.** *'A man of the Pharisees'*: The Pharisees were successors of Hasidim, pious Jews who joined forces with the Maccabees during the struggle for freedom from Syrian oppression (166-142 BC). They first appear under the name Pharisees during the reign of John Hyrcanus (135-105 BC). According to Pharisaism, Yahweh's grace extended only to those who kept His Law. The Pharisees did constitute a brotherhood of selected, wealthy, and learned people who did take a pledge that they would spend all their lives observing every detail of the scribal law. "The Law" (of Moses) was constituted by the first five books of the Old Testament, and out of these principles the scribes derived an infinite number of rules and regulations to govern every conceivable situation in life, till absurdity; "the scribal law." The name "Pharisee" means "the Separated One;" and they did separate themselves from all ordinary life in order to keep every detail of the scribal law. *'Nicodemus'*: He was a Pharisee, and one of the ruler of the Jews, a member of the Sanhedrin. This was the supreme court of the Jews, constituted by 70 members.

**Jn 3:2.** *'At night'*: Nicodemus came to Jesus by night. This was a sign of caution. He did not want to commit himself by coming to Jesus by day. Or he may have wanted a long talk, which would have been difficult in daytime with the crowd around Jesus. *'You... has come from Yahweh'*: Nicodemus did not doubt that Jesus was a representative of Yahweh; and he came to him to try to understand which was Jesus' actual message and function.

**Jn 3:3.** *'I tell you...'*: Jesus answered him that it is not the signs and the miracles that are really important; the important thing is a real change in a man's inner life. So much of a change that it can only be described as a new birth. *'Born again'*: The Greek word used here is "anothen," which is normally translated "again," but means also "from above;" therefore, "from Yahweh." Both meanings are consistent with Jesus' redeeming work.

**Jn 3:4.** *'How can...'*: Apparently Nicodemus misunderstood Jesus' answer, taking it in the literal sense. In reality, refusing to see its spiritual meaning, it is clear that he did consider this inner change as almost impossible.

**Jn 3:5.** *'Kingdom of yahweh'*: It is a society where Yahweh's will is as perfectly done on Earth as it is in Heaven. The entry in the Kingdom of Yahweh depends on and is the product of perfect obedience to the will of Yahweh. It is clear that we are unable of this perfect obedience; it is only when Yahweh's grace enters into us and takes possession of us that we can achieve it. *'Born of water and the Spirit'*: It is through Jesus that we are born again; it is when he enters into possession of our hearts and lives that the change comes. When that happens, we are "born of water and the Spirit." Water, as a symbol of cleansing. The Spirit, as a symbol of power; the power of doing what by ourselves we could never do.

**Jn 3:6.** *'Flesh... Spirit...'*: A man by himself is only flesh and his power is limited to

what flesh can do. But the very essence of the Spirit of Yahweh is power and life which are beyond human power and human life. When the Spirit of Yahweh takes possession of us, we are spiritually reborn.

**Jn 3:7.** *'Not be surprised'*: Nicodemus was an expert in Scripture and again and again the prophets had spoken of that very experience of which Jesus was speaking. *'You must be born again'*: This assertion refers to everyone, not just to Nicodemus. *'Must'*: There are no exceptions.

**Jn 3:8.** *'Wind'*: The answer from Jesus depends on the point that the Greek word "pneuma" has both the meaning of "spirit" and of "wind." The same is true of the Hebrew word "ruach." Jesus said: "You may not know how the Spirit of Yahweh works, but you can see the effect of His Spirit in human lives." Yahweh, His Spirit, is sovereign. He works as He pleases in His renewal of the human heart.

**Jn 3:9-13.** In reading the fourth Gospel there is the difficulty of knowing when the words of Jesus stop and the words of the writer of the Gospel begin. Almost certainly the last words of this passage are John's comment. Actually, John is answering to someone who asked: "What right has Jesus to say these things? What guarantee do we have that they are true?" John's answer is simple and profound. "Jesus' right to speak," he says, "came from the fact that he knew Yahweh personally." *'We testify'*: The plural associates others, surely the disciples, with Jesus. *'Our testimony'*: John emphasizes that the facts about Jesus are amply attested. *'The One who came from Heaven'*: Jesus, the Son of Yahweh, came from Heaven in the sense of Yahweh's fatherhood. *'The Son of Man'*: Jesus' favorite self-designation.

**Jn 3:14-15.** *'Just as Moses...'*: The story which appears in Numbers 21:4-9 is used as a kind of parable: "The image of the snake was lifted up; men looked at it; their thoughts were then turned to Yahweh; and by the power of that God in whom they trusted they were healed." Even Jesus had to be lifted up (the Cross was the supreme exaltation of Jesus); and when men turn their thoughts to him, they too are saved and find eternal life. We must believe that Jesus is the Son of Yahweh to be saved. *'Eternal life'*: An infinitely high quality of life in living fellowship with Yahweh -both now and forever.

**Jn 3:16.** *'For Yahweh...'*: This phrase tells us that all initiatives in salvation lie with Yahweh. It was Yahweh who sent His Son, and He sent him because He was fond of men. *'Yahweh was so fond of the world'*: The great truth that motivated Yahweh's plan of salvation.

**Jn 3:17-21.** Here we are faced with an apparent paradox of the fourth Gospel -the paradox of benevolence and judgment. We have just been thinking of Yahweh' benevolence, and now suddenly we are confronted with judgment, condemnation and punishment. The fact is that, when a man is confronted with Jesus, if his soul responds longing for him, he is on the way to salvation. But if he sees nothing good, he stands condemned. His reaction has condemned him. Yahweh sent Jesus for that man's salvation. It is not Yahweh who has condemned the man; the man has condemned himself. The man who reacts in hostility to Jesus likes the darkness more than the Light. The man who is engaged on an evil task does not want a flood of light shed on it and him; but the man engaged on an honorable task does not fear the light. A man, his inner soul, is revealed by his reaction to Jesus Christ. If he looks at Jesus with pleasure, for him there is hope; but if in Jesus he sees nothing attractive he has condemned himself. He who was sent with much benevolence has become to him his judge.



***John the Baptist's testimony about Jesus*** [John 3:22-36]

**(Jn3:22)** *After this, Jesus and his disciples went out into the Judean countryside, where he spent some time with them, and baptized. (23) Now John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because there was plenty of water, and people were constantly coming to be baptized. (24) (This was before John was put in prison.) (25) An argument developed between some of John's disciples and a certain Jew over the matter of ceremonial washing. (26) They came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, that man who was with you on the other side of the Jordan -the one you testified about- well, he is baptizing, and everyone is going to him."*

**(27)** *To this John replied, "A man can receive only what is given him from Heaven. (28) You yourselves can testify that I said, 'I am not the Christ but am sent ahead of him.' (29) The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom's voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete. (30) He must become greater; I must become less.*

**(31)** *The one who comes from Above is above all; the one who is from the Earth belongs to the Earth, and speaks as one from the Earth. The one who comes from Heaven is above all. (32) He testifies to what he has seen and heard, but no one accepts his testimony. (33) The man who has accepted it has certified that Yahweh is truthful. (34) For the one whom Yahweh has sent speaks the words of Yahweh, for Yahweh gives His Spirit without limit. (35) The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands. (36) Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for Yahweh's judgment remains on him."*

**Jn 3:22.** *'Baptized':* Later John will say that only Jesus' disciples did actually baptize (Jesus talks with a Samaritan woman. Jn 4:1-26).

**Jn 3:23.** *'Aenon':* About 8 miles (13 km) south of Scythopolis (Beth Shan), west of the Jordan.

**Jn 3:24.** *'This was...':* For a certain period of time the ministry of John the Baptist and Jesus did overlap.

**Jn 3:25.** *'Argument... over... ceremonial washing':* Some Jews were deeply interested in the right way to achieve ceremonial purification. *'A certain Jew':* Perhaps one of Jesus' disciples, some of whom were not following carefully the ceremonial rules.

**Jn 3:26.** *'Everybody is going to him':* It was clear that men were leaving John for Jesus, and some of John's disciples were worried. *'Testified':* John's disciples knew what he had testified about Jesus, but they were fond of their master and were envious of Jesus' success. They did not like to see their master taking the second place. But John told his disciples three things, reported in Jn 3:27, 28 and 29.

**Jn 3:27.** *'A man...':* No man could receive more than Yahweh gave him. Jesus was not stealing from John, but Yahweh was giving to him. Both Jesus and John had what Yahweh had given them, so there was no place for envy. *'Given':* The verb "to give" is used frequently in John's Gospel (76 times), especially of the things the Father gives the Son.

**Jn 3:28.** *'You yourselves...':* They knew that he never expected anything else. Yahweh had sent him as the forerunner of the Christ.

**Jn 3:29.** *'The bride belongs...':* His function was as the bridegroom friend's one. *'The bridegroom':* The most important man at a wedding, referring here to Jesus. The friend (best man) was the only one who had to help the bridegroom, which describes the role of John the Baptist. *'Full of joy':* Not because he was on center stage, but for the bridegroom. John's joy was to hear of Jesus' success. John used a very vivid picture which

every Jew would recognize: he called Jesus the bridegroom and himself the friend of the bridegroom. This friend had a unique place at a Jewish wedding: he arranged the wedding and presided at the wedding feast; it was his duty to open the door of the bridal chamber to the bridegroom, and after done it, he went away rejoicing, for his task was completed. He knew that his only task had been to bring bride and bridegroom together. John's task had been to bring Israel and Jesus together, to prepare and arrange for that marriage.

**Jn 3:30.** *'He must...'*: John the Baptist had been sent to prepare the way for the Messiah and here he reaffirms his subordinate position. The task was completed and he was happy to fade into obscurity.

**Jn 3:31-36.** These verses can be the words of John the Baptist; but more likely they are the commentary of John the Evangelist.

**Jn 3:31.** *'The one who comes from Above is above all'*: Jesus, whose heavenly descent meant so much to John, has total supremacy on anybody else. *'The one who is from the Earth'*: A general expression that could apply to anyone, but here it particularly refers to John the Baptist. *'The one who comes from Heaven'*: Jesus, the Son of Yahweh, came from Heaven in the sense and because of Yahweh's fatherhood.

**Jn 3:32.** *'What he has seen and heard'*: Jesus taught from divine experience. If we want information, we have to go to the person who possesses that information. If we want information about Yahweh, we will get it only from the Son of Yahweh. Jesus tells us what he himself has seen and heard. *'No one accepts'*: It does not mean that no person accepted what he said, but that people in general refused his teaching. It is John's grief that so few accept the message that Jesus brought.

**Jn 3:33.** *'Accepted. Certified'*: When anyone accepts Jesus Christ's testimony, he accepts the truth that Jesus is of divine descent and that Yahweh was acting in him for the salvation of the world. He thereby certifies that Yahweh is truthful, that His promise to send His Messiah is truthful.

**Jn 3:34-35.** *'The one whom Yahweh has sent'*: Jesus. *'Without limit'*: It is only to Jesus that the Spirit of Yahweh (spiritual communion with Yahweh) is given without limit (because, as Son of Yahweh, he has no spiritual limits.) All other people have a limit, and can be "filled" only at the maximum of their "capacity." We can believe what Jesus says, because on him Yahweh poured His Spirit in full measure, keeping nothing back. This means that Jesus perfectly knew and perfectly understood the truth of Yahweh. *'The Father...'*: In other terms, to listen to Jesus is to listen to the very voice of Yahweh.

**Jn 3:36.** *'Has eternal life'*: Eternal life is a present possession, not something the believer will only obtain later. *'Yahweh's punishment'*: A strong expression, meaning that Yahweh is actively opposed to everything evil. *'Remains'*: A sinner cannot expect Yahweh's judgment to fade away until he fully repents.

***Second trip to Galilee (through Samaria)******Jesus talks with a Samaritan woman [John 4:1-26]***

**(Jn4:1)***The Pharisees heard that Jesus was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John, (2)although in fact it was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples. (3)When the Lord learned of this, he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee.*

**(4)***Now he had to go through Samaria. (5)So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. (6)Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about the sixth our.*

**(7)***When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" (8)(His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)*

**(9)***The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For the Jews do not associate with Samaritans; they do not use dishes Samaritans have used.)*

**(10)***Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of Yahweh and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."*

**(11)***"Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? (12)Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his flocks and herds?"*

**(13)***Jesus answered. "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, (14)but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."*

**(15)***The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water."*

**(16)***He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back."*

**(17)***"I have no husband," she replied. Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. (18)The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true."*

**(19)***"Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet. (20)Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we may worship is Jerusalem."*

**(21)***Jesus declared, "Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. (22)You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. (23)Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks. (24)Yahweh is spirit, and His worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth."*

**(25)***The woman said, "I know that the Messiah (called Christ) is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us."*

**(26)***Then Jesus declared, "I who speak to you am he."*

**Jn 4:1.** *'The Pharisees':* Understandably, the religious leaders took a close look on the activities of John the Baptist and then also of Jesus.

**Jn 4:2.** *'It was not Jesus...':* Anyway, the disciples did baptize with Jesus' approval.

**Jn 4:3.** *'Learned of this':* Of the interest of the Judean religious authorities. *'Left Judea':* Success, not failure, led Jesus to leave Judea. Jesus did not wish at this stage of his ministry to be involved in a controversy about baptism; so he decided to quit Judea for the time being and transfer his operation to Galilee.

**Jn 4:4.** *'Through Samaria'*: Palestine is only 120 miles (190 Km) from north to south. In the north there was Galilee, in the south Judea, in between Samaria. And there was a centuries old feud between the Jews and the Samaritans. *'Had to go'*: The necessity lay in Jesus' mission, not in geography. *'Samaria'*: Here the whole region, not simply the city. The Jews often avoided Samaria by crossing the Jordan and traveling on the east side, but the shortest route from Judea to Galilee did cut through Samaria.

**Jn 4:5.** *'Sychar'*: A small village near Shechem. Jacob bought some land in the vicinity of Shechem (Genesis 33:18-19), and it was apparently this land that he gave to Joseph (Genesis 48:21-22).

**Jn 4:6.** *'Jacob's well'*: Mentioned nowhere else in Scripture. *'About the sixth hour'*: It was about 12.00 noon.

**Jn 4:7.** *'To draw water'*: People normally drew water at the end of the day rather than in the heat of midday.

**Jn 4:8.** *'His disciples had gone into the town to buy food'*: Something must have happened to them, to their ideas and prejudices. Before they had met Jesus it is entirely unlikely that they would have even thought of buying food in any Samaritan town.

**Jn 4:9.** *'You are a Jew and...'*: The point is that a Jew would become ceremonially unclean if he used a drinking vessel handled by a Samaritan, since the Jews held that all the Samaritans were "unclean."

**Jn 4:10.** *'The gift of Yahweh'*: The Greek for this word is used only here in this Gospel and emphasizes Yahweh's grace through Jesus Christ. Jesus gave life and gave it freely. *'Living water'*: Here it refers to the Spirit of Yahweh. In ordinary language "living water" was "running water," different than the stagnant water of a cistern or pool. And there, in the very deep Jacob's well, there was no running water.

**Jn 4:11-12.** *'The woman said...'*: She does not understand where Jesus can get running water. Jacob himself had to dig this well for his family and his cattle, and be happy with it. She is accusing Jesus to claim to be wiser and more powerful than Jacob.

**Jn 4:13-14.** *'Everyone who drinks'*: Sometimes the Rabbis identified this living water with the Spirit of Yahweh. In effect, the religious language was full of this idea of the thirst of the soul which can be satisfied only with the living water which was the gift of Yahweh through His Messiah (Isaiah 35:6-7; 49:10; Psalm 36:9). *'Welling up'*: Jesus was speaking of vigorous, abundant life. When Jesus spoke of bringing to men the water that quenches thirst for ever, he was actually stating that he was the Anointed One of Yahweh who was to bring in the new age.

**Jn 4:15.** *'Give me...'*: But the woman understood this literally. It was the same kind of misunderstanding as of Nicodemus (Jesus teaches Nicodemus. Jn 3:1-21). Anyway, in both cases the way was opened for further instruction.

**Jn 4:16-18.** *'He told her...'*: Suddenly, Jesus brings her to her senses. She was suddenly compelled to face herself and the total inadequacy of her life. Jesus began by revealing to this woman her own sinful state; but goes on to tell her of the true worship in which our souls can meet Yahweh. *'Five husbands, and the man...'*: To the Jewish standard this woman's life -divorced so many times, and not married to her present partner- had been exceedingly immoral.

**Jn 4:19.** *'A prophet'*: Because of his special insight.

**Jn 4:20.** *'This mountain'*: The proper place of worship had long been a source of debate between Jews and Samaritans. Samaritans held that "this mountain" (Mount Gerizim, or Sichern) was especially sacred. Abraham and Jacob had built altars in the vicinity (Genesis 12:7; 33:20), and the people had been blessed from this mountain (Deuteronomy

11:29;27:12). In the Samaritan Scriptures, Mount Gerizim (rather than Mount Ebal) was the mountain on which Moses had commanded an altar to be built (Deuteronomy 27:4-6). The Samaritans had built a temple on Mount Gerizim about 400 BC, which the Jews destroyed about 128 BC. Both actions, of course, increased hostility between the two groups. The woman is asking to Jesus, after recognizing her sinful condition, were to go and offer a sacrifice to Yahweh for her sins (to her as to all her contemporaries, the only cure for sin was sacrifice). Where to go and find Yahweh?

**Jn 4:21.** *'Believe me...'*: Jesus' answer was that the days of the old rivalries were coming to an end, and the time was on the way when men would find Yahweh everywhere.

**Jn 4:22.** *'You worship what you do not know'*: The Samaritans accepted only the Pentateuch and rejected all the other books. They worshipped Yahweh, the true God, but their failure to accept much of His revelation meant that they knew little of Him. *'We worship what we do know'*: Jesus stressed the fact that the Jewish nation had a unique place in Yahweh's plans and revelation. *'Salvation is from the Jews'*: The Messiah will be a Jew.

**Jn 4:23-24.** *'Yahweh is spirit... worship in spirit and in truth'*: The place of worship is irrelevant, because true worship consists of spiritual adoration and a life aimed to the truth. In John's Gospel truth is associated with Jesus Christ, a fact that has great importance for the proper understanding of Christian worship.

**Jn 4:25.** *'Messiah... will explain everything'*: The woman reasoned that the matter was too important for people like herself and Jesus to work out. Understanding would have to wait for the coming of the Messiah. The Samaritans expected a Messiah, but their rejection of all the inspired writings after the Pentateuch meant that they knew little about him. They thought of him mainly as a religious teacher.

**Jn 4:26.** *'I... am he'*: This is one of the very few occasions before his trial by Pilate on which Jesus specifically said that he was the Messiah. The term did not have the political overtones in Samaria that it had in Judea, which may be part of the reason Jesus used the designation here.

### **The disciples rejoin Jesus** [John 4:27-38]

*(Jn4:27)Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. But no one asked, "What do you want?" or "Why are you talking with her?"*

*(28)Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, (29)"Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" (30)They came out of the town and made their way toward him.*

*(31)Meanwhile his disciples urged him, "Rabbi, eat something."*

*(32)But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you know nothing about."*

*(33)Then his disciples said to each other, "Could someone have brought him food?"*

*(34)"My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of Him who sent me and to finish His work. (35)Do you not say, 'Four months more and then the harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. (36)Even now the reaper draws his wages, even now he harvests the crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together. (37)Thus the saying 'One sows and another reaps' is true. (38)I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor."*

**Jn 4:27.** *'Were surprised'*: Jewish religious teachers rarely spoke with women in public, much less with a Samaritan. *'But no one asked'*: However surprised the disciples might

be, they did not ask for justifications. They were beginning to know Jesus; and they had already arrived at the conclusion that, however surprising his actions were, they were not to be questioned and put in doubt.

**Jn 4:28-29.** *'Leaving her water jar'*: She was in a hurry to share this extraordinary experience with all the people of her town. *'Everything I ever did'*: This very desire to tell others of her discovery canceled in her the feeling of shame. This shows clearly the impression Jesus made on her. *'Could this be the Christ?'*: Her question seems full of longing, as though she did not expect them to say "No."

**Jn 4:30.** *'They came out...'*: Of course, even not having the slightest idea of what was happening, they accepted the diversion and followed the woman.

**Jn 4:31-33.** *'His disciples...'*: Jesus' disciples, quite reasonably, did not understand that he got strengthened by the conversion of the Samaritan woman.

**Jn 4:34.** *'My food is to do the will of Him who sent me'*: John often mentions that Jesus depended on the Father and did the work the Father sent him to do.

**Jn 4:35.** *'Four months more and then the harvest'*: Apparently a proverb meaning that "the harvest can't be rushed." But in the fields that Jesus referred to the harvest was already ripe, the whole world was there to be harvested for Yahweh.

**Jn 4:36.** *'Draws his wages'*: The work, or at least part of it, had been done, and others were working hard. The disciples were not to think that the harvest was far off. Jesus was not speaking of grain but of "the crop for eternal life." There was urgency, for the crop would not wait. *'Glad together'*: There must be no competition among Jesus Christ's faithful servants, and sowers and reapers must share in the joy of the crop. But here, in the case of the Samaritan woman, Jesus has sowed and reaped immediately.

**Jn 4:37.** *'One sows and another reaps'*: Another proverb. Most of the times, some people will sow the seed of Jesus, and later other people will reap the spiritual fruits.

**Jn 4:38.** *'Others have done...'*: It may refer to John the Baptist and his supporters, on whose work the disciples would build. Or perhaps Jesus was looking back, to the prophets and other godly men of old. Either way, he expected the apostles to be, at the due time, reapers as well as sowers.

### **Many of the Samaritans believe** [John 4:39-42]

**(Jn4:39)** *Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I ever did."* **(40)** *So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days.* **(41)** *And because of his words many more became believers.*

**(42)** *They said to the woman, "We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world."*

**Jn 4:39-42.** *'Many believed...'*: The Samaritans were introduced to Jesus Christ by the woman; the Word of Yahweh must be transmitted from man to man. Once introduced to him, they sought Jesus' company and they asked him to stay with them that they may learn from him and know him better. And so they did believe in him because of their own experience with Jesus, not only because of what the woman told them. *'The Savior of the world'*: In the New Testament this expression points to the fact that Jesus not only teaches but also saves, and that his salvation extends to the whole world. Of course, it is not likely that the Samaritans themselves put it exactly that way. We have to remember that John was writing years afterwards, and he was putting the discovery of the Samaritans in his own words, after a lifetime living with and thinking about Jesus Christ.

***Jesus begins to preach***

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*[Mark 1:14-15 Matthew 4:12-17 Luke 4:14 Jn 4:43]*

*(Mk1:14-15)(Mt4:12-17)(Lk4:14)(Jn4:43)After two days, when Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, he left from there to go to Galilee, where he returned in the power of the Spirit of Yahweh. Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum, which was by the lake in the area of Zebelun and Naphtali -to fulfill what was said through the prophet Isaiah:*

*"Land of Zebelun and land of Naphtali, the way to the sea, along the Jordan, Galilee of the Pagans - the People living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned."*

*From that time on Jesus began to preach, proclaiming the Good News of Yahweh.*

*"The time has come," he said. "Repent, for the Kingdom of Yahweh is near. Repent and believe the Good News!" And the news about him spread through the whole countryside.*

**Mk 1:14-15. Mt 4:12-17. Lk 4:14. Jn 4:43.** *'After the two days':* Jesus did stay for 2 days with the Samaritans (Many Samaritans believe. Jn 4:39-42). *'He left for Galilee':* To begin with his preaching. *'John... put in prison':* John was arrested and imprisoned in the dungeons of the Castle of Macharaeus by King Herod Antipas for publicly denouncing him of having seduced and unlawfully married Herodias, his brother's wife. *'Jesus... returned':* For John, the end of his mission had come. For Jesus the time had come to begin with his own. *'In the power of the Spirit of Yahweh':* Jesus was in deep spiritual communion with Yahweh, his Father. Luke always emphasizes the effect of such spiritual communion; for him "the Work of the Spirit." *'Capernaum':* Or Caphernaum, a town on the west side of the extreme north of the Sea of Galilee. Capernaum was a sizable town in Jesus' days. Peter's house was there and became Jesus' base of operations during his ministry in Galilee. *'Area of Zebelun and Naphtali':* Galilee originally had been assigned to the tribes of Asher, Naphtali and Zebelun when the Israelites first came into the land (Joshua 9). But these tribes had never been completely successful in expelling the native Canaanite inhabitants, and from the beginning the population of Galilee was mixed. Jesus went into Galilee to begin his mission and ministry. Galilee was the most northern district of Palestine, not a large one, being only 50 miles (80 Km) from north to south and 25 miles (40 Km) from east to west. But it was densely populated, and the most fertile region of Palestine. Josephus, who was at the time governor of the province, tells that in it there were 204 villages, all with a population of more than 5000 people -giving a total population exceeding 1 million people, really enormous for the time. Jesus began his mission where there were most people to hear him. *'Said through... Isaiah':* It was Matthew's habit to find in the Old Testament something which he could use as a prophecy about every event in Jesus' life. This time he finds such a prophecy in Isaiah 9:1-2, taking it, as usual, out of context and using it in his way. At the time of the Reign of Pekah -when the northern part of Palestine, including Galilee, was under Assyrian domination, it was a prophecy of deliverance for these territories. Matthew finds in it a prophecy which foretold of the light that Jesus was to bring. Jesus spent most of his public ministry in the area of Zebelun and Naphtali. *'Galilee of the Pagans':* It was the full name of the area, because it was literally surrounded by Pagans. Some very important roads passed through Galilee, as the "Way of the Sea" -which led from Damascus through Galilee right down to Egypt and Africa- and the "Road to the East." Because of its position, Galilee had been often invaded and conquered. Galilee

was, from the eighth to the second century BC, largely in pagan hands. In contrast with it, Judea was in the south, in a corner, isolated, secluded, sparsely populated. *'Began to preach proclaiming the Good News of Yahweh'*: The Good News of hope, peace, salvation, immortality. They were, and are, the Good News of Yahweh, a God of benevolence, who was sending His own Son to redeem the whole humanity. *'The time has come'*: The promised Messiah is here, exactly in this very moment of time. *'The Kingdom of Yahweh is near'*: The coming of Jesus Christ, the Messiah, brings the Kingdom near to the people. *'Repent'*: Jesus began his ministry with the same message as that of John the Baptist. The people must repent because Yahweh's Kingdom was coming near in the person and ministry of Jesus Christ. To repent means to make a radical change of mind, to feel deep sorrow first and mainly for sin, and then for the consequences of sin. *'Believe'*: That what sounds too good to be true is really true. To believe, to have faith in Jesus, is the only condition for salvation. *'The news about him...'*: Galilee would give him, at least in the beginning, an audience who would listen to and become inspired by his message.

***Jesus heals the official's son*** [John 4:44-54]

**(Jn4:44)** Now Jesus himself had pointed out that a prophet has no honor in his own country. **(45)** When he arrived in Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him. They had seen all that he had done in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, for they also had been there.

**(46)** Once more he visited Cana in Galilee, where he had turned the water into wine. And there was a certain royal official whose son lay sick at Capernaum. **(47)** When this man heard that Jesus had arrived in Galilee from Judea, he went to him and begged him to come and heal his son, who was close to death.

**(48)** "Unless you people see miraculous signs and wonders," Jesus told him, "you will never believe."

**(49)** The royal official said, "Sir, come down before my child dies."

**(50)** Jesus replied, "You may go. Your son will live." The man took Jesus at his word and departed. **(51)** While he was still on the way, his servants met him with the news that his boy was living. **(52)** When he inquired as to the time when his son got better, they said to him, "The fever left him yesterday at the seventh hour."

**(53)** Then the father realized that this was the exact time at which Jesus had said to him, "Your son will live." So he and all his household believed.

**(54)** This was the second miraculous sign that Jesus performed, having come from Judea to Galilee.

**Jn 4:44.** *'A prophet has no honor in his own country'*: An ancient proverb. It appears on the occasions when Jesus was rejected by his own countrymen.

**Jn 4:45.** *'Welcomed him'*: The welcome of the Galilean actually was a kind of rejection, for they were interested mainly in his miracles. They were not welcoming the Messiah who could save them, but a miracle worker who could amaze them.

**Jn 4:46-47.** *'Royal official'*: Evidently an official in Herod's service. Certain things about the conduct of this official are an example to all men. He was a man of high rank and, nonetheless, he went to Jesus, who had no greater status than that of a village carpenter. Furthermore, Jesus was in Cana, which is about 20 miles (32 km) from Capernaum, where this man lived. But he was in need, and nothing as pride, conventions, or customs stopped him to bring his need to Jesus Christ. He knew that his action would cause a sensation in Herod's court, but he did not care what people could say so long as he could obtain the help he so much wanted.



**Jn 4:48-49.** *'Unless you... see... signs and wonders... you will never believe'*: The general attitude of Galileans, not that of the official. This was even a way for Jesus to make sure that the official was seriously determined in his request, "Sir, come down before my child dies" without turning away irritably or despairingly.

**Jn 4:50.** *'Your son will live'*: Not simply a prophecy, but words of power. Jesus was healing, not forecasting a happy ending. *'The man took Jesus at his words'*: It must have been hard for him to turn away and go home only with Jesus' assurance. Yet he had faith enough to believe in Jesus' word and walk back home.

**Jn 4:51-53.** *'Was still on the way'*: And on his way back home, the next day, the realization came that the miracle did actually happen, that his son was living. *'The seventh hour'*: About 1.00 pm. *'He and all his household believed'*: It was very common, at the time, for the whole family to follow all the important decisions of the family head.

**Jn 4:54.** *'The second miraculous sign'*: There had, of course, already been many such signs, but this was the second time Jesus performed a miracle after coming to Galilee.

### ***Jesus rejected at Nazareth [Luke 4:15-30]***

**(Lk4:15)** *He (Jesus) taught in their synagogues, and everyone praised him.*

**(16)** *He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read. (17)The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:*

**(18)** *"The Spirit of Yahweh is on me, because He has anointed me to preach Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, (19)to proclaim the year of Yahweh's favor."*

**(20)** *Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, (21)and he began by saying to them, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."*

**(22)** *All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips, "Isn't this Joseph's son?" they asked.*

**(23)** *Jesus said to them, "Surely you will quote this proverb to me: 'Physician, heal yourself! Do here in your hometown what we have heard that you did in Capernaum.' (24)I tell you the truth," he continued, "no prophet is accepted in his hometown. (25)I assure you that there were many widows in Israel in Elijah's time, when the sky was shut for three and a half years and there was a severe famine throughout the land. (26)Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon. (27)And there were many in Israel with leprosy in the time of Elisha the prophet, yet not one of them was cleansed -only Naaman the Syrian."*

**(28)** *All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this. (29)They got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him down the cliff. (30)But he walked right through the crowd and went on his way.*

**Lk 4:15.** *'Taught in their synagogues'*: The synagogue was a very important religious institution among the Jews of that day. Originating during the exile, it provided a place where the Jews could study the Scriptures and worship Yahweh. There was only one Temple, but a synagogue could be established in any town and village where there were at least 10 married Jewish men. There were no sacrifices in the synagogue. The Temple

was designed for sacrifice, the synagogue for teaching. The service in the synagogue was divided in three parts: I) The worship, in which prayer was offered. II) The reading of the Scriptures. The reading was in ancient Hebrew, which was no longer spoken at the time and had to be translated into Aramaic or Greek; one verse at the time in the case of the Law; three verses at the time in the case of the prophets. III) The teaching. In the synagogue there was no professional ministry; the president would invite any distinguished person present to speak so that discussion could follow. This is what Jesus was doing. *'Everyone praised him'*: Because of his inner knowledge, he was held in high reputation by all.

**Lk 4:16.** *'He went to Nazareth... on the Sabbath day... into the synagogue'*: This passage gives a clear picture of the synagogue service and of Jesus' way of teaching. *'As was his custom'*: Jesus' custom of regular worship sets and example for all his followers. *'Stood up to read'*: Jesus read from Isaiah in Hebrew, and then he or someone else translated it in Aramaic.

**Lk 4:17.** *'The scroll of the prophet Isaiah'*: The books of the Old Testament were written on scrolls, kept in a special place in the synagogue and handed to the reader by an attendant. The passage Jesus read about the Messiah (Isaiah 61:1-2) may have been one he chose to read, or it may have been the assigned passage for the day.

**Lk 4:18-19.** *'The Spirit of Yahweh'*: These verses tell of the Messiah's ministry of preaching and healing -to meet every human need. *'He has anointed me'*: Not with literal oil, but with His Spirit. *'The year of Yahweh's favor'*: Not a calendar year, but the period when salvation would be proclaimed -the Messianic age. This quotation from Isaiah 61: 1-2 alludes to the Year of the Jubilee (Leviticus 25:8-55), when once every 50 years slaves were freed, debts were canceled, and ancestral property was returned to the original family. Isaiah predicted primarily the liberation of Israel from the future Babylonian captivity, but Jesus proclaimed liberation from sin and all its consequences.

**Lk 4:20.** *'Set down'*: It was customary to stand while reading Scripture, and to seat while teaching. *'The eyes'*: Jesus' reputation as teacher of the Scripture was high, and everybody was waiting for him to speak.

**Lk 4:21.** *'This Scripture is fulfilled'*: Actually, here he declared himself as the Messiah, even if it seems that nobody understood his declaration.

**Lk 4:22.** *'Joseph's son'*: All the listeners were amazed that a man brought up in their town, the son of a carpenter, could speak so well and properly about Scripture. Anyway, exactly because of his upbringing, their were not willing to believe to him.

**Lk 4:23.** *'Jesus said...'*: They were asking for some proof, for some miraculous sign, of the kind he did perform in Capernaum.

**Lk 4:24-27.** *'I... assure you...'*: This quotation and Jesus' reference to Yahweh helping two non-Israelites (1 Kings 17:1-24; 2 Kings 5:1-26) reflect Luke's special concern for the Pagans. Jesus' point was that when Israel rejected Yahweh's messenger of redemption, Yahweh sent him to the Pagans -and so it will be again if they refuse to accept Jesus as the Messiah. *'Sidon'*: One of the oldest Phoenician cities, 20 miles (32 Km) north of Ty-re. *'Leprosy'*: The Greek word was used for various skin diseases, not only for leprosy.

**Lk 4:28.** *'Furious'*: Because of Jesus' condemnation of Israel and favorable attitude toward the Pagans, speaking of them as if they were specially favored by Yahweh.

**Lk 4:29.** *'Drove him out...'*: So much they despised the Pagans and their friends, that they interrupted the religious service to kill Jesus who they now clearly considered an enemy of Israel and of Yahweh.

**Lk 4:30.** *'Walked right through the crowd'*: Luke does not explain whether the escape was miraculous or the result of Jesus' commanding presence. In any case, his time (to die) had not yet come.

***The calling of the first disciples***

See page 378

[Mark 1:16-20 Matthew 4:18-22 Luke 5:1-11]

**(Lk5:1)** One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennezareth, with the people crowding around him and listening to the Word of Yahweh, **(2)** he saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. **(3)** He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat. **(4)** When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, **"Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch."** **(5)** Simon answered, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets." **(6)** When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. **(7)** So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink. **(8)** When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" **(9)** For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, **(10a)** and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners.

**(Mk1:16)(Mt4:18)** As Jesus was walking besides the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. **(Mk1:17)(Mt4:19)** **"Come, follow me,"** Jesus said, **"and I will make you fishers of men."** **(Lk5:10b)** Then Jesus said to Simon, **"Don't be afraid; from now on you will catch men."** **(Mk1:18)(Mt4:20)(Lk5:11)** At once they left their nets and everything, pulled their boats up to shore and followed him.

**(Mk1:19)(Mt4:21)** Going on a little farther from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. **(Mk1:20)(Mt4:22)** Without delay Jesus called them, and immediately they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.

**Lk 5:1.** *'By the lake'*: Last time we heard of Jesus preaching in the synagogues; now he is at the lakeside, the Sea of Galilee. True, he will be back in the synagogues again, but the time is coming when the doors of the synagogues will be shut to him and his preaching will be by only the lakeside -his pulpit a boat- and the open road. The boat provided an ideal arrangement, removed from the press of the crowd but near enough to be seen and heard. Here and in the following verses we see Jesus literally laying down the foundations of his Kingdom and calling his first followers. *'Lake of Gennezareth'*: Luke is the only one who calls it a lake. The other Gospel writers call it the Sea of Galilee and John calls it also the Sea of Tiberias. It is a beautiful lake, fed by the waters of the Jordan River, 14 miles (23 km) long and 6 miles (10 km) wide, about 680 feet (220 meters) below sea level. This fact gives it an almost tropical climate. In Old Testament times it was known as the "Sea of Kinnereth."

**Lk 5:2** *'Fishermen'*: There were many fishermen in Galilee. All Galilee was centered around the Sea of Galilee. Fish was the staple diet of ordinary people in Palestine. Usually the fish was salted because there was no way of transporting it fresh. Fishing and salting were important activities. *'Net'*: The fishermen used two kinds of nets. One

was a trawl-net, let out from the back of the boat and was so weighted that it stood upright in the water. The boat, or better two boats, moving forward, drawn together the 4 corners of the net, trapping fishes into this kind of great bag. The other kind, which Peter and Andrew were using here, was much smaller, was cast in the water by hand from a boat or while standing in shallow water, and was shaped rather like an umbrella. It was weighted with pellets of lead, and sank into the sea surrounding the fishes. It was then drawn through the water to land. *'Washing their nets'*: After each period of fishing, the nets were washed, mended, hanged to dry, and prepared for the next day.

**Lk 5:3.** *'Simon'*: Probably a contraction of the Old Testament name of Simeon. Jesus gave Simon the name Peter. *'Sat down'*: The usual position for teaching. It was customary to stand while reading Scripture, and to sit while teaching.

**Lk 5:4-10a.** *'He said to Simon...'*: There is no need to think that Jesus had to create all those fishes expressly for the occasion. In the Sea of Galilee there were large schools of fish which covered the sea for as much as an acre (0.4 ha). Jesus was undoubtedly able of knowing where a concentration of fish was, and gave indication to Simon to go there. *'Because you say so'*: If Jesus said it, tired as he was, Peter was prepared to try again. The night, the time for fishing, was past. All the circumstances were unfavorable, yet he did go. And, for him and for everybody else, there was the demonstration that to have faith in Jesus, to believe to his words, especially when they seem contrary to human good sense, is really worthy. *'Go away from me, Lord'*: The nearer one comes to Jesus and Yahweh, the more he feels his own sinfulness and unworthiness. *'Partners'*: James and John, those who came with the other boat to help Simon and Andrew.

**Mk 1:16. Mt 4:18.** *'Jesus was walking'*: The place is the same as in Lk 5:1, but the accounts relate different events that probably happened on a different day or, at least, in the afternoon of the same day. *'Sea of Galilee. Casting a net. Fishermen'*: See notes to Lk 5:1 and 5:2.

**Mk 1:17. Mt 4:19.** *'Come, follow me. Fishers of men'*: The call to discipleship is definite and demands a response of total commitment.

**Lk 5:10.** *'Don't be afraid'*: Jesus had a special word of encouragement for Simon.

**Mk 1:18. Mt 4:20. Lk 5:11.** *'They left their nets and everything and followed him'*: It is clear that this was not Jesus' first encounter with the four of them. At least some of them had already been disciples of John the Baptist. No doubt that they had been part of the crowd and listened to him, that they stayed to talk after the rest of the people had left. No doubt that they had already felt the magic of his presence and the magnetism of his personality. Their periodic and loose association now became a closely knit fellowship as they followed the Master. They followed Jesus not because of anything that Jesus said, but because of everything that Jesus was. Jesus offered them a task, he called them not to ease but to service, a service in which they would have to spend themselves and burn themselves up and, in the end, die for his sake and for the sake of their fellow men.

**Mk 1:19-20. Mt 4:21-22.** *'Two other brothers'*: Immediately after calling Peter and Andrew, Jesus called their fishing partners, James and John. And with them everything worked as with Simon and Andrew. Furthermore, we have to notice that these first disciples were simple folk, not poor, not rich; they were simple working people, neither learned nor wealthy. They were fishermen, that is to say, very ordinary people. No one ever believed in ordinary people as Jesus did. It is not so important what a man is, as what Jesus can make of him. When Jesus called them, they were doing their day's work. And he simply said, "Follow me."

***Jesus drives out an evil spirit*** [Mark 1:21-28 Luke 4:31-37] See page 379  
 (Mk1:21)(Lk4:31) Then they went to Capernaum, a town in Galilee, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the Synagogue and began to teach the people. (Mk1:22) (Lk4:32) The people were amazed at his teaching, because his message had authority. He taught them as one who has authority, not as the teachers of the law. (Mk1:23)(Lk 4:33) In their synagogue there was a man who was possessed by a demon, an evil spirit. Just then he cried out at the top of his voice, (Mk1:24)(Lk4:34) "Ha! What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are -the Holy One of Yahweh!"  
 (Mk1:25-26)(Lk4:35) "Be quiet!" said Jesus sternly. "Come out of him!" Then the demon, the evil spirit, shook the man violently, threw him down before them all and came out of him with a shriek, without injuring him.  
 (Mk1:27)(Lk4:36) The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, "What is this? A new teaching -and with authority! With authority and power he even gives orders to evil spirits and they obey him and come out."  
 (Mk1:28)(Lk4:37) And the news about him spread quickly throughout the surrounding area over the whole region of Galilee.

**Mk 1:21. Lk 4:31.** *'Into the synagogue and began to teach'*: Jesus took advantage of the custom that allowed visiting teachers to participate in the worship service by invitation of the synagogue leaders. He had a message from Yahweh to give, and the natural places to which he did turn were the synagogues, where Yahweh's people met together. He was known to be a man with a message; for that very reason the synagogue of every community provided him with the possibility to read and preach.

**Mk 1:22. Lk 4:32** *'Amazed. Authority'*: It was Jesus' inherent authority that amazed people. He did not quote human authority, as did the teachers of the law, because his authority was directly from Yahweh. The Law -the Torah- was constituted by the first five books of the Old Testament, the Pentateuch. A whole class of scholars arose -the Scribes- to interpret the Law and to apply it to the facts of everyday life. Yet, no Scribe ever gave a decision on his own. They would always begin, "There is a teaching that..." and would then quote all the relevant authorities and references. The last thing they ever gave was an independent judgment. Jesus, instead, taught with personal authority, he spoke as if he needed no authority beyond himself. He spoke with the finality of the voice of Yahweh. He was the very antithesis of the careful quotations of the Scribes.

**Mk 1:23. Lk 4:33.** *'Demon... evil spirit'*: The Jews, and indeed the whole ancient world, believed strongly in demons and devils. Luke makes it clear that this was really an evil spirit, not the effect of a mental illness. Such a demon could cause mental disorders, violent actions, bodily diseases, and rebellion against Yahweh. *'Cried out'*: It was actually the demon who cried out.

**Mk 1:24. Lk 4:34.** *'What do you want'*: The demon recognized that Jesus was not a normal exorcist, but a powerful adversary, capable of destroying the forces of Satan. *'Holy One of Yahweh'*: The title points to Jesus' divine origin rather than his Messiahship.

**Mk 1:25-26. Lk 4:35.** *'Be quiet'*: Jesus' superior power silenced the shrieks of the demon-possessed man. *'Come out of him'*: The ordinary Jew and pagan exorcists used elaborated incantations and magical rites. Jesus with one word of clear, simple, brief authority exorcised the demon from a man. *'Without injuring'*: When the normal exorcists were able of chasing out a demon, it was after a long and painful battle which usually left the man in very bad shape and with many physical injuries. In the case of Jesus, the demon was obliged to live on the spot, without doing any further harm.

**Mk 1:27. Lk 4:36.** *'All so amazed'*: No one had ever seen anything like this before. The power was not in the formula, the incantation, the elaborate rite; the power was in Jesus and the people were astonished. The authority of his teaching and what he did here for the demon-possessed man greatly impressed everybody.

**Mk 1:28. Lk 4:37.** *'The news spread'*: It is clear that the news about Jesus' way to teach and about all his miraculous deeds did spread quite fast all around.

**Jesus heals many** [Mark 1:29-34 Matthew 8:14-17 Luke 4:38-41] See page 379

**(Mk1:29-30)(Mt8:14)(Lk4:38)** *As soon as they left the synagogue, Jesus went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew. Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed suffering from a high fever and they told Jesus about her. When Jesus came into Peter's house, he saw Peter's mother-in-law lying in bed with a fever, and they asked Jesus to help her. (Mk1:31)(Mt8:15)(Lk4:39) So he went and bent over her and rebuked the fever, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she got up at once and began to wait on them. (Mk1:32-34)(Mt8:16)(Lk4:40-41) That evening when the sun was setting the people brought to Jesus all who had various kinds of sickness and many who were demon-possessed. The whole town gathered at the door, and, laying his hands on each one, Jesus healed all the sick who had various diseases. He also drove out many spirits and demons with a word. Moreover, demons came out of many people, shouting, "You are the Son of Yahweh!" But he rebuked them and would not allow the demons to speak, because they knew who he was, the Christ. (Mt8:17) This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah:*

*"He took our infirmities and carried our diseases."*

**Mk 1:29-30. Mt 8:14. Lk 4:38.** *'The home of Simon and Andrew'*: Jesus and the disciples probably went there for a meal, since the main Sabbath meal was served immediately following the synagogue service, at the sixth hour (12.00 noon). *'Simon's mother-in-law'*: Peter was married. *'A high fever'*: All three Synoptic Gospels tell of this miracle, but only Luke, the doctor, uses the more specific phrase "high fever." Quite surely it was malaria, a well known illness, called "burning fever" in the Talmud. *'They asked Jesus to help her'*: The disciples already had begun to take all their troubles to Jesus. The simple home of Peter was upset because his mother-in-law was sick, and it was for them the most natural thing to tell Jesus about it.

**Mk 1:31. Mt 8:15. Lk 4:39.** *'He rebuked the fever. And the fever left her'*: Jesus did not require an audience in order to exert his power; he was just as prepared to heal in the intimate circle of a family's house as in the crowd of a synagogue. Here we see again, as in the synagogue with the demon possessed, the method of Jesus. With a gesture and a word of unique authority and power, he healed the woman. *'She got up at once and began to wait on them'*: These words tell a lot about the character of Peter's mother-in-law. As soon as she was healed, she began to attend to their needs, using her recovered health for renewed service. We always have to remember that Jesus helps people so that they too can help others.

**Mk 1:32-34. Mt 8:16. Lk 4:40-41.** *'When the sun was setting. The people brought to Jesus...'*: They waited until the Sabbath was over, at sundown (about 6.00 pm). Until then, according to the tradition of the elders, Jews could not travel more than a certain distance or carry a burden. According to the Sabbath Law, which forbade all work on the Sabbath day, it was illegal to heal on the Sabbath. Steps could be taken to prevent a person from getting any worse, but no steps might be taken to make him or her any bet-

ter. It was illegal to carry a sick person (to carry a burden) from place to place on a stretcher or in one's arms or on one's shoulder. So, only after sundown they could carry the sick to Jesus, and their eagerness is seen in the fact that they set out while the sun was still setting. *'All who had various kinds of sickness and many demon-possessed'*: The things that Jesus had done in Capernaum, the emergence of so great a new power and authority was something which could not be kept secret. So at evening Peter's house was surrounded by crowds seeking Jesus' healing touch. *'Laying his hands... Jesus healed all...'*: This time Jesus was healing in the street, recognizing the necessity of everyone. *'He also drove out many spirits and demons with a word'*: Again, as a demonstration of his powers, he was driving out demons with a simple, direct order. *'You are the Son of Yahweh. Because they knew who he was, the Christ'*: Jesus did not allow the demons to speak and recognize publicly who he was. He wanted first to show by word and deed the kind of Messiah he was (in contrast to popular notions) before he clearly declared himself, and he would not let the demons frustrate his intent. In effect, the Jews had their own popular ideas of the Messiah. To them the Messiah was to be a conquering king who would free them from foreign domination. Palestine was in an inflammable condition. Rebellion was always just below the surface and often broke out. Jesus knew that if the report went out that he was the Messiah the revolutionaries would be ready to flare up. Before men could call him Messiah, he had to teach them that Messiah did not mean a conquering king but a suffering servant. The people did not know what Messiahship meant, and if they started out with their wrong ideas only death and destruction would surely follow.

**Mt 8:17.** *'This was to fulfill...'*: Matthew, as usual, makes reference to an Old Testament prophecy (Isaiah 53:4) to further demonstrate that Jesus was the Messiah.

**First preaching trip through Galilee****Jesus prays in a solitary place and heals the sick**

See page 380

*[Mark 1:35-39 Matthew 4:23-25 Luke 4:42-44]*

**(Mk1:35-37)(Lk4:42)** *At day break, very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went out to a solitary place, where he prayed. The people were looking for him, and when they came to where he was, Simon and his companions found him and tried to keep him from leaving them, and exclaimed: "Everyone is looking for you!"*

**(Mk1:38)(Lk4:43)** *But Jesus replied, "I must preach the Good News of the Kingdom of Yahweh to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent. Let us go somewhere else -to the nearby village- so I can preach there also. That is why I have come." (Mk1:39)(Mt4:23)(Lk4:44)* *So Jesus traveled throughout Galilee, the Land of the Jews, and he kept on teaching in their synagogues, preaching the Good News of the Kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people and driving out demons. (Mt4:24)* *News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed, and he healed them. (25)* *Large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan followed him.*

**Mk 1:35-37. Lk 4:42.** *'Jesus... a solitary place... he prayed':* If we consider all the things that happened in Capernaum, we see that Jesus was left with no time to stay alone. Now Jesus knew very well that he could not live without Yahweh, without prayer; that if he was going to spend himself for others, he must now and then ask for some spiritual reinforcement to come to his aid. *'Companions':* Andrew, James, John and perhaps Philip and Nathanael. *'Everyone is looking for you':* There was no way in which Jesus could shut the door. When they came for him, he rose from his knees to meet the challenge of his task. *'They tried...':* They were trying to keep him in Capernaum.

**Mk 1:38. Lk 4:43.** *'I must preach... I was sent':* Jesus' mission was to go around preaching and healing, not to stay in one place only, waiting for people to come to him. He was moving from village to village, bringing the Word of Yahweh to everybody.

**Mk 1:39. Mt 4:23. Lk 4:44.** *'Jesus traveled throughout Galilee':* This was the first of three preaching tours of Galilee. Jesus went out preaching in the synagogues of Galilee. In Mark, Matthew and Luke this tour is dismissed in one verse, but it must have taken weeks or even months to do it. *'Preaching... and healing':* As he went, he preached and healed. Jesus never separated soul and body. Man is both soul and body, and the task of Christianity is to heal and redeem the whole human being and not just part of him.

**Mt 4:24.** *'Syria':* The area north of Galilee and between Damascus and the Mediterranean Sea. *'Those having seizures':* The Greek word for this expression originally meant "moon-struck," reflecting the ancient superstition that seizures were caused by changes of the moon. Anyway, there is no confusion between seizure and demon-possession.

**Mt 4:25.** *'The Decapolis':* A league of free cities characterized by Greek culture. All but one, Scytopolis (Beth Shan), were east of the Sea of Galilee and the Jordan River. The league stretched from a point northeast of the Sea of Galilee southward to Philadelphia (modern Amman).



***A man with leprosy*** [Mark 1:40-45 Matthew 8:1-4 Luke 5:12-16] See page 380  
**(Mk1:40)(Mt8:1-2)(Lk5:12)** When he came down from the mountainside, large crowds followed him. While Jesus was in one of the towns, a man came along to him who was covered with leprosy. When he saw Jesus, he knelt before him, fell with his face to the ground and begged, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean."

**(Mk1:41-42)(Mt8:3)(Lk5:13)** Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "**I am willing,**" he said. "**Be clean!**" And immediately the leprosy left him and he was cured.

**(Mk1:43-44)(Mt8:4)(Lk5:14)** Then Jesus sent him away at once and ordered him, with a strong warning: "**See that you don't tell this to anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them.**"

**(Mk1:45)(Lk5:15-16)** Instead he went out and began to talk freely, spreading the news. As a result, the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses. And Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but often stayed outside and withdrew to lonely places and prayed. Yet the people still came to him from everywhere.

**Mk 1:40. Mt 8:1-2. Lk 5:12.** '*A man covered with leprosy*': Luke alone notes the extent of the disease. The fate of the leper was truly hard. Leprosy did reduce a human being to a hideous condition, without killing him for many years. The term leprosy was also used for other skin diseases, including "psoriasis," a disease which covers the body with white scales, and which gave rise to the phrase "a leper as white as snow." The very primitive medical knowledge of the time did not distinguish between the different kinds and included both the deadly and incurable and the non-fatal and comparatively harmless under the same name. Any such skin disease rendered the sufferer unclean. He was banished from the town and had to live outside in the camp. He had to go with torn clothes, and as he went he had to give warning of his polluted presence with the cry, "Unclean, unclean!" If ever a leper was cured he had to undergo a complicated ceremony of restoration which is described in Leviticus 14. '*If you are willing...*': The leper came with humility and with faith in what Jesus could do. '*Make me clean*': Leprosy made a person physically afflicted as well as ceremonially unclean.

**Mk 1:41-42. Mt 8:3. Lk 5:13.** '*Filled with compassion, Jesus... touched the man*': An act that, according to Mosaic law, brought defilement. Jesus' compassion for the man superseded any ceremonial consideration. '*I am willing, be clean*': Jesus did not drive away the man who, according to the Law, had no right to have spoken to him at all, but met the desperation of the human need with understanding and compassion. He touched the man who was unclean. To Jesus he was not unclean; he was simply a human soul in desperate need.

**Mk 1:43-44. Mt 8:4. Lk 5:14.** '*Don't tell anyone*': To cure leprosy was absolutely out of ordinary. The healing was a testimony to Jesus' divine power, since the Jews believed that only Yahweh could cure leprosy. Jesus did not want this fact to be publicized for the same reasons already discussed when he did not allow the demons to tell that he was the Messiah (Jesus heals many. Mk 1:29-34; Mt 8:14-17; Lk 4:38-41). '*Go, show yourself to the priest*': By this command Jesus urged the man to keep the law and to supply ritual certification of cleansing so the man could be reinstated into society. '*Offer the sacrifices... as a testimony to them*': The sacrifices were to be evidence to the priests and the people that the cure was real and that Jesus respected the Law. He did not recklessly defy the conventions, but, when need be, he submitted to them.

**Mk 1:45. Lk 5:15-16.** 'Jesus could no longer enter a town openly': Jesus' growing popularity with the people and the increasing opposition from the Jewish leaders finally made necessary for him to withdraw from Galilee into the surrounding territories.

***The faith of the centurion*** [Matthew 8:5-13 Luke 7:1-10] See page 381

**(Mt8:5-8)(Lk7:1-7)** When Jesus had finished saying all this in the hearing of the people, he entered Capernaum. There a centurion's servant, whom his master valued highly, was sick and about to die. The centurion heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to him, asking him for help, to come and to heal his servant. When they came to Jesus, they pleaded earnestly with him, "Lord," they said, "his servant lies at home paralyzed and in terrible suffering. This man deserves to have you do this, because he likes our nation and has built our synagogue." Jesus said to them, **"I will go and heal him."** So Jesus went with them. He was not far from the house when the centurion sent friends to say to him: "Lord, don't trouble yourself, for I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed.

**(Mt8:9)(Lk7:8)** For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."

**(Mt8:10)(Lk7:9)** When Jesus heard this, he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd of those following him, he said, **"I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone with such great faith even in Israel. (Mt8:11)I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven. (12)But the subjects of the Kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."**

**(Mt8:13)(Lk7:10)** Then Jesus said to the men who had been sent by the centurion, **"Go! It will be done just as you believed it would."** And his servant was healed at that very hour. And they returned to the house and found the servant well.

**Note:** In Luke's account there are some Jewish elders friends of the centurion coming to Jesus in his behalf. Matthew, instead, does not mention these intermediaries, showing the centurion as going personally to speak to Jesus. The correct one is Luke ("That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you." Lk 7:7). The acts described were not physically carried out by the centurion himself, but by his representatives. He was sending them, so he was totally responsible for what they were saying and doing; practically "personally doing it." And this is the reason why Matthew cuts short and refers directly to the centurion. Matthew's real interest was to show that the Kingdom of Yahweh is open to everybody, even to the Pagans (Mt 8:11-12). The universality of the Gospel is one of Matthew's fundamental themes.

**Mt 8:5-9. Lk 7:1-8.** 'Centurion': A Roman military officer in charge of 100 soldiers. In a Roman legion there were 6000 men; the legion was divided into sixty centuries, each containing 100 men under the command of a centurion. The centurions were the long-service, regular soldiers of the Roman army. They were responsible for the discipline and were the cement which held the army together. It is interesting to note that all the centurions mentioned in the New Testament are mentioned with honor. This one was probably a member of Herod Antipas' forces, which were organized in Roman fashion. But there was something very special about this particular centurion at Capernaum. 'A centurion's servant, whom his master valued highly': The centurion showed genuine

concern for his servant, a slave. He was grieved that his servant was ill and was determined to do everything in his power to save him, an attitude completely unusual for a master to a slave. *'The centurion sent some elders of the Jews. This man deserves... he likes our nation...'*: He had an extremely unusual attitude towards the Jews; he had even paid for the construction of their synagogue. The whole atmosphere of this story implies not only a close bond of friendship between him and the Jews but shows that he was even admired by them, who spoke favorably of him even though he was a Pagan. *'Elders of the Jews'*: Jews highly respected by the community, though not necessarily rulers of the synagogue. Surprisingly, they were willing to come and plead for the centurion. *'I will go and heal him. Jesus went with them'*: Jesus could only rejoice to find that in this case the barrier between Jews and Pagans did not exist, and went to help the man in need. *'Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof'*: He was a humble man. He was accustomed to command, yet he did not even come to Jesus by himself. He knew quite well that a strict Jew was forbidden by the law to enter the house of a Pagan, to allow a Pagan into his house, and to have any communication with him. *'But just say the word and my servant will be healed'*: He was a man of faith. *'For I am a man under authority...'*: If his own authority produced the results it did, how much more was capable to produce Jesus' authority!

**Mt 8:10. Lk 7:9.** *'He was amazed'*: The amazement of Jesus is only mentioned twice, here because of belief and at Nazareth because of unbelief (A prophet without honor. Mk 6:1-6a; Mt 13:53-58).

**Mt 8:11-12.** *'I say to you that...'*: Here Jesus did use a famous Jewish picture. The Jews believed that when the Messiah came there would be a great banquet at which all the Jews will sit down to feast. But they believed that no Pagan would ever sit down at it. By that time the Pagans would have been destroyed. Yet here Jesus says that many will come, from everywhere, and will fully take part. Still worse, he said that many Jews (the subjects of the Kingdom) will be shut out.

**Mt 8:13. Lk 7:10.** *'Then Jesus said...'*: When Jesus spoke, the servant of the centurion was healed.

### ***Jesus raises a widow's son*** [Luke 7:11-17]

**(Lk7:11)** *Soon afterward, Jesus went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went along with him. (12)As he approached the town gate, a dead person was being carried out -the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the town was with her. (13)When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, "Don't cry."*

**(14)** *Then he went up and touched the coffin, and those carrying it stood still. He said, "Young man, I say to you, get up!" (15)The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother.*

**(16)** *They were all filled with awe and praised Yahweh. "A great prophet has appeared among us," they said. "Yahweh has come to help His people." (17)This news about Jesus spread throughout the land of the Jews and the surrounding country.*

**Lk 7:11-17.** *'Nain'*: A village at one day journey from Capernaum. Few minutes walk from Nain on the road to Endor there was a cemetery of rock tombs in which the dead were laid. The funeral procession would be headed by the band of professional mourners with their flutes and their cymbals. *'Coffin'*: The man was probably carried in an

open coffin, suggested by Jewish customs and by the fact that he sat up in response to Jesus' command. Here we can see the compassion of Jesus, the Son of Yahweh, moved to the depths of his heart. And, after the compassion, we can see his power, when he went up, touched the coffin and commanded the man to come back from death.

**Jesus heals a paralytic** [Mark 2:1-12 Matthew 9:1-8 Luke 5:17-26] See page 382

**(Mk2:1)(Mt9:1)** *A few days later, Jesus stepped into a boat, crossed over and came to his own town. When Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home.*

**(Lk5:17)** *One day as he was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law, who had come from every village of Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem, were sitting there. And the power of Yahweh was present for him to heal the sick. (Mk2:2) So many gathered that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the Word to them. (Mk2:3-5)(Mt9:2)(Lk5:18-20) Some men came, bringing to him a paralytic, lying on a mat, carried by four of them, and tried to take him into the house to lay him before Jesus. When they could not find a way to do this and they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they went up on the roof, made an opening in the roof above Jesus and, after digging through it, lowered him on his mat through the beams into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven."*

**(Mk2:6-8)(Mt9:3-4)(Lk5:21-22)** *Now some Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there, and they began thinking to themselves, "Why does this fellow talk like that? Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but Yahweh alone?"*

*Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit what they were thinking in their hearts, and he asked them, "Why are you thinking these things and entertain evil thoughts in your hearts? (Mk2:9)(Mt9:5)(Lk5:23) Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk'? (Mk2:10-11)(Mt9:6)(Lk5:24) But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on Earth to forgive sins..." Then he said to the paralyzed man, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." (Mk2:12)(Mt9:7-8)(Lk5:25-26) And immediately the man stood up in front of them, took the mat he had been lying on and went home praising Yahweh walking out in full view of them all. When the crowd saw this, everyone was amazed; they were filled with awe and they gave praise to Yahweh, who had given such authority to men, saying, "We have seen remarkable things today. We have never seen anything like this!"*

**Mk 2:1. Mt 9:1.** *'Came to his own town':* After Jesus had completed his tour of the towns, he returned to Capernaum which, at this stage of his ministry, was the center of his activity. When there, Jesus most probably made his home at Peter's house.

**Lk 5:17.** *'Pharisees and teachers of the law':* Opposition was rising in Galilee from these religious leaders. *'Pharisees':* Their name means "the separate ones;" they numbered about 6000 and were spread over the whole of Palestine. They were teachers in the synagogues, religious examples in the eyes of the people and self-appointed guardians of the law and its proper observance. They considered the interpretations and regulations handed down by tradition to be virtually as authoritative as Scripture. The majority of the teachers of the law, the Scribes, belonged to the party of the Pharisees. Already Jesus went against the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem (Life through the Son. Jn 5:16-30). Now they came to his home in Capernaum to hear and watch him. Jesus had no use for

all those rules and regulations. For him, the cry of human need superseded all such things. But to the Scribes and Pharisees he was a man who broke the law and taught others to do the same. *'The power of Yahweh...'*: It was because of his deep spiritual communion with Yahweh, his father, that Jesus had the power to heal.

**Mk 2:2.** *'So many gathered'*: The same enthusiasm that greeted Jesus earlier was evident at his return. In no time a crowd had filled the house to capacity and many had to stay outside to listen to Jesus preaching.

**Mk 2:3-5. Mt 9:2. Lk 5:18-20.** *'A paralytic'*: Nothing definite can be said about the nature of the man's affliction beyond the fact that he could not walk. The determination of the four men to reach Jesus suggests that his condition was desperate. *'They could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd'*: But they were men of resources and they made an opening in the roof. A typical Palestinian house had a flat roof that was used as a place of rest and quiet, and so usually it was accessible by means of an outside staircase. The roof was often made of a thick layer of clay (packed with a stone roller), supported by mats of branches across wood beams. So the four men dug out the filling between two of the beams and let their friend down directly at Jesus' feet. *'When Jesus saw their faith'*: Jesus recognized that the bold action of the paralyzed man and his friends gave evidence of their faith. *'Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven'*: Jesus first met the man's deepest need: forgiveness. It may seem an odd way to begin a cure. But the Jews believed that suffering and illness were the consequence of sin. The first thing that Jesus did was to assure the man that Yahweh was not angry with him.

**Mk 2:6-8. Mt 9:3-4. Lk 5:21-22.** *'He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but Yahweh alone?'*: It was an essential point of the Jewish faith that only Yahweh could forgive sins. For a man to claim to do so was to insult Yahweh; that was blasphemy, and the penalty for blasphemy was death by stoning (Leviticus 24:16). At the moment they were not ready to launch their attack in public, but it was not difficult for Jesus to see what they were thinking.

**Mk 2:9. Mt 9:5. Lk 5:23.** *'Which is easier...?'*: Jesus' point probably was that neither forgiving sins nor healing was easier. Both are equally impossible to men and equally easy to Yahweh. Saying "Your sins are forgiven" there was no possibility of demonstrating whether these words were effective or not. But to say, "Get up and walk" was to say something which could be proved right or wrong there and immediately.

**Mk 2:10-12. Mt 9:6-8. Lk 5:24-26.** *'But that you may know...'*: Spoken to the teachers of the law. It is clear that one purpose of his miracles was to give evidence of Jesus' divine descent. For the teachers of the law it was evident that the man could not be cured, unless he was forgiven. *'He stood up in front of them'*: He was actually cured, therefore he was forgiven. Jesus' power to heal was a visible affirmation of his power to forgive sin, and the actual demonstration of this power had been in front of plenty of witnesses.

### **The calling of Matthew-Levi**

*See page 383*

[Mark 2:13-17 Matthew 9:9-13 Luke 5:27-32]

*(Mk2:13)Once again Jesus went out beside the lake. A large crowd came to him, and he began to teach them. (Mk2:14) (Mt9:9)(Lk5:27-28)After this Jesus went out from there and, as he walked along, he saw a tax collector by the name of Levi, a man named Matthew, son of Alphaeus, sitting at his tax collector's booth. "Follow me," Jesus told him, and Levi, Matthew, got up, left everything, and followed him.*

*(Mk2:15)(Mt9:10)(Lk5:29)Then Levi held a great banquet for Jesus at his house.*

*While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, a large crowd of tax collectors and of other "sinners" came and were eating with him and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. (Mk2:16)(Mt9:11)(Lk5:30) But when the Pharisees and the teachers of the law who belonged to their sect, who were Pharisees, saw him eating with the "sinners" and tax collectors, they complained and asked his disciples: "Why does your teacher and why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and 'sinners'?"*

*(Mk2:17)(Mt9:12-13)(Lk5:31-32) On hearing this, Jesus said to them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. For I have not come to call the righteous, but the sinners to repentance. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.'"*

**Mk 2:13.** *'Jesus went out beside the lake':* The guardians of the Jewish orthodoxy were shutting the doors of the synagogues on Jesus, and now he was teaching by the lakeside. Anyway, this was also a very common way for a Rabbi to teach, walking with his disciples grouped around and followed by people listening.

**Mk 2:14. Mt 9:9. Lk 5:27-28.** *'Levi son of Alphaeus':* His given name was Levi, and Matthew ("Gift of the Lord") his apostolic name. *'Tax collector's booth':* Levi was a tax collector under Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee. The tax collector's booths were Jesus found Levi was probably a toll booth on the major international road that went from Damascus through Capernaum to the Mediterranean coast and to Egypt (the "Way of the Sea" of Isaiah 9:1). In those days there were import and export taxes and Capernaum must have been the place where they were collected. Matthew, as a tax collector, was a well-hated man. In the ancient world people never knew just how much they had to pay; the tax collectors extracted from them as much as they could and filled their own pockets with the surplus that remained after the demands of the law had been met. Jewish tax collectors were regarded as outcast. They could not serve as witnesses or as judges and were expelled from the synagogue. In the eyes of the Jewish community their disgrace extended to their families. *'Follow me... and... Matthew... left everything and followed him':* Since Jesus had been ministering in Capernaum for some time, Levi probably had known him previously. Anyway, by following Jesus, Matthew lost his job (which, for having left his tax collector booth, he would never get back) and the luxuries and comforts that came with it.

**Mk 2:15. Mt 9:10. Lk 5:29.** *'A great banquet for Jesus':* When Levi began to follow Jesus, he did not do it secretly. On the contrary, having discovered Jesus for himself, Matthew wished his friends to share his great discovery. And his friends were like himself, tax collectors and other kinds of social outcasts. *'Sinners':* So were classified notoriously evil people as well as those who refused to follow the Mosaic Law as interpreted by the teachers of the law. The term was commonly used of tax collectors, adulterers, robbers and the like. *'Were eating with him':* To eat with a person was a sign of friendship. And Jesus gladly accepted that invitation.

**Mk 2:16. Mt 9:11. Lk 5:30.** *'The teachers of the law who were Pharisees':* Not all teachers of the law were Pharisees. *'Why does he eat with...':* By going to Matthew's house Jesus was defying the orthodox conventions of his time.

**Mk 2:17. Mt 9:12-13. Lk 5:31-32.** *'I have not come to call the righteous, but the sinners':* Jesus' answer was quite simple; he was doing as a good doctor does, going to those who are sick in their soul and who need him most. The point is that the one person for whom Jesus can do nothing is the person who think himself so good that he does not need anything done for him; and the one person for whom Jesus can do everything is

the person who is a sinner and knows it, and who longs in his heart for a cure. A person must recognize himself as a sinner before he can be spiritually helped and healed. In other terms, a self-supposed righteous man does not realize his need for salvation, but an admitted sinner does. It is important to realize that Jesus was not saying that there were some people who were so good that they had no need of anything which he could give. Still less he was saying that he was not interested in people who were good. *'I desire mercy, not sacrifice'*: This saying is from Hosea 6:6 and expresses the true desire of Yahweh. A man can diligently go through all the motions of orthodox piety, but if his hands are never stretched out to help those who are in need, he is not a religious man.

***Jesus questioned about fasting***

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[Mark 2:18-22 Matthew 9:14-17 Luke 5:33-39]

**(Mk2:18)(Lk5:33)** Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. Some people came and asked Jesus, "How is it that John's disciples often fast and pray, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees, but yours are not and go on eating and drinking?" **(Lk9:14)** Then John's disciples came and asked him, "How is it that we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?"

**(Mk2:19-20)(Mt9:15)(Lk5:34-35)** Jesus answered, "How can you make the friends of the bridegroom mourn and fast while he is with them? They cannot, so long as they have him with them. But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them, and then, in those days they will fast."

**(Mk2:21)(Mt9:16)(Lk5:36)** He told them a parable: "No one tears a patch of unshrunk cloth from a new garment and sews it on an old one. For, if he does, the new piece will pull away from the old garment, making the tear worse. He will have torn the new garment, and the patch from the new will not match the old. **(Mk2:22)(Mt9:17)(Lk5:37-38)** And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the new wine will burst the skins, the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, new wine must be poured into new wineskins, and both are preserved. **(Lk5:39)** And no one after drinking old wine wants the new, for he says, 'The old is better.'"

**Mk 2:18. Mt 9:14. Lk 5:33.** *'John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting'*: In the Mosaic Law the only compulsory day of fast was the Day of Atonement, the day when the nation confessed and was forgiven its sins (Leviticus 16:29-31;23:27-32. Numbers 29:7). After the Babylonian exile four other yearly feasts were observed by the Jews (Zechariah 7:5;8:19). But in Jesus' time the stricter Jews as the Pharisees fasted twice a week, on Monday and Thursday. The fasting lasted from 6 am to 6 pm. Probably, John the Baptist's disciples were fasting also because he was in prison. Anyway, fasting was for them an expression of repentance. *'Disciples of the Pharisees'*: Pharisees as such were not teachers, but some were also Scribes (teachers of the law), who had disciples. The phrase could also more generically refer to the people influenced by the Pharisees. *'John's disciples often fast and pray'*: John the Baptist had grown up in the desert and learned to subsist on a meager, austere diet of locust and wild honey. His ministry was characterized by a sober message and a strenuous schedule. The Pharisees also had a rigorous life-style. *'Your disciples do not fast'*: On the contrary, Jesus went to banquets, and his disciples enjoyed a freedom not known by the Pharisees. While Jesus rejected fasting legalistically, he himself fasted privately and permitted its voluntary use for spiritual benefit. Jesus was not against fasting as such (Fasting. Mt 6:16-18). But the fasting of the Pharisees was for self-display, to call the attention of all men on their devotion.

**Mk 2:19-20. Mt 9:15. Lk 5:34-35.** *'How can... the friends of the bridegroom mourn and fast while he is with them?'*: Jesus compared himself with the bridegroom and his disciples with the friends of the bridegroom. A Jewish wedding was a particularly joyous occasion, and the celebrations associated with it often lasted a whole week. It was unthinkable to fast during such festivities, because fasting was associated with sorrow. There was a rabbinic rule which did exempt all the wedding guests from fasting and other religious observances which would lessen their joy. The incident tell us that the characteristic Christian attitude to life is joy. *'When the bridegroom will be taken from them'*: Jesus is the bridegroom, who would be taken from them by death, and then, not now, fasting would be appropriate.

**Mk 2:21. Mt 9:16. Lk 5:36.** *'Parable'*: Jesus knew quite well that he was coming with a startlingly new message; and he also knew that his way of life was dramatically different from that of the orthodox rabbinic teachers. He also knew how difficult it is for the minds of people to accept and understand a new truth; and here he begins using parables; easy illustrations of new, difficult concepts. *'Patch of unshrunk cloth'*: Jesus speaks of the danger of sewing a new patch on an old garment. The Greek word used here means that the new cloth was still undressed; it had never shrunk; so when the garment gets wet in the rain the new patch shrinks, and being much stronger than the old, it tears the old apart and the rent in the garment becomes wider than before. In other terms, there comes a time when the day of patching is over, and recreating must begin; a time when it is necessary to abandon completely the old ways and accept something absolutely new.

**Mk 2:22. Mt 9:17. Lk 5:37-39.** *'Wineskins'*: In ancient times goatskins were used to hold wine. When new wine was put into them, it was still fermenting and giving off gas. As a result, when the wine would expand, the new wineskins would stretch and stand the stress. But a used skin, already stretched, would break. *'The old is better'*: It may be that, at the moment, it is a mistake to despise the new wine, for, later, it will mature and be the best. The meaning of the two parables is that Jesus brings a newness that cannot be confined with the old forms. Jesus was pointing to the reluctance of many people to change and accept his ways.

***Lord of the Sabbath*** [Mark 2:23-28 Matthew 12:1-8 Luke 6:1-5] See page 384

**(Mk2:23)(Mt12:1)(Lk6:1)** *At that time, on one Sabbath, Jesus was going through the grainfields. His disciples were hungry and, as they walked along, they began to pick some heads of grain, rub them in their hands and eat the kernels. (Mk2:24)(Mt12:2)(Lk6:2) When some of the Pharisees saw this, they said to him, "Look! Why are your disciples doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?"*

**(Mk2:25)(Mt12:3)(Lk6:3)** *Jesus answered them, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need? (Mk2:26)(Mt12:4)(Lk6:4) In the days of Abiathar the High Priest, he entered the House of Yahweh, and taking the consecrated bread, he and his companions ate the consecrated bread -which was not lawful for them to do, but only for the priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions. (Mt12:5) Or haven't you read in the Law that on the Sabbath the priests in the Temple desecrate the day and yet are innocent? (Mt12:6) I tell you that One greater than the Temple is here. (Mt12:7) If you had known what these words mean, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the innocent. (Mk2:27-28)(Mt12:8)(Lk6:5) Then Jesus said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."*



**Mk 2:23. Mt 12:1. Lk 6:1.** *'Going through the grainfields. Pick some heads of grain...'*: In Palestine at the time of Jesus the grainfields and the cultivated lands were arranged in long narrow strips; and the ground between those strips was always a right of way. It was on one of these strips between the grainfields that Jesus and the disciples were walking when this incident happened. The disciples were not stealing. The Law expressly laid it down that the hungry travelers were entitled to do just what the disciples were doing, as long as they only used their hands to pluck the corn, and did not use any cutting tool.

**Mk 2:24. Mt 12:2. Lk 6:2.** *'What is unlawful on the Sabbath'*: The disciples were doing what, on an ordinary day, was freely permitted (Deuteronomy 23:25). But this was the Sabbath, and by their action the disciples had technically broken four rules about reaping, winnowing, threshing, and preparing a meal. The Pharisees immediately launched their accusation and pointed out that Jesus' disciples were breaking the law.

**Mk 2:25-26. Mt 12:3-4. Lk 6:3-4.** *'Jesus answered them'*: Instead of stopping his disciples, Jesus answered the Pharisees in their own language. *'Have you never read what David did...'*: He cited the story which is told in 1 Samuel 21:1-6. David was fleeing for his life, he came to the Tabernacle in Nob -not the Temple, because this happened in the days before the Temple was built- he demanded food and there was none except the consecrated bread. In this time of need David took and ate that bread. Of course, the Pharisees had read it, but they had never seen what it meant. They did read Scripture meticulously, they knew each word of it, they were able to quote the whole text, and yet they completely missed its real meaning. *'In the days of Abiathar the High Priest'*: Anyway, according to 1 Samuel 21:1, not Abiathar, but Ahimelec, Abiathar's father was then High Priest. *'Consecrated bread'*: Each Sabbath, 12 fresh loaves of bread were to be set on a table in the Holy Place. The old loaves were to be eaten only by the priests. This was the bread David and his companions ate. Jesus showed that Scripture itself supplied a precedent in which human need took precedence of human and even divine law. The relationship between the Old Testament incident and the apparent infringement of the Sabbath by the disciples lies in the fact that on both occasions godly men did something legally forbidden. Since, however, it is always "lawful" to do good and to save life (even on the Sabbath), both David and the disciples were within the real spirit of the Law.

**Mt 12:5.** *'The priests in the Temple desecrate the day'*: By doing work associated with the sacrifices. The Temple rituals always involved work -the preparation of fires, the slaughter and preparation of animals, the lifting of them on to the altar, and plenty of other activities. This work was actually doubled on the Sabbath, when the offerings were doubled. Any of these actions would have been illegal for any ordinary person to perform on the Sabbath day. But for the priests it was perfectly legal to do all these things, for the Temple worship must go on. That is to say, worship offered to Yahweh took precedence of all the Sabbath rules and regulations.

**Mt 12:6.** *'One greater than the Temple'*: Jesus proclaims himself more important than the Temple. Being Jesus a man, it refers for extension to the human race which is also -for Yahweh- more important than the Temple.

**Mt 12:7.** *'I desire mercy, not sacrifice'*: Here Jesus is quoting to the Pharisees Hosea 6:6. What Yahweh desires far more than ritual sacrifice is kindness, the attitude of the man who knows no other law than that he must answer the call of human need. Religion does not consist in rules and rituals. People are far more important than rituals. The best way to worship Yahweh is to help men. The best way to use "sacred" things is to use them to help men. That, in fact, is the only way to give them to Yahweh.

**Mk 2:27-28. Mt 12:8. Lk 6:5.** *'The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath'*: Jewish tradition had so multiplied the requirements and restrictions for keeping the Sabbath that the burden had become intolerable. Jesus cut across these traditions and emphasized the Yahweh-given purpose of the Sabbath -a day intended for man (for spiritual, mental and physical restoration). Man was created before the elaborate Sabbath law came into existence. Man was not created to be the victim and the slave of Sabbath rules and regulations which were initially developed to make life better. *'For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath'*: Jesus is claiming to be the Lord of the Sabbath, in the sense that he is entitled to use the Sabbath as he thinks appropriate; that he has the authority to overrule all the laws concerning the Sabbath, particularly as interpreted by the Pharisees. Furthermore, we have to notice that on this occasion Jesus is not defending himself for anything he did on the Sabbath; he is defending his disciples; and the authority which he is stressing here is not only his own but even that of the human need. Then we can conclude that what Jesus said here is: "Man is not slave of the Sabbath; he is the master of it, to use it for his own good."

**A man with a shriveled hand**

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[Mark 3:1-6 Matthew 12:9-14 Luke 6:6-11]

**(Mk3:1-2)(Mt12:9-10)(Lk6:6-7)** *Going on from that place, on another Sabbath he went into the synagogue and was teaching, and a man was there whose right hand was shriveled. Some of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath. They asked him, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?"*

**(Mk3:3)(Lk6:8)** *But Jesus knew what they were thinking and said to the man with the shriveled hand, "Get up and stand in front of everyone." So he got up and stood there.*

**(Mk3:4)(Lk6:9)** *Then Jesus asked them, "I ask you, which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill and destroy it?" But they remained silent.*

**(Mt12:11)** *He said to them, "If any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will you not take hold of it and lift it out? (12)How much more valuable is a man than a sheep! Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath."*

**(Mk3:5)(Mt12:13)(Lk6:10)** *Then he looked around at them all in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He did so, he stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored, just as sound as the other.*

**(Mk3:6)(Mt12:14)(Lk6:11)** *But they were furious and began to discuss with one another what they might do to Jesus. Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus.*

**Mk 3:1-2. Mt 12:9-10. Lk 6:6-7.** *'He went into the synagogue and was teaching'*: By this time the opposition to Jesus was quite open. He was teaching in the synagogue on the Sabbath day knowing that the Scribes and the Pharisees were there with the specific purpose to watch him so that, if he healed somebody, they could charge him with breaking the Sabbath law. *'Shriveled hand'*: The Greek word used here for hand means that the man had not been born that way but that the paralysis was due to some illness. *'Some of the Pharisees and of the teachers of the law'*: In the synagogue there was a deputation from the Sanhedrin. No one could miss them for, in the synagogue, the front seats were the seats of honor and they were sitting there. It was the duty of the Sanhedrin to deal with anyone who was likely to mislead the people and deviate them from the right way. And it is precisely what this deputation conceived of themselves as doing. The last

thing they were there to do was to worship; they were there to scrutinize every action of Jesus. *'Looking for a reason to accuse Jesus'*: Jesus' activity demanded a decision about his preaching, his acts and his person. *'To see if he would heal him on the Sabbath'*: An indication that the Pharisees believed in Jesus' power to perform miracles. The question was not "Could he?" but "Would he?" For the Jewish tradition healing on the Sabbath was prohibited, unless it was feared that the victim would die before the next day. In this case there was no question of the paralyzed man's life being in danger, surely he would be in no worse condition by the next day. Jesus knew the law, he knew what he was doing; he knew that the Pharisees were waiting and watching; and yet he healed the man. Jesus would accept no law which insisted that a man should suffer, even without danger to his life, one moment longer than necessary. His affection for humanity far surpassed his respect for ritual law. *'Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?'*: The Scribes and the Pharisees were not concerned with the man with the paralyzed hand; they were only concerned with the minutiae of their rules and regulations.

**Mk 3:3. Lk 6:8.** *'Get up and stand in front of everyone'*: There were two reasons for that. Very likely Jesus wished to make one last effort to waken sympathy for the stricken man by showing everyone his wretchedness. And quite certainly Jesus wished to take the step he was going to take in such a way that no one could possibly fail to see it. So there would be no question about the healing.

**Mk 3:4. Lk 6:9.** *'Jesus asked them'*: Jesus knew that, to answer properly to the Pharisees' question, he had to meet them on their own ground. *'I ask you, which is lawful on the Sabbath?'*: Jesus had been enduring questions and attacks from the Pharisees and now took the initiative by putting the question to everyone in the synagogue. *'To do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?'*: Here Jesus asked, "Which is better, to preserve life by healing or to destroy life by refusing to heal?" The question is ironic since, whereas Jesus was ready to heal, the Pharisees were plotting to put him to death. It was he who was seeking to save and they who were seeking to destroy. It is obvious who was guilty of breaking the Sabbath.

**Mt 12:11-12.** *'If anyone of you has a sheep...'*: That was, in fact, a case for which the law provided. If an animal fell into a pit on the Sabbath, then it was within the law to carry food to it, which in any case would have been a burden, and to render it all necessary assistance. So it is demonstrated that it is permitted to do good to a sheep on the Sabbath. *'Therefore, it is lawful...'*: And, if it is permitted to do good to a sheep, how much more it has to be lawful to do good to a man, who is of so much more value than any animal.

**Mk 3:5. Mt 12:13. Lk 6:10.** *'He looked around at them'*: Jesus wanted to see whether anyone objected to his question or to the implied answer, but no one was bold enough to do so. *'Deeply distressed'*: Jesus was and is always sad when people refuse him. *'Stretch out your hand'*: Then Jesus with a word of power healed the man in front of the whole assembly.

**Mk 3:6. Mt 12:14. Lk 6:11.** *'They were furious'*: Because they could not withstand Jesus' reasoning. *'The Pharisees went out'*: Once defeated, they couldn't stay inside any more for the rest of the service. *'And began to plot'*: Anyway, the decision to seek Jesus' death was not the result of this incident alone, but was the response to a series of incidents. *'Herodians'*: Influential Jews who favored the Herodian dynasty, meaning they were supporters of Rome, from which the Herods received their authority. They joined the Pharisees in opposing Jesus because they feared he might have an unsettling political influence on the people.

**Crowds follow Jesus, Yahweh's Chosen Servant**

See page 386

*[Mark 3:7-12 Matthew 12:15-21 Luke 6:17-19]*

*(Mk3:7-8)(Mt12:15)(Lk6:17-18a)* Aware of this, Jesus withdrew with his disciples from that place, went down with them to the lake and stood on a level place. And a large crowd from Galilee followed him, and he healed all their sick. A large crowd of his disciples was there and, when they heard all he was doing, a great number of people came to him from all over Judea, from Jerusalem, Idumea, and the regions across the Jordan and from the coast around Tyre and Sidon, to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. *(Mk3:9)* Because of the crowd he told his disciples to have a small boat ready for him, to keep the people from crowding him. *(10)* For he had healed many, so that those with diseases were pushing forward to touch him. *(Lk6:18b)* Those troubled by evil spirits were cured, *(19)* and the people all tried to touch him, because power was coming from him and healing them all. *(Mk3:11)* Whenever the evil spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, "You are the Son of Yahweh." *(Mk3:12)(Mt 12:16)* But he gave them strict orders, warning them not to tell who he was. *(Mt12:17)* This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah:

*(18)* "Here is My servant whom I have chosen, the One I am fond of, in whom I delight; I will put My Spirit on him, and he will proclaim justice to the nations.

*(19)* He will not quarrel, or cry out; no one will hear his voice in the streets.

*(20)* A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out, till he leads justice to victory. *(21)* In his name the nations will put their hope."

**Mk 3:7-8. Mt 12:15. Lk 6:17-18.** 'Aware of this, Jesus withdrew... to the lake': Unless Jesus was willing to fight with the religious authorities, he had to leave definitively the synagogues. It was not that he withdrew because of fear, but his hour was not yet come; there was much he had still to do and say before the time of final conflict. So he left the synagogues and went out to the lakeside. 'Stood on a level place': A kind of plateau, from which it would have been possible to be seen and heard by the crowd. 'A large crowd from Galilee. A great number of people... from...': Here we see impressive evidence of Jesus' rapidly growing popularity among the people. This geographical list indicates that the crowds came not only from the areas in the vicinity of Capernaum, but also from considerable distances. The regions mentioned included virtually all of Israel and its surrounding neighbors. 'To be healed': As usual, after preaching, Jesus was healing the sick and casting out demons.

**Mk 3:9.** 'A small boat ready for him': So large were the crowds that it became impossible to be seen and heard by everybody, even from a plateau.

**Mk 3:10. Lk 6:18-19.** 'All tried to touch him': Furthermore he was in danger of being crushed by the huge number of sick people who did not even wait for him to touch them, but who rushed to touch him. 'Power was coming from him': So intense was Jesus' involvement with the sufferances of the sick, that on those occasions it was sufficient to touch him to be healed.

**Mk 3:11.** 'The evil spirits fell down': Actually, it was through the demon-possessed men, who fell on their knees in front of Jesus. 'You are the Son of Yahweh': The evil spirits recognized who Jesus was.

**Mk 3:12. Mt12:16.** 'Not to tell who he was': The time for revealing Jesus' identity had not yet come, and demons were hardly the proper channel for such disclosure. Furthermore, he knew only too well how many false Messiah had arisen; and how inflammable the people were in Palestine. If the idea got around that someone with marvelous powers had emerged, then certainly a political rebellion would have arisen and plenty of

lives would have been needlessly lost. First and foremost, he had to teach that Messiahship meant not crushing power but sacrificial service, not a throne but a cross.

**Mt 12:17-21.** *'Spoken through... Isaiah'*: Matthew is quoting Isaiah 42:1-4. In the first instance it referred to Cyrus, the Persian king, a conqueror. *'My servant whom I have chosen'*: Cyrus, also if he did not know it, was an instrument of Yahweh. And as Cyrus was the master of the eastern world for Isaiah, so Jesus is the Master of the whole world for Matthew. *'He will proclaim justice to the nations'*: Jesus came to bring men justice, to show men how to live in a proper way, respecting both Yahweh and other men. *'He will not quarrel or cry out'*: The word used for "cry out" is the word used for complaining aloud. It means that Jesus would not quarrel and complain with men, but he will conquer them by his affection. *'A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out'*: Jesus did not come to discourage the already weak, but to encourage and to understand them, to make them stronger. *'In his name the nations...'*: Jesus came into the world not to a nation only, but to all men, to offer everyone Yahweh's affection.

### **The appointing of the Twelve Apostles**

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[Mark 3:13-19 Matthew 10:2-4 Luke 6:12-16]

**(Mk3:13-15)(Lk6:12-13)** *One of those days Jesus went out up on a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to Yahweh. When morning came, he called to him those of his disciples he wanted and chose Twelve of them, and they came to him. He appointed Twelve, whom he also designated Apostles, that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons. (Mk 3:16-19)(Mt10:2-4)(Lk6:14-16)* *These are the names of the Twelve Apostles he appointed: first, Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter) and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee and his brother John (to them he gave the name Boanerges, which means Sons of Thunder); Philip and Bartholomew, Matthew the tax collector and Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus (Judas son of James), Simon who was called the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him and became a traitor.*

**Mk 3:13-15. Lk 6:12-13.** *'Jesus... spent the night praying to Yahweh'*: Characteristically, Jesus spent the night in prayer before the important work of selecting his 12 Apostles. *'He called... those of his disciples...'*: Among those who came to hear Jesus there was a group who regularly followed him and who were committed to his teaching. At least 84 men were included, since 72 other disciples were later sent out on an evangelistic campaign (Jesus sends out the 72. Lk 10:1-11,16-20,23-24). *'He... chose twelve of them. He appointed twelve... designated Apostles'*: Jesus had to choose a group of men who will disseminate his message, and he chose them from his disciples. The word "disciple" means "learner," and the word "apostle" means "one sent out with a special commission." An apostle can be used as an envoy or an ambassador. So, they were to be his ambassadors to men. *'That they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach'*: First, Jesus called them to be with him. If they were to do his work in the world, they had to abandon their former occupation and to live for a certain period of time close to him, so they could be properly prepared. Second, he called them to send them out, to be his representatives in the world. The training of the Twelve included not only instruction and practice in various forms of ministry, but also continuous association and intimate fellowship with Jesus himself, so later they could spread all around his message. *'Authority to drive out demons'*: Furthermore, he had to give them special powers; the power to cast out demons in his name, and the power to heal.

**Mk 3:16-19. Mt 10:2-4. Lk 6:14-16.** *'Sons of Thunder'*: Most probably descriptive of their characters. *'Bartholomew'*: He is (in the Synoptics) the same as Nathanael (in John). Nathanael is associated with Philip in 'Jesus calls Philip and Nathanael.' (Jn 1:43-51). *'James son of Alphaeus'*: Probably the same as "James the younger" (The death of Jesus. Mk 15:33-42a; Mt 27:45-56; Lk 23:44-49; Jn 19:28-37). *'Thaddaeus'*: The same as "Judas son of James." *'Judas Iscariot'*: The only one from Judea, the others were coming from Galilee. Iscariot means "the man from Kerioth," the town Kerioth Hezron, 12 miles (19 Km) south of Hebron.

About the Twelve themselves we have to note two things. First, they were very ordinary men. The work of Jesus was not given in the hands of men whom the world would call great, but in the hands of ordinary people. Second, they were a strange mixture. For example, Matthew was a tax collector and, therefore, a traitor and renegade. Simon was a Zealot, and the Zealots were fanatical nationalists, who were sworn to assassinate every traitor and every Roman they could. So, in other circumstances, Simon the Zealot would have surely tried to kill Matthew. But, now, these people had some special characteristics. They had felt the magnetic attraction of Jesus, and they had the courage to show that they were on his side. And that really did require courage. Jesus was calmly crashing through the rules and regulations of the scribal law, heading for an inevitable collision with the orthodox leaders. And, in effect, he was already labeled as an heretic.

### **Jesus and Beelzebub**

*See page 387*

*[Mark 3:20-30 Matthew 12:22-32 Luke 11:14-23;12:10]*

**(Mk3:20)***Then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat. (21)When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, "He is out of his mind."*

**(Mt12:22)***Then they brought him a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute, and Jesus healed him, so that he could both talk and see. (Lk11:14)Then Jesus was driving out a demon that was mute. When the demon left, the man who had been mute spoke, and the crowd was amazed. (Mt12:23)All the people were astonished and said, "Could this be the Son of David?"*

**(Mk3:22)(Mt12:24)(Lk11:15)***But when the Pharisees and the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem heard this, some of them said, "He is possessed by Beelzebub! It is only by Beelzebub, the prince of demons, that this fellow drives out demons." (Lk11:16)Others tested him by asking for a sign from Heaven.*

**(Mk3:23-25)(Mt12:25)(Lk11:17)***Jesus knew their thoughts and so he called them and spoke to them in parables: "How can Satan drive out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand and will be ruined. If a city or household is divided against itself, it cannot stand and will fall. (Mk3:26)(Mt12:26)(Lk11:18)And if Satan drives out Satan, if he opposes himself and is divided against himself, he cannot stand; his end has come. How then can his kingdom stand? I say this because you claim that I drive out demons by Beelzebub. (Mt12:27)(Lk11:19)And now if I drive out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your followers drive them out? So then, they will be your judges. (Mt12:28)(Lk11:20)But if I drive out demons by the Spirit, by the finger, of Yahweh, then the Kingdom of Yahweh has come upon you.*

**(Mk3:27)(Mt12:29)(Lk11:21)***Or again, when a strong man, fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are safe. In fact, how can anyone enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man? Then he can rob his house. (Lk11:22)But when someone stronger attacks and overpowers*

*him, he takes away the armor in which the man trusted and divides up the spoils.*

*(Mt12:30)(Lk11:23)He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters. (Mk3:28-29)(Mt12:31)And so I tell you the truth, every and all sins and blasphemies of men will be forgiven them, but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit of Yahweh will never be forgiven; he is guilty of eternal sin. (Mt12:32)(Lk12:10)And anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks or blasphemes against the Spirit of Yahweh will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come." (Mk3:30)He said this because they were saying, "He has an evil spirit."*

**Mk 3:20.** *'A house':* Most probably the home of Peter and Andrew.

**Mk 3:21.** *'His family... went to take charge of him':* They had come to Capernaum from Nazareth, some 30 miles (48 Km) away. His own family -in this case most probably his mother and his brothers- had come to the conclusion that something was really wrong with him, and that it was time to take him home. It is not so difficult to understand why they felt like that. Jesus had left home and a good carpenter business to become a wandering preacher, and he was really at odd with the Jewish leaders, the Scribes and the Pharisees, in this way putting in real danger his own life. Furthermore, Jesus had a very strange group of followers, certainly not the proper kind of friends. *'He is out of his mind'*: What appalled Jesus' family was the risks that he was taking, which no sensible man would take. They were trying to justify him as being "out of his mind," that is, not responsible for his actions.

**Mk 12:22-23. Lk 11:14.** *'A demon-possessed man who was blind and mute. Driving out a demon that was mute':* In this occasion Jesus cured two men -one deaf and mute and one only mute- whose infirmities were attributed to demon-possession. *'The crowd was amazed. All the people were astonished. Could this be the Son of David?'*: The people were amazed. They began to wonder if this Jesus could be the promised and so long expected Messiah, the great Savior and Liberator. Their doubt was due to the fact that Jesus was so unlike the picture of the Messiah they all had in their minds. He was no glorious prince, he did not have any army, he was not calling men to war. He was a simple carpenter, with words of gentle and serene wisdom, with eyes full of compassion, and with hands full of mysterious powers.

**Mk 3:22. Mt 12:24. Lk 11:15.** *'He is possessed by Beelzebub':* Beelzebub, the prince of the demons, Satan. *'It is only by the prince of the demons that this fellow drives out demons'*: They did say that Jesus was in league with the prince of demons and that it was by the great demon that he was casting out the little demons. It was "black magic" what they claimed Jesus was practicing; when the exorcist calls to his aid some stronger power to drive out the weaker demon.

**Lk 11:16.** *'A sign from Heaven':* Jesus had just liberated two men from the evil spirits. Here there was their sign, and they would not recognize it.

**Mk 3:23-27. Mt 12:25-29. Lk 11:17-22.** *'Jesus knew their thoughts...':* Even here, the orthodox leaders did not question Jesus' power to exorcise demons. The Jews themselves did practice exorcism, expelling demons. Josephus, the historian, traces this practice and power back to Solomon. Part of Solomon's wisdom was that he was skillful with herbs and had invented incantations which drove out demons in such a way that they never came back. And Solomon's methods were still used by the Jewish exorcists. *'If I drive out... by whom...?'*: If Jesus was practicing exorcism by the power of the prince of devils, then they must be doing the same, for they were dealing with the same diseases

and had at least sometimes the same results. And Jesus objected with the two examples, or parables, of "Satan driving out Satan (the divided kingdom or house)" and "The strong man tied up and robbed." If Satan gave power to Jesus, who opposed him in every way, Satan would be supporting an attack upon himself. *'Then, they will be your own judges'*: The followers of the Pharisees actually drove out demons, but they claimed to drive them by the power of Yahweh, and Jesus claimed the same. So to accuse Jesus of using Satanic power was implicitly to condemn their own followers as well. And so these followers will be their judges, they will condemn the Pharisees for their accusation against him. Jesus said: "If I am casting out demons -and this you do not deny- it means that I have invaded the territory of Satan, that I am actually as a burglar despoiling his house. The very fact that I have been able so successfully to invade Satan's territory is proof that he is powerless to resist." The picture of the binding of the strong man is taken from Isaiah 49:24-26. Jesus was "entering a strong man's house and carrying off his possessions" when he freed people from Satan's control. Jesus was stronger than Beelzebub, and his exorcism of demons demonstrated that he had overpowered Satan and disarmed him. It was therefore foolish to suggest that Jesus had cast out demons by Satan's power. The defeat of the demons did not show that Jesus was in alliance with Satan; it showed that Satan's defenses had been breached; that a stronger man had arrived; that the conquest of Satan's kingdom had begun. Jesus was casting out demons and healing using the power that Yahweh had given him ("By the Spirit, by the finger, of Yahweh"). And, for Jesus, the healing of sufferers was always proof that the doors of the Kingdom of Yahweh were, because of himself, open to all people of the Earth. To note that Jesus accepted life as a struggle between the power of evil and the power of Yahweh. He did not waste his time in speculations arguing about where evil come from; but he did deal with it most effectively, and gave to others the power to overcome evil and do the right. Furthermore, Jesus regarded the defeat of disease as a part of the conquest of Satan. This is an essential part of Jesus' thought. He desired, and was able, to save men's bodies as well as men's souls.

**Mt 12:30. Lk 11:23.** *'Who is not with me is against me...'*: This is Jesus' declaration of behavior and conduct and it is valid for everybody and for ever. He who intentionally does not support Jesus, actually opposes him. *'Gather... scatters'*: This picture can come both from harvesting and from shepherding. It is impossible to be neutral, there is no place for neutrality in the Christian life. The man who stands apart, unconcerned, from the good cause automatically helps the evil one.

**Mk 3:28-30. Mt 12:31-32. Lk 12:10.** *'I tell you the truth'*: A solemn affirmation used by Jesus to strengthen his assertions. *'Whoever blasphemes against the Spirit of Yahweh will never be forgiven'*: Verses Mk 3:22 ("He is possessed by Beelzebub") and Mk 3:30 ("He has an evil spirit") identify this sin. When the teachers of the law attributed Jesus' healing to Satan's power rather than Yahweh's, they showed to be able to look at Yahweh's benevolence and to think it the expression of the power of Satan. This sin has no forgiveness in the sense that, if a man has got himself into such a state, by repeatedly refusing to listen to the word of the Spirit of Yahweh, that he can't see anything in Jesus at all, then the sight of Jesus will not give him any sense of sin. Because he has no sense of sin he cannot be penitent, and because he is not penitent he cannot be forgiven. This is the sin against the Spirit of Yahweh. *'Will not be forgiven... either in this age or in the age to come'*: There is only one condition for forgiveness and that is penitence. This is the first indication, in the Gospels, that Jesus' saving action will be available -to everybody- both in this life (this age) and after death (in the age to come).



***A tree and its fruit*** [Matthew 7:15-23;12:33-37 Luke 6:43-45] See page 388

***(Mt7:15)"Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. (16)By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? (17)Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. (Mt7:18;12:33)(Lk6:43-44)Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad. No good tree will bear bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. For each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thornbushes, or grapes from briars. (Mt7:19)Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. (20)Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.***

***(Mt12:34-35)(Lk6:45)You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks. (Mt12:36)But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. (37)For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.***

***(Mt7:21)Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in Heaven. (22)Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' (23)Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'"***

**Mt 7:15-20;12:33. Lk 6:43-44.** *'Prophets'*: In the New Testament this definition primarily applies to people who give a message from Yahweh, rarely who predict future events. *'Sheep's clothing'*: The sheepskin mantle had become the "uniform" of the Jewish prophets, distinguishing them from the other men. But sometimes it was used by people who had no right to wear it. So they were to be judged not by they appearance, but by their "fruit;" their preaching, actions, and requests. *'Watch out for...'*: This is another of Jesus' characteristic teachings by example, or parables, meaning: "As you can only tell a tree's quality by its fruits, so it is for a man's character, which you can tell by his deeds." A man cannot be judged in any other way than by his actions. "So, if I have done good actions, you must admit that I am a good man; on the contrary, if I have done bad actions, then you can consider me a bad man."

**Mt 12:34-37. Lk 6:45.** *'How can you...'*: After speaking of a man's deeds, Jesus takes into consideration the responsibility a man has for the words he speaks. The Scribes and the Pharisees had just spoken the most terrible words. They had looked on the Son of Yahweh and called him an ally of the devil. Here Jesus affirms a new important concept. The state of a man's heart can be seen through the words he speaks. Nothing shows the state of a man's heart so well as the words he speaks when he is not carefully considering them, when he is speaking freely. When he is off his guard, his words reveal his character.

**Mt 7:21-23.** *'Not everyone who...'*: There is an apparently surprising feature about this passage. Jesus is ready to concede that many of the false prophets will do and say wonderful and impressive things. There were and there are many charlatans who are rendering a lip service to Jesus Christ, and who use his name to produce wonderful effects, even driving out demons. What Jesus is saying is that if any man use his name on false pretenses, the day of reckoning will come. His real motives will be exposed, and he will be banished from the presence of Yahweh. They can deceive men with their words, but they cannot deceive Yahweh, who sees their true hearts.

***The sign of Jonah*** [Matthew 12:38-42 Luke 11:29-32] See page 389

***(Mt12:38-39)(Lk11:29)Then, as the crowd increased, some of the Pharisees and teachers of the law said to him, "Teacher, we want to see a miraculous sign from you." Jesus answered, "This is a wicked and adulterous generation. It asks for a miraculous sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. (Mt12:40)For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the Earth. (Lk11:30)For as Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, so also will the Son of Man be to this generation. (Mt12:41)(Lk11:32)The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now one greater than Jonah is here. (Mt12:42)(Lk11:31)The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them; for she came from the ends of the Earth to listen to Solomon's wisdom, and now one greater than Solomon is here."***

**Mt 12:38-42. Lk 11:29-32.** *'A miraculous sign'*: It was characteristic of the Jews that they asked signs and wonders from those who claimed to be messengers of Yahweh. They wanted Jesus to do something sensational to prove that he really was the Anointed One of Yahweh, the Messiah. But Jesus always rejected this kind of requests because they had wrong motives. Instead, here, he cited them a "sign" taken from Israel history. *'A Wicked and adulterous generation'*: Referring to spiritual, not physical, adultery, in the sense that their generation had become unfaithful to her spiritual husband (Yahweh). The word "adulterous" here means "apostate." Behind it there is a favorite Old Testament picture, the relationship between Israel and Yahweh, which was conceived as a marriage bond with Yahweh the husband and Israel the bride. *'The sign of the prophet Jonah'*: Here there is a problem with Matthew's text. Matthew says that the sign is that, as Jonah was in the belly of a huge fish for three days and three nights, so the Son of Man will be in the earth for three days and three nights. But Luke does not mention at all of Jonah being in the belly of the fish. He simply writes that Jesus affirmed, "As Jonah became a sign to the men of Nineveh, so will the Son of man to this generation." Most probably Matthew understood wrongly the point of what Jesus said, and in so doing he made a strange mistake, for Jesus was in the tomb for two nights only (we do not have to forget that the Gospels are not the actual words of Jesus, but what the Evangelists could remember of them). The point is that to the Ninevites Jonah himself was Yahweh's sign, and Jonah's words were Yahweh's message. When Jonah preached, the men of Nineveh recognized the authentic voice of Yahweh and responded to it. Jesus was saying, "You are asking for a sign -I am Yahweh's sign. You have failed to recognize me. The Ninevites recognized Yahweh's warning in Jonah; when Solomon was king, the Queen of Sheba recognized Yahweh's wisdom in him and came from far to benefit from it. In me there has come to you a greater wisdom than Solomon ever had, and a greater message than Jonah ever brought, but you are so blind that you cannot see the truth and so deaf that you cannot hear the warning. And for this reason the day will come (the day of judgment) when these people of the old time, who recognized Yahweh when they saw him, will be witnesses against you, who had so much better a chance, and failed to recognize Yahweh because you refused to do so." The condemnation of these Jews would be all the more complete because their privileges were so great. *'Huge fish'*: The Greek word does not mean "whale" but rather "sea creature," in this case surely a huge fish. *'Queen of the South'*: In 1 Kings 10:1 she is called Queen of Sheba, a country in southwest Arabia, now called Yemen.

**An evil spirit leaving and coming back**

See page 389

*[Matthew 12:43-45 Luke 11:24-28]*

***(Mt12:43-44)(Lk11:24-25)"When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, 'I will return to the house I left.' When it arrives, it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order. (Mt 12:45)(Lk11:26)Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that man is worse than the first. That is how it will be with this wicked generation."***

***(Lk11:27)As Jesus was saying these things, a woman in the crowd called out, "Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you." (28)He replied, "Blessed rather are those who hear the Word of Yahweh and obey it."***

**Mt 12:43-45. Lk 11:24-28.** *'When an evil spirit comes out':* Jesus is referring to the work of the Jewish exorcists who, even if casting out demons, were actually rejecting the Kingdom of Yahweh. And so, very often, their exorcisms were effective only for a limited period of time, as they did not stop the demons from coming back. Here, Jesus is telling the terrible story of a man from whom an unclean spirit was expelled. *'It goes through...':* The cast out demon wandered around for a while seeking rest (a new host) and found none. At a certain point it decided to return to the man and *'Finds the house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order':* The man's soul (the house) had been cleaned up but left unoccupied, empty of any important spiritual content. *'Then it goes and takes with it...':* Here Jesus states the fundamental truth that a man's soul cannot be left empty. An empty soul is a soul in peril. It is not enough to drive out evil; good must come in. A soul liberated but lacking Yahweh's presence is open to reoccupancy by the devil. To note that the evil spirit was banished from the man, but not destroyed. Evil can be conquered and driven away, but it cannot be destroyed. And it is always looking for the opportunity to counter-attack and regain the ground that was lost. In actual practice, a man's life must not only be liberated from evil; it must be fructified to good. It therefore follows that the only permanent cure for evil action is Christian action. This applies to the teaching of the churches as well; any teaching which stops at telling a man what he must not do is bound to be a failure; it must go on to tell him what good he must do.

**Lk 11:27-28.** *'A woman... called out. He replied...':* These verses show Jesus speaking sternly but truly. The woman who spoke was carried away by a moment of emotion. Jesus pulled her back to reality. The moment of emotion is a fine thing; but the greatest thing is a life of obedience doing the will of Yahweh.

**Jesus' mother and brothers**

See page 390

*[Mark 3:31-35 Matthew 12:46-50 Luke 8:19-21]*

***(Mk3:31)(Mt12:46)(Lk8:19)Then while Jesus was still talking to the crowd, his mother and brothers came to see him, but they were not able to get near him because of the crowd. Standing outside, wanting to speak to him, they sent someone in to call him.***

***(Mk3:32)(Mt12:47)(Lk8:20)A crowd was sitting around him, and someone told him, "Your mother and brothers are standing outside looking for you, wanting to speak to you."***

***(Mk3:33-35)(Mt12:48-50)(Lk8:21)He replied to him, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and pointing to his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers. My mother and bro-***

***thers are those who hear Yahweh's Word and put it into practice. For whoever does the will of Yahweh my Father in Heaven is my brother and sister and mother."***

**Mk 3:31-32. Mt 12:46-47. Lk 8:19-20.** *'Jesus' mother and brothers came'*: Jesus' family, thinking he was "out of his mind," surely wanted to convince him to stop doing what he was doing. *'Brothers'*: They did not believe in Jesus at this time (Jesus at the Feast of the Tabernacles. Jn 7:1-13). These brothers were the sons of Joseph and Mary, younger half-brothers of Jesus. In 'A prophet without honor' (Mk 6:1-6a; Mt 13:53-58) even sisters are mentioned. *'Someone told him'*: The crowd was too compact to allow them to go through and reach him, so they had to send him word of their arrival.

**Mk 3:32-35. Mt 12:48-50. Lk 8:21.** *'Who is my mother, and who are my brothers? Whoever does Yahweh's will...'*: With his reply Jesus did not reject his natural family, but did emphasize the higher priority of the spiritual relationship to those who believed in him. Membership in Yahweh's spiritual family, evidenced by obedience to Jesus, is more important than membership in human families. During Jesus' lifetime his nearest and dearest never understood him, "For even his own brothers did not believe in him" (Jesus at the Feast of the Tabernacles. Jn 7:1-13). Mark tells us that when Jesus set out on his public mission, his relatives tried to restrain him, for they said that he was mad (Jesus and Beelzebub. Mk 3:20-30; Mt 12:22-32; Lk 11:14-23,12:10). To his friends and relatives he seemed engaged in throwing his life away in a kind of insanity.

In this passage there is a great and practical truth. It happens very often that a person finds himself closer to people who are not related to him than he does to his own kin. The deepest relationship in life is not merely a blood relationship; it is the relationship of mind to mind and heart to heart. It is when people have common aims, principles, interests, and goals that they become really and truly close. All those whose aim in life is to make Yahweh's will their will are the true kin of Jesus. When a man gives himself absolutely to Jesus he becomes one of a family whose boundaries are the Earth and the Heaven.

***The beatitudes. Blessings and woes*** [Matthew 5:1-12 Luke 6:20-26] See page 390

***(Mt5:1-2)(Lk6:20a)Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and looking at them, he began to teach them, saying:***

***(Mt5:3)(Lk6:20b)"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven, of Yahweh.***

***(Mt5:4)(Lk6:21a)Blessed are those who mourn and weep now, for they will be comforted and will laugh.***

***(Mt5:5)Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the Earth.***

***(Mt5:6)(Lk6:21b)Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness now, for they will be filled and satisfied.***

***(Mt5:7)Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.***

***(Mt5:8)Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see Yahweh.***

***(Mt5:9)Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of Yahweh.***

***(Mt5:10)Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.***

***(Mt5:11)(Lk6:22)Blessed are you when people hate and insult you, when they persecute you and exclude you and reject your name as evil and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me, the Son of Man.***

*(Mt5:12)(Lk6:23) Rejoice in that day and be glad and leap for joy, because great is your reward in Heaven. For in the same way their fathers treated and persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

*(Lk6:24) But woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort.*

*(Lk6:25) Woe to you who are well fed now, for you will go hungry.*

*Woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep.*

*(Lk6:26) Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for that is how their fathers treated the false prophets."*

**Mt 5:1-12. Lk 6:20-26.** *'Blessings and woes':* Matthew's "Sermon on the Mount" and Luke's "Sermon on the Plain" closely correspond. Both start with a series of beatitudes. There are differences between the two versions, but they both take the accepted standards and turn them upside down. The people whom Jesus called happy, the world would call wretched; and the people Jesus called wretched, the world would call happy. In Matthew's version there are 107 verses, of which 29 are found together in Lk 6:20-49; 47 have no parallel in Luke's version; and 34 are found scattered all over Luke's Gospel in different contexts. That is to say, passages which are consecutive in Matthew's Gospel appear in widely separated chapters in Luke's Gospel. In his version Matthew shows us Jesus instructing his disciples in the message which was his and which they were to take to men. In Luke's version the Sermon follows immediately the choosing of the Twelve who received from Jesus their ordination address before they went out to their task. In this Sermon we have the essence of the teaching of Jesus to the inner circle of his chosen men. It is clear that, actually, the Sermon on the Mount was not one single sermon which Jesus preached on one definite situation; it is the summary of his consistent teaching to his disciples.

**Mt 5:1-2. Lk 6:20.** *'Mountainside':* The exact location is uncertain. It may have been the gently sloping hillside at the northwest corner of the Sea of Galilee, not far from Capernaum. *'Sat down':* When a Jewish Rabbi was teaching officially, he sat to teach. The official teaching was only done when he had taken a seat, not when he was standing or walking.

**Mt 5:3. Lk 6:20.** *'Blessed':* Here, this word means more than "happy," because happiness is an emotion often dependent on external circumstances. "Blessed" refers to the ultimate well-being and distinctive spiritual joy of those who share in the salvation of the Kingdom of Yahweh. The word blessed which is used in each of the beatitudes is the Greek word "makarios," which has the meaning of perfect happiness. *'Poor in spirit':* The beatitudes were written in Greek, and the word which was used for "poor" was "ptochos," which describes absolute and abject poverty, the poverty which describes not the man who has nothing superfluous, but the man who has nothing at all, who is absolutely destitute. The man who, because he has no earthly resources whatever, puts his whole trust in Yahweh. Therefore "blessed the poor in spirit" means: "Blessed is the man who has realized his own absolute helplessness, and who has put his whole trust in Yahweh." The man who is poor in spirit is the man who has realized that things mean nothing, and that Yahweh means everything. This beatitude does not call poverty a good thing, which is not, and Jesus would never have called blessed a state were people live in slums and have not enough to eat, and were health rots because conditions are all against it. These "poor in spirit" are in absolute contrast to those who are spiritually proud and self-sufficient. *'Theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven':* Jesus says that to such a poverty belongs the Kingdom of Heaven, that only he who does Yahweh's will is a citizen of the Kingdom.

**Mt 5:4. Lk 6:21.** *'Those who mourn'*: A person can mourn for different reasons. (i) Because he has endured the bitterest sorrow that life can bring. But sorrow can show us, as nothing else can, the essential kindness of our fellow-men; and it can show us, as nothing else can, the comfort and the compassion of Yahweh. (ii) Because he has cared intensely about the sorrows and the sufferings of others. This, because to be Christian means caring for others and comforting them. (iii) Because he is desperately sorry for his own sins and his unworthiness. Christianity begins with a sense of sin, so a man can repent and find the joy and comfort of Yahweh.

**Mt 5:5.** *'The meek'*: This beatitude is taken from Psalm 37:11 and refers not so much to an attitude towards a man as a disposition before Yahweh, namely, humility. The word "meek" in English is hardly honorable; it carries an idea of spinelessness and of subservience; it paints the picture of a submissive and ineffective creature. The word used in the Greek original is "praus" and it carries a different meaning. It identifies the man who is always angry at the proper occasion; that is, not for an insult or an injury done to himself, but to other people. It identifies the true humility which banishes all pride. Without humility there can be no such a thing as affection; no true religion, which begins with the realization of our own weakness and of our need for Yahweh, and that without Yahweh man can do nothing. *'Inherit the Earth'*: Jesus says that people with this kind of meekness will inherit the Earth, that the Earth will obey to them. No man can lead others until he has mastered himself, and no man can serve others until he has subjected himself. Perhaps the best translation for "praus" would be "honorable gentleman." A man with such a character is a king among men.

**Mt 5:6. Lk 6:21.** *'Hunger and thirst'*: The fact is that very few of us in modern conditions of life know what it is to be really hungry and really thirsty. In the ancient world it was very different. A working man, a daily laborer in Palestine, was never far from the border line of real hunger and actual starvation. It was still more so in the case of thirst. So the hunger which this beatitude describes is not the one we are accustomed to and which could be satisfied with a mid-morning snack; the thirst of which it speaks is not the one which could be satisfied with a cup of coffee or an iced drink. It is the hunger of the man who is starving for food, and the thirst of the man who will die unless he drinks. *'Filled and satisfied'*: The man who is blessed is the man who longs for righteousness with his whole heart, but not necessarily the man who achieves this goodness. In His mercy Yahweh judges us, not only by our achievements, but also by our dreams. Even if a man never attains goodness, if he is still hungering and thirsting for it, he is not shut out from blessedness.

**Mt 5:7.** *'Merciful'*: Here we have the statement of a principle which runs all through the New Testament; that to be forgiven we must be forgiving, that indeed only the merciful shall receive mercy. Clearly this mercy is much more than an emotional wave of pity, and it demands a quite deliberate effort of the mind and of the will. An effort to get inside the other person's mind and heart, until seeing and feeling things as that person sees and feels them. In fact very often, when we wish to be kind, the kindness has to be given in our way, and the other person has to accept it whether he likes it or not. To make the effort of getting inside the other person would make forgiveness, and tolerance, ever so much easier. It is only those who show this mercy who will receive it.

**Mt 5:8.** *'Heart'*: Intending the center of one's being, including mind, will, and emotions. *'Pure in heart'*: This beatitude demands from us the most exacting self-examination. Are our good actions done for selfless motives or for motives of self-display and personal prestige? To examine one's own motives is a daunting and a shaming thing, for there

are few things in this world that even the best of us does with completely unmixed motives. It is important to remember that, when by Yahweh's grace we keep our hearts clean, or by human lust we soil them, we are anyway preparing ourselves for our final destiny, that is, to live some day in Yahweh's Kingdom.

**Mt 5:9.** *'Peace'*: The Greek word is "eirene," and the Hebrew is "shalom." This peace is never only a negative or a passive state; it never means only the absence of trouble. In the Bible peace means not only freedom from all trouble; it means enjoyment of all good. The blessing is for the peace-makers, not necessarily for those who only wish peace. What this beatitude demands is not the passive acceptance of things because we are afraid of the trouble of doing anything about them, but to operate actively for the making of peace, even when the way to peace is through struggle. *'Sons of Yahweh'*: This is a typical Hebrew expression. "Son of..." in Hebrew is an adjective; for example, a man is called a "son of peace" instead of a "peaceful man." In this beatitude, to be "son of Yahweh" means doing a Yahweh-like work. The man who makes peace is engaged on Yahweh's work. On the other hand, the man who divides men is doing the devil's work.

**Mt 5:10-11. Lk 6:22.** *'Persecute. Hate. Insult. Evil against'*: Jesus never left men any doubt about what would happen to them if they choose to follow him. He was clear that he had come "not to make life easy, but to make men great." This is still true, but it was particularly real at the beginning of the Christian era. It is hard for us to realize what the first Christians had to suffer, that every aspect of their life was disrupted. Their Christianity might well disrupt their work, their social life, and their home life. What about a stone-mason receiving an order to participate to the construction of a temple to a pagan god? Or a tailor asked to produce robes for the pagan priests? Could a Christian share in a feast held in the temple of a pagan god? Even an ordinary meal in an ordinary house began with a libation, a cup of wine poured in honor of the gods. Could a Christian share in a pagan act of worship like that? It happened quite often that a member of a family became a Christian while the others did not. Immediately there was a split in the family and often the door was shut for ever in the face of the one who had accepted Jesus. Furthermore, there were the Roman persecutions. It seems extraordinary that anyone living a Christian life should be persecuted and put to death. The great ground for persecution was political, not moral or religious. In fact, there was the problem of the worship of the Roman Emperor, which became compulsory for everybody. Once a year a man had to go and burn a pinch of incense to Caesar and say, "Caesar is lord." This Caesar's worship was far more a test of political loyalty than anything else. In actual fact when a man had burned his pinch of incense, he received a certificate and then he could go and worship any god he liked, so long as his worship did not interfere with public order. The Christians refused to conform, for them Jesus Christ was the Lord, and to no man would they give that title which belonged to Christ. The result was that, however good a man, however fine a citizen a Christian was, he was automatically an outlaw. In the vast empire Rome should not afford pockets of disloyalty, and this is exactly what every Christian congregation appeared to the Roman authorities to be.

**Mt 5:12. Lk 6:23.** *'Rejoice... your reward'*: It may seem extraordinary to talk about the bliss of the persecuted. To have to suffer persecution is an opportunity to show one's loyalty to Jesus Christ; is to walk the same road as the prophets. To suffer for the right is to gain a share in a great succession, it is to take part in the clash between the world and Jesus. To have a share in such an event is not a penalty but a glory. When a man has to suffer something for his faith, that is the shortest way to be in the company of Jesus.

**Lk 6:24-26.** *'Woe to':* Exactly the contrary than "blessed are," meaning affliction, bitter grief on and because of those who are considered in these verses. *'You already have received':* Here, the word Jesus uses for "received" is the word used for receiving payment in full of an account. What Jesus is saying is this, "if you set your heart and bend your whole energies to obtain the things which the world values, you will get them -but that is all you will ever get. But if on the other hand you set your heart and bend all your energies to be totally loyal to Yahweh, you will run into all kinds of trouble; you may by the world's standards look unhappy, but much of your payment is still to come; and it will be joy eternal." Jesus promised his disciples that they would be absolutely happy, and in constant trouble. Jesus teaches that the joy of Heaven will amply compensate for the trouble of Earth.

### ***The salt of the Earth***

*See page 391*

*[Mark 9:49-50 Matthew 5:13 Luke 14:34-35]*

***(Mk9:49-50)(Mt5:13)(Lk14:34-35)"Everyone will be salted with fire. You are the salt of the Earth. Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good and fit for anything, neither for the soil nor for the manure pile, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with each other."***

**Mk 9:49-50. Mt 5:13. Lk 14:34-35.** Here, as in many other occasions around the Gospels, the interpretation will become easier if we notice that often Jesus' sayings were written down without much reference to the occasion on which they were said. Actually, we often get a series of quite disconnected sayings set together because they stuck in the writer's mind in that order. Here, in particular, the sayings were put together because they all contain the word "salt," which is used in various ways as metaphor or illustration. As a result, we must take and interpret these sayings individually. *'Everyone will be salted with fire':* According to the Jewish Law every sacrifice had to be salted before it was offered to Yahweh on the altar (Leviticus 2:13). This saying of Jesus will then mean, "Before a Christian's life becomes acceptable to Yahweh it must be treated with fire just as every sacrifice is treated with salt." Fire is connected with purification and with dedication to Yahweh. This saying means that every Christian in this life can expect to undergo the purifying fire of suffering in order to be able to enter Yahweh's Kingdom. *'You are the salt of the earth. Salt is good, but...':* Salt has some characteristic virtues. First, it lends flavor to things which, without it, would be insipid. Second, salt was the earliest of all food preservatives, to keep them from going rotten. It is the task of the Christian to impart to society a moral flavor as salt physically does to the dish with which it is used. And, just as salt fights the corruption which inevitably attacks dead meat, so Christianity is to fight the corruption of the world. So then in this saying Jesus was challenging the Christians. If the Christians are to be the salt of the Earth, they must be the persons who by their presence fight corruption and make it easier for others to be good. Christianity is to life what salt is to food. As salt lends flavor to thing, so Christianity lends flavor to life; the Christian must be the diffuser of joy. *'Thrown out':* What Jesus is saying is that when a thing loses its essential quality and fails to perform its essential duty, it is fit for nothing but to be thrown away. To note that, in ancient Palestine, some salt -which clearly included some fertilizing compounds- was spread on the land, to make easier for all good things to grow. *'Have salt in yourselves and be at peace with each other':* In the ancient world salt was also a symbol of purity



So this will mean, "Have within yourselves the purifying influence of Jesus. Be purified from all your bad sides, and then, and then only, you will be able to live in peace with your fellow men."

***The light of the world*** [Mark 4:21 Matthew 5:14-16 Luke 8:16] See page 391  
***(Mk4:21)(Mt5:14-15)(Lk8:16)He said to them, "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. No one lights his lamp and hides it in a jar or puts it under a bed. Instead, he puts it on a stand, so that those who come in can see the light, and it gives light to everyone in the house. (Mt5:16)In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in Heaven."***

**Mk 4:21. Mt 5:14-16. Lk 8:16.** *'You are the light of the world...'*: This is the greatest compliment ever paid to the individual Christian, for in it Jesus declares that the Christian is what he himself claimed to be; the Light of the world. The Christians shine with the same light as Jesus. Now, a light is foremost something which is meant to be seen and to make see. So, then, Christianity is something which is meant to be seen and to make see. A man's Christianity should be perfectly visible to all men. Furthermore, this Christianity should not be visible only within the Church. It should be even more visible in the ordinary activities of the world. A light is a guide, something to make clear the way. So a Christian must make the way clear to others. That is to say, a Christian must necessarily be an example so all those with less courage will follow. Men are to see the good deeds of the Christians, and those deeds have to draw attention not to the Christians, but to Yahweh. *'Lamp'*: In Jesus' days people used small clay lamps that burned olive oil drawn up by a wick.

***The fulfillment of the Law*** [Matthew 5:17-20 Luke 16:16-17] See page 392  
***(Lk16:16)"The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John. Since that time, the Good News of the Kingdom of Yahweh is being preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it.***

***(Mt5:17)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. (18)I tell you the truth, until Heaven and Earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. (Lk16:17)It is easier for Heaven and Earth to disappear than for the least stroke of a pen to drop out of the Law. (Mt5:19)Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the Kingdom of Heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven. (20)For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the Kingdom of Heaven."***

**Lk 16:16.** *'Proclaimed until John...'*: Before Jesus the Law and the Prophets -Nehemiah had been the Old Testament last prophet- were the final word of Yahweh. But then Jesus came preaching the Good News of the Kingdom of Yahweh opened to everybody. And, when he did so, the most unlikely people, the tax collectors and the prostitutes -generally, the big sinners- came rushing into the Kingdom even if the scribes and the Pharisees -the orthodox Jews- were setting up barriers to keep them out.

**Mt 5:17-18. Lk 16:17.** *'Do not think...'*: Again and again Jesus broke what the Jews called the law. He did not observe the handwashings that this law laid down; he healed sick people on the Sabbath; he was in fact condemned and crucified as a law-breaker; and yet here he speaks of the Law as completely and absolutely valid. Jesus declares that the Law is so sacred that not the smallest detail of it will ever pass away. And, in effect, when we come to understand what the Law really means, we see that it is really inevitable that Jesus should have said it. *'The Law'*: For the Jews, the expression "The Law" had different meanings; it was used to indicate either the first five books of the Bible -the Pentateuch- or the whole of Scripture -called The Law and the Prophets- or the scribal law. In the time of Jesus it was the last meaning which was commonest. What, then, was this scribal law? In the Old Testament itself we find very few rules; what we do find are great, broad principles which a man must himself take and interpret under Yahweh's guidance, and apply to the individual situations in life. Later, to the Jews these great principles did not seem enough, and they argued that it was possible to deduce out of the Law a rule and a regulation for every possible situation in life. As a result, the Scribes did reduce the great principles of the Law to literally thousands upon thousands of rules and regulations which to them were the essence of religion. Furthermore, for many generations the scribal law was not written but oral, handed down in the memory of generations of Scribes. Now, what Jesus repeatedly broke and condemned were all those rules and regulations; they were certainly not what Jesus meant by "the Law." *'Not to abolish... fulfill'*: Jesus said he had come not to cancel the Law, but to fulfill it, to bring out the real meaning of the Law; that is, the great principle of reverence and respect. Reverence for Yahweh, respect for everybody else. That reverence and respect did not, and does not, consist in obeying a multitude of rules and regulations. Not in sacrifice, but in mercy, not in legalism, but in goodwill. Jesus fulfilled the Law in the sense that he gave it its full meaning. He emphasized its deep, underlying principles and his own total commitment to it rather than mere external acknowledgment and obedience. *'It is easier...'*: Jesus emphasized that the Kingdom was not the end of the Law, but that only the useless details and regulations of the ceremonial law were wiped out. No man was to think that Christianity offered an easy way in which no law remained. The great laws stood unaltered and unalterable.

**Mt 5:19.** *'Called the least... great in the Kingdom of Heaven'*: This is a clear declaration that, at a certain point, all people will enter Heaven, the Kingdom of Yahweh, without any exception. Only their "position" in the Kingdom -that is, the level of communion they will receive from and give to others- will be different. There will be the "great" -those who had tried to live a "Christian" life- and the "least" -those who will enter the Kingdom after a bad life and a long, redemptive, period in hell (Thoughts. At the end of time, everybody will be with Yahweh).

**Mt 5:20.** *'Righteousness'*: In this passage Jesus warns men not to think that Christianity is easy; he is warning that the righteousness of the Christians must be of a different, better kind than the righteousness of the Scribes and the Pharisees. For them, righteousness was a matter of respecting all their rules and regulations. Instead, for the Christians who want and try to be good -great- it is a matter of respecting the demand of fondness, brotherhood, and respect. *'Not enter...'*: The actual meaning is that those people who will be among "the least" will be able to enter the Kingdom of Yahweh only after recognizing -in this life or in the next- Jesus Christ and his interpretation of the Law (Thoughts. At the end of time, everybody will be with Yahweh).

***Do not murder*** [Matthew 5:21-26]

***(Mt5:21)"You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' (22)But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell.***

***(23)Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, (24)leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.***

***(25)Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still with him on the way, or he may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. (26)I tell you the truth, you will not get out until you have paid the last kodrantes."***

**Mt 5:21-22.** *'It was said.... But I tell you':* The contrast that Jesus sets up (here, and in Mt 5:27-28;31-32;33-34;38-39;43-44) is not between the Old Testament and his own teaching (he has just established the validity of the Old Testament Law). Rather, it is between the current legalistic and pedantic interpretation of the rabbinic tradition and his own correct interpretation of the Law. *'Do not murder':* This was the statement of the ancient Law (Exodus 20:13); but now Jesus declares that even anger against a brother is forbidden. To note that the Greek and Hebrew verbs used here and in Exodus 20:13 specifically mean "murder," not "kill." *'Angry':* First, Jesus speaks of the man who is angry with his brother; of an anger that becomes inveterate, not the anger which quickly blazes up and which just as quickly dies down. This long-lived anger is liable to judgment. The anger which Jesus condemns is the anger of the man who refuses to be pacified, who seeks revenge. *'Raca':* Then Jesus goes on to speak of two cases where anger turns into insulting words. Raca is the word of one who despises another man with an arrogant contempt. Raca may be related to the Aramaic word for "empty" and means "empty head." *'Fool':* At the time, to call a man fool was not to criticize his mental ability, it was to mark him as a loose-living and immoral person. So Jesus says that he who destroys his brother's good name and reputation is liable to judgment and punishment. *'Hell':* The Greek word is Gehenna, which derives its name from a deep ravine south of Jerusalem, the "Valley of (the sons) of Hinnom" (Hebrew "Ge Hinnom"), which became a sort of perpetually burning city dump and later a figure for the place of final punishment. What actually Jesus is saying here is this: "In the old days men condemned murder; and truly murder is for ever wrong. But I tell you that not only are a man's outward actions under judgment; his inmost thoughts are also under the scrutiny and the judgment of Yahweh. Long-lasting anger is bad; contemptuous speaking is worse, and the careless or the malicious talk which destroys a man's good name is worst of all."

**Mt 5:23-24.** *'If you are offering...':* When Jesus said this, he was reminding the Jews what the meaning of a sacrifice to Yahweh was. When a man did something wrong, that action disturbed the relationship between him and Yahweh, and the sacrifice was meant to be the cure which restored that relationship. To be effective, the sacrifice had to include true penitence; and true penitence involved the attempt to rectify any consequences the wrong action might have had. Jesus is quite clear about this basic fact -we cannot be right with Yahweh unless we are right with men.

**Mt 5:25-26.** *'Settle matters...'*: Here Jesus is giving a very important advice; to get trouble sorted out immediately, to avoid more trouble in the future. The picture of the two opponents walking together on the way to court seems to us very strange, and indeed very improbable. But in the ancient world it often happened. Litigation cases were settled by the local council of elders. A time was appointed when plaintiff and defendant had to appear together, and in any small town or village it was very likely for them to meet on the way to the court. *'Hand you over to the officer'*: When a man was declared guilty, he was handed over to the court officer, whose duty was to see that the penalty was duly paid, and, if not, he had the power to imprison the defaulter, until it was paid. Jesus' advice to take immediate action means that, if we are wrong, we must be humble enough to confess it and to make apology. It also means that, even if we are in the right, we have to take the first step and try to solve the problem. *'Kodrantēs'*: The smallest Roman coin. 64 kodrantēs were necessary to make one Greek drachma or one Roman denarius, which were the daily salary of a working man (1 drachma = 1 denarius = 16 assis = 64 kodrantēs).

**Causing to sin. Adultery. Sin, faith, duty**

See page 392

[Mark 9:42-48 Matthew 5:27-30;18:6-10 Luke 17:1-10]

**(Mt5:27)(Lk17:1a)** Jesus said to his disciples: "You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' (Mt5:28) But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

**(Mk9:42)(Mt18:6)(Lk17:2)** And if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone tied around his neck and to be thrown and drowned into the depths of the sea.

**(Mt18:7)(Lk17:1b)** Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to sin! Such things are bound to and must come, but woe to that person through whom they come!

**(Mk9:43-46)(Mt5:30;18:8)** And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body and to enter eternal life maimed than with two hands and your whole body to go into hell, where the fire never goes out, where

*'their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.'*

And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter eternal life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into the fire of hell, where

*'their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.'*

**(Mk9:47-48)(Mt5:29;18:9)** And if your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body and enter eternal life, the Kingdom of Yahweh, with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown with your whole body into the fire of hell, where

*'their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.'*

**(Mt18:10)** See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in Heaven always see the face of my Father in Heaven. (Lk17:3) So watch yourselves.

If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him. (4) If he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times comes back to you and says, 'I repent,' forgive him."

**(5)** The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!"

(6) *He replied, "If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it will obey you.*

(7) *Suppose one of you had a servant plowing or looking after the sheep. Would he say to the servant when he comes in from the field, 'Come along now and seat down to eat'? (8) Would he not rather say, 'Prepare my supper, get yourself ready and wait on me while I eat and drink; after that you may eat and drink'? (9) Would he thank the servant because he did what he was told to do? (10) So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.'"*

**Mt 5:27-28. Lk 17:1.** *'You have heard. But I tell you...':* Here we have another example of Jesus' standards. The Jewish Law laid it down, "Do not commit adultery" (Exodus 20:14). In effect, so serious was adultery for the Jews that the guilty parties could be punished by death. But now Jesus declares that not only the forbidden action, but also the forbidden thought is guilty in the sight of Yahweh. Of course, Jesus is not speaking of the natural, normal desire, which is part of human instinct and human nature. According to the literal meaning of the Greek text, the man who is condemned is the man who looks at a woman with the deliberate intention of lusting after her, and who deliberately stimulates his passion and desire.

**Mk 9:42. Mt 18:6. Lk 17:2.** *'Little ones who believe in me...':* Regularly, a teacher's disciples were called his "sons" or his "children." Therefore, a "little one" is a "beginner in the faith," one who has just begun to believe, who is not yet mature and established in the faith, one who may easily be deflected from the right way. *'If any one... it would be better...':* To be cast into the sea with a millstone -a heavy millstone of the type which was turned by an ass- was a punishment and a means of execution both in Rome and in Palestine. To sin is terrible but to teach another person to sin is infinitely worse. Yahweh is not hard on the sinner, but he will be very hard on the person who pushes another to sin, and whose conduct, either thoughtless or deliberate, puts a stumbling block in the path of a weaker brother. Jesus' point is clear: to cause even those whom we might consider to be the least of believers -the little ones- to sin will bring serious judgment.

**Mt 18:7. Lk 17:1.** *'Woe to the world... Such things... must come...':* It is clear and evident that this world is full of sins and temptations; and no one can go out into it without meeting some seduction to sin. Jesus actually says, "It is perfectly true that the world is full of temptations but, even if this is inevitable in a world into which sin has entered, it does not reduce the responsibility of the person who is badly influencing a younger one or a beginner in the faith."

**Mk 9:43-48. Mt 5:29-30; 18:8-9.** *'If your... causes you to sin...':* This passage lays down in vivid eastern language the basic truth that there is one goal in life worth any sacrifice. In physical matter the amputation of some limb or the excision of some part of the body by surgical means is sometimes the only way to preserve the life of the whole body. In the spiritual life the same kind of thing can happen. Jesus' examples are taken from some of the many Jewish Rabbis sayings which were based on the way in which some parts of the body can sin. It is evident that Jesus is not teaching self-mutilation, but that he is asking each man to take strong action against sin. *'Their worm':* Here there is again a reference to Hinnom, the valley of Gehenna, where the refuse of Jerusalem was burned at all times. The actual phrase about the worm which does not die, and the fire which is

not quenched, comes from a description of the fate of Israel's evil enemies in Isaiah 66:24.

This passage actually states that it is worth any sacrifice to do the will of Yahweh. It means that it may be necessary to excise some habit, to abandon some pleasure, to give up some friendship, to cut out some thing which has become very dear to us, in order to be fully obedient to the will of Yahweh. The rooting out may be as painful as a surgical operation, it may seem like cutting out part of our body, but it must go on.

**Mt 18:10.** *'Do not look down...'*: Finally Jesus stresses the supreme importance of the beginners in the faith -the children, too, are beginners in the faith. *'Their angels...'*: In the time of Jesus the Jews had a very highly developed angelology, and they believed that every child had his guardian angel. *'Always see the face...'*: This picture, fully and easily understandable for Jesus' listeners, is of a royal court where only the most important ministers and officials have direct access to the king. This means that, in the sight of Yahweh, the "little ones" are so important that their guardian angels always have the right of direct access to Him. This is because in every "little one" there are infinite possibilities for good or ill. It is the responsibility of the parents, of the teachers, of the Christian Church, to see that these dynamic possibilities for good are realized. To twist them into evil, is one of the worse possible sins.

**Lk 17:3-4.** *'Watch yourselves... Forgive...'*: These verses speak of the necessity of forgiveness in the Christian life. Symbolically, they tell us to forgive seven times a day. Now, the Rabbis had a saying that if one forgave another a total of three times, that one was a perfect man. So, the actual meaning of "seven times in a day" is that the Christian standard of forgiveness must immeasurably exceed the best the world can achieve; and that forgiveness has to be granted and given every time there is true repentance.

**Lk 17:5-6.** *'Increase our faith!'*: The disciples felt incapable of respecting Jesus' standards, and they wanted greater faith to be given the possibility to live up to those standards. These verses tell us that faith is the greatest force in the world. *'If you have faith as small as...'*: We must again remember that it was the eastern custom to use language in the most vivid possible way. This saying means that even that which looks completely impossible becomes possible, if it is approached with faith. And, honestly, we have to recognize that if we approach a problem saying, "It can't be done," it will not; but that if we approach it saying, "It must be done," the chances are it will. Furthermore, when speaking about faith, we must always remember that in this case we are not alone, but that with us there is Yahweh and His power.

**Lk 17:7-10.** *'Servant'*: Actually, "Slave." These verses remind us that we -the servants- can never put Yahweh -the Master- in our debt and can never have any claim on Him. When we have done our best, we have only done our duty; and a man who has done his duty has only done what, in any event, he could have been compelled to do.

***The parable of the lost sheep*** [Matthew 18:11-14 Luke 15:1-7] See page 393

**(Lk15:1)** Now the tax collectors and "sinners" were all gathering around to hear him. **(2)** But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."

**(Lk15:3)** Then Jesus told them this parable: **(Mt18:11)** "The Son of Man came to save what was lost. **(Mt18:12)**(Lk15:4) What do you think? Suppose a man, one of you, owns a hundred sheep and loses one of them that wanders away. Will he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country on the hills and go to look after the one lost sheep that wandered off until he finds it? **(Mt18:13)**(Lk15:5) And when he finds it, I tell you

*the truth, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wandered off, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders (Lk15:6)and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' (Mt18:14)(Lk15:7)I tell you that in the same way your Father in Heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost. There will be more rejoicing in Heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent."*

**Lk 15:1-2.** *'Tax collectors. Sinners':* It was an offense to the scribes and the Pharisees that Jesus associated with men and women who, for the orthodox, were labeled as sinners. The Pharisees were forbidden to be the guest of such persons or to have them as their guests; and they were shocked at the way in which Jesus accompanied with this kind of people, of sinners.

**Mt 18:11. Lk 15:3.** *'Came to save what was lost':* For the orthodox Jews the sinners had to be obliterated before Yahweh, so the new concept introduced by Jesus, of Yahweh looking after and rejoicing for a repented sinner, was totally alien to their mentality.

**Mt 18:12. Lk 15:4.** *'Suppose...':* Here Jesus, as it was his custom, speaks in terms easily understandable by the people of his audience. *'And loses one...':* In Palestine it was very easy for the sheep to get lost. The pastureland was on the hill country which runs like a backbone down the middle of the country. This plateau is narrow, only a few miles across. There are no restraining walls and, at its best, the pasture is sparse. Therefore, the sheep can easily wander away and, if they stray from the plateau going into the ravines at each side, they have every chance of finishing up on some ledge from which they cannot get up or down, and they risk to die there. *'Leave the ninety-nine':* In the time of Jesus the flocks were often large and usually accompanied by two or three shepherds. That is why a shepherd could leave the ninety-nine and go and search for the missing one. If he had left them with no guardian he would have come back to find more of them gone. The topic was perfectly tuned to and understood by the shepherds, who always made the most strenuous efforts to find a lost sheep.

**Mt 18:13. Lk 15:5-6.** *'And when he finds... he is happier...':* It is within the human nature to be happier for finding something small that was lost -one sheep- than for keeping safely something big -the ninety-nine sheep. *'Rejoice with me':* We can imagine the other shepherds returning sadly with their flock to the village at evening time, with one of them still out on the hills seeking for the lost sheep. And we can imagine how everybody would welcome him coming back at night, with the sheep slung across his shoulder, safe at last, and gather around him with gladness.

**Mt 18:14. Lk 15:7.** *'In the same way your Father in Heaven...':* Here we have what was Jesus' favorite picture of Yahweh, Who is going seeking for the single man, and of Yahweh's benevolence. The shepherd was not content to wait for the sheep to come back; he went out to search for it. In a similar way, if a man is out, he has to be brought home. *'There will be more rejoicing...':* This was something the Jews could not understand because the concept of Yahweh looking and searching for a sinner to be brought back from sin was totally alien to their mentality.

**The parable of the lost coin** [Luke 15:8-10]

**(Lk15:8)"Or suppose a woman has ten drachmas and loses one. Does she not light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? (9)And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I ha-**

***ve found my lost coin.' (10)In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of Yahweh over one sinner who repents."***

**Lk 15:8.** *'Or suppose a woman... loses one':* Another example to have his concept, that is, of Yahweh seeking for the sinners, clearly expressed to and understood by everybody. It would be not so difficult to lose a coin in a Palestinian peasant's house and it might take a long search to find it. *'Does she not light a lamp?':* The houses were very dark, for they were lit by only one little window. The floor was beaten earth, and to look for a coin on a floor like that was really very difficult. *'Sweep the house':* The woman had to sweep the floor in the hope that she might see the coin glint or hear it tinkle as it moved. *'Search carefully':* To understand the importance of the search, we have to be aware that a drachma was a whole day's wage for a working man in Palestine, so it was really essential for getting the daily food necessary for the survival of the family. And this explains why, in a poor peasant family, the woman was so anxious to find the lost coin.

**Lk 15:9.** *'When she finds it...':* And it is easy to understand the joy of the woman when at last she finds the lost coin and holds it in her hand again.

**Lk 15:10.** *'In the same way...':* Yahweh, said Jesus, is like that. The joy of Yahweh, and of the angels, when one sinner comes back -repents-, is like the joy in a home when an absolutely needed coin which was lost has been found. No Pharisee had ever dreamed of a God like that; a God who is actually searching for each man, for each sinner.

### ***The parable of the lost son [Luke 15:11-32]***

***(Lk15:11)Jesus continued, "There was a man who had two sons. (12)The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them.***

***(13)Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. (14)After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country and he began to be in need. (15)So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. (16)He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.***

***(17)When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! (18)I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against you. (19)I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.' (20)So he got up and went to his father.***

***But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.***

***(21)The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against Heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'***

***(22)But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. (23)Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. (24)For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate.***

***(25)Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. (26)So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. (27)'Your brother has come,' he replied, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.'***



*(28)The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. (29)But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. (30)But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!'*

*(31)'My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. (32)But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'"*

**Lk 15:11-12.** *'Two sons. My share of the estate':* Under the Jewish law a father was not free to leave his property as he liked. In the case of two sons, the elder one had to receive two-thirds and the younger one-third. It was not unusual for a father to distribute his estate before he died, if he wished to retire from the actual management of the affairs. But to give a younger son his portion of the inheritance upon request was highly unusual. Furthermore the son, with his request, was actually saying, "Give me now the part of the estate I will get when you are dead, and let me get out of this." The father did not argue. He knew that his son was going to learn the lesson the hard way; and so he granted his request.

**Lk 15:13-14.** *'Got together all he had... Spent everything':* He wanted to be free of parental restraint and to spend his share of the family wealth as he pleased. *'Severe famine':* After spending all his money, there was surely no way for him to be accepted as a permanent guest by some of the temporary friends with whom he had wasted everything.

**Lk 15:15.** *'Hired himself... to feed pigs':* He had to look for a work because he had to earn some money to buy food. And he finished up feeding the pigs, unclean animals, a task so despicable that it was forbidden by the law to a Jew.

**Lk 15:16.** *'He longed to fill his stomach':* The only work he was able to get in this period of famine was absolutely insufficient even for this bare necessity. *'Pods':* Seeds of the carob tree. *'No one gave him anything':* The hired workers were not allowed to touch anything, not even the pigs' food.

**Lk 15:17.** *'When he came to his senses':* Jesus is actually saying that whatever the son had done, it was done in a condition of a kind of foolishness and that he had to come out of this condition to be a normal person again and to have the possibility of understanding what wrong he had done. In other terms, Jesus is saying that so long as a man is away from Yahweh he is not truly himself. Beyond any doubt Jesus did not believe in total human depravity, but was convinced that there will always come the moment for each man, in this life or in the next one, to understand his condition and to repent sincerely.

**Lk 15:18-19.** *'I will... go back... I am no longer worthy...':* The son decided to go back home not as a son but in the lowest possible rank, that of the hired servants, of the men who were only day laborers. In effect, even the ordinary slaves were in some way part of the family, but the hired servants could be dismissed at a day's notice and were never considered as being part of the family at all.

**Lk 15:20-21.** *'While he was a long way off':* The father was not only waiting for his son to come back home but took the initiative and, when his son was still on the way, he rushed to meet and welcome him, and forgave him with no recriminations. *'I have sinned...':* The son comes back "in his senses," fully aware and sorry of what he had done.

**Lk 15:22-23.** *'But the father said...'*: The father never gave him the chance of asking to be a servant but wanted to have him back officially as a son. *'Best robe... ring... sandals... fattened calf'*: Each of them was a sign of position and of acceptance; the long robe of distinction, the signet ring of authority, the sandals of sonship (slaves were bare-foot), and the fattened calf of a very special occasion, a feast that all might rejoice at the wanderer's return.

**Lk 15:24.** *'This son of mine'*: For the father -for Yahweh- the rebellious son was anyway part of his family -Yahweh never rejects a sinner. *'Was dead and is alive again'*: The son was spiritually dead but, repenting and recognizing his fault, was spiritually reborn -as a repented sinner is in the sight of Yahweh. *'Was lost and is found'*: This is a repetition -following the Jewish way of writing- of the same "dead... alive" concept, to reinforce it.

**Lk 15:25-28.** *'The older son. The older brother'*: The father never rejected any of his two sons; not the younger, when he decided to leave his family; not the older, when he didn't want to participate to his father's joy. The forgiving love of the father symbolizes the divine mercy of Yahweh, and the older brother's resentment is like the attitude of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law who opposed Jesus.

**Lk 15:29-30.** *'All these years I've been...'*: The elder son was actually sorry that his brother had come home. He stands for the self-righteous Pharisees who would rather see a sinner destroyed than saved. His attitude is of total lack of sympathy, as he speaks in terms of "your son," not of "my brother." Once again we have to notice that Yahweh is more merciful in His judgment than many orthodox men, that Yahweh can forgive when men refuse to forgive. *'Slaving for you'*: His attitude shows that his years of obedience to his father to him had been years of imposed duty. *'Never even a young goat...'*: He complains that, in spite of working hard for so many years, he was never given even the possibility of taking a goat -which was much less valuable than a fattened calf- to have some celebration with his own friends. *'This son of yours'*: The older brother would not even recognize him as a brother, so bitter was his hatred.

**Lk 15:31.** *'Everything I have is yours'*: The father reminds the older son that, after splitting his estate between his two sons, everything left belonged completely to him, the older one.

**Lk 15:32.** *'We had to celebrate'*: The father's love includes both brothers. The parable shows the contrast between the self-centered exclusiveness of the Pharisees, who failed to understand Yahweh's benevolence, and His joy at the repentance of sinners.

**A brother who sins against you** [Matthew 18:15-20]

*(Mt18:15)"If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listen to you, you have won your brother over. (16)But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' (17)If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the Assembly; and if he refuses to listen even to the Assembly, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.*

*(18)I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on Earth will be bound in Heaven, and whatever you loose on Earth will be loosed in Heaven.*

*(19)Again, I tell you that if two of you on Earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in Heaven. (20)For where two or three come together in my name, there I am with them."*

**Mt 18:15-20.** The interpretation of this passage is quite difficult because it doesn't sound truly as Jesus', but much more like an ecclesiastical regulation. Jesus could not have told his disciples to take things to the Assembly, that is, to the Church, for it did not exist; and the passage implies a quite organized Church with a system of ecclesiastical discipline. The tone of the passage is that there is a limit to forgiveness, that there comes a time when a man may be abandoned as beyond hope, and this is exactly the contrary of Jesus' teaching. Furthermore, verse 18 seems to give the Church -as an ecclesiastical human organization- the power to retain and to forgive sins. In essence this passage, as it stands, cannot be a correct report of the words of Jesus but is surely an adaptation made by the Church in later days, when Church discipline was more a matter of rules than of goodwill and forgiveness. Probably, what Jesus really said was, "If anyone makes something against you, spare no effort to get things right again between you and him." This means that we must never accept any situation in which there is a breach of personal relationship between us and another member of the Christian community. So this passage, even if not wholly Jesus', gives a scheme of action -as it was seen many centuries ago- for the mending of broken relationships within the Christian fellowship.

**Mt 18:15.** *'If your brother sins...'*: If we feel that someone has wronged us, we should immediately go to see him personally. If we have a difference with someone, there is only one way to settle it -quickly and face to face.

**Mt 18:16.** *'If he will not listen...'*: If a private and personal meeting fails, we should take some trusted persons with us to help with the process of reconciliation. *'Witnesses'*: Here, the taking of the witnesses requested by Deuteronomy 19:15 is not meant to be a way of proving to a man that he has committed an offence, but only a way of giving a correct, impartial advice.

**Mt 18:17.** *'If he refuses...'*: If this still fails, we must take our personal trouble to the Christian community, in the hope that the other person will respect the opinion of the community itself. *'If he refuses... treat him as...'*: Matthew's Gospel says that, if even that does not succeed, then the man who has wronged us is to be regarded as a pagan and a tax collector, and this gives the impression that the man must be abandoned as hopeless and irreclaimable. But that is precisely what Jesus cannot have said. He never set limits to human forgiveness. The actual meaning is that when a sinner remains stubborn, even if we think that he is not better than a tax collector or a Godless pagan, we do not have to forget that many of those -as Matthew and Zacchaeus- did become good friends of Jesus. So, this is not a statement that some men are hopeless; on the contrary, it is a statement that they are to be convinced and converted, not to be condemned as first and only option. Jesus Christ has found no man hopeless -and so neither must we.

**Mt 18:18.** *'Whatever you bind... loose...'*: This saying about binding and loosing is quite difficult. It cannot mean that the Church -a human organization- can forgive or not sins, and so settle a man's destiny in time or in eternity. The right of judgment -of perfect judgment- belongs only to Yahweh and to Jesus. This verse applies to all Christians, not to priests and pastors only. The actual meaning is that the relationships which we establish with our fellow-men last not only through time but into eternity -therefore we must absolutely make them right.

**Mt 18:19.** *'I tell you...'*: If this declaration is to be taken literally, it is manifestly untrue. Many times the prayers are not, in the literal sense, answered. Often, people agree to pray -and pray desperately- and do not receive that for which they pray. Anyway, we have to realize that, when our prayer is unselfish, it is always answered. But many times the answer is not the one we desire; it is the answer which Yahweh in His wisdom

knows to be the best. Simply because we are human beings, with human fears and hopes and desires, most of our prayers are prayers of escape, to be saved from some trial, some sorrow, some hurting and difficult situation. Yahweh does not give us escape from human situations. The perfect example of this is Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane. He prayed to be released from the dreadful situation which confronted him, but he was not released from it. He was given the power to meet it, to endure it -and to conquer it.

**Mt 18:20.** *'Where two or three...'*: Jesus is always present, even in the smallest congregation. He is not slave of numbers. He is there wherever faithful people meet, for he fully gives himself to each individual person.

***The parable of the unmerciful servant*** [Matthew 18:21-35]

**(Mt18:21)** *Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?"*

**(22)** *Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy times seven.*

**(23)** *Therefore, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. (24)As he began the settlement, a man who owned him ten thousand talents was brought to him. (25)Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay for the debt.*

**(26)** *The servant fell on his knees before him, 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.' (27)The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.*

**(28)** *But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded.*

**(29)** *His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.'*

**(30)** *But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. (31)When the other servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed and went and told their master everything that had happened.*

**(32)** *Then the master called the servant in, 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. (33)Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had of you?' (34)In anger his master turned him over to the jailers until he should pay back all he owed.*

**(35)** *This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart."*

**Mt 18:21.** *'Up to seven times?'*: Immediately after asking Jesus how often he had to forgive his brother, Peter answered his own question by suggesting that he should forgive seven times. Now, it was Rabbinic teaching that a man must forgive his brother a maximum of three times. Peter thought that he had to go very far and, so, suggested seven times.

**Mt 18:22.** *'Seventy times seven'*: Jesus' answer, practically, was that a Christian must not have any limit for forgiveness.

**Mt 18:23-35.** *'The Kingdom of Heaven is like...'*: This parable is centered on teaching forgiveness, a lesson which Jesus was never tired of teaching. As it runs also through all the New Testament, the lesson is that a man must forgive in order to be forgiven. He who will not forgive his fellow-men cannot hope that Yahweh will forgive him. *'Ten thousand talents... One hundred denarii'*: One of the great points in this parable is the

contrast between the two debts (1 talent = about 108 pounds, 49 kg of gold or silver; 1 denarius = the usual day's wage for a working man). The debt of the first servant, ten thousand talents, is of an incredible amount. On the contrary, the debt which a fellow-servant owed the first one was really minimum. The contrast between the two debts points to the fact that, if Yahweh can forgive us the huge debt we owe Him, we must forgive our fellow-men the minor debts they owe to us.

***The parable of the workers in the vineyard*** [Matthew 20:1-16]

***(Mt20:1)"For the Kingdom of Heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire men to work in his vineyard. (2)He agreed to pay them a denarius for the day and sent them into his vineyard.***

***(3)About the third hour he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing. (4)He told them, 'You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.' (5)So they went.***

***He went out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour and did the same thing. (6)About the eleventh hour he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, 'Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?'***

***(7)'Because no one has hired us,' they answered.***

***He said to them, 'You also go and work in my vineyard.'***

***(8)When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foremen, 'Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going to the first.'***

***(9)The workers who were hired about the eleventh hour came and each received a denarius. (10)So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. (11)When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner. (12)'These men who were hired last worked only one hour,' they said, 'and you have made them equal to us who have born the burden of the work and the heat of the day.'***

***(13)But he answered one of them, 'Friend, I am not being unfair to you. Didn't you agree to work for a denarius? (14)Take your pay and go. I want to give the man who was hired last the same as I gave you. (15)Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?'***

***(16)So the last will be first, and the first will be last."***

**Mt 20:1.** *'To hire men to work in his vineyard'*: This parable describes a kind of situation that frequently happened in Palestine. The grape ripened towards the end of September, and then very soon the rain came. If the harvest was not gathered in before the heavy rain came, then it was ruined; and so to get the harvest in was a frantic race against time. Any worker was welcome, even if he could give only few hours of work.

**Mt 20:2.** *'A denarius'*: The pay was perfectly normal; a denarius or a drachma was the normal day's wage for a working man.

**Mt 20:3-7.** *'Standing in the marketplace'*: The men who were standing in the marketplace were not idlers, lazing away their time. The men came to the marketplace first thing in the morning, carrying their tools, and waited until someone hired them. The men standing there were waiting for work, and the fact that some of them stood on until five o'clock in the evening is the proof of how much they needed it. These men were hired laborers; the lowest class of workers; they were not attached to any group; they were entirely at the mercy of chance employment. And, with their low pay, to be unemployed

for even few days was very serious. *'Third, sixth, ninth, eleventh hour'*: The hours in the parable are the normal Jewish hours, which were counted from sunrise, 6 AM, until 6 PM, when officially the next day began. Therefore, the third hour is 9 AM, the sixth hour is noon, the ninth hour is 3 PM, and the eleventh hour is 5 PM.

**Mt 20:8-9.** *'Call the workers and pay them'*: In strict justice the fewer hours a man worked, the less pay he should have received. But the master well knew that one denarius a day was not a great wage; he knew that this amount of money was barely sufficient for one day's food for the man and his family; and therefore he went beyond justice and gave them more than was their due.

**Mt 20:10-15.** *'They expected to receive more'*: The first group of workers came to an agreement with the master, to be paid a certain amount of money for a day's work. But in the case of those who were engaged later, there is no word of contract; all they wanted was the chance to work and they were willing to accept whatever pay the master would give them.

**Mt 20:16.** *'Last... First...'*: A man is not a Christian if his first concern is pay. The Christian works for the joy of serving Yahweh and his fellow-men. That is why the first will be last and the last will be first. It is the paradox of the Christian life that he who aims at reward loses it, and he who forgets reward finds it.

### ***Divorce***

*See page 394*

*[Mark 10:1-12 Matthew 19:1-12;5:31-32 Luke 16:18]*

**(Mk10:1)(Mt19:1-2)** *When Jesus had finished saying these things, he left Galilee and went into the region of Judea to the other side of the Jordan. Again large crowds of people came and followed him, and as it was his custom, he taught them and he healed them there.*

**(Mk10:2)(Mt19:3)** *Some Pharisees came to him to test him. They asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?"*

**(Mk10:3)** *"What did Moses command you?" he replied.*

**(Mk10:4)** *They said, "Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away."*

**(Mk10:5)(Mt19:8)** *Jesus replied, "Moses wrote this law and permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning."*

**(Mt19:7)** *"Why then," they asked, "did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?"*

**(Mk10:6-9)(Mt19:4-6)** *"Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning of creation Yahweh the Creator made them male and female, and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh?' So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what Yahweh has joined together, let man not separate."*

**(Mk10:10)** *When they were in the house again, the disciples asked Jesus about this.*

**(Mk10:11-12)(Mt5:31-32;19:9)(Lk16:18)** *He answered, "It has been said, 'Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.' But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman, commits adultery against her and causes her to become an adulteress. And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery and the man who marries the divorced woman commits adultery."*

**(Mt19:10)** *The disciples said to him, "If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry."*

**(11)** *Jesus replied, "Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given. (12) For some are eunuchs because they were born that way; others were made that way by men, and others have renounced marriage because of the Kingdom of Heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it."*

**Mk 10:1. Mt 19:1-2.** *'He left Galilee and...'*: Jesus was pursuing his way south, always preaching and healing. He had left Galilee and had come into Judea. This journey took him south from Capernaum, over the mountains of Samaria into Judea and then east across the Jordan to Perea, where he was in the territory of Herod Antipas.

**Mk 10:2. Mt 19:3.** *'Some Pharisees'*: They came to test him on divorce, wishing to test his orthodoxy. Jesus was speaking about marriage and remarriage, and they had the hope that he might contradict himself and stumble on his own words. They wished to hear Jesus contradict the Law of Moses, as indeed he did, and thereby formulate a charge of heresy against him. Furthermore, it was for unlawful divorce and remarriage that John the Baptist denounced Herod Antipas and Herodias, and this rebuke did cost him first imprisonment and then his life. Jesus was now within Herod's jurisdiction, and the Pharisees may have hoped that Jesus' reply would cause the tetrarch to seize him as he had John.

**Mk 10:3-12. Mt 19:4-9; 5:31-32. Lk 16:18.** *'He replied...'*: In this passage, Jesus is dealing with what was in his day, as it is even presently, a burning question. Divorce was something about which there was no unanimity among the Jews; and the Pharisees were deliberately trying to involve Jesus in the controversy. For the Jews, marriage was a sacred duty; to obey the commandment to "be fruitful and to multiply." Marriage was not to be entered into lightly, and the Jewish law of marriage and of purity aimed very high, but the actual situation was very different and the process of divorce was very easy. The basic fact was that in Jewish law a woman was regarded as a thing. She had no legal rights whatever but was at the complete disposal of the head of the family. The practical result was that a man could divorce his wife on almost any grounds, while it was very seldom that a woman could seek divorce. Actually, at the best she could ask her husband to divorce her. *'What did Moses command you?'*: First, Jesus made reference to the Mosaic regulation, saying that Moses had laid it down "because your hearts were hard," because this was the best that could be expected from people such as those for whom Moses was legislating. It is clear that Moses was trying to control divorce, to put it under the rule of a law, and to make it more difficult than it was at his time. *'Certificate of divorce'*: The law of Jewish divorce goes back to Deuteronomy 24:1, where the husband is requested to write a bill of divorce, process which remained always exceedingly easy even if, in later times, a Rabbis court was involved in writing and officializing it. Anyway, the crucial point was the very lax interpretation of the Law of Moses, and it was possible to get a divorce for the most trivial reasons. *'At the beginning...'*: Jesus went back to the Creation story and quoted Genesis 1:27 and 2:24. It was his view that in the very nature of things marriage was a permanent situation which indissolubly united two people in such a way that the bond could never be broken by any human law. And no Mosaic regulation dealing with a temporary situation could alter that principle. Jesus' answer takes things back to the very beginning, to when Yahweh created Adam and Eve; for each other and for no one else. Therefore Jesus is laying down the principle that all divorce is wrong. We have immediately to note that this is not a law; it is a principle, which is a very different thing. The ideal marriage is unbreakable; that is what Yahweh meant marriage to be. *'I tell you that...'*: Here we have a big difficulty in the text of the New Testament, because Mark and Luke make the prohibition of divorce

absolute, without any exception. But Matthew has a saving clause -divorce is permitted on the ground of adultery. Most probably, Mark and Luke did not mention this case because, under the Jewish law, divorce for adultery was for granted, and therefore they did not think that they needed to mention it. The real essence of this passage is that Jesus insisted that the loose sexual morality of his days must be changed. To note that under Rabbinic law, divorce was granted for two reasons; for adultery and for sterility. For the Jews, the object of marriage was the procreation of children; if after ten years a couple was still childless, divorce was almost compulsory. There is little doubt that here Jesus lays down the principle -not the law- that the ideal marriage is a union which cannot be broken because, in the ideal marriage, the husband is consecrated to the wife, and the wife to the husband. That is what Jesus meant when he said that a man would leave his father and his mother and he will become one flesh with his wife. This is the ideal situation which Jesus relates, that in the marriage state two people find the completion of their personalities. To turn this saying of Jesus into a law is gravely to misunderstand it. Jesus does not give us laws; he gives principles which we must intelligently apply to any given situation. To settle the question of divorce simply by quoting the words of Jesus would be legalism. And Jesus was fighting legalism. Beyond any doubt the ideal marriage should be an indissoluble union between two people, but life is often far away from being ideal. Suppose that two people enter into the marriage relationship with the highest hopes and the highest ideals. And then suppose that something unaccountably goes wrong and the relationship which begun perfectly goes wrong. Suppose that, in spite of trying to reestablish the initial situation in all possible ways, that marriage becomes an impossibility. Are then these two people to be for ever chained together in a situation which cannot do other than bring a lifetime of misery to both? It is extremely difficult to see how such a reasoning can be called Christian; it is extremely hard to see Jesus legalistically condemning two people to any such a situation. This is not to say that divorce should be made easy, but that when all the physical and mental and spiritual resources have been tried, and the situation remains incurable and even dangerous, then that situation should be mended. And the Church should do everything it can to help those unfortunate people, with more sympathy and less condemnation, without rigid legalism, but with plenty of understanding and compassion.

**Mt 19:10-11.** *'The disciples said to him'*: When the disciples heard the ideal of marriage which Jesus set before them, taking it as a law, they were highly discouraged. Their reaction was that, if marriage is so final and binding a relationship and divorce is forbidden, it is better not to marry at all, for there is no escape route from a possible very bad situation. *'Not everyone can accept...'*: But Jesus says clearly that not everyone can actually be in this ideal situation, that only by the help of Yahweh people can build up the relationship which the ideal marriage demands.

**Mt 19:12.** *'Eunuchs'*: The passage finishes with a very puzzling verse about eunuchs. Jesus distinguishes three classes of eunuchs. There are those who, because of some physical imperfection or deformity, can never be capable of sexual intercourse. There are those who were deliberately castrated, quite frequently servants in royal palaces, especially those who had to do with the royal harem. And then Jesus speaks of those who did voluntarily renounce marriage, parenthood, and human physical love to dedicate themselves to some particular mission. This verse has to be taken as an example from which to extrapolate the case of those people who don't want to get married in order to be completely available to all the requests of their vocation. Of course, this condition has to be strictly voluntary, and it doesn't have to be made compulsory to all the people who want to follow a religious vocation.



**Oaths** [Matthew 5:33-37]

**(Mt5:33)** "Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not break your oath, but keep the oaths you have made to Yahweh.' (34) But I tell you, Do not swear at all: either by Heaven, for it is Yahweh's throne; (35) or by the Earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the City of the Great King. (36) And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. (37) Simply let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No;' anything beyond this comes from the evil one."

**Mt 5:33.** 'Again, you have heard...': This is one of the many occasions when Jesus had to remind the Jews that which they already knew. In effect, the Jewish teachers had always insisted on the obligation of telling the truth. Still more they did insist on the truth which had been guaranteed by an oath. 'Keep the oaths you have made to Yahweh': The commandment is: "You shall not misuse the Name of Yahweh your Lord, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses His Name" (Exodus 20:7). Actually, this commandment condemns the man who swears that something is true, or makes some promise, in the name of Yahweh, and who takes the oath falsely. But at the time of Jesus too often people used sacred language in a meaningless way, taking an oath when it was not necessary or improper. Even worse, they divided oaths into two classes; those which were absolutely binding and those which were not. Any oath which contained the Name of Yahweh was absolutely binding, and any oath which succeeded in evading the Name of Yahweh was held not to be binding. If a man swore by the Name of Yahweh in any form, he would rigidly keep that oath; but if he swore by Heaven, or by Earth, or by Jerusalem, or by his head, he felt quite free to break that oath. The result was that oath evasion had been brought to a fine art. The idea behind was that, if Yahweh's Name was used, Yahweh became a partner in the transaction; whereas if Yahweh's Name was not used, Yahweh had nothing to do with the transaction.

**Mt 5:34-36.** 'But I tell you...': Jesus is saying that, actually, no man can keep Yahweh out of any transaction because Yahweh is already everywhere. There is nothing in the world which does not belong to Him; and therefore, whether Yahweh is actually named in words or not, does not matter, as Yahweh is already there. Life cannot be divided into compartments in some of which Yahweh is involved and in other of which he is not involved. We have to regard all promises as sacred because, actually, all promises are made in the presence of Yahweh, independently from the form of words which was used.

**Mt 5:37.** 'Simply, let your "yes"... and your "no"...': The ideal is that a man should never need an oath to guarantee the truth of anything he may say. Of course, Jesus does not forbid a man to take an oath when it is socially necessary, for example in the witness box. 'Anything beyond this comes from the evil one': What Jesus is saying is that the truly good man will never need to take an oath; the truth of his sayings and the reality of his promises need no such guarantee. But sometimes is still necessary for a man to take an oath; and this is because of Satan's influence on the life of the world.

**An eye for an eye. Kindness for enemies**

See page 395

[Matthew 5:38-48; 7:12 Luke 6:27-36]

**(Mt5:38)** "You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' (Mt5:39) (Lk6:29) But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic. (Mt5:40) And if someone wants to sue you and take your

*tunic, let him have your cloak as well. (41)If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. (Mt5:42)(Lk6:30)Give to everyone who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. (Mt7:12)(Lk6:31)So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.*

*(Mt5:43)You have heard that it was said, 'You'll be fond of your neighbor and you'll hate your enemy.' (Mt5:44)(Lk6:27-28)But I tell you who ear me: Be kind to your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who mistreat and persecute you, (Mt5:45)that you may be sons of your Father in Heaven. He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. (Mt5:46)(Lk6:32)If you are fond of those who are fond of you, what credit is that to you? What reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? Even 'sinners' are fond of those who are fond of them. (Mt5:47)And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? (Lk6:33)And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' do that. (34)And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' lend to 'sinners,' expecting to be repaid in full. (35)But be kind to your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because He is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. (Mt5:48)(Lk6:36)Be perfect and merciful, therefore, just as your heavenly Father is perfect and merciful."*

**Mt 5:38.** *'Eye for eye...':* From the whole of this passage we get a description of the characteristic ethic and of the conduct of the Christian life, which should distinguish the Christians from other men. Jesus begins by citing the law of tit for tat -of retaliation. This law is usually considered savage and merciless but, before to criticize it, we have to consider two fundamental points. (i)In the earliest days revenge and blood feud were characteristic of tribal society, and the original aim of the law of tit for tat was, in fact, the limitation of vengeance. If a man of a tribe injured a man of another tribe, then all the members of that tribe were out to take revenge on all members of the tribe of the man who had committed the injury; and the vengeance desired was always nothing less than death. This law deliberately limits vengeance. It states that only the man who committed the injury must be punished, and that his punishment must be no more than the equivalent of the injury he has inflicted and the damage he has done. Seen against its historical setting this is not a savage law, but a law of mercy. (ii)Furthermore, this law was never intended to give the individual person the right to take revenge on his own. It was always intended as a guide for a judge in the assessment of the punishment and the penalty.

**Mt 5:39-41. Lk 6:29.** *'If someone...':* Here Jesus moves forward and obliterates the very principle of the law of tit for tat because retaliation, however controlled and restricted, has no place in the Christian life. Then Jesus abolished the old law of limited vengeance and introduced the new ethic of non-resentment and of non-retaliation. And, to be clearly understood, he made three practical examples. As usual, if we take them literally, we risk of losing their point. It is necessary to understand what Jesus is really saying and meaning. (i)First, "If anyone strikes us on the right cheek we must turn to him the other cheek too." In such a strike, there is far more than the physical act. If a right-handed man wants to slap on the right cheek another man standing in front of him, he has to hit him with the back of his right hand. Now, for the Jews, to hit a man with the

back of the hand was much more insulting than to hit him with the flat of the hand. So, it had to be done purposely, with the intention of offending more than harming. Then, what Jesus is saying is: "Even if a man should direct at you the most deadly and calculated insult, you must on no account resent it." The true Christian has to learn not to resent insult and not to seek retaliation. (ii)Second, "If anyone tries to take away our tunic in a lawsuit, we must not only let him have that, but must offer him our cloak also." Again, there is far more here than it first appears. For the Jews, the tunic was the long, sack-like inner garment made of cotton or linen, of which usually they owned more than one. The cloak was the great, blanket-like outer garment which a man wore as a robe by day, and used as a blanket at night. Of this outer garment the Jews usually had only one. And it was the Jewish law that a man's tunic might be taken as a pledge, but not his cloak, which was essential for physical survival during the night. Then, what Jesus is saying is: "The Christian never disputes about his legal rights; does not think of his rights, but of his duties; not of his privileges, but of his responsibilities." (iii)Third, "If we are compelled to go one mile, in such a case we have to go two miles." Here, the Greek verb used for "to compel" means "compulsory service to the occupying power," and Palestine was occupied by the Romans. Then, what Jesus is saying is: "If your masters come to you and compel you to do something, don't do it with resentment, but with good grace. The Christian is not concerned to do as he likes; he is concerned only to help, even when the demand for help is discourteous, unreasonable, and tyrannical.

**Mt 5:42. Lk 6:30.** *'Give to everyone...'*: Finally, it is Jesus' demand that we should give to all who ask and never turn away from those who need to borrow. Giving must not be refused, and it must be carried out privately and secretly. Giving is at once a privilege and an obligation for in reality all giving to men is nothing less than giving to Yahweh. Anyway, it is clear that, when giving, the effect of the giving on the receiver must be taken into account. Giving must never be such as to encourage laziness, for such giving can only hurt. But we have also to remember that it is better to help a score of fraudulent beggars than to risk turning away the one person in real need.

**Mt 7:12. Lk 6:31.** *'Do to others what...'*: Here we have the most synthetic declaration of the Christian ethic, which is always absolutely positive. It does not consist in not doing things, but in doing them. Jesus gave us the positive rule to do good to the others, rule which exist -in negative form- in many cultures and in many religions. But there is a substantial difference -practical and ethical- between the positive and the negative form of this rule. In effect, it is not too difficult to keep ourselves from not doing harm; but it is a very different matter to do to others something good and positive, and exactly when they need it. The very essence of Christian conduct is that it consists, not in refraining from bad things, but in actively doing good things. And, when we respect this rule, we automatically respect the core and the essence of Moses' Law and of all the prophets' requirements.

**Mt 5:43-45. Lk 6:27-28.** *'You have heard... You'll be fond of your enemies'*: As usual, we have to find out what Jesus was really saying, and what he was demanding to his followers. The answer comes from the Greek word used here for "fond of," which is "agape," and indicates deep benevolence and tireless good-will. This means that no matter what a person does to us, we will never allow any bitterness against him to invade our hearts; on the contrary, we will regard him with plenty of benevolence and good-will. It has to be clear that Jesus never asked us to be fond of our enemies in the same ways as we are fond of our nearest or dearest. Those are different kinds of fondness, expressed, in Greek, by different words. In the case of fondness for our enemies, it is a

matter of the will, it is not a feeling of the heart, which we cannot help; it is something which we have to will ourselves into doing, it is a determination of the mind. It is in fact a victory over the natural human instincts. This kind of fondness is the basis for a proper personal relationship with our family, our neighbors and the people we meet every day in life. This commandment involves that we should do something good even for the people who are doing something bad to us; and the first and fundamental step of this "good" is that we have to pray for those people. And no man can pray for another man and still hate him. Jesus demands that we should have this Christian fondness for a very clear reason; it makes a man like Yahweh, who has this benevolence even towards men who have broken His laws. So we may become "sons of your Father;" that is, similar, in our attitude, to Yahweh.

**Mt 5:46-47. Lk 6:32-35.** *'If you are fond of...'*: The Christian ethic is based on the extra action. Jesus describes the common ways of sensible conduct and then dismisses them with the question, "What special there is in that?" The Christians do not have to compare themselves to their neighbors, they have to do and to be better. It is with Yahweh that we have to compare ourselves; trying to be good and merciful as He is. This Christian conduct makes us like Yahweh, for this is the way He acts. Yahweh is fond of and embraces saint and sinner alike. It is exactly that fondness we must try to emulate.

**Mt 5:48. Lk 6:36.** *'Be perfect and merciful'*: The Greek word used here for "perfect" is "teleios," which has a sense of functional perfection -a thing is perfect when it fully realizes the purpose for which it was planned, designed and made. A man is perfect if he realizes the purpose for which he was created and sent into the world. And the Bible leaves no doubt as to that. In the old creation story we find Yahweh saying, "Let us make man in Our image, in Our likeness" (Genesis 1:26). Man was created to be like Yahweh. And Yahweh is fond of saints and sinners alike. So, when a man reproduces in his life the forgiving benevolence of Yahweh, His mercy, he is perfect in the New Testament sense of the word.

#### ***Giving to the needy*** [Matthew 6:1-4]

***(Mt6:1)"Be careful not to do your 'acts of righteousness' before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in Heaven.***

***(2)So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. (3)But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, (4)so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."***

**Mt 6:1.** *'Acts of righteousness'*: This verse introduces the discussion on three acts of righteousness which, for the Jews, were the three great cardinal works of the religious life; giving to the needy, praying, and fasting. Jesus never disputed that; his warning was that, when these things were done with the sole intention of bringing glory to the doer, they were losing the most important part of their value. In effect, a man can give alms, not really to help the person to whom he gives, but simply to demonstrate his own generosity, to receive someone's gratitude and all men's praise. As well, a man can pray in such a way that his prayer is not really addressed to Yahweh, but to the people who are there around, in such a way that no one can fail to see him praying. Again, a man can fast simply to show his action and his self-discipline to the world. In general terms, a man can practice good works simply to win praise from men, to increase his own

prestige, and to show the world how good he is. *'Reward from your Father'*: When Jesus speaks of Yahweh rewarding those who have given to Him the kind of service He desires, he always speaks of reward in Heaven; and it is clear that he never considered any material reward. This concept is totally different than it was in the Old Testament, where the ideas of goodness and prosperity were closely connected.

**Mt 6:2.** *'They have received their reward in full'*: Jesus said that, anyway, all the acts of this kind do always receive a reward. Actually, the phrase above should be more exactly translated "They have received their payment in full." The Greek word used here is "apechein," which was the commercial word used on receipted accounts, for receiving payment in full. What Jesus is saying is this: "If you give alms to demonstrate your own generosity, you will get the admiration of men -but that is all you'll ever get. That is your payment in full. If you pray in such a way to make a show of your devotion in the face of men, you will gain the reputation to be a really devout man -but that is all you'll ever get. That is your payment in full. If you fast in such a way that all men know that you are fasting, you will become known as an extremely ascetic man -but that is all. That is your payment in full."

**Mt 6:3-4.** *'When you give to the needy'*: To the Jews, giving to the needy was a sacred religious duty, was to gain merit in the sight of Yahweh, and was even to win forgiveness for past sins. It was then natural and inevitable that the man who desired to be good should concentrate on giving. The teaching of the Rabbis was exactly the same as the teaching of Jesus. They too forbade ostentatious giving. But as in so many other cases practice fell far short of precept. Too often the giver gave in such a way that all men might see how much he gave, to bring glory to himself. This is precisely what Jesus condemns when he talks about the hypocrites who act in this way. Jesus is saying, "If your aim is to get yourself the world's reward, no doubt that you will get it -but you do not have to expect Yahweh's reward."

***Jesus' teaching on prayer (Our Father)*** [Matthew 6:5-15 Luke 11:1-4] See page 395

**(Lk11:1)** One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John has taught his disciples."

**(Lk11:2a)** He said to them, **(Mt6:5)** "When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they like to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. (6) But when you pray, go in your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. (7) And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. (8) Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.

**(Mt6:9-13)(Lk11:2b-4)** This, then, is how you should pray:

*'Our Father in Heaven, hallowed be Your Name,*

*Your Kingdom come; may Your will be done, on Earth as it is in Heaven.*

*Give us today our daily bread.*

*Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.*

*And let us not fall into temptation, but deliver us from evil.'*

**(Mt6:14)** For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. **(15)** But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins."

**Lk 11:1.** *'Lord, teach us to pray'*: It was the regular custom for a Rabbi to teach his disciples a simple prayer which they might habitually use. John had done that for his disciples, and now Jesus' disciples -some of whom were previously with John- came asking him to do the same for them.

**Mt 6:5-8.** *'When you pray...'*: The Jews had a very high ideal of prayer, which was one of the three "acts of righteousness." But, exactly because of the great seriousness with which the prayer was taken, some faults occurred in the Jewish habit of prayer; faults of misguided devotion. Prayers tended to be formalized, in kind and timing -specific prayers had to be recited at a specific time of the day- and, inevitably, ran a high risk of becoming a vain repetition. The liturgy supplied stated prayers for all occasions, with the intention that every event of life should be brought before Yahweh. But just because the prayers were so meticulously prescribed and stated, the whole system ended in the formalism of a rigid and ritualistic timetable. Furthermore, there was a tendency to link prayers with certain places, especially the Temple and the synagogues, as if the prayers were more efficacious if offered there. This means to think of Yahweh as being confined to certain "holy places," forgetting that the whole Earth is His Temple. But what Jesus was actually condemning is the habit of praying to be seen by men. And the Jewish way of praying made ostentation very easy; they prayed standing, with hands stretched out, palms upwards, and with head bowed. Prayers had to be said at 9 AM, 12 Noon, and 3 PM wherever a man might be. And it was easy for a man to make sure that at these ours he was in a crowded place, so that all might see with what devotion he prayed. *'They have received their reward in full'*: Jesus said that, anyway, all prayers do always receive a reward. Actually, the phrase above should be more exactly translated, "They have received their payment in full." The Greek word used here is "apechein," which was the commercial word used on receipted accounts, for receiving payment in full. What Jesus is saying is this: "If you pray in such a way to make a show of your devotion in the face of men, you will gain the reputation to be a really devout man -but that is all you'll ever get. That is your payment in full." *'Pray to your Father...'*: Jesus declares that the most important point, when praying, is that all prayers must be offered to Yahweh, with no desire at all to be seen by other men in the act of praying. *'Babbling like pagans'*: In a rigid, formalistic system, many times prayers slip out of the tongue with very little meaning, mostly as repetition of fixed formulas. *'Your Father knows'*: Yahweh is everywhere and He knows the inner thoughts of everybody.

**Mt 6:9-13. Lk 11:2-4.** *'This is how to pray...'*: Before we begin to see the Lord's Prayer in detail, we must note the particular order of the petitions. First, before anything is asked for ourselves, comes Yahweh and the reverence due to Him. Only when we give Yahweh His place will other things take their proper place. *'Our Father in Heaven'*: The word Father used of Yahweh is a compact summary of the Christian faith as it states the actual relationship God-man, a relationship of great affection. Also, if we believe that Yahweh is our Father, we also believe that He is Father of all men who, as a consequence, are all brothers. But Yahweh is not only "Our Father," He is "Our Father in Heaven." In Heaven, to differentiate our universal spiritual Father from our individual carnal fathers. *'Hallowed be Your Name'*: First, we have to understand the actual meaning of the words used here. The word which is translated "hallowed" comes from the Greek verb "hagiazesthai," which is connected to the adjective "hagios," which means "different" or "separate". This phrase of the Lord's Prayer means, "Let's God's Name, Yahweh, be treated differently from all other names." Furthermore, in Hebrew the "name" of a person has a wider meaning, which includes the whole nature, the character, and the personali-

ty of the person as he is known or revealed to us. Therefore, when we pray "Hallowed be Your Name," it means "Enable us to give You the unique place which Your nature and character deserve and demand." In other words, we have to give Yahweh all our reverence and respect. *'Your Kingdom come...'*: It is evident that the Kingdom of Yahweh was central to the message of Jesus, and Jesus himself declared that he had to preach the Good News of the Kingdom because he was sent expressly for that reason. *'Your will be done'*: We have already clearly seen that it is mostly important to obey the will of Yahweh. The mental attitude, when accepting this "Your will be done," doesn't have to be of defeated resignation -because Yahweh his too strong for us- or of bitter resentment -feeling Yahweh as a strong enemy we can't resist- but of perfect affection and trust -Yahweh is as a loving Father in whose hands and wisdom we have to relay. *'On Earth as it is in Heaven'*: Heaven is the place where Yahweh is fully present, is the society where His will is perfectly respected and followed. Hearth, from this point of view, is quite imperfect. So, by this petition, we are asking Yahweh to make the situation on Earth as good as it is in Heaven; completely under His control. *'Give us today our daily bread'*: This petition, simply, means: "Give us today the food and all the things we need for the present day." From this prayer it emerges that Yahweh cares about our bodies. And Jesus showed us that; he spent so much time healing men's diseases and satisfying their physical hunger. We have always to remember that Christian salvation is not simply the salvation of the soul, it is the salvation of the whole human being; of body, mind, and spirit. This petition teaches us to pray for the real necessities of the coming day, to live one day at a time, and not to worry and be anxious about the distant, unknown future. This petition gives Yahweh His proper place, as it is from Yahweh that we receive the food -all the things- that is necessary to support life. *'Forgive us our debts'*: Here, we have first to understand what a debt or a sin is. (i)It can be corresponding to the Greek word "hamartia" which means "a missing of the target." In this case sin is the failure to be what we might have been and could have been. (ii)It can be "parabasis" which means "stepping across." Sin is the stepping across the line of separation between right and wrong. (iii)It can be "paraptoma" which means "slipping across." It is not so deliberate as parabasis, but it carries a very similar meaning. (iv)It can be "anomia" which means "lawlessness." It is the sin of the man who knows the right, and yet breaks the law. (v)It can be "opheilema" which means "debt." And this is the word used in the Lord's Prayer. In this case, the meaning is of a failure to pay that which is due, a failure in duty. *'As we also have forgiven our debtors...'*: After realizing that we need Yahweh's forgiveness, we also need to realize that we are asking for a forgiveness proportional to our own. Jesus clearly says that if we forgive others, Yahweh will forgive us; but if we refuse to forgive others, Yahweh will refuse to forgive us. It is, therefore, quite clear that, if we pray this petition with some unsettled quarrel in our lives, we are deliberately asking Yahweh NOT to forgive us. Human forgiveness and divine forgiveness are inextricably intercombined, and they cannot be separated. If a man has not put things right with his fellow-men, he cannot put things right with Yahweh. It is evident that, to be able to apply this Christian forgiveness to our lives, we need to be open-minded and to understand which are other people's reasons for doing something apparently against us. But, most of all, we need to forget because, without forgetting, nobody can forgive. *'Let us not fall into temptation'*: To the modern readers the word "tempt" is always a bad word; it always means "to seek to seduce into doing evil." The Greek text uses the verb "peirazein" which is often translated also by the word "test" rather than by the word "tempt." The actual meaning is to test a person's strength, his loyalty and his

ability for service. Temptation -actually, testing- is not designed to make us fall, but to make us stronger and better. A man has to be tested before Yahweh can use him in His service. *'But deliver us from evil'*: But there is also the power of evil in this world, the true temptation. So the petition is also to be protected from Satan, who is always working in opposition to Yahweh.

**Mt 6:14-15.** These verses explain how forgiveness works.

***Fasting*** [Matthew 6:16-18]

**(Mt6:16)** *"When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. (17)But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, (18)so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."*

**Mt 6:16.** *'When you fast...'*: Fasting was an essential part of the religious life of the Jews. In the time of Jesus there was only one compulsory fasting, on the Day of Atonement. On that day, from morning to evening, all men had "to deny themselves" (Leviticus 16:31), they were forbidden to eat, to drink, to bathe, to use perfumes, to wear sandals, to have conjugal sex. But the Jews made great use of private fasting, as in the case of mourning, or to express repentance to expiate some sin -this was the most common reason for fasting as the fast was designed to be the outer expression of an inward sorrow. Anyway, the practice of fasting involved certain inevitable dangers. The greatest was that a man might fast as a sign of superior piety, to demonstrate to men, not to Yahweh, how devoted and disciplined he was. This is the fasting Jesus was condemning, when it was used as an ostentatious parade of piety. The Jewish days of fasting were Monday and Thursday, which were also market days. So those who were ostentatiously fasting on those days had a bigger audience to see and admire them. They walked through the streets with their hair deliberately unkempt and disheveled, with their clothes deliberately soiled and disarrayed. Even whitening their faces to accentuate their paleness. It is evident that those were not acts of humility; they were deliberate acts of spiritual pride and ostentation. *'They have received their reward in full'*: Jesus said that, anyway, all the acts of this kind do always receive a reward. Actually, the phrase above should be more exactly translated "They have received their payment in full." The Greek word used here is "apechein," which was the commercial word used on receipted accounts, for receiving payment in full. What Jesus is saying is this: "If you fast in such a way that all men know that you are fasting, you will become known as a very ascetic man -but that is all. That is your payment in full."

**Mt 6:17.** *'But when you fast'*: Jesus' words imply that there is a proper fasting, which is surely good for self discipline, and accepted by Yahweh. *'Put oil on your head and wash your face'*: As a further sign of penitence, the Jews put ashes on their heads when fasting. On the contrary, putting oil and washing the face was reserved for joyous occasions.

**Mt 6:18.** *'It will not be obvious...'*: Again, Jesus is condemning all acts of exterior formalism as totally useless. The most important point, when fasting, is that it will be offered to Yahweh, without any desire to be seen by other men. Yahweh, though "unseen," is everywhere; He knows what every person is doing and thinking. *'Your Father... will reward you'*: When Jesus speaks of Yahweh rewarding those who have given to Him the kind of service He desires, he always speaks of reward in Heaven; and it is clear that he



never considered any material reward. This concept is totally different than it was in the Old Testament, where the ideas of goodness and prosperity are closely connected.

***Treasures in Heaven*** [Matthew 6:19-21 Luke 12:32-34]

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***(Lk12:32)"Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the Kingdom. (Mt6:19)Do not store up for yourselves treasures on Earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. (Mt6:20)(Lk12:33)But store up for yourselves treasures in Heaven, sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in Heaven that will not be exhausted, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not come near, do not break in and steal. (Mt6:21)(Lk12:34)For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."***

**Lk 12:32.** *'Do not be afraid'*: Jesus addresses these words both to the many people who give all their efforts to accumulate terrestrial goods and to those who have few possessions. They don't have to worry; but to do their best and then leave the rest to Yahweh, who has already given them access to his Kingdom.

**Mt 6:19.** *'Moth and rust'*: Representative of all agents and processes that destroy worldly possessions. *'Treasures'*: Jesus makes three examples from the main sources of wealth in Palestine, and he tells to avoid them. (i)"The things that the moth can destroy." In the East, part of the wealth often consisted in fine and elaborate clothes. But, no matter how costly, the moth might get at them, when they are stored away, and all their beauty and value be destroyed. (ii)"The things that rust can destroy." The Greek word translated "rust" is "brosis," which means "eating away," not really "rusting." The picture actually refers to wealth consisting in the corn and the grain stored away in barns. But into that corn and grain there could come worms, rats, and mice; until the store is polluted and destroyed. (iii)"The treasures which thieves can steal by breaking in." In Palestine, the walls of most houses were made of baked clay; and burglars did actually enter by digging through the walls. The reference here is to the gold usually kept in the house. But burglars could have dug through the walls; and that treasure would be gone.

**Mt 6:20-21. Lk 12:33-34.** *'Treasures in heaven. Give to the poor'*: The Jews said that the deeds of kindness done upon Earth become treasures in Heaven; what is generously done or given brings treasures in Heaven. *'Where your treasure is...'*: If a man seeks the treasures of Heaven, his heart will be fixed on Heaven; but if he seeks the treasures of Earth, his heart will be fastened to Earth -and some day he will have to say goodbye to them. If everything that a man values is on Earth, then he will have no interest in any world beyond this one; and he will leave this Earth reluctantly and grudgingly. If all through his life a man's eyes are on eternity, then he will evaluate lightly the things of this world; and he will leave this world with gladness, because he goes at last to see Yahweh. Anyway, we have to note that Jesus never said that this world is unimportant; but he always said and implied that its importance is not in itself, but in that to which it leads. This world is not the end of life, it is a stage on the way; and therefore a man should never lose his heart to this world and to the things of this world.

***The lamp of the body*** [Matthew 6:22-23 Luke 11:33-36]

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***(Lk11:33)"No one lights a lamp and puts it in a place where it will be hidden, or under a bowl. Instead he puts it on its stand, so that those who come may see the***

**light. (Mt6:22-23)(Lk11:34)Your eye is the lamp of your body. If your eyes are good, your whole body also will be full of light. But if your eyes are bad, your whole body also will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness! (Lk11:35)See to it, then, that the light within you is not darkness. (36)Therefore, if your whole body is full of light, and no part of it dark, it will be completely lighted, as when the light of a lamp shines on you."**

**Lk 11:33.** *'No one lights a lamp...'*: This passage is strictly connected to 'The light of the world' (Mk 4:21; Mt 5:14-16; Lk 8:16), where Jesus introduces the picture of the Christians being the light of the world, and tells them to let their light -spiritual light- shine before men; to be seen by everybody.

**Mt 6:22-23. Lk 11:34-36.** *'Your eye is the lamp of your body'*: In this picture, the eye is regarded as the window by which the spiritual light gets into the body. And, as the state of a window determines what light gets into a room, so the light of the body -its spiritual condition- depends by the light -by the spiritual condition- of the eye. The light which gets into any man's heart and soul depends on the spiritual state of the eye through which it has to pass, for the eye (which is part of the brain, that is, of the mind) is the window of the body. If the eye is spiritually good, the body receives all the spiritual good light it needs. If the eye is spiritually diseased, the lights turns to spiritual darkness; and a great darkness, because of the great value that Yahweh assigns to all men and to their spirituality. *'If your eyes are good... If your eyes are bad...'*: Then, we have to consider the exact meaning of the Greek words translated "good" and "bad." For "good," we find "haplos," which usually means "generous." For "bad," we find "poneros," which means "grudging," or "ungenerous." So Jesus is actually saying, "There is nothing like generosity for giving you a clear and undistorted view of life and of people; and there is nothing like the grudging and ungenerous spirit for distorting your view of life and people."

**No one can serve two masters** [Matthew 6:24 Luke 16:13-15] See page 397

**(Mt6:24)(Lk16:13)"No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and be fond of the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both Yahweh and Money."**

**(Lk16:14)The Pharisees, who were eager for money, heard all this and were sneering at Jesus. (15)He said to them, "You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of men, but Yahweh knows your hearts. What is highly valued among men is detestable in Yahweh's sight."**

**Mt 6:24. Lk 16:13.** *'Serve'*: The Greek verb used here is "douleuein," which means "to be slave to." *'Master'*: The Greek word is "kurios," which denotes "absolute ownership." The proper translation should be: "No man can be a slave to two owners." In the ancient world the slave, in the eyes of the law, was not a person but a thing, a living tool, a material possession of his master; always at his owner's disposal. *'Hate one and be fond of the other... You cannot serve both Yahweh and money'*: It is clear and evident that it would be absolutely impossible for any man to follow both such masters, Yahweh and Money (in more general terms, Yahweh and Satan), whose requirements are totally antithetic. Here is the essence of our relationship to Yahweh, Who must be the only undisputed master of our lives. *'Money'*: The Hebrew word translated "money" is "mamon" which means "material possessions in which a man puts his trust." At a certain point mamon came to be considered as a name and to be regarded as nothing less than a god,

Mammon. Surely, when a man puts his full trust in material things, then those material things become not his support, but his god.

**Lk 16:14-15.** *'The Pharisees...'*: This passage is a rebuke to the Pharisees, who derided Jesus. This was because the Jews tended to connect earthly prosperity with goodness; wealth was a sign that a man was a good man and had the favor of Yahweh. *'You are the ones...'*: The problem with the Pharisees was that they put on a show of goodness and regarded material prosperity as a reward of that goodness. *'What is highly valued...'*: But the more they exalted themselves before men, the more they became an abomination to Yahweh. It is bad enough for a man to think himself a good man; it is even worse when he points to material prosperity as a proof of his goodness.

In essence, this saying of Jesus has to turn our thought to the place that material possession have in our life, to the fact that the possession of wealth, money, and material goods is not a sin, but a grave moral responsibility.

***Do not worry*** [*Matthew 6:25-34 Luke 12:22-31*]

*See page 397*

***(Mt6:25)(Lk12:22-23)Then Jesus said to his disciples: "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? (Mt6:26)(Lk12:24)Look at the birds of the air; consider the ravens: they do not sow or reap or store away in storerooms or barns, and yet Yahweh your heavenly Father feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds!***

***(Mt6:27)(Lk12:25)Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life or a single cubit to his height? (Lk12:26)Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest?***

***(Mt6:28-29)(Lk12:27)And why do you worry about clothes? See and consider how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. (Mt6:30)(Lk12:28)If that is how Yahweh clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will He clothe you, O you of little faith! (Mt6:31)(Lk12:29)So do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' (Mt6:32)(Lk12:30)For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. (Mt6:33)(Lk12:31)But seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. (Mt6:34)Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of his own."***

**Mt 6:25. Lk 12:22-23.** *'Therefore, I tell you...'*: Again, Jesus has something to say to those who have few worldly possessions. In all this passage the kind of thought which Jesus rejects is anxious thought or worry, the kind of fear which takes all the joy out of life. It has to be clear that Jesus never ordered anybody to live in a reckless way, but that he always told people to do their best and then leave the rest to Yahweh. And, to explain this clearly, he makes a number of examples. *'Do not worry...'*: Jesus begins by pointing out that it is Yahweh who gave us our life and that, exactly because of this, surely we can trust Him for the lesser things; as to give us food and clothing -generally, all the things which are necessary to support life.

**Mt 6:26. Lk 12:24.** *'Look at...'*: Jesus goes and speaks about the birds. There is no anxious worry in their lives, no attempt to pile up goods for an unforeseeable future; and

yet their lives go on. The point that Jesus is making is not that the birds do not work -actually, they toil quite hard to get their food- but that they do not worry. They are not like men who are trying to find security in things stored up and accumulated against the future. And, if Yahweh gives to the birds all they need, how much more He will give to men who, for Him, have a much higher value. *'Raven'*: A large crow, quite common in the fields of Palestine.

**Mt 6:27. Lk 12:25-26.** *'Who... can add...'*: In this verses, Jesus speaks about the impossibility, for men, to influence and change the basic characteristics of their life. Nobody by worrying can change any of the fundamental characteristics of his physical life. *'A single cubit'*: A cubit is 18 inches (45 cm). Clearly, the phrase "a single cubit," which appears on some manuscripts only, is wrong because it represent too much. Anyway, what is important is the concept, not this particular unit of measurement. It is Jesus' argument that, powerless as we are, is pointless for us to worry.

**Mt 6:28-30. Lk 12:27-28.** *'Lilies'*: Here they represent flowers in general. The lilies bloomed for one day only on the hillsides of Palestine; and yet in their brief life they were clothed with a beauty unsurpassed by the robes of kings. Now, if Yahweh gives such a beauty, which is beyond man's power to imitate, to a short-lived flower, how much more He will care for man, who is the crown of His creation. *'Thrown into the fire'*: Wood was scarce in Palestine, and it was the dried grasses and the wild flowers that were commonly used to feed the ovens.

**Mt 6:31-32. Lk 12:29-30.** *'So, do not set your heart...'*: Jesus presents a very fundamental argument against worry. Worry, he says, is characteristic of the pagans, and not of people who know what Yahweh is like. Worry is essentially distrust of Yahweh. This can be understandable in the pagans who believe in jealous, capricious, unpredictable gods; but it is not proper for who has learned to call Yahweh by the name of Father. The reason why the Christians don't have to worry is precisely because they believe in Yahweh's great affection.

**Mt 6:33. Lk 12:31.** *'But seek first...'*: Here, Jesus explains the way to defeat worry. It is to seek, and to concentrate upon, the Kingdom of Yahweh; to concentrate on the acceptance of His will. This means that the Christians should seek the spiritual benefits of the Kingdom rather than the material goods of the world which, as far as we need them, will be provided directly by Yahweh. In other terms, worry is banished when Yahweh becomes the dominating power of our lives.

**Mt 6:34.** *'Do not worry about tomorrow'*: Lastly, Jesus says that worry can be defeated when we acquire the art of living one day at a time. Each day is to be lived as it comes, each problem is to be solved when it appears, without worrying about the unknown future and all the things which could happen.

***Judging others*** [Mark 4:24-25 Matthew 7:1-6 Luke 6:37-42] See page 398  
*(Mk4:24)(Mt7:1-2)(Lk6:37-38)"Consider carefully what you hear," he continued. "Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged. Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you -and even more. (Mk4:25)Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him.*

*(Mt7:3)(Lk6:41)Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? (Mt7:4-5)(Lk6:42)How can you say to*

*your brother, 'Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye,' when you yourself fail to see that all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."*

*(Lk6:39)He also told them this parable: "Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? (40)A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher.*

*(Mt7:6)Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and then turn and tear you to pieces."*

**Mk 4:24. Mt 7:1-2. Lk 6:37-38.** *'Do not judge'*: Nobody should judge another person because nobody can ever know the whole person or the whole facts; and nobody can know the strength of another person's temptations. Furthermore, it is almost impossible for any person to be strictly impartial in his judgment. Only a completely impartial person has the right to judge, and it is not in the human nature to be completely impartial. Consequently, only Yahweh -who has the complete knowledge, and who is absolutely impartial- and Jesus Christ -to whom Yahweh has given the task of administering His justice to the living and the dead- can judge. *'Do not condemn'*: It is clear that, as we don't have to judge other people, so much more we don't have to condemn them -which is to express our final, negative judgment on them- if we don't consider them good. *'Forgive'*: The only logical option we are left with is to forgive whatever wrong other people could have done. *'You will not be judged... you will not be condemned... you will be forgiven'*: If, conscious of our own defects, we are able of not judging and of not condemning but, on the contrary, of forgiving other people's defects, we have Jesus' promise that he will use the same kindness in judging our own defects and in giving us his and Yahweh's forgiveness. Clearly, Jesus did not relieve his followers of the need of discerning right and wrong, but he condemned unjust and hypocritical judging of others. *'In the same way you judge... With the same measure you use...'*: Jesus, in judging a person, will always use the same criteria this particular person has used in judging other people. *'Give, and...'*: An invitation, a command, to be generous; with the certainty of the reward that will be received -either in this life, or in the life to come, or in both. *'A good measure, pressed down...'*: A figurative phrase to say that the reward for giving will always be great, the maximum we can hold -even more than that. *'Will be poured into your lap'*: The Jews wore a long loose robe down to the feet, and around the waist a belt. The robe could be pulled up so that the lap of the robe above the belt formed a kind of outsize pocket in which things, as a measure of wheat, could be carried.

**Mk 4:25.** *'Whoever has...'*: This may seem a hard saying, if taken physically. But its real meaning is moral and is a direct consequence of the attitude of a person toward other people. If a person is correct and generous, he will get Yahweh's reward -mainly moral, sometimes even material- and so he will have more. On the contrary, who is partial and unfair in his judgments, ungenerous toward other people, will not get Yahweh's reward, and will fall farther and farther away from Yahweh -and so he will have less and less.

**Mt 7:3-5. Lk 6:41-42.** *'Why do you look...'*: Here Jesus states the supreme reason why we should not judge others, "No one is good enough to judge anybody else." Jesus used a hyperbole to sharpen the contrast and to emphasize how foolish and hypocritical it is for us to criticize someone for even a minor fault while remaining blind to our own -even considerable- faults. Jesus taught that we have no right to criticize unless we ourselves are free of faults, that only the faultless has the right to look for faults in others.

This simply means that we have no right to criticize at all, because nobody is free of faults. So, we have to concentrate on our own faults, and to leave the faults of others to Yahweh.

**Lk 6:39-40.** *'He also told them...'*: These verses read like a series of separated sayings. Most probably Luke was collecting together few sayings of Jesus which were spoken on different occasions and represent a kind of compendium of rules for correct living. *'Can a blind man...? A student is not above...'*: Both sayings mean that, in our learning, we must seek the best teacher for only he can lead us farther on; and that, if and when we teach, we must remember that we cannot teach what we do not know.

**Mt 7:6.** *'Do not give dogs...'*: This is a very difficult saying of Jesus for, taken literally, it seems to demand an exclusiveness which is the very reverse of the Christian message. The traditional interpretation of this text is associated with the Lord's Table. In effect, from the beginning of the Christian Church, the Eucharist was only reserved to those who were baptized in the name of the Lord. In more general terms, this saying means that teaching -the instruction given to people about Jesus Christ and the meaning of Christianity- should be given in accordance to the spiritual capacity of the learners, to avoid falling in some trap of Satan and being torn to pieces by him. *'Dogs. Pigs'*: Both animals were despised by the Jews as unclean, so here they represent people who are really far from Jesus Christ's message and not -or, better, not yet- worthy to receive it.

**Ask, seek, knock** [Matthew 7:7-11 Luke 11:5-13]

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**(Lk11:5)** *Then he said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and he goes to him at midnight and says, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, (6)because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him.'*

**(7)** *Then the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children are with me in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.' (8)I tell you, though he will not get up and give him the bread because he is his friend, yet because of the man's persistence he will get up and give him as much as he needs.*

**(Mt7:7)(Lk11:9)** *So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. (Mt7:8)(Lk11:10)For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.*

**(Mt7:9-10)(Lk11:11)** *Which of you fathers, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? (Lk11:12)Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? (Mt7:11)(Lk11:13)If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in Heaven give good gifts and His Spirit to those who ask Him!"*

**Lk 11:5-8.** *'Suppose one of you...'*: In Jesus' story there is a traveler who has arrived towards midnight at his friend's house. In Palestine hospitality was a sacred duty; it was not enough to set before a man a bare sufficiency, the guest had to be offered an ample abundance. In this case, the late arrival of the traveler put the householder in an embarrassing situation, because he had no bread and he could not fulfill the duty of hospitality. So, late as it was, he went to borrow from a friend, whose door was shut for the night. In Palestine the door was open all day, for there was little privacy, but when it was shut at night, this was a sign that the householder did not wish to be disturbed. No one would knock at a shut door unless the need was imperative. *'I can't get up'*: To understand why the man who was in bed did not want to rise, we have to give a look to the standard house of poor people in Palestine, which consisted of one room with one door

and one little window only. Families were large and they slept close together for warmth. For one to rise was inevitably to disturb the whole family. But the determined borrower kept knocking with unashamed persistence until at last the householder, knowing that by this time the whole family was disturbed anyway, rose and gave him what he needed.

**Mt 7:7-8. Lk 11:9-10.** *'Ask, and it will be given... Seek... Knock...'*: Jesus is clearly telling us to persist and never to be discouraged in prayer, in this way giving us a clear indication of the Christian way to pray and in what kind of atmosphere our prayers will be heard. The lesson of this parable is that we must be persistent in our prayers, and that we must knock at Yahweh's door until He finally answers. Jesus urged boldness and persistence and gave assurance that Yahweh actually answers to our prayers; but those prayers have to be intense because the reality and sincerity of our desire can only be guaranteed by the passion by which we pray. It is important to remember that, when we pray, we are not asking gifts from an unwilling God, but going to One who knows our needs better than we know them ourselves. So, if we don't receive what we pray for, it is not because Yahweh refuses to give it but because He has something better for us. There is not such a thing as an unanswered prayer, but the answer given may not be the answer we desired or expected; anyway, even when it appears as a refusal it is the answer of the affection and the wisdom of Yahweh.

**Mt 7:9-10. Lk 11:11-12.** *'Which of you fathers...'*: Jesus' argument is very simple; it is that no good human father will ever refuse the proper request of his son or, worse, deceive him with something false. And so, much more, Yahweh the Father will never refuse the proper requests of his children. The three examples taken by Jesus are carefully chosen. At first sight, the matchings look quite strange, but the point is that in each case the two things cited bear a close resemblance which had to be familiar to the people listening to Jesus. Let us analyze those resemblances. (i)"Bread, stone": The round limestone stones on the seashore were the shape and the color of little loaves. If a son asks for bread, will his father mock him by giving him a stone, which looks like bread but which is impossible to eat? (ii)"Fish, serpent": Almost certainly the serpent here is an eel which, according to the Jewish food laws could not be eaten, because it was unclean (it does not have fins and scales). If a son asks for a fish, will his father mock him by giving him a kind of fish which is forbidden to eat? (iii)"Egg, scorpion": In Palestine there is a pale kind of scorpion which, when at rest with its claws and tail folded in, can look as an egg. If a son asks for an egg, will his father mock him by handing him a biting scorpion?

**Mt 7:11. Lk 11:13.** *'How much more your Father...'*: Yahweh will never refuse our prayers, and He will never mock our prayers. Yahweh will always answer our prayers; but He will answer them in His way, in the way of perfect wisdom and of great affection. This means that often, if He answered our prayers as we desire at the moment, it would not be appropriate for our future -and Yahweh is mainly looking at our spiritual future. *'Give good gifts and His Spirit'*: The "good gifts" are Yahweh's spiritual gifts. Furthermore, the greatest of Yahweh's gifts is the gift of "His Spirit" -the gift of allowing people to be in spiritual communion with Him.

**The narrow and wide gates** [Matthew 7:13-14 Luke 13:22-30]

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(Lk13:22)Then Jesus went through the towns and villages, teaching as he made his way to Jerusalem. (23)Someone asked him, "Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?"

*He said to them, (Mt7:13-14)(Lk13:24)"Make every effort to enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it. Because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able. (Lk 13:25)Once the Owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, 'Sir, open the door for us.'*

*But he will answer, 'I don't know you or where you come from.'*

*(26)Then you will say, 'We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.'*

*(27)But he will replay, 'I don't know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evil-doers!'*

*(28)There will be weeping there, and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the Kingdom of Yahweh, but you yourselves thrown out. (29)People will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the Kingdom of Yahweh. (30)Indeed there are those who are last who will be first, and first who will be last."*

**Lk 13:22.** *'Through the towns and villages...':* At this point Jesus left Judea and, on his way to Jerusalem, began his work in Perea. During the last part of the Perea ministry, it appears that he went north to Galilee and then traveled south again through Perea to Jerico and to Jerusalem. To note also that some of Jesus' sayings that Luke attributes to the period of ministry in Perea are found in different settings in Matthew. But surely Jesus repeated various sayings in different places and different occasions.

**Lk 13:23.** *'Only a few... saved?':* The question posed by this person was certainly based on the assumption that the Kingdom of Yahweh was for the Jews and that the pagans would all be shut out.

**Mt 7:13-14. Lk 13:24.** *'Make every effort to enter...':* Jesus' answer must have come as a shock to his questioner. He declared that entry to the Kingdom can never be automatic but is the result and the reward of a long struggle. In effect, the word used for "make every effort" has the meaning of "agony;" the struggle to enter must be so intense that it can be described as an agony of soul and spirit. *'Wide is the gate... small is the gate':* The choice with which Jesus is confronting people in this passage is between two ways. There is a broad and easy way, and there are many who take it; but at the end of it there is ruin. There is a narrow and hard way, and there are few who take it; but at the end of it there is life, the eternal life of spiritual communion with Yahweh. *'Many... will try...':* All the people who will not try hard enough, will not have access to the Kingdom of Yahweh at the end of their terrestrial life -they will have to go through a period of redemptive punishment in hell, where they will have to struggle for finally gaining entry to the Kingdom.

**Lk 13:25.** *'Once the Owner...':* When Yahweh ends the terrestrial life of a man and asks him to come to judgment. *'I don't know you...':* Jesus, who will judge all people at the end of their physical life, will refuse those people direct entry to the Kingdom of Yahweh.

**Lk 13:26-27.** *'We ate and drank with you, and you taught us in our streets':* The defense of these people was that they had followed for a while Jesus Christ and his way of life and, for that, they were sure to have the right to be accepted in the Kingdom. But the entry to the Kingdom is a matter of spiritual attitude towards other people and towards Jesus Christ and his message, till the end of terrestrial life. It won't be enough to have participated for a certain period of time only. It is evident that we don't have to think



that, once we have made a formal commitment of ourselves to Jesus Christ, we have reached the end of the road and achieved our goal for ever. For the Christians, the struggle to enter the Kingdom of Yahweh has to be continuous; for the whole duration of their terrestrial life.

**Lk 13:28.** *'When you see...'*: Here Jesus is expressly considering all the Jews who will not go straight to the Kingdom for the mere fact that they are Jews, as they were taking for granted, but will be rejected and sent away. And from where they will stay -hell, the punitive, but expiatory and redemptive place where Yahweh is not- they will see the Kingdom of Yahweh and all the Patriarchs and the Prophets.

**Lk 13:29.** *'People... from east and west and north and south'*: All the peoples of the Earth, not only the Jews, have full title to enter the Kingdom of Yahweh.

**Lk 13:30.** *'Last... first...'*: Furthermore, there will be some surprises in the Kingdom of Yahweh. The standards of Heaven are not the standards of Earth. Earth's first will often be last, and its last will often be first. Those who are very prominent in this world may have to be very humble in the next; those whom no one notices here may be the princes of the world to come. Their "position" in the Kingdom will be indicative of the degree of communion they have reached with Yahweh.

***The wise and foolish builders*** [Matthew 7:24-29 Luke 6:46-49] See page 399

**(Lk6:46)** *"Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say? (Mt7:24) (Lk6:47)Therefore, I will show you that everyone who comes to me and hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. (Mt7:25)(Lk6:48)He is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundations on the rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built. (Mt7:26-27)(Lk6:49)But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on the ground of sand without a foundation. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed with a great crash and its destruction was complete."*

**(Mt7:28)** *When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, (29)because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.*

**Lk 6:46.** *'Why do you call me...'*: To call Jesus "Lord," to invoke his name and to stop there, without putting into practice his teachings, is to choose the easy way (The narrow and wide gates. Mt 7:13-14; Lk 13:22-30) which leads to disaster.

**Mt 7:24-27. Lk 6:47-49.** *'I will show you that...'*: Here, Jesus is speaking with all his authority; the authority deriving from the fact that he is the Son of Yahweh. *'Everyone who comes to me and hears... and puts... into practice...'*: The parable teaches the importance of laying down the right foundations for life; the only true foundations, which consist of putting into practice the teachings of Jesus. *'Built on the rock... built... on the... sand...'*: We can clearly see that Jesus was an expert in practical life; when he spoke about the foundations of a house, he knew what he was talking about. This story shows the kind of things that could really happen in Palestine, where the builder of a house had to think ahead before to start construction. In effect, many places were a

pleasant sandy hollow in summer, but become in winter raging torrents of water. So a short-sighted man might well have built his house too near to the dried-up bed of a river, and, when winter came, his house would disintegrate. Even on other sites it was tempting to begin building on the smoothed-over sand, and not to bother digging down to the shelf of rock below; but also that way disaster lay ahead. Only a house whose foundations are firm can withstand the storm. In Palestine, the wise man searched for the rock, were it was much more difficult to build and were it was hard labor to cut out the foundation. But, when the wild winter weather came, his toil was amply repaid, for his house stood strong and firm and secure. *'Everyone who hears... and does not put... into practice...'*: It may be easier to take the easy way than it is to take Jesus' way, but at the end of it there is ruin. Jesus' way is the way to security here and hereafter. When we realize that the hard way is always the best and the right one, we will found our lives upon the teachings of Jesus and no storm will ever shake them. In essence, Jesus demands two things. (i) That men should listen. The first step to the Christian life is simply to give Jesus Christ a chance to be heard, so it is possible to learn what Jesus said and what the Church is teaching. (ii) That men should do. Knowledge only becomes relevant when it is translated into action. To be in any sense followers of Jesus, we must hear and do. In one word, Jesus demands our implicit obedience to his teachings. To learn to obey to Jesus is the most important thing in life, as it is Jesus' claim that obedience to him is the only sure foundation for eternal life; and it is his promise that the life which is founded on obedience to him is safe, no matter what storm can come.

**Mt 7:28-29.** *'Authority'*: When preaching, the teachers of the law always quoted other Rabbis to support their own teaching; but Jesus spoke with divine authority, without any need of quoting the words of other people; and all the listeners were fully aware of the great difference between his preaching and that of the teachers of the law.

***Jesus anointed by a sinful woman*** [Luke 7:36-50]

**(Lk7:36)** *Now one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, so he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. (37) When a woman who had lived a sinful life in that town learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume, (38) and as she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them.*

**(39)** *When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is -that she is a sinner."*

**(40)** *Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to tell you." "Tell me, teacher," he said.*

**(41)** *"Two men owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. (42) Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he canceled the debts of both. Now which of them will like him more?"*

**(43)** *Simon replied, "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt canceled." "You have judged correctly," Jesus said.*

**(44)** *Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. (45) You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, had not stopped kissing my feet. (46) You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. (47) Therefore, I tell you, her*

***many sins have been forgiven -for she has shown much kindness. But he who has been forgiven little is he who has shown little kindness."***

***(48)Then Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."***

***(49)The other guests began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?"***

***(50)Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."***

**Lk 7:36-50.** The scene is in the courtyard of the house of Simon the Pharisee in Capernaum. The houses of well off people were built around an open courtyard in the form of a hollow square. Often in the courtyard there were a garden and a fountain; and there in the warm weather meals were eaten. It was the custom that when a Rabbi was at the meal in the house of an important man, all kinds of people came in -they were quite free to do so- to listen to him. By the way, that explains the presence of the woman. When an important guest entered such a house, three things were always done. (i)The host placed his hand on the guest's shoulder and gave him the kiss of peace. This was a mark of respect that was never omitted in the case of a Rabbi. (ii)At the time, the roads were only dust tracks, and the shoes were merely soles held in place by straps across the foot. So always cool water was poured over the guest's feet to cleanse and comfort them. (iii)Either a pinch of sweet-smelling incense was burned or a drop of perfume of roses was placed on the guest's head. Good manners demanded these things, and in this case not one of them was done.

**Lk 7:36.** *'One of the Pharisees...':* Simon was one of the Pharisees, the "separated ones." The main reason for such a man to invite Jesus to his house may have been more to entrap Jesus saying or doing something unorthodox than to learn from him. Surely, Simon was not a friend or a sympathizer -even if not all the Pharisees were Jesus' enemies. This appears clearly from the whole atmosphere of discourtesy, which explains the strange combination of a certain respect and the omission of the usual courtesies. *'Reclined at the table':* In the east the guests did not sit, but reclined, at the table. They lay on low couches, resting on the left elbow, leaving the right arm free, with the feet stretched out behind; and during the meal the sandals were taken off.

**Lk 7:37.** *'A woman who had lived a sinful life':* A prostitute. She must have heard Jesus preach, and in repentance she determined to lead a new life. She went there with hope, understanding that she could be forgiven. *'Alabaster jar':* A long-necked, globular bottle, filled with a perfumed ointment.

**Lk 7:38.** *'Stood behind him at his feet':* Jesus reclined on a couch with his feet extended away from the table, which made it possible for the woman to stand besides Jesus' feet, to anoint and wipe them, and still not to disturb him. *'Weeping':* Full of repentance for her past life. *'Wiped with her hair':* For a Jewish woman to appear with the hair unbound was an act of the gravest immodesty. The fact that this woman loosed her long hair in public showed how she had forgotten everyone except Jesus. *'Poured perfume on them':* The anointing, perhaps originally intended for Jesus' head, was instead applied to his feet. A similar act was performed by Mary of Bethany just over a week before the crucifixion (Jesus anointed at Bethany. Mk 14:3-9; Mt 26:6-13; Jn 12:2-11).

**Lk 7:39.** *'The Pharisee... said to himself...':* Here, Simon was judging both Jesus -as a prophet of Yahweh, and excluding this possibility- and the woman -recognizing her as a notorious sinner. And judging other people is what Jesus said not to do (Judging others. Mk 4:24-25; Mt 7:1-6; Lk 6:37-42).

**Lk 7:40-42.** *'Jesus answered...':* Jesus was fully aware of Simon's inner thoughts. And,

as in many other occasions, his answer -his teaching- assumed the form of a parable. The meaning of it is that a sinner actually has a debt with Yahweh who, if and when the sinner recognizes his condition -repents- will cancel his debt -forgive him. The bigger the debt -the sin- the bigger the sentiment of gratitude the repented sinner will feel.

**Lk 7:43.** *'Simon replied'*: Simon's reply shows that he understood perfectly that the condition of "sinner" applies to everybody -who more, who less- and that only the quantity of debt canceled -of sin forgiven- can differ from person to person.

**Lk 7:44-46.** *'Do you see...'*: Jesus is reproaching Simon for not respecting -he, who was supposed to follow all the traditions and the scribal rules- the fundamental rules of hospitality, not even giving him some water to clean his feet; which was the minimal gesture of hospitality. As a contrast there is the woman, who was fully conscious of being only a sinner, and who was actually doing what Simon did not do.

**Lk 7:47.** *'Her many sins... forgiven...'*: A man must recognize himself as a sinner before he can be spiritually helped and healed. In other terms, a self-supposed righteous man does not realize his need for salvation -and is not forgiven-, but a self-admitted sinner does -and is forgiven. *'He who has been forgiven little is he who has shown little kindness'*: The story shows a contrast between two attitudes of mind and heart. Simon was sure he did not need it, and therefore he did not receive any forgiveness. Simon's impression of himself was that he was a good man in the sight of men and of Yahweh. The woman was conscious of nothing else than a claimant need, and therefore was full of affection for him who could supply forgiveness, and so she received it.

**Lk 7:48.** *'Your sins are forgiven'*: Jesus met the woman's deepest need -forgiveness- and, to clarify her position in front of everybody, he did assure the woman that Yahweh was not angry with her.

**Lk 7:49.** *'Who... forgives sins?'*: It was an essential point of the Jewish faith that only Yahweh could forgive sins. For a man to claim to do so was to insult Yahweh; that was blasphemy, and the penalty for blasphemy was death by stoning.

**Lk 7:50.** *'Your faith has saved you...'*: Because of her faith in Jesus, her sins were forgiven and she could experience Yahweh's peace.

***Second preaching trip through Galilee******Jesus travels again through Galilee [Luke 8:1-3]***

*(Lk8:1)After this, Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the Good News of the Kingdom of Yahweh. The Twelve were with him, (2)and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; (3)Joanna the wife of Cuza, the manager of Herod's household; Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means.*

**Lk 8:1.** *'Jesus traveled about...':* Most of Jesus' ministry had been centered in Capernaum, and most of his preaching in synagogues. But now he was on the road again -always accompanied by the inner group of the Twelve- and, as he traveled from town to town on a second tour of the Galilean countryside, the synagogues were not any more open to him, as once they had been. He had begun there, in the synagogues, were any man with a message from Yahweh would have expected to find an attentive and receptive audience. Instead of a welcome he had found opposition; instead of eager listeners he had found the rejection of the scribes and Pharisees; so Jesus took his preaching and healing to the open road, to the hillside, and to the lake shore.

**Lk 8:2-3.** *'Also some women...':* This passage lists a little group of women who accompanied and served Jesus out of their resources. It was always considered a pious act to support a Rabbi, and the fact that the devoted followers of Jesus helped him in this way was in direct line with ordinary practice. But, once more, as with the disciples, so with these women, we have to notice how mixed a company they were. There was Mary Magdalene, out of whom Jesus had cast seven demons. Even if it is not mentioned at all, clearly she had a dark and terrible past. There was Joanna, whose husband was the man who managed Herod's properties and financial interests. This had to be a very much trusted and important official. There was Susanna, of whom nothing else is known. It is amazing to find Mary of Magdala -with her dark past- and Joanna -a lady of the court- in the same company. But, even if it looks odd and surprising to find such ladies in Jesus' company, we have to recognize that with Jesus the most diverse people were able to live together; and, furthermore, without losing their own personalities, temperaments, or qualities. *'Helping to support them':* Jesus and his disciples did not provide for themselves by miracles, but were supported by the service of such grateful people as these women. They were a group of people whose help was practical. Being women, they would not be allowed to preach; but they gave all the help they could. And there is no gift which cannot be used in the service of Jesus Christ, many of whose greatest servants were and are in the background, unseen but essential to his cause.

***The parable of the sower****See page 400*

*[Mark 4:1-20;22-23 Matthew 13:1-23 Luke 8:4-15;17-18]*

*(Mk4:1-4)(Mt13:1-4)(Lk8:4-5)Again that same day Jesus went out of the house, sat by the lake and began to teach while a large crowd was gathering and people were coming to him from town after town. The crowd that gathered around Jesus was so large that he got into a boat and sat in it out on the lake, while all the people stood along the shore at the water's hedge. Then he taught them many things by parables, and in his teaching he told this parable and said: "Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path; it was trampled on, and the birds*

*of the air came and ate it up. (Mk4:5-6)(Mt13:5-6)(Lk8:6)Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. And when it came up, it sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root and no moisture. (Mk4:7)(Mt13:7)(Lk8:7)Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up with it and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain. (Mk4:8-9)(Mt13:8-9)(Lk8:8) Still other seed fell on good soil, where it came up, grew and produced a crop, multiplying thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times what was sown."*

*Then, when Jesus said this, he called out, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."*

*(Mk4:10)(Mt13:10)(Lk8:9)When he was alone, the Twelve and the others disciples around him came to him and asked him about what these parables meant, "Why do you speak to the people in parables?"*

*(Mk4:11-12)(Mt13:11;13-15)(Lk8:10)He replied and told them, "The knowledge of the secrets of the Kingdom of Yahweh has been given to you. But not to them; to those on the outside everything is said in parables. This is why I speak to the others in parables, so that,*

*'Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand.'*

*In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah:*

*'You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. For this people's heart has become callused;*

*They hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes.*

*Instead, if they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, I would heal them.'*

*(Mt13:16)But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear. (17)For I tell you the truth, many prophets and righteous men longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it."*

*(Mk4:13)Then Jesus said to them, "Don't you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable? (Mk4:14)(Mt13:18)(Lk8:11)Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: The seed is the Word of Yahweh, and the farmer sows the Word. (Mk4:15)(Mt13:19)(Lk8:12)Some people are like seed along the path, where the Word is sown. Those, the seed along the path, are the ones who hear the message about the Kingdom and do not understand it. And then, as soon as they hear it, Satan, the evil one, comes and snatches away from their hearts the Word that was sown in them, so that they may not believe and be saved. (Mk4:16-17)(Mt13:20-21)(Lk8:13)Others, like the seed sown that fell on rocky places, are the ones who, when they hear the Word, receive it at once with joy. But since they have no root, they last only a short time. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing, when trouble or persecution comes because of the Word, they quickly fall away. (Mk4:18-19)(Mt13:22)(Lk8:14)Still others, like the seed that was sown and fell among the thorns, are those who hear the Word; but as they go their way they are choked by the worries of this life, the riches and pleasures. The deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the Word, making it unfruitful, and they do not mature. (Mk4:20)(Mt13:23)(Lk8:15)Others, like the seed sown that fell on good soil, are those who hear the Word, understand it and accept it. The seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the Word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop -yielding thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times what was sown.*

*(Mk4:22)(Lk8:17)For whatever is hidden is meant to be disclosed, there is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed. And whatever is concealed is meant to be brought*

*out into the open; there is nothing concealed that will not be known or brought out into the open. (Mt13:12)(Lk8:18)Therefore consider carefully how you listen. Whoever has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has will be taken from him. (Mk4:23)If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear."*

**Mk 4:1-9. Mt 13:1-9. Lk 8:4-8.** *'By the lake'*: Jesus had to take religious preaching and teaching out of its conventional setting in the synagogues into the open air and among the crowds of ordinary men and women. *'He taught by parables'*: His method of teaching consisted of speaking to the people in parables. A parable is basically a comparison; it is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. Something on Earth is compared with something in Heaven, so that the heavenly truth may be better grasped in light of the earthly illustration. Jesus chose the method of the parable simply to make people listen. Now he was not any more dealing with an assembly of people in a synagogue who were more or less bound to remain there till the end of the service. He was dealing with a crowd in the open air who were quite free to walk away at any time. Therefore, the first essential point was to interest them. Unless their interest was aroused they would simply drift away. Still further, a parable is a method of teaching which makes the abstract ideas concrete. Few people can grasp abstract ideas. Most people think in pictures, as the concept of physical beauty which becomes clear only if we point to a person who we qualify as having such a characteristic. Jesus knew that it was useless to expect simple minds to cope with abstract ideas; and so he put the abstract ideas into concrete stories; he showed them in action; he made them into persons, so that men might grasp and understand them. *'A farmer...'*: What in all likelihood happened was that, as Jesus was using the boat as a pulpit, in one of the fields near the shore a sower was actually sowing, and Jesus took this situation, which they all could see, as a text. Jesus began from something which at the moment they could actually see to open their mind to a truth which they had never seen. By so doing Jesus showed that there is a real link between Earth and Heaven; that in the ordinary, common, everyday things men can see Yahweh. *'Who has hears...'*: It is important to realize that the parables were spontaneous and unrehearsed. The parables were, in the first instance, not meant to be read but to be heard. No one has to sit down and study them phrase by phrase and word by word. They were spoken to produce an immediate impression and reaction. It is always wrong to attempt to make every detail of a parable mean something. What is important is the idea that would flash in a man's mind when he heard a parable for the first time.

**Mk 4:10-12. Mt 13:10-11;13-15. Lk 8:9-10.** *'Secrets of the Kingdom of Yahweh'*: Secret, in Greek "mysterion;" that is, "mystery." This word in Greek does not mean something which is complicated and mysterious in our sense of the term. It means something which is quite unintelligible to a person who has not been initiated into its meaning, but perfectly plain to a person who has been so initiated. When the New Testament talks of the mysteries of the Kingdom, it does not mean that the Kingdom is remote and abstruse and hard to understand; but it does mean that it is quite unintelligible to the man who has not given his heart to Jesus, and that only the man who has taken Jesus as Master and Lord can understand what the Kingdom of Yahweh means. *'Given to you. But not to them'*: Practically, Jesus said to his disciples: "Sometimes people cannot understand what I say; but you know me; you are my disciples; you can fully understand." It is only after a personal encounter with Jesus Christ that a man can understand Christianity. *'Though seeing...'*: This quotation may sound as if Jesus taught in parables deliberately

to hide his meaning from ordinary men and women. This impression is wrong, for Jesus used parables not to hide his meaning and his truth but to enable men to see it and recognize it. Jesus did not come to hide truth from men; he came to reveal it. The quotation is from Isaiah 6:9-10. In essence, Isaiah says that the people made themselves so dull that they would not understand the meaning of the Word of Yahweh. And even now Jesus saw dull incomprehension in so many eyes, and so many people blinded by prejudice, deafened, too lazy to think. So, what Jesus really meant is that people's minds can become so dull and insensitive that when Yahweh's truth comes to them they cannot see it. They have become so mentally lazy, so blinded by prejudice, so unwilling to see anything they do not want to see, that they have become incapable of assimilating Yahweh's truth. So, what happened was that Jesus turned to his disciples and remembered them what Isaiah had actually said; that when he came with Yahweh's message to Yahweh's people, they were so dully un-understanding that you would have thought that Yahweh had shut instead of opening their minds. And that he, too, was feeling like that. This means that we have to read this part with a tone of regretful affection, not of bitter exasperation.

**Mt 13:16-17.** *'Blessed...'*: They were really lucky because they had been given the chance of living with Jesus, seeing and listening to the Word of Yahweh. *'Many prophets...'*: All the prophets and the righteous people of the past were not given this chance.

**Mk 4:13-14. Mt 13:18. Lk 8:11.** *'The parable means...'*: Every detail of this parable would be real to his listeners because every detail came from their everyday life. *'The farmer sows...'*: Here Jesus gives a very detailed explanation, which does not leave any possible doubt. The seed is the Word of Yahweh, His message to men. The sower is Yahweh himself. The people are compared to four kinds of ground; their response to Yahweh's Word is compared to the ways the seed can germinate and develop.

**Mk 4:15. Mt 13:19. Lk 8:12. and Mk 4:4. Mt 13:4. Lk 8:5.** *'Seed along the path...'*: There was the hard ground at the side of the road. The fields in Palestine were in the form of long, narrow strips; these strips were divided by little path, which were the right of way; the result was that they became beaten very hard by the feet of those who used them. As the sower scattered his seed some might well fall there; and there they had not a chance to grow. Furthermore, the birds can easily pick them up and eat them. There are some people into whose hearts Christian truth can find no entry. This is due to their lack of interest which comes from a failure to realize how important the Christian way is.

**Mk 4:16-17. Mt 13:20-21. Lk 8:13. and Mk 4:5-6. Mt 13: 5-6. Lk 8:6.** *'Rocky places...'*: There was the rocky ground, which was not ground full of stones; but it was a narrow skin of soil over a shelf of limestone rock. Much of Galilee was like that. On such ground the seed would certainly germinate; and it would germinate quickly, because the ground grew speedily warm with the heat of the sun. But there was no depth of soil and when it sent down its roots in search of nourishment, it would meet only the rock, and would starve to death, quite unable to withstand the heat of the sun because the soil was so shallow and held so little nourishment and moisture. There are many people who are attracted by Christianity but who never let it get beyond the surface of their lives. They accept the Word but they never think it out and never realize its consequences and they therefore collapse when the strain comes.

**Mk 4:18-19. Mt 13:22. Lk 8:14. and Mk 4:7. Mt 13:7. Lk 8:7.** *'Thorns...'*: There was the ground that was full of thorns. The Palestinian farmers used to cut off the weeds; they even burned them off; and the field might look clean; but below the surface the



roots were still there; and in due time the weeds revived in all their strength. They grew with such rapidity and such virulence that they choked the seed out. There are people whose lives are so busy that the things of Yahweh get crowded out. And it is important to notice that those things which crowd out the highest needs are not necessarily bad in themselves but, simply, too many to leave enough time for the Word of Yahweh to penetrate.

**Mk 4:20. Mt 13:23. Lk 8:15. and Mk 4:8. Mt 13:8. Lk 8:8.** *'Good soil...'*: There was the good, clean, deep soil in which the seed flourished. These people have good heart, are the good hearers who listen attentively, keep what they hear in their mind, think over it until they discover its meaning for themselves, and act upon it, translating what they have heard into action.

Now, what could have been the thought which flashed in the mind of the crowd who heard this parable for the first time? Surely that there are different ways of accepting the Word of Yahweh, and the fruit which it produces depends on the heart of him who receives it. Furthermore, even if part of the seed never grew, the fact remains that at the end there was a splendid harvest. And the same applies to the harvest of souls; it may seem that much of the work is wasted, that in many places the message fails, but there always is a good, abundant harvest.

**Mk 4:22. Lk 8:17.** *'Whatever is hidden...'*: Jesus declared that the truth cannot ultimately be hidden. This saying applies both to truth itself, and to men. It applies to truth, which may be attacked, suppressed, mocked at; but time brings in its revenge and in the end truth prevails. It applies to men and to their life and conduct. When a man does a wrong thing his first instinct is to hide. But in the end it is literally true that there is nothing which will not be revealed in the presence of Yahweh.

**Mk 4:23. Mt 13:12. Lk 8:18.** *'Whoever has...'*: These verses lay down the universal law that a man physically and mentally active will improve even more; and that a man physically and mentally passive will worsen more and more. Physically, if a man is fit and keeps himself so, his body will be ready for ever greater efforts; if he lets himself go flabby, his body will lose even the abilities it already has. Mentally, the more a student learns, the more he can learn; but if he refuses to go on learning, he will lose the knowledge he already has. This is just another way of saying that there is not standing still in life. All the time we are either going forward or going back.

**The parable of the growing seed** [Mark 4:26-29]

**(Mk4:26)** *He also said, "This is what the Kingdom of Yahweh is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. (27)Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. (28)All by itself the soil produces grain -first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. (29)As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come."*

**Mk 4:26-29.** *'This is what...'*: This parable is one of those giving us some information about the Kingdom of Yahweh. Here, as well as in a number of other occasions, Jesus uses some illustrations taken from the growth of nature to describe the evolution of the Kingdom. Nature's growth is often imperceptible. If we see a plant every day we cannot see its growth taking place. It is only when we see it after an interval of time that we notice the difference. It is so with the Kingdom. Nature's growth is constant. Night and day, while man sleeps, growth goes on. As well the work of Yahweh goes on quietly, unfolding Yahweh's plans. Nature's growth is inevitable. There is nothing so powerful as

growth. Nothing can stop it. It is so with the Kingdom. In spite of men's rebellion and disobedience, Yahweh's work goes on; and nothing in the end can stop His purposes. '*Kingdom of Yahweh*': The Kingdom of Yahweh, which began as a little seed, will grow, and will become fully grown the day when Yahweh's will will be done as perfectly on Earth as it is in Heaven. '*A man... doesn't know*': This parable tells us of man's total lack of power. The farmer does not make the seed grow. He does not even understand how it grows. '*All by itself...*': The seed has the secret of life and of growth within itself. No man has ever possessed the secret of life; no man has ever created anything in the full sense of the term. Man can discover things; can rearrange them; but cannot create them. Behind all things there is Yahweh and His power and His will. '*As soon as...*': Here, the parable tells us that there will be a conclusion, an end; that there will be a day when the Kingdom of Yahweh will actually reach full maturation. On that day all people will be gathered together, in communion with Yahweh.

***The parable of the weeds. Parable's explanation*** [Matthew 13:24-30;36-43]

***(Mt13:24) Jesus told them another parable: "The Kingdom of Heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. (25) But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. (26) When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared.***

***(27) The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?'***

***(28) 'An enemy did this,' he replied.***

***The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?'***

***(29) 'No,' he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. (30) Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.'"***

***(Mt13:36) Then he left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field."***

***(37) He answered, "The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. (38) The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the sons of the Kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, (39) and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are the angels.***

***(40) As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. (41) The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his Kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. (42) They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (43) Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the Kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear."***

**Mt 13:24-30.** '*The Kingdom of Heaven is like...*': As usual, the whole series of figurative pictures within this parable would be absolutely clear and familiar to the people of Galilee. '*Weeds*': Probably Darnel (*Lolium temulentum*), which was one of the pests against which the farmers had to work very hard. In their early stages these weeds resemble so closely the wheat that it is impossible to recognize them. This is possible only when both have headed out; but by that time their roots are so intertwined that the weeds cannot be taken out without tearing the wheat out with them. Both, therefore, must be left to grow together until harvest time. '*Enemy*': The picture of a man deliberately sowing

weeds in someone else's field was by no means only imagination. Sometimes, that was actually done; so much that this kind of crime was even codified in the Roman law.

**Mt 13:36-43.** *'The field is the world...'*: Thus Jesus declared that the people of the Kingdom have to live side by side with the people of the evil one. This parable teaches us that there is always a hostile power in the world, seeking and waiting to destroy the good seed before it could produce fruit at all. The lesson is that we must be forever on guard because it is very hard to distinguish between those who are in the Kingdom and those who are not. Furthermore, it teaches not to be so quick with our judgment which has to wait until "harvest time." A man in the end will be judged, not by any single act in his life, but by his whole life. Consequently, judgment cannot come until the end. No one who sees and knows only part of a man's life can judge the whole man. This means that the only person with the right to judge is Yahweh, because it is Yahweh alone who sees all of a man and all of his life. *'The Son of Man'*: Jesus, who came for the final salvation of all men. *'Will send out his angels...'*: Every time the harvesters -the angels sent by Jesus- will come, they will collect the good souls -those already good and those who have at that time repented after a period of formative punishment in hell- and will send to hell -for the necessary period of formative punishment- the bad ones. So, little by little, at the end of the human race the number of bad souls will reduce till, at last, there will be no more of them. *'Fiery furnace'*: Figurative for hell, the punitive and formative place where Yahweh is not present. And it is this lack of Yahweh's presence that constitutes the punishment and the moral suffering.

**The parable of the mustard seed and the yeast**

See page 402

[Mark 4:30-34 Matthew 13:31-35 Luke 13:18-21]

**(Mk4:30-32)(Mt13:31-32)(Lk13:18-19)** Then, again Jesus told them another parable and asked, **"What shall we say the Kingdom of Yahweh is like? What shall I compare it to? Or what parable shall we use to describe it? The Kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all the seed you plant in the ground, yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants and becomes a tree, with such big branches that the birds of the air can come and perch in its shade."**

**(Mt13:33)(Lk13:20-21)** Again he told them still another parable and asked, **"What shall I compare the Kingdom of Yahweh to? The Kingdom of Heaven is like the yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough."**

**(Mk13:33-34)(Mt13:34)** Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd; and with many similar parables Jesus spoke the Word to them, as much as they could understand. He did not say anything to them without using a parable. But when he was alone with his own disciples, he explained everything. **(Mt13:35)** So was fulfilled what was spoken through the prophet,

*'I will open my mouth in parables,*

*I will utter things hidden since the creation of the world.'*

**Mk 4:30-32. Mt 13:31-32. Lk 13:18-19.** *'The Kingdom of Yahweh is like... A mustard seed... Becomes a tree'*: In this parable there are two pictures which every Jew would readily recognize. First; the mustard plant of Palestine -which was very different from today's European plant. Second, in the Old Testament one of the commonest ways to

describe a great empire was as a tree, and the tributary nations within it as birds finding shelter within the shadow of its branches. *'The smallest... The largest'*: The mustard seed was one of the smallest seed used by Palestinian farmers and gardeners, but under favorable conditions the plant could reach some ten feet (3 meters) in height. To be strictly accurate the mustard seed was not the smallest of seeds; but in the east it was proverbial for smallness. *'A tree... Its branches'*: This mustard seed did in fact grow into something very like a tree. The birds were very fond of the little black seeds of the tree and a cloud of birds over a mustard plant was a common sight. As well, all kinds of people, of every nation, will find shelter in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Actually, this parable says, "Never be discouraged by small beginnings." It may seem that at the beginning the effect is very small; but if this small effect is repeated many times, it will become quite great. Everything must have a beginning, nothing emerges fully grown. When Jesus said that the Kingdom is like the mustard seed and that it will grow into a tree, the point is very clear. The Kingdom of Heaven, which started from the smallest beginnings, in the end will grow so big that all nations will be gathered within it. In other words, in this parable Jesus is saying to his disciples, and to all his followers in future times, that there must be no discouragement, that they must serve each in his place, that each one must be the small beginning from which the Kingdom of the Earth finally becomes the Kingdom of Yahweh. This also means that:

- i) There is room in the Kingdom for a wide variety of beliefs. No man and no church has a monopoly of all truth. So long as all men's beliefs are focused in Christ they are all facets of Yahweh's truth.
- ii) There is room in the Kingdom for a wide variety of experiences. Not all men must come to Jesus Christ in the same way. But all kinds of experiences come from Yahweh and all men belong to Yahweh.
- iii) There is room in the Kingdom for a wide variety of ways of worship. One man finds in touch with Yahweh in an elaborated ritual and a splendid liturgy; another finds Him in the bare simplicity. There is no right or wrong here.

**Mt 13:33. Lk 13:20-21.** *'The Kingdom of Heaven is like...'*: Here we have another parable based on the activities of everyday life, as in Palestine bread was baked at home. *'Yeast'*: It is a little piece of dough kept over from a previous baking, which had fermented in the keeping. Here it is a symbol of growth indicating that, as the yeast permeates and changes a batch of dough, so the Kingdom of Heaven spreads through and changes a person's life. As well, it signifies the growth of the Kingdom by the inner working of the Spirit of Yahweh. Now, it is interesting to note that, in the Bible and in Jewish language and thought, yeast usually symbolizes what is evil and unclean, because the Jews connected fermentation with putrefaction. Surely Jesus chose this illustration of the Kingdom deliberately. There would be a certain shock in hearing the Kingdom of Yahweh compared to yeast; and the shock would arouse interest and obtain attention, as an unexpected illustration always does. The lesson of this parable is that the Kingdom works unseen. We cannot see the yeast working in the dough, but its work is always going on. Just so we cannot see the work of the Kingdom, which is anyway always working and drawing men and the world nearer to Yahweh. With Jesus Christ and his Gospel a new force has been let loose in the world, and this force is working, silently but inevitably.

**Mk 4:33-34. Mt 13:34.** *'He did not say anything to them without using a parable'*: The people in general were not ready for the full truth of the Gospel, so Jesus used parables to illustrate truths, stimulate thinking and awaken spiritual perception. When alone with

his disciples Jesus taught more specifically, but even they usually needed to have things explained. This passage gives us also a picture of an inner circle to whom Jesus could really and fully explain all things. After Jesus had spoken the crowds dispersed; but there was a little company that stayed with him and did not want to leave him. It was to them that he explained the meaning of everything.

**Mt 13:35.** *'So was fulfilled...'*: A citation from Psalm 78:2. Matthew's Gospel was written for the Jewish Christian community in Syrian Antioch. It was written particularly to demonstrate to the Jews that all the prophecies of the Old Testament were actually fulfilled in Jesus and that, therefore, he must be the promised Messiah.

***The parables of the hidden treasure and the pearl*** [Matthew 13:44-46]

**(Mt13:44)"The Kingdom of Heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy he went and sold all he had and bought that field.**

**(45)Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. (46) When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it."**

**Mt 13:44.** *'The Kingdom of Heaven is like...'*: Although this parable sounds strange to us, it would sound perfectly natural to the people of Palestine in the days of Jesus. In the ancient world people used the ground to hide their money and valuables. Palestine was often in a state of war, and when war was approaching, it was common practice for people to hide their belongings in the ground before to run away, in the hope that the day they would come back they could regain them. It may appear that in this parable Jesus glorifies a man who was guilty of a very sharp practice, as he hid again the treasure and then took steps to possess it. But, we have to know that the Jewish law stated that any scattered money belonged to the finder, so the man had a prior right to what he had found. The main point of this parable is the joy of the discovery, a joy that made the man willing to give up everything he had to make the treasure indubitably his own. The first lesson of the parable comes from the fact that the man found the treasure not so much by chance but as a result of his work. The man found his treasure, unexpectedly, it is true, but while he was working in the field; that is during his normal, daily activity. As well we can find Yahweh and feel close to Him not only in churches, in so-called holy places and in so-called holy occasions, but in every moment of our normal life, when working and when staying with our family or with our friends. The second lesson of this parable is that it is worthy any sacrifice to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, making and following the will of Yahweh.

**Mt 13:45-46.** *'The Kingdom of Heaven is like...'*: In the ancient world people desired to possess some pearls, not only for their value, but also for their beauty. The main source of pearls in those days was the Red Sea; but a merchant would scour the markets of the world to find a pearl which was of surpassing beauty. The Kingdom of Heaven is compared to such a pearl. To get into the Kingdom of Heaven is a most precious matter. In this parable we find the same point as in the previous one but with a difference. The man who was digging the field was not searching for a treasure; he came upon it unaware. Now the man who was searching for pearls was spending his life in the search. But no matter whether the discovery was the result of a moment or the result of a long search, the reaction was the same -everything was sold and sacrificed to gain the pre-

cious thing. However a man discovers the will of Yahweh for himself, either in the flash of a moment's illumination or at the end of a long and conscious search, it is worth sacrificing everything to accept it.

***The parable of the net*** [Matthew 13:47-52]

***(Mt13:47)"Once again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. (48)When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up to the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away. (49)This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous (50)and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.***

***(51)Have you understood all these things?" Jesus asked.***

***"Yes, they replied."***

***(52)He said to them, "Therefore every teacher of the law who has been instructed about the Kingdom of Heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old."***

**Mt 13:47-50.** *'Once again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like...'*: It was the most natural that Jesus should use illustrations from fishing when he was speaking to fishermen. It was as if he had said to them: "Look how your daily work speaks to you of the things of Heaven." *'Net'*: The way of fishing referred to in this parable was with the dragnet. A great square net with cords at each corner, and weighted so that, at rest, it hung upright in the water. When the boat moved, the net was drawn into the shape of a big cone where all kinds of fish were tangled. The net was then drawn to land, and the catch was separated; the useless fishes were thrown back into the water, the good ones put into containers. It is in its own nature that the dragnet cannot discriminate between good and bad fishes. If we apply that to the Kingdom of Yahweh on Earth, to the human institution of the Church, it is clear that it has to be a mixture of all kinds of people, good and bad. If we apply that to the Kingdom of Yahweh in Heaven, it is clear that every time Jesus is fishing souls, he will get a number of first-timers -those souls already good- and also a number of second, third, n-th timers -those souls who, after a period of redemptive punishment in hell have accepted to repent and to follow Jesus. *'Into the fiery furnace'*: Figurative for hell, the punitive and formative place where Yahweh is not present -this constitutes the punishment and the moral suffering.

**Mt 13:51.** *'Have you understood...?'*: And the disciples had understood, at least in part. What Jesus is in effect saying is this: "You were able to understand, because you came to me with a fine heritage, the teaching of the Law and the Prophets, that helps you to understand. But after you have been instructed by me, you have the knowledge of things you never knew before, and even the knowledge which you had before is illuminated by what I have told you."

**Mt 13:52.** *'Every teacher of the law... Instructed about the Kingdom of Heaven...'*: Generally, all the Jews who followed Jesus' teaching. *'New treasures as well as old'*: Jesus never desired or intended that any man should forget all he knew when he came to him; but that he has to see his knowledge in a new light and use it in a new way. When he does that, what he knew before becomes a greater treasure than ever it was. Every man comes to Jesus Christ with some gift and some ability. Jesus does not ask that he should give up his gifts, but that he would use them even more in the light of the new knowledge he has given him.

***The cost of following Jesus*** [Matthew 8:18-22 Luke 9:57-62] See page 403

***(Mt8:18-19)(Lk9:57)*** *As they were walking along the road, when Jesus saw the crowd around him, he gave orders to cross to the other side of the lake. Then a man, a teacher of the law, came to him and said, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go."*

***(Mt8:20)(Lk9:58)*** *Jesus replied, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."*

***(Mt8:21-22)(Lk9:59-60)*** *He said to another man, "Follow me." But the man, another disciple, replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father."*

*But Jesus told him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the Kingdom of Yahweh."*

***(Lk9:61)*** *Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say goodbye to my family."*

***(62)*** *Jesus replied, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the Kingdom of Yahweh."*

**Mt 8:18-19. Lk 9:57.** *'I will follow you...':* The Evangelists saw a miracle in the fact that it was a scribe who wished to follow Jesus. *'Teacher':* He gave to Jesus the highest title of honor he knew, because to him Jesus was the greatest teacher to whom he had ever listened and whom he had ever seen. It was indeed already a miracle that any scribe should give Jesus that title, as Jesus stood for the actual destruction and the end of all that narrow legalism on which scribal religion was built.

**Mt 8:20. Lk 9:58.** *'Foxes have holes... The Son of Man has no place...':* It is as if Jesus said to this man, "Before you follow me, think what you are doing, count the cost." Jesus did not want followers brought in by a moment of emotion, but men who knew what they were doing. He talked about taking up a cross, setting himself above the dearest relationship in life, giving away everything to the poor. He was always saying to men, "Yes, I know that your hearts are running out to me but, if you want to become my disciples, do you really are fond of me enough for all that?" It is clear that nobody has to believe that the Christian way is an easy way. On the contrary, the Christian way always involves a personal cross.

**Mt 8:21-22. Lk 9:59-60.** *'Follow me...':* There was another man who wished to follow Jesus. But he would follow Jesus only at the condition to be allowed to "go and bury his father." The true meaning of this phrase undoubtedly lies in the way in which the Jews used this phrase "I must bury my father." In the case of this man, his father was surely very much alive and what he meant was that he must fulfill all his duties to his parents and his relatives, before he could leave them and go with Jesus. In fact, that could be only after his father's death, which might not happen for many years. So, the man was actually saying, "I will follow you some day, when my father is dead, and when I am free to go." *'Let the dead bury...':* At first sight Jesus' answer seems a hard saying. But Jesus well knew that if the man did not follow him on the moment, he never would; that he had to break immediately with the past and begin a substantially different kind of life.

**Lk 9:61-62.** *'No one who...':* Jesus' words to the third man state a truth which no one can deny; no farmer ever plowed a strait furrow looking back over his shoulder. This man was one of those people whose hearts are in the past, always looking back. And Jesus told him, "If you want to follow me, you don't have to look back at and to be bound to your past life, as I accept no lukewarm service." And left the man to make his own decision. In other terms, Jesus was saying, "You are feeling at the moment that you must change your life; so change it now, or you will never change it at all."

***Jesus calms the storm*** [Mark 4:35-41 Matthew 8:23-27 Luke 8:22-25] See page 403  
**(Mk4:35-36)(Mt8:23)(Lk8:22)** One day when evening came, Jesus said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side of the lake." So they got into a boat and set out. Then, leaving the crowd behind, he got into the boat and they took him along, just as he was. There were also other boats with him, and his disciples followed him. **(Mk4:37-41)(Mt8:24-27)(Lk8:23-25)** As they sailed, he fell asleep. Without warning, a furious storm, a squall, came up on the lake, and the waves broke over the boat, so that the boat was nearly being swamped, and they were in great danger. But Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples went and woke him and said to him, "Lord, save us! We are going to drown! Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"

He replied, asking to his disciples, "You of little faith, why are you so afraid? Where is your faith? Do you still have no faith?" Then he got up and rebuked the wind and the raging waters, and said, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the storm subsided, the wind died down and it was all completely calm. The men were terrified and amazed, and they asked each other, "Who is this? What kind of man is this? He commands and even the winds and the waves obey him!"

**Mk 4:35-36. Mt 8:23. Lk 8:22.** 'Let us go over...': It was no doubt for much needed rest and quiet from the crowds that Jesus decided to cross the lake.

**Mk 4:37-41. Mt 8:24-27. Lk 8:23-25.** 'He fell asleep...': Jesus was tired; he, too, could reach the point of exhaustion when the claim of sleep is imperative. By falling asleep, he showed that he trusted his men; they were fishermen of the lake and he was leaving the sailing to their skill and seamanship. 'Without a warning... a furious storm...': Then the storm came down, and Jesus and his disciples were in peril of their lives. The Lake of Galilee was notorious for its sudden and shattering storms. The main reason is due to the numerous north-eastern ravines which operate as funnels on the upper part of the lake. The winds coming from the plateau of Trachonitis and the summit of Mount Hermon rush with tremendous force through these narrow spaces and then agitate the Lake of Galilee. 'Sleeping on a cushion': Jesus was in the stern of the boat, where usually a carpet and a cushion were arranged for a traveling guest. 'The disciples... woke him...': They were terrified by this particularly furious storm and they awoke Jesus to make him aware of the dangerous situation. 'You of little faith, why are you so afraid? Quiet! Be still!': In this story there is something more than the calming of a storm at sea. The lesson is that as Jesus stopped a storm in Galilee, so whenever the storms of life shake our souls and we call Jesus Christ in there, in his presence the most terrible tempests turn to peace. 'Who is this?': In view of what Jesus had done, the only answer to this rhetorical question is: he is the very Son of Yahweh. Yahweh's presence, as well as His power, was demonstrated. By such miracles Jesus sought to establish and increase the disciples' faith in him.

### ***The healing of a demon-possessed man***

See page 404

[Mark 5:1-20 Matthew 8:28-34 Luke 8:26-39]

**(Mk5:1-3)(Mt8:28)(Lk8:26-27)** They sailed and went across the lake to the region of the Gadarenes, which is across the lake from Galilee. When Jesus arrived at the other side, he got out of the boat and stepped ashore. A man from the town, demon-possessed by an evil spirit, came from the tombs to meet him. He was so violent that no one could pass that way. For a long time this man had not worn clothes or lived in a house, but had lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him any more, not even with a chain.



**(Mk5:4)** For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue him. **(5)** Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones.

**(Mk5:6-8)(Mt8:29)(Lk8:28-29)** When he saw Jesus from a distance, he cried out, ran, and fell at his feet on his knees in front of him. He shouted at the top of his voice, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son Yahweh, the Most High? Have you come here to torture me before the appointed time? I beg you, swear to Yahweh that you won't torture me!" For Jesus had commanded the evil spirit to come out of the man and said to him, "**Come out of this man, you evil spirit!**" Many times it had seized him, and though he was chained hand and foot and kept under guard, he had broken his chains and had been driven by the demon into solitary places.

**(Mk5:9)(Lk8:30)** Then Jesus asked him, "**What is your name?**"

"My name is Legion, for we are many," he replied, because many demons had gone into him. **(Mk5:10)(Lk8:31)** And he begged Jesus again and again not to send them out of the area and not to order them go into the Abyss.

**(Mk5:11-13)(Mt8:30-32)(Lk8:32-33)** Some distance from there a large herd of pigs was feeding on the nearby hillside. The demons begged Jesus to let them go into them, "If you drive us out, send us among the pigs; allow us to go into them." And he gave them permission, saying, "**Go!**" And so, when the evil spirits, the demons, came out of the man, they went into the pigs. And the whole herd, about two thousand in number, rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned in the water.

**(Mk5:14-16)(Mt8:33)(Lk8:34-36)** When those tending the pigs saw what had happened, they ran off and reported all this in the town and countryside, and the people went out to see what had happened. When they came to Jesus, they found the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons, from whom the demons had gone out, sitting there at Jesus' feet, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. Those who had seen it told the people what had happened to the demon-possessed man and how the man had been cured -and told about the pigs as well.

**(Mk5:17)(Mt8:34)(Lk8:37)** Then the whole town, all the people of the region of the Gadarenes went out to meet Jesus. And when they saw him, they began to plead with Jesus to leave them and their region, because they were overcome with fear. So he got into the boat and left.

**(Mk5:18-20)(Lk8:38-39)** As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed and from whom the demons had gone out begged to go with him. Jesus did not let him, but sent him away, saying, "**Go, return home to your family and tell them how much the Lord Yahweh has done for you, and how He has had mercy on you.**" So the man went away and began to tell all over town and in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed.

**Note:** We find one demon-possessed man on Mark and Luke's Gospels, two on Matthew's. Probably the men were two and one was a much worst case of demon possession than the other. So, Mark and Luke did not consider necessary to record the presence of the second. This unified version of the story is as per Mark and Luke.

**Mk 5:1-5. Mt 8:28. Lk 8:26-27.** '*Across the lake*': Jesus and his disciples went to the east side of the lake, a territory largely inhabited by Pagans, as indicated by the presence of the large herd of pigs -animals the Jews considered unclean and therefore unfit to eat. '*Gadarenes*': A town six miles (9 km) from the shores of the lake, and it would be

very natural for the town burying place and the town grazing place to be some distance outside the town. This incident must have happened late in the evening or even when the night had already fallen. It was late in the evening when Jesus and his friends set sail to cross the lake which, in that particular part, is about five miles (7.5 km) across. On the way they had encountered the storm, and now had made the journey and reached land. *'Tombs'*: In this part of the lakeside there were many caves in the limestone rock, and many of these caves were used as tombs. And out of the tombs there came a demon-possessed man. *'He would cry and cut himself with stones'*: Every word in the story emphasizes the man's pathetic condition as well as the purpose of demonic possession -to torment and destroy the divine likeness with which man was created.

**Mk 5:6-10. Mt 8:29. Lk 8:28-31.** *'He shouted at the top of his voice'*: How completely this man was possessed by a number of spirits is seen in his way of speaking. Sometimes he used the singular, when their leader was speaking for himself; sometimes he used the plural, when all the demons were speaking. We won't be able even to begin and understand this story unless we realize how serious a case of demon-possession this man was. *'Swear to Yahweh...'*: The demons sensed that they were to be punished and used the strongest basis for an oath as they knew, though this appeal to Yahweh was strangely ironic. *'Jesus had commanded...'*: It is clear that Jesus made more than one attempt to heal him. Jesus had begun by his usual method -an authoritative order to the demon to come out. But on this occasion that was not enough, probably because there were too many of them. Next, he demanded what the demon's name was, to be able to chase him by name. *'Legion'*: The Roman Legion was composed by six thousand men. Here it stands for a really large number of demons possessing the man. And they did not want to be sent out because, as Jesus said, "When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it" (An evil spirit leaving and coming back. Mt 12:43-45; Lk 11:24-28). *'Abyss'*: A place of confinement for evil spirits and for Satan.

**Mk 5:11-13. Mt 8:30-32. Lk 8:32-33.** *'Send us among the pigs'*: Jesus saw that there was only one possibility for making free this man, that the only way was by transferring all those demons from the man to other living beings. This is where the herd of pigs comes in. They were there nearby and numerically enough to allow the transfer of all the evil spirits. *'The whole herd... rushed down the steep bank into the lake'*: Surely, Jesus did not want to destroy the pigs. The only possible explanation is that they knew that, by so doing, they would cause a huge financial loss to the inhabitants of the area who, attributing the fact to Jesus, would refuse to allow him around, closing him the possibility to enter the area of the Decapolis, and to preach there.

**Mk 5:14-17. Mt 8:34. Lk 8:34-37.** *'Those tending the pigs...'*: Naturally the men who had been in charge of the pigs went to the town and to the farms with the news of this astounding happening. *'And told about the pigs as well'*: More than the remarkable change in the demon-possessed man, the drowning of the pigs was the major concern, because it was so dramatic and brought considerable financial loss to their owners. *'All people... went out to see...'*: When the curious people arrived on the spot they found the man who had once been so mad sitting quietly and in full possession of his faculties. They regarded the matter with superstitious terror, and Jesus as very powerful and dangerous, and urged him to get out of their district as soon as possible. It is clear that, for them, Jesus was fully responsible for the destruction of the pigs. Surely they were not interested in the man who had been healed, but only in the economic loss due to the death of the pigs. And they did not want any more of this.

**Mk 5:18-20. Lk 8:38-39.** *'Tell them how much the Lord has done for you'*: This request is in marked contrast to Jesus' exhortation to silence, perhaps because the healing of the demoniac was in pagan territory, where there was little danger that Messianic ideas about Jesus might be circulated. Jesus sent the man back to be a witness for Christianity, a living demonstration of what Jesus can do for a man, the first seed for spreading Christianity in the area of the influence of Greek civilization. *'The Decapolis'*: This particular incident happened in the Decapolis, in the area of the Ten Cities. Near the Jordan there were ten cities, one on the west side, nine on the east side which were essentially Greek. Their names were Scythopolis, Pella, Dion, Gerasa, Philadelphia, Gadara, Raphana, Kanatha, Hippos, and Damascus. With the conquest of Alexander the Great there had been a Greek penetration into Palestine and Syria and these towns were inhabited mainly by people of Greek culture and religion.

**A dead girl and a sick woman**

See page 405

[Mark 5:21-43 Matthew 9:18-26 Luke 8:40-56]

**(Mk5:21-24)(Mt9:18-19)(Lk8:40-42)** Now, after saying this, when Jesus had again crossed over by boat and returned to the other side of the lake, a large crowd welcomed him and gathered around him while he was by the lake, for they were all expecting him. Then a man named Jairus, one of the synagogue rulers, came there. And, seeing Jesus, he fell at his feet and pleaded earnestly with him to come to his house because his only daughter, a girl of about twelve, was dying, "My little daughter is dying. But please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live." Jesus got up and went with him, and so did his disciples. As Jesus was on his way, a large crowd followed and pressed around him almost crushing him.

**(Mk5:25-29)(Mt9:20-21)(Lk8:43-44)** And just then a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years, but no one could heal her. She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse. When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched the edge of his cloak, because she said to herself, "If I just only touch his cloak, I will be healed." And immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was free from her suffering.

**(Mk5:30-31)(Lk8:45)** At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, "**Who touched me and my clothes?**"

"You see the people crowding against you," his disciples answered, "and yet you can ask, '**Who touched me?**'" When they all denied it, Peter said, "Master, the people are crowding and pressing against you."

**(Mk5:32)(Lk8:46)** But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it and said, "**Someone touched me; I know that power has gone out from me.**"

**(Mk5:33)(Lk8:47)** Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her and seeing that she could not go unnoticed, came, fell at his feet trembling with fear, and told him the whole truth. In the presence of all people, she told why she had touched him and how she had been instantly healed. **(Mk5:34)(Mt9:22)(Lk8:48)** Then Jesus turned, and saw her, "**Take heart, daughter,**" he said to her, "**your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.**" And the woman was healed from that moment.

**(Mk5:35)(Lk8:49)** While Jesus was still speaking, some men came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue ruler. "Your daughter is dead," they said. "Why bother the teacher any more?"

**(Mk5:36)(Lk8:50)** *Hearing this and ignoring what they said, Jesus told Jairus, the synagogue ruler, "Don't be afraid; just believe, and she will be healed."*

**(Mk5:37-43)(Mt9:23-25)(Lk8:51-56)** *When they came to the home of Jairus, the synagogue leader, he did not let anyone follow him and go in except Peter, James and John the brother of James, and the child's father and mother. Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly, as meanwhile the people were wailing and mourning for her.*

*When Jesus entered the ruler's house and saw the flute players and the noisy crowd, he went in and said to them, "Why all this commotion and wailing? Stop wailing, go away, the girl is not dead but asleep." But they laughed at him, knowing that she was dead.*

*After he put them all and the crowd outside, he took the child's father and mother and the disciples who were with him, and went in where the child was. He took the girl by the hand and said to her, "Talitha koum!" (which means, "My little girl, I say to you, get up!"). Immediately her spirit returned, and at once the girl stood up and walked around (she was twelve years old). At this her parents were completely astonished. But Jesus gave them strict orders not to tell and let anyone know about what had happened, and told them to give her something to eat.*

**(Mt9:26)** *News of this spread through all the region.*

**Mk 5:21-24. Mt 9:18-19. Lk 8:40-42.** *'The other side of the lake':* Jesus returned to the west side of the lake, to the area of Capernaum. *'Jairus':* This man was one of the rulers, the administrative heads of the synagogue, a person of considerable importance. He was a member of the board of elders responsible for the good management of the synagogue and for the conduct of the services. As such, he was responsible for the allocation of duties and for seeing that they were carried out properly. He appointed those who were to read and to pray in the service, and invited those who were to preach. As a ruler of the synagogue he was a pillar of Jewish orthodoxy, one of the men who despised Jesus and who would have been glad to see him eliminated. But something happened to him when his daughter, his only child, fell ill and, in his desperation, he thought of asking Jesus' help. In so doing, he had to make a huge effort and to forget his prejudices, his social dignity, and his pride. Most probably he had previously regarded Jesus as a dangerous heretic, to whom the synagogue doors were rightly closed, and one whom any orthodox would carefully avoid. But he abandoned all these prejudices in his hour of need. He, a ruler of the synagogue, forgot his social position and came and threw himself at the feet of Jesus, the rejected wandering teacher. All this must have cost him a heavy, conscious effort of humiliation. It is very much indicative the fact that he came personally and did not send a messenger. So doing, this ruler defied public opinion and home advice in order to call in Jesus. He was a man who forgot everything except that he wanted Jesus' help.

**Mk 5:25-29. Mt 9:20-21. Lk 8:43-44.** *'A woman... bleeding...':* The woman in this story suffered from a trouble which was very common and very hard to deal with. No doubt this poor woman had tried all known cures and remedies, suffering much and spending everything she had; but the physicians had no success. She had heard of Jesus, but she had the problem that her trouble not only did affect her health, but it also rendered her ceremonially unclean, shutting her off from the worship of Yahweh together with the other women (Leviticus 15:25-27). Everything and everyone she touched was infected by her uncleanness. She should not even have been in the crowd surrounding Jesus, for

she was theoretically infecting everyone whom she touched. There is little wonder that she was desperately eager to try anything which might rescue her from her life of isolation and humiliation. To go in the crowd and to state it openly was something she could not face; and so she decided to try to touch Jesus, his clothes, in secret. She slipped through the crowd up behind Jesus and touched the fringe of his garment. And having touched it, she was thrilled to find herself cured.

**Mk 5:30-31. Lk 8:45.** *'Jesus realized...'*: All at once in the middle of the crowd Jesus halted; and for the moment it seemed that for him no one but that woman and nothing but her need existed. She was simply a poor woman lost in the crowd, but in her hour of need, Jesus gave her the whole of himself. We would say that she showed nothing other than superstition, as to touch the edge of Jesus' cloak is the same kind of thing as to look for healing power in the relics of saints. But she came to Jesus with a very simple kind of faith in him, free of whatever complicated reasoning. And Jesus' affection was there, ready to receive her.

**Mk 5:32. Lk 8:46.** *'Power has gone out from me'*: This passage tells us about the cost of healing. Every time Jesus healed anyone it took something out of him. The greatness of Jesus was that he was prepared to pay the price of helping others, till the point when he laid down his own life for the good of everybody. This passage also shows that the disciples had never realized that it did cost Jesus anything at all to heal others.

**Mk 5:33-34. Mt 9:22. Lk 8:47-48.** *'Then the woman...'*: At this point, the woman had to come out and declare publicly what happened to her, how she was healed by Jesus' powers. *'Your faith has healed you'*: To be the recipient of a miracle, even of one of Jesus' miracles, it is always and only necessary to have faith in him.

**Mk 5:35-43. Mt 9:23-26. Lk 8:49-56.** *'Just believe'*: Again, faith in Christ is always essential. So Jesus went with the ruler of the synagogue to his house; and there he found a scene of pandemonium. All Jewish mourning customs were practically designed to stress the desolation and the final separation of death. There was the rending of garments, that had to be performed following stated rules and timing. There was the wailing for the dead, an incessant wailing kept up by professional women. There were the flute-players. The music of the flutes was especially associated with death because of their particular eerie sound. *'Jesus entered...'*: Into that excited and hysterical atmosphere came Jesus. Quietly he told that the girl was not dead but only asleep, and they all laughed at him with scorn. So, authoritatively he put them all out. *'The girl is not dead, but only asleep'*: When Jesus said that the girl was asleep, he meant exactly what he said. In effect, the word used in the Greek text of the Gospel is "katheudein," which usually is used for natural sleep, and not "kiomasthal," which is used both for sleep and for death. Furthermore, if we take into account that in the east cataleptic coma was quite common, and that the interment of the dead followed death quickly, because the climate make it necessary, not infrequently people were buried alive. Here, in this case, we have a clear example of Jesus' miraculous diagnostic power. By stopping the funeral and the burial, Jesus saved this girl from being buried alive, from a terrible death. *'Something to eat'*: So the girl could regain her physical strength.

***Jesus heals the blind and mute*** [Matthew 9:27-34]

**(Mt9:27)** *As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed him, calling out, "Have mercy on us, Son of David!"*

**(28)** *When he had gone indoors, the blind men came to him, and he asked them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?"*

*"Yes, Lord," they replied.*

*(29)Then he touched their eyes and said, "According to your faith will it be done to you;" (30)and their sight was restored. Jesus warned them sternly, "See that no one knows about this." (31)But they went out and spread the news about him all over that region.*

*(32)While they were going out, a man who was demon-possessed and could not talk was brought to Jesus. (33)And when the demon was driven out, the man who had been mute spoke. The crowd was amazed and said, "Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel."*

*(34)But the Pharisees said, "It is by the prince of demons that he drives out demons."*

**Mt 9:27-31.** *'As Jesus... two blind men followed him...':* The way in which Jesus dealt with these two blind men is illuminating, because it shows the importance of faith. Jesus did not answer their shouts in the streets, so they followed him in the house where he asked them the focal question; if they were really convinced that he had the ability of healing them. The essential for a miracle is faith. This is a matter of fact which every doctor knows well; no doctor can cure a sick person who goes to him in a completely hopeless frame of mind. The way to a miracle is to place one's life in the hands of Jesus Christ, with full faith in him. *'Son of David':* The title by which this two blind men addressed Jesus described the popular conception of the Messiah. For centuries the Jews had awaited the promised deliverer of David's line; the leader who, in their opinion, would not only restore their freedom, but would also lead their country to power and glory. It was in that way that these two blind men thought of Jesus; as the envoy of Yahweh who would lead the people to freedom and conquest. They came to Jesus with a very inadequate idea of who and what he was, and yet he healed them, seeing the sincerity of their faith in him. *'See that no one knows about this':* Jesus' usual request for secrecy, always justified by the necessity to avoid the risk of being pushed into the position of the freedom-giving and conquering Messiah of the popular conception.

**Mt 9:32.** *'A man who was demon-possessed... was brought...':* It is clear that, in the case of demon-possession, personal faith is not directly involved. In this case it is a direct battle between Jesus and the devil. And Jesus can't allow the devil to conquer a man - a being made in the image of Yahweh.

**Mt 9:33-34.** *'The crowd... the Pharisees...':* Here we have the picture of two attitudes, two reactions to Jesus. The attitude of the crowd was of amazed wonder; the attitude of the Pharisees was of violent hatred. The crowd looked at Jesus with wonder, because they were simple people with plenty of needs; and they saw that in Jesus their needs could be satisfied in the most astonishing way. The Pharisees saw Jesus as a destructor of orthodoxy, so as one who was in league with all the powers of evil. They did not deny his powers; but they attributed them to his complicity with the prince of the demons. They were too proud, too well satisfied with themselves to see any need of change. Their eyes were so blinded by their own ideas that they could not see in Jesus Christ the truth and the power of Yahweh.

**Third preaching trip through Galilee**

**A prophet without honor** [Mark 6:1-6a Matthew 13:53-58] See page 407

*(Mk6:1-2)(Mt13:53-54)When Jesus had finished these parables, he moved on from there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples. When the Sabbath came, he began to teach the people in their synagogue, and the many who heard him were amazed. "Where did this man get these things, this wisdom and these miraculous powers?" they asked. "What's this wisdom that has been given him, that he even does miracles! (Mk6:3-4)(Mt13:55-57)Isn't this the carpenter's son? Isn't his mother's name Mary, and aren't his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas? Aren't all these his sisters here with us? Where then did this man get all these things?" And they took offense at him.*

*But Jesus said to them, "Only in his hometown, among his relatives and in his own house is a prophet without honor."*

*(Mk6:5)(Mt13:58)And he could not do many miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them, because of their lack of faith. (Mk6:6a)And he was amazed at their lack of faith.*

**Mk 6:1-2. Mt 13:53-54.** *'Went to his hometown':* When Jesus came to Nazareth he put himself to a very severe test, because there are no severer critics of any man than those who have known him since his boyhood. Jesus' was not a private visit to see his relatives and his friends. He came followed by his disciples; that is, to say that he came as a Rabbi. On the Sabbath, he went into the synagogue and taught. In the synagogue there was no definite person to give the address. Any distinguished visitor present might be asked by the ruler of the synagogue to speak, or any one who had a message could venture to give it. There was no danger that Jesus would not be given the opportunity to speak. But when he did speak, all that he encountered was hostility and incredulity. And his teaching was greeted not with wonder but with a kind of contempt.

**Mk 6:3-4. Mt 13:55-57.** *'Isn't this the carpenter's son?':* Jesus was a very able craftsman, and the people of Nazareth could not accept him as a Rabbi because he was a man of the people, a working man. *'Isn't his mother's name Mary?':* The fact that they called Jesus Mary's son tell us that Joseph must have been dead. Here we have the key to one of the enigmas of Jesus' life. Jesus was only thirty-three years old when he died; and yet he did not leave Nazareth until he was thirty. The reason for staying so long in Nazareth was that when Joseph died Jesus had to take upon himself the support of his mother and of his brothers and sisters; and only when they were old enough to look after themselves he went for with his mission. *'His brothers. His sisters':* The children Joseph and Mary had after Jesus was born. *'They took offense at him':* They were scandalized that a man who came from a background like Jesus' should say and do things such as he; they refused to listen to what he had to say. They could not conceive that anyone who had lived among them had any right to speak as Jesus was.

**Mk 6:5. Mt 13:58.** *'He could not...':* Their attitude to him raised a barrier which made it impossible for Jesus to have any effect upon them. The result of this was that he could only do few miracles in Nazareth. It was and it is still true that no man can be healed if he refuses to be. There can be no preaching and healing in the wrong atmosphere, in the absence of faith.

**Mk 6:6a.** *'Amazed':* Not only surprised but, surely, full of sorrow for their attitude.

**The workers are few** [Matthew 9:35-38]

**(Mt9:35)** *Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the Good News of the Kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. (36) When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. (37) Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. (38) Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest field."*

**Mt 9:35.** *'Jesus went... teaching... preaching... healing...':* Here, in one sentence, we see the activity which was the essence of Jesus' life. Jesus was the herald, the man who brought the message from Yahweh; was the teacher, the man who, after proclaiming the message from Yahweh, showed the significance of his preaching for living; was the healer of body and soul, and he spent far more time healing the sick and feeding the hungry and comforting the sorrowing than he did talking about Yahweh.

**Mt 9:36.** *'He had compassion...':* When Jesus saw the crowds of ordinary men and women, he was moved to compassion because of the pain of their sicknesses and the sorrow for all the unfortunate events in their lives. Furthermore, he saw how much they were left without guidance, how much they all were longing for Yahweh; and the Scribes and the Pharisees, the priest and the Sadducees, the pillars of the orthodox religion of his days, had nothing to offer them. They had neither guidance, nor comfort, nor strength to give. On the contrary, the Jewish leaders were harassing men with subtle arguments about the Law, which could not give any help or comfort.

**Mt 9:37-38.** *'The harvest is plentiful, but...':* When Jesus and the orthodox leaders of his day looked to the crowd of ordinary men and women, they saw them in quite different ways. The Pharisees saw the common people -who, even if willing, could not follow all the rules of the scribal law- as chaff to be destroyed and burned up; Jesus saw them as a harvest to be reaped and to be saved. The Pharisees in their pride looked for the destruction of sinners; Jesus in his affection died for the salvation of sinners. But the harvest will never be reaped unless there are workers to reap it. For that, Jesus Christ needs men. When he was upon this Earth, his voice could reach so few. He was never outside Palestine, and there was a world which was waiting. So, he needs to find men who will spread around and tell everybody the Good News of the Gospel. It follows that, if the harvest of men is ever to be reaped, then every Christian must be a reaper, for there is surely someone whom each Christian can -and must- bring to Yahweh.

**Jesus sends out the Twelve. Warnings and encouragements**

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[Mark 6:6b-13 Matthew 10:1,5-42 Luke 9:1-6;12:1-9,11-12]

**(Mk6:6b)** *Then Jesus went around teaching from village to village. (Mk6:7)(Mt10:1)(Lk9:1)* *When Jesus had called his Twelve disciples together to him, he sent them out by two and gave them authority over evil spirits, the power to drive out all demons and to cure and heal every disease and sickness, (Lk9:2) and sent them out to preach the Kingdom of Yahweh and to heal the sick.*

**(Mk6:8-9)(Mt10:5-10)(Lk9:3)** *Jesus sent the Twelve out and the following were his instructions. He told them: "Do not go among the Pagans or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. As you go, preach this message: 'The Kingdom of Heaven is near.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give. Do not take along any gold or silver or copper in your belts. Take nothing for the journey except a staff -no*



*bread, no bag, no money in your belts. Wear sandals but not an extra tunic, or sandals or a staff; for the worker is worth his keep.*

*(Mk6:10)(Mt10:11)(Lk9:4)Whatever town or village you enter, search for some worthy person there and stay at his house. Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you live that town. (Mt10:12)As you enter the home, give it your greeting. (13) If the home is deserving, let your peace rest on it; if it is not, let your peace return to you. (Mk6:11)(Mt10:14)(Lk9:5)And if any people in any place will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that home or their town, as a testimony against them. (Mt10:15)I tell you the truth, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town. (16)I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves."*

*(Mt10:17)(Lk12:1)Meanwhile, when a crowd of many thousands had gathered, so that they were trampling on one another, Jesus began to speak, first to his disciples, saying: "Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. Be on your guard against men; they will hand you over to the local councils and flog you in their synagogues. (Mt10:18)On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Pagans. (Mt10:19-20)(Lk12:11-12) But when they arrest you, when you are brought before synagogues, rulers and authorities, do not worry about how you will defend yourselves or what you will say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of Yahweh your Father will teach you at that time what you should say, speaking through you.*

*(Mt10:21)Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. (22)All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. (23)When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another. I tell you the truth, you will not finish going through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes.*

*(24)A student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. (25)It is enough for the student to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If the head of the house has been called Beelzebub, how much more the members of his household!*

*(Mt10:26)(Lk12:2)So do not be afraid of them. There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. (Mt10:27)(Lk12:3)What I tell you in the dark, and what you have said in the dark, speak so it will be heard in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, and what you have whispered in the ear in the inner rooms proclaim so it will be proclaimed from the roofs. (Mt10:28)(Lk12:4-5)I tell you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body but after that can do no more and cannot kill the soul. But I will show you whom you should fear. Rather, fear Him who, after the killing of the body, has power to throw you into hell. Be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Yes, I tell you, fear Him. (Mt10:29)(Lk12:6)Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And five sparrows for two copper coins? Yet not one of them is forgotten by Yahweh and will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. (Mt10:30-31)(Lk12:7)And, indeed, even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.*

*(Mt10:32)(Lk12:8)I tell you, whoever acknowledges me before men, I, the Son of*

*Man, will also acknowledge him before the angels of Yahweh, my Father in Heaven. (Mt10:33)(Lk12:9)But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before the angels of Yahweh, my Father in Heaven.*

*(Mt10:34)Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to Earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. (35)For I have come to turn 'a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law (36)-a man's enemies will be the members of his own household.*

*(37)Anyone who is fond of his father or mother more than of me is not worthy of me; anyone who is fond of his son or daughter more than of me is not worthy of me; (38)and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. (39)Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.*

*(40)He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives the One who sent me. (41)Anyone who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and anyone who receives a righteous man because he is a righteous man will receive a righteous man's reward. (42)And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward."*

*(Mk6:12-13)(Lk9:6)So they set out and went from village to village, preaching the Gospel and telling people to repent. They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed people everywhere.*

**Mk 6:6b-7. Mt 10:1. Lk 9:1-2.** *'When Jesus had called...':* The Twelve were the first "workers" sent to harvest into Yahweh's field. *'By two':* The purpose of going in pairs may have been to bolster the credibility of their teaching by giving the testimony of two witnesses at a time, as well as to provide mutual support during their training period. *'Gave them authority...':* A new phase of Jesus' ministry began when he sent out the Twelve to do the same type of preaching, teaching and healing they had observed him doing. The Twelve were to be the core of Christianity, and so they had to fully represent Jesus in all he was doing, not only in preaching and teaching. *'To preach and to heal':* One thing which stands out about the ministry which Jesus assigned to the Twelve is that it joined preaching and healing. It joined concern for both men's bodies and men's souls. Their message was not confined to the news of eternal life; it proposed to change the conditions on Earth and it stressed that health to men's bodies was an integral part of Yahweh's purpose as health to their souls.

**Mk 6:8-9. Mt 10:5-10. Lk 9:3.** *'Do not go among the Pagans or... the Samaritans':* Forbidding the Twelve to go to the Pagans or the Samaritans looks a very un-Christian instruction, but it was due to practical reasons only. *'Pagans':* All the people of different race and religion than the Jews. *'Samaritans':* A mixed-blood race resulting from the intermarriage of Israelites left behind when the people of the northern kingdom were exiled and Pagans brought into the land by the Assyrians. Bitter hostility existed between Jews and Samaritans in Jesus' days. *'Go to the lost sheep of Israel':* The actual effect of this order was to limit the first journey of the Twelve to Galilee -not to the Pagans meant they could not go north into Syria or the Decapolis; not to the Samaritans meant not to south. There were some good reasons for these limitations. The New Word of Yahweh had to be offered first to His old people, the Jews. It is true that they rejected it, but they had to get the opportunity to accept it before anybody else. Furthermore, the Twelve were not prepared to teach to the Pagans. They had neither the background, nor the knowledge, nor the technique. Before the Gospel could be effectively brought to the

Pagans, a man with Paul's life and background had to emerge. To remember that it was only after his death and resurrection that Jesus commanded his message to be taken to all nations. But the most important reason was that such a small force could not be dispersed on too big an area, and Jesus' decision to concentrate this mission to Galilee was due to the fact that Galilee was the most open of all parts of Palestine to a new message. *'Preach... Heal...'*: Again, these orders show that Jesus came to bring health both to the spirit and to the body of men. *'Freely...'*: By this phrase Jesus was giving to his men the same instructions that the best Rabbis gave to their own disciples. A Rabbi was bound by law to give his teaching freely; he was forbidden to take money for teaching the Law which Moses had freely received from Yahweh. It was his privilege to share with others the riches Yahweh had given him. *'Do not take...'*: Jesus told the Twelve not to take with them anything. Jesus was once again using terms which were very familiar to the Jews. The Talmud told them that no one had to go to the Temple Mount with staff, shoes, or bag of money. When a man entered the Temple he had to be free of whatever had to do with business and worldly affairs. So, Jesus was saying to his men, "You must treat the whole world for what it really is, the Temple of Yahweh." *'The worker is worth...'*: Once again, the Jews would recognize this. It is true that a Rabbi might not accept any payment for his teaching, but it is also true that it was considered at once a privilege and an obligation to support a Rabbi. Here, then, there is a double truth; the man of Yahweh must never be overconcerned with material things, but the people of Yahweh must never fail in their duty to give him a reasonable support.

**Mk 6:10-11. Mt 10:11-14. Lk 9:4-5.** *'Search for some worthy person... If the home is deserving...'*: This passage is full of the most practical advice. When they entered a city or a village, they were to take residence in the house of people having a good reputation. By staying with people with a bad reputation, they would seriously affect the effect of their mission. *'Give it your greeting'*: The passage about giving a greeting and taking it back is typically eastern. In the east a spoken word was thought to have a kind of active and independent existence. So, if the house was unworthy, the blessing could be recalled. *'Shake the dust off your feet'*: Hospitality was a sacred duty in the East. When a stranger entered a village, it was the duty of the village to offer hospitality. Jesus told his disciples that if hospitality was refused, and if doors and ears were shut, they must leave shaking off the dust of that place from their feet. This was a formal pictorial form of denial stating that there could be no fellowship between the not-accepted disciples and the people of that village. To shake the dust off the feet was also a symbolic act practiced by the Pharisees when they left an "unclean" Pagan area. This does not mean that certain people had to be abandoned as being outside the message of the Gospel and beyond the reach of grace. This was an instruction like that of not to go to the Pagans and the Samaritans. It was simply due to the time factor; time was short; as many as possible had to hear the proclamation of the Kingdom; there was no time then to argue with the disputatious and to seek to win the stubborn; that would come later. At that moment the disciples had to tour the country quickly; therefore they had to move on when there was no immediate welcome for the message they brought.

**Mt 10:15.** *'It will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah...'*: Sodom and Gomorrah were proverbial for wickedness. Just before their destruction they had been guilty of a grave and vicious breach of the laws of hospitality. They, too, had rejected the messengers of Yahweh but, even at their worst, had never had the opportunity to reject the message of Jesus Christ. That is why it will be easier for them. For it is always true that the greater has been the privilege, the greater is the responsibility.

**Mt 10:16.** *'Sheep among wolves'*: This was the first missionary trip of the Twelve, and they were completely without experience; actually, defenseless against the kind of people who would oppose them. *'Shrewd as snakes'*: They had to go on with their mission, but in a prudent way. They had to make proper and good use of their power reaching the expected results without clashing against their opponents -as snakes which, in spite of their dangerous power, always run away and very seldom attack. *'Innocent as doves'*: But always maintaining the spiritual innocence which is traditionally symbolized by doves.

**Mt 10:17-20. Lk 12:1;11-12.** *'Be on your guard...'*: As usual, Jesus was using ideas and pictures which were part of the Jewish thought. Jesus never hesitated to tell men what they might expect, if they followed him; actually, he offered his men hardship, persecution, and death. *'Hypocrisy'*: The basis of hypocrisy is insincerity. The hypocrite is never genuine; he is always acting. Better a blunt, straight sinner, than someone who puts on an act of goodness -as the Pharisees were doing. *'Local Councils, Governors, Kings'*: Jesus warned his men that in the days to come they might well find the state and the consolidated religious organization allied against them; that both state and church would persecute them. *'Synagogues'*: Actually, the Church which will persecute them. No established Church likes and accepts to be upset, and quite often the man with a message from Yahweh had -and still has- to undergo the hatred and the enmity of a fossilized orthodoxy. *'Do not worry... You will be given...'*: Many men can have feared that their own unskillfulness in words and defense might do wrong rather than commend their faith. It is the promise of Jesus that when a man is on trial for his faith, the words to properly defend it will come to him straight from Yahweh.

**Mt 10:21-22.** *'Brother... Father... Children...'*: Even their own family will persecute them; their nearest would think them mad and shut the door against them, so that sometimes they will be confronted with the choice between obedience to Jesus Christ and obedience to relatives and friends.

**Mt 10:23.** *'When... persecuted in one place...'*: This passage, too, counsels a wise prudence. Jesus told his men that there must be no useless waste of Christian lives. Often Christians have to die for their faith, but they do not have to throw away their lives in a way that does not help the faith. There is real wisdom in recognizing when to escape. *'You will not finish going...'*: This sentence seems to mean that the second coming of Jesus had to be within their lifetime. The actual meaning is that they will not even complete their preaching mission throughout all the cities of Israel that they will see the Kingdom of Yahweh coming to power. In effect, within thirty years from the Cross the message of Jesus Christ had swept across the world and had reached Rome, the capital of the Western world. The passage should be written "You will not even complete your tour of the cities of Israel, that the Kingdom of Yahweh will be already powerfully present on Earth."

**Mt 10:24-25.** *'A student... not above...'*: This was Jesus' warning to his disciples that they -the students- must expect that it will happen to them what happened to him -their teacher. Jesus calls not only to share his glory, but also his battles and agony. *'Nor a servant above...'*: The same applies to their enemies -the servants- who will act against Christianity following the example and the orders of Beelzebub -their master.

**Mt 10:26-31. Lk 12:2-7.** *'Do not be afraid...'*: Three times in this passage Jesus told his disciples not to be afraid of what they don't know of their lives. *'Nothing concealed that will not be disclosed'*: In this context the meaning is that nothing hidden through hypocrisy will fail to be made known, that the truth will always triumph, that the day will al-

ways come when things will be seen as they really are. *'What I tell you... will be proclaimed...'*: What Jesus has told them, they must tell to men. *'Inner rooms'*: Storerooms. They were surrounded by other rooms so that no one could dig in from the outside. *'I tell you'*: What Jesus was saying is that no punishment that men can ever inflict to a man can compare with the fate of one who has been guilty of infidelity and disobedience to Yahweh. It is true that men can kill a man's physical body; but Yahweh can condemn a man to hell, to the death of the soul. And Yahweh alone has this power. *'Are not two sparrows...'*: Yahweh even cares for the little birds, which are sold cheaply; and if Yahweh cares for the sparrows, surely He will care much more for men, of whom He knows everything, even the number of their hairs. *'So, don't be afraid...'*: The correct attitude to life is of fearlessness. This because, first, a man can destroy another man's body but not his soul. Second because, whatever happens, a Christian cannot drift beyond the affection of Yahweh. He knows that Yahweh will not leave or forsake him; that he is surrounded for ever by Yahweh's care. If that is so, why to be afraid and to worry?

**Mt 10:32-33. Lk 12:8-9.** *'I tell you...'*: The reward to loyalty to Jesus is not in material things; it consists in the fact that Jesus will welcome in Heaven each good person saying, "This is my man. Welcome!" *'Whoever acknowledges'*: If a man is loyal to Jesus Christ in this life, Jesus Christ will be loyal to him in the life to come. *'But whoever disowns...'*: And the same is valid for the opposite attitude; who rejects Jesus in his earthly life, will be rejected by Jesus -and sent to hell for the necessary formative and punitive period.

**Mt 10:34-39.** *'Do not suppose...'*: At first glance this saying sounds like a contradiction. It is true that Jesus came to bring peace -peace between the believers and Yahweh, and peace among men. Yet the inevitable result of Jesus' coming is conflict -between Christ and the antichrist, between Christ's children and the devil's children. And this conflict can occur even between members of the same family. As usual, Jesus was using a language that was perfectly familiar to the Jews, who believed that one of the features of the Day of the Lord would be the division of families. It is as if Jesus had said, "The end you have always been waiting for has come; and the intervention of Yahweh in history is splitting homes and groups and families." The world will always be divided into those who have accepted Jesus Christ and those who have not. *'Anyone who is fond of... more than of me...'*: Jesus offered men a choice. A man has to choose sometimes between the closest ties of Earth and the loyalty to Jesus Christ. *'Take his cross'*: Jesus offered men a cross, which was an instrument of death and here symbolizes the necessity of total commitment -even till death- on the part of Jesus' followers. The people of Galilee well knew what a cross, a death on a cross, was. In Christianity there is always some cross, for it is the religion of the Cross. *'Whoever finds...'*: The man who seeks first ease and comfort and security and the fulfillment of personal ambitions may well get all these things, but he will not bring them to the next life. On the contrary, he who will serve the others, fulfilling Yahweh's purpose for his life, will find true life, here and hereafter.

**Mt 10:40-42.** *'He who receives...'*: Another way of speaking which the Jews regularly used. The Jews always felt that to receive a person's envoy or messenger was the same as to receive the person himself. If a man is a true man of Yahweh, to receive him is to receive Yahweh, who sent him. *'Prophet. Righteous man. Disciple'*: Not all people can be prophets, and preach and proclaim the word of Yahweh, but he who gives Yahweh's messenger the simplest gift of hospitality will receive no less a reward than the prophet himself. Not all people can be shining examples of goodness; not all people can stand in the eye of the world as righteous; but he who helps men will always receive a reward.

**Mk 6:12-13. Lk 9:6.** *'So they set out and...'*: Here there is the summary of the work that the Twelve did when Jesus sent them out. *'Preaching... Drove out many demons'*: This mission marked the beginning of the disciples' own ministry in Jesus' name, and their message was precisely the same as his. *'Anointed many sick people with oil'*: In the ancient Mediterranean world olive oil was widely used as a medicine, and it was regarded as a panacea for all cures. Practically they were using the pharmacopoeia of their time. And in the hands of the servants of Christ the old cures acquired a new virtue, as Christ gave the healers new powers.

**Jesus and John the Baptist** [Matthew 11:1-19 Luke 7:18-35] See page 410

**(Mt11:1)** *After Jesus had finished instructing his Twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach and preach in the towns of Galilee.*

**(Mt11:2-3)(Lk7:18-19)** *John's disciples told him about all these things. When John heard in prison what Jesus was doing, he called two of his disciples and sent them to the Lord to ask him, "Are you the One who was to come, or should we expect someone else?"*

**(Lk7:20)** *When the men came to Jesus, they said, "John the Baptist sent us to you to ask, 'Are you the One who was to come, or should we expect someone else?'"*

**(21)** *At that very time Jesus cured many who had diseases, sicknesses and evil spirits, and gave sight to many who were blind. (Mt11:4-5)(Lk7:22) So Jesus replied to the messengers, "Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the Good News is preached to the poor. (Mt11:6)(Lk7:23) Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me."*

**(Mt11:7)(Lk7:24)** *As John's disciples were leaving, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John: "What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed swayed by the wind? (Mt11:8)(Lk7:25) If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear fine and expensive clothes and indulge in luxury are in kings' palaces. (Mt11:9)(Lk7:26) But then what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. (Mt11:10)(Lk7:27) This is the one about whom it is written:*

*'I will send My messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.'* **(Mt11:11)(Lk7:28)** *I tell you the truth: Among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet he who is least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he. (Mt11:12) From the days of John the Baptist until now, the Kingdom of Heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it. (13) For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John. (14) And if you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who was to come. (15) He who has ears, let him hear."*

**(Lk7:29)** *(All the people, even the tax collectors, when they heard Jesus' words, acknowledged that Yahweh's way was right, because they had been baptized by John. (30) But the Pharisees and experts in the law rejected Yahweh's purpose for themselves, because they had not been baptized by John.)*

**(Mt11:16-17)(Lk7:31-32)** *"To what, then, can I compare the people of this generation? What are they like? They are like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling out to each other: 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn and cry.' (Mt11:18)(Lk7:33) For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and they say, 'He has a demon.' (Mt11:19)*

**(Lk7:34-35)** *The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and "sinners."' But wisdom is proved right by her actions, by her children.*"

**Mt 11:1.** *'Jesus... went...':* After the departure of the Twelve, Jesus went on with his preaching and healing activity, accompanied by all the other disciples.

**Mt 11:2-3. Lk 7:18-20.** *'John's disciples':* Despite John the Baptist's imprisonment, his disciples kept in contact with him and continued his ministry. *'John... in prison':* During a trip to Rome, Herod Antipas, the Tetrarch of Galilee, had been seduced by his brother's wife. When he came back to Galilee, he dismissed his own wife, and married the sister-in-law. Publicly and sternly John rebuked Herod. And, in revenge, Herod threw John into the dungeons of the fortress of Machaerus in the mountains near the Dead Sea. *'Called... and sent them...':* John wanted to be sure that Jesus was the Messiah, the One who was to come. So he sent his disciples to Jesus to ask for his confirmation. In effect, John was growing impatient, asking himself when Jesus was going to start with action; when he was going to destroy his enemies; when the day of Yahweh's holy destruction was to come. *'Or should we expect someone else?':* John had announced the coming of the Messiah, and the work of Jesus had not brought the expected results. His disappointment was natural, and he wanted reassurance -and perhaps also to urge Jesus to further action.

**Mt 11:4-5. Lk 7:21-22.** *'Report to John...':* Jesus' answer was based on facts, not on words; asking to take into account not what he was claiming to be, but what he was actually doing. Jesus pointed to his healing and life-restoring miracles. In Jesus' review of his work, he used an ascending scale, ending with the dead raised and the Good News preached to the poor. In this way Jesus reminded John that these were the true things predicted of the Messiah in the Scriptures.

**Mt 11:6. Lk 7:23.** *'Blessed is the man...':* Finally came this warning, which was specially addressed to John because he had grasped only half the truth. John had preached a message of divine holiness accompanied by divine destruction; Jesus was preaching a Gospel of divine holiness accompanied by divine affection. So Jesus said to John: "Maybe I am not doing the things you expected me to do. But the powers of evil are to be defeated not by irresistible power, but by unanswerable benevolence."

**Mt 11:7-10. Lk 7:24-27.** *'Jesus began to speak... about John':* Jesus began by asking the people what for they went into the desert to see John. Surely not to see something ordinary as a reed (a long cane grass). Surely not to see an ordinary, even if richly dressed, person. The very fact that crowds did go in the desert showed how extraordinary John was. He was a prophet, a man to whom Yahweh gave the courage to deliver His message. Furthermore, John was something more than a simple prophet. The Jews believed that, before the Messiah came, Elijah would return to announce his coming. And Jesus declared that John was nothing less than the divine messenger whose duty and privilege was to announce -as prophesied by Malachi 3:1- the coming of the Messiah.

**Mt 11:11. Lk 7:28.** *'Not anyone greater...':* Such was the tremendous tribute of Jesus to John, spoken with the accent of admiration. *'Yet he who is the least...':* Then came that startling declaration. The prophets were great; their message was precious; but with Jesus there emerged something still greater, and a message still more wonderful. No one could call John's message a Gospel, Good News; it was basically a threat of destruction. It took Jesus the Cross to show the reality of Yahweh's affection for men. And John never saw the Cross. Because of Jesus, it is possible for the humblest Christian to know

more about Yahweh than it was for the greatest of the Old Testament prophets. The least Christian has a higher privilege than John the Baptist.

**Mt 11:12.** *'From the days of John... forcefully advancing... forceful men...'*: The meaning is that the Kingdom of Yahweh is for those who are prepared to make a great effort to get in. Such men will enter the Kingdom and become Jesus Christ's disciples. To do this takes spiritual courage, power and determination because of the ever present persecutions.

**Mt 11:13-15.** *'All the prophets...'*: John belonged to the age of the old covenant, which was preparatory to Jesus Christ. *'John... is the Elijah who was to come'*: Once again Jesus told people that John was really the herald and the forerunner whom they have awaited so long. But they were not willing to accept such a fact. That is why Jesus ends with the appeal that he who has ears -that is, who is able to hear- should use them to accept the role of John.

**Lk 7:29-30.** *'The tax collectors... the Pharisees...'*: Even the tax collectors -that is, the heavy sinners- had shown their willingness to repent by accepting John's baptism, whereas the Pharisees showed their rejection of Yahweh's message by refusing to be baptized. *'Expert in the law'*: A designation used for the Scribes, most of whom were Pharisees.

**Mt 11:16-17. Lk 7:31-32.** *'People of this generation. Children in the marketplace'*: Jesus was saddened by the obtuseness of human nature. In effect, grown men and women can be very much like spoiled children who refuse to play no matter what the game is, not wanting to listen to the truth, never stopping in their criticism, remaining stubbornly unresponsive to whatever invitation is made to them. People had rejected both John and Jesus, but for different reasons -like children who refuse to play either a joyful game or a mournful one.

**Mt 11:18-19. Lk 7:33-35.** *'For John the Baptist... the Son of Man...'*: The Jews might criticize John for his lonely isolation, but John had moved men's hearts to Yahweh as they had not been moved for centuries. They might criticize Jesus for mixing too much in ordinary life and with ordinary people, but in him people were finding a new life and a new goodness, a new power to live as they ought to, and a new way to Yahweh. The Pharisees and the scribes refused Yahweh's purposes by refusing to recognize that His affection was coming to them through Jesus Christ. *'Wisdom is proved right...'*: Yahweh in His wisdom has sent both John and Jesus in specific roles. There are those who accept this; and Yahweh's wisdom is in the end justified by those people. Yahweh has not used force to coerce all men doing His will. In this case there would have been a world of automata. But Yahweh chose the dangerous way of affection, and affection in the end will triumph. The spiritually wise persons could see that the ministries of both John and Jesus were godly, despite their differences.

**Not peace but division** [Luke 12:49-53]

***(Lk12:49)"I have come to bring fire on the Earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! (50)But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is completed! (51)Do you think I came to bring peace on Earth? No, I tell you, but division. (52)From now on there will be five in one family divided against each other, three against two and two against three. (53)They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law."***



**Lk 12:49-53.** *'I have come to bring...'*: To those who were beginning to regard Jesus as the Messiah, the Anointed One of Yahweh, the words of this passage would come as a shock. They regarded the Messiah as a conqueror and a king, and the messianic age as a golden time. But Jesus was speaking of himself and of his mission in totally different terms; by words very difficult to understand and to accept.

**Lk 12:49.** *'To bring fire'*: In Jewish thought fire was always the symbol of divine judgment. The Jews firmly believed that, at the time of final judgment, Yahweh would judge all other nations by one standard and themselves by another; that the very fact that a man was a Jew would be enough to absolve him. Jesus as well regarded the coming of his Kingdom as a time of judgment; but of the personal judgment, with him as the judge, who will divide people sending them either straight to Heaven or to the formative and redemptive punishment of hell.

**Lk 12:50.** *'A baptism to undergo'*: The Greek verb used here, "baptizein," means to dip, to be submerged. Often it is used metaphorically of a man overwhelmed and submerged by some terrible event. That is the way in which Jesus used it here. He had to pass through the Cross, which was always before his eyes. How different this was from the Jews' idea of the Messiah, Yahweh's king! Jesus came, not with avenging armies and flying banners, but to give his life as ransom for all. *'How distressed...'*: Jesus wished that the hour of his suffering were already past and his earthly mission already accomplished.

**Lk 12:51-53.** *'Peace on Earth'*: Jesus' mission was mainly to open the Kingdom of Yahweh in Heaven to all men. On earth everybody had to carry his cross -as Jesus himself did. *'Division. Divided'*: Jesus' coming would inevitably mean division, as in point of fact it did. Many times, the conversion to Christianity of a person -which meant at least a substantially different life-style- divided families in two. Many times a family member had to decide whether he or she was more fond of his relatives or of Jesus Christ. Here, again, Jesus declared that the essence of Christianity is that loyalty to him has to take precedence over the dearest loyalties of this Earth.

**Woe on unrepentant cities** [Matthew 11:20-24 Luke 10:12-15]

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*(Mt11:20)Then Jesus began to denounce the cities in which most of his miracles had been performed, because they did not repent. (Mt11:21)(Lk10:13)"Woe to you, Korazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. (Mt11:22)(Lk10:14)But I tell you, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you. (Mt11:23)(Lk10:15)And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the Skies? No, you will go down to the depths. If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day. (Mt11:24)(Lk10:12)But I tell you that it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment than for that town."*

**Mt 11:20.** *'Most of his miracles'*: Matthew clearly stated that most of Jesus' miracles happened in the towns cited in this passage, and yet we have no account at all about all those. There is no record in the Gospels of the work that Jesus did there, of the miracles he performed in those places. This passage shows how little we know of what Jesus did; in the Gospels we have only the barest selection of Jesus' work.

**Mt 11:21. Lk 10:13.** *'Woe'*: The Greek word translated "woe" is "ouai," which expresses sorrowful pity more than anger. Jesus' accent was of sorrow; his condemnation of sin was of the kind of anger that comes from a broken heart. *'Korazin'*: It was a town an hour traveling north of Capernaum. *'Bethsaida'*: It was a fishing village on the west bank of the Jordan, just where the river enters the northern end of the lake. *'Tyre and Sidon'*: Pagan cities in Phoenicia, north of Galilee, which had not had the opportunity to witness Jesus' miracles and hear his preaching as the people had in most of Galilee.

**Mt 11:22. Lk 10:14.** *'More bearable'*: The sin that made these cities worse than Tyre and Sidon, which were synonymous of iniquity, had been very serious indeed. It was the sin of forgiving the responsibilities of privilege. The cities of Galilee had been given a privilege the other cities never had: they had actually seen and heard Jesus. To have heard Yahweh's word was a great privilege and a great responsibility.

**Mt 11:23. Lk 10:15.** *'Capernaum'*: Jesus' headquarters on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee, whose inhabitants had many opportunities to see and hear Jesus. And they did refuse his work and his message. Therefore the condemnation for their rejection was so much greater. Theirs, was the sin of indifference. These cities did not attack Jesus; they did not drive him from their gates; they did not seek to crucify him; they simply disregarded him. Indifference, too, is a sin. There are sins of action; but there is also a sin of inaction, of absence of any kind of action.

**Mt 11:24. Lk 10:12.** *'More bearable... for Sodom'*: Although Sodom was so sinful that Yahweh destroyed it (Genesis 19:24-28), the people who heard the message of Jesus and of his disciples were even more accountable, because they had the Gospel of the Kingdom preached to them.

***Rest for the weary*** [Matthew 11:25-30 Luke 10:21-22]

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**(Mt11:25-26)(Lk10:21)** *At that time Jesus, full of joy through the Spirit of Yahweh said, "I praise You, Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth, because You have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was Your good pleasure.*

**(Mt11:27)(Lk10:22)** *All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows who the Son is except the Father, and no one knows who the Father is except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him.*

**(Mt11:28)** *Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, 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."*

**Mt 11:25-26. Lk 10:21.** *'I praise you, Father...'*: Jesus, as everybody should do, thanked Yahweh for the actual situation of life in which he was put. And he didn't ask for anything different. *'Hidden from the wise, revealed to little...'*: Jesus was speaking out of his own experience; the experience that the Rabbis and the wise men rejected him, and that the simple people accepted him. The intellectuals had no use for him; but the humble welcomed him. Of course, Jesus was very far from condemning intellectual capability; what he condemned was intellectual pride. Anyway, Christianity does not mean knowing all the theories about the New Testament; still less does it mean knowing all the theologies and the Christologies. Christianity does not mean knowing about Jesus Christ, it means having Jesus Christ in our heart.

**Mt 11:27. Lk 10:22.** *'All things... committed to me...'*: Yahweh gave Jesus full authority

over the whole creation, with the specific task of making all men (in this life or after physical death) suitable to enter His Kingdom. *'No one knows...'*: This is the greatest claim that Jesus ever made, the claim which is the center of the Christian faith; that he alone can reveal Yahweh to men. What Jesus said is, "If you want to see what Yahweh is like, if you want to see the mind of Yahweh, the heart of Yahweh, the nature of Yahweh, if you want to see Yahweh's attitude to men; look at me." In Jesus alone we can see what Yahweh is like; and it is the Christian conviction that Jesus can give that knowledge to anyone who is humble enough and trustful enough to accept it. This verse tells of the unique relationship between Jesus and Yahweh. This is what the Gospels intend when Jesus says, "I and the Father are one," or, "He who has seen me has seen the Father."

**Mt 11:28.** *'Come to me...'*: For the orthodox Jews their religion was a matter of burdens, of endless rules that dictated every action of their life. Jesus' invitation was and is to those who are exhausted with the search for the truth, beyond all those rules.

**Mt 11:29-30.** *'My yoke... my burden...'*: The Jews used the phrase "the yoke" for "entering into submission to." "My yoke is easy" means that it fits well. The life Jesus gives men is not a too heavy and oppressive burden; it is made to fit each man's abilities exactly. "My burden is light" means not that the burden is easy to carry; but that it is laid on us in affection and that it is meant to be carried in affection; and that affection makes even the heaviest burden light.

### **John the Baptist beheaded**

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*[Mark 6:14-29 Matthew 14:1-12 Luke 9:7-9]*

**(Mk6:14)(Mt14:1-2)(Lk9:7)** Now, at that time, King Herod the Tetrarch heard the reports about all this that was going on, for Jesus' name had become well known. And he was perplexed, because some were saying to his attendants, "This is John the Baptist; he has been raised from the dead! And that is why miraculous powers are at work in him."

**(Mk6:15)(Lk9:8)** Others said that Elijah had appeared, "He is Elijah." And still others claimed that one of the prophets of long ago had come back to life, "He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of long ago."

**(Mk6:16)(Lk9:9)** But when Herod heard this, he said, "John has been raised from the dead! I beheaded that man! Who, then, is this I hear such things about?" And he tried to see him.

**(Mk6:17)(Mt14:3)** For Herod himself had given orders to have John arrested, and he had him bound and put in prison. He did this because of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, whom he had married. **(Mk6:18)(Mt14:4)** For John had been saying to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have her, your brother's wife." **(Mk6:19)** So Herodias nursed a grudge against John and wanted to kill him. But she was not able to, **(20)** because Herod feared John and protected him, knowing him to be a righteous and holy man. When Herod heard John, he was greatly puzzled; yet he liked to listen to him. **(Mt14:5)** Herod wanted to kill John, but he was afraid of the people, because they considered him a prophet.

**(Mk6:21-23)(Mt14:6-7)** Finally the opportune time came. On his birthday Herod gave a banquet for his high officials and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee. When the daughter of Herodias came in and danced for them, she pleased Herod and his dinner guests so much that he promised with an oath to give her whatever she asked.

*The king said to the girl, "Ask me for anything you want, and I'll give it to you. Whatever you ask, up to half my kingdom."*

*(24)She went out and said to her mother, "What shall I ask for?"*

*"The head of John the Baptist," she answered.*

*(Mk6:25)(Mt14:8)At once, prompted by her mother, the girl hurried in to the king with the request, and said: "I want you to give me right now the head of John the Baptist on a platter."*

*(Mk6:26)(Mt14:9)The king was greatly distressed, but because of his oaths and his dinner guests, he did not want to refuse her and he ordered that her request be granted.*

*(Mk6:27)(Mt14:10)And so he immediately sent an executioner with orders to bring John's head. The man went and had John beheaded in the prison. (Mk6:28)(Mt14:11)*

*And his head was brought back on a platter. He presented it to the girl, and she carried it and gave it to her mother. (Mk6:29)(Mt14:12)On hearing of this, John's disciples came and took his body and buried it in a tomb. Then they went and told Jesus.*

**Mk 6:14-29. Mt 14:1-12. Lk 9:7-9. 'King Herod the Tetrarch':** When Herod the Great died, his kingdom was divided in four parts, each assigned to a tetrarch (ruler of the fourth part); and Herod Antipas was in charge of Galilee and Perea. *'Reports about all...':* By this time news of Jesus had spread all over the country and reached the ears of Herod. The reason why he didn't hear of Jesus earlier was that his residence in Galilee was in Tiberias, a largely pagan city, where, as far as we know, Jesus never went. *'John the Baptist':* Being superstitious, when they heard of Jesus, some of Herod's officials thought that he could be John the Baptist raised to life. *'Elijah':* The Jews waited for the Messiah, and it was an essential part of that belief that, before the coming of the Messiah, Elijah would come again to be his herald and forerunner. *'A prophet':* Others were seeing in Jesus a prophet of Yahweh. In those days the Jews were quite conscious that for more than three hundred years the voice of prophecy had been silent. And men in those days were listening, in Jesus, to the authentic voice of Yahweh. *'Put in prison...':* The story of this passage develops in the castle of Machaerus, which stood on a lonely ridge, overlooking the east side of the Dead Sea. *'Herodias':* Herod the Great was married many times and Herodias was the daughter of Aristobulus, one of his sons. So she was niece both of her first husband, Philip, and of Herod, the killer of John the Baptist. By marrying Herodias, his brother's wife, Herod had broken the Law, and John had publicly rebuked him. *'On Herod's birthday':* In spite of John's rebuke Herod still feared and respected him, but with Herodias it was different. She was implacably hostile to John and determined to eliminate him. Finally, she got her chance at Herod's birthday feast. During that feast her daughter Salome came to dance. Solo dances in those days and in such a company were licentious pantomimes, usually performed by professional prostitutes. The very fact that she, a princess, so exposed herself is a grim commentary of the character of Salome and of her mother, who allowed and encouraged her to do so. But Herod was pleased and offered a reward; Herodias got the chance she was waiting for, and John was executed. *'Up to half my kingdom':* A proverbial reference to generosity, not to be taken literally. Herod was a man who acted on impulse. He made his promise to Salome without thinking and, without any doubt, when he was already quite drunk. And he had to keep his promise because he did not want to lose face with his friends.

**Jesus feeds the five thousand**

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[Mk 6:30-44 Mt 14:13-21 Lk 9:10-17 Jn 6:1-15]

(Mk6:30-34)(Mt14:13-14)(Lk9:10-11)(Jn6:1-2)Some time after this, when the apostles returned, they gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. Then, when Jesus heard what had happened and, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, "**Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.**" So Jesus took them with him and they crossed in a boat to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee (that is, the Sea of Tiberias), to a town called Bethsaida, and they withdrew by themselves to a solitary place. But, hearing of this, many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. So the crowds learned about it and a great crowd of people followed him because they saw the miraculous signs he had performed on the sick. When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he welcomed them, began teaching them many things, and spoke to them about the Kingdom of Yahweh, and healed their sick, those who needed healing. (Jn6:3)Then Jesus went up on a mountain-side and sat down with his disciples. (4)The Jewish Passover Feast was near.

(Mk6:35-36)(Mt14:15)(Lk9:12)By this time it was late in the afternoon and, as evening approached, the Twelve disciples came to him and said, "This is a remote place, and it's already getting very late. Send the crowd away so they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages to find lodging and buy themselves some food to eat."

(Jn6:5)When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, "**Were shall we buy bread for those people to eat?**" (6)He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do.

(Mk6:37-38)(Mt14:16-17)(Lk9:13)(Jn6:7-9)Philip answered him, "Two hundred denarii would not buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!" But Jesus replied, "**They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.**" They said, "That would take two hundred denarii! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?"

"**How many loaves do you have?**" he asked. "**Go and see.**"

Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up, "Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?"

When they found out, they answered, "We have here only five loaves of bread, and two fish -unless we go and buy food for all this crowd." (Mk6:39-41)(Mt14:18-19)(Lk 9:14-16)(Jn6:10-11)"**Bring them here to me,**" Jesus said. And then Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass, saying to his disciples, "**Have the people sit down in groups of about fifty each.**" There was plenty of grass in that place, the disciples did so, and so all the men who were there, about five thousand of them, sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties. Taking the five loaves and looking up to Heaven, Jesus gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to his disciples to set before the people, and the disciples gave them to the people, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the two fish, dividing them also among them all.

(Mk6:42-43)(Mt14:20)(Lk9:17)(Jn6:12-13)They all ate and were satisfied. When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, "**Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted.**" And so the disciples picked them up and filled twelve basketfuls of the broken pieces of the five barley loaves of bread and of the fish that were

left over by those who had eaten. (Mk6:44)(Mt14:21)The number of the men who had eaten was about five thousand, besides women and children.

(Jn6:14)After the people saw the miraculous sign that Jesus did, they began to say, "Surely this is the prophet who is to come into the world." (15)Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself.

**Mk 6:30-34. Mt 16:13-14. Lk 9:10-11. Jn 6:1-2.** *'When the apostles returned'*: After the end of their first mission, they reported to Jesus where they went to preach and which miracles they had done. *'Not even a chance to eat'*: The demanding crowds were so insistent that they had no time for even their basic needs. *'Come with me...'*: So Jesus decided to go to a quiet place to find some peace and rest. In effect, nobody can work without any rest; and nobody can live a true Christian life unless he gives himself at least some time with Yahweh in quietness and in loneliness. And Galilee was a small country, only fifty miles (80 km) from north to south and twenty-five miles (40 km) from east to west, a place where it was really very difficult to be alone. The Roman historian Josephus tells that in his time within this small area there were 204 towns and villages, none with a population of less than 5,000 people. In an area so much populated it was not easy to get away from the people. *'But... many... run on foot'*: The rest which Jesus sought for himself and for his disciples was not to be. The crowd saw Jesus and his men going away by boat, and plenty of people, accustomed to go by foot, ran around the lake and arrived by the other side before the boat itself. So, when Jesus and his men stepped out of the boat, they found there a crowd of people waiting for them. *'He had compassion on them'*: Jesus had come to find quiet, peace, and loneliness. Instead he found a vast crowd eagerly demanding what he alone could give. He might so easily have resented them. What right had they to invade his privacy with their continual demands? Was he to have no rest and quiet, no time to himself at all? But Jesus was not like that. So far from finding them a nuisance, he was moved with compassion for them. He looked at them; they were so desperately in need; they wanted so much his help. *'Sheep who had no shepherd'*: As sheep without shepherd cannot find the way, so men, left to themselves, lose the way of life. It is only when Jesus leads and we follow that we can find the right way. As sheep without shepherd have no defense against the dangers which threaten them, the robbers and the wild beasts, so men, left to themselves, cannot defend themselves against the temptations and the evil of the world. Without Jesus we are defenseless; with him we are safe.

**Jn 6:3-4.** *'Then... went up a mountainside'*: Only after satisfying the needs of the crowd, Jesus thought of allowing himself some rest with his disciples. *'The Passover'*: The Feast of Passover was near and in that occasion there would be big crowds on the roads. Surely, many pilgrims who were on their way to Jerusalem coming from north, were going south to Perea, and then crossed the Jordan near Jericho. That way was longer, but it avoided the dangerous territory of the hated Samaritans.

**Mk 6:35-38. Mt 14:15-17. Lk 9:12-13. Jn 6:5-9.** *'As evening approached...'*: The disciples pointed to the practical difficulty of finding lodge and food for such a big crowd. *'He said to Philip...'*: Philip was the right man to whom to turn, for he came from Bethsaida (Jesus calls Philip and Nathanael. Jn 1:43-51) and knew the area. When Jesus asked him where food could be got, Philip's answer was despairing, both for the real difficulty in finding so much food, and for the fact that they did not have enough money to pay for it. *'Andrew'*: Then Andrew appeared on the scene, bringing a boy with a minimum quantity of food.

**Mk 6:39-44. Mt 14:18-21. Lk 9:14-17. Jn 6:10-13.** *'Bring them here to me'*: The story shows two reactions to human need. When the disciples saw how late it was, and how tired and hungry the crowd was, they actually said, "These people are tired and hungry. Get rid of them and let each one worry about himself." Jesus, in effect, said, "These people are tired and hungry. We must do something about it." It also shows two reactions to available resources. When the disciples were asked to give the people something to eat, they insisted that a big amount of money was needed to buy bread for them. What they really meant was, "What we have is absolutely not sufficient to buy the quantity of bread all these people need." But Jesus didn't stop there; after asking them what food they had available (Five loaves of barley bread -practically rolls of the poorest type of bread available- and two salty fishes -about the size of sardines), he ordered them to go on with the distribution. What they had there did not seem much, but Jesus took it and worked wonders with it. So the people ate and were filled. In the hands of Jesus little is always much. *'He gave them to his disciples...'*: The story tells that Jesus gave to the disciples and then the disciples gave to the crowd. In this case, too, we have to note that, if Jesus wants something done, he gets a man to do it. Jesus always needs people through whom he can act and speak. *'Denarii'*: A denarius was a Roman silver coin which value corresponded to a day's wage of a working man. *'Sit on the green grass'*: Grass is green around the Sea of Galilee after the early spring rains. *'Five thousand'*: This number, as usual at the time, did not include the women and children present. To note that this is the only miracle of Jesus related by all four Gospels.

**Jn 6:14-15.** *'After the people saw...'*: Here we see the reaction of the mob to Jesus' miracles. The Jews were waiting for the Messiah who had to free them from foreign oppression and, in that moment, after Jesus fed them all multiplying the loaves and fish, they were willing to accept Jesus as that Messiah and to carry him to power on a wave of popular acclaim. But they were looking for a Messiah who would be king and conqueror, who will defeat and drive out the Romans from the land. *'Sign'*: Jesus' miracle pointed people to the Son of Man and the food for eternal life he gives, but the Jews thought only of the prophet of Deuteronomy 18:15 who would be a leader like Moses. Through Moses, Yahweh had provided food and water for the people in the desert, and they expected the prophet to do the same. *'Make him king by force'*: Jesus had already rejected this kind of kingship as a temptation of the devil.

### **Jesus walks on the water**

*See page 415*

[Mark 6:45-56 Matthew 14:22-36 John 6:16-24]

**(Mk6:45-47)(Mt14:22-24)(Jn6:16-17)** *When evening came, his disciples went down to the lake. Immediately Jesus made them get into the boat and go ahead of him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. They got into a boat and set off across the lake for Capernaum. After he had dismissed and left them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. By now it was dark, and Jesus had not yet joined them. He was there alone on land, but the boat was already a considerable distance from land, in the middle of the lake, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it.*

**(Mk6:48-50)(Mt14:25-27)(Jn16:18-20)** *He saw the disciples straining at the oars, because a strong wind was blowing against them and the waters grew rough. About the fourth watch of the night, when they had rowed twenty-five or thirty stadia, Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. He was about to pass by them, but when all the disciples saw him approaching the boat, walking on the water of the lake, they thought he*

was a ghost, and they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear.

But Jesus immediately spoke to them and said, **"Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."**

**(Mt14:28)** "Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water."

**(29)** "Come," he said.

Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. **(30)** But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!"

**(31)** Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. **"You of little faith,"** he said, **"why did you doubt?"**

**(Mk6:51)(Mt14:32-33)(Jn6:21)** Then they were willing to take them into the boat and, when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down and immediately the boat reached the shore where they were heading. Then those who were in the boat worshipped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of Yahweh." They were completely amazed, **(Mk6:52)** for they had not understood about the loaves; their hearts were hardened.

**(Mk6:53)(Mt14:34)** When they had crossed over, they landed at Gennezaret and anchored there. **(Mk6:54-56)(Mt14:35-36)** And as soon as they got out of the boat, when the men of that place recognized Jesus, they sent word to all the surrounding country. They ran throughout that whole region and carried the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was. And wherever he went -into villages, towns or countryside- people brought all their sick to him and placed them in the marketplaces. They begged him to let the sick just touch even the edge of his cloak, and all who touched him were healed.

**(Jn6:22)** The next day the crowd that had stayed on the opposite shore of the lake realized that only one boat had been there, and that Jesus had not entered it with his disciples, but that they had gone away alone. **(23)** Then some boats from Tiberias landed near the place where the people had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks. **(24)** Once the crowd realized that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum in search of Jesus.

**Mk 6:45-47. Mt 14:22-24. Jn 6:16-17.** 'Immediately... into the boat': After the hunger of the crowd had been satisfied, Jesus sent his disciples away before he dismissed the crowd. This because, when the crowd had realized about the miracle, there had been a move to take Jesus by force and to make him king. It was a dangerous situation because the disciples, too, were still thinking of Jesus in terms of earthly power; and he did not want them to be caught in this nationalistic outburst and become inflamed by this movement. It was this kind of power that he had rejected at the time of his temptations, once and for ever. And so Jesus had to calm and dismiss them all. 'He went up on a...': When he was finally alone, he went up to the mountainside to pray; and for some time he was alone in the hill with Yahweh. Plenty of problems were falling on him. There was the hostility of the orthodox people; the suspicion of Herod Antipas; the political hotheads who would make him a nationalistic Messiah against his will. He absolutely needed some time of deep spiritual communion with his Father.

**Mk 6:48-50. Mt 14:25-27. Jn 6:18-20.** 'He saw his disciples...': At the north end the lake was no more than four miles (6.5 km) across; and the disciples had already rowed between three and three and a half miles (5 and 5.5 km); that is to say, they were nearly at the end of their journey. After a while, Jesus looked down from the mountainside to the lake. The wind was up and in the light of the moon he saw the boat, with his men in it, having a hard struggle to reach the other side. 'Jesus went on to them': Immediately



Jesus forgot all his problems and went to the help of his friends. *'Walking on the water'*: This was the first part of the miracle reported in this passage. It shows that the disciples were so much frightened and in real danger that Jesus considered necessary to reach them personally and immediately. *'It's a ghost'*: In the middle of the waves, and with the only light of the moon, the disciples did not recognize Jesus -and they could not expect to see him, or anybody else, reaching them by actually walking on the surface of the lake. For them, the only possible explanation was that they have met a ghost. *'It is I'*: Jesus, fully aware of their thoughts, called them from as far as possible, to reassure them. **Mk 14:28-29.** *'If it is you... tell me...'*: Here Peter showed that he had faith in Jesus' powers; if the supposed ghost was actually Jesus, he too, would surely be allowed to walk on the water. And so it happened.

**Mk 14:30.** *'He was afraid... beginning to sink'*: Faith in Jesus has to be constant, with no afterthoughts. Without faith, there are no miracles. We can clearly see from the Gospels that Peter was given to acting upon impulse and without thinking of what he was doing. It was his mistake that again and again he acted without fully understanding the situation and without considering the consequences. But he was always in the right place at the right moment and his instinct was always right. *'Lord, save me!'*: Peter's failure was never final, for always in the moment of his failure he clutched to Jesus Christ. Each time he failed, he rose again; and each of his failures brought him closer to Jesus.

**Mk 14:31.** *'Jesus reached...'*: Jesus knew Peter's heart, his strong and his weak sides; and so it was with friendly affection that he reproached Peter's doubt; his "little faith."

**Mk 6:51-52. Mt 14:32-33. Jn 6:21.** *'The wind died'*: As soon as they had recognized Jesus and taken him and Peter on board, Jesus realized the second part of his miracle, immediately and completely calming the wind and the lake. *'Truly, you are...'*: Here Jesus' disciples showed, again, that they had not yet realized and understood his real position, his real mission.

**Mk 6:53-56. Mt 14:34-36.** *'As soon as...'*: As soon as Jesus landed on the other side of the lake, he was surrounded again by the crowd. No sooner Jesus appeared anywhere that men were crowding and clamoring for his help. *'All... were healed'*: And Jesus never refused his help to anybody.

**Jn 6:22-24.** *'The next day...'*: The crowd that had been waiting on the far side of the lake was still there because, having seen that there was only one boat and that the disciples had gone off with it without Jesus, they deduced that he must still be somewhere nearby. Only after they had waited for some time, they began to realize that he was not there any more. So they embarked on some boats which had come from Tiberias and made the crossing of the lake back to Capernaum, always trying to find Jesus.

### ***Jesus the Bread of Life*** [John 6:25-59]

**(Jn6:25)** *When they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him, "Rabbi, when did you get here?"*

**(26)** *Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. (27) Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him Yahweh the Father has placed His seal of approval."*

**(28)** *Then they asked him, "What must we do to do the works Yahweh requires?"*

**(29)** *Jesus answered, "The work of Yahweh is this: to believe in the one He has sent."*

**(30)** *So they asked him, "What miraculous sign then will you give that we may see it*

and believe you? What will you do? (31)Our forefathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written: 'He gave them bread from Heaven to eat.'

(32)Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from Heaven, but my Father who gives you the true bread from Heaven. (33)For the bread of Yahweh is he who comes down from Heaven and gives life to the world."

(34)"Sir," they said, "from now on give us this bread."

(35)Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty. (36)But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe. (37)All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. (38)For I have come down from Heaven not to do my will but to do the will of Him who sent me. (39)And this is the will of Him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that He has given me, but raise them up at the last day. (40)For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."

(41)At this the Jews began to grumble about him because he said, "I am the bread that came down from Heaven." (42)They said, "Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, 'I came down from Heaven'?"

(43)"Stop grumbling among yourselves," Jesus answered. (44)"No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day. (45)It is written in the Prophets: 'They will all be taught by Yahweh.' Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from Him comes to me. (46)No one has seen the Father except the one who is from Yahweh; only he has seen the Father. (47)I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life. (48)I am the bread of life. (49)Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died. (50)But here is the bread that comes down from Heaven, which a man can eat and not die. (51)I am the living bread that came down from Heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

(52)Then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"

(53)Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. (54)Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. (55)For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. (56)Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him. (57)Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. (58)This is the bread that came down from Heaven. Your forefathers ate manna and died, but he who feeds on this bread will live forever." (59)He said this while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum.

**Jn 6:25.** 'When they found him': The people discovered to their surprise that Jesus was already there, by the side of Capernaum.

**Jn 6:26-27.** 'I tell you the truth': Jesus did not reply to their question, but went straight to the heart of the matter. He actually said, "You have seen wonderful things. You have seen how Yahweh's grace enabled a crowd to be fed. Your thoughts ought to have been turned to Yahweh who did all these things; but instead all you are thinking about is the

bread you have eaten." *'Food that spoils'*: Jesus' point was that these Jews were only interested in their physical satisfaction. They had received an unexpected meal for free; and they wanted more. *'Food that endures eternal life...'*: But there are other kinds of hunger which can be satisfied only by him. The hunger for truth -in him alone there is the truth of Yahweh. The hunger for life -in him alone there is the eternal life. The hunger for affection -in him alone there is the affection which outlast sin and death. Jesus Christ alone can satisfy all the hungers of the human heart and soul. *'Seal of approval'*: And Jesus can satisfy all these hungers because this is the will of Yahweh.

**Jn 6:28.** *'What must we do...?'*: When Jesus spoke about the works required by Yahweh, the Jews immediately thought in terms of "good" works, and they expected him to lay down a list of things to do. They had not understood that eternal life is Jesus Christ's gift and were always thinking in terms of achieving it by pious works.

**Jn 6:29.** *'The work of Yahweh is...'*: Believing in Jesus Christ, having faith in him, was and is the indispensable "work" Yahweh asks for -the one that leads to eternal life. And having faith in Jesus means being in a relationship of friendship with Yahweh and, furthermore, recognizing Him as Father.

**Jn 6:30-31.** *'What sign?'*: They were seeking from Jesus a sign as great as the gift of manna that had accompanied Moses' ministry. Here the argument becomes specifically Jewish in its expressions, assumptions and allusions. Jesus had just declared that the true work of Yahweh was to believe in him. For the Jews, this was in effect a claim to be the Messiah; and they asked him to prove it. *'Manna'*: The manna had always been regarded as the bread of Yahweh; and there was a strong belief that the Messiah would again give the manna. In other terms, the Jews were challenging Jesus to produce bread from Yahweh in order to substantiate his claims. They did not regard the bread that had fed the five thousand as bread from Yahweh; it begun with already existing loaves and fish and went on with the distribution of the same kind of food. The manna, they held, was a different matter and a real test. *'He gave them bread...'*: A quotation from Exodus 16:4, Nehemia 9:15, and Psalm 78:24-25.

**Jn 6:32-33.** *'I tell you the truth...'*: Jesus pointed out that the manna in the desert did not come from Moses, but from Yahweh, and that the Father was now starting to give the true bread from Heaven (that is, life through the Son). *'For the bread of Yahweh is...'*: The manna was not the real bread of Yahweh; it was only its symbol. The real bread of Yahweh is he, the Son of Yahweh, who came to give men not simply satisfaction from physical hunger, but also eternal life. *'He who comes down from Heaven'*: This phrase is repeated six times in this context, emphasizing Jesus' descent, the fact that he is the human Son of Yahweh.

**Jn 6:34.** *'Give us this bread'*: Another demonstration of their incapacity to understand the meaning of Jesus' words; their minds were only able to run along materialistic lines.

**Jn 6:35-36.** *'I am the bread of life'*: Clearly for life here Jesus meant far more than mere physical existence; he was speaking of spiritual life. That is to say, without Jesus Christ there may be existence, but not this spiritual life; therefore, Jesus is the essential of life, and so he may be described as the bread of life. *'Still you do not believe'*: Jesus confirms again their incapacity to understand his mission.

**Jn 6:37-38.** *'All the Father gives me...'*: No man can accept Jesus unless Yahweh pulls the man towards him. At the back of everything there is Yahweh, who moves in the human heart to awaken the desire for knowing Jesus. *'I will never drive away...'*: Jesus will accept -will work in and with- all men; he will never send away even a single one.

*'Not... my will but...'*: A statement, a confirmation that Jesus was working following the will of his Father, a will that he had always fully accepted.

**Jn 6:39-40.** *'This is the will... that I shall lose none... but raise them up'*: Another confirmation that Jesus Christ's salvation will, at the end, be given to all people. As soon as a person will recognize, in this physical life or in the next, that Jesus is the Savior, that person will be saved for ever and accepted in Yahweh's Kingdom. And, because of Jesus' activity both in this physical life -by means of the terrestrial Church- and in the next one -by Jesus himself going to the spirits of the dead who have still to accept him- at the moment of the universal resurrection everybody will already be with Jesus in Yahweh's Kingdom.

**Jn 6:41-42.** *'Is this not Jesus, the son...?'*: This passage shows the reason why those orthodox Jews rejected Jesus and, in rejecting him, rejected eternal life. They judged him by human values and by external standards. Their reaction in face of the claim of Jesus was to produce the fact that he was a carpenter's son and that they had seen him grow up in Nazareth. They were unable to understand how one who had been a tradesman and who came from a poor home could possibly be the special messenger from Yahweh; the Messiah.

**Jn 6:43.** *'Stop grumbling'*: The Jews listened, but they did not learn. Their was a listening of criticism, of resentment and of superiority.

**Jn 6:44-45.** *'No one can come...'*: The Jews resisted the call of Yahweh. Yahweh can draw men, but men's resistance can defeat Yahweh's affection. *'It is written...'*: To convince them Jesus even tried to show them that his claims were confirmed by the Scripture (Isaiah 54:13).

**Jn 6:46.** *'No one has seen the Father...'*: Of all the people present there, none had the possibility to "see" -either physically or spiritually- Yahweh. Only Jesus -the human Son of Yahweh- had this possibility, this special revelation.

**Jn 6:47.** *'I tell you the truth'*: Jesus confirmed that the main point is to believe in him, in his saving mission.

**Jn 6:48-51.** *'I am the bread of life'*: This means that Jesus is the essential for life; therefore to refuse the invitation and the command of Jesus is to miss true life in this world and in the world to come. *'Ate the manna... yet died'*: The manna was only a physical food, given by Yahweh to support only physical life; it had nothing to do with spiritual life. *'If anyone eats...'*: He who "eats," that is he who has accepted Jesus at a certain moment of his physical or spiritual life, will be saved for ever. *'My flesh, which I will give...'*: Jesus was looking forward to Calvary, where he will sacrifice his life, that is, his body (flesh and blood), in this way providing eternal life to all people.

**Jn 6:52.** *'How can...'*: They were quick to take the literal sense of Jesus' words and to use it as an argument against him.

**Jn 6:53-58.** *'I tell you the truth...'*: This is a difficult passage, which speaks in a language and moves in a world of ideas which are quite alien to us and which may seem even fantastic and grotesque. But these ideas would be quite normal to people brought up in ancient times, when animal sacrifices were common. The animal sacrificed to a god was very seldom completely burned. Usually only a token part was burned on the altar, although the whole animal was offered to the god. Part of the flesh was given to the priests as their perquisite; and part to the worshipper to make a feast for himself and his friends within the temple precinct. Furthermore, when the flesh was offered to the god, it was held that he entered into it; and therefore who had eaten it was filled by the dynamic vitality of his god. To people accustomed to these ideas, a section like this presen-

ted no difficulty at all. They would not normally read phrases like "eating Christ's body and drinking his blood" with crude and shocked realism. They would think about the experience of an union closer than any earthly union, of a "communion;" a spiritual union between the worshipper and Jesus. *'Just as the living Father...'*: Here we have a perfect depiction of the universal communion -which will include everybody, at the end of time, in the Kingdom of Yahweh. There Jesus will be in spiritual communion with the Father, and all people will be in spiritual communion with Jesus and, through him, with the Father and with everybody else.

**Jn 6:59.** *'He said this while...'*: It is important to remember that John wrote his Gospel many years after the death of Jesus, and that he never tried to give the actual words of Jesus, but their inner significance. When Jesus spoke about eating his flesh and drinking his blood, he was telling us to feed our hearts and souls and minds on his humanity, and to revitalize our lives with his life until we are filled with the life of Yahweh.

**Many disciples desert Jesus** [John 6:60-71]

**(Jn6:60)** *On hearing it, many of his disciples said, "This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?"*

**(61)** *Aware that his disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them, "Does this offend you? (62)What if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before! (63)The Spirit of Yahweh gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life. (64)Yet there are some of you who do not believe."* For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him. **(65)** *He went on to say, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled him."*

**(66)** *From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.*

**(67)** *"You do not want to leave too, do you?" Jesus asked the Twelve.*

**(68)** *Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. (69)We believe and know that you are the Holy One of Yahweh."*

**(70)** *Then Jesus replied, "Have I not chosen you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil!" (71)(He meant Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, who, though one of the Twelve, was later to betray him.)*

**Jn 6:60.** *'Hard teaching'*: It is clear that many of Jesus' followers found his discourse too hard to understand and, even more, to accept. It is not too difficult to understand that no one could live the very life of Yahweh and face eternity without accepting Jesus and submitting to him because, in the nature of things, men cannot fully understand Yahweh. But the real difficulty of Christianity, besides its demand to surrender to Jesus accepting him as the final authority, is that it demands a moral standard of the highest level.

**Jn 6:61-62.** *'Jesus said...'*: Jesus went on, not to try to prove his claims, but to state that some day the actual events will prove them. What he was saying is: "You find it difficult to believe that I am essential for eternal life, the equivalent of bread coming from Heaven. But you will have no difficulty in accepting that claim when some day you will see me ascending to Heaven." It was a forecast of the Ascension, meaning that Resurrection and Ascension are the guarantee of Jesus' claims.

**Jn 6:63.** *'Spirit of Yahweh'*: Jesus went on saying that the all important thing is the living power of the Spirit of Yahweh. *'The flesh counts for nothing'*: The most important point is the spirit in which any action is done as the real value of anything depends on

the intention with which it is done. And in this the merely physical part of man is not essential. *'The words... are spirit and... life'*: Jesus alone could tell us what life is, put us in the spiritual attitude in which it must be lived, and give us the strength to live it properly, in spite of the constant opposition coming from everywhere.

**Jn 6:64.** *'For Jesus had known...'*: Jesus was well aware that some of his followers would not only reject his offer but reject it with hostility. In effect, even if no man can accept him unless he is moved by Yahweh, it is as well true that a man can resist Yahweh and refuse His call; such a man is shut out not by Yahweh, but by himself.

**Jn 6:65.** *'This is why...'*: The decision of going to Jesus for salvation is never a merely human achievement; the process always begins with the will, the help, of Yahweh.

**Jn 6:66.** *'Many... no longer followed him'*: At that point many of his followers decided to defect Jesus, leaving him for various reasons. Some saw quite clearly where Jesus was heading. It was not possible to challenge the authorities as he was doing and get away with it; he was heading for disaster and they were getting out in time. Some did not accept the challenge set by Jesus. In effect, they had come to Jesus to get something from him and, when it came to suffering for him and giving to him, they quit. For the man who would follow Jesus it is important to remember that in following him there is always a Cross.

**Jn 6:67.** *'You do not want...?'*: It appears evident that Jesus was expecting the Twelve, who he had personally so carefully instructed, to hold on and not to leave him.

**Jn 6:68-69.** *'Simon Peter answered'*: Just situations as this one called out Peter's loyalty, which was based on his personal relationship to Jesus. *'We believe and know'*: There were many things Peter did not understand. He was just as bewildered and puzzled as anyone else. But he knew that Jesus was coming from Yahweh, so it was unthinkable for Peter to leave him. In the last analysis Christianity is not a philosophy or a theory to discuss before accepting it; it is a personal, spontaneous, response to Jesus Christ.

**Jn 6:70-71.** *'Chosen... the Twelve'*: Jesus did expect them to stay always by his side, because he had selected them one by one at the beginning of his mission and had invited each of them to follow him. Anyway, he had to recognize that this was not sufficient; in the case of one of them -Judas- his freedom of choice, and Satan's temptation, would bring him to opposition and betrayal.

### **The cost of being a disciple** [Luke 14:25-33]

*(Lk14:25) Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said:*

*(26)"If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters -yes, even his own life- he cannot be my disciple.*

*(27)And anyone who does not carry his cross and follows me cannot be my disciple.*

*(28)Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? (29)For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, (30) saying, 'This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.'*

*(31)Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? (32)If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. (33)In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple."*

**Lk 14:25-27.** *'If anyone comes to me...'*: When Jesus said this he was on the road to Jerusalem. He knew that he was on his way to the Cross; but the crowds who were with him thought that he was on his way to an empire. So, in the most possible vivid way he told them that any man who was willing to follow him was not on the way to worldly power and glory, but that he must be ready for a loyalty which would sacrifice the dearest things in life -inclusive of his immediate family- and for a suffering which would be like the agony of a man upon a cross. *'Hate his father and...'*: Eastern language was always very strong in its expressions, and we must not take these words with cold and unimaginative literalness. When Jesus told to hate the nearest and dearest, he simply meant to say that no affection in life can compare with the affection we must bear to him. *'Anyone who does not...'*: There is a practical reality in this passage; it is actually possible to be a follower of Jesus without being a disciple. And, unfortunately, in the Christian Church the vast majority is composed by distant followers of Jesus, with so few real disciples. This vast majority constitutes the flock, of which the few disciples are the shepherds.

**Lk 14:28-30.** *'Suppose...'*: It is a Christian's fundamental duty to consider the cost of following Jesus; that is, to consider what Jesus expects of his disciples, the full-followers, from whom Jesus did and does not want a blind, naive commitment that expects only blessing. *'Tower'*: The tower that the man was going to build was probably a vineyard tower, that is, a tower from which watch was kept against thieves who might steal the harvest. An unfinished building was and is always a humiliating matter, as a follower is always an unfinished disciple.

**Lk 14:31-32.** *'Or suppose a king...'*: Had that king moved to war without considering his inferiority, he would have lost everything; the war, his power, his kingdom, and his life. As well a person, not considering what Jesus expects from his full-followers, would lose everything, even what Jesus can give him in his limited function of follower -which is similar to the condition of a king who, not to lose everything, has to ask for and to accept terms of peace.

**Lk 14:33:** *'In the same way...'*: In every sphere of life, men are called to consider the cost. Jesus warned that, in choosing the full Christian life -that is, to be a disciple- the cost is complete surrender to him. But, even if a man can be discouraged by the high demands of Jesus Christ, he has anyway to remember that he will never be left to fulfill them alone. Jesus, after calling him to the steep road, will walk with him every step of the way and will be there at the end of it to meet him.

**Clean and unclean** [Mark 7:1-23 Matthew 15:1-20]

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*(Mk7:1-5)(Mt15:1-2) Then some Pharisees and some of the teachers of the law who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus and saw some of his disciples eating food with hands that were "unclean," that is, unwashed. (The Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they give their hands a ceremonial washing, holding to the tradition of the elders. When they come from the marketplace they do not eat unless they wash. And they observe many other traditions, such as the washing of cups, pitchers and kettles).*

*So the Pharisees and the teachers of the law asked Jesus, "Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders and don't live according to it, instead of eating their food with 'unclean' hands? They don't wash their hands before they eat!"*

*(Mk7:6-13)(Mt15:3-9) Jesus replied, "You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you; as it is written:*

***'These people honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me.***

***They worship Me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.'***

***You have let go of the commands of Yahweh and are holding on to the tradition of men."***

*And he said to them: "You have a fine way of breaking and setting aside the commands of Yahweh in order to observe your own traditions! For with Moses Yahweh said, 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.' But you say that if a man says to his father or mother: 'Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is Corban' (that is, a gift devoted to Yahweh), he is not to 'honor his father or his mother' with it, and then you no longer let him do anything for his father or mother. Thus you nullify the Word of Yahweh for the sake of your tradition, that you have handed down. And you do many things like that."*

*(Mk7:14)(Mt15:10) Again Jesus called the crowd to him and said, "Listen to me, everyone, and understand this. (Mk7:15)(Mt15:11) Nothing of what from outside goes into a man's mouth can make him 'unclean' by going into him. Rather, it is what comes out of a man's mouth that makes him 'unclean.' (Mk7:16) If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear."*

*(Mk7:17)(Mt15:12) Then, after he had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples came to him and asked him about this parable, "Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this?"*

*(Mt15:13) He replied, "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be pulled up by the roots. (14) Leave them; they are blind guides. If a blind man leads a blind man, both will fall into a pit."*

*(15) Peter said, "Explain the parable to us."*

*(Mk7:18-19)(Mt15:16-17) "Are you still so dull?" Jesus asked them. "Don't you see that nothing that enters a man from outside can make him 'unclean'? For whatever enters the mouth doesn't go into his heart but into his stomach, and then out of his body." (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods "clean.")*

*(Mk7:20)(Mt15:18) He went on: "But the things that come out of a man's mouth come from the heart, and these are what make a man 'unclean.' (Mk7:21-22)(Mt15:19) For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, false testimony, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. (Mk7:23)(Mt15:20) All these evils come from inside and are what make a man 'unclean;' but eating with unwashed hands does not make him 'unclean.'"*

**Mk 7:1-5. Mt 15:1-2.** *'Some Pharisees... had come down from Jerusalem':* Another delegation of religious leaders sent from Jerusalem to investigate the Galilean activities of Jesus. This passage shows a head-on clash between Jesus and the leaders of the orthodox Jewish religion. Its opening sentences make clear that the scribes and the Pharisees had come all the way from Jerusalem to Galilee to put their questions to Jesus. They were genuinely bewildered; and in a short time they became genuinely outraged and shocked. Anyway, the basic importance of this passage is not the clash between Jesus and the Pharisees, but the collision of two views of religion and of two views of the demand of Yahweh. *'The tradition of the elders'*: Originally, for the Jews, the Law meant two things; the Ten Commandments and the first five books of the Old Testament, the Pentateuch. It is true that the Pentateuch contains a certain number of detailed regula-



lations and instructions; but, in the matter of moral questions, it lays down a series of great moral principles which a man must interpret and apply for himself. For long it was like that. But in the fifth and fourth centuries before Christ, after the Babylonian captivity, came out a class of legal experts known as the Scribes. They were not content with great moral principles; they wanted those principles to be carefully defined to govern every possible action and every possible situation in life. So they issued thousands of unwritten little rules, which were called the Oral Law; that is, the Tradition of the Elders -the ancient legal experts of the old days. *'Hands... unclean'*: In this passage we meet the whole conception of clean and unclean. This idea of cleanness was entirely a ceremonial matter. The uncleanness was contracted by contact with certain persons or things. There was nothing moral about this. The laws of cleanness or uncleanness were developed from Leviticus 11 and laid even down what a man might or might not eat. Certain of the regulations were wise from the point of view of health and hygiene, but most of the unclean things and animals were so for no reason at all except that they had been declared such. These rules would not in themselves matter very much, but the trouble and the tragedy were that they had become to the Orthodox Jews a matter of life and death. To serve Yahweh, to be religious, it was to observe this kind of laws. It was clearly impossible to avoid all kinds of ceremonial uncleanness. How could a man possibly know when on the street he had touched someone who was unclean? Or how to avoid the unclean dust touched by one of the many Pagans living in Palestine? Step by step, to combat uncleanness they worked out a very elaborate system of ceremonial washing. To the orthodox Jews all these ritual ceremonies were religion; they were as important and as binding as the Ten Commandments. To fail to follow those rules was, in Jewish eyes, not to be guilty of bad manners, not to be dirty in physical terms, but to be unclean in the sight of Yahweh. A thing might in the ordinary sense be completely clean and yet in the legal sense be unclean. *'Marketplace'*: A typical place where the orthodox Jews would come into contact with the Pagans, or with Jews who did not observe the ceremonial law, and thus become ceremonially unclean.

**Mk 7:6-13. Mt 15:3-9.** *'Jesus replied'*: To the scribes and the Pharisees who saw that his disciples did not observe the rules in regard to the washing of hands before and during meals, and asked why, Jesus began by quoting a passage from Isaiah 29:13. There the prophet denounced the religious leaders of honoring Yahweh with their lips while their hearts were really far away. Jesus used this quotation to describe the tradition of the elders as "rules taught by men." *'You hypocrites'*: Anyone to whom religion is a legal thing, meaning the keeping of certain external rules, and being entirely connected with the keeping of certain rituals and of a certain number of taboos, is an hypocrite. The reason is that he believes that he is a good man if he carries out the correct acts and practices, no matter what his heart and his thoughts are. Legalism takes into account only a man's outward actions and doesn't consider at all his inward feelings. The great peril is to identify goodness with certain social religious acts; church going, time-tabled prayer, bible-reading, careful financial giving. On the contrary, for Jesus the fundamental point was and is how a man's heart is toward Yahweh and toward his fellow-men. *'You have a fine way...'*: To answer to the Pharisees' question, Jesus took a practical example of the actual usage of the oral and ceremonial law to show how its observance, so far from being obedience to the Law of Yahweh, could become actual contradiction of that Law. *'With Moses Yahweh said'*: The Law of Yahweh said (Exodus 20:12;21:17, Deuteronomy 5:16 and Leviticus 20:9) that a man shall honor his father and his mother; which also means to support them if they are in need. *'But you say... Corban'*: The Jews

used this word as an oath. Initially it was used to describe something which was specially dedicated to Yahweh. A thing declared Corban was completely set apart from all ordinary purposes and usages and became the property of Yahweh. If a man wished to dedicate some of his money or of his property to Yahweh, he declared it Corban, and thereafter it might never again be used for any ordinary or secular purposes. So, if a man had declared all his properties Corban, sacred to Yahweh, and then if his father or mother in dire need came to him for help, he had to say that he could not help them because nothing he had was available for them. Later, Corban came to identify a different type of oath. If, in a moment of rage, a man said to his father or mother, "Corban, if anything I have will be used to help you," this was considered an oath in the Name of Yahweh; that is, absolutely binding. And then, even if the man had a remorse of conscience because he had made the refusal in a moment of anger; even if he had a second thought and felt that after all his duty was to help his parents, and was prepared to follow the Law of Yahweh, the strict scribes said that this was not possible because their law -the scribal law- said that such an oath could never be broken. In essence, the scribes would hold a man to a reckless oath, taken in a moment of passion, and oath which actually obliged a man to break the higher Law of Yahweh. They did forbid the man to repent and to act in consequence. What Jesus meant is: "You are using your scribal interpretations, your traditions, to oblige a man to dishonor his father and mother, even when he himself has repented and has seen the proper way." *'The Word of Yahweh... your tradition'*: Jesus did clearly show how much in contrast the two are. Yahweh's commands are found in the Scriptures and are binding; the traditions of the elders are not biblical and therefore not binding. Jesus was attacking a system which put rules and regulations before the claims of human need. The commandment of Yahweh was that human sentiments should come first; on the contrary, that of the scribes gave priority to the legal rules.

**Mk 7:14-19. Mt 15:10-17.** *'Listen to me'*: This passage, when it was spoken, was very much revolutionary. Jesus had been arguing with the legal experts about different aspects of the traditional law. He had shown the irrelevance of the elaborate handwashings. He had shown how rigid adherence to the traditional law could actually mean disobedience to the Law of Yahweh. But here he said something even more surprising and upsetting. He declared that nothing that goes physically into a man can possibly defile him, for it is received only into his body which rids itself of it in the normal, physical way. At that time, no Jew, orthodox or not, could ever have believed that. Leviticus 11 has a long list of animals that are unclean and may not be used for food. But Jesus said that things cannot be either unclean or clean in any really religious sense of the term. Only persons can be really defiled; and what defiles a person is his own actions, which are the product of his own heart. This was a shattering new doctrine. Jesus, after condemning scribal and Pharisaic ritual and ceremonial religion, actually wiped out large sections of the book of Leviticus; all the food laws of the Old Testament. *'The Pharisees were offended... Every plant that...'*: Jesus' disciples were worried by the clash between Jesus and the Pharisees, worried of going so heavily against the leaders of the established religious organization. But Jesus told them that the Pharisees were not men of Yahweh -plants not planted by Yahweh- and that, because of that, their teaching -blind guides- was not to be followed.

**Mk 7:20-23. Mt 15:18-20.** *'He went on'*: The things Jesus listed as coming from the heart and making a man unclean began with evil thoughts and continued with a long list of sins. There is no doubt that the most important is the first one, because every outward

act of sin is preceded by an inward act of choice, by an evil thought. 'Unclean': Jesus replaced the Jewish understanding of defilement with the truth that defilement comes from an impure heart, not from the violation of external rules. Fellowship with Yahweh is not interrupted by unclean hands or food, but by sin.

***The faith of the Canaanite woman*** [Mark 7:24-30 Matthew 15:21-28] See page 417

**(Mk7:24)(Mt15:21)** Jesus left that place and withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon, to the vicinity of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know it; yet he could not keep his presence secret. **(Mk7:25-26)(Mt15:22)** In fact, as soon as she heard about him, a Canaanite woman from that vicinity, whose little daughter was possessed by an evil spirit, came to him and fell at his feet. The woman was a Greek, born in Syrian Phoenicia. She begged Jesus to drive the demon out of her daughter, crying out, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is suffering terribly from demon-possession."

**(Mt15:23)** Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, "Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us."

**(24)** He answered, "**I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.**"

**(25)** The woman came and knelt before him. "Lord, help me!" she said.

**(Mk7:27)(Mt15:26)** "First let the children eat all they want," he replied and told her, "**for it is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs.**"

**(Mk7:28)(Mt15:27)** "Yes, Lord," she replied, "but even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs that fall from their masters' table."

**(Mk7:29)(Mt15:28)** Then Jesus answered her, "**Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted. For such a reply, you may go; the demon has left your daughter.**" And her daughter was healed from that very hour.

**(Mk7:30)** She went home and found her child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.

**Mk 7:24. Mt 15:21.** 'Tyre and Sidon': They were cities of Phoenicia (modern Lebanon). Tyre was 40 miles (64 km) north-west of Capernaum and was a great natural harbor. And Sidon was 26 miles (42 Km) north-east of Tyre. Like Tyre it was a natural harbor and a very ancient city. Although these Phoenician cities were part of Syria, they were independent and they had their own kings, their own gods, and their own money. 'He entered in a house': So Jesus was in Pagan territory and, by entering in a Pagan house, gave a practical demonstration of his opinion about the traditional law of uncleanness. 'He did not want anyone to know': Since the feeding of the five thousand Jesus had been trying to avoid the opposition in Galilee and to secure the opportunity to teach his disciples privately. The end was coming near and, during this time of deliberate withdrawal, Jesus wished to have some quiet time, so he could prepare his disciples to the day of the Cross. There were things which he must tell them, and which he must force them to understand. And there was no place in Palestine where he could be sure of privacy; wherever he went, the crowds would find him. So he went right north through Galilee until he came to the land of Tyre and Sidon. There, at least for a time, he would be safe from the hostility of the scribes and the Pharisees and from the danger of being forced by the people into the position of Messiah, for no Jew would be likely to follow him into Pagan territory. 'He could not keep his presence secret': But even in these foreign territories Jesus was well known for all his healing activity.

**Mk 7:25-26. Mt 15:22.** 'As soon as she heard about him': Even if in that area there was no political risk, Jesus had always to face the demands of human need. This passage

tells of a woman who had a daughter who was seriously afflicted. She must have heard of the wonderful things which Jesus could do; and she followed him and his disciples crying desperately for help. '*Greek*': Here equivalent to Pagan. '*Syrian Phoenicia*': At that time Phoenicia belonged administratively to Syria.

**Mt 15:23.** '*Jesus did not answered a word*': At first Jesus seemed to pay no attention to her. '*Send her away*': The disciples were embarrassed and their reaction was not of compassion at all. On the contrary, to them the pagan woman was a nuisance, and all they wanted was to get rid of her as quickly as possible.

**Mt 15:24-25.** '*I was sent only...*': To Jesus there was a problem there. He had to begin with the Jews; and there there was a Pagan, a Canaanite -and the Canaanites were traditional enemies of the Jews- crying for mercy. '*Lord, help me*': In spite of Jesus' apparent refusal, the woman kept asking for help, and Jesus could not do anything else but help her. There was only one thing for him to do; to be in condition of fulfilling her request, he had to awaken true faith in the heart of the woman.

**Mk 7:27-28. Mt 15:26-27.** '*First... the children...*': The children here are the Jews and to them Jesus -the bread of Heaven- had to be offered first, so they could take how much of it -of his saving action- they wanted. '*It is not right...*': Jesus' answer, that it was not right to take the children's bread and to give it to the dogs, looks shocking because the word dog was often a term of contempt, an insult, used by the Jews to indicate the Pagans. But we may be sure that the tone of Jesus' voice and the look of compassion in his eyes took all the insult out of his words. Furthermore, the Greek word used here for dog refers to pet dogs, not to street dogs. Jesus said that the children had be fed first; that is, the Gospel had to be given first to the Jews. And, due to limitations of time and of people available, it was not possible to give it immediately also to the Pagans. '*Even the dogs...*': In those days people ate with their hands; in rich houses they wiped the soiled hands on chunks of bread and then flung the bread away and the house pet dogs ate it. So what the woman said is, "I know that the children are to be fed first, but can't I even get the scraps the children throw away?" She was quick to understand the real meaning of Jesus' phrase, and she was willing to settle for "crumbs."

**Mk 7:29-30. Mt 15:28.** '*You have a great faith*': Jesus recognized her deep faith; and he granted her the blessing and the healing which she so much desired. The woman's faith was tested and found true, so her prayer was answered. Symbolically she stands for the Pagan world which so eagerly seized on the bread of Heaven which the Jews rejected and threw away.

### **The healing of a deaf and mute man** [Mark 7:31-37]

**(Mk7:31)** Then Jesus left the vicinity of Tyre and went through Sidon, down to the Sea of Galilee and into the region of the Decapolis. **(32)** There some people brought to him a man who was deaf and could hardly talk, and they begged him to place his hand on the man.

**(33)** After he took him aside, away from the crowd, Jesus put his fingers into the man's ears. Then he spit and touched the man's tongue. **(34)** He looked up to Heaven and with a deep sigh said to him, "**Ephphatha!**" (which means, "**Be opened!**"). **(35)** At this, the man's ears were opened, his tongue was loosened and he began to speak plainly.

**(36)** Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone. But the more he did so, the more they kept talking about it. **(37)** People were overwhelmed with amazement. "He has done everything well," they said. "He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak."

**Mk 7:31.** *'Left the vicinity of Tyre and...'*: This passage begins by describing a long journey. Jesus went north from Tyre to Sidon and then down southeast through the territory of Herod Philip to the east side of the Lake of Galilee. The route was circuitous to avoid entering Galilee, where Herod Antipas was in power and where many people wanted to take Jesus by force and make him king. Possibly this trip took Jesus and his disciples traveling together for few months; a long, quiet period of communion and preparation before the final tempest of the Cross. At the end of this journey, Jesus arrived in the district of the Decapolis.

**Mk 7:32.** *'Some people brought him...'*: This man was deaf and had an impediment in his speech. No doubt that the two things went together; it was the inability to hear which made his speech imperfect.

**Mk 7:33-35.** *'Jesus put his fingers...'*: Jesus acted as in a kind of dumb-show. First, he put his hands in the man's ears and, then, touched his tongue with spittle (In those days people believed that spittle had a curative quality), to show that the putting of hands, of spittle, or whatever other physical action was at the best preparatory to the real healing power, which comes only from Yahweh. *'Looked up to Heaven'*: To show that it was from Yahweh that the actual help was to come. Then he spoke and the man was healed.

**Mk 7:36.** *'Not to tell anyone'*: As usual, to avoid the risk of being taken and made king by force.

**Mk 7:37.** *'He has done everything well'*: This declaration of the people was none other than the verdict of Yahweh upon His own Creation in the very beginning (Genesis 1: 31). Jesus, bringing healing to men's bodies and salvation to their souls, had began the work of creation all over again. In the beginning everything had been good and now Jesus was bringing back the beauty of Yahweh to the world.

***Jesus feeds the four thousand*** [Mark 8:1-10 Matthew 15:29-39] See page 418

**(Mt15:29)** *Jesus left there and went along the Sea of Galilee. Then he went up on a mountainside and sat down. (Mt15:30) Great crowds came to him, bringing the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute and many others, and laid them at his feet; and he healed them. (31) The people were amazed when they saw the mute speaking, the crippled made well, the lame walking and the blind seeing. And they praised [Yahweh] the God of Israel. (Mk8:1-3)(Mt15:32) Since they had nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples to him and said, "I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. I do not want to send them away hungry, or they may collapse on the way, because some of them have come a long distance."*

**(Mk8:4)(Mt15:33)** *His disciples answered, "But where could we get enough bread in this remote place to feed such a crowd?"*

**(Mk8:5)(Mt15:34)** *"How many loaves do you have?" Jesus asked.*

*"Seven," they replied, "and a few small fish."*

**(Mk8:6-7)(Mt15:35-36)** *He told the crowd to sit down on the ground. Then, when he had taken the seven loaves and given thanks, he broke them and gave them to his disciples, to set in turn before the people, and they did so. They had a few small fish as well; he gave thanks for them also and told the disciples to distribute them. (Mk8:8)(Mt15:37) All the people ate and were satisfied. Afterward the disciples picked up seven basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. (Mk8:9-10)(Mt15:38-39) The number of those who were present and ate was about four thousand men, besides women and children. And, after Jesus had sent the crowd away, he got into the boat with his disciples and went to the region of Dalmanutha, to the vicinity of Dalmanutha and Magadan.*

**Mt 15:29.** *'Jesus left there and...'*: The last stage of this trip, from the district of the Decapolis, to the east coast of the Lake of Galilee. Even if the Gospels don't give any definite indication of times and dates, surely Jesus' period of retreat with his disciples was much longer than it could appear from a casual reading. When Jesus fed the five thousand, it was near Bethsaida. After the discussion with the scribes and the Pharisees he moved to the districts of Tyre and Sidon. And that in itself was no small journey on foot. Then he left and arrived in the region of the Decapolis. It is clear that this was not a direct trip, but a long journey touching many places and taking few months. So Jesus was able to devote those few months particularly to his disciples' instruction.

**Mt 15:30-31.** *'Great crowds'*: On these occasions there would surely be many Pagans present, perhaps more Pagans than Jews. This is the explanation of the curious phrase, "They praised [Yahweh] the God of Israel." To the Pagans Jesus' healing was a demonstration of the power of the God of Israel. *'He healed them'*: In this passage we see Jesus relieving the human needs by healing every kind of physical disability. Jesus was and is highly concerned with the physical pain of the world, with men's bodies, just as he was and is with their souls.

**Mk8:1-3. Mt15:32.** *'I have compassion...'*: Here, as in so many other occasions, we see Jesus moved with compassion for the problems and the needs of men.

**Mk 8:4. Mt 15:33.** *'Where could we get...'*: When Jesus had pity of the crowd and wished to give them something to eat, the disciples immediately pointed to the practical difficulty that they were in a desert area and that there was no place where to get any food.

**Mk 8:5-7. Mt 15:34-36.** *'How many loaves do you have?'*: Here, again, there is the characteristic challenge of Jesus; to use what is available, when is available, without waiting for more. *'Then... gave them to his disciples'*: After asking them what food they had available, he ordered his disciples to go on with the distribution; to begin by giving to the crowd the few loaves and fishes they had, living the rest to Yahweh's help. What they had was not much, but Jesus took it and worked wonders with it. *'To set before...'*: The story tells that Jesus gave the loaves and fish to his disciples and that the disciples gave them to the crowd. Again, we have to note that, when Jesus wants something done, he gets a man to do it. Jesus always needs people through whom he can act and speak.

**Mk 8:8-10. Mt 15:37-39.** *'All the people ate...'*: And, with the power of Jesus, such small quantity of food did multiply till all people present (four thousand men plus women and children) had had more than enough. *'Picked up... broken pieces... left over'*: The left-over were carefully collected to be eaten later -food is so important that Jesus never allowed to waste it. *'Dalmanutha, Magadan'*: They were two villages located on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee, probably close to each other. Magadan, also called Magdala, was the home of Mary Magdalene.

### **The demand for a sign. Interpreting the times**

*See page 419*

*[Mark 8:11-13 Matthew 16:1-4 Luke 12:54-59]*

**(Mk8:11)(Mt16:1)***The Pharisees and the Sadducees came to Jesus and began to question him. To test him, they asked him to show them a sign from Heaven. (Mk8:12)(Mt-16:2-4a)(Lk12:54-56)*He sighed deeply and said to the crowd, **"When evening comes, you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red,' and in the morning, 'Today it will be stormy, for the sky is red and overcast.' When you see a cloud rising in the west, immediately you say, 'It's going to rain,' and it does. And when the south wind blows, you say, 'It's going to be hot,' and it is. Hypocrites! You know how to interpret the ap-**

*pearance of the sky and the earth. But how is it that you don't know how to interpret the signs of this present time? Why does this wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign? But I tell you the truth, no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah.*

*(Lk12:57)Why don't you judge for yourselves what is right? (58)As you are going with your adversary to the magistrate, try hard to be reconciled to him on the way, or they may drag you off to the judge, and the judge turn you over to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison. (59)I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last lepton."*

*(Mk8:13)(Mt16:4b)Then Jesus left them, got back into the boat, went away and crossed to the other side.*

**Mk 8:11. Mt 16:1.** *'Pharisees and Sadducees'*: The Pharisees lived life according to the minutiae of the oral and the scribal laws. The Sadducees rejected those laws completely and accepted only the written words of the Moses' Books (the Pentateuch). The Sadducees were the small, wealthy aristocracy, the collaborationist party, and were quite prepared to cooperate with the Roman government, in order to retain their wealth and privileges. And these two so different sects came together in their common desire to eliminate Jesus. *'Asked a sign from Heaven'*: The whole tendency of the age in which Jesus lived was to look for Yahweh in the abnormal. It was believed that when the Messiah came the most extraordinary things would happen. And frequently false Messiah did arise, and they lured the people to follow them by promising astonishing signs. It was such a kind of sign that the Pharisees and the Sadducees were demanding. They expected to see something really extraordinary happening in the sky in front of plenty of astonished men. Only this, in the view of the Pharisees and the Sadducees, could authenticate Jesus' position as Messiah.

**Mk 8:12. Mt 16:2-3. Lk 12:54-56.** *'He said'*: Jesus replied that the sign was there, before everybody's eyes. To Jesus their demand was not due to the desire to see the hand of Yahweh in action but, on the contrary, to the fact that they were blind to Yahweh. Yahweh was already there, in the world, for anyone who had eyes to see. The Jews of Palestine, who were so wise when reading in the sky the signs of the different kinds of weather, could not, or would not, read the signs of the new religious times. If they had, they would have seen that the Kingdom of Yahweh was on the way. *'The sign of Jonah'*: Jonah was the prophet who converted the people of Nineveh and turned them towards Yahweh. Now the sign which convinced the people of Nineveh was not the fact that he was swallowed by the great sea monster and that he came out of it alive. They knew nothing of that; and Jonah never used it as a mean of appeal. The sign of Jonah was Jonah himself and his message from Yahweh. It was the arrival of the prophet and the message which he brought that changed the life of the people of Nineveh. So Jesus was saying that Yahweh's sign was he himself and his message.

**Lk 12:57-59.** *'Judge for yourselves'*: The signs of the time called for an immediate decision -before judgment came on the Jewish nation. *'As you are going...'*: The assumption is that the defendant had a bad case which will inevitably go against him. Jesus implied that every man has a bad case in the presence of Yahweh; and if he is wise, he will make his peace with Yahweh while there is still time. *'You will not get out until...'*: This is another confirmation of the expiatory and redemptive function of the punishment of hell, where the souls of the bad dead will suffer, and learn, until they accept Yahweh's salvation through Jesus. At that moment -paid to the last lepton- they will join Jesus in

the Kingdom of Yahweh. '*Lepton*': The smallest copper coin then in circulation in Palestine.

**Mk 8:13. Mt 14:4b.** '*Jesus left them*': As usual, to escape the crowd's pressure, Jesus had to go away sailing by the lake.

**Repent or perish** [Luke 13:1-5]

**(Lk13:1)** Now there were some present at that time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. **(2)** Jesus answered, "**Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way? (3) I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish. (4) Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them -do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem? (5) I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish.**"

**Lk 13:1-5.** '*Told Jesus*': Here we have reference to two incidents about which we have no definite information. '*The Galileans whose blood...*': The Galileans were easily involved in political trouble because they were a highly inflammable people. Probably here Jesus makes reference to what happened when Pilate decided that Jerusalem needed a new, improved water supply. He proposed to build it and to finance it with part of the Temple money. It was a proper proposal and a more than justifiable expenditure. But at the very idea of spending Temple money, the Jews went up in arm. When the mob gathered, the Roman soldiers attacked the mob and violently dispersed it, and a considerable number of people lost their lives. '*Those eighteen... the tower in Siloam*': It was a tower built inside the south-east section of Jerusalem's wall. Perhaps those eighteen on whom the tower of Siloam fell were people who actually worked on Pilate's hated aqueducts. If so they were considered sinners because the money they were earning belonged to the Temple, to Yahweh. '*Do you think... worse sinners...*': The Jews rigidly connected sin and suffering. They assumed that a calamity would fall on those who were extremely sinful. '*I tell you, no!*': And Jesus absolutely denied it. Furthermore, as we know very well, it is often the greatest saints who have to suffer most, to carry the heavier cross. '*Unless you repent, you too will all perish*': Jesus pointed out that all men are sinners and that all men must repent or face a fearful end. He knew well that if the Jews went on with their intrigues, their rebellions and their plottings, they were simply going to commit political suicide. He knew that in the end the Romans would step in and obliterate the nation; that is, precisely what happened with the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

**The yeast of the Pharisees, Sadducees and Herod**

See page 419

[Mark 8:14-21 Matthew 16:5-12]

**(Mk8:14)(Mt16:5)** When they went across the lake, the disciples forgot to take bread, except for one loaf they had with them in the boat. **(Mk8:15)(Mt16:6)** "**Be careful,**" Jesus warned them. "**Watch out for and be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees and that of Herod.**"

**(Mk8:16)(Mt16:7)** They discussed this among themselves and said, "It is because we didn't bring any bread."

**(Mk8:17-19)(Mt16:8-9)** Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked them: "**You of little faith, why are you talking among yourselves about having no bread? Do you still not**



*see or understand? Are your hearts hardened? Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears and fail to hear? And don't you remember? When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?"*

*"Twelve," they replied.*

*(Mk8:20)(Mt16:10)"And when I broke the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?"*

*They answered, "Seven."*

*(Mk8:21)He said to them, "Do you still not understand? (Mt16:11)How is it you don't understand that I was not talking to you about bread? But be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees."*

*(12)Then they understood that he was not telling them to guard against the yeast used in bread, but against the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.*

**Mk 8:14. Mt 16:5.** *'The disciples forgot...':* The problem was that by that side of the Sea of Galilee it was not possible to buy any food.

**Mk 8:15. Mt 16:6.** *'Watch out for the yeast...':* To the Jews yeast -a piece of dough kept over from a previous baking and fermented- was a symbol of corruption, of evil, as they identified fermentation with putrefaction. Sometimes they used the word yeast to identify the evil side of the human nature, which kept man from doing the will of Yahweh. So Jesus was actually saying, "Be on your guard against the evil influence of the Pharisees and the Sadducees and of Herod. Don't follow the same way that they have already gone." Now, which was the connection between the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and Herod? The Pharisees had just asked for a sign and, in 'The demand for a sign' (Mk 8:11-13; Mt 16:1-4; Lk 12:54-59), we can see what Jesus was thinking of such a demand. The Sadducees and Herod were looking for satisfaction and happiness through the gaining of earthly power, wealth and prestige. And Jesus was telling his disciples not to think of the Messiah in those terms of earthly power and glory as the Pharisees, the Sadducees and Herod.

**Mk 8:16. Mt 16:7.** *'They discussed...':* This passage sheds a vivid light on the minds of the disciples. They could think of nothing but the fact they had forgotten to bring bread and that, as a result, they would go hungry.

**Mk 8:17-20. Mt 16:8-10.** *'Aware of this discussion...':* Jesus saw their preoccupation, and he reminded them that twice, exactly when they had only a minimum quantity of food available, he had abundantly satisfied the hunger of huge crowds.

**Mk 8:21. Mt 16:11.** *'He said to them...':* And he reminded them that in his presence all these problems had been already solved and could be solved again. They had to stop worrying about material things and to start trusting him in everything.

**Mt 6:12.** *'Then they understood':* And, finally, the disciples understood what was in Jesus' mind when he warned them to watch against the yeast, the bad influence, of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The Pharisees saw religion in terms of laws and rules. On the contrary, Jesus was actually telling his disciples to be careful not to transform their religion in a series of outward actions and of "you don't have to" rules. The Sadducees were wealthy, aristocratic and deeply involved in politics (this was even more valid for Herod). And so Jesus was telling his disciples to be careful of not identifying the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth -the future Church- with terrestrial goods and with political influence.

**The healing of a blind man at Bethsaida** [Mark 8:22-26]

**(Mk8:22)** *They came to Bethsaida, and some people brought a blind man and begged Jesus to touch him. (23)He took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village. When he had spit on the man's eyes and put his hands on him, Jesus asked, "Do you see anything?"*

**(24)** *He looked up and said, "I see people; they look like trees walking around."*

**(25)** *Once more Jesus put his hands on the man's eyes. Then his eyes were opened, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. (26)Jesus sent him home, saying, "Don't go and tell anyone in the village."*

**Mk 8:22.** '*Bethsaida*': It was a town located on the northeast shore of the Sea of Galilee. Philip the Tetrarch rebuilt it and named it Julias, after the daughter of Caesar Augustus. '*A blind man*': Blindness was one of the great curses of the East.

**Mk 8:23.** '*He took...*': The way in which Jesus performed this miracle is quite similar to what he did to heal a deaf and mute man (The healing of a deaf and mute man. Mk 7: 31-37). First, Jesus took the man out of the village, far from the crowd. Then he began by spitting on the man's eyes, and he got only a partial result. (In those days people believed in the healing power of spittle. The belief is not so strange when we remember that it is a first instinct to put a cut or burned finger into our mouth to ease the pain). This act was to show that the putting of spittle, or whatever other physical action, was at the best preparatory to the real healing power, which comes only from Yahweh.

**Mk 8:24.** '*Like trees walking around*': The man had no doubt bumped, during his life, into trees in his blindness; now he was dimly seeing something like tree trunks moving around.

**Mk 8:25.** '*Once more Jesus put his hands...*': This second laying of hands is unique in Jesus' healing ministry, and this is the only miracle which can be said to have happened gradually, as the blind man's sight came back in stages. Usually Jesus' miracles happened suddenly and completely. '*He saw everything clearly*': Giving sight to the blind was another indication that Jesus was doing what Yahweh had promised to do by sending the Messiah (Isaiah 61:1-2).

**Mk 8:26.** '*Don't go and tell anyone*': The usual request not to spread the news of what Jesus had done, trying to avoid the risk to precipitate a crisis before Jesus had completed his ministry.

**The healing at the pool** [John 5:1-15]

**(Jn5:1)** *Some time later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for a feast of the Jews. (2)Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades. (3)Here a great number of disabled people used to lie -the blind, the lame, the paralyzed- and they waited for the moving of the waters. (4)From time to time an angel of Yahweh would come down and stir up the waters. The first one into the pool after each such disturbance would be cured of whatever disease he had. (5)One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. (6)When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, "Do you want to get well?"*

**(7)** *"Sir," the invalid replied, "I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me."*

**(8)** *Then Jesus said to him, "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk." (9)At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked.*

*The day on which this took place was a Sabbath, (10) and so the Jews said to the man who had been healed, "It is the Sabbath; the law forbids you to carry your mat."*

*(11) But he replied, "The man who made me well said to me, 'Pick up your mat and walk.'"*

*(12) So they asked him, "Who is the fellow who told you to pick it up and walk?"*

*(13) The man who was healed had no idea who it was, for Jesus had slipped away into the crowd that was there.*

*(14) Later Jesus found him at the Temple and said to him, "See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you." (15) The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well.*

**Jn 5:1.** *'Jesus went... for a feast':* John always shows that Jesus was attending the great feasts and that he did not disregard the obligations of Jewish worship. When Jesus arrived in Jerusalem he was apparently alone, as there is no mention of his disciples following him.

**Jn 5:2-4.** *'A pool':* This of Bethesda (which means "house of mercy") was a famous pool, deep enough to swim in. Beneath the pool there was a subterranean stream which now and then bubbled up and disturbed the waters. The belief was that the disturbance was caused by an angel, and that the first person to get into the pool after the troubling of the water would be surely healed. To us this is mere superstition. But it was the kind of belief which was spread all over the world in ancient days -and which still exists in many places.

**Jn 5:5-6.** *'An invalid':* It may be that as Jesus walked around, the man of this story was pointed out to him as a most pitiable case, because his disability made it impossible for him to be the first to get into the pool after it had been troubled. He had no one to help him, and Jesus was always the friend of the friendless and the helper of the helpless. He did not trouble to lecture the man on the useless superstition of waiting for the water to be moved. His only desire was to help and so he decided to heal the man who had waited so long. *'Do you want to get well?':* In this story we see very clearly the conditions under which the power of Jesus operated. He gave his orders to men and, in proportion as they tried to obey, his power came to them. Jesus began by asking the man if he wanted to be cured. The question was important, and it was not so foolish as it may sound. The man had not asked Jesus for help, and a beggar of those days could lose a profitable and easy income if he were cured; and he would have to shoulder all the burden of making a living. Furthermore, the man had waited for thirty-eight years and it might well have been that hope had died in him and left behind only a passive and dull despair.

**Jn 5:7.** *'I have no one...':* The man did not see Jesus as a potential healer, and his mind was set only on the supposed curative powers of the water. *'While I am trying...':* Anyway, the man's response was immediate. He wanted to be healed, though he did not see how he ever could be since he had no one to help him. So, he had the first essential characteristic for receiving the power of Jesus, which is to have an intense desire for it.

**Jn 5:8-9.** *'Jesus said...':* Jesus went on and told the man to get up. In effect, here Jesus was commanding the man to attempt the humanly impossible. And, instead of telling Jesus that this did not make any sense, the man tried -and was healed. To note that, usually, Jesus healed in response to faith, but that man did not even know who he was speaking to. Anyway, it is clear that Jesus' action was not limited by a person's lack of faith. In this case the decision to heal was totally Jesus', who was moved by the pitiful condition of this man.

**Jn 5:10.** *'It is the Sabbath'*: A man had been healed from a disease which, humanly speaking, was incurable. And, instead to consider it an occasion for rejoicing and thanksgiving, some people found it to be an occasion of accusation and complaint. As the man who had been healed was walking through the streets carrying his bed, the orthodox Jews stopped him and reminded him that he was breaking the law -the scribal law- by carrying a heavy load on the Sabbath day. The Law of Yahweh, which was a series of great principles which men were left to apply and carry out, simply said that the Sabbath day must be different from the other days and that on it neither a man nor his servants nor his animals must work. But through the years the Jews had transformed it into thousands of little rules and they considered that, among all the other cases, to carry something on the Sabbath was a work.

**Jn 5:11-13.** *'The man... said to me...'*: The defense of the healed man was that he was doing it because he could not fail to obey to the man who healed him. *'Jesus had slipped away'*: Here Jesus was showing how to act when helping a fellow-man; to give help and disappear, without even waiting to be thanked.

**Jn 5:14.** *'Stop sinning'*: Later, when Jesus met him in the Temple, he told the man to follow, as much as possible, the Jewish scribal laws, so to have the possibility to spend the rest of his life without getting too much in trouble with the orthodox Jews.

**Jn 5:15.** *'The man told the Jews'*: After knowing the identity of his healer, the man hurried to tell the authorities that Jesus was the one in question. It is clear that, with this, he was not seeking to get Jesus into trouble, as he was simply trying to explain that it could not be his fault if he had broken the scribal law to obey a so well known and exceptional man as Jesus.

### ***Life through the Son*** [John 5:16-30]

**(Jn5:16)**So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jews persecuted him. **(17)**Jesus said to them, **"My Father is always at His work to this very day, and I, too, am working."** **(18)**For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling Yahweh his own Father, making himself equal with Yahweh.

**(19)**Jesus gave them this answer: **"I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. (20)For the Father loves the Son and shows him all He does. Yes, to your amazement He will show him even greater things than these. (21)For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it. (22)Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, (23)that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him.**

**(24)**I tell you the truth, whoever hears my Word and believes Him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life. **(25)**I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of Yahweh and those who hear will live. **(26)**For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in himself. **(27)**And He has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man.

**(28)**Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice **(29)**and come out -those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned. **(30)**By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but Him who has sent me."

**Jn 5:16-30.** When we read passages like this one we must always remember that John was not trying to give the actual words that Jesus spoke but what Jesus meant. John wrote his Gospel around AD 100. For seventy years he had thought about Jesus and the wonderful things he had done and said. Many of these things he did not fully understand at the time he had seen and heard them. But finally, after thinking for so many years about them, he tried to write down the inner meaning of Jesus' words and actions. Here, Jesus claims to be the promised Messiah. Even if we do not understand this immediately, it was crystal clear to the Jews in all the thoughts and expressions of this passage. The clearest of Jesus' claims was of being the Son of Man. This strange title came from Daniel 7:13-14, where the prophet states that all the powers and dominions of the Babylonian, of the Median, of the Persian, and of the Macedonian Empires will be given to one "like a son of man." And that this one will be the Chosen One of Yahweh, the expected Messiah. So when Jesus was calling himself the Son of Man, he was doing nothing less than calling himself the Messiah. Furthermore, Jesus was claiming that he would raise the dead and would be their judge when they would be raised. In the Old Testament Yahweh alone can raise the dead and He alone has the right to judge. In later thoughts this function of resurrecting the dead and then acting as judge became part of the duty of Yahweh's Chosen One when he brought in the new age. And Jesus said that, thanks to him, those who have done good would be resurrected to life -going straight to Heaven, to the Kingdom of Yahweh- and those who have done evil would be resurrected to death -going to hell, to the place where Yahweh is totally absent, for the necessary period of formative and redemptive punishment. Claims like these would sound the worst blasphemy to the orthodox Jews. The men who were listening to these words had only two alternatives, either to accept Jesus as the Son of Yahweh or hate him as a blasphemer.

**Jn 5:16-18.** *'The Jews persecuted him':* The authorities considered Jesus a blasphemer they had to eliminate. *'My Father is always at work':* For the Jewish authorities, Jesus' defense for healing on the Sabbath day was really very upsetting. Jesus said that Yahweh did not really stop working on the Sabbath day because, according to the creation story, it is true that Yahweh rested on the seventh day, that He rested from creating something new, but in the meantime His creation's life and development was going on even on that day. Any Jew would grasp the full force of Jesus' assertion. *'And I, too, am working':* It was this last passage which really upset the Jews, for it meant nothing less than that the work of Jesus and the work of Yahweh were the same. *'Calling Yahweh his own Father':* Jesus was putting himself on an equality with Yahweh, and that was something the Jews could not accept from any man.

**Jn 5:19-20.** *'The Son can do nothing...':* Jesus' "equality" was based not on identity but on complete obedience. Jesus never did what he wanted to do but always only what Yahweh wanted him to do. It is because his will was completely submitted to Yahweh's will that we can see Yahweh in him and understand how Yahweh feels to men, how He reacts to sin, how He regards the human situation. *'The Father loves... and shows him...':* The Father revealed to the Son his plans and purposes, and the Son obediently carried them out. Jesus' obedience was based not on submission but on love. The unity, the spiritual communion between Jesus and Yahweh is a unity of love. There is such a complete identity of mind and will that Father and Son are "one."

**Jn 5:21-23.** *'As the Father raises... so the Son':* This is one of the three great functions (bringer of life, bringer of judgment, receiver of honors and worship) which belong to Jesus Christ as the Son of Yahweh. He is the bringer of eternal life: After this life is en-

ded, for the man who has accepted Jesus Christ there opens a life still more full and wonderful; while for the man who has refused Jesus Christ there comes that death which is separation from Yahweh. But Jesus, the bringer of spiritual life, brings life both in this world and in the world to come; so the separation from Yahweh will last only till that man accepts the saving action of Jesus. *'The Father has entrusted all judgment to the Son'*: The Jews believed that the Father is the judge of the world, so this teaching seemed heretical to them. Jesus is the bringer of judgment: A man's judgment depends on his reaction to Jesus. If he finds in Jesus a friend to follow, he is on the way to life. If he sees in Jesus an enemy, he has condemned himself. *'All may honor the Son just as... the Father'*: In the Old Testament, only Yahweh receives honors and worship. Jesus is the receiver of honors and worship: Jesus, whom Yahweh appointed Master and Savior of the human race, is the receiver of all the honors which are traditionally given to Yahweh. The Christians have to worship Jesus Christ as they worship Yahweh the Father.

**Jn 5:24.** *'I tell you...'*: Jesus said quite simply that to accept him brings spiritual life; and to reject him brings spiritual death. *'Whoever hears... and believes...'*: To believe that Yahweh is as Jesus said He is; that Yahweh is high benevolence. To accept the way of life that Jesus offered -however difficult it may be and whatever sacrifices it may involve- is to take the way to peace and happiness, and to refuse it is to take the way to judgment and unhappiness.

**Jn 5:25.** *'I tell you...'*: Here the Messianic claims of Jesus stand out most clearly. He is the Son of Yahweh, he is the life-bringer; he will raise the dead to life and, when they are raised, he will be their judge. In this passage John used the word "dead" both for the spiritually dead and for the physically dead. To be spiritually dead means to have stopped trying to live in a Christian way; stopped repenting of whatever bad action or thought. Here Jesus taught that the resurrection will come for all and that what happens to a man in the next life is strictly connected to what he has done in this life. *'The dead will hear the voice of the Son of Yahweh and...'*: This was a forecast, an anticipation, of what Jesus would do immediately after his crucifixion and death, before his resurrection. After Jesus' death his body lay in the tomb waiting for Resurrection, while his Spirit -his Soul- went to the "Land of the Dead" to preach to their souls. In the Old Testament, the "Land of the Dead," in Greek "Hades," in Hebrew "Sheol," did not represent hell, but the place where men's souls were going after their physical death. And Jesus' spirit went there, to preach to the souls of the dead (all the dead), announcing the Good News and declaring the remission of sins. All who believed in him were immediately admitted to the Kingdom of Yahweh. From that moment on, it is always true that either in this life or in the life beyond physical death each man -good or bad, Christian or not- will be offered Yahweh's grace by Jesus Christ and that, when he accepts it, he will be converted to Christianity. This conversion can take any "time," from a very short to an immensely long one, and involves the sufferings of hell as a necessary expiatory and corrective tool. After a man's repentance and conversion, his period in hell ends and he goes, passing through personal judgment, to the Kingdom of Yahweh. The same situation is repeated again and again; Jesus keeps going to preach to the souls of the dead. He who repents, follows him in Yahweh's Reign; he who does not want to repent -to repent or not is a decision left to the individual freedom- is left there for another period of punishment and instruction. Anyway, at a certain point, all people will have repented and gained admittance to Yahweh's Kingdom; at that point, after the demonstration that all men have accepted to live with and not against Yahweh, even Satan, Lucifer, will

repent and will rejoin for ever -accompanied by all his angels- Yahweh in His Kingdom. This because the hypothesis of a final situation, after the end of time, with the creation split in two -the good ones with Yahweh and the bad ones with Satan- is really absurd and unacceptable. A situation of eternal separation would not only leave Yahweh totally unsatisfied and full of sorrow but, furthermore, would leave the final victory to Satan, not to Yahweh. The high benevolence of Yahweh, with its unlimited tolerance and patience, gives all the freedom to behave badly -tolerance- and in the meantime tries, without ever giving up -patience- to convince the bad of becoming good.

**Jn 5:26.** *'Has life in Himself'*: This phrase must be understood against the background of the Old Testament, where life is considered as belonging to Yahweh and as being His gift. The Son has been given by the Father the same kind of life that He possesses, so he can give eternal life to all men who believe in him.

**Jn 5:27.** *'He is the Son of Man'*: Jesus confirms that he is the Holy One of Yahweh, the awaited Messiah, and that he has the proper authority for judging all men.

**Jn 5:28-29.** *'All who are in the graves will hear his voice and...'*: Practically, these verses are a repetition, with different words, of verse Jn 5:25.

**Jn 5:30.** *'By myself I can do nothing'*: Jesus stressed his dependence on the Father. He judges only as he is instructed by the Father, and this makes his judgment perfectly fair. Jesus' judgment is true and final because he has no desire to do anything other than the will of Yahweh, so his judgment is actually the judgment of Yahweh. It is very difficult, actually impossible, for any man to judge another man fairly as there are plenty of reasons which would affect the judging person -prejudices, jealousy, intolerance, envy, ignorance, self-righteousness. On the other hand there is the judgment of Yahweh, which is perfect. Yahweh alone knows the standards by which each man must be judged. Yahweh alone has the full knowledge, and judgment can be perfect only when it takes into account all the circumstances. Jesus, who judges following his Father's instructions, does not judge with the inevitable mixture of human motives; he judges with the perfect knowledge, the perfect holiness and the perfect sympathy of Yahweh.

**Testimonies about Jesus** [John 5:31-47;7:15-24]

*(Jn5:31)"If I testify about myself, my testimony is not valid. (32)There is another who testifies in my favor, and I know that his testimony about me is valid.*

*(33)You have sent to John and he has testified to the truth. (34)Not that I accept human testimony; but I mention it that you may be saved. (35)John was a lamp that burned and gave light, and you chose for a time to enjoy his light.*

*(36)I have testimony weightier than that of John. For the very work that the Father has given me to finish, and which I am doing, testifies that the Father has sent me.*

*(37)And the Father who sent me has Himself testified concerning me. You have never heard His voice nor seen His form, (38)nor does His Word dwell in you, for you do not believe the one He sent. (39)You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, (40)yet you refuse to come to me to have life.*

*(41)I do not accept praise from men, (42)but I know you. I know that you do not have the benevolence of Yahweh in your hearts. (43)I have come in my Father's Name, and you do not accept me; but if someone else comes in his own name, you will accept him. (44)How can you believe if you accept praise from one another, yet make no effort to obtain the praise that comes from [Yahweh] the Only One God?*

**(45)But do not think I will accuse you before the Father. Your accuser is Moses, on whom your hopes are set. (46)If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. (47)But since you do not believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say?"**

**(7:15)The Jews were amazed and asked, "How did this man get such learning without having studied?"**

**(16)Jesus answered, "My teaching is not my own. It comes from Him who sent me. (17)If anyone chooses to do Yahweh's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from Yahweh or whether I speak on my own. (18)He who speaks on his own does so to gain honor for himself, but he who works for the honor of the One who sent him is a man of truth; there is nothing false about him. (19)Has not Moses given you the Law? Yet not one of you keeps the Law. Why are you trying to kill me?"**

**(20)"You are demon-possessed," the crowd answered. "Who is trying to kill you?"**

**(21)Jesus said to them, "I did one miracle, and you are all astonished. (22)Yet, because Moses gave you circumcision (though actually it did not come from Moses, but from the patriarchs), you circumcise a child on the Sabbath. (23)Now if a child can be circumcised on the Sabbath so that the Law of Moses may not be broken, why are you angry with me for healing the whole man on the Sabbath? (24)Stop judging by mere appearances, and make a right judgment."**

**Jn 5:31-32.** *'If my testimony is not valid...'*: This section stresses the testimonies about Jesus' Messiahship of John the Baptist, of the works of Jesus himself, of Yahweh the Father, of the Scriptures, and of Moses. Once again Jesus was answering the charges of his opponents. They were asking what evidence he could adduce to demonstrate that his claims were true. Jesus argued in a way that all the Rabbis would understand for he used their own methods. He began by fully admitting the normal Jewish law of evidence, the universal principle that the unsupported evidence of one person cannot be taken as proof, that there must be at least two witnesses. Jesus did agree that his own unsupported testimony to himself could not be accepted. But there were other witnesses to him: John the Baptist, Jesus Christ's own works, Yahweh the Father, and the Scriptures. And those had to be accepted. *'Another who testifies...'*: John the Baptist was his witness.

**Jn 5:33-35.** *'You have sent to John'*: A reference to the delegation from the Jewish leaders to John the Baptist (John the Baptist prepares the way. Mk 1:2-8; Mt 3:1-12; Lk 3:1-20; Jn 1:6-9,15,19-28). And John, officially recognized as a prophet of Yahweh, had repeatedly testified. *'Not that I accept...'*: The testimony of John was important, though not, of course, equal to the testimony of the Father. *'I mention it...'*: If the Jews had believed John, they would have believed Jesus and would have been saved. *'John was a lamp'*: Then Jesus paid a tribute to John, comparing him to the light of a lamp. The function of a lamp is to give light along the way, and John had pointed and guided the Jews on the way to repentance and to Yahweh. But the Jews, who "for a while" did actually follow John, had listened to him only as long as he said the things they liked, and had abandoned him as soon as he became inconvenient to them.

**Jn 5:36.** *'Testimony weightier than...'*: That of John could have been considered the human evidence of a fallible man. *'The very work... testifies'*: The miracles of Jesus testified who he was and which his divine mission was. Jesus cited his works, not to point to himself but to the power of Yahweh working in him and through him. In essence, his supreme witness was Yahweh.



**Jn 5:37-38.** *'The Father... has Himself testified... His voice'*: Yahweh had given His testimony at Jesus' baptism, but the Jews now accusing Jesus were not there at the time. *'Nor seen His form'*: Used to strengthen, to say that the Jews were very far from Yahweh. Clearly only Jesus, the Son of Yahweh, had seen His aspect. *'You do not believe'*: The Jews did not recognize what Yahweh was saying, as their failure to believe Jesus showed. *'Nor does His Word dwell...'*: Yahweh's testimony about Jesus could be found in the Scriptures but, even though the Jews did study them, they failed to recognize the Messiah when he came; even worse, they rejected him. It is clear that they read the Scripture in the wrong way, not so much to search for Yahweh but to find arguments to support their own positions. They did not humbly learn from Scripture; on the contrary, they used Scripture to defend a theology which they themselves had produced.

**Jn 5:39-40.** *'You diligently study'*: The Jews studied the Scriptures in minute detail, but they were not able to recognize the One to whom the Scriptures bear testimony. They made a still bigger mistake; they regarded Yahweh as having given men a written revelation. But the true revelation of Yahweh is a revelation in history; not of Yahweh speaking, but of Yahweh acting. The Bible itself is not His revelation; it is the record of His revelation. *'You think... you possess...'*: They worshipped the Bible's words. This is the reason why when the Messiah came the Jews did not recognize him.

**Jn 5:41.** *'I do not accept...'*: Jesus did not accept human praise any more than human testimony. That is to say, "I am not arguing like this because I want to win an argument. I am not talking like this because I want to win the applause of men. It is because I am fond of you and I want to save you."

**Jn 5:42.** *'You don't have the benevolence of Yahweh'*: Their hearts were shut to the possibility of understanding and receiving the benevolence of Yahweh.

**Jn 5:43.** *'I have come... but if someone else comes...'*: There had been plenty of impostors claiming to be the Messiah, and every one of them had plenty of followers, because the claims of those impostors corresponded to the desires of the Jews. They came promising empires and victories and material prosperity; Jesus came offering a Cross. The characteristic of the impostors was the offer of the easy way; on the contrary, Jesus offered men the hard way of Yahweh.

**Jn 5:44.** *'Praise from one another'*: The Jews had their attention so firmly focused on themselves and on human praise that they could not accept the one who came from Yahweh. The scribes and the Pharisees desired the praise of men. They dressed and prayed in such a way that everyone would recognize them. They liked the front seats in the synagogues, the deferential greetings of men on the streets. And just because of that they could not hear the voice of Yahweh.

**Jn 5:45-46.** *'Your accuser is Moses'*: The Jews were very proud of Moses, their great lawgiver. So it was totally unexpected to hear Jesus say that Moses himself would accuse them before Yahweh. They wrongly believed that, because Moses was their mediator, they were safe; on the contrary, Moses is the one who would condemn them because they did not believe to his words, which were speaking of Jesus. *'He wrote about me'*: All the New Testament stresses and assumes that the Old Testament, rightly read, points to Jesus Christ. But knowledge had been given to the Jews, and they had failed to use it, and this had become their condemnation.

**Jn 5:47.** *'Since you do not believe'*: The Jews did not believe to what, in the Old Testament Books traditionally written by Moses, pointed to Jesus and to his saving mission. There was only one logical conclusion; as they did not believe to the Scriptures so, much less, they would believe to Jesus himself.

**Jn 7:15.** *'How did this man get...'*: Polemically, the Jewish leaders did argument about Jesus' lack of religious education. In their opinion he was quite uneducated, as he never went to a rabbinic school. Furthermore, the Rabbis never made any statement on their own authority. They always began: "There is a teaching that..." and then went to cite quotations and authorities for every statement they made. And here now there was this Galilean carpenter, a man with no religious training at all, daring to quote and to explain Moses to them.

**Jn 7:16.** *'My teaching is not my own...'*: Jesus claimed to be Yahweh-taught. It was in fact a claim he made again and again during his ministry.

**Jn 7:17.** *'If anyone chooses...'*: Jesus went on to proclaim a fundamental truth. Only the man who does Yahweh's will can truly understand his teaching. In effect this is not only a theological but a universal truth. In religious matters, as in any other human field, if we wait until we have understood everything, until we have known everything, we will never start at all. But if we begin by doing Yahweh's will as we know it at that moment, Yahweh's truth will become clearer and clearer.

**Jn 7:18.** *'He who speaks...'*: Jesus was speaking in the name of Yahweh, totally following His will. So, he couldn't be accused to be false.

**Jn 7:19-23.** *'Has not Moses given you the Law?'*: We must picture this scene as a debate between Jesus and the leaders of the Jews, with the crowd standing all around, listening as the debate went on. Jesus was justifying his action of healing the paralytic on the Sabbath day, breaking the Law. He began by saying that Moses gave them the Sabbath Law, and yet none of them kept it completely. If they then accused him of breaking the Law to heal a man, why did they break the Law seeking to kill him? At this point from the crowd came the exclamation: "You are mad!" and the question: "Who is trying to kill you?" The crowd had not yet realized that their leaders had decided to eliminate Jesus. They thought that this was because of Jesus' imagination; and they thought in this way because they did not know the facts. Jesus did not answer the question of the crowd which was not really a question so much as a kind of interjection; but went on with his argument. Moses' Law said that a child should be circumcised on the eighth day after his birth (Leviticus 12:3). Obviously that day would often fall on a Sabbath; and the rabbi's law was quite clear that "everything necessary for circumcision may be done on the Sabbath day." So Jesus' argument went like that: "You have said that you fully observe the Law of Moses which says that there must be no work done on the Sabbath day; and under "work" you have included every kind of medical attention which is not absolutely necessary to save a life. And yet you have allowed circumcision to be carried out on the Sabbath day. Furthermore, circumcision is both medical attention to one part of the body, and a kind of mutilation as it is actually taking something from the body. How can you blame me for making a man's body whole on the Sabbath day when you allow yourselves to mutilate it on the same day?"

**Jn 7:24.** *'Stop judging by...'*: Jesus finished by telling them to try to look below the surface of things and to judge fairly. If they did, they would not be able any longer to accuse him of breaking the real Law.

### **Peter's confession of Christ**

*See page 420*

*[Mark 8:27-30 Matthew 16:13-20 Luke 9:18-21]*

**(Mk8:27)(Mt16:13)(Lk9:18)** *When Jesus and his disciples came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, they went on to the villages around. Once, on the way, when Jesus was praying in private and his disciples were with him, he asked them, "Who do people of the crowds say I, the Son of Man, am?"*

**(Mk8:28)(Mt16:14)(Lk9:19)** *They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or that one of the prophets of long ago has come back to life."*

**(Mk8:29)(Mt16:15-16)(Lk9:20)** *"But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"*

*Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of [Yahweh] the living God."*

**(Mt16:17)** *Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in Heaven. (18) And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. (19) I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven; whatever you bind on Earth will be bound in Heaven, and whatever you loose on Earth will be loosed in Heaven." (Mk8:30)(Mt16:20)(Lk9:21)* Then Jesus strictly warned his disciples not to tell anyone about him, that he was the Christ.

**Mk 8:27. Mt 16:13. Lk 9:18.** *'Caesarea Philippi'*: This town was outside Galilee, about twenty-five miles (40 km) north-east of the Sea of Galilee, in the territory of Herod Philip. The end was coming near and Jesus needed some time alone with his disciples to instruct and prepare them properly. In this area the population was mainly non-Jewish, and there Jesus would have time and peace to teach the Twelve. *'Who do people of the crowds say I...'*: Jesus well knew what awaited him in Jerusalem, he knew that he was going to die on a cross; and, before he went, he had to be sure that his disciples had understood and had recognized him for what he really was. This was a crucial problem, for it involved the very survival of the Christian faith.

**Mk 8:28. Mt 16:14. Lk 9:19.** *'They replied'*: The disciples reported the popular rumors and reports. To note that, when the people identified Jesus with Elijah and with Jeremiah, they were paying him a great compliment, for Elijah and Jeremiah, according to their traditions, were none other than the expected forerunners of the Messiah.

**Mk 8:29. Mt 16:15-16. Lk 9:20.** *'But who do you say I am?'*: Jesus was determined to know the personal opinion of his followers. And suddenly Peter realized for sure that Jesus was the Messiah, the Christ, the Anointed One, the Son of Yahweh. And from Peter's answer Jesus had the assurance that his message would survive his imminent death on the cross and would be spread by those people all around the world.

**Mt 16:17-19.** *'Jesus replied'*: This passage is a crucial point, a source of great discord, of the New Testament interpretation. And it is difficult to approach it without prejudice, because to the Roman Catholic Church it represents the justification for the position of the Pope and of the Church itself. It is taken by the Catholic Church to mean that Peter was given the power to admit or exclude men from Heaven, absolving them or not from their sins. It is further argued that, after Peter became the bishop of Rome, this power descended to all the bishops of Rome; that is, given to the Pope, who is the head of the Catholic Church and the bishop of Rome. As this "supremacy" of the Pope is not shared by any other Christian Church, it is appropriate and necessary to try and understand the true meaning of Jesus' words. *'Blessed... revealed... by my Father...'*: When Peter realized who Jesus actually was, this happened because of the intervention of Yahweh, who put this information, this certainty, in Peter's mind and heart. *'You are Peter...'*: Immediately after Peter had understood and recognized the Christ in Jesus, Jesus called him the foundation "rock" of his Church. The same word was applied by the Rabbis to Abraham, who was the "rock" on which the Jewish people and nation were founded. It is then clear that to call a person "rock" was a really great compliment. The explanation of

this phrase is that Peter, who had been the first man to discover who Jesus really was, to see that he was the Son of Yahweh, was the first stone, the first brick, of the whole Church. In other terms, Peter was the first member of the Christian Church and, in that sense, the whole Church is built on him. And everyone who makes the same discovery as Peter, in any place and in any time, is another stone, another brick, added to the Church of Christ. The Church which began with Peter was and is THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST, not a sectarian Church limited by an ecclesiastical denomination; it is the fellowship of ALL believers in Jesus Christ. And this CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST is nothing else but THE KINGDOM OF YAHWEH, embracing both Heaven and Earth. *'The Gates of Hades will not overcome it'*: For the Jews, Hades was the place, not of punishment, where the souls of all the dead went. The function of its gates was to keep the souls in, waiting for the opening of the Kingdom of Yahweh to all "good" men, event that happened only after Jesus' death, when his soul descended to Hades and preached there. And at this point all the souls of the dead who believed in him followed him out of Hades into the Kingdom of Yahweh (The gates of Hades could not keep in Jesus and those who were following him). *'I will give you the keys of the Kingdom'*: "To give the keys" is a phrase which always means the giving of some kind of very special power, as in the case of Eliakim (Isaiah 22:22), who was given the keys of the house of David, and who alone could open and shut its doors. Now the duty of Eliakim was to be the faithful steward of the house. It was the steward who carried the keys of the house, who in the morning opened the doors, and through whom the visitors gained access to the royal presence. So Jesus was telling Peter that in the days to come he will be the first steward of the Church, through whom the doors of the Kingdom of Yahweh would be opened to all people. So, it is not only Peter who has the keys of the Kingdom; every Christian who opens the doors of the Kingdom to some other person has them as well. *'Whatever you bind...'*: "To bind" and "To loose" were very common phrases, used especially for taking decisions in regards to the law by the great teachers and the great Rabbis. Their regular sense, which any Jew would immediately recognize, was "to forbid" and "to allow." To bind something was to declare it forbidden; to loose something was to declare it allowed. That is in fact the only meaning of these phrases in this context. Jesus was actually saying to Peter: "Peter, you are going to have heavy responsibilities laid upon you. You are going to have to take decisions which will affect the welfare of the whole Church. You will have to be the guide and the support of the infant Church." The power or, better, the duty of binding and loosing meant that Peter would have to take decisions about the life and the practical management of the Church which would have far-reaching consequences on its development. And, as it results from the first chapters of Acts, this is exactly what Peter did in Jerusalem. Peter had made a great discovery; and Peter was given a great privilege and a great responsibility. It is evident that, as Peter's discovery had been his own, as well the great privilege and the great responsibility had been given to him only; surely nothing he could hand down to other people.

**Mk 8:30. Mt 16:20. Lk 9:21.** *'Not to tell anyone'*: Even if the disciples had grasped the fact that Jesus was Yahweh's Messiah, they still had not understood what that meant; they were still convinced that Jesus was the kind of Messiah, king and conqueror, that the Jews were wrongly waiting for. This kind of Messiah would be violent, nationalistic, destructive, and vengeful. No wonder Jesus had to re-educate his disciples in the meaning of Messiahship; and no wonder the Jews crucified him in the end as an heretic.

***Jesus predicts his death***

See page 421

*[Mark 8:31-38;9:1 Matthew 16:21-28 Luke 9:22-27]*

***(Mk8:31)(Mt16:21)(Lk9:22)*** Then from that time on Jesus began to teach to his disciples and to explain them that he, the Son of Man, must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of, and be rejected by, the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised again to life. ***(Mk8:32)(Mt16:22)*** He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "Never, Lord!" He said. "This shall never happen to you!"

***(Mk8:33)(Mt16:23)*** But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. "Get behind me, Satan!" he said. "You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of Yahweh, but the things of men."

***(Mk8:34)(Mt16:24)(Lk9:23)*** Then Jesus called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. ***(Mk8:35)(Mt16:25)(Lk9:24)*** For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the Gospel will find and save it. ***(Mk8:36-37)(Mt16:26)(Lk9:25)*** What good is for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose his soul or forfeit his very self? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? ***(Mk8:38)(Mt16:27)(Lk9:26)*** For, if anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes with the holy angels in his glory and in the glory of the Father, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done."

***(Mk9:1)(Mt16:28)(Lk9:27)*** And he said to them, "I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Kingdom of Yahweh come with power and the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom."

**Mk 8:31-33. Mt 16:21-23. Lk 9:22.** '*Jesus began... to explain*': So Jesus began to persuade his disciples that for him there was no way but that of the Cross. When Jesus connected Messiahship with suffering and dying, he was making statements that were both incomprehensible and incredible to the disciples. All their lives they had thought of the Messiah in terms of irresistible conquest, and now they were presented with an idea which was bewildering them. '*Peter... begun to rebuke him*': Suffering and rejection had no place in Peter's conception of the Messiah, and he rebuked Jesus for teaching what to him was impossible. That is why Peter protested so violently. '*Satan*': Peter's attempt to dissuade Jesus from going to the Cross held the same temptation Satan gave from before the beginning of Jesus' ministry. Jesus rebuked Peter so severely because he was putting into words the very temptations which were assailing him. Jesus did not want to die. He knew that he had powers which he could use for conquest. At this moment he was fighting again with the devil who was tempting him again to take his way instead of Yahweh's way. And it is strange and terrible that the tempter spoke in the voice of a well-meaning friend, a friend who cherished Jesus. That is what happened to Jesus that day; that is why he answered so severely.

**Mk 8:34-35. Mt 16:24-25. Lk 9:23-24.** '*If anyone...*': Here we can see the total honesty of Jesus. No one could ever say that he was induced to follow Jesus by false pretenses, because he never tried to offer men an easy way. He did not offer men peace, but spiritual glory. Jesus never demanded from his men what he would not endure himself; and he was the first one to take his Cross. '*He must deny himself*': The men who want to be his disciples have to be able of saying no to themselves, to their search for ease and comfort, to every course of action based on self-seeking and self-will. '*And follow me*':

Jesus' disciples must unhesitatingly say yes to the voice and the command of Jesus, must live to follow his will. *'Whoever wants to save his life, will lose it...'*: Yahweh gave us life to spend and not to keep for ourselves. If we keep life only for ourselves, thinking only of our own profit, ease, and security, if we make no effort except for ourselves, we are losing the sense of life. But if we spend life for others, if we forget health, time, wealth and comfort in our desire to do something for Jesus and for the men for whom Jesus died, we are gaining the true life. Physical life may be saved by denying Jesus, but eternal life will be lost. On the contrary, discipleship may result in the loss of physical life, but that loss is insignificant when compared with gaining eternal life.

**Mk 8:36-37. Mt 16:26. Lk 9:25.** *'What good is for a man...'*: The real question Jesus asked was, "Where do you put the values in life?" It is possible for a man to put his values on the wrong things and to discover it too late. A man can sacrifice honor for profit, he may desire material things and not to be honest in how to procure them, he can sacrifice principle for popularity. The world is full of temptations towards profitable dishonesty. The real question is not, "What do men think of this?" but "What does Yahweh think of it?" It is not the verdict of public opinion but the verdict of Yahweh that settles destiny. *'The whole world'*: All the things that could possibly be achieved or acquired in this life. *'Forfeit his soul. Give in exchange of his soul'*: That is, to lose eternal life.

**Mk 8:38. Mt 16:27. Lk 9:26.** *'If anyone...'*: This was a warning of inevitable judgment. There is no escape to the fact that Christianity teaches that after this life there comes the judgment; and from the passage before, we see at once what the standard of judgment is. *'The Son of Man will be ashamed...'*: The world is difficult and hostile to Christianity. If under such conditions a man is ashamed to show that he is a Christian, he cannot expect to gain a place of honor in the Kingdom. *'When he comes... in his glory and...'*: One thing leaps out from this passage -the absolute confidence of Jesus. He had just been speaking of his death; he had no doubt that the Cross was waiting for him; but nonetheless he was absolutely sure that in the end there will be triumph. *'Then he will reward...'*: Loyalty to Jesus Christ will have its reward, and disloyalty its punishment. If we are true to him in the time of this world, he will be true to us in the eternity of Yahweh's Kingdom. But if by our lives we disown him, even though with our lips we confess him, the day must come when he cannot but disown us.

**Mk 9:1. Mt 16:28. Lk 9:27.** *'Some who are standing here...'*: The last part of this passage is taken by some people as a reference to the second coming; but it is not at all. To understand it we have to consider that, when Jesus was speaking, his word had touched only a very small area and a small number of people. Furthermore, he had provoked the enmity of the orthodox leaders, so much that he himself was expecting to be killed. It would have seemed that Christianity had no possible future, that in a short time it would be completely eliminated and forgotten. But what actually happened was quite different. Scarcely thirty years later, Christianity had swept through Asia Minor; had penetrated into Egypt; had crossed the sea and come to Rome. It was astonishing but true that in the lifetime of many who were there, against all expectations, Christianity had not only survived, but had become surprisingly strong.

**The Transfiguration** [Mark 9:2-13 Matthew 17:1-13 Luke 9:28-36] See page 422  
*(Mk9:2-3)(Mt17:1-2)(Lk9:28-29)About a week after Jesus said this, he took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone, to pray. There, as he was praying, he was transfigured before*

them. The appearance of his face changed and shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them; as white as the light, as bright as a flash of lightning.

**(Mk9:4)(Mt17:3)(Lk9:30-31)** And just then there appeared before them two men in glorious splendor, Moses and Elijah, who were talking with Jesus. They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem. **(Lk9:32)** Peter and his companions were very sleepy, but when they became fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him.

**(Mk9:5-6)(Mt17:4)(Lk9:33)** As the men were leaving Jesus, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, let us put up three shelters -one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." (He did not know what he was saying, they were so frightened.)

**(Mk9:7)(Mt17:5)(Lk9:34-35)** Then, while he was still speaking, a bright cloud appeared and enveloped them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. A voice came from the cloud saying, **"This is My Son, whom I have chosen and whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!"**

**(Mt17:6)** When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown to the ground, terrified.

**(Mk9:8-10)(Mt17:7-9)(Lk9:36)** But, when the voice had spoken, Jesus came and touched them. **"Get up,"** he said. **"Don't be afraid."** Suddenly, when they looked up around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus, who was alone.

As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus instructed them ordering, **"Don't tell anyone what you have seen, until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead."** The disciples kept this matter to themselves, discussing what "rising from the dead" meant, and told no one at that time what they had seen.

**(Mk9:11)(Mt17:10)** And the disciples asked him, "Why then do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?"

**(Mk9:12)(Mt17:11)** Jesus replied, **"Surely, Elijah must come first, and will restore all things. And it is also written that the Son of Man must suffer much and be rejected. (Mk9:13)(Mt17:12) But I tell you, Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but they have done to him everything they wished, just as it is written about him. In the same way the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands." (Mt17:13)** Then the disciples understood that he was talking to them about John the Baptist.

**Mk 9:2-3. Mt 17:1-2. Lk 9:28-29.** 'About a week after...': Mark and Matthew say that this happened six days after the events of the previous passage. Luke speaks of about eight days, and it is clear that the three of them actually say, "About a week afterward..." 'He took with him...': These three disciples had an especially close relationship to Jesus. 'Up a high mountain': Most probably the Transfiguration happened on Mount Hermon, fourteen miles (22.5 km) from Caesarea Philippi. 'He was transfigured': We cannot tell what actually happened; we can only take note of the changes happened to Jesus and to his clothes as they are reported by the Gospels.

**Mk 9:4. Mt 17:3. Lk 9:30-31.** 'Appeared... Moses and Elijah': They were sent by Yahweh to meet Jesus. Moses, the supreme law-giver of Israel, had given the Jews the Laws of Yahweh. Elijah, the first and the greatest of the prophets, brought to men the very voice of Yahweh. With their presence they witnessed in Jesus the realization of the plans of Yahweh. To note that these two great servants of Yahweh had some experiences that matched those of Jesus. When Moses came down from Mount Sinai, the skin of his face shone (Exodus 34:29). Both Moses and Elijah had their most intimate expe-

rience of Yahweh on a mountain; Mount Sinai for Moses, Mount Horeb for Elijah. And there was something peculiar, as well, about their death. Moses died alone on Mount Nebo and Yahweh Himself was his burier (Deuteronomy 34:5-6). Elijah ended his terrestrial life departing from the astonished Elisha in a chariot and horses of fire (2 Kings 2:11). Further, the Jews believed that Elijah was to be the forerunner and the herald of the Messiah, and that he would be accompanied by Moses. But the real reason why Moses and Elijah met Jesus was to speak to him "of his departure....," of the completion of his mission on Earth, which would end in the glory of Heaven.

**Lk 9:32.** *'Very sleepy'*: Probably all this happened at night, after a long session of prayer. *'When they became fully awake, they saw...'*: Even if initially they were sleepy, there is no doubt that, with Jesus "shining" and speaking to two other men "in glorious splendor," the three disciples fully awoke.

**Mk 9:5-6. Mt 17:4. Lk 9:33.** *'Peter said to Jesus...'*: When Peter woke up and saw what was going on, his first reaction was to build three shelters, one for each of them. Peter was always the man of action, the man who must do something. It is clear that, even without understanding what was happening, he wished that great and extraordinary moment to be prolonged as much as possible.

**Mk 9:7. Mt 17:5. Lk 9:34-35.** *'A bright cloud...'*: In Jewish thought the presence of Yahweh was regularly connected with a cloud, the "Cloud of the Presence." It was in the Cloud that Yahweh came to the Tabernacle. It was the Cloud which filled the Temple when it was dedicated after Solomon had built it. The descent of the Cloud was showing that the Messiah had come. *'This is My Son...'*: Yahweh spoke using the same words spoken from Heaven at Jesus' baptism. In practical terms, Yahweh said to Jesus, "My Son, you are acting properly, go on." On the mountain of the Transfiguration Jesus was assured that he had chosen the right way. He saw not only the inevitability, but the essential rightness of the Cross.

**Mt 17:6.** *'When the disciples heard this...'*: They should have understood that they had listened to the voice of Yahweh. And the only logical reaction for them was a sentiment of fear and a position of maximum reverence. The Transfiguration had a double significance, one for Jesus and one for his disciples. For Jesus: He had taken the decision to go to Jerusalem and to accept the Cross. Obviously he had to be absolutely sure that he had decided rightly before he could go on. There on the mountain he received a double approval, from Moses and Elijah, and from Yahweh Himself. For the disciples: They had been shattered by Jesus' declaration that he was going to Jerusalem to die. That seemed to them the complete negation of all they had ever understood of the Messiah. They were bewildered and uncomprehending. What they saw on the mountain of the Transfiguration gave them a point of reference, even if they could not understand. Cross or not, they had heard Yahweh's voice acknowledge Jesus as His Son.

**Mk 9:8-10. Mt 17:7-9. Lk 9:36.** *'Get up. Don't be afraid'*: At the end of that all -Jesus' Transfiguration, appearance of Moses and Elijah, Cloud of Yahweh's Presence, Yahweh's words- the three disciples really needed to be reassured and brought back to normality. *'Don't tell anyone... until...'*: Jesus knew quite well that they were still following the idea of a Messiah of might and power. If they had to tell of what had happened on the mountain top, of how the Glory of Yahweh had appeared, of how Moses and Elijah had appeared, that would have been seen as a prelude to the burst of Yahweh's avenging power on the nations of the world. The disciples had still to learn what Messiahship meant, and there was only one thing that could teach them that -the Cross and the Resurrection to follow. Then, and then only, they would see the Transfiguration as it had



to be seen -as a prelude, not of the unleashing of Yahweh's force, but of His benevolence. *'Discussing what... meant'*: They were still thinking of what they had witnessed, and they could not understand what Jesus' words about resurrection meant. And in fact they never understood them. When the Cross actually came their outlook was that of men to whom the end had come. But we must not blame them, for they had been brought up in a so completely different idea of Messiahship that they could not accept what Jesus had said.

**Mk 9:11. Mt 17:10.** *'Why... Elijah must come first?'*: Something was puzzling them. The Jews strongly believed that before the Messiah came, Elijah would come to be his herald and forerunner. And that, by coming, he would restore the whole nation to a perfect condition as per the will of Yahweh. Inevitably they were wondering "If Jesus is the Messiah, what had happened to Elijah?"

**Mk 9:12. Mt 17:11.** *'Jesus replied...'*: Jesus' answer was in terms that every Jew would understand; confirming the coming of Elijah, or "one like him," in preparation for the coming of the Messiah. *'And it is also written...'*: Further, Jesus pointed that it was also written that the Messiah had to suffer much and to be rejected by his own people.

**Mk 9:13. Mt 17:12.** *'Elijah has already come... In the same way the Son of Man...'*: Elijah had come; and his way had been the way of suffering and of sacrifice, as had also to be the way of the Messiah. Jesus was referring to the imprisonment and death of John the Baptist at the hands of Herod. Jesus was overturning all the preconceived notions and ideas of his disciples. They looked for the emergence of Elijah, the coming of the Messiah, the irruption of Yahweh into time and the shattering victory of Heaven, which they identified with the triumph of Israel. Jesus was trying to make them see that in fact the herald had been cruelly killed and that the Messiah must end on a Cross. They still did not understand, they wished things as they desired them and not as Yahweh had ordered them. The error of their thoughts had blinded them to the revelation of Yahweh's truth.

**Mt 17:13.** *'The disciples understood...'*: Finally, they understood only that the Messiah's forerunner had been John and that Jesus was speaking of him.

### ***The healing of a boy with an evil spirit***

*See page 423*

*[Mark 9:14-32 Matthew 17:14-23 Luke 9:37-45]*

**(Mk9:14)(Lk9:37)** *The next day, when they came down from the mountain to the other disciples, they saw a large crowd around them who met him, and the teachers of the law arguing with them.*

**(Mk9:15-17)(Mt17:14)(Lk9:38)** *When they came to the crowd, as soon as all the people saw Jesus, they were overwhelmed with wonder and ran to greet him.*

**"What are you arguing with them about?"** *he asked.*

*A man in the crowd approached Jesus, knelt before him and called out answering, "Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech. I beg you to look at my son, for he is my only child. (Mk9:18)(Mt17:15-16) (Lk9:39-40) Lord, have mercy on my son, he has seizures and is suffering greatly. A spirit seizes him and he suddenly screams. Whenever it seizes him, it throws him to the ground. It throws him into convulsions so that he foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth and becomes rigid. He often falls into the fire or into the water. It scarcely ever leaves him and is destroying him. I brought him to your disciples, and asked, begged, them to drive out the spirit, but they could not heal him."*

**(Mk9:19)(Mt17:17)(Lk9:41)** **"O unbelieving and perverse generation,"** *Jesus re-*

plied, **"how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy, your son, here to me."**

**(Mk9:20-26)(Mt17:18)(Lk9:42)** So they brought him. Even when the boy was coming, when the spirit saw Jesus, the demon immediately threw the boy to the ground in a convulsion. He fell to the ground and rolled around, foaming at the mouth.

Jesus asked the boy's father, **"How long has he been like this?"**

"From childhood," he answered. "It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us."

**"If you can?"** said Jesus. **"Everything is possible for him who believes."**

Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!"

When Jesus saw that a crowd was running to the scene, he rebuked the evil spirit. **"You deaf and mute spirit,"** he said, **"I command you, come out of him and never enter him again."**

The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and came out of the boy, and he was healed from that moment, and Jesus gave him back to his father. The boy looked so much like a corpse that many said, "He's dead." **(Mk9:27)** But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him to his feet, and he stood up.

**(Mk9:28)(Mt17:19)** Then, after Jesus had gone indoors, the disciples came to him in private and asked, "Why couldn't we drive it out?"

**(Mk9:29)(Mt17:20-21)** He replied, **"Because you have so little faith. But this kind can't go out except by prayer and fasting. I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."** **(Mk9:30-32)(Mt17:22-23)(Lk9:43-45)** And they were amazed at the greatness of Yahweh.

While everyone was marveling at all that Jesus did, they left that place and passed together through Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone to know where they were, because he was teaching his disciples, and he said to them, **"Listen carefully to what I am to tell you: The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and on the third day he will be raised to life."** But the disciples were filled with grief and they did not understand what he meant. It was hidden from them, so that they did not grasp it, and they were afraid to ask him about it.

**Mk 9:14-18. Mt 17:14-17. Lk 9:37-40.** *'The next day...'*: When Jesus came down from the mountain, immediately after the glory of his Transfiguration, he had to face a delicate situation. A father had brought his boy, clearly an epileptic, to the disciples. They had been unable to deal with his case, and that had given the scribes a really good chance to discredit them and their Master. Then Jesus arrived. When the people saw him, they were surprised because they thought him to be still up on the mountain.

**Mk 9:19. Mt 17:17. Lk 9:41.** *'O unbelieving and perverse generation...'*: This passage begins with a cry coming straight from the heart of Jesus. He had been on the mountain and had decided to face the tremendous task that lay ahead of him. He had decided to dedicate his life to the redemption of the world. And now he had come back down to find his nearest followers, his own chosen men, beaten and baffled as helpless and ineffective. The thing, for a short moment, must have upset even Jesus. He must at that moment have almost despaired of the attempt to change human nature and to make men suitable to Yahweh.

*'Bring the boy'*: Anyway, the moment of despair passed quickly, Jesus took the problem in his hands and called for the boy.

**Mk 9:20-27. Mt 17:18. Lk 9:42.** *'If you can... help us':* The attitude of the father of the boy is most illuminating. He had come seeking for Jesus' help. Since Jesus was on the mountain he had to deal with the disciples and his experience with them had been discouraging. His faith was badly shaken, so much that when he came to Jesus all he could say was, "If you can..." *'Everything is possible for him who believes':* Jesus stated the conditions of a miracle, saying, "The cure of your boy depends, not on me, but on you. The miracles are possible only if approached with faith." *'I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief':* Rebuked by Jesus, his inner faith came out again, and he asked to be helped in having his faith reinforced. And Jesus acted, and the boy was healed.

**Mk 9:28. Mt 17:19.** *'The disciples asked...':* When they were by themselves the disciples asked the cause of their failure. Jesus had sent them out to preach, heal, and cast out spirits. So they did not understand why they had failed.

**Mk 9:29. Mt 17:20-21.** *'Because you have so little faith':* The disciples apparently had taken for granted the power given to them and had come to believe that it was inherent in them. As a consequence, they did not pray enough. Their lack of prayer indicates that they had forgotten that their power over the illnesses and the demonic spirits was from Jesus. In effect he said to them, "You don't live close enough to Yahweh. You have been equipped with powers, but you need continuous prayers to stay close to Yahweh and to maintain them." *'I tell you...':* It is absolutely necessary to have faith, without which nothing can happen. *'Move... and it will move':* When Jesus spoke about moving mountains he was using a phrase which the Jews knew well. A great teacher, one who could really interpret and explain scripture and who could resolve difficulties, was regularly known as an "uprooter of mountains." What Jesus meant was: "If you have faith enough, all difficulties can be solved, and even the hardest tasks can be accomplished."

**Mk 9:30-32. Mt 17:22-23. Lk 9:43-45.** *'They left that place and...':* Jesus had now left the northern country where he was safe and was taking the first steps towards Jerusalem and towards the Cross that awaited him there. But even in Galilee he did not want the crowds around him. He knew that he had to write his message on the hearts of his men, and he wanted to have all the time still available for this purpose. *'The Son of Man is going to be...':* Jesus was not only announcing a fact and giving a warning; he was also making an appeal to Judas, the man in whose heart was forming the betrayal. Even this time the disciples did not understand, mainly the part about rising again. They never had the certainty of the Resurrection. That was a wonder too great for them, a wonder they grasped only when it became an accomplished fact.

### **Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?**

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[Mark 9:33-37 Matthew 18:1-5 Luke 9:46-48]

**(Lk9:46)** *An argument started among the disciples as to which of them would be the greatest.*

**(Mk9:33)** *They came to Capernaum. When he was in the house, he asked them, "What were you arguing about on the road?" (34) But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest.*

**(Mt18:1)** *At a certain time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?"*

**(Mk9:35)** *Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, "If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all."*

**(Mk9:36-37)(Mt18:2-5)(Lk9:47-48)** *Jesus, knowing their thoughts, called a little child and had him stand among them beside him. And then taking him in his arms, he*

said to them, **"Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the One who sent me. I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven. For he who is the least among you all -he is the greatest."**

**Mk 9:33-34. Lk 9:46.** *'An argument... as to which of them would be the greatest':* Questions of rank and status were normal and played an important role in the life of the Jews of that time, but they had no place in Jesus' value system. This discussion shows very well how far the disciples were from realizing the real meaning of Jesus' Messiahship. Repeatedly he had told them what awaited him in Jerusalem, and yet they were still thinking of his Kingdom in earthly terms and of themselves as his ministers of state. *'In the house':* The one belonging to Peter and Andrew. *'But they kept quiet':* Deep in their hearts, they knew they were in some way wrong. When Jesus asked them what they had been arguing about, they had nothing to say.

**Mt 18:1.** *'Who is the greatest':* Anyway, at a certain moment, they could not keep quiet any more. They had to know which would be their respective positions in the new Kingdom. The very fact that the disciples asked this question showed that they had no idea at all what the Kingdom of Heaven was.

**Mk 9:35.** *'Jesus... said':* Jesus dealt with this very seriously. He told them that in the Kingdom of Yahweh things were quite different than on Earth. If they looked for greatness, they would find it not by being first, but by being last; not by being masters, but by being servants of all. With that, Jesus did not abolish ambition. Rather, he defined it in a totally different way. For the ambition to rule he substituted the ambition to serve. For the ambition to have things done for us (that is, to be served) he substituted the ambition to do things for others (that is, to serve).

**Mk 9:36-37. Mt 18:2-5. Lk 9:47-48.** *'Jesus, knowing their thoughts...':* Here, Jesus explains clearly which are the praiseworthy ambitions in the Kingdom of Heaven. *'Unless you become like little children':* Children have no influence at all; cannot do anything important. On the contrary, children need things done for them. So Jesus said, "If a man does something good to the poor, ordinary people, the people who have no influence, no wealth and no power, the people who need assistance, he is doing it to me and, more than that, to Yahweh." So, we have to go and seek out not those who can do something for us, but those for whom we can do something useful.

**Whoever is not against us is for us** [Mark 9:38-41 Luke 9:49-50] See page 425

**(Mk9:38)(Lk9:49)** "Teacher," said John, "we saw a man driving out demons in your name and we tried and told him to stop, because he was not one of us."

**(Mk9:39-40)(Lk9:50)** "Do not stop him," Jesus said. "No one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me, for whoever is not against us is for us. (Mk9:41) I tell you the truth, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to Christ will certainly not lose his reward."

**Mk 9:38. Lk 9:49.** *'A man driving out demons':* As we have already seen, in the time of Jesus everybody believed in demons; that both mental and physical illness was caused by the malign influence of these evil spirits. At the time, there was a very common method used in the exorcisms. If an exorcist could get to know the name of a more power-

ful being, he could command the evil demon in that name to come out of a person; and the demon was supposed to be powerless to resist. This is the kind of picture we have here. *'Not one of us'*: John had seen a man using the all-powerful name of Jesus to defeat the demons and he had tried to stop him, because he was not one of the intimate group of the disciples. Nevertheless he acted in Jesus' name and had done what the other disciples, on at least one occasion, had not been able to do (The healing of a boy with an evil spirit. Mk 9:14-32, Mt 17:14-23; Lk 9:17-45).

**Mk 9:39-40. Lk 9:50.** *'Do not stop him'*: Jesus declared that no man could do a mighty work in his name and be altogether his enemy. Here, Jesus' view of discipleship was far more inclusive than the narrow view held by the Twelve.

**Mk 9:41.** *'I tell you...'*: The teaching of this passage is simple and unmistakable. Any kindness shown, any help given to another person will not lose its proper reward. The reason for helping is that the person in need belongs and is dear to Jesus. Had Jesus still been here on Earth, he himself would have helped that person. And he has devolved on us the duty of helping. We must notice how simple the help of this example is; a cup of water. We are not asked to do great things for others, things beyond our power. We are only asked to give the simple things that we can give without any difficulty.

**The Temple tax** [Matthew 17:24-27]

**(Mt17:24)** *After Jesus and his disciples arrived in Capernaum, the collectors of the two-drachma tax came to Peter and asked, "Doesn't your teacher pay the Temple tax?"*

**(25)** *"Yes, he does," he replied.*

*When Peter came into the house, Jesus was the first to speak. "What do you think, Simon?" He asked. "From whom do the kings of the Earth collect duty and taxes -from their own sons or from others?"*

**(26)** *"From others," Peter answered.*

*"Then the sons are exempt," Jesus said to him. (27) "But so that we may not offend them, go to the lake and throw out your line. Take the first fish you catch; open his mouth and you will find a shekel. Take it and give it to them for my tax and yours."*

**Mt 17:24.** *'The two-drachma tax'*: The Temple at Jerusalem was clearly a costly place to run. There were daily morning and evening sacrifices of a year old lamb accompanied by wine, flour, and oil. Incense was constantly burned. The priests needed costly robes. So, on the basis of Exodus 30:13, it was made compulsory for every male Jew over twenty years of age to pay an annual Temple tax of half a shekel (equivalent to two Greek drachmas), which was in fact equivalent to two days' pay of a working man. *'The collectors asked...'*: The method of collection was carefully organized in all the towns and villages of Palestine, and there is little doubt that, when the tax authority came to Peter and asked if his master paid his taxes, the question was asked with malicious intent in the hope that Jesus would refuse to pay. For, if he refused, the orthodox Jews would have had a ground of accusation against him.

**Mt 17:25-26.** *'Yes'*: Peter's immediate answer was that Jesus surely did pay. Then he went to Jesus who solved the matter with a kind of parable. It is obvious that, when a king imposed taxes, he certainly did not impose them on his own family, as it was for the support of his own household that the taxes were imposed. Now, the tax in question was for the Temple, which was the House of Yahweh; and Jesus was the Son of Yahweh. How could the Son be under obligation to pay the tax which was for his own Father's House?

**Mt 17:27.** *'But so that...'*: Jesus said that they must pay, not because of the compulsion

of the law, but because of a higher duty, not to set a bad example to others. 'Go to the lake...': Before we begin to examine the story itself, we have to note that we can't take it as the report of a miracle because Jesus never did such kind of miracles. First, we have to consider that however poor the disciples were, they surely did not need a miracle to enable them to earn that small amount; it was not beyond human power to earn such a sum. But the most important consideration is that, at the beginning of his mission, Jesus decided that he would never use his miraculous power for his own ends. At the time of his temptations, he could have turned stones into bread to satisfy his own hunger; but he refused. In the desert Jesus decided once and for all that he would not selfishly use his power. Anyway, even if this is so, we do not have to say that this is a mere legendary story, mere imaginative fiction, with no truth at all behind it. Undoubtedly what happened was this. Jesus said to Peter: "Yes, Peter. You are right. We, too, must pay. And you know how to do it. Go back to fishing for one day. You will get plenty of money selling the fishes." When Jesus said this, he was not telling Peter literally to get coins from fishes' mouths. He was telling him that by his daily work he would get what he needed to pay his due.

This story, which seems irrelevant to the development of Christianity, was selected and included in the Gospel for a very important reason. Matthew's Gospel was written after the Temple was totally destroyed in AD 70. The Roman Emperor Vespasian had decided that the former Temple tax should be paid to the treasury of the Temple of Jupiter Capitolinus in Rome. So the Jews and the Jews Christians had been faced with a real and disturbing moral problem. Many of them were violently inclined to rebel against this imposition. Now, any widespread rebellion would have had disastrous consequences, for it would have been severely crushed and would have gained the Jews and the Christians the reputation of being bad and disloyal citizens. This story was put in the Gospel to tell the Christians that, however unpleasant that might be, the duties of a citizen must be shouldered.

### ***Jesus goes to the Feast of Tabernacles*** [John 7:1-13]

**(Jn7:1)** *After this, Jesus went around in Galilee, purposely staying away from Judea because the Jews there were waiting to take his life. (2) But when the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles was near, (3) Jesus' brothers said to him, "You ought to leave here and go to Judea, so that your disciples may see the miracles you do. (4) No one who wants to become a public figure acts in secret. Since you are doing these things, show yourself to the world." (5) For even his own brothers did not believe in him.*

**(6) Therefore Jesus told them, "The right time for me has not yet come; for you any time is right. (7) The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify that what it does is evil. (8) You go to the Feast. I am not yet going up to this Feast, because for me the right time has not yet come." (9) Having said this, he stayed in Galilee.**

**(10) However, after his brothers had left for the Feast, he went also, not publicly, but in secret. (11) Now at the Feast the Jews were watching for him and asking, "Where is that man?"**

**(12) Among the crowds there was widespread whispering about him. Some said, "He is a good man." Others replied, "No, he deceives the people." (13) But no one would say anything publicly about him for fear of the Jews.**

**Jn 7:1.** 'Jesus went around in Galilee': When the Jewish authorities in Judea became too upset with him and too decided to seize and kill him, Jesus had to move to another area -Galilee- where he could go on with his mission.

**Jn 7:2.** *'The Feast of Tabernacles'*: A great feast celebrating the completion of harvest and commemorating Yahweh's goodness during the wandering in the desert. The name came from the leafy shelters in which people lived throughout the duration of the feast, which lasted a total of eight days and fell between the end of September and the beginning of October. It was one of the obligatory feasts and every adult male Jew who lived within fifteen miles (24 km) from Jerusalem was obliged to attend it. But plenty of people living outside this radius came to Jerusalem to attend the feast.

**Jn 7:3-4.** *'Jesus' brothers...'*: Telling him to go to Jerusalem, Jesus' brothers were quite right from the human point of view. None of his great miracles had happened in Jerusalem and it was natural to tell him to go there and let his supporters see what he could do. *'Public figure'*: In Jesus brothers' opinion he had to act in such a way that everyone could see what he was doing, to acquire a position of prestige in the society.

**Jn 7:5.** *'His brothers did not believe'*: As it also results from other passages in the Gospels, Jesus' family never believed, till after his Resurrection, that he was the Messiah.

**Jn 7:6.** *'The right time for me has not yet come'*: Jesus frequently spoke about "his time" or "hour." In those cases we find in the Gospels the Greek word "hora" which means "destined hour of Yahweh." Such an hour was not movable or avoidable. It had to be accepted without argument and without alteration because it was the hour at which Yahweh had decided that something had to happen. But the word used in this passage is "kairos," which means "opportunity;" the best time to do something, the moment when the circumstances are most suitable, even psychologically. So, Jesus was not saying that the destined hour of Yahweh had not yet come but something much simpler; that this was not the moment which would give him the chance he was waiting for. Jesus was not refusing to go to the feast, but was refusing to go in the way his brothers suggested -as a miracle-worker, and from the beginning of the feast. When he went, it would be to deliver a message from Yahweh, for which he awaited the "right time." *'For you any time is right'*: It did not matter when his brothers went to Jerusalem, for nothing important depended on their going.

**Jn 7:7.** *'The world cannot hate you'*: The Jewish authorities had nothing against Jesus' family, because they were absolutely not involved in his activities. *'But it hates me...'*: On the contrary, they hated Jesus who was showing how much far from Yahweh they were.

**Jn 7:8-10.** *'I am not yet going...'*: His brothers could go for the whole duration of the feast. But Jesus' going was a very different matter. *'However...'*: Jesus delayed his going until the middle of the feast, since to arrive with the crowds all assembled there gave him a far better opportunity than to go at the very beginning. *'Not publicly, but in secret'*: Not in the position of a rabbi followed by his disciples, but alone.

**Jn 7:11.** *'The Jews'*: The Pharisees and the chief priests did hate Jesus, even if not for the same reason. The Pharisees hated him because he went against their petty rules, a system which for them was more important than Yahweh's benevolence. The Sadducees -and nearly all the high priests were Sadducees- were a kind of political party. They did not observe the Pharisaic rules. They collaborated with their Roman masters, and they held a very comfortable life. They did not want a Messiah; for when he came their political set-up would disintegrate and their comfort would be gone. They hated Jesus because he interfered with their interests, which were dearest to them than Yahweh.

**Jn 7:12-13.** *'Whispering'*: The people were not speaking openly of Jesus because it was not safe. *'Some said'*: Anyway, the people in the crowd talked about Jesus, expressing and discussing different opinions about him. Some said that he was a good man, others

that he was leading men away from true religion. 'No one would say...': Nobody expressed aloud his opinion -mainly if it was favorable to Jesus- for fear of the reaction of the Jewish authorities.

***Is Jesus the Christ?*** [John 7:14;25-44]

**(Jn7:14)**Not until halfway through the Feast did Jesus go up to the Temple courts and begin to teach. **(7:25)**At that point some of the people of Jerusalem began to ask, "Isn't this the man they are trying to kill? **(26)**Here he is, speaking publicly, and they are not saying a word to him. Have the authorities really concluded that he is the Christ? **(27)**But we know where this man is from; when the Christ comes, no one will know where he is from."

**(28)**Then Jesus, still teaching in the Temple courts, cried out, "Yes, you know me, and you know where I am from. I am not here on my own, but He who sent me is true. You do not know Him, **(29)**but I know Him because I am from Him and He sent me."

**(30)**At this they tried to seize him, but no one laid a hand on him, because his time had not yet come. **(31)**Still, many in the crowd put their faith in him. They said, "When the Christ comes, will he do more miraculous signs than this man?"

**(32)**The Pharisees heard the crowd whispering such things about him. Then the chief priests and the Pharisees sent Temple guards to arrest him.

**(33)**Jesus said, "I am with you for only a short time, and then I go to the One who sent me. **(34)**You will look for me, but you will not find me; and where I am, you cannot come."

**(35)**The Jews said to one another, "Where does this man intend to go that we cannot find him? Will he go where our people live scattered among the Greeks, and teach the Greeks? **(36)**What did he mean when he said, 'You will look for me, but you will not find me,' and, 'Where I am, you cannot come'?"

**(37)**On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. **(38)**Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." **(39)**By this he meant the Spirit of Yahweh, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit of Yahweh had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.

**(40)**On hearing his words, some of the people said, "Surely this man is the Prophet."

**(41)**Others said, "He is the Christ."

Still others asked, "How can the Christ come from Galilee? **(42)**Does not the Scripture say that the Christ will come from David's family and from Bethlehem, the town where David lived?" **(43)**Thus the people were divided because of Jesus. **(44)**Some wanted to seize him, but no one laid a hand on him.

**Jn 7:14.** 'Halfway through the Feast': Jesus decided to go there when the crowds would be at their maximum. Teaching in the Temple courts at such time would reach the highest number of people.

**Jn 7:25.** 'Isn't this the man...?': The people were surprised to find Jesus preaching in the Temple courts. They well knew the hostility of the authorities to Jesus, and they were surprised to see his courage in defying them in such a way.

**Jn 7:26.** 'Here he is...': They were still more surprised to see that he was allowed to teach unmolested. 'Have... concluded that he is the Christ?': This thought suddenly



struck them, but they dismissed it quickly (In the Greek text the question is in a form which expects a negative answer).

**Jn 7:27.** *'But we know...'*: Their objection to Jesus being the Messiah was that they knew where he had come from. They knew that his home was in Nazareth; they knew who his parents and brothers and sisters were; there was no mystery about his antecedents. That was the very opposite of the popular belief that the Messiah would come out without nobody knowing anything about him but that he would be born in Bethlehem, for that was David's town.

**Jn 7:28-29.** *'You know me'*: In answering to their objections, Jesus made two statements, which shocked both the people and the authorities. He said that it was quite true that they knew who he was and where he came from; but it was also true that he had been sent directly by Yahweh. Furthermore, he said that they did not know Yahweh, but that he -and only he- did. It was a bitter reproach to tell Yahweh's chosen people that they did not know Yahweh. And it was an incredible claim that he alone knew Him and that he stood in a unique relationship to Yahweh. Up to this point the authorities had looked on him mainly as a revolutionary Sabbath breaker, which already was a serious enough charge; but from now on he was officially guilty of the ultimate sin, of blasphemy. As they saw it, he was talking of Yahweh as no human being had any right to.

**Jn 7:30.** *'They tried to...'*: Jesus' enemies were powerless against him until "his time" came.

**Jn 7:31.** *'Many in the crowd put their faith...'*: Many of those pilgrims believed that Jesus was the Anointed One of Yahweh on the basis of his miraculous deeds. *'Will he do more miraculous signs...?'*: Those who believed thought that no one could possibly do greater things than he was doing. That was in fact the argument that Jesus himself used when John the Baptist was in doubt whether he was the one who had to come or if they had to look for another one (Jesus and John the Baptist. Mt 11:1-19; Lk 7:18-35).

**Jn 7:32.** *'Sent Temple guards...'*: The very fact that there were people accepting Jesus as the Messiah moved the authorities to action. They sent their guards, the Temple Police, to arrest him.

**Jn 7:33-34.** *'I am with you... then I go'*: Jesus changed the topic from his miracles to his death, to which he referred enigmatically. Jesus said that his time on Earth was going to end and that, later, the day would come when they would search for him, not to arrest him, but to obtain what he only could give (spiritual life), and it would be too late. *'You cannot come'*: Jesus meant that he would go to his Father, from whom by their disobedience they had shut themselves out.

**Jn 7:35.** *'Where does this man...'*: His hearers did not understand that he was speaking of going to Yahweh. *'Scattered among the Greeks'*: Throughout the centuries the Jews had been scattered around the world. Sometimes they had been removed by force as exiles; sometimes they had emigrated to other lands. As a result there were plenty of Jews who lived outside Palestine. So the people here said: "Is Jesus going away to preach to the Greek Jews and so become lost in the masses of the Pagan world? Is he going to run away so far that he will be completely out of reach?"

**Jn 7:36.** *'What did he mean...'*: Surely at that time they would not understand what actually Jesus was meaning.

**Jn 7:37.** *'On the last and greatest day...'*: On that day there was a special ceremony of thanksgiving to Yahweh. Every day the worshippers came with their palms and their willows to the Temple; with them they formed a kind of screen against the sun when marching around the great altar. At the same time a priest took a pitcher and went down

to the pool of Siloam and filled it with water. Then the water was carried up to the Temple altar and poured out as an offering to Yahweh. And the worshippers shouted and waved their palms towards the altar. On the last day the ceremony was doubly impressive for they marched seven times around the altar in memory of the sevenfold circuit around the walls of Jerico after which they fell down and the city was taken. *'Jesus stood and said...'*: Against this background and probably at that very moment, Jesus' voice rang out. *'If anyone is thirsty...'*: It is as if Jesus said: "You are thanking and glorifying Yahweh for the water which quenches the thirst of your bodies. But come to me if you want a 'water' which could quench the spiritual thirst of your soul."

**Jn 7:38-39.** *'As the Scripture has said'*: This quotation is not found in the Scriptures we know. *'Streams of living water...'*: The man who comes to Jesus and accepts him will feel like receiving plenty of refreshing water. It is exactly what Jesus said to the woman of Samaria (Jesus talks with a Samaritan woman. Jn 4:1-26). The meaning was that Jesus can give men the refreshment coming from the communion with Yahweh, with His Spirit, so that their thoughts and feelings would be purified and revitalized. It is as if Jesus had said: "Come to me and accept me; and I will put into you through the Spirit of Yahweh a new life which will give you purity and satisfaction, and give you the kind of life you have always longed for and never had." *'The Spirit of Yahweh... to receive'*: To receive the Spirit of Yahweh is to enter in a relationship of spiritual communion with Yahweh, Jesus, and all Christian believers. *'Up to that time...'*: The power of the Spirit of Yahweh always existed; but men never really enjoyed his full power until after Pentecost. It was only when men had known Jesus that they really knew Yahweh. It took the life and death of Jesus Christ to really give the power of Yahweh to all men, allowing them to enter in spiritual communion with Him.

**Jn 7:40-43.** *'Some of the people said...'*: Some people thought that Jesus was the Prophet whom Moses had promised (Deuteronomy 18:15). Others thought that he was the Anointed One of Yahweh; and there followed an argument about whether or not the Anointed One of Yahweh must come from Bethlehem. A great religious experience had ended in the aridity of a theological dispute.

**Jn 7:44.** *'Wanted to seize him but...'*: No one could, as "his time" had not yet come.

### **Unbelief of the Jewish leaders** [John 7:45-53]

**(Jn7:45)** *Finally the Temple guards went back to the chief priests and Pharisees, who asked them, "Why didn't you bring him in?"*

**(46)** *"No one ever spoke the way this man does," the guards declared.*

**(47)** *"You mean he has deceived you also?" the Pharisees retorted. (48) "Has any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed in him? (49) No! But this mob that knows nothing of the law -there is a curse on them."*

**(50)** *Nicodemus, who had gone to Jesus earlier and who was one of their own number, asked, (51) "Does our Law condemn anyone without first hearing him to find out what he is doing?"*

**(52)** *They replied, "Are you from Galilee too? Look into it, and you will find that a prophet does not come out of Galilee."*

**(53)** *Then each went to his own home.*

**Jn 7:45.** *'The Temple guards'*: They had gone out to arrest Jesus and had come back without him, even if they knew that they would be in trouble for failing to make the arrest. To note that they did not mention the hostility of part of the crowd, which would have given them something of an excuse before their chiefs.

**Jn 7:46.** *'No one ever spoke...'*: The Temple guards openly declared that they were impressed by the teaching of Jesus -never in their lives they had heard anyone speak as he did- and did not dare to cause him trouble.

**Jn 7:47.** *'The Pharisees retorted'*: The reaction of the chief priests and the Pharisees was of contempt. In their eyes even their guards had been deceived by Jesus' words. Anyway, they had been so greatly surprised by the behavior of the guards that they did not punish them for not following their orders.

**Jn 7:48.** *'Has any of the rulers...'*: In their opinion only unlearned people could believe in what Jesus was saying. In other words they declared that nobody who was spiritually and academically of any account could have believed in Jesus. Only ignorant fools had accepted him.

**Jn 7:49.** *'This mob knows nothing'*: The Pharisees exaggerated the people's ignorance of Scripture, even if it was true that the average Jew paid little attention to the minutiae of the scribal law that mattered so much to the Pharisees. In effect, the "Traditions of the Elders" were too great a burden for people who earned their living by hard physical work, and consequently these regulations were widely disregarded.

**Jn 7:50-51.** *'Nicodemus... one of their own...'*: There is irony here. The Pharisees implied that no Jewish leader believed in Jesus, yet Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council, not only went personally to speak to Jesus (Jesus teaches Nicodemus. Jn 3:1-21), but even spoke up in his defense in front of all of them. *'Does our Law condemn...?'*: They called for people to observe the Law, but Nicodemus pointed to their own failure to keep other parts of the same Law. Anyway, the reaction of Nicodemus was very timid, for he did not defend Jesus directly. He dared only quote certain legal maxims which were relevant to the case. The Law declared that every man must receive justice; and part of justice was that he must have a right to state his case and could not be condemned on secondhand information.

**Jn 7:52.** *'Are you from Galilee too?'*: It is clear that Nicodemus did not carry his protest any further. When the Pharisees suggested that he could have a connection with the Galilean agitators, he said nothing more. His heart told him to defend Jesus but his head told him not to take the risk. *'A prophet does not come out of Galilee'*: They were angry -and wrong. John came from Galilee, and perhaps other prophets as well. Moreover, the Pharisees overlooked the right of Yahweh to raise up prophets from wherever He would choose.

**Jn 7:53.** *'Each went... home'*: Jesus' "time" had not come yet. So, after this discussion, they did not take any further action against him.

### **The adulterous woman** [John 8:1-11]

**(Jn8:1)** But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. **(2)** At dawn he appeared again in the Temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. **(3)** The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group **(4)** and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. **(5)** In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" **(6)** They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him.

But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. **(7)** When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her." **(8)** Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground.

(9) *At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. (10) Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?"*

(11) *"No one, sir," she said.*

*"Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin."*

**Jn 8:1.** *'Mount of Olives':* A hill east of Jerusalem, which reaches a height of about 2,700 feet (820 m). Jesus went there to pray and spend the night.

**Jn 8:2.** *'At dawn...':* Very early in the morning, Jesus was again in the Temple, to use all the available time to teach people about the Good News.

**Jn 8:3-5.** *'Brought in...':* The scribes and the Pharisees were out to get some charge on which they could discredit Jesus; and here they thought to have found what they needed. When a difficult legal question arose, it was taken to a Rabbi for a decision. So, by going to Jesus with the adulterous woman, the scribes and the Pharisees recognized Jesus as a Rabbi. *'A woman caught in adultery':* In the eyes of the Jews adultery was a serious crime, as serious as idolatry and murder, and it was punishable by death. Now, this kind of sin cannot be committed alone, so immediately the question arises why only the woman was brought. The incident was clearly staged to trap Jesus, and surely provision had been made for the man to escape without being arrested. This incident shows the attitude of the scribes and the Pharisees to people. They were not looking at this woman as a person at all; for them she was a thing, an instrument they could use to formulate a charge against Jesus. *'Stand before the group':* The woman's accusers did humiliate her, publicly and more than necessary, since they could have kept her in custody while they spoke to Jesus. *'Caught in the act':* Caught in the act by two or more people, who now were testifying against her. Compromising circumstances were not sufficient evidence, as the Law required at least two witnesses who had seen the act. *'To stone such women':* From the legal point of view the scribes and the Pharisees were perfectly correct, this woman was liable to death. But, when taking the case to Jesus, they altered the Law. The manner of execution was not prescribed unless the woman was a betrothed virgin (Deuteronomy 22:23-24). And the Law required the execution of both parties (Leviticus 20:10; Deuteronomy 22:22), not just of the woman.

**Jn 8:6.** *'Using this question as a trap':* If Jesus said that the woman ought to be stoned to death, two things would follow. First, he would lose the name of friend of the sinners he had gained with his affection and his mercy. Second, he would come into collision with the Roman law, for the Jews had no power to pass or carry out a death sentence. So, if Jesus had said to stone her to death, he could have been accused of being against the Roman law. On the other hand, if he had said that the woman should be pardoned, it could have immediately been said that he was teaching men to break the Law of Moses. *'But Jesus...':* Jesus turned their attack in such a way that it retorted against the attackers. *'Bent down and started to write...':* The Greek verb used here and translated "to write" is "katagraphein," which in effect does not mean "to write" but "to write down a record against someone." So it may be that Jesus was writing with his finger on the earth the list of the sins of the people who brought him the woman.

**Jn 8:7.** *'They kept on...':* Anyway, the scribes and the Pharisees continued to insist for an answer. And they got it. *'If anyone... let him be the first':* In effect, Jesus said: "All right! As you wish! But let the man among you who is without sin to be the first to throw a stone." Jesus' answer disarmed them. In effect, since he spoke of throwing a sto-

ne, not of killing the woman, he could not be legally accused of failure to respect the Roman law. Furthermore, the qualification of "without sin" for throwing the stone actually prevented anyone from acting.

**Jn 8:8.** *'Again...'*: And he went back writing on the ground, possibly continuing with the list of the sinners present there and of their sins.

**Jn 8:9.** *'Began to go away'*: Because they knew they were not "without sin." *'The older ones first'*: They were the first to realize what was involved. But all the men were either conscience-stricken or afraid, and in the end only Jesus and the woman remained.

**Jn 8:10-11.** *'Has no one... Then neither do I...'*: It is very important to understand just how Jesus treated this woman. It is easy to gain the impression that Jesus forgave her lightly and easily, as if her sin did not matter. What he actually did was to differ the sentence, giving the sinner a chance to prove that she could do better and redeem herself. *'Go now and leave your life of sin'*: Here, Jesus showed how much he always believed in the human nature and in the fact that with his help the sinners can find in themselves the energy to change their life.

**The validity of Jesus' testimony** [John 8:12-30]

**(Jn8:12)** *When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the Light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the Light of Life."*

**(13)** *The Pharisees challenged him, "Here you are, appearing as your own witness; your testimony is not valid."*

**(14)** *Jesus answered, "Even if I testify on my own behalf, my testimony is valid, for I know where I came from and where I am going. But you have no idea where I come from or where I am going. (15) You judge by human standards; I pass judgment on no one. (16) But if I do judge, my decisions are right, because I am not alone. I stand with the Father, who sent me. (17) In your own Law it is written that the testimony of two men is valid. (18) I am one who testifies for myself; my other witness is the Father, who sent me."*

**(19)** *Then they asked him, "Where is your Father?"*

*"You do not know me or my Father," Jesus replied. "If you knew me, you would know my Father also." (20) He spoke these words while teaching in the Temple area near the place where the offerings were put. Yet no one seized him, because his time had not yet come.*

**(21)** *Once more Jesus said to them, "I am going away, and you will look for me, and you will die in your sin. Where I go, you cannot come."*

**(22)** *This made the Jews ask, "Will he kill himself? Is that why he says, 'Where I go, you cannot come'?"*

**(23)** *But he continued, "You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. (24) I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins."*

**(25)** *"Who are you?" they asked.*

*"Just what I have been claiming all along," Jesus replied. (26) "I have much to say in judgment of you. But He who sent me is reliable, and what I have heard from Him I tell the world."*

**(27)** *They did not understand that he was telling them about his Father. (28) So Jesus said, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am the one I claim to be and that I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me. (29) The One who sent me is with me; He has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases Him." (30) Even as he spoke, many put their faith in him.*

**Jn 8:12.** *'When Jesus spoke again...'*: This discussion took place in the Temple Treasury (Jn 8:20), which was in the Court of the Women. Around the Court of the Women there was a colonnade on porch; and there, set against the wall, there were thirteen chests for the offerings. Clearly it was a busy place, with a constant flow of worshippers coming and going; a very good place were to find an audience of devout people and to teach them. *'I am the Light of the world'*: Probably Jesus made this great claim during a particular ceremony which was called "The Illumination of the Temple." In the center of the Court of the Women, after the dark came, four huge candelabra were lit, sending plenty of light all around. And there, all night along, people danced and sang Psalms in honor of Yahweh. Jesus said, "In this moment, you are amazed at the blaze of the Temple illumination piercing the darkness of the night. And you have to know that I am the 'Light of the World,' a spiritual light which will illuminate for ever the whole world." *'Whoever follows me...'*: To be a follower of Jesus Christ, a disciple, is to give oneself completely into the obedience of the Master, illuminated by his spiritual light. To follow Jesus Christ is to walk in safety through life and, at the end of it, to enter straight into the Kingdom of Yahweh.

**Jn 8:13.** *'The Pharisees...'*: When Jesus declared to be the Light of the World, the scribes and the Pharisees reacted with hostility. To them it would sound -and indeed it was- a claim to be the Messiah and to be at the same level than Yahweh. In effect, for the Jews the word "Light" was always specially associated with Yahweh, who was the "Light" of the Jewish Nation. *'Your own witness'*: They insisted that Jesus' statement could not be regarded as accurate because it was backed by insufficient testimony; there was only Jesus' word, and it was the Law that any statement must be founded on the evidence of at least two witnesses before it could be regarded as true.

**Jn 8:14.** *'Jesus answered...'*: Jesus' testimony on himself was valid because he was so conscious of the authority received by Yahweh that no other testimony was necessary to confirm his claims.

**Jn 8:15-16.** *'You judge...'*: Here, Jesus spoke of his right to judge, saying that his coming into the world was primarily for bringing Yahweh's benevolence to men, not for judging them. *'I pass judgment on no one'*: In effect, it is a man's reaction to Jesus which is in itself a judgment; if a man does not see Jesus' affection, he actually condemns himself. Here, Jesus pointed to the contrast between the two possible kinds of judgment. There is the judgment based on human knowledge and human standards, which never sees below the surface, for this is in the nature of the human capabilities. And there is the judgment based on the knowledge of all the facts, even the hidden facts, which belongs only to Yahweh. *'If I do judge...'*: If and when Jesus had to judge, his judgment would not be a human one; but it would be Yahweh's because, being so much in communion with Him, he would base it on the complete knowledge coming from Yahweh.

**Jn 8:17-18.** *'My other witness...'*: Anyway, Jesus' testimony was not unsupported. The Father was with him, so he and the Father were the two witnesses required by the Law. The testimony of Yahweh was in Jesus' words (no man could speak with such wisdom unless Yahweh has given him the necessary knowledge) and in Jesus' deeds (no man could do such things unless Yahweh was acting through him). In essence Jesus declared that his words had to be accepted because supported by adequate testimony; that of his own consciousness of the authority received, and that of Yahweh.

**Jn 8:19.** *'You don't know...'*: Jesus bluntly told the scribes and Pharisees that they had no real knowledge of Yahweh. The proof of this was the fact that they did not recognize him for who and what he was. The Jews had become so involved with their own ideas,

so intent on their own ways, so sure of their own conception of what religion was that they had become blind to Yahweh.

**Jn 8:20.** *'In the Temple area...'*: In the Temple Treasury . See note to Jn 8:12.

**Jn 8:21.** *'Once more Jesus said...'*: In Jn 8:21-29 there is one of those passages of argument and debate so characteristic of John's Gospel and so difficult understand. Jesus said that he was going away; and that, only after he went, they will realize what they have missed, and will search for him and not find him. In other words, to every man is given the opportunity to accept Jesus as Savior and Lord; but that opportunity can be refused and lost. And, just because there is this opportunity in life, there is also judgment. The greater the opportunity, the greater the judgment if it is refused or missed. Going away, Jesus was going to the Father, and that was where they could not follow him, because by their disobedience and their refusal to accept him, they had shut themselves off from Yahweh.

**Jn 8:22.** *'This made the Jews ask...'*: They met Jesus' words with derision, suggesting that he was going to kill himself. Now, according to Jewish thought, the worst of hell was reserved for those who took their own lives; so they were wishing him to go quickly to the lowest hell.

**Jn 8:23.** *'From below. From above. Of this world. Not of this world'*: With these contrasts, Jesus pointed to the fact that, because of their attitude, they belonged to that "below," to that "world" which was and is under the influence of the devil. On the contrary, because of his attitude, he belonged to "above," to Yahweh. Jesus was certainly in the world, but he did not belong to the world, to Satan.

**Jn 8:24.** *'I told you... you will die in your sins'*: The man who refuses to accept Jesus as Savior and Lord will die with his terrestrial life unrealized; and he therefore will die unfit to enter into a higher life of communion with Yahweh. The essence of sin is that it separates man from Yahweh. To refuse Jesus Christ is to be a stranger to Yahweh; to accept him is to be with Yahweh.

**Jn 8:25.** *'Who are you? Just what I have been claiming'*: The Messiah.

**Jn 8:26.** *'Much to say in judgment'*: They will have to recognize the Messiahship of Jesus in the day of their judgment. At the moment he might look like the outlawed carpenter of Nazareth; but the day will come when they will see him as judge and understand who and what he is.

**Jn 8:27.** *'They didn't understand...'*: The thoughts and the convictions of Jesus' opponents were too far away from Yahweh to allow them to understand the meaning of his affirmations.

**Jn 8:28-29.** *'When you have lifted up...'*: It was when Jesus Christ was crucified that they finally had the opportunity to see who and what he really was. *'I do nothing on my own... I always do what pleases Him'*: Jesus' obedience to Yahweh's will was perfect and complete. *'The One who sent me is with me'*: Not only Jesus was always perfectly obedient to the will of his Father, but there was also perfect and total spiritual communion between the two of them.

**Jn 8:30.** *'Many put their faith in him'*: Many of the people there present had started to believe that he was the Messiah -of course, the kind of Messiah they were waiting for, not the kind Jesus actually was.

### ***The children of Abraham*** [John 8:31-41]

**(Jn8:31)** *To the Jews who had believed in him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. (32) Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."*

(33) *They answered him, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?"*

(34) *Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. (35) Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. (36) So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. (37) I know you are Abraham's descendants. Yet you are ready to kill me, because you have no room for my word. (38) I am telling you what I have seen in the Father's presence, and you do what you have heard from your father."*

(39) *"Abraham is our father," they answered.*

*"If you were Abraham's children," said Jesus, "then you would do the things Abraham did. (40) As it is, you are determined to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from Yahweh. Abraham did not do such things. (41) You are doing the things your own father does."*

*"We are not illegitimate children," they protested. "The only Father we have is Yahweh Himself."*

**Jn 8:31.** *'Believed in him':* Here "believed" surely means "made a formal profession of faith," as their following words show that these people were not true believers (they believed he was the Messiah of tradition). *'If you hold to...':* This passage gives a definition of discipleship, which begins with belief. Initially, there is the moment when a man accepts what Jesus says as true. After that, discipleship means to listen constantly to Jesus' voice and to learn more and more from him, as no one can hear or read the words of Jesus once and say he has understood their full meaning.

**Jn 8:32.** *'You will know the truth':* The truth which Jesus brings shows the real values of life, what is important and what is not. *'The truth will set you free':* Free from fear, because a disciple always walks in company of and protected by Jesus. Free from self, because Jesus always helps a disciple to win his own selfishness, which is one of the most difficult things to do. Free from other people, because a disciple has ceased to worry about what the other people say and think of him, as he cares only of what Jesus says and thinks of him. Free from sin, because the help of Jesus frees a disciple from the slavery of sin, of Satan.

**Jn 8:33.** *'Abraham's descendants...':* Jesus' talk of freedom annoyed the Jews. They claimed that they had never been slaves to any man. Obviously, in a physical sense, this was not true. They had been captives in the exile in Babylon; and at the moment they were subject to the Romans. But, in a spiritual sense, all the Jews belonged to Yahweh only, so they could not be slaves to anybody. Plenty of rebellions flared up because some fiery leaders arose who insisted that the Jews could obey to no earthly ruler because Yahweh was their only King. So, when the Jews said that they had been no man's slaves they were saying something which was a fundamental article of their creed of life. And it was also true that even in servitude they maintained an independence of spirit which showed that they might be slaves in body but never in soul. In effect, even to suggest to a Jew that he could be regarded as a slave was a deadly insult.

**Jn 8:34.** *'Jesus replied...':* But it was another slavery that of which Jesus was speaking, as everyone who commits a sin is a slave of sin. This was Jesus' point. No man who sins can ever be said to be free.

**Jn 8:35.** *'A slave has no permanent place...':* Here, Jesus made a veiled threat, one which all the listening Jews would well understand. He reminded them that in every family there is a fundamental difference between a slave and a son. A son is a permanent



dweller in the family, but a slave can be ejected at any time. In effect Jesus was saying: "You think that you are sons in Yahweh's house and that nothing can ever banish you from that house. But, be careful, by your conduct you are making yourselves slaves, and the slaves can be ejected from the master's presence at any time."

**Jn 8:36.** *'If the son sets you free...'*: But he, the Son of Yahweh, can make men really free from the constraints of sin. See note to Jn 8:32.

**Jn 8:37.** *'Abraham's descendants'*: For the Jews Abraham was the greatest figure in all of their religious history; and they considered themselves safe and secure in the favor of Yahweh simply because they were his descendants. They believed that Abraham had gained such merit from his goodness that this merit was sufficient also for all his descendants. *'You are ready to kill me'*: They were looking for a way to kill him, the messenger of Yahweh; that was exactly the opposite of what Abraham did. When a messenger from Yahweh came to him, Abraham welcomed him with all his reverence.

**Jn 8:38.** *'I'm telling you...'*: Jesus was the messenger of Yahweh, he was reporting what Yahweh had told him to report. *'You do what...'*: In spite of receiving Yahweh's message, they went on with their way of thinking and doing, an evil way, which classified them as children of the devil.

**Jn 8:39-40.** *'Abraham is our father'*: Traditionally, all the Jews descended from Abraham. *'If you were...'*: They could not call themselves the descendants of Abraham when their conduct was so very different from the way in which Abraham acted. That is exactly what John the Baptist had said before; that the day of judgment was coming and that it was not enough pleading that they were descendants of Abraham, for Yahweh could raise up descendants to Abraham from the very stones, if He chose to do so (John the Baptist prepares the way. Mk 1:2-8; Mt 3:1-12; Lk 3:1-20; Jn 1:6-9,15,19-28). *'As it is, you are determined... Abraham did not so...'*: See note to Jn 8:37.

**Jn 8:41.** *'You are doing the things your father does'*: Jesus had just said that Abraham was not their father. The reaction of the Jews was to make an even greater claim. *'We are not illegitimate children'*: By claiming that Yahweh was their Father, the Jews meant that they did not belong to a nation of idolaters but they had always worshipped the true God. It was clearly a claim that they had never gone astray from Yahweh; a claim that only a nation of mainly right and correct people would ever dare to make.

### ***The children of the devil*** [John 8:42-47]

**(Jn8:42)** *Jesus said to them, "If Yahweh were your Father, you would be fond of me, for I came from Yahweh and now am here. I have not come on my own; but He sent me. (43) Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. (44) You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. (45) Yet because I tell the truth, you do not believe me! (46) Can any of you prove me guilty of sin? If I am telling the truth, why don't you believe me? (47) He who belongs to Yahweh hears what Yahweh says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to Yahweh."*

**Jn 8:42.** *'If Yahweh were...'*: Jesus' answer to the claim of the Jews was that it was false; and the proof was that if Yahweh was really their Father, they would have been fond of and welcomed him. Here there is one of the key thoughts of John's Gospel; the moral standing of a man is put in evidence by his reaction to Jesus. To be confronted with Je-

Jesus is to be confronted with judgment; he is the touchstone by which Yahweh's judgment is applied to all men. And it is not Jesus who actually judges, it is a man's reaction to Jesus which is in itself a judgment. If a man finds in Jesus a person to like and to follow, he is on the way to life. But, if he sees in Jesus an enemy, he has condemned himself.

**Jn 8:43.** *'My language'*: The form of expression -the actual words of Jesus. *'What I say'*: The content of his words. The Jews were so convinced of their own preconceptions that they did not really hear what Jesus was saying. Their minds refused to hear and to understand. For so long they had tuned their ears to the voice of their own desires that now they were unable to receive the voice of Yahweh.

**Jn 8:44.** *'You belong to your father, the devil'*: Those who had gloried in the claim that they were the children of Abraham and, furthermore, the children of Yahweh, were now confronted with the charge to be the children of the devil. Their own words had revealed their true sonship. *'You want to carry out...'*: Their problem was basically spiritual, not intellectual. Being oriented toward Satan, they were bent on murdering Jesus and eventually would succeed. *'He was a murderer from the beginning'*: The devil was and is characteristically a murderer. With his rebellion against Yahweh the devil had killed the perfection of Yahweh's creation, introducing suffering and death into it. But, apart from this, the fact remains that Jesus Christ leads to spiritual life in communion with Yahweh, and the devil to spiritual death in complete separation from Yahweh. *'Not holding to the truth. Liar'*: Truth is totally foreign to Satan and to those who are his. He always hated the truth and tried to destroy it. At that very moment the Jews were plotting how to kill Jesus; they were taking the devil's way. When the Jews and Jesus met, the false way met the true, and inevitably the false tried to destroy the true.

**Jn 8:45.** *'Yet because I...'*: Jesus indicted the Jews as children of the devil because their thoughts were bent on the destruction of the good and the maintaining of the false. Every man who tries to destroy the truth is doing the devil's work.

**Jn 8:46.** *'Can... you prove me guilty of sin?'*: Here, Jesus came out with a tremendous claim. There was anybody there who could accuse -and prove- him to be guilty of any sin? And nobody could formulate a charge against him. The asking of the question was more significant than the Jews' failure to answer, because it showed that Jesus had a perfectly clear conscience. *'If I'm telling the truth...'*: By their silence they were admitting that they could find no charge against him. Then, why they did not accept what he was saying? *'Why don't you believe me?'*: They were not intellectually stupid, but they were spiritually deaf.

**Jn 8:47.** *'The reason you do not hear...'*: The only and real reason why they didn't accept his words was because they were not from Yahweh. The Jews believed they were religious people; but because they had clung to their own idea of religion instead of to Yahweh's idea, they had in the end drifted away so far from Yahweh that they had become godless.

### ***The claims of Jesus about himself [John 8:48-59]***

**(Jn8:48)** *The Jews answered him, "Aren't we right in saying that you are a Samaritan and demon-possessed?"*

**(49)** *"I am not possessed by a demon," said Jesus, "but I honor my Father and you dishonor me. (50)I am not seeking glory for myself; but there is One who seeks it, and He is the judge. (51)I tell you the truth, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death."*

(52) *At this the Jews exclaimed, "Now we know that you are demon-possessed! Abraham died and so did the prophets, yet you say that if anyone keeps your word, he will never taste death. (53) Are you greater than our father Abraham? He died, and so did the prophets. Who do you think you are?"*

(54) *Jesus replied, "If I glorify myself, my glory means nothing. My Father, whom you claim as your God, is the One who glorifies me. (55) Though you do not know Him, I know Him. If I said I did not, I would be a liar like you, but I do know Him and keep His word. (56) Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad."*

(57) *"You are not yet fifty years old," the Jews said to him, "and you have seen Abraham!"*

(58) *"I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!" (59) At this, they picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus hid himself, slipping away from the Temple grounds.*

**Jn 8:48.** *'The Jews answered him...':* To be told that they were stranger to Yahweh stung the Jews. They hurled their invectives against Jesus, accusing him to be an heretic and a servant of the devil. *'You are a Samaritan':* They meant that he was an enemy of Israel, for there was deadly enmity between the Jews and the Samaritans; that he was a law breaker because he did not observe the law; and above all that he was an heretic, for Samaritan and heretic had become synonymous. *'Demon-possessed':* Again the old accusation that he was casting out demons by the power of Satan and, so, of being under Satan's domination.

**Jn 8:49.** *'I am not... But I honor...':* Jesus' answer was that, so far from being a servant of the devil, his only aim was to honor Yahweh, while the conduct of the Jews was dishonoring Yahweh's Messiah. He said in effect: "It is not I who serve the devil; it is you."

**Jn 8:50.** *'I'm not seeking...':* Then came the declaration of the supreme faith of Jesus in Yahweh. He actually said: "I am not looking for honor in this world; I know that I will be insulted, rejected, dishonored, and crucified. But there is One who will one day assess things at their true value."

**Jn 8:51.** *'If anyone keeps my word...':* It was not physical life and physical death of which Jesus was speaking. He meant that, for the man who fully accepts him, death has lost its finality; he has entered into a relationship with Yahweh which neither time nor eternity can sever; and he goes, not from life to death, but from life to life, because physical death is only the introduction to the presence of Yahweh.

**Jn 8:52-53.** *'The Jews exclaimed...':* Jesus' declaration shocked the Jews who were only thinking in terms of physical life. They considered that Abraham and all the prophets, who kept the word of Yahweh, were anyway dead. How could Jesus think of setting himself above the great ones of their faith, above death?

**Jn 8:54.** *'Jesus replied':* Here, Jesus declared that all true honors can and must come only from Yahweh. Humanly speaking, it is not difficult to honor oneself -in fact, it is quite easy. Neither it is too difficult to win honor from men, as the world honors the successful man. But the real honor is the honor that only Yahweh can give; and the measuring rod of Yahweh is not the measuring rod of men.

**Jn 8:55.** *'You do not know him, I know him':* Here Jesus claimed to know Yahweh as no one else has ever known or ever will. And he would not lower that claim, for to do so would be a lie. This means that the only way a man has to know Yahweh is through Jesus, for only in him men can see what Yahweh is like. *'I... keep His word':* He claimed complete obedience to Yahweh.

**Jn 8:56.** *'Your father Abraham...'*: The Jews believed that Abraham was living in Heaven and able to see what was happening on Earth (The rich man and Lazarus. Lk 16:19-31). Furthermore, Abraham was given (Genesis 15:12-21) a vision of the whole future of the nation of Israel and therefore had a vision beforehand of the time when the Messiah would come. So when Jesus said that Abraham has seen his day, he was making a deliberate claim that he was the Messiah. He was really saying: "I am the Messiah Abraham saw in his vision."

**Jn 8:57.** *'Not fifty years old'*: Fifty was the age at which the Levites retired from their service (Numbers 4:3). So, the Jews were saying to Jesus: "You are a young man, not even old enough to retire from service. How can you possibly have seen Abraham? This is mad talk."

**Jn 8:58.** *'Before Abraham was born, I am!'*: We must note carefully that Jesus did not say: "Before Abraham was, I was," but "I am." This was not a claim of Jesus to be timeless, that he had always existed -in effect, Jesus was born into this world at Bethlehem, in a specific moment of time. The meaning is that, exactly because Abraham had a vision of the future story of Israel and of the coming of the Messiah, Jesus' coming was "already existing," because planned by Yahweh, even before Abraham's birth.

**Jn 8:59.** *'At this, they picked up stones...'*: The Jews could not interpret Jesus' claims as other than blasphemy, for which stoning was the proper penalty.

***Jesus heals a man born blind*** [John 9:1-12]

**(Jn9:1)** *As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. (2)His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"*

**(3)"Neither this man nor his parents sinned,"** said Jesus, **"but this happened so that the work of Yahweh might be displayed in his life. (4)As long as it is day, we must do the work of Him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. (5)While I am in the world, I am the Light of the World."**

**(6)Having said this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes. (7)"Go,"** he told him, **"wash in the Pool of Siloam"** (this word means Sent). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing.

**(8)His neighbors and those who had formerly seen him begging asked, "Isn't this the same man who used to sit and beg?" (9)Some claimed that he was. Others said, "No, he only looks like him." But he himself insisted, "I am the man."**

**(10)"How then were your eyes opened?"** they demanded.

**(11)He replied, "The man they call Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes. He told me to go to Siloam and wash. So I went and washed, and then I could see."**

**(12)"Where is this man?"** they asked him.

**"I don't know,"** he said.

**Jn 9:1.** *'A man blind from birth'*: This is the only miracle in the Gospels in which the sufferer is said to have been afflicted from his birth.

**Jn 9:2.** *'His disciples asked...'*: When they saw the man born blind, the disciples took the opportunity to put to Jesus a problem with which Jewish thought had always been concerned. The Jews connected suffering and sin. They assumed that wherever there was suffering, somewhere there was sin. *'Who sinned, this man or...?'*: Some of the Jewish theologians in the time of Jesus believed in the pre-existence of the soul. They believed that all the souls existed either in the Garden of Eden, or in the Seventh Heaven, waiting to enter into a body. And they believed that these souls had the possibility to

sin, and that a man's affliction, especially if it was from birth, came from some sin his soul had committed before he was born. '*Or his parents?*': The alternative was that the man's affliction was due to the sins of his parents. In effect the idea that children would inherit the consequences of their parents' sins was deeply embedded into the thought of the Old Testament, as one of the keynotes of the Old Testament is that the sins of the fathers always come upon the children.

**Jn 9:3.** '*Neither...*': Jesus immediately plainly contradicted these beliefs. He did not try to explain the connection of sin and suffering. He said that, in this particular case, this man's affliction came to him to give an opportunity of showing the miracles Yahweh can do. To note that for John the miracles were always a sign of the power of Yahweh; were opportunities for displaying Yahweh's grace. The writers of the other Gospels regarded them as a demonstration of the compassion of Jesus. These are simply two ways of looking at the same thing, as Jesus was following his Father's will.

**Jn 9:4.** '*As long as it is day...*': For Jesus it was true that he had to press on with Yahweh's work in the day, for the night of the Cross lay ahead. But this is true for every man. We are given only a limited time. Whatever we have to do must be done within it. The Christian's duty is to use the time he has -and nobody knows how much it will be- with the service of Yahweh and of his fellow-men.

**Jn 9:5.** '*While I am in the world...*': We have already seen that Yahweh was "The Light" of Israel. And Jesus is "The Light" from Yahweh that lights the way for life of all men. By the other side, both darkness and this world belong to Satan. So Jesus -both when he was physically in the world and afterwards, with his spiritual presence- is "The Light" that lights the darkness of this world. And Jesus' followers reflect the light that comes from him, so they too are "the light of the world."

**Jn 9:6.** '*He spit on the ground...*': This is one of the few miracles in which Jesus is said to have used spittle to effect a cure. The use of spittle in the ancient world was quite common as spittle was believed to possess good curative qualities.

**Jn 9:7.** '*Go...*': After covering the man's eyes with mud, Jesus sent him to wash in the pool of Siloam, one of the landmarks of Jerusalem. And the man believed to Jesus, went, washed and saw.

**Jn 9:8-12.** '*Seen him begging*': Begging was about the only way a blind person of that day could support himself. '*Isn't this...*': In spite of the evidence of having been cured, he had some difficulty in persuading the people that he, the blind from birth, had been healed. But he resolutely confirmed the miracle that Jesus had worked out. '*The man they call Jesus*': The born blind man began by thinking of Jesus as a wonderful man, as he had never met anyone who could do the things Jesus did. Later he will call him a prophet, and finally he will recognize him as the Son of Yahweh.

### ***The Pharisees investigate the healing*** [John 9:13-34]

**(Jn9:13)** *They brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind. (14) Now the day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened the man's eyes was a Sabbath. (15) Therefore the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. "He put mud on my eyes," the man replied, "and I washed, and now I see."*

**(16)** *Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from Yahweh, for he does not keep the Sabbath."*

*But others asked, "How can a sinner do such miraculous signs?" So they were divided.*

(17) Finally they turned again to the blind man, "What have you to say about him? It was your eyes he opened."

The man replied, "He is a prophet."

(18) The Jews still did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they sent for the man's parents. (19) "Is this your son?" they asked. "Is this the one you say was born blind? How is it that now he can see?"

(20) "We know he is our son," the parents answered, "and we know he was born blind. (21) But how he can see now, or who opened his eyes, we don't know. Ask him. He is of age; he will speak for himself." (22) His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews, for already the Jews had decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Christ would be put out of the synagogue. (23) That was why his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."

(24) A second time they summoned the man who had been blind. "Give glory to Yahweh," they said. "We know this man is a sinner."

(25) He replied, "Whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!"

(26) Then they asked him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?"

(27) He answered, "I have told you already and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples, too?"

(28) Then they hurled insults at him and said, "You are this fellow's disciple! We are disciples of Moses! (29) We know that Yahweh spoke to Moses, but as for this fellow, we don't even know where he comes from."

(30) The man answered, "Now that is remarkable! You don't know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes. (31) We know that Yahweh does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly man who does His will. (32) Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. (33) If this man were not from Yahweh, he could do nothing."

(34) To this they replied, "You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!" And they threw him out.

**Jn 9:13.** *'The man who had been blind':* Giving sight to the blind was predicted as a Messianic activity. Thus this miracle was additional evidence that Jesus actually was the Messiah.

**Jn 9:14-15.** *'The day on which...':* It was on the Sabbath day that Jesus had made the mud and healed the man. *'He put mud... now I see':* Undoubtedly Jesus had broken twice the scribal law, by making some mud and by healing a man. By making the mud, he had been guilty of working on the Sabbath -when even the simplest acts constituted work. By healing a man, he had been guilty of giving medical attention on the Sabbath -when medical attention could be given only if life was in actual danger. But even then it had to be only such as to keep the sick or injured from getting worse, not to make him any better.

**Jn 9:16.** *'Some of the Pharisees... Others...':* Some of them thought that their way of serving Yahweh was the only correct one. But some others thought otherwise and recognized that no one doing the things Jesus was doing could be a sinner -a person going against Yahweh.

**Jn 9:17.** *'What have you to say about him?':* It is curious that they put such a question to such a person; this reflected their perplexity. *'A prophet':* When the man was asked his opinion on Jesus, he gave it without hesitation, and said that Jesus was a prophet. This was probably the highest designation of which the man could think. Anyway, his thin-

king about Jesus had already progressed from "man" able of doing wonderful things to "prophet of Yahweh." In effect, in the Old Testament a prophet was often tested by the signs he could produce.

**Jn 9:18.** *'The Jews still did not believe...'*: The Pharisees at first suspected that this was a miracle faked between Jesus and the man. Further, they were well aware that the Scripture recognized that a false prophet could produce false miracles for his own false purposes (Deuteronomy 13:1-5). Anyway, to be sure, they went on with the investigation and called for the testimony of the man's parents.

**Jn 9:19.** *'Is this your son? The one... born blind? How is it...?'*: By asking the man's parents to testify about the blindness of their son, they did want to discover if there was something the man was hiding and the parents knew.

**John 9:20-22.** *'We know...'*: They did testify about the facts -that the man was their son and that he was born blind- but, rightly, they refused to give their personal opinion about what had happened. *'He is of age'*: Their emphasis on the son's responsibility showed their fear of getting involved. They were clearly un-cooperative, but at the same time they were afraid of the Jewish rulers. *'Put out of the synagogue'*: The synagogue authorities had a powerful weapon, the weapon of excommunication, by which a man was shut off from the congregation of Yahweh's people, cut from the center of Jewish community life and from many social relations. Furthermore, any Jew would regard it as shutting him out, not only from the synagogue, but from Yahweh.

**Jn 9:23.** *'That is why...'*: They answered that their son was quite old enough to be a legal witness and, as such, to give his own answers.

**Jn 9:24.** *'Give glory to Yahweh'*: This was a phrase used in cross-examination which really meant: "Speak the truth in the presence and in the name of Yahweh." *'This man is a sinner'*: The Pharisees were so embittered against Jesus that they were prepared to take any action to reach their own ends, and they tried to influence the man with the weight of their authority.

**Jn 9:25.** *'He replied...'*: The man gave a perfect and true reply, showing no shyness of any kind.

**Jn 9:26.** *'Then they asked...'*: They repeated their questions in the hope that the man would in some way contradict himself under the stress of the interrogation.

**Jn 9:27.** *'Do you want to become...'*: An ironic answer which, anyway, shows that the man was already considering himself a disciple of Jesus.

**Jn 9:28.** *'This fellow's disciple'*: Disciple of an heretic, for they had already declared Jesus an heretic and a servant of the Devil. *'Disciples of Moses'*: They considered themselves right, because they followed Moses' Law -and all the scribal rules.

**Jn 9:29.** *'We don't even know...'*: They were declaring the false, because they knew perfectly well Jesus, his origin -the human part of it- and history.

**Jn 9:30-33.** *'The man answered...'*: The man who had been blind presented the Pharisees with an argument which they could not contradict. It was really good reasoning for an unschooled man: "Jesus has done a really wonderful thing; the fact that he has done it means that Yahweh hears him; now Yahweh never hears the prayers of a bad man; therefore Jesus cannot be a bad man." In effect, the fact that Yahweh does not hear the prayers of bad men is a basic thought of the Old Testament.

**Jn 9:34.** *'They replied...'*: They were annoyed because they could not deny the man's argument which was based on Scripture. And so they resorted to insult and abuse. *'Steeped in sin'*: First, they accused the man of being born in sin -in pre-natal sin. *'Threw him out'*: Then, they resorted to the threatened punishment and they expelled him from their

assembly, that is, they excommunicated him. Surely, the man knew quite well what the Pharisees thought of Jesus and that if he decided to come out on Jesus' side he would certainly be excommunicated. But he was grateful to Jesus and made sincerely his statements.

**Spiritual blindness** [John 9:35-41]

**(Jn9:35)** *Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"*

**(36)** *"Who is he, sir?" the man asked. "Tell me so that I may believe in him."*

**(37)** *Jesus said, "You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you."*

**(38)** *Then the man said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshipped him.*

**(39)** *Jesus said, "For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind."*

**(40)** *Some Pharisees who were with him heard him say this and asked, "What? Are we blind too?"*

**(41)** *Jesus said, "If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains."*

**Jn 9:35-37.** *'They had thrown him out':* The man had been excommunicated, expelled from the synagogue. *'When he found him':* In the critical moment, Jesus did not leave the man alone, but he went personally and looked for the man who had shown gratitude and faith in him. *'Do you believe...? You have now seen him':* And so that man was given the great revelation that Jesus was the Son of Yahweh, for it is to the man who is true to him that Jesus most fully reveals himself. The worldly penalty of loyalty may well be persecution and ostracism at the hands of men; but its spiritual reward is a closer relationship with Christ.

**Jn 9:38.** *'Lord... He worshipped him':* The man confirmed his faith and gave Jesus the reverence due to Yahweh's Messiah.

**Jn 9:39.** *'For judgment...':* Even if Jesus did not come for actual judgment, his coming divided people, and this brings in itself a judgment. Whenever a man is confronted with Jesus, with his attitude that man passes a judgment on himself. If he sees in Jesus nothing to like and to admire, then he has condemned himself. If he see in Jesus something wonderful to respond to, then he is on the way to Yahweh. *'The blind will see':* The man who is conscious of his own spiritual blindness, who longs to understand better and to know more, is the man whose eyes can be opened and who can be led more and more deeply into the truth. *'Those who see will become blind':* If a man thinks he knows everything, and is convinced he is spiritually farsighted, he is truly spiritually blind.

**Jn 9:40.** *'Some Pharisees...':* They found incredible that Jesus would consider them spiritually blind.

**Jn 9:41.** *'Jesus said...':* The Pharisees' claim to be farsighted showed their complete unawareness of their spiritual blindness. But their actions were evidence of their blindness. The Pharisees were intellectually privileged people. Now, the more knowledge a man has, the more he is to be condemned if he does not recognize the good when he sees it. If the Pharisees had been brought up in ignorance, they could not have been condemned. Their condemnation came from the fact that they knew so much and they claimed to see so well, and yet failed to recognize Yahweh's Son when he came.



**A crippled woman healed on the Sabbath** [Luke 13:10-17]

**(Lk13:10)** *On a Sabbath Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues, (11) and a woman was there who had been crippled by a spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not straighten up at all. (12) When Jesus saw her, he called her forward and said to her, "Woman, you are set free from your infirmity." (13) Then he put his hands on her, and immediately she straightened up and praised Yahweh.*

**(14)** *Indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, the synagogue ruler said to the people, "There are six days for work. So come and be healed on those days, not on the Sabbath."*

**(15)** *The Lord answered him, "You hypocrites! Doesn't each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or donkey from the stall and lead it out to give it water? (16) Then should not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has kept bound for eighteen long years, be set free on the Sabbath day from what bound her?"*

**(17)** *When he said this, all his opponents were humiliated, but the people were delighted with all the wonderful things he was doing.*

**Lk 13:10.** *'Jesus was teaching...':* This is the last time we heard of Jesus being in a synagogue. It is clear that by this time the Jewish authorities were watching each of his actions and were waiting to attack him whenever they got the chance.

**Lk 13:11.** *'Crippled by a spirit':* At the time, everybody believed that most disorders were caused by evil spirits. The description of the infirmity of this woman suggests that the bones of her spine were rigidly fused together.

**Lk 13:12-13.** *'Set free':* The spirit had been cast out, and the woman was freed from the bond of Satan and from her physical handicap. *'He put his hands':* Physical contact was not necessary to Jesus, but it surely psychologically helped the woman. *'She... praised Yahweh':* It is evident that the woman considered Jesus the Messiah of Yahweh.

**Lk 13:14.** *'Healed on the Sabbath':* A focal point of attack against Jesus was his conduct on the Sabbath. Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, act which legally was work; and therefore he had broken the scribal law on the Sabbath. *'The synagogue ruler':* After Jesus had healed the woman who for eighteen years had not been able to straighten her bent body, the president of the synagogue intervened. He had not even the courage to speak directly to Jesus. He addressed his protest to the people, although it was meant for Jesus. *'There are six days for work...':* The ruler of the synagogue and those like him were more concerned about the observance of their system of petty rules than about helping a person in need. Jesus' action in this matter makes it clear that it is not Yahweh's will that any human being should suffer longer than it is absolutely necessary. If Jesus had postponed the healing of this woman till the following day, no one would have criticized him; but he taught that a person must not be allowed to continue suffering if he or she can be helped immediately.

**Lk 13:15.** *'The Lord answered...':* Jesus confuted his opponents out of their own law. *'Untie his ox...':* In effect, even on the Sabbath it was perfectly legal to take the domestic animals from their stall and to lead them to drink water. The rabbis, who made this rule, had more regards for the needs of the animals than for the needs of the people.

**Lk 13:16.** *'Then should not...?':* Jesus actually declared, "If you can loose a beast from a stall and lead it to the water on the Sabbath day, surely it is right in the sight of Yahweh to loose, on the Sabbath day, this poor woman from her infirmity."

**Lk 13:17.** *'His opponents were humiliated':* Because, in front of all the people attending to the Sabbath worship, Jesus showed that they were not right. *'The people were deligh-*

*ted...'*: Most of the people there were surely interested not so much in the clash between Jesus and the synagogue ruler, as in seeing and commenting all his miracles in favor of normal persons.

***Jesus at a Pharisee's house*** [Luke 14:1-14]

***(Lk14:1)*** One Sabbath, when Jesus went to eat in the house of a prominent Pharisee, he was being carefully watched. ***(2)*** There in front of him was a man suffering from dropsy. ***(3)*** Jesus asked the Pharisees and experts in the law, ***"Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?"*** ***(4)*** But they remained silent. So taking hold of the man, he healed him and sent him away.

***(5)*** Then he asked them, ***"If one of you has a son or an ox that falls into a well on the Sabbath day, will not you immediately pull him out?"*** ***(6)*** And they had nothing to say.

***(7)*** When he noticed how the guests picked the places of honor at the table, he told them this parable: ***(8)*** ***"When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited. (9) If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, 'Give this man your seat.' Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place. (10) But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, 'Friend, move up to a better place.' Then you will be honored in the presence of all your fellow guests. (11) For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."***

***(12)*** Then Jesus said to his host, ***"When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. (13) But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, (14) and you will be blessed. Also they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."***

**Lk 14:1.** *'Jesus went to eat...'*: It is to be noted that Jesus never refused any man's hospitality, especially an enemy's invitation, for he would never miss a chance to try and change a man. *'He was carefully watched'*: The miracle of this passage is one of those performed on the Sabbath day, that only made the Scribes and the Pharisees more certain that Jesus was dangerous and irreligious and that he had to be stopped at all costs.

**Lk 14:2.** *'Dropsy'*: A disease in which watery fluids collect in the tissues and the cavities of the body. It is quite possible that the Pharisee who had invited Jesus purposely had the man with dropsy come and seat in front of Jesus, to see what he would do.

**Lk 14:3.** *'Is it lawful...'*: By asking for their opinion before the miracle, Jesus made it difficult for them to protest afterwards.

**Lk 14:4-6.** *'He healed him'*: Jesus' action was unlawful only according to rabbinic interpretation, not according the true Law of Moses. *'A son or an ox that falls...'*: Open wells were quite common in Palestine, and were not infrequently the cause of accidents. The scribal law allowed to take all the actions necessary to rescue even a beast which had fallen in. Here Jesus actually demanded how, if it was right to help an animal on the Sabbath, it could be wrong to help a man.

**Lk 14:7-11.** *'Do not take the place of honor'*: It was really true that, if a quite undistinguished guest arrived early at a feast and took the top place, and if a more distinguished person then arrived, a most embarrassing situation resulted. *'But... take the lowest place'*: In this case, the man's humility would have gained him all the more honor.

**Lk 14:12-14.** *'When you give...'*: This passage demands an examination of the motives

behind generosity. We can give from a sense of duty, as we pay our taxes. Or from motives of self-interest, consciously or un-consciously regarding it as an investment, a credit in the sight of Yahweh. Or in order to feel superior, in which case we can be cruel, as superiority can hurt the recipient much more than a refusal. Finally, we can give because we only want to help, and this is the only real way to give, for the law of the Kingdom is that, if a man gives to gain reward he will receive none; but if he gives with no thought of reward, his reward is certain. *'Resurrection of the righteous'*: All men will be resurrected when all become righteous. That is, when all recognize Jesus and his saving action.

***The parable of the great banquet*** [Luke 14:15-24]

***(Lk14:15)***When one of those at the table with him heard this, he said to Jesus, "Blessed is the man who will eat at the feast in the Kingdom of Yahweh."

***(16)***Jesus replied, "A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. ***(17)***At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.'

***(18)***But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, 'I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please, excuse me.'

***(19)***Another said, 'I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I'm on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.'

***(20)***Still another said, 'I just got married, so I can't come.'

***(21)***The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.'

***(22)***'Sir,' the servant said, 'what you ordered has been done, but there is still room.'

***(23)***Then the master told his servant, 'Go out to the roads and the country lanes and make them come in, so that my house will be full. ***(24)***I tell you, not one of those men who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.'"

**Lk 14:15.** *'Feast in the Kingdom'*: The Jews had a series of ever-recurring conventional pictures of what would happen when Yahweh would break into history and when the golden days of the new age would arrive. One of these was the picture of the Messianic banquet. On that day Yahweh will give a great feast to his own people at which Leviathan, the sea monster, would be part of the food. The man who spoke to Jesus of the happiness of those who would be guests at that banquet was surely thinking of the Jews, and of the orthodox Jews only, for no Jew would ever have dreamed that Pagans and sinners would find a place at the feast of Yahweh.

**Lk 14:16-17.** *'Jesus replied'*: Jesus used the man's remark as the occasion for warning with a parable that not every Jew would enter the Kingdom of Yahweh. *'Invited many guests'*: In Palestine, when a man decided to make a feast, the feast was announced and the invitations sent out long before; but the actual day was not announced. *'At the time of the banquet'*: When the day of the banquet came and all things were ready, servants were sent out to summon the guests who had already accepted to come. It is clear that, to accept an invitation and then to refuse it when the day came was a serious insult.

**Lk 14:18-20.** *'Make excuses'*: They had accepted the initial invitation, but when the final invitation came, they gave priority to other interests. But none of the reasons given seemed genuine. For example, nobody would have bought a field without first seeing it, nor some oxen without first trying them out.

**Lk 14:21-24.** *'Master. Owner of the house'*: In this parable the master stands for Yahweh. The originally invited guests stand for the Jews. Throughout all their history they had looked forward to the day when Yahweh would break in; and when the day came, they refused His invitation. *'The poor...'*: The men from the streets and alleys of the town stand for the sinners, who welcomed Jesus in a way the orthodox Jews never did. *'Roads and country lanes'*: Those gathered in from the roads and the country lanes stand for the Pagans for whom there was still ample room at the feast of Yahweh. *'Make them come in'*: The servants stand for Jesus' disciples, who have to go all around the world to preach and convert to Jesus Christ all who don't know him. *'Not one of those men who were invited'*: Their refusal to accept Yahweh's invitation would result in the rejection of the orthodox Jews from the feast; that is, from Yahweh's Kingdom.

***Jesus sends out the seventy-two*** [Luke 10:1-11;16-20;23-24]

**(Lk10:1)** *After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. (2)He told them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest field. (3)Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. (4)Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road.*

*(5)When you enter a house, first say, 'Peace to this house.' (6)If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; if not, it will return to you. (7)Stay in that house, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house.*

*(8)When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is set before you. (9)Heal the sick who are there and tell them, 'The Kingdom of Yahweh is near you.' (10)But when you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and say, (11)'Even the dust of your town that sticks to our feet we wipe off against you. Yet be sure of this: The Kingdom of Yahweh is near.'*

*(16)He who listens to you listens to me; he who rejects you rejects me; but he who rejects me rejects Him who sent me."*

*(17)The seventy-two returned with joy and said, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name."*

*(18)He replied, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from Heaven. (19)I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the powers of the enemy; nothing will harm you. (20)However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in Heaven."*

*(23)Then he turned to his disciples and said privately, "Blessed are the eyes that see what you see. (24)For I tell you that many prophets and kings wanted to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it."*

**Lk 10:1.** *'Appointed seventy-two'*: Seventy-two more disciples -other than the Twelve (Jesus sends out the Twelve. Mk 6:6b-13; Mt 10:1,5-42; Lk 9:1-6;12:1-9,11-12). *'Sent them'*: By sending these disciples to prepare the people for his arrival, Jesus quickly covered Judea with his message as thoroughly as he had Galilee. *'Two by two'*: As with the Twelve in Galilee, the purpose of going in pairs had been to bolster the credibility of their teaching -by giving the testimony of two witnesses at a time, as requested by the Law- as well as to provide mutual support during their first trip preaching and healing autonomously.

**Lk 10:2.** *'The harvest is plentiful'*: There were plenty of people, all around, to help by healing them and to whom to announce the Good News of the Kingdom of Yahweh. *'The workers are few'*: Even if seventy-two seems to be a big number of people, the physical needs of the crowds and the necessarily personalized teaching actions were so much time consuming that they were surely not enough. *'Ask the Lord...'*: One of the duty of the disciples was and is to prepare other disciples who can go on with their work.

**Lk 10:3.** *'Lambs among wolves'*: This was their first autonomous missionary trip, and they were completely without experience and defenseless against the people who would oppose them.

**Lk 10:4.** *'Do not take...'*: They were to travel light, without extra money, luggage, or sandals. As for the Twelve, in all these instructions Jesus was once again using terms which were familiar to the Jews. The Talmud said that no one had to go to the Temple Mount with staff, shoes, or bag of money. When a man entered the Temple he had to be free of whatever had to do with business and worldly affairs. So, Jesus was saying to his men, "You must treat the whole world for what it is, the Temple of Yahweh." *'Do not greet...'*: They were not to stop along the way to visit relatives and friends with whom to exchange the customary lengthy greetings -which sometimes could take even few days. This was not an instruction to discourtesy; but meant that their mission was urgent and had full priority.

**Lk 10:5.** *'First say, Peace...'*: Their mission was of peace, and so it had to be their attitude, from the first moment they contacted a new family.

**Lk 10:6.** *'If a man of peace...'*: These are practical advices. When they entered a city or a village, they were to take residence in the house of peaceful people having good reputation. By staying with people with a bad reputation, they would seriously affect their credibility and, as a consequence, the success of their mission. If the people of the house they entered were not proper, they had to look, quickly, for proper ones.

**Lk 10:7.** *'Stay in that house...'*: They must not be in the work for what they could get out of it; they had to eat what was offered them and must not move from house to house seeking better and more comfortable quarters. *'The worker deserves...'*: Once again, the Jews would recognize this concept, because they applied it to the teaching activity of the Rabbis. Anyway, here there is a double truth; the man of Yahweh must never be overconcerned with material things, but the people of Yahweh must never fail in their duty to give a reasonable support to the worker sent by Yahweh.

**Lk 10:8.** *'When you enter a town...'*: This verse carries the same concepts as verses 10:5-7.

**Lk 10:9.** *'Heal the sick... and tell them...'*: Their first action had to be focused on improving the physical conditions of the people they were meeting. After that it would be surely easier to go on preaching and presenting the Good News of the Kingdom.

**Lk 10:10-11.** *'But... when you are not welcomed... Even the dust of your town...'*: Hospitality was a sacred duty in the East. When a stranger entered a village, it was the duty of the village to offer hospitality. The picture of the disciples who, if hospitality was refused, must shake off the dust of that place from their feet when leaving, was a formal pictorial form of denial stating that there could be no fellowship between the not-accepted disciples and the people of that village. This does not mean that those people had to be abandoned as being outside the message of the Gospel and beyond the reach of grace. The instruction given was simply due to the time factor, which was short. As many people as possible had to hear the proclamation of the Kingdom; there was no time then to argue with the disputatious and to seek to win the stubborn; that would come later. At

that moment the disciples had to tour the country quickly; therefore they had to move out when there was no immediate welcome for the message they brought. *'Yet be sure of this...'*: But even the people who were not willing to receive them and their message did not have to doubt that the Kingdom of Yahweh was quite close.

**Lk 10:16.** *'He who listens... He who rejects...'*: The Jews always felt that to receive a person's envoy or messenger was the same as to receive the person himself. So, if a man is a true man of Yahweh, to receive him is to receive Jesus, who sent him; and to receive Jesus is to receive Yahweh, who sent him.

**Lk 10:17.** *'The seventy-two returned...'*: When they returned they were radiant with the deeds they had worked out in the name of Jesus.

**Lk 10:18.** *'I saw Satan fall...'*: This phrase, clearly difficult to understand, has a number of meanings. As the demons were driven out by the disciples, it means that Satan was suffering defeat. Then, it means that Jesus knew that the deathblow to Satan and all his powers had been struck, however long his final conquest might be delayed. Equally well, Jesus' phrase was a warning against pride. It was for pride that Satan rebelled against Yahweh and was cast out of Heaven where once had been the chief of all the angels. So, Jesus was saying to the seventy-two, "You have had your triumphs; now keep yourselves from pride, for once even the chief of all the angels fell to pride and was cast from Heaven."

**Lk 10:19.** *'Snakes and scorpions... All the powers of the enemy'*: Snakes and scorpions represent evil spirits; the enemy is Satan.

**Lk 10:20.** *'However...'*: Jesus went on to warn his disciples against the risk of pride and over-confidence. It was true that they were given plenty of powers, but their greatest glory was that there was a place reserved for them in the Kingdom of Yahweh. It will always remain true that a man's greatest glory is not what he has done but what Yahweh has done for him. Pride bars from Heaven; humility is the passport for the admission to the presence of Yahweh.

**Lk 10:23-24.** *'Then he... said...'*: In other words, Jesus said, "I am the One all the prophets and the saints and the kings were anxiously expecting." Jesus is the consummation of all history, the final end of Yahweh's revelation to men. In him and with him finally men met Yahweh.

### **The parable of the good Samaritan** [Luke 10:25-37]

**(Lk10:25)** *On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"*

**(26)** *"What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?"*

**(27)** *He answered: "'You'll be fond of Yahweh your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind;' and 'You'll be fond of your neighbor as of yourself.'"*

**(28)** *"You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live."*

**(29)** *But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"*

**(30)** *In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. (31) A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. (32) So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. (33) But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. (34) He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put*

*the man on his donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. (35)The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expenses you may have.'*

*(36)Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"*

*(37)The expert of the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him."*

*Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."*

**Lk 10:25.** *'Expert in the law':* A scholar well versed in Scripture, who asked a classical question.

**Lk 10:26.** *'What is written...? How do you read it?':* The scribe's question was serious and, seriously, Jesus asked him to give his interpretation of what was written in the Scriptures.

**Lk 10:27.** *'You'll be fond of Yahweh... your neighbor...':* The words referring to Yahweh are from Deuteronomy 6:5, to which the Scribe added those from Leviticus 19:18.

**Lk 10:28.** *'You answered correctly. Do this and you will live':* To be fond of Yahweh and to be fond of all men is the actual essence of Christianity. Nothing more -in terms of laws and rules- is needed.

**Lk 10:29.** *'Who is my neighbor?':* With their passion for definitions the Rabbis sought to define who a man's neighbor was; and mostly they confined this definition to the Jews only.

**Lk 10:30.** *'From Jerusalem to Jericho':* Jerusalem is 2,500 feet (760 m) above sea-level; the Dead Sea, near which Jericho stood, is 800 feet (240 m) below sea-level. So then, in less than 20 miles (32 km), this road dropped 3,300 feet (1,000 m). It was a notoriously dangerous road, narrow, full of rocky defiles and of sudden turnings which made it ideal for brigands. *'A man was going...':* When Jesus told this story, he was speaking about something that was often happening on that road. This traveler had been very imprudent. People carrying goods or valuables had always to travel in caravans, for the safety of traveling in a big group.

**Lk 10:31-33.** *'A priest':* Probably, the priest thought that the man was dead. To touch him would mean losing his turn of duty in the Temple, because he who touched a dead man was unclean for seven days (Numbers 19:11), and he refused to risk that. The Temple and his liturgy meant more to him than the pain of a man, so he set the claims of ceremonial law above those of charity. *'A Levite':* He too passed the man by the other side of the road. Sometimes the bandits used a decoy who would act the part of a wounded man and, when a traveler stopped there, the others would all rush upon him. The Levite took no such a risk. *'A Samaritan':* This man seems to have been a commercial traveler who was a regular visitor to the inn. And he stopped there, and gave to the injured man all the possible medical attention. *'Priest... Levite... Samaritan':* It is significant that the person Jesus commended was neither the religious leader nor the lay associate, but a hated foreigner. Between Samaritans and Jews there was open hostility, but Jesus always asserted that kindness doesn't have to know national boundaries.

**Lk 10:34.** *'He went to him...':* Only the Samaritan was prepared to help. Perhaps he was an enemy and an heretic, but there is no doubt that plenty of affection for Yahweh and for all men was in his heart.

**Lk 10:35.** *'The next day...':* Clearly, the credit of this man was good and the innkeeper did trust him. *'Two denarii':* Enough to keep the injured man up to two weeks in the inn.

**Lk 10:36.** *'Which... was a neighbor to the man...?':* Jesus' question now became: "Who proved to be the good neighbor by his actions?"

**Lk 10:37.** *'The expert... replied':* Clearly, he had no other possibility but to recognize that it was the Samaritan. *'Go and do likewise':* Jesus' command was his final answer to the initial question of the Rabbi (Lk 10:25). This passage teaches that we must help a man even when he has brought his trouble on himself, as that traveler had done. Any man of any nation who is in need is our neighbor. And our help must be practical and not consist merely in feeling sorry. Compassion, to be real, must end in actual facts.

**At the home of Martha and Mary** [Luke 10:38-42]

**(Lk10:38)** *As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. (39)She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. (40)But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be done. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"*

**(41)"Martha, Martha,"** *the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, (42)but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."*

**Lk 10:38-42.** *'A village':* It was Bethany, at about two miles (3.5 km) from Jerusalem, where the house of Mary and Martha was. *'Martha... had a sister called Mary':* These verses show the two different temperaments of Mary and Martha. The first was naturally full of activity, the other was quiet. And there is no right or wrong in this as Yahweh did not make everyone alike. But these verses show something more -they show the wrong type of kindness. When Jesus came to their home, for the two women it was a great day; and Martha was eager to celebrate it by laying out the best. So she rushed and cooked and fussed; and that was precisely what Jesus did not want. All he wanted was quiet, few hours of calm away from the demanding crowds; and that is what Mary gave him and Martha, in her kindness, did her best to destroy. So often we want to be kind -but we want to be kind in our way; and should it happen that our way is not the necessary way, we take offense and think that we are not appreciated. *'Only one thing is needed':* Jesus actually said: "I don't want a big meal with plenty of guests; all I want is the simplest meal, one course only, for the few of us, and some quiet time." It is clear that Mary understood and Martha did not.

**The shepherd and his flock** [John 10:1-21]

**(Jn10:1)"I tell you the truth, the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. (2)The man who enters by the gate is the shepherd of his sheep. (3)The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. (4)When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. (5)But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice." (6) Jesus used this figure of speech, but they did not understand what he was telling them.**

**(7)Therefore Jesus said again, "I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. (8) All who ever came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. (9)I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture. (10)The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.**

**(11)I am the Good Shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.**



*(12)The hired hand is not the shepherd who own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. (13)The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.*

*(14)I am the Good Shepherd. I know my sheep and my sheep know me (15)-just as the Father knows me and I know the Father- and I lay down my life for the sheep. (16)I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. (17)The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life -only to take it up again. (18)No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father."*

*(19)At these words the Jews were again divided. (20)Many of them said, "He is demon-possessed and raving mad. Why listen to him?"*

*(21)But others said, "These are not the sayings of a man possessed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?"*

**Jn 10:1.** *'Sheep pen':* A roofless court surrounded by walls and with only one entrance. There were two kinds of sheep pens. In the villages there were communal sheep pens where all the village flocks were sheltered when they returned home at night. The entrance of these pens was protected by a strong gate. But when the sheep were out on the hills in the warm season and did not return at night to the village, they were kept into pens which were just open spaces enclosed by a wall. In them there was an opening by which the sheep came in and went out, but there was no door. At night the shepherd himself lay down across the opening, so that no sheep could go out. *'The man who... climbs in':* To steal the sheep, the thieves had to enter the pen by climbing the wall.

**Jn 10:2.** *'Shepherd':* Palestine was much more a pastoral than an agricultural country. The shepherd's life was very hard, and he was never off duty as the flock could not be left without supervision. The grass was scarce, so the sheep tended to wander around, and they had to be constantly watched. The shepherd's life was also dangerous, because he had also to guard the flock against wild animals; and there were always thieves and robbers ready to steal his sheep. The picture of the shepherd is woven into the language and imagery of the Bible. Yahweh himself was called the "Shepherd of Israel," and He had given great responsibility to the leaders ("shepherds") of Israel; which they failed to respect. Yahweh denounced these false shepherds and promised to provide the true shepherd, the Messiah, to care for the sheep. So this protective picture passed in the New Testament, and Jesus became the Good Shepherd.

**Jn 10:3-4.** *'The watchman':* A man in charge of a communal pen, where several flocks were kept. *'His voice':* The sheep really recognized the voice of their own shepherd and responded only to him. In Palestine the sheep were largely kept for their wool, not for their meat; so they were often with the shepherd for many years. *'His own sheep':* The shepherd did call and drive to the pasture only those that belonged to him. *'He goes on ahead':* The Palestinian shepherd led his sheep (he did not drive them), and the sheep followed him.

**Jn 10:5.** *'Will never follow a stranger':* It is true that the sheep knew the voice of their habitual shepherd and understood his commands; and that they would never answer the voice of a stranger.

**Jn 10:6.** *'They did not understand':* The Jews did not understand the meaning of the story of the Good Shepherd. So in the following verses Jesus, plainly applied the whole story to himself.

**Jn 10:7.** *'I am the gate'*: As seen in Jn 10:1, in the most literal sense, the shepherd was the pen gate. And that was what Jesus thought of.

**Jn 10:8.** *'All who ever came before me'*: Here Jesus referred to the "false shepherds" like the Pharisees and the chief priests, not to the true prophets of the Old Testament. *'But the sheep did not listen to them'*: Here Jesus referred to those adventurers who were continually arising in Palestine and promising that, if the people would follow them, they would bring in Israel's Golden Age. Fortunately, the Jews did never follow them in mass.

**Jn 10:9.** *'I am the gate... Whoever enters... will be saved'*: Through Jesus, and through Jesus alone, men can find access to Yahweh, as Jesus alone opens the way to Yahweh. Until he came men could think of Yahweh only as, at best, a stranger and as, at worst, an enemy. But Jesus came to show men what Yahweh is really like, and to open the way to Him. *'Come in and go out'*: Here, Jesus used a well-known Hebrew phrase. To be able to come and go unmolested was the Jewish way of describing a life that is absolutely safe, in a place where there is absolute peace, and where the forces of law and order are perfectly effective.

**Jn 10:10.** *'The thief comes... I have come...'*: Jesus was saying: "There have been men who claimed that they were leaders sent to you from Yahweh. They believed in war, murder, assassination. Their way only leads for ever farther away from Yahweh. On the contrary, my way is the way of peace and life; it leads for ever closer to Yahweh." *'They may have life... to the full'*: The Greek phrase used for "have it to the full" means "to have a superabundance of everything." To be a follower of Jesus, is to have a superabundance of life, a "full life."

**Jn 10:11.** *'I am the Good Shepherd'*: Sometimes the true shepherd had to risk his life, as when thieves and robbers came to steal the flock. *'Lays down his life'*: Surely, a Palestinian shepherd might risk danger for his sheep, but he surely tried to come through alive. But Jesus said that he, as the Good Shepherd, will also die for his sheep (Jn 10:15).

**Jn 10:12-13.** *'Hired hand'*: The hired shepherd was interested only in his wage, not in sheep. In time of danger he would run away and abandon the flock to the predators. On the contrary, a real shepherd, who had been sent out to look after the flock from an early age, was accustomed to think of the sheep before he thought of himself. *'Wolf'*: In Palestine, wolves were a serious threat to the flocks.

**Jn 10:14-15.** *'I am the Good Shepherd'*: Jesus was the good shepherd who was so fond of his sheep that for their safety he would risk, and one day give, his life. Here, the Greek word used for "good" is "kalos" which, more than "efficiency" and "fidelity," means "benevolence." *'I know... my sheep know me...'*: Between Jesus and his followers there is a deep mutual knowledge, like that of the Father and the Son. *'I lay down my life ...'*: This is the fact of central importance. The flock is the Church of Christ; which can be attacked from outside, from the wolves and the robbers. But it can even get trouble from inside, from the false shepherd. The second case is far the worse; because if the shepherd is faithful and good, there is a strong defense against the attacks from the outside; but if the shepherd is faithless and a mercenary, the enemies from outside can penetrate into the pen -the Church- and steal the flock.

**Jn 10:16.** *'Other sheep'*: The Jews believed that they were Yahweh's chosen people and that Yahweh had no use for any other nation. But here Jesus said that there will come a day when all men will know him as their shepherd, because they already belonged to him, though they had not yet been brought to him. *'One flock and one shepherd'*: The unity of the flock comes from the fact that, at a certain point, all will hear the word of

Jesus, and all will obey to him, believing in him and in his saving action. The fact that there will be only one flock does not mean that there will be only one Church denomination, only one method of worship, only one form of ecclesiastical administration. But it does mean that all the different churches (denominations) will be -and are- united by a common loyalty to Jesus Christ.

**Jn 10:17-18.** *'The reason my Father...':* Jesus saw his whole life as an act of obedience to Yahweh. Yahweh had given him a task to accomplish, and he was prepared to carry it out, even if it meant his death. *'I lay down my life... to take it up again':* Jesus always saw the Cross and the glory together. He never doubted that he must die, and he never doubted that he would rise again, because he had faith in Yahweh and was sure that Yahweh would never abandon him. *'No one takes it from me...':* Jesus' death was entirely voluntary. He was not the victim of circumstances; he laid down his life because he chose to do so.

**Jn 10:19-21.** *'The Jews were... divided':* The people who listened to Jesus on this occasion were confronted with a dilemma; either Jesus was a megalomaniac madman, or he was really the Son of Yahweh. For the Jews, there was no escape from that choice. But the deeds of Jesus were not the deeds of a mad-man; as some of the Jews said, a madman would not be able to give back their sight to the blind.

***The unbelief of the Jews*** [John 10:22-42]

*(Jn10:22)Then came the Feast of Dedication at Jerusalem. It was winter, (23)and Jesus was in the Temple area walking in Solomon's Colonnade. (24)The Jews gathered around him, saying, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly."*

*(25)Jesus answered, "I did tell you, but you do not believe. The miracles I do in my Father's name speak for me, (26)but you do not believe because you are not my sheep. (27)My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. (28)I give eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. (29) My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. (30)I and the Father are one."*

*(31)Again the Jews picked up stones to stone him, (32)but Jesus said to them, "I have shown you many great miracles from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?"*

*(33)"We are not stoning you for any of these," replied the Jews, "but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be as Yahweh."*

*(34)Jesus answered to them, "Is it not written in your Law, 'I have said you are gods'? (35)If he called them 'gods,' to whom the word of Yahweh came -and the Scripture cannot be broken- (36)what about the one whom the Father set apart as His very own and sent into the world? Why then do you accuse me of blasphemy because I said, 'I am Yahweh's Son'? (37)Do not believe me unless I do what my Father does. (38)But if I do it, even though you do not believe me, believe the miracles, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father." (39)Again they tried to seize him, but he escaped their grasp.*

*(40)Then Jesus went back across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing in the early days. Here he stayed (41)and many people came to him. They said, "Though John never performed a miraculous sign, all that John said about this man was true." (42)And in that place many believed in Jesus.*

**Jn 10:22.** *'Feast of the Dedication'*: It fell at the end of December and was the latest of the great Jewish feasts to be founded. It was also called "The Feast of Lights" because, for that occasion, there were great illuminations in the Temple. At the end of the Syrian occupation of Israel, which began in the year 165 BC, the Temple was cleansed, purified, and dedicated again to Yahweh after three years of pagan profanation. The Feast of the Dedication was instituted to commemorate that fact, and it was sometimes even called the "Memorial of the Purification of the Temple."

**Jn 10:23.** *'Solomon's Colonnade'*: The first court in the Temple was the Court of the Pagans. Along two sides of it ran two colonnades called the Royal Porch and Solomon's Porch.

**Jn 10:24.** *'How long...'*: Behind this question there were two attitudes of mind. There were those who genuinely wished to know. And there were others who asked the question as a trap. They wished to bring Jesus to make a statement which could be twisted either into a charge of blasphemy -which their own courts could deal with- or into a charge of insurrection -with which the Roman Governor would deal. *'If you are the Christ...'*: Theirs was a critical question, but it was not easy to answer because of the idea of Messiahship they had.

**Jn 10:25.** *'I did tell you...'*: Jesus' answer was that he had already told them who he was. His words, the very accent of authority with which he spoke, the way in which he abrogated the old law and put his own teaching in its place, were a claim that Yahweh was speaking in him, that he was the Anointed One of Yahweh. *'The miracles I do...'*: Further to his words, there were his deeds, which corresponded to Isaiah's dream of the Golden Age, when the blind, the deaf, the dumb, and the lame will be healed (Isaiah 35:5-6).

**Jn 10:26.** *'But... you are not my sheep'*: The great majority of the Jews had not accepted Jesus' claims; were not Jesus' followers.

**Jn 10:27.** *'My sheep listen...'*: As already seen, in Palestine the sheep knew their own shepherd's special call and answered it; similarly, only the men who listen to Jesus are part of his flock.

**Jn 10:28.** *'I give eternal life...'*: Though most of the Jews did not accept Jesus, some did; and to them Jesus promised that, by accepting him as Master and becoming members of his flock, they would know the splendor and the magnificence of the life of Yahweh. For them death would not be the end, but the beginning; they would know the glory of eternal life. *'No one can snatch them out of my hand'*: This does not mean that Jesus' followers would be saved from sorrow, suffering, and physical death; but that nobody will have the power to jeopardize and take their eternal life in the Kingdom of Yahweh.

**Jn 10:29.** *'My Father, who has given them to me'*: Jesus had just been speaking about his sheep and his flock; he had just been saying that no one will ever take them from him, that he is the shepherd who will keep the sheep safe for ever. But he did not stop there, and said that it was his Father who gave him his sheep; and both he and his sheep were in his Father's hand. Jesus was sure of himself because he was sure of Yahweh; he was confident in himself because he was confident in Yahweh.

**Jn 10:30.** *'I and the Father are one'*: This unity was due to their deep bond of love, and the proof of his love was Jesus' obedience to the Father. Jesus was and is "one" with Yahweh -in complete spiritual communion- because he obeyed and loved Him as no one ever did. Similarly, the Christians, when they are bound by affection and obey to the words of Jesus Christ, are "one" with each other and, consequently, with Jesus and

with Yahweh -that is, in complete spiritual communion with all men, with Jesus, and with Yahweh.

**Jn 10:31.** *'Picked up stones'*: To the Jews Jesus' statement that he and the Father were one was blasphemy, for which the Jewish law made compulsory a death penalty by stoning. So they physically made preparations to stone Jesus.

**Jn 10:32.** *'Jesus said to them...'*: Jesus reminded them that he was spending all his days doing acts of deep affection; healing the sick, feeding the hungry, comforting the sorrowing. And that all his deeds were due to the power coming from Yahweh. So, why did they wish to condemn him?

**Jn 10:33.** *'Blasphemy'*: The Jewish leaders understood and accepted that all Jesus' deeds were due to powers coming from Yahweh, but their preconceptions prevented them from accepting him as the Son of Yahweh.

**Jn 10:34-36.** *'Your Law'*: In its strictest sense the term "Law" meant the Pentateuch, but it was often used, as here, for the whole Old Testament. *'I have said you are gods'*: To meet their attack Jesus used a purely Jewish argument which is quite difficult for us to understand. He quoted Asaph's Psalm 82:6, which was a warning to unjust judges to cease from unjust ways and defend the poor and the innocent. The judges were called "gods" because they were commissioned by Yahweh to judge men. In a number of passages the Scripture said that the men who were especially commissioned to some task by Yahweh (judges, rulers, or other leaders) were "gods." In effect, the Hebrew word translated "judges" is "elohim," which means "gods." *'Jesus answered'*: He said: "In the old days it was possible for the Scripture to speak of judges as gods, because they were commissioned by Yahweh to bring His truth and His justice into the world. Now, I have been set apart for a special task; I have been sent into the world by Yahweh; how can you then object if I call myself the Son of Yahweh? I am only doing what the Scripture already does." This is one of those biblical arguments the force of which is difficult for us to feel; but which to a Jewish rabbi would have been entirely convincing.

**Jn 10:37-38.** *'Do not believe me unless...'*: Jesus went on and invited them to make the final test. He said: "I do not ask you to accept my words. But I do ask you to accept my deeds." A word is something about which a man can argue against; but a deed is something beyond argument. *'Believe the miracles'*: Jesus' miracles testified about the communion between him and the Father.

**Jn 10:39.** *'They tried to seize him'*: It is not clear if it was for trial or to take him out for stoning. *'He escaped'*: John does not say why they failed, but it is clear that Jesus could not be killed before the appointed time.

**Jn 10:40.** *'Jesus went back...'*: For Jesus the time was running out; and he desired some quietness before the final struggle. So he retired to the other side of the Jordan, and went to the place where John had been accustomed to baptize, the place where he himself had been baptized.

**Jn 10:41-42.** *'Many people came to him. They said...'*: Those who went to see Jesus on the far side of the Jordan, they too thought of John. They remembered that John had spoken with the words of a prophet, but that he had never done mighty deeds; and they saw that there was quite a difference between Jesus and John; to John's proclamation Jesus added Yahweh's power. *'Many believed...'*: Many of those who had looked on John as a prophet, now saw that what John had foretold of Jesus was true, and they believed in Jesus Christ.

***The death of Lazarus*** [John 11:1-16]

**(Jn11:1)** Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. **(2)** This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair. **(3)** So the sisters sent word to Jesus, "Lord, the one you are fond of is sick."

**(4)** When he heard this, Jesus said, "**This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for Yahweh's glory so that Yahweh's Son may be glorified through it.**" **(5)** Jesus was fond of Martha, her sister and Lazarus. **(6)** Yet when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days.

**(7)** Then he said to his disciples, "**Let us go back to Judea.**"

**(8)** "But Rabbi," they said, "a short while ago the Jews tried to stone you, and yet you are going back there?"

**(9)** Jesus answered, "**Are there not twelve hours of daylight? A man who walks by day will not stumble, for he sees by this world's light. (10) It is when he walks by night that he stumbles, for he has no light.**"

**(11)** After he had said this, he went on to tell them, "**Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up.**"

**(12)** His disciples replied, "Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better." **(13)** Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep.

**(14)** So then he told them plainly, "**Lazarus is dead, (15) and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so you may believe. But let us go to him.**"

**(16)** Then Thomas (called Didymus) said to the rest of the disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

**Jn 11:1.** 'Lazarus': John gives all the references to identify this man and the members of his family (At the home of Martha and Mary. Lk 10:38-42). The name Lazarus means "Yahweh is my help."

**Jn 11:2.** 'Mary': Here John, who wrote his Gospel many years later, anticipates a fact happened later (Jesus anointed at Bethany. Mk 14:3-9; Mt 26:6-13; Jn 12:2-11).

**Jn 11:3.** 'Sent word...': Jesus was in Perea, across the Jordan. 'The one you are fond of': Even if Lazarus was not one of the group of his disciples, it is clear that their relationship of friendship must have been very close.

**Jn 11:4.** 'This sickness will not end in death': Thus predicting the raising of Lazarus, since Jesus already knew of his death and he knew that he had the power to bring Lazarus back to life. 'For Yahweh's glory so that...': Yahweh's Son would be glorified through what he would do for Lazarus, because this miracle displays the glory of Yahweh (who alone can raise the dead) in Jesus.

**Jn 11:5.** 'Jesus was fond of...': Another declaration of the close friendship between Jesus and that family.

**Jn 11:6.** 'He stayed where he was...': It looks strange that John pointed to Jesus staying two whole days where he was after receiving the news about Lazarus' sickness. But John always shows Jesus taking action entirely on his own initiative and not on the persuasion of anyone else. And, in this particular case, Jesus wanted his action to have a specific, un-doubtable effect, clear to everybody.

**Jn 11:7.** 'Let us go...': At the appropriate time, Jesus moved as the Father directed, not as people (here, Mary and Martha) wished.

**Jn 11:8.** 'But Rabbi...': When Jesus finally announced that he was going to Judea -to Bethany-, his disciples were surprised and worried. They reminded him that last time he

was there the Jewish authorities had tried to find a way to kill him. To go to Judea at that time seemed to them -and indeed humanly speaking it was- a sure way to get killed. **Jn 11:9-10.** *'Are there not twelve hours...'*: The Jewish day, like the Roman day, was divided in twelve equal hours, from sunrise to sunset. So, the length of an hour varied, during the year, according to the length of the day. Now, the length of each particular day is fixed, nothing will shorten or lengthen it, and its twelve hours will go on no matter what should happen. Similarly, in Yahweh's economy of time a man has his day -his life- whether it be short or long. And in this personal day, in these 12 hours of life, there is time enough for everything that particular man should do. Consequently, there is no need for a rushed haste. But, on the other hand, this day has a fixed duration -there are only 12 hours- which cannot be extended; therefore, time cannot be wasted. For each man there is time enough, but not too much; and it must be used at the best. *'A man who walks by day...'*: Other than the physical meaning (it is dangerous to walk in the darkness), Jesus' phrase means that a man must finish his work within the duration of his physical life, for when death comes the work has to be completed. So Jesus said: "Finish your greatest work, get yourself right with Yahweh while you have life in this world, for the time will come when for you, too, death will come, and then it will be too late."

**Jn 11:11.** *'Lazarus... fallen asleep'*: The usual euphemism for "dead." *'To wake him up'*: Jesus knew he had the power to call Lazarus back to physical life.

**Jn 11:12-13.** *'If he sleeps...'*: To the disciples that sounded good news, for there is no better medicine than sleep. *'Death... natural sleep'*: They were wrong, because the actual meaning of Jesus' words was "dead."

**Jn 11:14.** *'Lazarus is dead...'*: Jesus had to tell them clearly that Lazarus was really dead.

**Jn 11:15.** *'For your sake...'*: Lazarus' death was a good thing for them, because it would produce an event which would strengthen their faith.

**Jn 11:16.** *'Thomas... said...'*: At that moment the disciples might well have refused to follow Jesus; they were all feeling that to go so near to Jerusalem was to go to their deaths. But they did not refuse, and one of them, Thomas, spoke for all: "Let us also go..." We usually remember Thomas for his doubting, but it is clear that he was also capable of devotion and courage.

### **Jesus comforts the sisters** [John 11:17-37]

*(Jn11:17)On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. (18)Bethany was less than fifteen stadia from Jerusalem, (19)and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. (20)When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home.*

*(21)"Lord," Martha said to Jesus, "if you had been here, my brother would not have died. (22)But I know that even now Yahweh will give you whatever you ask."*

*(23)Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again."*

*(24)Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."*

*(25)Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; (26)and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"*

*(27)"Yes, Lord," she told him, "I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of Yahweh, who was to come into the world."*

(28) *And after she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside. "The Teacher is here," she said, "and is asking for you." (29) When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him. (30) Now Jesus had not yet entered the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. (31) When the Jews who had been with Mary in the house, comforting her, noticed how quickly she got up and went out, they followed her, supposing she was going to the tomb to mourn there.*

(32) *When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, "Lord, if you had been there, my brother would not have died."*

(33) *When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. (34) "Where have you laid him?" he asked.*

*"Come and see, Lord," they replied.*

(35) *Jesus wept.*

(36) *Then the Jews said, "See how he was fond of him!"*

(37) *But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"*

**Jn 11:17.** *'Already... in the tomb':* In Palestine the burial followed death as quickly as possible. *'Four days':* In fact, Lazarus must have died shortly after the messenger left Bethany, accounting for the "four days;" one day for the journey of the messenger, the two days when Jesus remained where he was, and a day for Jesus' journey from Perea to Bethany.

**Jn 11:18.** *'Less than fifteen stadia':* About 2 miles; 3.2 km.

**Jn 11:19.** *'Many Jews had come...':* It was a duty for friends to come and express their sorrow to the relatives of the one who had died. In Jewish customs, deep mourning lasted for seven days, of which the first three were days of weeping. This week of deep mourning was followed by thirty days of lighter mourning. So, when Jesus found a crowd in the house of Bethany, he found what anyone would expect to find in a Jewish house in mourning.

**Jn 11:20.** *'Martha... went out to meet him':* Here, too, Martha was true to her character. In 'At the house of Martha and Mary' (Lk 10:38-42), Martha was shown as the one who liked action, and Mary as the one whose instinct was to sit still. It was so here. As soon as it was announced that Jesus was coming near, Martha was up to meet him, for she could not sit still, but Mary lingered behind.

**Jn 11:21.** *'Martha said...':* When Martha met Jesus, still out of Bethany, she spoke with her heart more than through her lips; half with a reproach that she could not keep back, and half with a faith that nothing could shake. She actually said, "When you got our message, why didn't you come at once? If you had come in time, Lazarus would still be alive. And now it's too late."

**Jn 11:22.** *'But I know...':* The Jews believed that the soul remained near the body for three days after death in the hope of returning to it. So, Lazarus' family and friends obviously thought that, after four days, all hope was gone and that Lazarus was irrevocably dead. Anyway still Martha hoped that Jesus could do something, in spite of the fact that more than three days had passed from death. Martha's words were words of faith, of a faith which defied the facts and the experiences of daily life.

**Jn 11:23.** *'Jesus said...':* Here, Jesus made reference to the final, universal, resurrection. He did not speak of the possibility of raising in that moment Lazarus from physical death.



**Jn 11:24.** *'I know...'*: Martha confirmed her faith in the belief of the life to come.

**Jn 11:25-26.** *'Jesus said...'*: Jesus suddenly said something which brought a new meaning to the belief in the final resurrection and in the eternal life. *'I am the resurrection and the life'*: It is clear that Jesus was not speaking in terms of physical life for, physically speaking, it is not true that the men who believe in him will never die. Here Jesus was speaking of the death caused by sin. He was saying, "Even if a man (either he believes in me or not) is dead in sin, I will make him spiritually alive for ever (from the moment -in this life or in the life to come- he repents and believes in me)." Furthermore, Jesus was not only saying that he gives resurrection and life; but that in some way these are identified with him, so that spiritual death is impossible for he who believes in him. Jesus brought into life the certainty that physical death is not the end of everything; that it is a gate to another kind of life. He who believes in Jesus Christ, spiritually, will never die.

**Jn 11:27.** *'I believe'*: Martha is always remembered for her shortcoming (At the home of Martha and Mary. Lk 10:38-42), but she was also a woman of deep faith, as her declaration shows.

**Jn 11:28-30.** *'Mary... got up quickly...'*: Mary left the house only because requested by Jesus, who was waiting for her outside of Bethany.

**Jn 11:31.** *'To mourn there'*: Wailing at a tomb was common, and the family's friends immediately thought this was in Mary's mind. And, because they followed her, Jesus got a number of witnesses to his miracle.

**Jn 11:32.** *'Lord...'*: Mary's greeting came with exactly the same tone of reproach mixed to faith as that of Martha (Jn 11:21). If only Jesus had come in time, Lazarus would still be alive. Obviously, even if Mary had plenty of faith in the healing power of Jesus, she did not even consider the possibility of Jesus raising now Lazarus from death.

**Jn 11:33.** *'Weeping'*: Mary and all the family's friends were weeping. Both times the Greek word used for "weeping" denotes a loud expression of grief. This would be no gentle shedding of tears; it would be almost hysterical wailing and shrieking, for it was the Jewish point of view that the more unrestrained the weeping, the more honor was paid to the dead. *'He was deeply moved'*: Once again John gives the picture of Jesus full of anguish as he shared the anguish of his friends. Here, it is important to remember that John's Gospel was written for the Greek, expressly on the theme that in Jesus we can see the mind and the attitude of Yahweh. Now, for the Greek a primary characteristic of the highest God was what they called "apatheia," which means total inability to feel any emotion whatsoever. But Jesus, who represents the mind and the sentiments of Yahweh, gave a very different picture; he showed a God whose heart is full of anguish for the anguish of his people, a God who cares for his creatures. To the Greek readers, the sentence "Jesus was deeply moved..." would be the most astonishing thing in an astonishing story. That the Son of Yahweh could weep would be almost beyond their understanding.

**Jn 11:34.** *'Where have you...'*: Jesus had come to Bethany to rise Lazarus from physical death (Jn 11:11). So, accompanied by the two sisters and by the family's friends, he went to the tomb.

**Jn 11:35.** *'Jesus wept'*: The Greek for this word is not the one for loud grief (as in Jn 11:33), but one that denotes a quiet weeping.

**Jn 11:36.** *'The Jews said...'*: It clearly appeared to everybody that Jesus' grief was real, not due to social convenience.

**Jn 11:37.** *'Could not he who...':* Even if this phrase looks like that of Martha (Jn 11:21) and of Mary (Jn 11:32), it is clear that those people were criticizing Jesus for not intervening when, in their opinion, there was still the possibility to heal Lazarus.

***Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead*** [John 11:38-44]

**(Jn11:38)** *Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. (39)"Take away the stone," he said.*

*"But, Lord," said Martha, the sister of the dead man, "by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days."*

**(40)** *Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of Yahweh?"*

**(41)** *So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank You that You have heard me. (42)I knew that You always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that You sent me."*

**(43)** *When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" (44) The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face.*

*Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go."*

**Jn 11:38.** *'The tomb':* A typical Palestinian tomb; a cave with an entrance in which there was a stand for the preparation of the body. Beyond that there was a chamber, with shelves cut in the rock, on which the bodies were laid. The bodies were enveloped in a big linen cloth but the hands and feet which were wrapped in strips of linen, narrow as bandages, and the head which was wrapped in another cloth. The tomb had no door, but in front of the opening ran a groove in which was set a great stone like a cartwheel that was rolled across the entrance to seal the grave.

**Jn 11:39.** *'But... said Martha...':* Surely, when Jesus asked that the stone should be moved, Martha was very surprised. She could not hope that Jesus could still do something for Lazarus.

**Jn 11:40.** *'Then Jesus said...':* Surely nobody in the group of people standing in front of the tomb understood the meaning of Jesus' words. To think that Jesus could still do something for Lazarus was too far away from any reasonable possibility.

**Jn 11:41-42.** *'Jesus looked up and said...':* Jesus prayed to the Father, clearly declaring that the power which flowed through him was not his; it was Yahweh's. Jesus sought always and only the glory of Yahweh; and he always declared that all his miracles were due to the power of Yahweh and designed to show His glory.

**Jn 11:43-44.** *'Lazarus, come out! The dead man came out...':* It is weird to think of the bandaged figure unsteadily walking out from the tomb. *'Take off...':* Then Jesus had to shake all the present from their astonishment and to tell them to go and help Lazarus, to unloose all those grave-clothes and wrappings and let him go home.

***The plot to kill Jesus*** [John 11:45-54]

**(Jn11:45)** *Therefore many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, put their faith in him.*

**(46)** *But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. (47) Then the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the Sanhedrin. "What are we accomplishing?" they asked. "Here is this man performing many miraculous signs.*

*(48)If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation."*

*(49)Then one of them, named Caiaphas, who was High Priest that year, spoke up, "You know nothing at all! (50)You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish."*

*(51)He did not say this on his own, but as High Priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the Jewish nation, (52)and not only for that nation but also for the scattered children of Yahweh, to bring them together and make them one. (53)So from that day on they plotted to take his life.*

*(54)Therefore Jesus no longer moved about publicly among the Jews. Instead he withdrew to a region near the desert, to a village called Ephraim, where he stayed with his disciples.*

**Jn 11:45.** *'Many of the Jews... put their faith in him':* After witnessing such a miracle, there is no doubt that many of the people who were there began to believe that Jesus was the expected Messiah.

**Jn 11:46.** *'But some of them...':* Of course, some of those people went to inform the Jewish authorities of the miracle happened in their presence, and of the fact that many people believed that Jesus was the Messiah.

**Jn 11:47-48.** *'The chief priests and the Pharisees':* The Pharisees, who always appear as Jesus' principal opponents, lacked political power, and it is the priests who were prominent in the events that led to Jesus' crucifixion. In effect, during the general meeting of the Sanhedrin where they discussed what to do, it was the Sadducees who dominated. *'Here is this man performing...':* They did not deny the reality of the miracles, but they failed to believe in Jesus as Yahweh's Messiah. *'If we let him go like this...':* The wonderful happening at Bethany had forced the hands of the Jewish authorities, who feared that Jesus might gain a big following and cause a revolt. *'Our place':* If Jesus were the cause of civil disorder, Rome would descend in all her power and, beyond any doubt, the Sadducees would lose their position of prestige and authority in the Jewish society.

**Jn 11:49.** *'Caiaphas':* High Priest from 18 to 36 AD. He was the son-in-law of Annas, who had been deposed from the High Priesthood by the Romans in AD 15. *'High Priest that year':* It means "High Priest at that time." The High Priesthood was not an annual office but one supposed to be held for life. *'You know nothing at all!':* A remark typical of Sadducean rudeness (Caiaphas, as High Priest, was a Sadducee, and the Sadducees were notoriously discourteous).

**Jn 11:50.** *'It is better...':* Caiaphas was concerned with political expediency, not with guilt and innocence.

**Jn 11:51.** *'Not on his own, but as high priest':* Caiaphas was not a private citizen, he was Yahweh's High Priest, and Yahweh overruled in what he said. *'Prophesied':* Prophecy in Scripture is the impartition of divinely revealed truth. It was the Jewish belief that when the High Priest spoke for the nation, Yahweh spoke through him. And Yahweh, who can speak through the most unlikely people, sometimes sends his message through a man without the man being aware. In reality Caiaphas' words, which were inspired by Yahweh, meant that Jesus' death would be for the Jewish nation, not by way of removing political trouble, but by taking away the sins of those who believed in him.

**Jn 11:52.** *'Also for the scattered children of Yahweh':* Jesus' death would have effects far beyond the Jewish nation, extending to all Yahweh's people throughout the world. *'To bring them together and make them one':* See note to Jn 10:30 in 'The unbelief of the Jews.' (Jn 10:22-42).

**Jn 11:53.** *'From that day...'*: So they decided to follow Caiaphas' advice, and to look for an occasion of eliminating Jesus.

**Jn 11:54.** *'He withdrew'*: Even if Jesus could not die before his "time," he never acted imprudently. Jesus was willing to lay down his life, but not to throw it away before his work was done. *'Ephraim'*: A town in the mountains, north of Jerusalem.

***The last trip toward Jerusalem******Samaritan opposition*** [Luke 9:51-56]

**(Lk9:51)** *As the time approached for him to be taken up to Heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem. (52)And he sent messengers on ahead, who went into a Samaritan village to get things ready for him; (53)but the people there did not welcome him, because he was heading for Jerusalem. (54)When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked, "Lord, do you want us to call fire down from Heaven to destroy them?" (55)But Jesus turned and rebuked them. And he said, "You do not know what kind of spirit you are of! For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." (56)And they went to another village.*

**Lk 9:51.** *'The time approached...':* Luke emphasizes Jesus' determination to complete his mission. This journey toward Jerusalem, the one that led to his crucifixion, marks the beginning of a period of ministry in Judea.

**Lk 9:52.** *'A Samaritan village':* The direct way from Galilee to Jerusalem led through Samaria; but most of the Jews avoided it. It was at least a three-day journey from Galilee to Jerusalem through Samaria, and the Samaritans refused overnight shelter for the pilgrims. There was a centuries' old quarrel between the Jews and the Samaritans who, in fact, did everything they could to impede, even by the use of violence, any bands of pilgrims who attempted to pass through their territory on their way to observe religious festivals in Jerusalem. Because of this enmity, the Jews traveling between Galilee and Jerusalem frequently went on the east side of the Jordan river, entering Perea.

**Lk 9:53.** *'The people there did not welcome him':* When, on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus attempted to find hospitality in a Samaritan village, he did this to extend a hand of friendship to people who were enemies of the Jews. In this case not only hospitality was refused but the offer of friendship was rejected with disdain.

**Lk 9:54.** *'Lord, do you want us...':* No doubt that, after such a refusal, James and John believed they were doing a praiseworthy thing when they offered to call in divine aid to punish the village.

**Lk 9:55.** *'Jesus... rebuked them':* But Jesus would not permit them to go on with such a kind of action. *'You don't know...':* In this passage Jesus taught very directly the duty of tolerance. First of all, Yahweh calls people to himself in many different ways; and no man or church can have a monopoly of His truth. But, most important, tolerance must be based not on indifference but on fondness. The best way to destroy an enemy is to make him our friend.

**Lk 9:56.** *'Another village':* It appears clear that not all the Samaritan villages did oppose Jesus and his disciples, and so they found shelter in another, friendly, village.

***Ten healed of leprosy*** [Luke 17:11-19]

**(Lk17:11)** *Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. (12)As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance (13)and called out in a loud voice, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!"*

**(14)** *When he saw them, he said, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were cleansed.*

**(15)** *One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising Yahweh in a loud voice. (16)He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him -and he was a Samaritan.*

*(17)Jesus asked, "Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? (18)Was no one found to return and give praise to Yahweh except this foreigner?" (19)Then he said to him, "Rise and go; your faith has made you well."*

**Lk 17:11.** *'Border between Samaria and Galilee'*: From this point Jesus followed the usual road taken by most of the pilgrims, who avoided Samaria.

**Lk 17:12.** *'They stood at a distance'*: There was no specific distance at which they should stand, but nothing could better show the utter isolation in which lepers lived.

**Lk 17:13.** *'In a loud voice'*: Trying to get Jesus' attention in spite of the distance.

**Lk 17:14.** *'Show yourselves to the priests'*: This was the normal procedure to follow after recovery, because the Law prescribed that the priests had to verify and testify that the sickness was over.

**Lk 17:15.** *'One of them'*: The ten lepers came to Jesus with a desperate longing, he cured them, and nine never thanked their healer.

**Lk 17:16.** *'And he was a Samaritan'*: Normally the Jews did not associate with the Samaritans. Yet in this group there was at least one Samaritan. The common tragedy of their leprosy had broken down the racial and national barriers among the sick people while erecting others between them and the rest of the population.

**Lk 17:17.** *'Where are the other nine'*: The nine who did not come back to thank Jesus for their healing were clearly Jews.

**Lk 17:18.** *'Was no one found...'*: A heavy reproach to all the Jews who believed so much to be the elected of Yahweh that they did not care about Him any more.

**Lk 17:19.** *'Your faith has made you well'*: The fact that the Samaritan returned to thank Jesus indicates that he had received salvation in addition to the physical healing all the ten had received.

### **The little children and Jesus**

*See page 425*

*[Mark 10:13-16 Matthew 19:13-15 Luke 18:15-17]*

*(Mk10:13)(Mt19:13)(Lk18:15)Then people were also bringing babies to Jesus to have him touch them, and for him to place his hands on them and pray for them. But, when the disciples saw this, they rebuked those who brought them. (Mk10:14)(Mt19:14)(Lk18:16)But, when Jesus saw this, he was indignant. Jesus called the children to him and said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the Kingdom of Yahweh belongs to such as these. (Mk10:15)(Lk18:17)I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the Kingdom of Yahweh like a little child will never enter it." (Mk10:16)(Mt19:15)And he took the children in his arms and, when he had placed his hands on them and blessed them, he went on from there.*

**Mk 10:13. Mt 19:13. Lk 18:15.** *'People were bringing babies...'*: Those who brought the children to Jesus were, without any doubt, their mothers. It was the custom for mothers to bring their children to some distinguished Rabbi at their first birthday that he might bless them. They had seen what Jesus' hands could do healing any kind of disease. And they wanted those hands to touch their children. *'When the disciples saw this...'*: Here, the disciples sound as if they were rough and severe; but, if they were, it was their desire to protect Jesus that made them so. They saw how tired he was; they saw what healing people did cost him. He was talking to them so often about a Cross, and they must have seen on his face the tension of his heart and soul. All that they wanted was to see that Jesus was not bothered. They could only think that at that time the children were a nuisance to the Master.

**Mk 10:14. Mt 19:14. Lk 18:16.** *'Jesus called the children to him'*: This passage shows how Jesus cared for the children. Clearly, Jesus was the kind of person children liked. He could not have been a stern and joyless person. He must have smiled easily and laughed joyously. Jesus was certainly no grim ascetic, if the children loved him. Furthermore, no one was ever a nuisance to Jesus. He was never too tired, never too busy to give all of himself to anyone who needed it. The way to his presence was always open to the humblest person and to the youngest child. *'Belongs to such as these'*: The Kingdom of Yahweh belongs to those who, like little children, are prepared to receive the Kingdom as a gift -a gift of Yahweh. The Kingdom of Yahweh must be received as a gift. It may be entered only by those who know they are helpless, without any claim of merit.

**Mk 10:15. Lk 18:17.** *'Receive the Kingdom of Yahweh like a little child'*: The point of comparison is the usual openness and receptivity of little children, who have confidence in other people and do not expect any person to be bad. They have a short memory and they have not yet learned to bear grudges and nourish bitterness. Even when they are unjustly treated, they forget, and forget so completely that they do not even need to forgive. As the children trust their parents, so we should trust our Father -Yahweh. To keep alive the sense of wonder, to live in unquestioning trust, to instinctively obey, to forgive and to forget -that is the childlike spirit, and that is the passport to the Kingdom of Yahweh. In other terms, Jesus said of them that they were nearer to Yahweh than anyone else. The little children's simplicity is, indeed, closer to Yahweh than anything else.

**Mk 10:16. Mt 19:15.** *'And blessed them'*: Jesus blessed the little children, as their mothers had requested.

### ***The rich young man***

*See page 426*

*[Mark 10:17-31 Matthew 19:16-30 Luke 18:18-30]*

**(Mk10:17)(Mt19:16)(Lk18:18)** *Now as Jesus started on his way, a man, a certain ruler, run up to him and fell on his knees before him, "Good teacher," he asked, "what good things must I do to inherit eternal life?"*

**(Mk10:18)(Mt19:17)(Lk18:19)** *"Why do you call me good and ask me about what is good?" Jesus answered, "No one is good -except Yahweh alone. There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, obey the commandments."*

**(Mk10:19)(Mt19:18-19)(Lk18:20)** *"Which ones?" the man inquired.*

*Jesus replied, "You know the commandments: 'You will not murder, you will not commit adultery, you will not steal, you will not give false testimony, you will not defraud, you will honor your father and mother, and you'll be fond of your neighbor as of yourself.'"*

**(Mk10:20)(Mt19:20)(Lk18:21)** *"Teacher," the young man declared, "all these I have kept since I was a boy. What do I still lack?"*

**(Mk10:21)(Mt19:21)(Lk18:22)** *When Jesus heard this, he looked at him and liked him, "You still lack one thing," Jesus answered, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell every possession you have and give to the poor, and you will have a treasure in Heaven. Then come, follow me."*

**(Mk10:22)(Mt19:22)(Lk18:23)** *When the young man heard this, his face fell, he became very sad and he went away, because he was a man of great wealth.*

**(Mk10:23)(Mt19:23)(Lk18:24)** *Then Jesus looked around at him and said to his disciples, "I tell you the truth, how hard it is for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven!"*

**(Mk10:24)** *The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, "Children,*

**how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the Kingdom of Yahweh! (Mk10:25)(Mt19:24)(Lk18:25) Again, I tell you, it is easier indeed for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Yahweh."**

**(Mk10:26)(Mt19:25)(Lk18:26) When the disciples heard this, they were even more greatly astonished, and asked to each other, "Who then can be saved?"**

**(Mk10:27)(Mt19:26)(Lk18:27) Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but not with Yahweh; all things are possible with Yahweh."**

**(Mk10:28)(Mt19:27)(Lk18:28) Peter said to him, "We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?"**

**(Mk10:29-30)(Mt19:28-29)(Lk18:29-30) "I tell you the truth," Jesus replied to them, "at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And no one who has left home or wife or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for me and the Gospel and for the sake of the Kingdom of Yahweh will fail to receive in this present age a hundred times the value of homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields (and with them, persecutions) and, in the age to come, to inherit eternal life. (Mk10:31)(Mt19:30) But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first."**

**Mk 10:17. Mt 19:16. Lk 18:18.** 'A ruler': A member of a council or court. 'A man... run up...': Clearly in a moment of overflowing emotion. 'Good teacher...': This way to address Jesus was clearly a way full of flattery. 'What good thing must I do...?': As a Jew, he was thinking of earning eternal life by works. And, before answering the question, Jesus had to correct this misunderstanding.

**Mk 10:18. Mt 19:17. Lk 18:19.** 'Why do you call me good? There is only One who is good': Jesus was not denying his own goodness but was forcing the man to trust totally in Yahweh, who alone can give eternal life. 'If you want... obey the commandments': The keeping of the commandments is not to establish one's merit before Yahweh but an expression of true faith.

**Mk 10:19. Mt 19:18-19. Lk 18:20.** 'Which ones?': The man was seeking for happiness and for peace with Yahweh. But he was thinking in terms of doing, of keeping rules. So Jesus tried to lead him to the knowledge of Yahweh's grace. 'Jesus replied...': To note that the commandments cited by Jesus are those that deal, not with duty to Yahweh, but with duty to men.

**Mk 10:20. Mt 19:20. Lk 18:21.** 'All these I have kept': The man was sincere but, because for him keeping the law was a matter of external conformity, he did not understand that the Law also required inner obedience, which no one can fully satisfy. 'Since I was a boy': At age 12 a Jewish boy became adult and assumed personal responsibility for obeying the commandments. 'What do I still lack?': The first doubt that there could be something more important than the keeping of the scribal law.

**Mk 10:21. Mt 19:21. Lk 18:22.** 'Jesus... liked him': The man was sincere. 'You still lack one thing. If you want to be perfect...': Jesus' response was not condemning him for his failure to understand the spiritual depth of the commandments but it was an expression of genuine affection. The man's primary problem was his attachment to his wealth. Therefore Jesus' prescription for changing from "good" man to "perfect," was to rid him of it. To note that Jesus' prescription was not meant for everybody. It applies only to those who have the same spiritual problem. 'Treasure in Heaven': Eternal life. In giving away his wealth, the young man would have acquired this treasure by removing the obstacle that kept him from trusting in Jesus. In effect, the real question was, "What good



have you done, with all your possessions?" The man practically declared that, by keeping all the commandments cited by Jesus, he never did anyone any harm in his life. And Jesus' final instruction was, "Stop looking at goodness as consisting in not doing bad things. Take yourself and all that you have, and spend everything on others. Then you will find true happiness in this life and in eternity." Clearly, in the full Christian life, social respectability is not enough.

**Mk 10:22. Mt 19:22. Lk 18:23.** *'When the young man heard this...'*: He was giving more value to his possessions than to eternal life.

**Mk 10:23-24. Mt 19:23. Lk 18:24.** *'How hard it is...'*: Popular Jewish morality was simple; prosperity was the sign of goodness and, if a man was rich, Yahweh must have honored and blessed him. The more prosperous a man was the more certain was his entry into the Kingdom. *'Trust in riches'*: Jesus repeated his saying in a slightly different way to make clear what he meant. The danger of material things is that they tend to fasten a man to this world. And a man can think of everything in terms of money's price and not in terms of real value. And there are values in this world far beyond money.

**Mk 10:25. Mt 19:24. Lk 18:25.** *'It is easier for...'*: Riches may have many negative effects on men's psychology by encouraging a false sense of independence. If a man is well-supplied with this world's goods, he is very apt to think that he can deal with any situation, coming to think that he can do without Yahweh. Furthermore, riches tend to make a man selfish, so that he will want more than he already has. Once a man has possessed comfort and luxury, he always tends to fear the day when he may lose them, and his life becomes a strenuous struggle to retain the things he has. *'Camel... eye of a needle'*: This vivid contrast between the camel, which was the largest animal living in Palestine, and the small opening of the needle represent what, humanly speaking, is impossible.

**Mk 10:26. Mt 19:25. Lk 18:26.** *'Who then can be saved?'*: It is clear that, in mere human terms, to be saved is almost impossible.

**Mk 10:27. Mt 19:26. Lk 18:27.** *'All things are possible with Yahweh'*: This is the true and whole doctrine of Christian salvation. If salvation had to depend solely on a man's efforts, it would be impossible for anyone. But salvation is a gift from Yahweh, a gift which comes only from Him, because any attempt to enter His Kingdom on the basis of achievement or merit only is futile. It is important to note that Jesus did not say that it is impossible for the rich to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, nor that those who have riches are shut out. In effect, riches are not a sin, but they are a danger, the danger of thinking that one does not need Yahweh.

**Mk 10:28. Mt 19:27. Lk 18:28.** *'Peter said to him...'*: With that almost crude honesty of his, Peter could not help drawing the contrast between that man and himself and his friends. The rich man had just refused to fully follow Jesus, and he and his friends had accepted.

**Mk 10:29-30. Mt 19:28-29. Lk 18:29-30.** *'I tell you the truth...'*: It would have been very easy for Jesus to dismiss Peter's question with an impatient rebuke, saying that anyone who followed him in that kind of spirit had no idea of what being a disciple meant at all. But, even if there is an implicit rebuke in the parable which follows, Jesus did not scold Peter. *'At the renewal... you... will also sit... judging'*: Jesus' disciples will be his close companions even in the Kingdom of Yahweh, in a better "position" than anybody else. *'No one who has left...'*: No man ever gave up anything for the sake of Jesus without getting it back multiplied. Anyway, what he receives is not new material possessions, but is a new fellowship, human and divine. *'A hundred times the value of homes...*

(*and persecutions*)': And, for the few disciples who -apparently- will receive an earthly compensation, this will actually be a deeper test of their faith as it will always come accompanied by persecution from the enemy of Christianity. The life of discipleship is a combination of promise and persecution, of blessing and suffering.

**Mk 10:31. Mt 19:30.** *'Many... first will be last and...'*: Finally, Jesus declared that there will be some surprises in the final assessment, as Yahweh's standard of judgment are not men's. As a consequence, to redress the imbalance of earthly life and to adjust its misjudgments, often those who were humble on Earth will be great in Heaven, and those who were great in this world will be humble in the world to come.

### ***Jesus again predicts his death***

*See page 428*

[Mark 10:32-34 Matthew 20:17-19 Luke 18:31-34]

**(Mk10:32-34)(Mt20:17-19)(Lk18:31-33)** *Now they were on their way up to Jerusalem, with Jesus leading the way, and the disciples were astonished, while those who followed were afraid. Again Jesus took the Twelve disciples aside and told them what was going to happen to him. "We are going up to Jerusalem," he said, "and everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled. He will be betrayed to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Pagans, who will mock him, insult him and spit on him, flog him and crucify and kill him. Later, on the third day, he will be raised again to life!"*

**(Lk18:34)** *The disciples did not understand any of this. Its meaning was hidden from them, and they did not know what he was talking about.*

**Mk 10:32-34. Mt 20:17-19. Lk 18:31-33.** *'On their way up to Jerusalem'*: This journey to Jerusalem began in a city called Ephraim and took Jesus into Galilee, south through Perea to Jericho, then to Bethany and finally to Jerusalem. *'Jesus leading the way... the disciples were astonished'*: Jesus was walking alone ahead of the group, because the disciples were surely so amazed and bewildered by what Jesus had just said (The young rich man. Mk 10:17-31; Mt 19:16-30; Lk 18:18-30), that they were afraid to go up to him. *'Those who followed'*: Probably pilgrims on their way to the Passover in Jerusalem. *'Told them... Everything that is written by the prophets'*: Jesus had to take his decisions alone. Had Jesus tried to share his decision with the Twelve, their only contribution would have been to try to stop him. This was the third time Jesus foretold the things that were to happen to him in Jerusalem. At first (Jesus predicts his death. Mk 8:31-38,9:1; Mt 16:21-28; Lk 9:22-27) it was the bare announcement. At the second time (The healing of a boy with an evil spirit. Mk 9:14-32; Mt 17:14-23; Lk 9:37-45) the hint of betrayal was there. And now at the third time he spoke of the derision, the insults, and the scourging. *'And will hand him over to the Pagans, who will... flog him and crucify and kill him'*: With this additional statement, found only in this third prediction of the Passion, Jesus told his disciples that he would not be killed by the Jews, which would have been by stoning, but would be crucified by the Pagans, since this way was the usual means of Roman execution of non Romans. *'Later... he will be raised again'*: All three predictions include and finish with the confident assertion of his Resurrection on the third day. After the suffering, the glory would follow; after the Cross, the Crown; after the defeat, the triumph; after death, life. It is important to notice that Jesus never foretold the Cross without foretelling the Resurrection. He knew that shame lay before him, but he was equally certain that glory lay before him, too. He knew what the malice of

men could do, but he knew also what the power of Yahweh could do. It was in the certainty of the ultimate victory that he faced the apparent defeat of the Cross. He knew that without a Cross there can never be any crown.

**Lk 18:34.** *'Did not understand...'*: It is quite clear that at this time the disciples had no idea of what was going on. They were sure that Jesus was the Messiah; and he was telling them that he was going to die. To them these two facts did not make any sense when put together, and they were completely bewildered. Yet, they followed him.

***The request of James and John***

See page 428

[Mark 10:35-45 Matthew 20:20-28 Luke 22:24-30]

**(Mk10:35)(Mt20:20)** *Then the mother of James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Jesus with her sons and, kneeling down, asked a favor of him. "Teacher," they said, "we want you to do for us whatever we ask."*

**(Mk10:36-37)(Mt20:21)** *"What it is you want me to do for you?" he asked.*

*They replied, "Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory."*

*She said, "Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your Kingdom."*

**(Mk10:38-40)(Mt20:22-23)** *"You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said to them. "Can you drink the cup I am going to drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?"*

*"We can," they answered.*

*Jesus said to them, "You will indeed drink from the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father."*

**(Mk10:41)(Mt20:24)** *When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with two brothers James and John.*

**(Lk22:24)** *Also a dispute arose among them as to which of them was considered to be the greatest. (Mk10:42)(Mt20:25)(Lk22:25)* *Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the kings, those who are regarded as rulers of the Pagans, lord it over them; and their high officials, those who exercise authority over them, call themselves Benefactors. (Mk10:43-44)(Mt20:26-27)(Lk22:26)* *But not so with you, you are not to be like that. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. The greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. (Lk22:27)* *For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? It is not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves. (Mk10:45)(Mt20:28)* *For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. (Lk22:28)* *You are those who have stood by me in my trials. (29)* *And I confer on you a Kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, (30) so that you may eat and drink at my table in my Kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."*

**Mk 10:35. Mt 20:20.** *'James and John'*: The Twelve were not a company of saint. They were ordinary men. It was and it is with ordinary people that Jesus works to change and to save the world. *'Asked a favor'*: There may have been a very natural reason for this request as it is probable that James, John and their mother were closely related to Jesus. If we look at the women who were at the cross when Jesus was crucified, we deduce that Mary, the mother of James and John, was the sister of Jesus' mother (The Cruci-

fixion. Jn 19:25 and The death of Jesus. Mk 15:40-41; Mt 27:55-56; Lk 23:49). That means that James and John were full cousins of Jesus; and it may have been that they felt that this close relationship entitled them to a special place in his Kingdom.

**Mk 10:36-37. Mt 20:21.** *'Sit at your right and... at your left'*: In a kingdom, those were classical positions of prestige and power. James and John were ambitious and they aimed at being Jesus' chief ministers of what they supposed to be an earthly state. It is clear that they had completely failed to understand Jesus. And the timing of this incident looks very odd indeed, as they came out with their request in the moment when Jesus was forecasting in a detailed way his death. It is clear how little they understood of what Jesus was saying to them. Even his words were powerless to rid them of the idea of a Messiah of earthly power and glory. Only the Cross could do that. Anyway, it must be noted that, bewildered as they were, they still continued to believe in Jesus; that they were connecting power and glory with a Galilean carpenter who had incurred the enmity and the bitter opposition of the orthodox religious leaders, and who was heading -his words- for a Cross. This means that, even if they were out of tune, they never doubted of Jesus' ultimate triumph.

**Mk 10:38-40. Mt 20:22-23.** *'Can you drink the cup... or be baptized with...?'*: These were Jewish figures of speech that meant to undergo the same or a similar experience, to completely share someone's destiny. Here the reference is to Jesus' incumbent suffering and death. The image of baptism, which was by immersion, is in parallel to that of the cup, and means to be fully immersed in what happens. In effect Jesus said, "Can you bear to go through the terrible experience which I have to go through? Can you face being submerged in hatred and pain, as I have to be?" Jesus was telling to these two disciples that in Christianity without a cross there can be no crown. *'We can'*: And they accepted the challenge of their Master -even if they did so blindly. *'Is not for me to grant'*: Jesus would not usurp his Father's authority and so he told them that the ultimate decision always belongs to Yahweh, is His prerogative. And, as first example, there is Jesus' own life, which was one long act of submission to Yahweh's will.

Later, James and John's life went on very differently. James was the first of the apostolic group to die as a martyr (Acts 12:2). For him the cup was martyrdom. For what refers to John, tradition reports that he lived to a great old age in Ephesus and died a natural death when he was about one hundred years old. For him the cup was the constant discipline of the Christian life throughout all those years. It is wrong to think that for the Christian the cup must always be the agonizing struggle of martyrdom; the cup may well be the long routine of the Christian life, with all its daily sacrifices, struggles, disappointments and tears. To drink Jesus' cup and to be baptized with his baptism means to follow him wherever he may lead, and to be with him in any situation life may bring.

**Mk 10:41. Mt 20:24.** *'When the ten heard...'*: Inevitably the action of James and John aroused deep resentment among the other ten disciples, possibly because they desired the positions of prestige and power for themselves. It seemed to them that the two brothers had tried to take an unfair advantage from their kinship.

**Lk 22:24.** *'A dispute arose'*: Immediately the old controversy about who was to be the greatest began to rage again (Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven? Mk 9:33-37; Mt 18:1-5; Lk 9:46-48).

**Mk 10:42. Mt 20:25. Lk 22:25.** *'Jesus called them...'*: This was a serious situation. The fellowship of the apostolic band might well have been wrecked, had Jesus not taken immediate action. *'You know that...'*: He made quite clear the different standards of greatness in his Kingdom and in the kingdoms of the world. In the kingdoms of the world the

standard of greatness was power; how many people a man can control, on how many he can impose his will. *'Benefactors'*: A title of honor assumed by rulers in Egypt, Syria and Rome, seldom representing actual service rendered.

**Mk 10:43-44. Mt 20:26-27. Lk 22:26.** *'Not so with you'*: In the Kingdom of Jesus the disciples' standard of life has to be that of service. Greatness has to consist, not in reducing other men to one's service, but in putting oneself to their service, in this way overturning the value structure of the world.

**Lk 22:27.** *'I am... the one who serves'*: To reinforce his words Jesus pointed to his own example. With such powers as he had, he could have arranged life entirely to suit himself, but he had spent himself and all his powers in the service of others.

**Mk 10:45. Mt 20:28.** *'Even the Son of Man...'*: Jesus came to this world as a servant -as "indeed, The Servant"- who would suffer and die for everybody's redemption, as Isaiah clearly predicted (Isaiah 52:13-53:12). *'Ransom'*: The Greek word here used for "ransom" was used most commonly for the price paid to redeem a slave. And Jesus gave his life to release all men from bondage to sin and spiritual death. Before him, men were in the grip of the power of evil, a power which they could not break; their sins totally separated them from Yahweh. And it did cost the life and the death of Jesus Christ to bring all men back to Yahweh, to His affection. *'Many'*: In effect, Jesus gave himself as ransom for "all men." Salvation is offered to "all," but only "many" receive it at any given time, when they accept Christ's offer of it.

**Lk 22:28.** *'In my trials'*: Including temptations, hardship and rejection.

**Lk 22:29-30.** *'I confer on you a kingdom'*: Their faith and their obedience to Jesus would have been recognized in the Kingdom of Yahweh, as it was Jesus' obedience to the Father. *'Sit on thrones'*: As they were to share in Jesus' trials, so they would share in his position of closeness -deep spiritual communion- with Yahweh.

### **The blind beggar Bartimaeus receives his sight**

See page 429

[Mark 10:46-52 Matthew 20:29-34 Luke 18:35-43]

**(Mk10:46-47)(Mt20:29-30)(Lk18:35-38)** Then they came to Jericho. As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd which followed him, were approaching the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus (that is, the Son of Timaeus), was sitting by the roadside begging. When he heard the crowd going by, he asked what was happening. They told him, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by." When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth going by, he began to shout, "Lord Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

**(Mk10:48)(Mt20:31)(Lk18:39)** Many of those in the crowd who led the way rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

**(Mk10:49-51)(Mt20:32-33)(Lk18:40-41)** Jesus stopped and ordered the man to be brought to him. "Call him," he said.

So they called the blind man, "Cheer up! On your feet! He's calling you." Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus. When he came near, Jesus asked him, "What do you want me to do for you?"

The blind man replied, "Rabbi, Lord, I want to see."

**(Mk10:52)(Mt20:34)(Lk18:42-43)** Jesus had compassion on him and touched his eyes. "Go," said Jesus to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has healed you." Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road, praising Yahweh. When all the people saw it, they also praised Yahweh.

**Mk 10:46-47. Mt 20:29-30. Lk 18:35-38.** *'Jericho'*: A very ancient city located 5 miles (8 km) west of the Jordan and about 15 miles (24 km) northeast of Jerusalem. In Jesus' time Old Testament Jericho was largely abandoned, because a new city, south of the old one, had been built by Herod the Great. The main road ran right through Jericho, from the old to the new city. *'Jesus and...'*: Jesus was on his way to the Passover in Jerusalem. As it was the custom at the time, he was surrounded by a crowd of people, not only by his disciples, who listened to him as he discoursed while walking. *'A blind man... begging'*: The presence of a blind beggar just outside the city gates, on a road pilgrims followed on the way to Jerusalem was a common sight in that days. The blind man was waiting for Jesus, and when his chance came he fought to seize it immediately. No doubt he had heard of the wonderful powers of Jesus; and no doubt he wondered if those powers might be exercised also on him.

**Mk 10:48. Mt 20:31. Lk 18:39.** *'Many... rebuked him'*: To those listening to Jesus teaching as he walked, all that shouting was an offense. They tried to silence Bartimaeus, but no one was going to take from him his chance to escape from blindness, so he shouted with such violence and importunity that the group stopped, and he was brought to Jesus. The Greek word used here for "shout" is quite different from that used in the previous verse, where it was an ordinary loud shout to attract attention. Here, instead, it is an instinctive shout of ungovernable emotion, a scream, which well shows the utter desperation of the man. *'Son of David'*: Obviously, Bartimaeus had a quite inadequate conception of Jesus and used the traditional Messianic title. But, in spite of this, Bartimaeus had faith, and faith is the very important matter. The essential point is not to fully understand Jesus, but to have faith in him.

**Mk 10:49-51. Mt 20:32-33. Lk 18:41-41.** *'Jesus stopped and...'*: Nothing had stopped his demand to come face to face with Jesus. And he knew precisely what he wanted: his sight.

**Mk 10:52. Mt 20:34. Lk 18:42-43.** *'Jesus had compassion...'*: When walking, Jesus was discoursing to the crowd like any rabbi. But at the blind man's cry of need he stopped, the discourse forgotten. And the man found the healing he so passionately desired. For Jesus it was always more important to act than to talk. There, at the gate of the town, there was a human being in need, and for Jesus words always took second place to deeds. *'Followed Jesus'*: After receiving his sight, he followed Jesus. He did not selfishly go on his way when his need was met.

**Note 1:** One blind man on Mark and Luke, two on Matthew. Probably, the blind men were two and, since one was the spokesman and more outstanding, Mark and Luke did not consider necessary to record the presence of the second. This unified version of the story is as per Mark and Luke.

**Note 2:** Mark (Mk 10:46) and Matthew (Mt 20:29) have "leaving the city," Luke (Lk 18:35) has "approaching." Probably Jesus was leaving the old city and approaching the new one. Anyway, "approaching" fits better the following story of 'Zacchaeus the tax collector.'

### **Zacchaeus the tax collector** [Luke 19:1-10]

*(Lk19:1) Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. (2) A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. (3) He wanted to see who Jesus was, but being a short man he could not, because of the crowd. (4) So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way.*

*(5) When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come*

**down immediately. I must stay at your house today." (6) So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly.**

**(7) All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a 'sinner.'"**

**(8) But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount."**

**(9) Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. (10) For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."**

**Lk 19:1. 'Entered Jericho':** Jesus was going through the new town, leaving the old one. Jericho was a very rich and important town. It lay in the Jordan valley and controlled both the approach to Jerusalem and the crossing of the river which gave access to the lands east of the Jordan. All this made of Jericho one of the greatest taxation centers in Palestine.

**Lk 19:2. 'Zacchaeus... a chief tax collector':** He was in charge of a whole district, with many other tax collectors under him. The region of Jericho was prosperous, so it is not surprising that Zacchaeus, who had reached the top of his profession, had grown rich; as well, he surely was one of the most hated men in the district.

**Lk 19:3. 'Wanted to see Jesus':** Zacchaeus was wealthy but his profession made him an outcast of the Jewish society, which considered him a heavy sinner. It is clear that, at this point of his life, Zacchaeus was and felt lonely and, having heard of this Jesus who welcomed tax collectors and sinners, he wondered if he would have any word for him. *'Because of the crowd':* For Zacchaeus to mingle with the crowd at all was already a courageous thing to do, for many men would take the chance of pushing or kicking at the little and very much hated tax collector. For them it was an opportunity not to be missed, and surely they were doing their best to prevent him from seeing Jesus.

**Lk 19:4. 'Climbed a sycamore-fig tree':** Zacchaeus was determined to see Jesus, and would let nothing stop him. So he ran ahead of the crowd and climbed a sycamore, a sturdy tree, which gives fig-like fruit, from 30 to 40 feet (9 to 12 m) high, with a short trunk and spreading branches, capable of holding a grown man.

**Lk 19:5-6. 'Jesus... looked up':** Jesus was clearly well aware of where Zacchaeus was and of the fact that he was really looking for him and for his words. *'Come down':* An invitation, a command, of not isolating himself any more but to reach immediately Jesus and the people accompanying him. *'I must stay at your house':* Proposing, almost ordering, what Zacchaeus could not even have hoped for; to have Jesus in his house, as his guest, for a whole day.

**Lk 19:7. 'The people... began to mutter':** As usual, most of the people did not understand the essence of what Jesus was doing and complained about him going to be guest of a hated heavy sinner.

**Lk 19:8. 'Zacchaeus... said':** After Jesus announced that he would stay a day at his house, and when he discovered that he had found a new and wonderful friend, immediately Zacchaeus took the great decision to give half of his goods to the poor; and from the other half to make restitution for the frauds of which he had been guilty. *'Four times':* This was one of the repayments required under the law in case of theft (Exodus 22:1; 22:4, Leviticus 6:5, Numbers 5:7). Zacchaeus took steps to show to the community by his actions that he was a changed man. In these restitutions he went far beyond what was legally necessary.

**Lk 19:9.** *'Jesus said...'*: The sincerity of the man was full and total, so Jesus officially declared that Zacchaeus' faith had saved him. *'Son of Abraham'*: Jesus recognized the tax collector as such, though Jewish society excluded him. So Zacchaeus was again a true Jew, not only of the physical lineage of Abraham but also of Abraham's faith.

**Lk 19:10.** *'Son of Man'*: A Messianic title, often used by Jesus. *'To seek and to save'*: An important summary of Jesus' purpose -to bring salvation, meaning eternal life and the Kingdom of Yahweh, to those which were lost, to the men who had wandered away from Yahweh.

***The parable of the ten minas*** [Luke 19:11-27]

**(Lk19:11)***While they were listening to this, he went on to tell them a parable, because he was near to Jerusalem and the people thought that the Kingdom of Yahweh was going to appear at once. (12)He said, "A man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return. (13)So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. 'Put this money to work,' he said, 'until I come back. (14)But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, 'We don't want this man to be our king.'*

**(15)He was made king, however, and returned home. Then he sent for the servants to whom he had given the money, in order to find out what they had gained with it.**

**(16)The first one came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned ten more.'**

**(17)'Well done, my good servant!' his master replied. 'Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.'**

**(18)The second came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned five more.'**

**(19)His master answered, 'You take charge of five cities.'**

**(20)Then another servant came and said, 'Sir, here is your mina; I have kept it laid away in a piece of cloth. (21)I was afraid of you, because you are a hard man. You take out what you did not put in and reap what you did not sow.'**

**(22)His master replied, 'I will judge you by your own words, you wicked servant! You knew, did you, that I am a hard man, taking out what I did not put in, and reaping what I did not sow? (23)Why then didn't you put my money on deposit, so that when I came back, I could have collected it with interest?'**

**(24)Then he said to those standing by, 'Take his mina away from him and give it to the one who has ten minas.'**

**(25)'Sir,' they said, 'he already has ten!'**

**(26)He replied, 'I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but as for the one who has nothing, even what he has will be taken away. (27)But those enemies of mine who did not want me to be king over them -bring them here and kill them in front of me.'"**

**Lk 19:11.** *'The Kingdom of Yahweh was going to appear'*: Many people believed that Jesus was the Messiah -the Old Testament type of Messiah- and so they expected him to come out in power and glory and to set up his earthly kingdom, defeating all their political and military enemies.

**Lk 19:12.** *'He said'*: To clarify the difference between the kind of Kingdom of Yahweh they were expecting and the real one, Jesus told them a parable, the only one whose story is in part based on actual historical events. Anyone in Israel, on hearing the parable, would immediately remember the historical circumstances on which it was based. When Herod the Great died in 4 BC he left his kingdom divided between Herod Anti-



pas, Herod Philip, Archelaus and Lisania (The return to Nazareth. Mt 2:19-23). But this division had to be ratified by the Romans, who were the overlords of Palestine, before it became effective. *'A man of noble birth...'*: Archelaus, to whom Judea had been left, went to Rome to persuade Augustus to allow him to enter into his inheritance and to have himself appointed king of Judea.

**Lk 19:13.** *'He called ten of his servants and gave them...'*: During his absence, the master left in the hands of some of his servants some not so important amounts of money, leaving them fully responsible for the better use of it. *'Ten minas'*: A mina equaled 100 drachmas, each drachma being worth a day's wage. Similarly, Jesus was soon to depart and in the future he is to return as King. During his absence, all his earthly affairs are entrusted to the Christians, his disciples and followers.

**Lk 19:14.** *'Sent a delegation'*: At the same time as Archelaus' trip, the people of Judea sent an embassy of fifty men to Rome to inform Augustus that they did not wish to have him as a king. Similarly, this aspect of the story was a warning to the Jews against rejecting Jesus as King.

**Lk 19:15.** *'He was made king'*: Augustus confirmed Archelaus in his inheritance, though without the actual title of king. *'Then he sent for the servants...'*: It was now time for the master to check what his people had done. It is important to note that he gave his servants the money and then went away and left them use it as they could and as they thought best. He did not interfere with them, and he left them entirely free in their own initiative. Similarly, Yahweh and Jesus trust men leaving them free to administer the spiritual capital assigned to them.

**Lk 19:16-23.** *'The first one came...'*: The parable here follows reporting the results achieved by three of the ten servants who were given their master's money. The first two did use it properly, but the third one did not. The servants were trusted and, in so being, were tested whether or not they were faithful and reliable in the things they had been given. Similarly, it is precisely in their routine duties that Yahweh is testing men. And there is no better example of this as Jesus himself. Of his thirty-three years of life Jesus spent thirty in Nazareth. Had he not discharged with absolute fidelity the charge of the carpenter's shop in Nazareth and the obligation of being -after the death of Joseph- the breadwinner of the family, Yahweh could never have given to him the supreme task of being the Savior of the world. Furthermore, it is very important to note that the men who were faithful got the king's reward, and that the reward that they received was not one which they could enjoy by sitting down and doing nothing. One was put over ten cities and the other over five. The reward of work well done was more work to do. Similarly, the reward of Yahweh to the man who has satisfied the test is more trust on more important matters.

**Lk 19:24.** *'Take his mina away...'*: The third servant, who was not faithful and whose attitude was against his master, got his punishment and lost what initially he had been given.

**Lk 19:25-26.** *'More will be given... even what he has will be taken away'*: Those who seek spiritual gain in the Gospel, for themselves and others, will become richer, and those who neglect or waste the spiritual capital that is given to them will become impoverished, losing even what spirituality they have.

**Lk 19:27.** *'Those enemies of mine...'*: The punishment of those who rebelled and actively opposed the king (Lk 19:14) was much more severe than that of the negligent servant. This is probably a reference to the Jewish nation which was punished, for rejecting Jesus Christ, with Jerusalem's destruction in AD 70.

***The sheep and the goats*** [Matthew 25:31-46]

***(Mt25:31)"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. (32)All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. (33)He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.***

***(34)Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the Kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. (35)For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger and you invited me in, (36)I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'***

***(37)Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? (38)When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? (39)When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'***

***(40)The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'***

***(41)Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. (42)For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, (43)I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.'***

***(44)They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?'***

***(45)He will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.'***

***(46)Then they will go away to final punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."***

**Mt 25:31.** *'When the Son of Man comes':* At Jesus' second coming, he will be plainly visible to all.

**Mt 25:32-33.** *'He will separate... He will put...':* The judgment referred to (in typical Jewish language) in this passage will occur at the end of time. Its purpose will be not separation between Heaven and hell, but separation in different levels of communion with Yahweh. Second coming and judgment are integral parts. Christianity is an ethical religion, that is why it involves judgment, rewards and sanctions. It demands obedience to certain laws of life and, consequently, it can be only those who keep those laws who will be rewarded. And, further, since it is clear that rewards and punishments are not correctly allocated in this life, the actual, individual judgment must take place when life is ended, when the faithful will be rewarded for their fidelity, and the disobedient punished for their disobedience. In the moment of confrontation with Jesus -during earthly life, at the individual judgment at the moment of physical death, and all the times salvation will be offered by Jesus to the souls in hell- there is inevitably a judgment, for when a man is confronted with Jesus, he necessarily experiences a reaction. If he reacts with fondness, then it is well with his soul. If he reacts with indifference or anger or dislike or hatred, then it is ill with his soul.

**Mt 25:34-45.** *'Then the king will say...':* The lesson of this parable is crystal clear -that Yahweh will judge men in accordance to their reaction to human need. His judgment will not depend on the knowledge a man has amassed, or the fame he has acquired, or the fortune he has gained, but on the help the man has given. The supreme standard of

judgment is reaction to human need. He who can see human need and listen to human appeal without doing anything about it stands condemned; he whose hand is instinctively stretched out to help is honored by Yahweh. There are certain things which the parable teaches about this help, which must be in simple things. The things Jesus spoke of are things which anyone could do; are cases of simple help to simple, everyday men. Help must be for itself, without any calculation. Those who helped did not think that they were helping Jesus and thus piling up eternal merits; they helped because they couldn't stop doing it. On the other hand, the attitude of those who failed to help was, "If we had known it was you, we would gladly have helped; but we thought it was only some common man who was not worth helping." Their help would not have been out of generosity; on the contrary, of disguised selfishness.

**Mt 25:46.** *'Punishment'*: The Greek word used here for "punishment" is "kolasis," which actually means "discipline for the purpose of correcting." Clearly, this punishment is given to amend and cure. It follows that it has to last only till its purpose is reached, and then it has to end. This punishment can last for a very long time, even as long as the present world lasts, the time the universe lasts; but it does not mean lasting for ever and ever throughout eternity. It describes a disciplinary, curative punishment; certainly a punishment which only Yahweh can inflict. It is, indeed, obvious that hell -the place where Yahweh is not- is temporary; at the end of the human race, after the conversion to Christianity of the last man, it will be an empty place and, for that, the reason itself of its existence will end. As a result of Jesus' salvation, at the end of time, all people will gain admittance to the Kingdom of Yahweh even if at very different levels of communion with Him, depending on both their earthly life and on their attitude at the moment of their personal judgment. Surely, there is a substantial difference between entering the Kingdom of Yahweh immediately after physical death -as a result of a "Christian" life and of a prompt acceptance of the grace offered during personal judgment- or after a bad life and a long period in hell: the "spiritual scars" left by a bad life and by the punishment in hell will always be evident and will constitute a limit to the maximum possible level of communion between this particular person and Yahweh. *'Life'*: On the contrary, this life will be everlasting, with a beginning and with no end. It will be similar to the eternal life of Yahweh -which is also without beginning.

**The coming of the Kingdom of Yahweh**

*See page 430*

[Matthew 24:37-41 Luke 17:20-37]

**(Lk17:20)**Once, having been asked by the Pharisees when the Kingdom of Yahweh would come, Jesus replied, "**The Kingdom of Yahweh does not come with your careful observation, (21)nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the Kingdom of Yahweh is among you.**"

**(22)**Then he said to his disciples, "**The time is coming when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, but you will not see it. (23)Men will tell you, 'There he is!' or 'Here he is!'** Do not go running off after them. **(24)For the Son of Man in his day will be like the lightning, which flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other. (25)But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.**

**(Mt24:37)(Lk17:26)Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also it will be in the days of the coming of the Son of Man. (Mt24:38-39)(Lk17:27)For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and being given in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark, and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and destroyed and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.**

**(Lk17:28)** *It was the same in the days of Lot. People were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building. (29)But the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from Heaven and destroyed them all.*

**(30)** *It will be just like this on the day the Son of Man is revealed. (31)On that day no one who is on the roof of his house, with his goods inside, should go down to get them. Likewise, no one in the field should go back for anything. (32)Remember Lot's wife! (33)Whoever tries to keep his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life [for me] will preserve it. (34)I tell you, on that night two people will be in one bed; one will be taken and the other left. (Mt24:40)(Lk17:36) Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. (Mt24:41)(Lk17:35)Two women will be grinding grain together with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left."*

**(Lk17:37)** *"Where, Lord?" they asked.*

*He replied, "Where there is a dead body, there the vultures will gather."*

**Lk 17:20-21.** *'When the Kingdom of Yahweh would come...':* Jesus affirmed that they did not have to wait for the Kingdom of Yahweh to come preannounced by some well evident sign to look for. *'The Kingdom of Yahweh is among you':* The Kingdom was already there, among them, present on Earth in the person of Jesus Christ.

**Lk 17:22.** *'Then he said...':* This verse and the following (from Lk 17:22 to 17:37) deal with the second coming of Jesus. *'The time is coming when...':* In the future times of trouble, the believers will desire the immediate return of Jesus in his glory to deliver his people from their distress. But, even if there will be such times, the Christians will need to learn patience and wait. Yahweh acts by His own time, not by men's time.

**Lk 17:23.** *'Do not go running off after them':* When somebody will announce that Jesus is already or will be at a certain time back on Earth, they don't have to believe it.

**Lk 17:24.** *'For... will be like the lighting':* Jesus' coming will be sudden, unexpected and evident to all. Nobody will be able to predict Jesus Christ's return on Earth, nor will have the time to announce it. The coming of Jesus is certain, but its time is totally unknown. Speculation is vain. Many people will come with false prophecies and false predictions; but nobody must leave his ordinary work to follow them. At the time Jesus will actually come, the best way for a Christian to be found by Jesus will be by faithfully and humbly doing his duty.

**Lk 17:25.** *'But first he must suffer':* Before his glorious return, Jesus has to complete his present mission, suffering, dying and resurrecting.

**Mt 24:37-39. Lk 17:26-30.** *'Just as... in the days of Noah. It was the same in the days of Lot':* The second coming of Jesus Christ will come sudden and un-announced as it happened for the flood and for the destruction of Sodom. Nobody will be aware of its coming. *'That is how it will be... It will be just like this...':* And, when Jesus arrives, his presence will be clear and evident to everybody.

**Lk 17:31.** *'On the roof of his house':* It was customary to relax on the terraced rooftop of the houses. *'In the field':* Working in the fields. When the final hour comes, nobody should even think of going back to his house to retrieve some material goods.

**Lk 17:32.** *'Remember...':* Lot's wife was and is a classical example of what not to do in time of real emergency. A moment of hesitation can represent the difference between life and death. In a period of great emergency, it will be too risky for the people to stop and look or to go back and retrieve some goods from their houses. They have to flee away as they are, happy to come out with their life.

**Lk 17:33.** *'Tries to keep...':* A saying of Jesus, here a little out of context, found more than once in all four Gospels. Physical life may be saved by denying Jesus, but the life

of immediate spiritual communion will be lost. Conversely, discipleship may result in the loss of physical life, but that loss is insignificant when compared to gaining immediate communion with Yahweh, Jesus and all other souls.

**Mt 24:40-41. Lk 17:34-36.** *'One will be taken...'*: No matter how close two people can be in life, they have no guarantee of the same destiny. When the day of Yahweh's judgment comes, of two people, who all their lives lived side by side, one will be taken immediately to the Kingdom of Yahweh and the other left out to his necessary period of redemptive punishment.

**Lk 17:37.** *'Where there is... there...'*: When they asked Jesus where and when all this would happen, he answered by quoting a well-known Jewish proverb, which simply means that a thing would happen only when the necessary conditions are fulfilled. The coming of Jesus Christ will be as obvious as the gathering of vultures around a carcass. Yahweh will bring Jesus again only at the proper time. We cannot know that time, and we don't have to speculate about it, but we must live so that whenever Jesus comes, he will find us ready.

**Seven woes. Jesus' sorrow for Jerusalem**

*See page 431*

[*Matthew 23:1-13;15-39 Luke 11:37-54;13:31-35*]

*(Lk11:37)When Jesus had finished speaking, a Pharisee invited him to eat with him; so he went in and reclined at the table. (38)But the Pharisee, noticing that Jesus did not first wash before the meal, was surprised.*

*(Mt23:1)(Lk11:39a)Then Jesus said him and to the crowds and to his disciples: (Mt 23:2)"The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. (3)So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach. (4)They tie up heavy loads and put them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them.*

*(Mt23:5)Everything they do is done for men to see: They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long; (6)they like the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; (7)they like to be greeted in the marketplaces and to have men call them 'Rabbi.'*

*(Mt23:8)But you are not to be called 'Rabbi,' for you have only one Master and you are all brothers. (9)And do not call anyone on Earth 'father,' for you have one Father, and He is in Heaven. (10)Nor are you to be called 'teacher,' for you have one Teacher, the Christ. (11)The greatest among you will be your servant. (12)For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted."*

*(Lk11:45)One of the experts in the law answered him, "Teacher, when you say these things, you insult us also."*

*(Lk11:46)Jesus replied, "And you experts in the law, woe to you, because you load people down with burdens they can hardly carry and you yourselves will not lift one finger to help them.*

*(Lk11:43)Woe to you Pharisees, because you like the most important seats in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces.*

*(Mt23:13)(Lk11:52)Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! Because you have taken away the key to knowledge. You shut the Kingdom of Heaven in men's faces. You yourselves have not entered, nor will you let those enter who are trying to, hindering them.*

*(Mt23:15)Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are.*

*(Mt23:16) Woe to you, blind guides! You say, 'If anyone swears by the Temple, it means nothing; but if anyone swears by the gold of the Temple, he is bound by his oath.' (17) You blind fools! Which is greater; the gold, or the Temple that makes the gold sacred? (18) You also say, 'If anyone swears by the altar, it means nothing; but if anyone swears by the gift on it, he is bound by his oath.' (19) You blind men! Which is greater: the gift, or the altar that makes the gift sacred? (20) Therefore, he who swears by the altar swears by it and by everything on it. (21) And he who swears by the Temple swears by it and by the One who dwells in it. (22) And he who swears by Heaven swears by Yahweh's throne and by the One who sits on it.*

*(Mt23:23)(Lk11:42) Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! Because you give Yahweh a tenth of your spices -mint, dill, cummin, rue and all other kinds of garden herbs. But you have neglected the more important matters of the Law -justice, mercy, faithfulness and the affection of Yahweh. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. (Mt23:24) You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel.*

*(Mt23:25)(Lk11:39b) Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! Now then you clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside you are full of greed, wickedness and self-indulgence. (Mt23:26) Blind Pharisees! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean. (Lk11:40) You foolish people! Did not the one who made the outside make the inside also? (41) But give what is inside the dish -what you have- to the poor, and everything will be clean for you.*

*(Mt23:27)(Lk:11:44) Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! Because you are like unmarked graves, which men walk over without knowing it. You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean. (Mt23:28) In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.*

*(Mt23:29)(Lk11:47) Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! Because you build tombs for the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous and it was your forefathers who killed them. (Lk11:48) So you testify that you approve of what your forefathers did; they killed the prophets and you build their tomb. (Mt 23:30) And you say, 'If we had lived in the days of our forefathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.' (31) So you testify against yourselves that you are the descendants of those who murdered the prophets. (32) You fill up, then, the measure of the sin of your forefathers!*

*(Mt23:33) You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell? (Mt23:34)(Lk11:49) Because of this, Yahweh in His wisdom said, 'Therefore I am sending you prophets and apostles and wise men and teachers. Some of them you will kill and crucify and persecute; others you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town.' (Mt23:35-36)(Lk11:50-51) And so, therefore, this generation will be held responsible for the blood of all the prophets, and upon you will come all the righteous blood that has been shed on Earth, since the beginning of the world, from the blood of the righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Berekiah, whom you murdered between the Temple and the altar. Yes, I tell you the truth, this generation will be held responsible for it all."*

*(Lk13:31) At that time some Pharisees came to Jesus and said to him, "Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you."*

*(32) He replied, "Go tell that fox, 'I will drive out demons and heal people today and*

*tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal.' (33) In any case, I must keep going today and tomorrow and the next day -for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!*

*(Mt23:37)(Lk13:34) O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! (Mt23:38-39)(Lk13:35) Look, your house is left to you desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of Yahweh.'"*

*(Lk11:53) When Jesus left there, the Pharisees and the teachers of the law began to oppose him fiercely and to besiege him with questions, (54) waiting to catch him in something he might say.*

**Lk 11:37.** *'A Pharisee invited him':* Surely, not all the Pharisees were against Jesus and probably this particular one was trying to better understand Jesus and his intentions.

**Lk 11:38.** *'Did not first wash':* Jesus did not follow the social-religious practice of ceremonially washing his hands before eating. To omit doing it was considered to sin and, so, the Pharisee was surprised that a Rabbi did not follow this rule.

**Mt 23:1. Lk 11:39.** *'Jesus said':* Usually, when a distinguished person as a Rabbi was invited, the house was open to everybody, allowing them to listen to the guest. So Jesus had the possibility of speaking not only to his host and his disciples, but to plenty of people as well.

**Mt 23:2.** *'Sit in Moses' seat':* Yahweh gave the Law to Moses; Moses handed it to Joshua; Joshua transmitted it to the elders; the elders passed it down to the prophets; and the prophets gave it to the Scribes and the Pharisees who, then, were considered the authorized successors of Moses as teachers of the Law.

**Mt 23:3-4.** *'You must obey them':* Jesus was not commending the Scribes and the Pharisees with all their rules. Actually, he was saying, "Until now, because the Scribes and Pharisees have taught you the great principles of the Law which Moses received from Yahweh, you had to obey them." And those great principles of the Law, on which the Ten Commandments were based, are reverence and respect. Reverence for Yahweh. Respect for what -life, parents, sons, etc.- He has given and for man -life, personality, good name, possessions, etc. Those principles are eternal; and, until the Scribes and the Pharisees taught reverence for Yahweh and respect for men, their teaching was eternally binding and eternally valid. *'They do not practice...':* They were experts in the law and they used their expertise to lay upon men the thousand burdens of the ceremonial law; but they did not keep them themselves, because they were also expert in legalistic evasion. *'They tie up heavy loads...':* All those ceremonial rules were an intolerable burden to people. Their presentation of religion did not give men wings to fly up to Yahweh; on the contrary, it put deadweights dragging them down, far from Yahweh. Their religion was a depressing affair of burdens and prohibitions, so ceasing to be true religion.

**Mt 23:5.** *'Everything they do...':* The religion of the Pharisees became almost inevitably a religion of ostentation and, consisting in obeying countless rules, it became easy for them to worry only of making everyone aware of how well they fulfilled those regulations, and of how perfect their piety was. *'Make... wide... long':* Here, Jesus selected certain actions and customs by which the Pharisees particularly showed their ostentation. *'Phylacteries':* They were like little leather boxes, strapped one on the wrist and one on the forehead, containing small parchment rolls with certain passages of the

scripture. The Pharisees, to draw attention on themselves, wore specially big ones, so that they might demonstrate their exemplary obedience to the law. *'Tassels'*: They were fringes worn on the four corners of the outer garment. It was easy to make these tassels of especially large size to draw everybody's attention.

**Mt 23:6.** *'Place of honor... most important seats'*: In Palestine, at the banquets, the nearer the seat to the house-master, the greater was the honor, and the more important was the guest. In the synagogues, the most honored seats were those of the elders, which faced the congregation. If a man was seated there, everyone would see that he was present and he could conduct himself through the service with a pose of piety which the congregation could not fail to notice.

**Mt 23:7.** *'They like to be greeted...'*: The more exaggerated the greetings the Pharisees received in the streets the better they were pleased. *'Call them Rabbi'*: Still further, they liked to be addressed as Rabbi and to be treated with the greatest respect. In effect, they claimed greater respect than that which was given to parents for, they said, the parents gave only physical life, but they, the teachers of the law, gave men eternal life.

**Mt 23:8-10.** *'Are not to be called Rabbi... you are all brothers'*: In the eyes of Yahweh all men are exactly equals (brothers), so no one has the right to consider himself to be a master (Rabbi). *'Do not call anyone... father. Nor... teacher'*: The Christians should always remember that they have only one Father -Yahweh- and only one Teacher and Master -Jesus Christ.

**Mt 23:11.** *'The greatest... be your servant'*: To the Christians, greatness has to consist, not in reducing other men to one's service, but in reducing oneself to their service. The life of discipleship is to be characterized by humble and affectionate service.

**Mt 23:12.** *'Whoever exalts...'*: Repeatedly Jesus had told his disciples that, if they looked for greatness, they would find it not by being first, but by being last; not by being masters, but by being servants of all. The whole design of the Pharisees was to dress and act in such a way as to draw attention to themselves. The whole design of the Christians should be to obliterate themselves, so that if men see their good deeds, they may glorify not them, but Yahweh their Father in Heaven.

**Lk 11:45.** *'Expert in the law... You insults us also'*: In this passage, in Matthew's Gospel, Jesus condemns the behavior of both the Pharisees and the teachers (doctors, experts) of the law. In Luke's Gospel, till this point, Jesus condemns the Pharisees only. But the scribes felt, rightly, of being accused as well (many of them were Pharisees) and then one of them did complain.

**Lk 11:46.** *'Woe'*: The Greek word used here for "woe" is "ouai," a word hard to translate for it includes not only wrath, but also affliction and deep sorrow. There is righteous anger here, but it is the anger of an heart full of affection, broken by the stubborn blindness of men. *'Load people down'*: By adding all those rules to the authentic Law of Moses and doing nothing to help keep them, while inventing ways for themselves to circumvent them.

**Lk 11:43.** See notes to Mt 23:6 and 23:7.

**Mt 23:13. Lk 11:52.** *'Hypocrites'*: The word hypocrite occurs here again and again. It identifies a person who acts a part, who puts on an external show while inwardly his thoughts and feelings are very different. *'The key to knowledge'*: The very persons who should have opened the people's minds concerning the Law obscured their understanding by faulty interpretations and by an erroneous system of theology. *'They shut the Kingdom of Heaven in men's faces'*: Their interpretation of Scripture was so fantastic that it was impossible for the ordinary man to understand it. In their hands Scripture became a book of riddles. In their mistaken ingenuity they refused to see its plain meaning



and they would not let anyone else see it either. The Scriptures had become the perquisite of the experts and a dark mystery to the common man. They made the word of Yahweh so difficult that the seeking mind of the common man was bewildered and did not know what to believe or to whom to listen. *'You... do not enter, nor...'*: These Scribes and Pharisees were not only failing to enter the Kingdom themselves but, when people tried to find entry into the Kingdom, the Pharisees presented them with all those rules, which was as good as shutting the door of the Kingdom in their faces.

**Mt 23:15.** *'To win a single convert'*: In a time of a multitude of gods, the idea of One God was welcomed by a number of people who were also attracted by the ethical purity and by the standards of morality of the Jewish religion. Most of those people were the so-called Yahweh-fearers, who accepted the concept of One God and the Jewish moral law, but took no part in the ceremonial law and did not convert. The Pharisees were very active in trying to turn these Yahweh-fearers into proselytes, that is, in full converts. *'Twice as much a son of hell as you'*: As so often happens, those converts were the more fanatical devotee of their new religion; doubly zealous for ritual purification, which fostered pride and false security and brought no salvation. Jesus accused the Pharisees of being missionaries of evil because they were not really seeking to lead men to Yahweh, but to make them Pharisees.

**Mt 23:16-22.** *'If anyone swears by the Temple...'*: In matter of oaths the Jewish legalists were masters of evasion (Oaths. Mt 5:33-37). To the Jews of Jesus' time an oath was absolutely binding only as long as it was one in which the Name of Yahweh was employed. Any other oath might be legitimately broken. Jesus was actually saying, "You have brought evasion to such a fine art that it is possible to regard an oath by the Temple as not binding, while an oath by the gold of the Temple is binding; and an oath by the altar as not binding, while an oath by the gift on the altar is binding." But the truly religious and honest man will never make a promise with the deliberate intention of evading it; he will never, as he makes it, provide himself with a series of escape routes, which he may use if he finds his promise hard to keep.

**Mt 23:23. Lk 11:42.** *'A tenth'*: To give the tenth of all the produce was an essential part of Jewish religious regulations. It was specially for the support of the Levites, whose task was to do the material work of the Temple. It was a tenth of "everything that can be used as food and is cultivated and grows out of the ground." *'A tenth of your spices'*: The point of Jesus' saying is that it was logical to give the tenth of the main crop. But mint, dill and cummin were herbs of the kitchen garden and were grown in small quantities. To give one tenth of those small quantities was almost useless. But the Pharisees were so absolutely meticulous that they would give the tenth even of the produce of a single small plant. *'But you have neglected'*: And yet these same men could be guilty of injustice; could be hard, arrogant and cruel, forgetting the claim of mercy. Could take oaths and pledges and promises with the deliberate intention of evading them, forgetting fidelity.

**Mt 23:24.** *'A gnat... a camel'*: The gnat -a small biting fly- was the smallest, and the camel the biggest, of the unclean animals existing in Palestine. In order to avoid drinking anything unclean, the most strict Pharisees poured wine through a gauze to filter out any possible impurity. This is a sarcastic picture, of a man who has completely lost his sense of proportion, who carefully filters his wine to avoid swallowing a microscopic insect and yet cheerfully swallows a camel.

**Mt 23:25-26. Lk 11:39-41.** *'You clean the outside'*: If an unclean person touched any vessel, that vessel became unclean; and, thereafter, any other person who touched the

vessel became in turn unclean. It was, therefore, of paramount importance to have all vessels properly cleansed; and the rules for cleansing them were absurdly complicated. The food or drink inside a vessel might have been obtained by cheating or extortion or theft; it did not matter, so long as the vessel itself was ceremonially clean. *'Inside you are full of greed... First, clean the inside...'*: The Pharisees were more concerned about keeping ceremonial acts than about being moral. But the inside of a man (his "heart") is much more important than the outside (the ceremonial cleansing performed). *'Everything will be clean'*: Giving from the heart makes everything else right. If one gives to the poor, his heart is no longer in the grip of "greed and wickedness." Jesus' comment was that, if they were as particular about cleansing their hearts as they were about washing their hands, they would have been much better men.

**Mt 23:27. Lk 11:44.** *'Unmarked graves'*: Here again there is a picture which any Jew would understand. Anyone who touched a dead body became unclean. One of the commonest places for tombs was by the wayside. Therefore, anyone who came in contact with a tomb automatically became unclean. For a man to become unclean on his way to the Passover Feast would be a disaster, for that meant he would be barred from sharing in it. *'Whitewashed tombs'*: Graves were painted white to make them easily visible, especially at night so that no pilgrim might accidentally come in contact with one of them and be rendered unclean. So the tombs would look good in the sunshine; but inside they were full of bones and bodies whose contact would defile.

**Mt 23:28.** *'In the same way...'*: That, said Jesus, was a precise picture of what the Pharisees were. Their outward actions were the actions of intensely religious men; but their inward hearts were foul and putrid with sin.

**Mt 23:29-32. Lk 11:47-48.** *'You build tombs for the prophets'*: The attitude of the Scribes and Pharisees toward the prophets was paradoxical. They professed a deep admiration for the prophets. But the only prophets they admired were those dead; and, when they met a living one they tried to kill him, just as their ancestors had done. The Scribes and the Pharisees tended the tombs of the martyrs, beautified their memorials and claimed that, if they had lived in the old days, they would have not slain the prophets and the men of Yahweh. But that is precisely what they would have done, and precisely what they were still going to do, rejecting and killing Jesus.

**Mt 23:33-36. Lk 11:49-51.** *'Yahweh in His wisdom said'*: This is not a quotation from the Old Testament or any other known book. It refers in quotation to Yahweh's decision to send prophets and apostles even though He knew they would be rejected. *'This generation'*: All the Jewish people of any period, from the beginning of Israel to Jesus. *'From... Abel to... Zechariah'*: The murder of Abel (Genesis 4:8) was the first in the Bible story, and the murder of Zecharias the last (it appears in the book 2 Chronicles 24: 20-22 which, in the Hebrew Bible, is the last one). From the beginning to the end, the history of Israel was the rejection, and often the slaughter, of the men of Yahweh. The murder of Abel by Cain is well known. Zecharias rebuked the nation for their sins, and Joash, the king, had him stoned to death in the very Temple court; and Zecharias died saying, "May the Lord see and avenge!" *'Son of Berekias'*: Zecharias was wrongly called the son of Berekias when, in fact, he was the son of Jehoiada. *'Responsible for it all'*: Jesus was quite clear that the murder taint was still there. He knew that he had to die, and that in the days to come his followers would be persecuted, ill-treated, rejected, and slain.

**Lk 13:31.** *'Some Pharisees came to Jesus. Herod wants to kill you'*: Not all the Pharisees were hostile to Jesus. Here we have some of them actually warning him that he was

in danger, and advised him to seek safety. This passage shows that even among the Pharisees there were those who admired and respect Jesus. It is true that from the Gospels we get a negative picture of the Pharisees, but there are always the good and the bad.

**Lk 13:32-33.** *'Fox'*: Jesus was addressing his words to Herod Antipas king of Galilee, who was trying to stop him. To the Jews the fox was a symbol, both of an ingenious and destructive animal, and of a worthless and insignificant man. So, Jesus was saying that the actions of Herod, the reigning king, were to be insignificant in the following events. *'Today and tomorrow and...'*: In Semitic usage this phrase referred to an indefinite but limited period of time. *'Reach my goal'*: Jesus' life had a predetermined plan that would be carried out, and no harm could come to him until his purpose was accomplished. *'Die outside Jerusalem'*: Jesus' hour had not yet come. He would die in Jerusalem as had numerous prophets before him.

**Mt 23:37. Lk 13:34.** *'O Jerusalem...'*: Here Jesus spoke, not so much as the judge of all the Earth, but as the savior of all men. Jerusalem had killed the prophets and stoned the messengers of Yahweh; yet Yahweh did not cast it off; and in the end He had sent there His Son. And Jesus, who was and is fond of men, would not force himself in; the only weapon he would use is the appeal of affection. An appeal which men are fully responsible for accepting or rejecting.

**Mt 23:38-39. Lk 13:35.** *'House is left... desolate'*: After their final refusal, Yahweh will abandon His Temple and His City. Only forty years were to pass and in AD 70 Jerusalem would be a heap of ruins, destroyed by the Romans. *'Not see me again until...'*: Anyway, Jesus would not go to Jerusalem till the last days of his life, when the people will acclaim him (The triumphal entry. Mk 11:1-11; Mt 21:1-11; Lk 19:28-44; Jn 12:12-19). *'Blessed is he...'*: A quotation from Psalm 118:26.

**Lk 11:53-54.** *'Waiting to catch him'*: It is evident the determination of the religious leaders to trap and stop Jesus in any possible way.

***The parable of the shrewd manager*** [Luke 16:1-12]

**(Lk16:1)** Jesus told his disciples: *"There was a rich man whose manager was accused of wasting his possessions. (2)So he called him in and asked him, 'What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your management, because you cannot be manager any longer.'*

*(3)The manager said to himself, 'What shall I do now? My master is taking away my job, I'm not strong enough to dig, and I'm ashamed to beg -(4)I know what I'll do so that, when I lose my job here, people will welcome me into their houses.'*

*(5)So he called in each one of his master's debtors. He asked the first, 'How much do you owe my master?'*

*(6)'A hundred batos of olive oil,' he replied.*

*The manager told him, 'Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it fifty.'*

*(7)Then he asked the second, 'And how much do you owe?'*

*'A hundred koros of wheat,' he replied.*

*He told him, 'Take your bill and make it eighty.'*

*(8)The master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly. For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the Light. (9)I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.*

*(10)Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. (11)So if you*

***have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? (12) And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own?"***

**Lk 16:1.** *'Jesus told'*: Another parable to explain the difference between the things of this world and the things of Yahweh. *'Manager'*: Probably it was a slave, who was in charge of the running of his master's estate. *'Accused of wasting'*: In Palestine there were many absentee landlords. This master may well have been one of those, as in this case his business was in the hands of a servant.

**Lk 16:2.** *'Give an account...'*: The landlord was told what wrong his manager had done, so he asked him to come and to justify his actions.

**Lk 16:3-7.** *'What shall I do now?'*: The manager, sure of losing his job, tried his best to find some -dishonest- way for keeping his lifestyle, without being obliged to physical work. *'I know what I'll do...'*: He had a brilliant idea; he decided to falsify the entries in the books so that the landlord's debtors would be debited with far less than they owed. This would have two effects. First, the debtors would be grateful to him. Second, he had involved them in his own misdemeanors and he was now in a position to exercise a little blackmail. The dishonest manager had no scruples against using his position for his own benefit, even if it meant cheating against his master. Surely, what the debtors owed was rent, which was usually paid not in money but in kind, in terms of an agreed proportion of the produce. Quite probably, at the moment of signing the contract, the manager had charged more than the right to the debtors; practice which, by the way, was commonly used for circumventing the Mosaic Law that prohibited taking interest from fellow Jews (Deuteronomy 23:19). So, to reduce the debts, he was forgoing rental payments his master did not have a right to charge and, in returning the figures to their initial amounts, he would gain the good favor of the debtors without dissatisfying his master. The point here is not his dishonesty, but that he was shrewd enough to use all the means at his disposal to plan for his future well-being. *'A hundred batos of olive oil'*: About 800 gallons, 3,600 liters; the yield of 450 olive trees. *'A hundred koros of wheat'*: About 8,000 gallons (36,000 liters); the yield of 100 acres (40 hectares) of cultivated land.

**Lk 16:8.** *'The master commended...'*: The master himself was something of a rascal for, instead of being shocked at the whole proceeding, he appreciated the shrewd brain behind it and actually praised the steward for what he had done. *'The people of this world... the people of the Light'*: The meaning is that, if the Christians -the people of the light- were as eager and ingenious in their attempts to attain goodness as the men of the world are in their attempts to attain money and comfort, they would be much better men.

**Lk 16:9.** *'Worldly wealth'*: Yahweh's people should be ready to make proper use of what Yahweh has given them. *'To gain friends'*: By helping those in need, who in the future will show their gratitude when they welcome their benefactors into Heaven ("eternal dwellings"). In this way worldly wealth may be wisely used to gain eternal benefit.

**Lk 16:10-12.** *'Whoever can be trusted...'*: Faithfulness is not determined by the amount entrusted but by the character of the person who uses it. The lesson is that a man's way of fulfilling a small task is the best proof of his fitness or unfitness to be entrusted with a bigger task. That is clearly true of earthly matters. But Jesus extended the principle to eternity. He said, "On Earth you are in charge of things which are not really yours. You

cannot take them with you when you die. They are only lent to you. You are only stewards over them. On the other hand, in Heaven you will get what is really and eternally yours." *'True riches'*: The things of highest value, ultimately those of the spirit.

***The rich man and Lazarus*** [Luke 16:19-31]

***(Lk16:19)"There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. (20)At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores (21)and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores.***

***(22)The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. (23)In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. (24)So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.'***

***(25)But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. (26)And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.'***

***(27)He answered, 'Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father's house, (28)for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.'***

***(29)Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.'***

***(30)'No, father Abraham,' he said, 'but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.'***

***(31)He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone will rise from the dead.'"***

**Lk 16:19.** *'There was a rich man'*: Every word of this verse adds something to the luxury in which the man lived. *'Was dressed...'*: That is the description of the robe of the High Priest, a dramatically costly robe. *'Lived in luxury'*: The word translated "lived" has more a meaning of feasting, which is the word used for a gourmet feeding on exotic and costly dishes. *'Every day'*: In a country where the common people toiled for six days a week and were fortunate if they could eat meat on the Sabbath, the rich man was depicted as a figure of indolent self-indulgence.

**Lk 16:20-21.** *'A beggar named Lazarus'*: A beggar in shocking conditions, covered with ulcerated sores; and so helpless that he could not even ward off the stray dogs, which pestered him. *'Longing to eat ...'*: Lazarus was only waiting for the food remains that fell from the table. He was not waiting for the left-over food which, surely, was given to the house servants and slaves. In that time food was eaten with the hands and, in the very wealthy houses, the hands were cleaned by wiping them on hunks of bread, which were then thrown away. That was what Lazarus was waiting for.

**Lk 16:22-23.** *'The time came when...'*: Such was the scene in this world; then abruptly Jesus changed it to the next showing that there Lazarus was in glory and the rich man in torment. *'Abraham's side'*: The Talmud mentions both Heaven and "Abraham's side" as the home of the righteous. "Abraham's side" refers to the place of blessedness to which only some of the righteous dead went to await the final judgment of the last day, which will open the doors of Heaven to all good men. This waiting place was reserved to peo-

ple like Abraham, who were called by Yahweh to some particular task during their earthly life. *'Hell'*: Actually, in Greek, Hades, the place of redemptive punishment. What was the sin of the rich man? He had not ordered Lazarus to be removed from his gate. He had made no objections to his receiving the bread that was flung away from his table. He did not kick him in the passing. He was not deliberately cruel to him. His sin was that he never noticed Lazarus, that he accepted him as part of the landscape and simply thought it perfectly natural and inevitable that Lazarus should lie in pain and hunger while he was enveloped in luxury. He looked at a fellow-man, hungry and in pain, and did nothing about it.

**Lk 16:24.** *'He called'*: The image of punishment given in this verse -punishment by the torment of fire- is the most traditional one, the easiest to understand for Jesus' listeners.

**Lk 16:25.** *'Abraham replied'*: This phrase is a declaration that the next life will bring compensation to everything that was not proper, both in a positive and negative way, in the physical, earthly life.

**Lk 16:26.** *'Between us and you... Nor can anyone cross over'*: Only Jesus can move from Heaven and Hades, all the times he is going there to teach and offer salvation to the souls of the dead.

**Lk 16:27-28.** *'Then I beg you... I have five brothers'*: Possibly for the first time the man who had been rich showed concern for other people, even if they were members of his family. During his life he had failed to pay attention to Scripture and its teaching, and now he feared that his brothers would be punished as him. Actually, the first step toward accepting Jesus' offer of salvation (Hell is formative and redemptive).

**Lk 16:29.** *'Moses and the Prophets'*: A way of designating the whole Old Testament.

**Lk 16:30-31.** *'Someone from the dead'*: If a person's mind is closed and Scripture is rejected, no evidence -not even if brought by a person coming back from the dead- will change him. It seems hard that Abraham did reject his request that his brothers should be warned. But the fact is that men possess the truth of Yahweh's Words, and if other men's sorrow and pain does not move them to action, nothing will change them.

### **The parable of the persistent widow** [Luke 18:1-8]

**(Lk18:1)** *Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. (2)He said: "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared Yahweh nor cared about men. (3)And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.'*

*(4)For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear Yahweh or care about men, (5)yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually wear me out with her coming!'"*

*(6)And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. (7)And will not Yahweh bring about justice for His chosen ones, who cry out to Him day and night? Will He keep putting them off? (8)I tell you, He will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the Earth?"*

**Lk 18:1.** *'Always pray and not give up'*: Here, Jesus is giving again a fundamental suggestion; that men have never to despair and always seek Yahweh's help.

**Lk 18:2.** *'A judge who neither feared Yahweh'*: Clearly, this judge was not a Jewish one. All ordinary Jewish disputes were taken before the elders, and not into the public courts at all. If, under Jewish Law, a matter was taken to arbitration, there must always be three judges, one chosen by the plaintiff, one by the defendant, and one independently appointed. The judge of this parable was certainly one of the paid magistrates appointed

either by Herod or by the Romans. Such judges were well known for their corruption. Unless a plaintiff had influence and money, he had no hope of ever having his case settled. *'Nor cared about men'*: Unconcerned about the needs of others and about their opinion of him.

**Lk 18:3-5.** *'A widow'*: This widow was particularly helpless and vulnerable because it is clear that she had no family to uphold her cause. Only justice and her own persistence were in her favor. It is obvious that, being without resources of any kind, she had no hope of ever obtaining justice from such a judge. But she had one weapon -persistence- which, in the end, won.

**Lk 18:6-7.** *'Will not Yahweh bring about justice...?'*: Actually, Jesus said, "If, in the end, an unworthy judge, unjust and rapacious, who felt no constraint of right or wrong, can be obliged by persistence to give a helpless widow justice, how much more will Yahweh, who is as a loving father, give His children what they need."

**Lk 18:8.** *'He will see that they get justice'*: That is true, but it does not mean that we should expect to get whatever we pray for. Often a father has to refuse the request of a son, for he knows that what the son is asking would hurt rather than help. Yahweh acts exactly in this way. We do not know what is to happen in the next hour; even less the next week, or month, or year. Only Yahweh sees the time whole and, therefore, knows what is good for us in the long run. That is why Jesus said we must never be discouraged in prayer. *'When the Son of Man comes'*: Here, Jesus spoke of the time of his second coming, clearly a period of spiritual decline and persecution, a time that will require perseverance such as the widow demonstrated. *'Will he find faith...?'*: Particularly to persevere in prayer and to remain faithful to Yahweh and Jesus Christ.

**The parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector** [Luke 18:9-14]

*(Lk18:9) To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable: (10) "Two men went up to the Temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. (11) The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'Yahweh, I thank You that I am not like other men -robbers, evildoers, adulterers- or even like this tax collector. (12) I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.'*

*(13) But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to Heaven, but beat his breast and said: 'Yahweh, have mercy on me, a sinner.'*

*(14) I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before Yahweh. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."*

**Lk 18:9.** *'Confident of their own...'*: Orthodox, fully observant people are usually absolutely confident to be right and tend to rate low every person who is not as them.

**Lk 18:10.** *'Up to the Temple to pray'*: The devout Jews observed three prayer times daily, at 9 AM, 12 Noon, and 3 PM, when there were the daily prayers scheduled in connection with the morning and evening sacrifices. Furthermore, prayers were supposed to be specially efficacious if they were offered in the Temple and so at these hours many went up to the Temple to pray.

**Lk 18:11.** *'The Pharisee'*: He did not really go to pray Yahweh, but he went to inform Yahweh of how good he was, enumerating his virtues.

**Lk 18:12.** *'I fast twice a week'*: The Mosaic Law commanded fasting only on the Day of Atonement. But those who wished to gain special merit fasted also on Mondays and Thursdays. Those were also the market days, when Jerusalem was full of country peo-

ple. To attract attention on themselves, emphasizing their suffering, those who fasted whitened their faces and appeared in disheveled clothes, and those days gave their piety the biggest possible audience. *'A tenth of all I get'*: A typical Pharisee of the time, who tithed all he acquired, not merely what he earned.

**Lk 18:13.** *'The tax collector'*: He stood far off, and would not even lift his eyes to Yahweh, fully aware of being considered a sinner and an out-caste by the orthodox Jews. *'Have mercy on me'*: The tax collector did not plead his good works but the mercy of Yahweh in forgiving his sin.

**Lk 18:14.** *'I tell you...'*: And Jesus said that it was that sincere prayer of a man who regretted his sins which won the tax collector's acceptance before Yahweh, gaining him Yahweh's forgiveness. *'For everyone who exalts...'*: This parable tells us certain things about prayer; that no man who is proud can properly pray, and that no man who despises his fellow-men can really pray. No doubt that what the Pharisee said was true. He did fast; he did meticulously give the tenth; he was not as so many other men were; still less he was like that tax collector. But he was comparing himself with other men, not with the requests of Yahweh. Furthermore, he did not ask for the only important thing, the mercy of Yahweh for being a sinner.

### **Jesus at Mary and Martha's home** [John 11:55-57;12:1]

**(Jn11:55)** *When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, many went up from the country to Jerusalem, for the ceremonial cleansing before the Passover. (56) They kept looking for Jesus, and as they stood in the Temple area they asked one another, "What do you think? Isn't he coming to the Feast at all?" (57) But the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone found out where Jesus was, he should report it so that they might arrest him.*

**(12:1)** *Six days before the Passover, Jesus arrived at Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead.*

**Jn 11:55.** *'Almost time for the Jewish Passover'*: Some time before the main Feast, Jerusalem was beginning to fill up with people. *'Ceremonial cleansing'*: Especially important at a time like Passover, because without it, it would be not possible to keep the Feast. Because of the scribal law, uncleanness could be contracted by touching a vast number of things and people. So, before the Jews could attend any feast they had to be ceremonially clean. Those purifications were carried out in the Temple and they took time. Many of the Jews, therefore, came up to the city early to make the necessary offerings and go through the necessary washing in order to ensure ceremonial cleanliness.

**Jn 11:56.** *'Isn't he coming...?'*: The question, in Greek, expects the answer "No." The Jews gathered there knew what was going on, they knew about the contest between Jesus and the authorities. They wondered if he would appear at the Feast, and concluded that he could not possibly come.

**Jn 11:57.** *'Had given orders'*: By this time Jesus had been classified an outlaw. Probably the authorities had offered a reward for information leading to his apprehension, the reward that Judas sought and later received.

**Jn 12:1.** *'Six days before...'*: But the Jews underrated Jesus, who came to Jerusalem in spite of the authorities' threat, openly and in a way to focus the attention on himself. When the time arrived for him to come, nothing on Earth would stop him coming. *'Jesus arrived at Bethany'*: So great were the crowds who came to the Passover that they could not all possibly obtain lodging within the city itself, and Bethany was one of the places outside the city boundaries where the pilgrims could stay.



***The Last Week******The triumphal entry***

See page 433

*[Mark 11:1-11 Matthew 21:1-11 Luke 19:28-44 John 12:12-19]*

***(Lk19:28)(Jn12:12)***The next day, after Jesus had spoken, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. And the great crowd that had come for the Feast heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. ***(Mk11:1-2)(Mt21:1-2)(Lk19:29-30)***As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage from Bethany, at the hill called the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples, saying to them, ***"Go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, at once you will find a donkey tied there, with a colt by her, which no one has ever ridden. Untie them and bring them here to me. (Mk11:3)(Mt21:3)(Lk19:31)If anyone says anything to you and asks you, 'Why are you doing this? Why are you untying them?' tell him, 'The Lord needs them and he will send them back right away.'"***

***(Mk11:4-5)(Mt21:6)(Lk19:32-33)***Those disciples who were sent ahead went, did as Jesus had instructed them, and found a colt outside in the street, tied at a doorway. As they were untying the colt, some people standing there, its owners, asked them, "What are you doing? Why are you untying that colt?" ***(Mk11:6)(Lk19:34)***They answered as Jesus had told them to, "The Lord needs it." And the people let them go. ***(Mk11:7)(Mt21:4;7)(Lk19:35)(Jn12:14)***When they brought the donkey and the colt to Jesus, they placed their cloaks on the colt, and Jesus sat on it. This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet. As it is written,

***(Mt21:5)(Jn12:15)***"Say to the Daughter of Zion,

*'Do not be afraid, O Daughter of Zion; see, your king comes to you,  
gentle and riding on a donkey, seated on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'*"

***(Mk11:8-10)(Mt21:8-9)(Lk19:36-38)(Jn12:13)***As he went along, a very large crowd took and cut branches from the palm trees, and spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread on the road branches they had cut in the fields and went out to meet him.

When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples, those who went ahead of him and those who followed, began joyfully to praise Yahweh in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen and shouted,

*"Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the Name of the Lord [Yahweh]!*

*Hosanna, Son of David!*

*Blessed is the king who comes in the Name of the Lord [Yahweh]!*

*Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!*

*Blessed is the King of Israel!*

*Glory in the Highest!*

*Peace in Heaven and glory in the Highest!"*

***(Lk19:39)***Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples!"

***(40)"I tell you," he replied, "if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out."***

***(41)***As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it ***(42)***and said, ***"If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace -but now it is hidden from your eyes. (43)The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. (44)They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of Yahweh's coming to you."***

**(Mk11:11)(Mt21:10-11)** *When Jesus entered Jerusalem, he went to the Temple. The whole city was stirred and asked, "Who is this?"*

*The crowd answered, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee."*

*Jesus looked around at everything, but since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve.*

**(Jn12:16)** *At first his disciples did not understand all this. Only after Jesus was glorified did they realize that these things had been written about him and that they had done these things to him.*

**(17)** *Now the crowd that was with him when he called Lazarus from the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to spread the word. (18) Many people, because they had heard that he had given this miraculous sign, went out to meet him. (19) So the Pharisees said to one another, "See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him!"*

**Lk 19:28. Jn 12:12.** *'Going up to Jerusalem':* With this "Triumphal Entry," which inaugurates the Passion Week, Jesus purposefully introduced himself as the Messiah, knowing that his action would provoke the Jewish leaders to take action against him. *'For the Feast':* It was Passover time, and Jerusalem and the whole surrounding neighborhood was crowded with pilgrims. The law was that every adult male Jew who lived within fifteen miles (24 km) of Jerusalem must come to the Passover; but the Jews of Palestine and from every corner of the world came for the greatest of their national festivals. *'Heard that Jesus...':* News and rumors had gone out that Jesus, the man who had raised Lazarus from the dead, was on his way to Jerusalem. Many of the pilgrims had doubtless seen and heard Jesus in Galilee, and they welcomed the opportunity to proclaim him as Messiah.

**Mk 11:1-3. Mt 21:1-3. Lk 19:29-31.** *'Bethphage':* A village near the road going from Jericho to Jerusalem. *'Bethany':* A village on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives, about two miles (3.2 km) from Jerusalem and the final station on the road from Jericho to Jerusalem. Bethphage and Bethany were recognized lodging-places for pilgrims to the Passover when Jerusalem was full. *'Mount of Olives':* A ridge a little more than a mile (1.6 km) long, separated from Jerusalem by the Kidron Valley, to the east of the city. *'Sent two of his disciples':* It is clear that this was not a sudden decision, taken on the moment. The whole tone of the story shows that he was carrying out plans which he had made ahead. Jesus had already arranged that the donkey and the colt should be waiting for him, for he must have many friends in the village; and the phrase, "The Lord needs them" was a password by which their owner would know that it was Jesus making the request. *'Donkey':* An animal symbolic of humility, peace and Davidic royalty. *'Which no one has ever ridden':* Unused animals were regarded as especially suitable for religious and ceremonial purposes.

**Mk 11:4-6. Mt 21:6. Lk 19:32-34.** *'Those disciples who were sent...':* And everything went as Jesus had described.

**Mk 11:7. Mt 21:4;7. Lk 19:35. Jn 12:14.** *'Jesus sat on it. To fulfill what was spoken...':* Jesus entered Jerusalem claiming publicly that he was the chosen Son of David, the One of whom the prophets had spoken, the Messiah. But we must be very careful to note just what he was doing. The whole impact of the scene -Jesus arriving riding on a donkey- is that he, the King, was coming in peace. In effect, in Palestine the donkey was not a despised beast, but a noble one. When a king went to war he rode on a horse, but when he went in peace he rode on a donkey.

**Mt 21:5. Jn 12:15.** *'Say to the daughter of Zion...'*: Jesus came as a king, in peace and for peace. And this results from the quotation of Zechariah 9:9.

**Mk 11:8-10. Mt 21:8-9. Lk 19:36-38. Jn 12:13.** *'A very large crowd'*: There were two groups of people, one who was accompanying Jesus from Bethany, the other surging out of Jerusalem to see him. *'Palm branches'*: Used in celebration of victory. *'Spread their cloaks on the road'*: An act of royal homage. *'All the miracles'*: The raising of Lazarus and the healing of the blind Bartimaeus were only some recent examples. *'Hosanna!'*: This crowd was greeting Jesus as a conqueror. That is, in fact, the predominant atmosphere of the whole scene. There is no doubt that when the people sang Psalm 118:25-26, they were considering Jesus as Yahweh's Anointed One, the Messiah, the Deliverer, the One who was to come. To note that the word "hosanna" is often quoted and used as if it meant praise; but it is a simple transliteration of the Hebrew for "Save now." It was used by people seeking for help and protection at the hands of the king. So, what the crowd shouted was not a cry of praise to Jesus, it was a cry to Yahweh to break in and to save His people now that the Messiah had come. In effect, Psalm 118 was written to commemorate the day of purification and the battle that Judas Maccabaeus won against the king Antiocheius of Syria -an invader- who desecrated the Temple of Jerusalem. Judas Maccabaeus in 163 BC drove Antiocheius out and re-purified and reconsecrated the Temple, an event commemorated by the Feast of Dedication. So Jesus approached Jerusalem with the shout of the mob hailing a conqueror. And this must have hurt him, for they were looking in him for that very thing which he had refused to be. Entering Jerusalem, Jesus did something to have everybody know that he was not such a Messiah. And so, on that day, he claimed to be king, but he claimed to be king of peace. With a crowd so big, it was obviously impossible for Jesus to speak to everybody. His voice could not have reached that vast assembly of people. So he did something that all could see: he came riding on a donkey's colt. This was, first, a deliberate claim to be the Messiah; second, a claim to be a particular kind of Messiah; a sign that he was not the warrior figure the Jews dreamed of, but the king of peace. But no one saw it that way at that time, not even the disciples.

**Lk 19:39.** *'Some of the Pharisees'*: Jesus knew perfectly well that he was entering a hostile city. However enthusiastic the crowd could have been, the Jewish authorities hated him and had sworn to eliminate him.

**Lk 19:40.** *'I tell you'*: Jesus' time had come. There was nothing the Jewish authorities could do to stop Yahweh's plans.

**Lk 19:41-44.** *'He wept'*: Jesus wept over Jerusalem because he knew what was going to happen to the city. The tears of Jesus are the tears of Yahweh when He sees the needless pain and suffering in which men involve themselves through their foolish rebellion against His will. *'Your enemies will build an embankment'*: Fulfilled when the Romans took Jerusalem in AD 70, using an embankment to besiege the city. *'The time of Yahweh's coming to you'*: Yahweh came to the Jews in the person of Jesus, the Messiah, but they failed to recognize him and rejected him.

**Mk 11:11. Mt 21:10-11.** *'Who is this?'*: The people greeted him as the Son of David, as the Messiah. *'Went out to Bethany'*: Jesus spent each night till Thursday on Passion Week in Bethany at the home of his friends Mary, Martha, and Lazarus.

**Jn 12:16.** *'Did not understand...'*: This brief passage also shows something about his disciples. They were still with him. By this time it must have been quite plain to them that Jesus was committing suicide, as it seemed to them. Sometimes we criticize them for their lack of loyalty in the last days but, as little as they understood what was happening, they still stood by him.

**Jn 12:17-19.** *'The crowd... continued to spread the world':* Everybody was speaking of Jesus, the Messiah, who had come to Jerusalem. *'The Pharisees':* And, in the background, there were the Jewish authorities. They felt that nothing they could do seemed able to stop the attraction of this Jesus on the crowds.

***Jesus predicts his death*** [John 12:20-36]

**(Jn 12:20)** *Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the Feast. (21) They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. "Sir," they said, "we would like to see Jesus." (22) Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus.*

**(23)** *Jesus replied, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. (24) I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. (25) The man who is fond of his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. (26) Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.*

**(27)** *Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour!' No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. (28) Father, glorify Your Name!"*

*Then a voice came from Heaven, "I have glorified it, and will glorify it again." (29) The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him.*

**(30)** *Jesus said, "This voice was for your benefit, not mine. (31) Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. (32) But I, when I am lifted up from the Earth, will draw all men to myself." (33) He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die.*

**(34)** *The crowd spoke up, "We have heard from the Law that the Christ will remain forever, so how can you say, 'The Son of Man must be lifted up'? Who is this Son of Man?"*

**(35)** *Then Jesus told them, "You are going to have the Light just a little while longer. Walk while you have the Light, before darkness overtakes you. The man who walks in the dark does not know where he is going. (36) Put your trust in the Light while you have it, so that you may become sons of Light." When he had finished speaking, Jesus left and hid himself from them.*

**Jn 12:20-22.** *'Greeks':* Probably "Yahweh-fearers," people attracted by the monotheism and the morality of Judaism, but repelled by its nationalism and by the too many rules of the scribal law. They worshipped in the synagogues but did not become proselyte. *'They came to Philip...':* These Greeks went to Philip, which is a Greek name, probably thinking they will be treated sympathetically. But Philip did not know what to do, and he went to Andrew, who was in no doubt and led them to Jesus. Andrew had already discovered that no one could ever be a nuisance to Jesus, that Jesus never turns any seeking soul away.

**Jn 12:23.** *'The hour has come for the Son of Man...':* It was clear that the situation had been building up to a crisis. When Jesus talked of the Son of Man, he did not mean what other people meant. For the Jews the Son of Man was the one who had to receive from Yahweh a Kingdom, a dominion that was to be universal and last for ever. They

believed that the day will come when Yahweh will release the Son of Man and he will come with divine power against which no man and no kingdom will be able to stand, and smash the way to world empire for the Jews. *'To be glorified...'*: When Jesus said so, his listeners would catch their breath. But Jesus did not mean by "glorified" what they understood. They meant that all the kingdoms of Earth would lay under the conqueror's feet; he meant "crucified."

**Jn 12:24-26.** *'I tell you the truth...'*: The first sentence which Jesus spoke surely excited the hearts of those who heard it; then he went on with a succession of sayings which must have left them staggered and bewildered by their sheer incredibility, for he spoke, not in terms of conquest, but in terms of sacrifice and death. He said three things, which are all variations of one fundamental truth and all at the center of the Christian faith and life. (i) Only by death life comes. The kernel of wheat is ineffective and unfruitful so long as it is preserved in safety. It is when it is thrown into the ground, and buried there as in a tomb, that it bears fruit. (ii) Only by spending life we retain it. The man who loves only his physical life, in his selfishness and desire of security, will never risk it in defense of other men or of moral principles. Only the man who risks (that is, who "hates" it, in the sense that he does not give life more than the right importance) and possibly loses his physical life, will gain the spiritual, eternal one. (iii) Only by service comes greatness. The people of importance, from the Christian point of view, are only those who unselfishly serve others. In effect, Jesus came to the Jews with a new view of life. They looked on glory as conquest, the acquisition of power, the right to rule. He looked on it as a cross in behalf of all men.

**Jn 12:27-34.** *'My heart is troubled...'*: In this passage John shows Jesus' tension when he was fighting his battle with his human longing to avoid the Cross, and what turned tension into triumph. No one wishes to die at thirty-three; and no one wishes to die on a cross. There would be no virtue in Jesus' obedience to Yahweh, if it had come easily and without cost. Real courage does not mean not being afraid. It means to be terribly afraid, and yet to do the thing that has to be done. *'A voice came from Heaven...'*: To note that the voice of Yahweh came to Jesus at all the great moments of his life. At his Baptism, at his Transfiguration, and now when his human flesh and blood had to be strengthened before the ordeal of the Cross. *'The time for judgment'*: In the past, Satan had conquered the human race and the Earth because of Adam and Eve's disobedience. Now Jesus, with the demonstration of his total faith in Yahweh, won them back, giving all men -of the present, the past and the future- the possibility to enter Yahweh's Kingdom, that is, to be in spiritual communion with Jesus, Yahweh, and everybody else. *'The prince of this world'*: Satan. The Cross would seem his triumph; in fact, it was his defeat. Out of it came the greatest good ever to come to the world. *'Lifted up'*: The Cross was the supreme exaltation of Jesus. *'All men'*: After his Crucifixion and Resurrection, Jesus will draw all people to himself, either during this life or when going preaching to the souls of the dead. At the end he will bring all with him into the Kingdom of Yahweh, without regard for time, nationality, or social status. And it is significant that Greek Pagans were present on this occasion.

**Jn 12:35-36.** *'The Light...'*: The man who walks with Jesus is delivered from the shadows of the fears and the uncertainties of life. *'Put your trust...'*: The decision to trust life and all things to Jesus, to take him as Master and Guide and Savior, must be made in time. Jesus said this trying to convince the Jews to believe in him before the Cross came and he was taken from them.

***The Jews continue in their unbelief*** [John 12:37-50]

**(Jn12:37)** Even after Jesus had done all these miraculous signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him. **(38)** This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet:

"Lord, who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?"

**(39)** For this reason they could not believe, because, as Isaiah says elsewhere:

**(40)** "He has blinded their eyes and deadened their hearts, so they can neither see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts, nor turn -if not, I would heal them."

**(41)** Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus' glory and spoke about him.

**(42)** Yet at the same time many even among the leaders believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they would not confess their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue; **(43)** for they loved praise from men more than praise from Yahweh.

**(44)** Then Jesus cried out, "**When a man believes in me, he does not believe in me only, but in the One who sent me. (45) When he looks at me, he sees the One who sent me. (46) I have come into the world as a Light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness.**

**(47) As for the person who hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge him. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save it. (48) There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; that very Word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day. (49) For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it. (50) I know that His command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say."**

**Jn 12:37-41.** 'They still would not believe': Yahweh's chosen people should have responded when Yahweh sent His Messiah. They should have seen the significance of the signs he did. 'The word of Isaiah the prophet': In this passage John quotes twice Isaiah, who foresaw this unbelief. 'Who has believed...?': In the first quotation (Isaiah 53:1), the prophet asks if there is anyone who has believed what he has been saying, and if there is anyone who recognizes the power of Yahweh when it is revealed to him. 'He has blinded...': In the second quotation (Isaiah 6:10), he seems to say that men's unbelief is due to Yahweh's action; that Yahweh has ordered that certain people must not and will not believe. Now, to understand Isaiah's passage we have to look at his situation at the time. He had proclaimed the Word of Yahweh and put everything he had into his message. And men had refused to listen. In the end he was forced to say: "For all the good I have done I might as well never have spoken. Instead of making men better my message seems to have made them worse. They might as well never have heard it, for they are simply confirmed in their disobedience and their unbelief. You would think that Yahweh had meant them not to believe." To read the words of Isaiah with cold literalness is completely to misunderstand them. The point here is that it was a basic belief of the Jews that Yahweh is behind everything, that nothing could happen outside His purposes. This means that even the men not accepting Yahweh's message are still within Yahweh's purposes; that Yahweh uses men's unbelief for His purposes. So this passage means, not that Yahweh has predestined certain people to unbelief, but that even men's unbelief can be used for the realization of His plans. 'Saw Jesus' glory': Isaiah spoke of the glory of Yahweh (Isaiah 6:1-3), while John spoke of the glory of Jesus and made no distinction at all between the two, attesting Jesus' communion with Yahweh. To John, the thought of glory was complex. There was the idea of majesty, and there was also the

idea that Jesus' death on the cross and his subsequent resurrection and ascension to Heaven did show his real glory. *'Spoke about him'*: Isaiah foresaw the rejection of Christ, as the passages quoted show. He spoke of the Messiah both in the words about blind eyes and hard hearts, and in those about his willingness of healing (that is, of freeing from Satan's domination) all men.

**Jn 12:42-43.** *'Many... leaders believed'*: A number of Jewish leaders believed in Jesus Christ, though they remained secret believers for fear of excommunication. They feared that by becoming confessed followers of Jesus they would lose so much. They were not prepared to take the risk of openly declaring for him. It would have meant an end of their social position, their profit, and their prestige. They would have been ostracized from society and banished from orthodox religion. For them, it was too high a price to pay.

**Jn 12:44-45.** *'Cried out'*: The words are given special emphasis by being spoken in a loud voice. *'Believes in me'*: Jesus makes the claim which is the basis of his whole life, that in him men see Yahweh, that in him Yahweh meets man and man meets Yahweh. *'The One who sent me'*: Jesus' mission, as well as the deep communion of the Father and the Son, is stressed all throughout John's Gospel.

**Jn 12:46.** *'I have come into the world'*: This declaration points to Jesus' saving mission.

**Jn 12:47-48.** *'I did not come to judge'*: Judgment is not the purpose of Jesus' coming, but judgment is the other side of salvation. Jesus did not come to condemn; he came to save. It was not the wrath of Yahweh which sent Jesus to men; it was His affectio. Yet the coming of Jesus inevitably involves judgment. This is because by his attitude to Jesus a man shows what he is and therefore judges himself. If he finds in Jesus a person to be fond of, even if he never succeeds in making his life what he knows he ought to make it, he has felt the tug of Yahweh upon his heart; and therefore he is safe. If on the other hand he sees in Jesus nothing to desire, it means that he is impervious to Yahweh; and he has therefore judged himself. *'At the last day'*: At the last day Jesus' words, which these people had heard, would be their judges. In effect, a man cannot be blamed if not knowing. But if he knows the right and does the wrong, then he must be condemned.

**Jn 12:49.** *'The Father... commanded me what to say'*: Jesus' hearers have a great responsibility. His "word" is that which the Father commanded him to say. To reject it, therefore, is to reject Yahweh.

**Jn 12:50.** *'His command'*: Yahweh wants the spiritual salvation of all men. *'So'*: Jesus said what he did in order to fulfill the will of the Father.

***The fig tree withers*** [Mark 11:12-14 Matthew 21:18-19]

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**(Mk11:12)(Mt21:18)** *The next day early in the morning, as they were leaving Bethany and were on their way back to the city, Jesus was hungry. (Mk11:13-14)(Mt21:19)* *Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf by the road, he went up to find out if it had any fruit. When he reached it, he found nothing on it except leaves, because it was not the season for figs. Then he said to the tree, "May you never bear fruit again! May no one ever eat fruit from you again." Immediately the tree withered. And his disciples heard him say it.*

**Mk 11:12-14. Mt 21:18-19.** *'In the morning'*: The first part of the story of the fig-tree happened on Monday morning of Passion Week, and it ended on the morning of the next day, with the cleansing of the Temple in between. In the Gospels narrative, this is a

very difficult story, because if it is taken literally it presents difficulties which are really insuperable. In effect, the story does not sound true. The whole incident does not seem worthy of Jesus. It is just the kind of story usually told of other wonder-workers but never of Jesus. Further, we have another basic difficulty, as Jesus had always refused to use his miraculous powers for his own sake. Yet here he is shown using his powers to blast a tree which had disappointed him when he was hungry; a totally unreasonable action. This was the Passover Season, that is, the middle of April. Even in a sheltered spot a fig-tree never did bear figs until late May at the earliest. Fig-trees around Jerusalem normally begin to get leaves in March or April but do not produce figs until their leaves are all out in June. This tree was an exception because it was already, at Passover time, full of leaves, even if it did not bear fruit. Why to blast a tree for failing to do what it was not possible for it to do? It was an action both unreasonable and unjust. *'May no one ever eat fruit from you again'*: This phrase as well as the whole story does not fit Jesus at all. So, we have to take it as an enacted parable, expressed in symbolic terms. If we take it this way, it may be interpreted as the condemnation of a promise without fulfillment. A fig-tree full of leaves normally should have fruit, but this one had none, and for that it was condemned. The leaves of the tree might be taken as the promise for fruit, but there was no fruit there. The condemnation of the tree represents the condemnation of the people of Israel. All the Jews' history was a preparation for the coming of Yahweh's Chosen One but, when he did come, the promise to receive him eagerly went tragically unfulfilled.

### ***Jesus clears the Temple***

*See page 435*

*[Mark 11:15-19 Matthew 21:12-17 Luke 19:45-48]*

**(Mk11:15)(Mt21:12)(Lk19:45)***Then, on reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the Temple area and began driving out all those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves, (Mk11:16)and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the Temple courts.*

**(Mk11:17)(Mt21:13)(Lk19:46)***And as he taught them, he said, "It is not written:*

***'My House will be called a House of Prayer for all nations'?***

***But you have made it 'a den of robbers.'***

**(Mt21:14)***The blind and the lame came to him at the Temple, and he healed them. (15)But when the chief priests and the teachers of the law saw the wonderful things he did and the children shouting in the Temple area, "Hosanna, Son of David," they were indignant.*

**(16)***"Do you hear what these children are saying?" they asked him.*

***"Yes," replied Jesus, "have you never read,***

***'From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise'?"***

**(Mk11:18)(Lk19:47-48)***Every day he was teaching at the Temple. But the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the leaders among the people heard this and began looking for a way to kill him, for they feared him. Yet they could not find any way to do it, because all the people hung on his words, and the whole crowd was amazed at his teaching.*

**(Mk11:19)(Mt21:17)***And, when evening came, he left them and went out of the city to Bethany, where he spent the night.*

**Mk 11:15-16. Mt 21:12. Lk 19:45.** *'The Temple area'*: This incident took place in the Court of the Pagans, into which anyone, Jew or Pagan, might come. It was the only part



of the Temple in which the Pagans could worship Yahweh and gather for prayer. But, bit by bit this court had become almost entirely secularized. It had been meant to be a place of prayer and preparation, but there was in the time of Jesus a commercialized atmosphere of buying and selling which made prayer and meditation impossible. What made it worse was that the business which went on there was mere exploitation of the pilgrims. (More informations on 'Jesus clears the Temple.' Jn 2:12-25). *'Buying and selling'*: Pilgrims coming to the Passover Feast needed animals that met the ritual requirements for sacrifice, and vendors set up their animal pens in the Court of the Pagans. *'The tables of the money changers'*: Pilgrims needed their money changed into the local currency because the annual Temple tax had to be paid in that currency. Also, local currency was needed for the offerings. *'Those selling doves'*: Doves were required for the purification of women, the cleansing of those with certain skin diseases, and other purposes. They were also the usual offering of the poor. *'To carry merchandise through the Temple courts'*: The Temple area was being used as a short cut between the eastern part of the city and the Mount of Olives. Jesus was reminding the Jews that their own law was expressly forbidding that.

**Mk 11:17. Mt 21:13. Lk 19:46.** *'My House...'*: A quotation from Isaiah 56:7 and Jeremiah 7:11. *'A House of Prayer for all nations'*: The non-Jews were allowed to worship Yahweh in the Temple. But, by allowing the Court of the Pagans to become a noisy, smelly marketplace, the Jewish religious leaders were interfering with Yahweh's provision. *'A den of robbers'*: Not only because they took financial advantage of the people but because they deprived the Temple of its sanctity. It is clear that Jesus was really angry both at the exploitation of the pilgrims, and at the desecration of Yahweh's holy place. The Temple authorities were treating them not as worshippers, but as subjects to be exploited for getting the maximum possible profit.

**Mt 21:14.** *'The blind and... came to him'*: This passage ends with Jesus healing the blind and the lame in the Temple court. Jesus did not clear everybody out, those who needed him stayed.

**Mt 21:15-16.** *'The children shouting...'*: The use Matthew makes of the quotation of Psalm 8:2 makes it clear that here he is referring to real children, not to Jesus' disciples (very often a Rabbi's disciples were called his children). In any event the things happening that day in that Temple court were really exceptional. It was not every day that the vendors and the money-changers were sent away; and it was not every day that the disabled were healed. Ordinarily it would not have been possible for the children to shout like this, but this was not ordinary day. *'From the lips of...'*: There are truths which only the simple in heart can see and which are hidden from the wise, the learned, and the sophisticated.

**Mk 11:18. Lk 19:47-48.** *'Looking for a way to kill him'*: The decision to seek Jesus' death was not the result of this incident alone, but was the response to a long series of such incidents. *'They could not find a way'*: Because they feared his killing might cause a popular uprising.

**Mk 11:19. Mt 21:17.** *'Went out... to Bethany'*: Since it was already evening, as usual Jesus went out to Bethany with the Twelve, to the house of his friends Mary, Martha, and Lazarus.

***The withered fig tree*** [Mark 11:20-26 Matthew 21:20-22]

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**(Mk11:20)** *In the morning, as they went along, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots. (21) Peter remembered and said to Jesus, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree you cursed*

has withered!" (Mt21:20) When the disciples saw this, they were amazed. "How did the fig tree wither so quickly?" they asked.

(Mk11:22-23)(Mt21:21) "Have faith in Yahweh," Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, if anyone of you has faith and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. Not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and it will be done. (Mk11:24)(Mt21:22) Therefore I tell you, if you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer; believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. (Mk11:25) And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in Heaven may forgive you your sins. (26) But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in Heaven forgive your sins."

**Mk 11:20.** *'In the morning':* Tuesday morning of Passion Week. *'Withered from the roots':* This detail indicates that the destruction was total and no one in the future would eat fruit from that tree. It served as a vivid warning of the judgment to come in AD 70, with the destruction of Jerusalem.

**Mk 11:21. Mt 21:20.** *'Peter... said... The disciples asked...':* All the disciples were clearly surprised by the sudden withering of the fig-tree.

**Mk 11:22-24. Mt 21:22.** *'Have faith in Yahweh':* The saying about the faith which can even remove mountains occurs also in 'The healing of a boy with an evil spirit' (Mk 9: 14-32; Mt 17:14-23; Lk 9:37-45). Clearly, these sayings are to be approached not so much as having to do with a particular incident, but as general advices which Jesus repeatedly laid down. *'Throw yourself into the sea':* It is clear that this is not to be taken literally. Neither Jesus himself nor anyone else ever removed a physical mountain by prayer. *'I tell you...':* This passage gives some indications on how to pray. First, prayer must be the prayer of faith. The phrase about moving mountains was quite a common phrase. It was regular for removing difficulties, especially used of particularly wise teachers. In effect, a teacher who could remove the difficulties which the minds of his scholars encountered was called a "mountain-remover." So the meaning is that if we have real faith, prayer is a power which can solve any problem and make us able to deal with any difficulty. Second, prayer must be the prayer of presentation of our problems to Yahweh. And, clearly, we should be ready to accept Yahweh's guidance when He gives it. Third, prayer must also be the prayer of expectation. It is the universal fact that anything tried with confident expectation has a much bigger chance of success. Finally, prayer is not asking Yahweh to do something; it is asking him to make us able to do it ourselves. If it were simply a method of getting things done for us, prayer would be very bad, for it would make us flabby, lazy and inefficient. Therefore, no man should pray and then sit and wait; he must pray and then rise and work.

**Mk 11:25-26.** *'If you hold anything against anyone, forgive him':* We need to realize that we need Yahweh's forgiveness, and we also need to realize that we will be given a forgiveness proportional to our own. Jesus clearly says that if we forgive others, Yahweh will forgive us; but if we refuse to forgive others, Yahweh will refuse to forgive us. It is, therefore, clear that, if we pray with some unsettled quarrel in our lives, Yahweh will not forgive us. Human forgiveness and divine forgiveness are inextricably inter-combined, and they cannot be separated. If a man has not put things right with his fellow men, he cannot put things right with Yahweh.

**The parable of the fig tree** [Luke 13:6-9]

**(Lk13:6)** Then he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree, planted in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it, but did not find any. (7) So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, 'For three years now I've been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven't found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?'

**(8)** 'Sir,' the man replied, 'leave it alone for one more year, and I'll dig around it and fertilize it. **(9)** If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down.'"

**Lk 13:6.** 'A man had a fig tree': In this parable, the owner of the vineyard stands for Yahweh, and the tree for any sinful man.

**Lk 13:7.** 'The man who took care...': The man who took charge and care of the field stands for Jesus. 'For three years now': During that long time the fig-tree had plenty of chances to bear fruit -that is, of doing something useful and good- but it did not do it. 'Cut it down!': Here, one more time, Jesus reminded men that they would be judged according to the opportunities they had. The fig-tree was drawing strength and sustenance from the soil; and in return was producing nothing. That was precisely its fault.

**Lk 13:8.** 'Sir... leave it...': Here, the parable expresses the concept of the further chance. It is always Jesus' way, for bringing men to himself and to Yahweh, to give them chance after chance. So, after he falls, a man has always the possibility of rising again.

**Lk 13:9.** 'If it bears... If not...': But there is also the final chance. If a man refuses chance after chance, if Jesus' appeal comes again and again in vain, the day finally comes when that man will have to stand Jesus' judgment, and the punishment.

**The authority of Jesus questioned**

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[Mark 11:27-33 Matthew 21:23-27 Luke 20:1-8]

**(Mk11:27-28)(Mt21:23)(Lk20:1-2)** They arrived again in Jerusalem, and Jesus entered the Temple courts. While he was walking and teaching the people and preaching the Gospel, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, together with the elders of the people, came up to him. "Tell us, by what authority are you doing these things?" they asked. "And who gave you authority to do this?"

**(Mk11:29)(Mt21:24)(Lk20:3)** Jesus replied, "I will also ask you one question. Answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. **(Mk11:30-31)** **(Mt21:25)(Lk20:4-5)** John's baptism -where did it come from? Was it from Heaven, or from men? Tell me!"

They discussed it among themselves and said, "If we say, 'From Heaven,' he will ask, 'Then why didn't you believe him?' **(Mk11:32)(Mt21:26)(Lk20:6)** But if we say, 'From men,' we are afraid all the people will stone us, for they all hold that John really was a prophet."

**(Mk11:33)(Mt21:27)(Lk20:7-8)** So they answered Jesus, "We don't know where it was from."

Then Jesus said, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things."

**Mk 11:27-28. Mt 21:23. Lk 20:1-2.** 'The Temple courts. Walking and teaching': It was common for the rabbis and the teachers to stroll in the two column porches which were part of the Court of the Pagans. They gave shelter from the sun, the wind, and the rain and it was in these places that most of the religious teaching was done. 'The chief priests and... came up to him': A deputation from the Sanhedrin, which was composed by these three groups of people. 'By what authority...? Who gave you authority...?': Here

the reference is to the recent cleansing of the Temple, which not only defied the authority of the Jewish leaders but also hurt their monetary profits. The Sanhedrin members were asking why Jesus performed what appeared to be an official act if he possessed no official status. They had asked the same of John the Baptist (John the Baptist prepares the way. Mk 1:2-8; Mt 3:1-12; Lk 3:1-20; Jn 1:6-9,15,19-28) and of Jesus himself early in his ministry (Jesus clears the Temple. Jn 2:12-25). They had also been looking for a way to discredit Jesus in the eyes of the people or to raise suspicion of him as a threat to the authority of Rome. By asking Jesus by what authority he did act, they hoped to put Jesus into a difficulty. If he said he was acting under his own authority they could arrest him as a megalomaniac before he did any further damage. If he said that he was acting on the authority of Yahweh they could arrest him on an obvious charge of blasphemy, on the grounds that Yahweh would never give any man authority to create a disturbance in His own House.

**Mk 11:29-32. Mt 21:24-26. Lk 20:3-6.** *'Jesus replied...'*: At the moment Jesus was not prepared to give them the direct answer that his authority came from the fact that he was the Son of Yahweh. To do so would have been to precipitate the end. There were actions still to be done and teachings still to be given. Jesus saw quite clearly the way in which they thought to compromise him, and by his reply he put them into a compromising situation. *'John's baptism... from Heaven, or from men?'*: By replying with a question, Jesus put the burden on his opponents -leaving only two alternatives: The work of John was either Yahweh-inspired or man-devised. Obviously, Jesus' question implied that his authority, like that of John's baptism, came from Yahweh. *'They discussed...'*: If they said it was divine, they knew that Jesus would ask why they had stood out against it. Worse than that, Jesus could say that John had in fact pointed him to all men as the Messiah, and that therefore he was divinely attested and needed no further authority. So they would be compelled to accept Jesus as the Messiah. On the other hand, if they said that John's work was merely human, mainly now that John had become a martyr, they knew quite well that the people who were there, listening to this discussion, would rebel against them.

**Mk 11:33. Mt 21:27. Lk 20:7-8.** *'We don't know'*: They ought to have known; it was part of the duty of the Sanhedrin, of which they were members, to distinguish between true and false prophets. But they were obliged to say that they did not know, and thereby Jesus did not need to give them an answer to their question. The emissaries of the Sanhedrin refused to face the truth, and they had to withdraw frustrated and discredited with the people.

**The parable of the two sons** [Matthew 21:28-32]

**(Mt21:28)"What do you think? There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work today in the vineyard.'**

**(29)'I will not,' he answered, but later he changed his mind and went.**

**(30)Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, 'I will, sir,' but he did not go.**

**(31)Which of the two did what his father wanted?"**

**"The first," they answered.**

**Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the Kingdom of Yahweh ahead of you. (32)For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him."**

**Mt 21:28-32.** *'What do you think?'*: This parable tells that there are two very common classes of people. First, those whose practice is far better than their profession. They profess to have no interest in the Church and in religion, and yet they live more Christian lives than many professing Christians. Second, those whose profession is much better than their practice. They will promise anything; they will make great protestations of piety and fidelity; but their practice lags far behind. The real point and the key to the correct understanding of this parable is that Jesus is not really praising anyone, as neither class of people is perfect. The really good man is the man in whom profession and practice meet and match. Further, this parable teaches that promises can never take the place of performances, and fine words are never a substitute for fine deeds, as the Christian way is in performance and not in promise. The son who said he would go, and did not, had all the outwards marks of courtesy. In his answer he even called his father "Sir." But a respect which doesn't get beyond words is a totally illusory thing. With the other son's behavior, the parable teaches that a man can easily spoil a good thing by the way he does it. *'Jesus said'*: The meaning of this parable is really clear. The Jewish leaders are the people who said they would obey Yahweh and did not. The tax collectors and the prostitutes are those who said they would go their own way and then took Yahweh's way. But neither son in the story was the kind of son who brings full joy to his father. Both were unsatisfactory; anyway, the one who in the end obeyed has to be considered better than the other.

**The parable of the tenants**

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[Mark 12:1-12 Matthew 21:33-46 Luke 20:9-19]

**(Mk12:1)(Mt21:33)(Lk20:9)** *He then went on and began to speak to the people in parables. "Listen to another parable: There was man, a landowner, who planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a pit in it for the winepress and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and went away for a long time on a journey. (Mk12:2-3)(Mt21:34-35)(Lk20:10) When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his fruit. The tenants seized his servants; they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third. Then he sent a servant so they would give him some of the fruit of the vineyard. But the tenants seized him, beat him and sent him away empty-handed. (Mk12:4)(Lk20:11) Then he sent another servant to them; but they beat also that man, they struck him on the head and treated him shamefully and sent away empty-handed. (Mk12:5)(Mt21:36)(Lk20:12) He sent still another, a third, and that one they wounded and killed and threw him out. Then he sent many other servants to them, more than the first time; and the tenants treated them the same way, some of them they beat, others they killed.*

**(Mk12:6)(Mt21:37)(Lk20:13)** *He had one left to send, a son, whom he loved. Then, last of all, the owner of the vineyard sent him to them saying, 'What shall I do? I will send my son, whom I love; perhaps they will respect him.'*

**(Mk12:7)(Mt21:38)(Lk20:14)** *But when the tenants saw the son, they talked the matter over and said to one another, 'This is the heir. Come, let's kill him and the inheritance will be ours.' (Mk12:8-9)(Mt21:39-41)(Lk20:15-16) So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what then will he do to those tenants? He will come and bring those wretches to a wretched end and he will rent the vineyard to other tenants, who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time."*

*When they heard this, they said, "May this never be!"*

*(Mk12:10-11)(Mt21:42)(Lk20:17)* Jesus looked directly at them and asked, "What then is the meaning of that which is written? Haven't you ever read this Scripture?:

*'The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes.'*

*(Mt21:43)* Therefore I tell you that the Kingdom of Yahweh will be taken away and given to a people who will produce its fruit. *(Mt21:44)(Lk20:18)* Everyone who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed."

*(Mk12:12)(Mt21:45-46)(Lk20:19)* Then, when the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the Pharisees heard Jesus' parables, they looked for a way to arrest him immediately, because they knew he was talking about them and had spoken this parable against them. But they were afraid of the crowd because the people held that he was a prophet; so they left him and went away.

**Mk 12:1. Mt 21:33. Lk 20:9.** *'Listen to another parable'*: This parable is rather complex, even in its details, which fit the social situation in Jewish Galilee at the time. In this parable, Jesus used pictures that were part of Jewish thought and imagery, and all the details have a precise meaning. *'Landowner'*: The owner of the vineyard is Yahweh; the vineyard itself is the people of Israel. This was a picture with which the Jews were familiar. In the Old Testament it is used in Isaiah 5:1-7, from which some of the details and the language of this passage are taken. *'Vineyard'*: This vineyard was really given every necessary equipment. *'Wall'*: To mark out its boundaries, to keep out robbers and to defend it from the assaults of the wild boars. *'Pit... for the winepress'*: The system consisted of two troughs either hollowed out of the rock, or built of bricks; one was a little higher than the other, and was connected with the lower one by a channel. The grapes were pressed with the feet in the higher trough and the juice ran off into the lower trough. Beneath the winepress there was a wine tank into which the pressed-out juice, filtered of the impurities, flowed. *'Watchtower'*: In this the wine was stored, the cultivators had their lodging, and from it they kept watch for robbers at harvest time. *'He rented'*: Large estates, owned by absentee landlords, living more comfortably in Jerusalem or outside Palestine, were put in the hands of local peasants who cultivated the land as tenant farmers. *'Farmers'*: The farmers stand for the rulers of Israel all throughout the history of the nation.

**Mk 12:2-5. Mt 24:34-36. Lk 20:10-12.** *'Sent his servants'*: The servants whom the owner sent stand for the prophets Yahweh sent in former times and who were rejected, persecuted and killed. *'To collect his fruit'*: In accordance with a kind of sharecropping agreement, at the proper time the landowner would expect to receive his share. If the owner followed the law, the first time for collecting the rental was five years after the planting of the vineyard (Leviticus 19:23-25). To note that this story is by no means improbable and tells the kind of thing which did actually happen.

**Mk 12:6. Mt 21:37. Lk 20:13.** *'A son'*: The son represents Jesus Christ, who was condemned to death by the religious leaders. Jesus deliberately removed himself from the succession of the prophets. They were servants. He was son. This parable was a deliberate challenge to the Jewish authorities because it contains the unmistakable claim of Jesus to be the Messiah. Challenging them, Jesus knew that he had to die, knew that the way he had chosen could have no other ending but the Cross, knew that he would be ill-treated and killed, but he also knew that this would not be the end, that after the rejection would come the triumph and the glory.

**Mk 12:7-9. Mt 21:38-41. Lk 20:14-16.** *'Let's kill him'*: There could be only one reason

why the cultivators thought they could kill the son and then enter into possession of the vineyard. They must have thought that the owner was dead. *'The inheritance will be ours'*: The Jewish law provided that a piece of property unclaimed by any heir would be declared "owner-less," and could be claimed by anyone using it. The tenants assumed that the son came as heir to claim his property, and that if he were slain, they could claim the land. *'When the owner comes'*: But the owner was not dead. On the contrary, after giving his tenants chance after chance, he decided to intervene directly and to punish them. *'He will rent the vineyard to other tenants'*: To the Pagans, to whom the early Church turned when the Jews, for the most part, rejected the Gospel. In effect, by the second century onwards the Christian Church was composed almost entirely by Pagans. The parable tells what was to come -the rejection of the Jews and the passing of their privileges and responsibilities to the Pagans.

**Note:** When comparing the sequence of the events in Matthew and Luke, it clearly appears that Mt 21:41 is not correct. What is the leaders' answer in Matthew, is actually still part of Jesus' speech, and their answer -reported at the end of Lk 20:16- is missing.

**Mk 12:10-11. Mt 21:42. Lk 20:17.** *'The cornerstone'*: The parable ends with the quotation of Psalm 118:22-23. It is the picture of a stone which some builders rejected but later, in another building, had become the stone that bound the sides of the building together; the most important stone of all. Originally the Psalmist meant this as a picture of the nation of Israel, which was despised and rejected. The Jews were hated by all men. They had been servants and slaves of many nations; but none the less the nation which all men despised was the chosen people of Yahweh. The meaning here is that, even if men reject Jesus and seek to eliminate him, at the end they will yet find that he is the most important person in the world.

**Mt 21:43-44. Lk 20:18.** *'Stone'*: Here we have the picture of another "stone," not the one representing the apostle Peter (Peter's confession of Christ. Mk 8:27-30; Mt 16:13-20; Lk 9:18-21). Here we have a more difficult picture, of a stone that breaks a man, if he stumble against it, and which crushes a man to pieces, if it falls on him. It is a composite picture, taken from three Old Testament passages (Isaiah 8:13-15, Isaiah 28:16, and Daniel 2:34;44-45). The idea behind all these pictures is that Jesus is the foundation stone on which everything is built, and the cornerstone which holds everything together. To refuse his way is to batter one's head against the walls of the Law of Yahweh. To defy Jesus is in the end to be crushed by life. However strange these pictures may seem to us, they were familiar to every Jew of the time who knew the prophets' writings.

**Mk 12:12. Mt 21:45-46. Lk 20:19.** *'A way to arrest him'*: The Jewish authorities knew perfectly well that Jesus was speaking publicly of them. *'They were afraid'*: Anyway, they could not take any action against Jesus for fear of causing an upsurging of the population.

**The parable of the wedding banquet** [Matthew 22:1-14]

*(Mt22:1) Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying: (2) "The Kingdom of Heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. (3) He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come.*

*(4) Then he sent some more servants and said, 'Tell those who had been invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.'*

*(5)But they paid no attention and went off -one to his field, another to his business. (6)The rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them. (7)The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city.*

*(8)Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. (9)Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.' (10)So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, both good and bad, and the wedding hall was filled with guests.*

*(11)But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. (12)'Friend,' he asked, 'how did you get in here without wedding clothes?' The man was speechless.*

*(13)Then the king told the attendants, 'Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'*

*(14)For many are invited, but few are chosen."*

**Mt 22:1-10.** *'King'*: In this parable the king stands for Yahweh. The originally invited guests stand for the Jews. *'A wedding banquet'*: In accordance with normal Jewish customs, when the invitations to a great feast, like a wedding feast, were sent out, the time was not stated; and only when everything was ready the servants were sent out to tell the guests to come. So, the king in this parable had sent out his invitations long before; but when everything was ready the final invitations were insultingly refused. *'They paid no attention'*: The initial invitations had been accepted, but when the final invitations came, other interests took priority. The Jews, generations before, had been invited by Yahweh to be His chosen people; yet when Yahweh's Son came into the world, and invited them to follow him, they contemptuously refused. The result was that the invitation of Yahweh was diverted to the sinners and the pagans, who never expected to be invited into the Kingdom. *'He sent his army'*: In AD 70 there was the destruction of Jerusalem by the armies of Rome. The Temple was sacked and burned and the city completely destroyed, as Jesus had foretold. Complete disaster had come to those who refused to recognize the Son of Yahweh when he came calling them. *'Those I invited'*: Throughout all their history they had looked forward to the day when Yahweh would break in; and when he did, they tragically refused His invitation. *'Anyone'*: All the people, of any race and nationality, that is, all the Pagans.

It is important to notice that this parable reminds that Yahweh's invitation was to a feast as joyous as a wedding feast. It is to joy that the Christians are invited; and it is joy they miss, if they refuse the invitation. Those who did refuse to come were punished, but their real tragedy was that they lost the joy of the feast.

**Mt 22:11-14.** *'A man there...'*: Whereas the first part of the parable spoke of the rejection of the nation of Israel, the second part deals with the responsibility of the individual. *'Not wearing wedding clothes'*: It is clear that the king had provided the guests with wedding garments. This would have been necessary for the guests of this banquet in particular, for they were brought in directly from the streets. The failure of the man in question to wear a wedding garment was therefore an insult to the host, who had made the garments available. *'Throw him outside... darkness... weeping... gnashing of teeth'*: Expressions depicting severe punishment. The wedding garment no doubt represents the righteousness that Yahweh provides to all who accept His invitation. The concept here is that Yahweh issues an undeserved invitation to undeserving people, and in addition provides the righteousness the invitation demands. *'Many are invited, but...'*: It is true that the door of the Kingdom is open to all men, but when they come they must



bring a life -to wear the received wedding clothes- which seeks to fit the affectio which has been given to them. The door is always open to the sinner who, if he repents, becomes saint. The meaning of this phrase is that many -ALL- are always invited to come into the Kingdom of Yahweh (in this life, at the moment of personal judgment following death, and when Jesus goes to preach to the souls of the dead who are in hell), but that only few at a time choose to accept the invitation.

**Paying taxes to Caesar**

See page 439

[Mark 12:13-17 Matthew 22:15-22 Luke 20:20-26]

**(Mt22:15)** Then the Pharisees went out and laid plans to trap him in his words. **(Mk 12:13-14)(Mt22:16-17)(Lk20:20-22)** Later, keeping a close watch on him, they sent spies to Jesus, some of the Pharisees' disciples, who pretended to be honest, along with the Herodians. They hoped to catch Jesus in something he said so that they might hand him over to the power and authority of the governor. So they came to him and the spies questioned him saying, "Teacher, we know you are a man of integrity. You aren't swayed by men, because you pay no attention to who they are; but you speak and teach what is right, and you do not show partiality but teach the way of Yahweh in accordance with the truth. Tell us then, what is your opinion? Is it right for us to pay taxes to Caesar or not? **(Mk12:15-17)(Mt22:18-22)(Lk20:23-26)** Should we pay or shouldn't we?"

But Jesus, knowing their hypocrisy and their evil intent, saw through their duplicity and said to them, "**You hypocrites, why are you trying to trap me? Bring me the coin used for paying the tax, a denarius, and let me look at it.**" They brought him a denarius, and he asked them, "**Whose portrait is this? And whose inscription is on it?**"

"Caesar's," they replied.

Then Jesus said to them, "**Then give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to Yahweh what is Yahweh's.**"

They were unable to trap him in what he had said there in public. When they heard this, they were amazed at him and, astonished by his answer, they became silent. So they left him and went away.

**Mk 12:13-14. Mt 22:15-17. Lk 20:20-22.** *'The Pharisees. The Herodians'*: The Pharisees were ardent nationalists, opposed to Roman rule, while the Herodians, as their name indicates, supported the Roman rule of the Herods. However, the Pharisees enlisted the help of the hated Herodians to try and trap Jesus. *'Authority of the governor'*: Herod the Great had ruled all Palestine as a Roman tributary king. He had been loyal to the Romans and they had respected him and given him a great deal of freedom. When he died in 4 BC he divided his kingdom among four heirs. One of those, Archelaus, who received Judea and Samaria, was a complete failure. The result was that in AD 6 the Romans had to step in and introduce direct rule. And the south of Palestine became a province governed by a procurator. *'Teacher, we know you are...'*: The Jewish leaders launched their attack by directing at Jesus carefully formulated questions, and they asked those questions in public, while the crowd was looking and listening, as their aim was to make Jesus discredit himself by his own words in the presence of the people. The approach of the Pharisees was very subtle. They began with flattery and formulated their question in a way which, in their opinion, would have made it impossible for him to avoid giving an answer which would not compromise him completely. *'Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not?'*: Fearing to take action themselves, the Jewish religious lea-

ders tried to get from Jesus some statement that would bring action from the Herodian officials and remove him from his contact with the people. After trying to put him off guard with flattery, they came out with this awkward question. If he said "No," the Herodians would report him to the Roman governor and he would be executed for treason. If he said "Yes," the Pharisees would denounce him to the people as disloyal to his nation.

Roman provinces fell in two classes. Those which were peaceful and required no troops were governed by the Senate and ruled by proconsuls. Those which were trouble-centers and required troops were the direct sphere of the Emperor and were governed by procurators. Southern Palestine fell naturally into the second category and tribute was in fact paid directly to the Emperor. The calmer section of the people accepted this as an inevitable necessity. But some raised violent opposition, which was dealt by the Romans, but which never totally died out. The taxes imposed were three. (1) A ground tax, which consisted of one-tenth of all the grain and one fifth of all the wine and fruit produced. This was paid partly in kind and partly in money. (2) An income tax, which amounted to one per cent of a man's income. This was paid in money. (3) A poll tax, levied on all men from fourteen to sixty-five and all women from twelve to sixty-five. It was one denarius per person.

**Mk 12:15-17. Mt 22:18-22. Lk 20:23-26.** '*A denarius*': It was the common Roman coin of that day. On one side was the portrait of Emperor Tiberius and on the other the inscription in Latin: "Tiberius Caesar Augustus, Son of the Divine Augustus." The coin was issued by Caesar and was used to pay taxes to him. In the ancient days coinage was the sign of power and of kingship. As soon as a king came to the throne he issued his own coinage; and the coinage was held to be the property of the king whose image it bore. '*Give to Caesar... and to Yahweh...*': Jesus' answer therefore was, "By using the coinage of Tiberius you in any event recognize his political power in Palestine. And the coinage is his because it has his name on it. By giving it to him you give him what is in any event his own. Give then it to him but remember that there is a sphere in life which belongs to Yahweh and not to Caesar." The lesson is that, if the state remains within its proper boundaries and makes its proper demands, the citizen must give it his loyalty and his service. There are obligations to the state that do not infringe the obligations to Yahweh. Furthermore, in distinguishing clearly between Caesar and Yahweh, Jesus also protested against the false and idolatrous claims made on the coins.

### ***The resurrection and marriage***

*See page 440*

*[Mark 12:18-27 Matthew 22:23-33 Luke 20:27-40]*

*(Mk12:18)(Mt22:23)(Lk20:27) Then the same day some of the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Jesus with a question. (Mk12:19)(Mt22:24)(Lk20:28) "Teacher," they said, "Moses told and wrote for us that if a man's brother dies and leaves a wife but no children, the man must marry the widow and have children for his brother. (Mk12:20)(Mt22:25)(Lk20:29) Now there were seven brothers among us. The first one married a woman and, since he died without leaving any children, he left his wife to his brother. (Mk12:21-22)(Mt22:26-27)(Lk20:30-32) The same thing happened to the second brother, who married the widow, but he also died, leaving no child. And then it was the same with the third. And in the same way, right on down to the seventh, the seven died. In fact, none of the seven left any children. Finally, last of all, the woman died too. (Mk12:23)(Mt22:28)(Lk20:33) Now then, at the resurrection, when men rise from the dead, whose wife will she be of the seven, since all of them were married to her?"*

*(Mk12:24-25)(Mt22:29-30)(Lk20:34-36)* Jesus replied, "You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of Yahweh. The people of this age marry and are given in marriage. But at the resurrection, when the dead rise, and they are considered worthy of taking part in that age and in the resurrection from the dead will neither marry nor be given in marriage; and they can no longer die for they will be like the angels in Heaven. They are Yahweh's children, since they are children of the resurrection. *(Mk12:26-27)(Mt22:31-32)(Lk20:37-38)* But now about the resurrection of the dead -have you not read in the book of Moses, in the account of the bush, that even Moses showed that the dead rise, for Yahweh said to him, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for to Him all are alive. You are badly mistaken!"

*(Lk20:39)* Some of the teachers of the law responded, "Well said, teacher!" *(Mt22:33)* When the crowds heard this, they were astonished at his teaching. *(Lk20:40)* And no one dared to ask him any more questions.

**Mk 12:18. Mt 22:23. Lk 20:27.** *'The Sadducees'*: A Jewish party that represented the wealthy and sophisticated classes. Its members were located largely in Jerusalem and made the Temple and its administration their primary interest. Though they were very small in number, in Jesus' time they exerted powerful political and religious influence. They were an aristocratic, politically minded group, willing to compromise with secular and pagan leaders. They controlled the high priesthood at that time and held the majority of the seats in the Sanhedrin. *'Who say there is no resurrection'*: They denied the resurrection, accepted only the five Books of Moses -the Scripture, that is, the Pentateuch- as authoritative and flatly rejected the oral tradition -all those rules which were so important to the Pharisees. These beliefs set them against the Pharisees and common piety. *'Came to Jesus'*: The Sadducees came to Jesus with a test question designed to make the belief in individual resurrection look absurd.

**Mk 12:19. Mt 22:24. Lk 20:28.** *'Moses told... us'*: The reference (Deuteronomy 25:5-6) is to the Levirate-Marriage Law (from Latin "levir," which means "brother-in-law") which was given to protect the widow and guarantee the continuance of the family line. If a group of brothers lived together -this point is omitted in the Sadducees' quotation of the law- and if one of them died and left no children, it was the duty of the next to take his brother's widow as wife and to raise up children to his brother. So, when a child was born, the child was held to be the offspring of the original husband.

**Mk 12:20-23. Mt 22:25-28. Lk 20:29-33.** *'There were seven brothers...'*: They thought that, by asking whose wife the woman will be after death, they rendered the idea of resurrection completely absurd.

**Mk 12:24-25. Mt 22:29-30. Lk 20:34-36.** *'Jesus replied...'*: Here Jesus dealt with burning questions of the time by means of arguments which a Rabbi would have found completely convincing even if they appear not convincing to the modern mind. But Jesus was using arguments which the people he was arguing with could understand; he was using their own language. So Jesus quoted from the Pentateuch when arguing with the Sadducees, since those books had special authority for them. Jesus' answer is actually divided in two parts. *'At resurrection...'*: In the first part, Jesus declared that when a person rises again, the laws of physical life will no longer apply. *'Like the angels'*: The risen will be like the angels, and physical matters like marrying (for men) and being married (for women) will no longer apply. Life to come can't be thought at all in terms of this life. Life in Heaven will be quite different, because men will be quite different.

The resurrection order can't be thought in terms of the earthly one. '*Children of the resurrection*': Men will really be as "sons of Yahweh" only after their resurrection.

**Mk 12:26-27. Mt 22:31-32. Lk 20:37-38.** '*About the resurrection...*': In the second part of his answer, Jesus dealt with the fact that resurrection will be a reality. The Sadducees insisted that in the Pentateuch there was no evidence for immortality. And so, exactly from the Pentateuch Jesus drew his proof. '*Book of Moses*': The Pentateuch, the first five books of the Old Testament. '*In the account of the bush*': A common way of referring to Exodus 3:1-6. Since Scripture chapters and verses were not used at the time of Jesus, the passage was identified in this way, referring to Moses' experience with the burning bush. '*I am the God of Abraham... Isaac... Jacob*': To be still presently the God of these old patriarchs, means that they must still be alive, because Yahweh is the living God of living people. So there is no spiritual death accompanying the physical one. And if they are alive in spirit, they can be physically resurrected at the end of time. And the Sadducees could find no answer to Jesus' argument. '*You are badly mistaken*': The whole question started from a basic error, the error of thinking of Heaven in terms of Earth, and thinking of eternity in terms of time. Heaven is not going to be simply an extension of this world. But the life in heavenly places will be greater than any conception this present physical life can supply. In the end Jesus based his demonstration of the resurrection on the fact that the relationship between Yahweh and a good man is one nothing can break, not even death.

**Mk 20:39. Mt 22:33.** '*Well said, teacher!*': Even though there was great animosity against Jesus, the teachers of the law (who were Pharisees) sided with Jesus against the Sadducees on the matter of resurrection.

**Lk 20:40.** '*No one dared...*': After Jesus' demonstration nobody -not the Pharisees, not the Sadducees- had the courage to try and test him again.

***The greatest commandment*** [Mark 12:28-34 Matthew 22:34-40] See page 441

**(Mt22:34)**Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. **(Mk12:28)(Mt22:35-36)**One of them, a teacher of the law, an expert in the law, came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he tested him and asked him this question, "Teacher, of all the commandments in the Law, which is greatest and the most important?"

**(Mk12:29-30)(Mt22:37)**"*The most important one,*" answered Jesus, "*is this: 'Hear, O Israel; the Lord [Yahweh] our God, the Lord is One. You'll be fond of the Lord [Yahweh] your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.'* **(Mt22:38)***This is the first and greatest commandment. (Mk12:31)(Mt 22:39)*And the second is like it: '*You'll be fond of your neighbor as of yourself.*' *There is no commandment greater than these. (Mt22:40)*All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

**(Mk12:32)**"Well said, teacher," the man replied. "You are right in saying that Yahweh is One and there is no other but Him. **(33)**To be fond of Him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to be fond of your neighbor as of yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices."

**(34)**When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, "**You are not far from the Kingdom of Yahweh.**" And from then on no one dared ask him any more questions.

**Mk 12:28. Mt 22:34-36.** *'Which is... the most important?'*: Jewish rabbis counted more than 600 statutes in the Law, and attempted to differentiate between "heavy" (or "great") and "light" (or "little") commands. Here, the scribe did not ask Jesus this question to trip him out. He asked it because, after seeing the way Jesus had confuted the Sadducees, he hoped to get from him the final answer to a question which was often a matter of debate in the rabbinic schools. In Judaism there was a double tendency. First, to expand the Law into hundreds of rules. Then, to try and gather up the Law into one sentence, one general statement which would be a compendium of its whole message.

**Mk 12:29-31. Mt 22:37-39.** *'The most important one'*: For answer Jesus took two great commandments and put them together. *'Hear, O Israel...'*: In this single sentence there is the real creed of Judaism (Deuteronomy 6:4). This quotation came to be known as the Shema, named after the first word of Deuteronomy 6:4 in Hebrew, which means "hear." The Shema became the Jewish confession of faith, which was recited by the Jews every morning and evening. To this day it begins every synagogue service. It is the declaration that Yahweh is the only God, the foundation of Jewish monotheism. *'You'll be fond of the Lord...'*: When Jesus quoted this sentence (Deuteronomy 6:5) as the most important commandment, every Jew would agree with him. *'The second. Fond of your neighbor...'*: To the Shema Jesus joined the commandment from Leviticus 19:18 to show that fondness for neighbors is a natural and logical consequence of Yahweh's fondness. In its original context this commandment had to do with a man's fellow Jews only. It did not include the Pagans, whom it was quite permissible to hate. But Jesus quoted it without racial or religious qualifications and without limiting boundaries. The really new thing was to put these two commandments together. No rabbi had ever done that before. Religion to Jesus was being fond of Yahweh and of men. In effect, for him the only way in which a man can prove he is fond of Yahweh is by being fond of men. The biblical teaching is that man is made in the image of Yahweh (Genesis 1:26-27). It is for that reason that man has to be cherished. How to fulfill this scriptural command of being fond of your neighbor, whatever neighbor? How is it possible to be fond by commandment? It is clear that nobody can be coerced or frightened into being fond of another person. Fondness just does not come that way. The solution is in realizing that there are two kinds of fondness; the fondness of feeling -on which we have very little control- and the fondness of willing. The first lies in the emotions, the second in the will. The fondness of the commandment is not the fondness of feeling, it is the fondness of willing. The Greek verb used here for fondness is not "phileo," which expresses friendly affection, but "agapao," the commitment of devotion that is directed by the will and can be commanded as a moral duty. For the very nature of it, the fondness for neighbors has to be a matter of the will, an intentional choice.

**Mt 22:40.** *'The Law and the Prophets'*: All the laws of the Old Testament and all the recommendations and instructions of the prophets strictly derive from these two commandments.

**Mk 12:32-33.** *'More important'*: The scribe willingly accepted Jesus' answer, and went on to say that such a fondness was surely of a higher moral level than all sacrificial offerings. The comparison was undoubtedly suggested by the fact that the discussion took place in the temple courtyard, where the animals for the sacrifices were sold. This scribe had morally risen beyond his contemporaries and that is why he found himself in accordance with Jesus.

**Mk 12:34.** *'Not far from the Kingdom'*: The passage ends with the scribe and Jesus very close to each other. There must have been a look of affection in Jesus' eyes, as he addressed his appeal to him, "You have gone so far. Will you not go a little farther and accept my way? Then you will be a true citizen of the Kingdom of Yahweh."

***Whose son is the Christ?***

See page 441

[Mark 12:35-40 Matthew 22:41-46;23:14 Luke 20:41-47]

**(Mk12:35-36)(Mt22:41-44)(Lk20:41-43)** While the Pharisees were gathered together and Jesus was teaching in the Temple courts, he asked them, **"What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?"**

"The son of David," they replied.

Then Jesus said to them, **"How is it that the teachers of the law say that the Christ is the son of David? How is it then that David himself, speaking by the Spirit of Yahweh, calls him 'Lord'? For he declares in the Book of Psalms:**

**'The Lord said to my Lord:**

**"Sit at My right hand until I make your enemies a footstool under your feet."'**

**(Mk12:37)(Mt22:45)(Lk20:44)** If David himself calls him 'Lord,' how then can he be his son?"

The large crowd listened to him with delight. **(Mt22:46)** No one could say a word in reply, and from that day no one dared to ask him any more questions.

**(Mk12:38-39)(Lk20:45-46)** As he taught, while all the people were listening, Jesus said to his disciples, **"Watch out for the teachers of the law. They like to walk around in flowing robes and be greeted in the market-places, and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets. (Mk12:40)(Mt23:14)(Lk 20:47) Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You devour widows' houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. Therefore you will be punished more severely."**

**Mk 12:35-37. Mt 22:41-45. Lk 20:41-44.** *'Jesus... asked...'*: This passage is difficult to understand, because it uses thoughts and methods of argument which are strange to us. But it would not be at all difficult for the people who heard it in the Temple precincts in Jerusalem, for they were accustomed to such ways of arguing and of using Scripture. *'Christ'*: Here, not Jesus, but more generically the expected Messiah. *'Whose son is he?'*: The Pharisees, as he knew they would, answered, "The son of David." *'How is it that...'*: All the people knew that the Messiah was to be from the family of David. Jesus was actually asking, "How can the scribes say that the Messiah who is to come is the son -that is, the descendant- of David?" The argument which Jesus put forward in support of this comes from Psalm 110:1, which all accepted as a Messianic text, written by David. *'The Lord said to my Lord'*: In this verse David refers to the Messiah as his Lord. The question is, "Why is David calling 'my Lord' one of his descendants?" If the Messiah was a descendant of David, how could this honored king refer to him as his Lord? Unless Jesus' opponents were ready to admit that the Messiah was also the divine Son of Yahweh, they could not answer the question. To note that in Psalm 110:1 the first "Lord" is Yahweh, the second "Lord" is the Messiah. The clear result of the argument is that it is not adequate to call the Messiah "son of David." With this Jesus meant only one thing -that the true description of him is "Son of Yahweh," not "son of David." And so his Messiahship was not to be thought in terms of Davidic conquest, but in terms of divine and sacrificial affection. *'Footstool under your feet'*: The ancient kings used to put their

foot on the defeated's heads, as a demonstration of their victory. *'The large crowd listened...'*: It is quite likely that the mass of the people listened with pleasure to a denunciation of the scribes even if surely that day few understood anything of what Jesus actually meant.

**Mt 22:46.** *'No one could say...'*: None of the Pharisees gathered there was able to come with a stronger argument to confute Jesus' one.

**Mk 12:38-39. Lk 20:45-46.** *'As he taught...'*: In this passage Jesus makes a series of charges against the scribes. *'They like to walk around in flowing robes'*: The teachers of the law liked to dress in a way that drew attention to themselves. They wore long, white linen robes that were fringed and almost reached to the ground. The long robes were a kind of status symbol, were the robes of the rich. In effect, they should have taken the robes off to work and lift them up to walk speedily; something that they, clearly, did not do. *'Greeted in the market-places'*: The scribes liked to be greeted with honor and with respect. The very title Rabbi means "My great one." To be so addressed was agreeable to their vanity. *'The most important seats in the synagogues'*: In the synagogues, in front of the ark where the sacred volumes were kept, and facing the congregation, there was a bench where the specially distinguished sat. It had the advantage that no one who sat there could possibly be missed, being in full view of the congregation. *'The places of honor at banquets'*: At banquets precedence was strictly fixed. The first place was that on the right of the host, the second that on the left, and so on, alternating right and left, around the table. It was easy to tell the honor in which a man was held by the place at which he sat.

**Mk 12:40. Mt 23:14. Lk 20:47.** *'You devour widow's houses'*: The rabbis were legally bound to teach for nothing, and to support themselves by the work of their hands. But these legal experts had managed to convince the people that there was no higher duty and privilege than to support a rabbi in comfort. Such a system was open to abuses, and widows were especially vulnerable to exploitation. *'Make lengthy prayers'*: The long prayers of the scribes and the Pharisees were notorious. Those prayers were not so much offered to Yahweh as to men. They were praying in such places and in such ways that no one could fail to see how pious they were. *'Punished more severely'*: The whole business revolted Jesus. It was all the worse because these men knew so much better and held so responsible a place within the life of the community. Yahweh will always condemn the man who uses a position of trust to reach his own ends and to get his own comfort. The higher the esteem of men, the more severe the demand of true justice; and the more hypocrisy, the greater the condemnation.

This passage warns against three things. 1) Desire of prominence. Office in the Church is a responsibility, not a privilege. 2) Desire for deference. A basic fact of Christianity is that it ought to make a man wish to obliterate self rather than to exalt it. 3) Attempt to make a commerce of religion. Religion does not have to be used for self-gain and self-advancement.

***The widow's offering*** [Mark 12:41-44 Luke 21:1-4]

See page 442

**(Mk12:41)(Lk21:1)** Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the Temple Treasury. As he looked up, Jesus saw many rich people throwing in their gifts, large amounts. **(Mk12:42)(Lk21:2)** But he also saw a poor widow who came and put in two lepton, worthy a kodrantes.

**(Mk12:43)(Lk21:3)** Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, **"I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the Treasury than all the others. (Mk12:44)(Lk21:4)**

***All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything -all she had to live on."***

**Mk 12:41. Lk 21:1.** *'Where the offerings were put'*: In the Court of the Women there were thirteen collecting boxes called "Trumpets," because they were so shaped. They were reserved to contributions for the daily sacrifices and the expenses of the Temple. Each of them was for a special purpose, for example to by corn or wine for the sacrifices. Both men and women were allowed in this court, but women could go no farther into the Temple building. *'Many rich people...'*: Many people threw in quite considerable contributions.

**Mk 12:42. Lk 21:2.** *'A poor widow'*: Then came a widow, who put in a really small amount of money. *'Two lepton'*: The smallest copper coins then in circulation in Palestine. *'A kodrantes'*: The smallest Roman coin. 128 lepton were necessary to make one Greek drachma or one Roman denarius, which were the daily salary of a working man (1 drachma = 1 denarius = 16 assis = 64 kodrantes = 128 lepton). Even though her offering was meager, the widow brought "all she had."

**Mk 12:43-44. Lk 21:3-4.** *'I tell you the truth...'*: Jesus said that her tiny contribution was more valuable than all the others, for the other people had thrown in what they could easily spare, and still have plenty left, while the widow had given everything she had.

The lesson from this passage is that two things determine the value of a gift, the spirit in which it is given and the sacrifice it involves. If unwillingly extracted, given with a grudge, for the sake of prestige or of self-display, it loses most of its value. The real gift is that which comes from the heart and which, furthermore, involves some sacrifice. The amount of the giving is never so important as its cost to the giver. Real giving has a certain recklessness in it. The widow might have kept one of the two coins for her necessities. It would not have been much but it would have been something at list for that day. Instead she gave all she had, trusting Yahweh for her future needs.

### ***Signs of the end of the age***

*See page 442*

*[Mark 13:1-31 Matthew 24:1-35 Luke 21:5-38]*

**Note:** In each of the individual Gospels there is a composite vision of the future, with the various strands all entangled. The unified version tries to disentangle them and, for a matter of clarity, is divided into the following sections:

**The doom of Jerusalem.** It foretells the ultimate complete destruction of Jerusalem.

**The terror of the siege.** It foretells the terrible days of the siege of Jerusalem.

**The day of the Lord.** It foretells the end of time using typical Jewish pictures.

**The persecution to come.** It foretells the persecutions which the Christians will have to endure.

**Threats to the faith.** It foretells the threats against the faith and the purity of the Church.

**The coming of the king.** It clearly foretells the second coming of Jesus Christ.

**Be on the watch.** It speaks of the necessity of being alert and ready to face Jesus.

### ***[The doom of Jerusalem]***

*(Mk13:1-2)(Mt24:1-2)(Lk21:5-6)As Jesus was leaving the Temple and was walking away, some of his disciples came up to him to call his attention to its buildings, remarking about how the Temple was adorned with beautiful stones and with gifts dedicated*



to Yahweh. One of his disciples said to him, "Look, Teacher! What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!" But Jesus said, "**Do you see all these things, all these great buildings? I tell you the truth, as for what you see here, the time will come when not one stone here will be left on another; every one of them will be thrown down.**"

**Mk 13:1-2. Mt 24:1-2. Lk 21:5-6.** *'The Temple'*: The Temple which Herod the Great built was one of the wonders of the world. It was all its splendor that so impressed the disciples. Perhaps some of them had not been very often to Jerusalem. And they were country folks, staggered by what they saw, by the greatness of the Temple which, to them, seemed the summit of human achievement and art, and seemed so vast and solid that it would stand for ever. *'How the Temple was adorned'*: The magnificence of the Temple built by Herod was shown by the archaeological investigations on the Temple hill. *'Massive stones'*: According to Josephus (Antiquities, 15.11.3), they were white, and some of them were 37 feet long, 12 feet high, and 18 feet wide (11.3 x 3.6 x 5.5 meters). *'Not one stone... left'*: Fulfilled literally in AD 70, when the Romans under Titus completely destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple buildings. Stones were even taken apart to collect the gold leaf that melted from the roof when the Temple was set on fire. *'Thrown down'*: Excavations uncovered large numbers of these stones, toppled from the walls by the invaders.

**[The terror of the siege]**

**(Lk21:20)When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near. (Mk13:14)(Mt24:15-16)(Lk21:21)So when you see 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel, standing in the Holy Place where it does not belong -let the reader understand- then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those in the city get out, and let those in the country not enter the city. (Mk13:15)(Mt24:17)Let no one on the roof of his house go down or enter the house to take anything out of the house. (Mk13:16)(Mt24:18)Let no one in the field go back to get his cloak. (Lk21:22)For this is the time of punishment in fulfillment of all that has been written. (Mk13:17-19)(Mt24:19-21)(Lk21:23)How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! Pray that this and your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath. Because those will be days of great distress in the land and wrath against this people, unequalled from the beginning, when Yahweh created the world, until now -and never to be equaled again. (Lk21:24)They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Pagans until the times of the Pagans are fulfilled.**

**(Mk13:20)(Mt24:22)If the Lord had not cut short those days, no one would survive. But for the sake of the elect, His elects, He has shortened them."**

**Mk 13:14-20. Mt 24:15-22. Lk 21:20-24.** *'When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies'*: Jesus forecasts the horror of the siege and the fall of Jerusalem. The sign that the end of the Jewish nation is near would be the siege of Jerusalem. *'The abomination that causes desolation'*: This phrase has its origin in the book of Daniel (9:27;11:31;12:11). The Hebrew expression literally means "The profanation that appalls," and speaks of the desecration of the Temple done about 170 BC by Antiocheius Epiphanes, the king of Syria, who determined to stamp out Judaism and to introduce into Judea Greek reli-

gion and Greek practices. He captured Jerusalem, and desecrated the Temple by erecting an altar to Zeus and by sacrificing swine's flesh on it, and by turning the priests' rooms and the Temple chambers into brothels. So, in his forecast, Jesus was saying, "Some day, quite soon, you will see the very incarnate power of evil attempt again to completely destroy the people and the Holy Place of Yahweh." And, in AD 70, Jerusalem finally fell to the besieging army of Titus, who was to be Emperor of Rome. *'Let those who are... Let no one...'*: Jesus' warning was that at the first signs of siege people ought to flee, not even waiting to pick up their clothes or to try to save their goods. *'Flee to the mountains'*: When an army surrounds a city, it is natural to seek protection inside the walls, but Jesus directed the Jews to seek the safety of the mountains because the city was doomed to destruction. Unfortunately, the people did exactly the opposite. They crowded into Jerusalem, and death came in many terrible ways, as the siege of Jerusalem was one of the most terrible sieges in all history. Jerusalem was obviously a difficult city to take, being set on a hill and defended by religious fanatics; so Titus had no alternative but to totally starve the city. Furthermore, the matter was complicated by the fact that even at that terrible time there were sects and factions inside the city itself. Josephus the historian tells the story of that terrible siege in the fifth book of "The Wars of the Jews." He tells that 97,000 were taken captive and 1,100,000 perished by starvation and the sword. The prophecy that Jesus made of terrible days ahead for Jerusalem came abundantly true. Those who crowded into the city for safety died by the hundreds of thousand, and only those who took his advice and fled to the hills were saved. *'The time of punishment...'*: This was the final punishment of Jerusalem -of the Jewish nation- for not accepting Jesus Christ, the Messiah Yahweh had sent them. And this time there would be no further deliverance and no purification; there would be nothing but ultimate destruction. *'Pregnant women and nursing mothers'*: Representative of any one forced to flee under especially adverse and difficult circumstances. *'In winter'*: The time when heavy rain caused streams to become swollen and impossible to cross, preventing many from reaching a place of refuge. *'Or on the Sabbath'*: Matthew alone includes this detail because he was writing to the Jews, who were forbidden to travel on the Sabbath. *'Great distress... Unequaled from the beginning...'*: Josephus describes the destruction of Jerusalem in almost identical language. *'Jerusalem will be trampled on... until the times of the Pagans are fulfilled'*: The Pagans would have the total domination of Jerusalem, but only until Yahweh will allow it. *'Cut short those days'*: The distress was to be of such intensity that, if allowed to continue for too long, it would have destroyed everyone.

***[The day of the Lord]***

***(Mk13:7-8)(Mt24:6-8)(Lk21:9-11)Then he said to them: "When you will hear of wars and rumors of wars and revolutions, do not be frightened but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen first, but the end will not come right away. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be great earthquakes, famines and pestilences in various places, and fearful events and great signs from Heaven. All these are the beginning of birth pains.***

***(Mk13:24-25)(Mt24:29)But in those days, immediately following that distress,***

***'The sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light;***

***the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.'***

***(Lk21:25)There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the Earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. (26)Men will faint***

*from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken.*

*(Mk13:26)(Mt24:30)(Lk21:27)At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the Earth will mourn. Men will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with great power and glory. (Mk13:27)(Mt24:31) And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the Earth to the ends of the Heavens. (Lk21:28)When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.*

**Mk 13:7-8;24-27. Mt 24:6-8;29-31. Lk 21:9-11;25-28.** The Jews divided time in two ages, the present one, and the age to come. They considered the present age so bad and beyond all hope of human reformation, that it could be mended only by the direct intervention of Yahweh. After His intervention, the "Golden Age" will come. In between the two ages there will be the Day of the Lord, a time of terrible and fearful upheaval; the "birth-pangs" of the new age. *'When you will hear of...'*: The Day of the Lord will not be sudden, but it will last for a certain length of time. The universe will be shattered to pieces. It will be a time of fearful events and of moral chaos, when moral standards will be turned upside down, when wars and violence and hatred will be the common atmosphere of life. Very naturally the New Testament writers tended to identify the Second Coming of Jesus Christ with the Day of the Lord; and they took over a kind of imagery which had to do with the Day of the Lord and applied it to the Second Coming. Clearly, none of this pictures is to be taken literally; they are only pictures, attempts to find some kind of representation for happenings for which human language has no description. *'Do not be frightened...'*: But from all these pictures certain truths emerge. i)Yahweh has not abandoned the world; for all its wickedness, the world is still the scene in which Yahweh's purpose is worked out. ii)Even a high increase in evil does not have to discourage. The complete breakdown of all moral standards and an apparent complete disintegration of the world must precede the Day of the Lord; they are not the prelude to destruction, but the prelude to re-creation. iii)Both judgment and a new creation are certain. Yahweh contemplates the world both in justice and in mercy; His plan is not the obliteration of the world, but the creation of a world which is nearer to His desire. When we read these pictorial words of Jesus about the second coming we must remember that he is giving neither a map of eternity nor a timetable of the future, but that he is simply using the language and the pictures that the Jews had knew and used for centuries. *'The end will not come right away'*: The end of the age will not come immediately, but will be preceded by the terrible period described in the previous verses. Anyway, all the events listed here are also characteristic of the entire present age, not just signs of the coming of the new one. So, it will be impossible to recognize the real period announcing the actual Day of the Lord. *'Birth pains'*: The rabbis spoke of "birth pains," that is, sufferings, that would precede such a day. *'In those days'*: A common Old Testament expression having to do with the end of time. *'The sun...'*: A quotation from Isaiah 13:10;34:4. This description does not necessarily refer to a complete breakup of the universe. It is the language that was commonly used to describe Yahweh's judgment on a fallen world. *'At that time... Son of Man coming...'*: The time of Jesus Christ's second coming at the end of time. *'Coming on the clouds... with great power and glory'*: At his second coming Jesus Christ will have the complete power and authority. *'Gather His elect'*: In the Old Testament Yahweh is often spoken of as gathering at the end of time

His people scattered all over the world. *'Lift up your heads'*: People do not have to be downcast at the appearance of these signs, but to look up in joy, hope and trust. *'Redemption'*: Final, complete redemption is finally coming, in the power of Jesus Christ.

*[The persecution to come]*

***(Mk13:9)(Mt24:9)(Lk21:12-13)But you must be on your guard. Before all this, they will lay hands on you and persecute you. Then you will be handed over to the local councils and flogged in the synagogues. They will deliver you to prisons, to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. And all on account of me and my name you will be brought and stand before governors and kings. This will result in your being witnesses to them. (Mt24:10)At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other. (Mk13:11)(Lk21:14)But whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, make up your mind and do not worry beforehand about what to say and how you will defend yourselves. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Spirit of Yahweh. (Lk21:15)For I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict. (Mk13:12)Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child. Children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. (Lk21:16)You will be betrayed even by parents, brothers, relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death. (Mk13:13)(Lk21:17-19)All men will hate you because of me, but not a hair of your head will perish. By standing firm to the end you will be saved and gain life."***

***(Mk13:3-4)(Mt24:3)(Lk21:7)As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the Temple, the disciples, Peter, James, John and Andrew asked him privately, "Teacher, tell us, when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are all about to be fulfilled? And what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?"***

**Mk 13:3-4;9;11-13. Mt 24:3;9-10. Lk 21:7;12-19.** *'You must be on your guard'*: Here we have the warnings about the persecutions the Christians will have to suffer. Jesus never left his followers in any doubt that they had chosen a hard way. He never promised his disciples an easy way; on the contrary, he promised them death, suffering and persecution. *'Local councils'*: The religious courts made up of the synagogue elders. *'Flogged in the synagogues'*: Infraction of Jewish regulations was punished by flogging, the maximum penalty being 39 strokes with the whip. The synagogues were used not only for worship and school, but also for community administration and police confinement while awaiting trial. The handing over to councils and the flogging in synagogues refer to Jewish persecutions and trials in their local courts (there was the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem and a local Sanhedrin in every place where there was a synagogue). *'Governors and kings'*: This verses refer to Roman persecutions and trials before Roman courts. *'On account of me. Your being witnesses'*: The Christians will be arrested and tried as criminals. But, exactly in these circumstances, they will "testify" spreading the Good News of Jesus among their accusers and tormentors. *'Many will turn away...'*: It is clear that a number of people will not be able to withstand the torments and will disown their faith in Jesus, and will accuse each other as requested by their persecutors. Anyway, even through these negative events, Jesus' words will spread more and more. *'But... make up your mind and do not worry'*: The true Christians, who are in spiritual communion with Jesus and, through him, with Yahweh, will anyway get the help they need in the critical moments. *'I will give you words of wisdom'*: It has to be clear that those "help" and

"words" are as per the will of Yahweh, are the best in absolute -but many times they do not appear like that at the very moment, analogous to the answers received to prayers. (Ask, seek, knock. Mt 7:7-11; Lk 11:5-13). *'Brother will betray...'*: And it was true that even members of a man's own family sometimes betrayed him. This family and domestic hostility was and still is one of the characteristics of the process of conversion to Christianity of a pagan population. *'Not an hair of your head will perish'*: This figure does not refer to physical safety, but indicates that there will be no spiritual loss. *'Firm to the end'*: In this, as in all other things, it is the man who endures to the end who is spiritually saved. Such perseverance is a sure indication of salvation. Although persecution and physical death may come, Yahweh is in control, and the ultimate outcome will be eternal life in His Kingdom. *'Mount of Olives'*: A ridge a little more than a mile (1.6 km) long, beyond the Kidron Valley east of Jerusalem and rising about 200 feet (60 meters) above the city. *'When will these things happen? And what will be the sign... of your coming and of the end of the age?'*: The disciples thought that the destruction of the Temple would be one of the events that will happen at the end of time. So they asked for a "sign" by which they might understand that the destruction of the Temple was about to take place and that the end of the age was approaching.

**[Threats to the faith]**

**(Mk13:5-6)(Mt24:4-5)(Lk21:8)** Jesus answered them: *"Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am he, the Christ,' and 'The time is near,' and will deceive many. Do not follow them. (Mt24:11) And many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. (12) Because of the increase of wickedness, the faith of most will grow cold, (13) but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. (Mk13:21)(Mt24:23) At that time if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or, 'Look, there he is!' do not believe it. (Mk13:22)(Mt24:24) For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive the elect -if that were possible. (Mk13:23)(Mt24:25) So be on your guard; see, I have told you everything ahead of time. (Mt24:26) So if anyone tells you, 'There he is, out in the desert,' do not go out; or, 'Here he is, in the inner rooms,' do not believe it.*

**Mk 13:5-6;21-23. Mt 24:4-5;11-13;23-26. Lk 21:8.** *'Watch out'*: It is clear from Jesus' words that one of the main purposes of this discourse on the Mount of Olives was to alert the disciples to the danger of deception. *'I am he'*: That is, the Messiah. Jesus saw that two main dangers would threaten the Christians during the life of the Church. i) *'False Christs and false prophets'*: The false leaders; men who will try to attach other men to themselves rather than to Jesus Christ. The inevitable result is that they will spread division instead of building up the unity of the Christian. ii) *'The faith... will grow cold'*: discouragement; many will abandon Jesus' way because of the lawlessness of the world. Jesus' advice is never to believe to any of such people or to their deeds. The reason for this is very clear. There is only one Jesus Christ whose second coming will be so evident that, at the proper time, absolutely nobody will have the minimum doubt about it.

**[The coming of the king]**

**(Mk13:10)(Mt24:14)** *And this Gospel of the Kingdom must and will first be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come. (Mt24:27) For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will*

***be the coming of the Son of Man. (28)Whenever there is a carcass, there the vultures gather."***

**Mk13:10. Mt24:14;27-28.** *'This gospel must and will first be preached'*: Here, Jesus makes it clear that, before the end of the age could come, his Gospel will have to be known all around the world. *'As lightning... so... the Son of Man'*: Then, the coming of Jesus Christ will come in full view of everybody, all around the world. *'There the vultures will gather'*: The coming of Jesus Christ will be as obvious as the gathering of vultures around a carcass. Here, Jesus quotes a well-known Jewish proverb, which simply means that a thing would happen only when the necessary conditions are fulfilled. Yahweh will bring Jesus again only at the proper time. We cannot know that time, and we don't have to speculate about it, but we must live so that whenever Jesus comes, he will find us ready.

***[Be on the watch]***

***(Mk13:28)(Mt24:32)(Lk21:29-30)He told them this parable: "Now look at the fig tree and all the trees and learn this lesson: As soon as their twigs get tender and their leaves come out, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near. (Mk13:29)(Mt24:33)(Lk21:31)Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the Kingdom of Yahweh is near, right at the door. (Mk13:30)(Mt24:34)(Lk21:32)I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. (Mk13:31)(Mt24:35)(Lk21:33)Heaven and Earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away. (Lk21:34)Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap. (35)For it will come upon all those who live on the face of the whole Earth. (36)Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man."***

***(37)Each day Jesus was teaching at the Temple, and each evening he went out to spend the evening on the hill called the Mount of Olives, (38)and all the people came early in the morning to hear him at the Temple.***

**Mk 13:28-31. Mt 24:32-35. Lk 21:29-38.** *'Look at the fig tree...'*: These verses indicate that, as a man can tell by the signs of nature when summer is on the way, so he will be able to tell by the proper signs when the coming of the Kingdom will be on the way. *'This generation will... not pass away...'*: The meaning is that some of the men standing there will see, during their life-span, the Kingdom of Yahweh on Earth, temporary and imperfect, spread all around the known world, that is, to Rome and, from there, to the Roman Empire. *'Heaven... will pass away, but...'*: All Yahweh's physical creation will have a physical end, but the words of Jesus, which are the earthly expression of Yahweh's Spirit, are eternal. *'That day will close on you unexpectedly'*: This does not mean that Jesus Christ's second coming will be completely unannounced, since there will be plenty of introductory signs, but that men, signs or not signs, have always to be ready for it. *'The whole Earth'*: The second coming of Jesus Christ will involve the whole mankind, whereas the fall of Jerusalem did not. *'Able to escape... Able to stand...'*: Here, the phrases about the destruction of Jerusalem and the second coming are entangled together. The first refers to the terror of Jerusalem siege and destruction; the second to the necessity of being always ready to receive Jesus. *'Each day'*: Each day during the last week of his life, from his Triumphal Entry to the Passover.

***The parable of the rich fool*** [Luke 12:13-21]

**(Lk12:13)**Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me."

**(14)**Jesus replied, "Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?"

**(15)**Then he said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."

**(16)**And he told them this parable: "The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop. **(17)**He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.'

**(18)**Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. **(19)**And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry."'

**(20)**But Yahweh said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?'

**(21)**This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward Yahweh."

**Lk 12:13-15.** *'Divide the inheritance'*: The general rule was that the elder of two brothers had to receive double a younger one's portion (Deuteronomy 21:17). *'Judge or arbiter'*: It was common for people in Palestine to take their unsettled disputes to a respected rabbi; but Jesus refused to be mixed in anyone's disputes about money. This man's request was selfish and materialistic. Furthermore, there is no indication that he had been listening seriously to what Jesus had been teaching. *'Be on your guard'*: Anyway, that request gave Jesus an opportunity to explain which has to be the attitude of his followers to material goods.

**Lk 12:16-21.** *'He told them...'*: To better clarify the concept, Jesus replied with a parable about the consequences of greed on those who have much, "The parable of the Rich Fool." To note that there is no other parable so full of the words "I" and "my." That rich man was absolutely self-centered and, even when he had a superfluity of goods, he never thought to give some away to the needy. His whole attitude was the very reverse of Christianity. The rich man never thought beyond this world. All his plans were made on the basis of terrestrial life. *'This is how...'*: The man who never remembers that there is another world is destined some day for a very unpleasant shock.

***Watchfulness*** [Luke 12:35-38]

**(Lk12:35)**"Keep your loins girded and your lamps burning, **(36)**like men waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him. **(37)**It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. I tell you the truth, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them. **(38)**It will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready, even if he comes in the second or third watch of the night."

**Lk 12:35-38.** *'Keep your loins...'*: This passage has two meanings. In its narrower sense it refers to the second coming of Jesus Christ; in its wider sense it refers to the time when Yahweh's personal call enters a man's life, a call to prepare to meet Him. *'Loins girded'*: The long robes of the East were a hindrance to work; and when a man prepared

to work he lifted up his robes under his girdle to leave himself free for activity. *'Lamps burning'*: The lamps were like a cotton wick floating in a sauce-boat of oil. The wick had always to be kept trimmed and the lamp replenished or the light would go out. *'It will be good'*: This is a praise to the servant who is ready. *'He will dress himself to serve'*: Here the master, recognizing the particular merits of his servants, reverses the normal roles and serves the servants. *'Second or third watch'*: The night was divided in four watches by the Romans and three by the Jews. Those of this passage were probably the last two of the Jewish watches. The banquet the master attended to would have begun in the first watch.

**The day and hour unknown**

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[Mark 13:32-37 Matthew 24:36;42-51 Luke 12:39-48]

***(Mk13:32)(Mt24:36)"No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in Heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.***

***(Mk13:33)(Mt24:42)Therefore, be on guard! Be alert! Keep watch because you do not know when that time will come, on what day your Lord will come.***

***(Mt24:43)(Lk12:39)But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. (Mk13:34)It's like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with his assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch. (Mt24:44)(Lk12:40)So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him."***

***(Lk12:41)Peter asked, "Lord, are you telling this parable to us, or to everyone?"***

***(Mt13:45)(Lk12:42)The Lord answered, "Who then is the faithful servant, the wise manager, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food allowance at the proper time? (Mt13:46)(Lk12:43)It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns. (Mt13:47)(Lk12:44) I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. (Mt13:48-49)(Lk 12:45)But suppose that the servant is wicked and says to himself, 'My master is staying away, taking a long time in coming,' and he then begins to beat his fellow men-servants and maidservants and to eat and drink and get drunk with drunkards. (Mt 13:50-51)(Lk12:46)The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, with the unbelievers, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.***

***(Lk12:47)That servant who knows his master's will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows. (48)But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.***

***(Mk13:35)Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back -whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. (36)If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. (37)What I say to you, I say to everyone: 'Watch!'"***

**Mk 13:32. Mt 24:36.** *'No one knows'*: Knowing the future would be a hindrance, not a help, to faith. Previously, the description of certain signs has been given (The signs of the end of time. Mk 13:1-31; Mt 24:1-35; Lk 21:5-38), but not for the purpose of making detailed predictions. *'That day'*: An Old Testament expression for the day of the



Lord's intervention, referring to the coming of the Son of Man. *'Nor the Son'*: While on Earth, even Jesus lived by faith, and obedience was the hallmark of his ministry. This section states quite definitely that no one knows the time of the second coming; not the angels, not even Jesus himself, but only Yahweh.

**Mk 13:33. Mt 24:42.** *'You do not know'*: There were things that even Jesus left completely in the hands of Yahweh. There can be no greater warning and rebuking to those who work out dates and timetables trying to determine when Jesus will come again.

**Mk 13:34. Mt 24:43-44. Lk 12:39-40.** *'Understand this'*: Jesus draws two practical examples. We are like a house-owner who does not know when the thief will come; like servants who know that their master will come, but who do not know when. The time of Jesus' coming is not known, then all life must be a constant preparation for that coming. And, as a consequence of this, there are certain basic behaviors to avoid. i) To live without watchfulness. This leads to disaster. A thief does not announce when he is going to burgle a house; therefore a householder who has valuables in his house must maintain a constant guard. But the watching of the Christian for the coming of Jesus Christ is not full of apprehension and fear; it is the watching of eager expectation for the coming of joy and glory. ii) To live thinking that there is still plenty of time left to settle our life. There are things which must not be put off, for no man knows if for him tomorrow will ever come. The punishment -rejection- is based on failure in duty, and the reward -acceptance- is based on fidelity. The servants who fulfilled their duty faithfully were given a still greater assignment; and the servant who failed was dealt with in severity (The parable of the ten minas. Lk 19:11-27, and The parable of the talents. Mt 25:14-30). The inevitable conclusion is that, when he comes, Jesus cannot find us employed in a better and greater task than in doing our duty. The fundamental point is always clear; Jesus Christ's return is certain, but its time is not known.

**Lk 12:41.** *'Telling this parable to us, or to everyone?'*: Jesus taught the people in parables but used a more direct approach with the disciples. However, it is fully clear that he did intend these warnings of watchfulness were for all men.

**Mt 13:45-49. Lk 12:42-45.** *'The faithful servant'*: Very often, in the East a trusted slave ran his master's house for him and administered his estate. This trusted steward had almost unlimited power. He was himself a slave, yet he had control of all the other slaves. *'Their food allowance'*: The payment in kind for the work done. *'But suppose that...'*: This unwise steward made two mistakes. By saying, "I will do what I like while my master is away" and, "I have plenty of time to put things right before the master comes," he forgot that the day of reckoning always comes and that there is nothing so fatal as to feel that one has plenty of time.

**Mt 13:50-51. Lk 12:46-48.** *'Cut him to pieces. Beaten with many blows. Beaten with few blows'*: Three grades of punishment that the judge will meter out in proportion to both the privileges each person has enjoyed and his response to those privileges.

**Mk 13:35-37.** *'Therefore...'*: This passage finishes with the warning that knowledge and privilege always bring responsibility. Sin is much more serious to the man who knew better; failure is doubly blameworthy in the man who had every chance to do well. *'In the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn'*: The four watches of the night used by the Romans.

***The parable of the ten virgins*** [Matthew 25:1-13]

***(Mt25:1)"At that time the Kingdom of Heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. (2)Five of them were foolish and fi-***

*ve were wise. (3)The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. (4)The wise, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. (5)The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep.*

*(6)At midnight the cry rang out: 'Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!'*

*(7)Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. (8)The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.'*

*(9)'No,' they replied, 'there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.'*

*(10)But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut.*

*(11)Later the others also came. 'Sir! Sir!' they said, 'Open the door for us!'*

*(12)But he replied, 'I tell you the truth, I don't know you.'*

*(13)Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour."*

**Mt 25:1.** *'Ten virgins':* The bridesmaids, who had to accompany the bride to meet the bridegroom. *'Lamps':* Torches that consisted of a long pole with oil-drenched rags at the top. (The small indoor clay lamps would have been of little use in an outdoor procession). In a Palestinian village a wedding was a great occasion. The whole village turned out to accompany the couple to their home, and they went by the longest possible road, in order that they might receive the good wishes of as many as possible. After this, it was the Jewish custom that, when a couple married, they stayed at home and for a week kept open house for all relatives and friends.

**Mt 25:24.** *'Foolish. Wise':* The foolish, for not being prepared for a possible long wait and, so, for missing the celebration of the wedding and the banquet. The wise, for being properly prepared. *'Oil':* Olive oil.

**Mt 25:5-6.** *'Long in coming':* As usual, in all kinds of ceremonies, there was no scheduled time-table. *'At midnight':* The bridegroom arrived, practically without notice, in the middle of the night. Those who were ready went immediately in with the bride and the bridegroom. Those who were not, lost their chance.

**Mt 25:7.** *'Trimmed':* The charred ends of the rags were cut off and oil was added.

**Mt 25:8-9.** *'There may not be enough':* Torches required large amounts of oil in order to keep burning, and the oil had to be replenished every few minutes. Here, the lesson is that there are certain things which cannot be borrowed. Each man has to acquire and keep his own spiritual capital, which is something no one can borrow from someone else.

**Mt 25:10.** *'The door was shut':* It was the Jewish custom that, once the bride and the bridegroom had arrived, the door of their house was shut, and late-comers were not admitted to the ceremony. The lesson here is that there are certain things which cannot be obtained at the last minute. Many times, to be too late could mean to lose everything.

**Mt 25:11-12.** *'I don't know you':* A way to say that, not having fulfilled their duty, they were not deserving to come and take part in the celebration. So, because they were unprepared, the foolish virgins missed the marriage ceremony and the banquet.

**Mt 25:13.** *'Keep watch':* In its immediate significance this parable was directed against the Jews. They were the chosen people; their whole story should have been a preparation for the coming of the Son of Yahweh; they ought to have been always and fully prepared. Instead they were quite unprepared and therefore were shut out.

***The parable of the talents*** [Matthew 25:14-30]

***(Mt25:14)"Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. (15)To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. (16)The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. (17)So also, the one with the two talents gained two more. (18)But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.***

***(19)After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. (20)The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.'***

***(21)His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'***

***(22)The man with the two talents also came, 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with two talents; see, I have gained two more.'***

***(23)His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'***

***(24)Then the man who had received the one talent came. 'Master,' he said, 'I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting were you have not sown and gathering were you have not scattered seed. (25)So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.'***

***(26)His master replied, 'You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest were I have not sown and gather were I have not scattered seed? (27)Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers; so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest.***

***(28)Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents. (29)For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. (30)And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, were there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'"***

**Mt 25:14-30.** In this parable the whole attention is focused on the useless servant. There can be little doubt that he stands for the scribes and the Pharisees, and for their attitude towards the Law and the truth of Yahweh. The useless servant buried his talent in the ground, in order that he might hand it back to his master exactly as it was. The whole aim of the scribes and Pharisees was to keep the Law exactly as it was. In their own phrase, they sought "to build a fence around the Law." Any change, any development, any alteration, anything new was to them anathema.

This parable teaches that: i)There can be no religion without adventure, as Yahweh can find no use for the shut mind. ii)Yahweh gives men different gifts. One man received five talents, another two, and another one. It is not the number of talents which matters; what matters is how they are used. Yahweh never demands a man to use abilities he has not got; but He does demand that a man should use to the full the abilities which he does possess. Men are not equal in talent; but men can be equal in effort. iii)The reward for work well done is still more work to do. The two servants who had done well were not told to lean back and rest because they had done well. On the contrary, they were given greater tasks and greater responsibilities in the business of their master.

iv)The man who is punished is the man who does not want to try. The third servant did not lose the one talent, he simply did nothing with it. Even if he had adventured with it and lost it, it would have been better than doing nothing at all. v)If a man has a talent and exercises it, he is progressively able doing more with it ("Everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance"). But, if he has a talent and fails to exercise it, he will inevitably lose it ("Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him"). And that is equally true of any human physical or manual or intellectual activity. *'Talent'*: The term was first used for a unit of weight (about 108 pounds, 49 kg of gold or silver), then for a unit of coinage. The present-day use of "talent" to indicate an ability or gift is derived from this parable.

### ***Jesus anointed at Bethany***

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[Mark 14:3-9 Matthew 26:6-13 John 12:2-11]

**(Mk14:3)(Mt26:6-7)(Jn12:2-3)**While Jesus was in Bethany, a dinner was given in his honor in the home of a man known as Simon the Leper. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. Then a woman, Mary, took an alabaster jar with about a pound of pure nard, a very expensive perfume, and came to him. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on Jesus' head and feet as he was reclining at the table, and she wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

**(Mk14:4-5)(Mt26:8-9)(Jn12:4-5)**But when some of the disciples present there saw this, they were indignantly saying to one another, "Why this waste of perfume?" And they rebuked her harshly. One of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, "Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It could have been sold at a high price, as it was worth more than three hundred denarii." **(Jn 12:6)**He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.

**(Mk14:6)(Mt26:10)(Jn12:7)**Aware of this, Jesus said to them, "**Leave her alone. Why are you bothering this woman? She has done a beautiful thing to me. It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial.** **(Mk14:7)(Mt26:11)(Jn12:8)**The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me. **(Mk14:8)(Mt26:12)**She did what she could. When she poured this perfume on my body, she did it beforehand to prepare me for burial. **(Mk14:9)(Mt 26:13)**I tell you the truth, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her."

**(Jn12:9)**Meanwhile a large crowd of Jews found out that Jesus was there and came, not only because of him, but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. **(10)**So the chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus as well, **(11)**for on account of him many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and putting their faith in him.

**Mk 14:3. Mt 26:6-7. Jn 12:2-3.** *'Simon the Leper'*: Not mentioned elsewhere, he had been probably a victim of leprosy who had been healed by Jesus. *'Martha served'*: She was fond of Jesus; she was a practical woman; and the only way in which she could show her affection was by the work of her hands. *'Reclining'*: In Jesus' time people did not seat to eat; they reclined on low couches. They lay on the couch resting on the left elbow and using the right hand to take their food. So, anyone coming up to someone lying like this would stand well above him. *'A woman'*: Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus. *'Ala-baster jar'*: A sealed flask with a long neck that was broken off when the

content was used and that contained enough ointment for one complete application. '*A pound*': A Roman pound, corresponding to 327 gr. '*Nard*': A perfume made from the aromatic oil extracted from the root of a plant grown mainly in India. '*Poured the perfume*': It was a custom to pour a few drops of perfume on a guest's head when he arrived at a house or when he reclined to a meal. But it was not a few drops that Mary poured on the head and feet of Jesus. She broke the flask and anointed him with the whole content, without calculating the cost. Mary showed her affection for Jesus in a different, more unusual way than her sister. It was a sign of honor to anoint a person's head. But, humbly, Mary anointed also his feet. '*Wiped his feet with her hair*': Furthermore, completely unselfconscious, she uncovered and loosened her hair, and she wiped Jesus' feet with them. In Palestine no woman would ever had appeared in public with her hair unbound. That was the sign of immorality. But Mary never even thought of that.

**Mk 14:4-5. Mt 26:8-9. Jn 12:4-5.** '*The disciples... were indignantly...*': Mary's action provoked the criticism of some of the bystanders. '*Why this waste?*': To some it seemed a shameful waste. '*Judas Iscariot*': Jesus was well aware that there was a traitor within the ranks of the disciples, and that it was Judas. '*Given to the poor*': It was a Jewish custom to give gifts to the poor on the evening of Passover. '*It was worthy more than 300 denarii*': A denarius was a Roman coin worth a working man's daily wage.

**Jn 12:6.** '*Keeper of the money bag*': Jesus would not have put Judas in charge of the money-box unless he had some capabilities in that direction. Judas had a gift for handling money but was so fond of it that he became first a thief and then a traitor.

**Mk 14:6. Mt 26:10. Jn 12:7.** '*Leave her*': Jesus understood that Mary's action came from her heart, from her affection for him. '*Done a beautiful thing*': The Greek word used for "beautiful" has an aesthetic as well as an ethical meaning. Jesus said that it was a nice thing the woman had done. Mary acted on the impulse of her affection because she knew in her heart that if she did not do it now, then she would never do it at all. There are certain things, the chance to do which comes only once. '*It was intended... for... my burial*': It was the custom in the East, to anoint the body of the dead with aromatic oils in preparing it for burial. And in this case the flask was broken. Although the woman did not mean it, that was the very thing she was doing.

**Mk 14:7. Mt 26:11. Jn 12:8.** '*The poor you will always have with you*': Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 15:11, "There will always be poor people in the land." It is clear that by this phrase Jesus did not express lack of concern for the poor, for their needs lay always close to his heart.

**Mk 14:8. Mt 26:12.** '*She did what she could*': Mary did express with total sincerity her affection for Jesus. '*Beforehand to prepare me for burial*': Jesus anticipated suffering a criminal's death, for only in that circumstance there was no anointing of the body.

**Mk 14:9. Mt 26:13.** '*What she has done will also be told*': Her action was so much the expression of deep affection that it has to be reported all around the world, as an example of absolutely selfish affection.

**Jn 12:9-11.** '*Plans to kill Lazarus as well*': For the leaders of the Jews things were taking an impossible direction. This was especially the case of the Sadducees, to whom belonged all the chief priests. For them the situation was serious from the political and the theological point of view. Politically, they did want to be in good relations with the Romans, to keep their own wealth and comfort. They saw Jesus as a possible leader of a rebellion, and an uprising of the people would have determined a direct intervention of the Romans who would have summarily dismissed them. Theologically, they regarded Jesus as intolerable. They did not believe in the resurrection of the dead; and Jesus ma-

de them confront with the resurrection of Lazarus from the grave. Unless they could do something about it, the foundation of their power, influence and beliefs was breaking down. So they proposed to destroy the evidence by doing away with Lazarus.

**Note:** The story of the anointing at Bethany is told by Mark, Matthew, and John. Mark and Matthew's stories are almost exactly the same; but John adds the information that the woman who anointed Jesus was Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus. Luke does not tell this story; he tells the story of another anointing, in the house of Simon the Pharisee at Capernaum (Jesus anointed by a sinful woman. Lk 7:36-50). And in Luke's story the woman who anointed Jesus' feet and wiped them with the hair of her head was a notorious sinner. It has always been a debated question if the story told by Luke is or not the same as the story told by Mark, Matthew, and John. In three of the stories the name of the host is Simon (the Pharisee in Luke, the Leper in Mark and Matthew; but Simon was a very common name), whether in John the host is not named at all, even if the narrative could read as if the dinner took place in the house of Martha, Mary and Lazarus. But it is possible that all of them, as Jesus' friends, were invited to the dinner in Simon the Leper's house and that Martha (who, notoriously, was a very active woman) had decided to serve (most probably only Jesus and, possibly, the Twelve). The main reason for not identifying the stories of Luke and of the other three Gospel writers is that in Luke's story the woman was a notorious sinner, which was not the case of Mary of Bethany.

**The plot against Jesus. Judas agrees to betray Jesus**

See page 448

[Mark 14:1-2;10-11 Matthew 26:1-5;14-16 Luke 22:1-6]

**(Mt26:1)** *When Jesus had finished saying all these things, he said to his disciples, (2) "As you know, the Passover is two days away -and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified."*

**(Mk14:1-2)(Mt26:3-5)(Lk22:1-2)** *Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread, called the Passover, was approaching, only two days away. And then the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders of the people assembled in the palace of the High Priest, whose name was Caiaphas, and they plotted to arrest Jesus and were looking for some sly way to get rid of him and kill him. "But not during the Feast, or there may be a riot among the people," they said, for they were afraid of the people.*

**(Mk14:10)(Mt26:14)(Lk22:3-4)** *Then Satan entered Judas, the one called Iscariot, one of the Twelve. And Judas went to the chief priests and the officers of the temple guard and discussed with them how he might betray Jesus to them. **(Mk14:11)(Mt26:15-16)(Lk22:5-6)** And he asked, "What are you willing to give me if I hand him over to you?" They were delighted to hear this and promised to give him money. Judas consented, so they counted out for him thirty silver coins, and from then on he watched for an opportunity to hand Jesus over to them when no crowd was present.*

**Mt 26:1-2.** *'The Son of Man will be handed over...':* Once again Jesus warned his disciples of what was to come. For the last few days he had acted in complete defiance of the Jewish authorities, so much that they might have thought that he proposed to defy them. But here once again he makes it clear that his aim was the Cross.

**Mk 14:1-2. Mt 26:3-5. Lk 22:1-2.** *'Feast of the Unleavened Bread. Passover':* The Feast of the Passover fell on the 14th Nisan (March-April). The Feast of the Unleavened Bread was an important, even if minor, festival and consisted of the seven days following the Passover, during which the Jews were to eat unleavened bread only (Exodus

12:14-20). During the Passover there were huge crowds of pilgrims in Jerusalem, whose feelings ran very high. The remembrance of the old deliverance from Egypt made the people long for a new deliverance from Rome. At no time was nationalist feeling so intense. During Passover time special detachments of Roman troops were drafted into Jerusalem as a deterrent against insurrections. *'Plotted to arrest Jesus'*: Caiaphas, the High Priest, was fully collaborating with the Romans who would not tolerate any civil disorder. Let there be any rioting and certainly Caiaphas would have lost his position. *'Not during the Feast'*: During Passover and the week-long Feast of the Unleavened Bread the population of Jerusalem increased from about 50,000 to several hundred thousand. It would have been too risky to apprehend Jesus with so large and excitable a crowd present. The Jewish authorities knew that in such an inflammable atmosphere, the arrest of Jesus might well provoke a riot. That is why they thought some stratagem to arrest him secretly and have him in their power before the populace knew anything about it. Caiaphas' plan was to leave the whole matter till after the Passover Feast, and the city was quiet; but Judas did provide him an earlier solution to his problem.

**Mk 14:10. Mt 26:14. Lk 22:3-4.** *'Satan entered Judas'*: In the Gospels this expression is used on two separated occasions: Before Judas went to the chief priests and offered to betray Jesus (here), and during the Last Supper. Thus the Gospels writers depict Satan's control over Judas who, anyway, had never displayed a high motive of service or commitment to Jesus. Just as Yahweh is always looking for men to be His instruments, so is Satan. A man can be the instrument of good or of evil, of Yahweh or of Satan. But it remains true that Satan could not have entered into Judas unless Judas had opened him the door. *'Officers of the Temple guard'*: All were Jews selected mostly from the Levites.

**Mk 14:11. Mt 26:15-16. Lk 22:5-6.** *'He asked...'*: The authorities had asked for information as to where Jesus could be found in view of arresting him. But when Judas went to them, he declared himself ready to hand Jesus over to them. *'They were delighted'*: This was an unexpected opportunity that they seized, even though they had intended not to apprehend Jesus during the Feast. *'Thirty silver coins'*: Equivalent to 120 denarii. So it seems that Judas, who was the treasurer of the group, and who used his position to pilfer from the common purse (Jesus anointed at Bethany. Jn 12:6), was made blind to honesty and honor by his desire for money. Anyway, to properly understand Judas' behavior, we have to look also for some other possible reasons, other than money. First of all, it is clear that, even at that time, the Twelve still thought of the Kingdom in earthly terms and dreamed of getting high positions in it. Probably Judas was the first, if not the only one of the group, to understand how far wrong these dreams were and how little chance they had of being fulfilled. And probably in his disillusionment his initial affection for Jesus turned to hate. But there is another possibility. It is almost certain that Judas was a fervent nationalist and had seen in Jesus the person who could make the dream of national glory and power true. But now he saw Jesus drifting irrevocably to death. So may be that he betrayed Jesus in order to force his hand. May be he delivered him to the authorities with the idea that now Jesus would be compelled to act in order to save himself, and that this action would be the beginning of a victorious campaign against the Romans. This theory is supported by the fact that, when he saw what he had actually done, he tossed the accursed money at the feet of the Jewish authorities and went out to hang himself.

**The Lord's Last Supper**

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**Jesus washes his disciples' feet and predicts his betrayal***[Mark 14:12-25 Matthew 26:17-29 Luke 22:7-23 John 13:1-30]*

**(Mk14:12-14)(Mt26:17-18)(Lk22:7-11)** Then came the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, when it was customary to sacrifice the Passover lamb, and the disciples came to Jesus and asked him, "Where do you want us to go and make preparations for you to eat the Passover?"

So Jesus sent two of his disciples, Peter and John, telling them, **"Go into the city and make preparations for us to eat the Passover."**

"Where do you want us to prepare for it?" they asked.

He replied: **"As you enter the city, a certain man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him to the house that he enters, and say to the owner of the house, 'The Teacher says: My appointed time is near. I am going to celebrate the Passover with my disciples at your house. Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' (Mk14:15)(Lk22:12) He will show you a large upper room, all furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there."**

**(Mk14:16)(Mt26:19)(Lk22:13)** So the disciples left, did as Jesus had directed them, went into the city and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover.

**(Jn13:1)** It was just before the Passover Feast, Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having been fond of his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his affection.

**(Mk14:17)(Mt26:20)(Lk22:14)** When evening came, Jesus and his Twelve apostles arrived and reclined at the table.

**(Jn13:2)** The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus. **(3)** Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from Yahweh and was returning to Yahweh; **(4)** so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. **(5)** After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

**(6)** He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

**(7)** Jesus replied, **"You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."**

**(8)** "No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet."

Jesus answered, **"Unless I wash you, you have no part with me."**

**(9)** "Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!"

**(10)** Jesus answered, **"A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you."** **(11)** For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean.

**(12)** When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. **"Do you understand what I have done for you?"** he asked them. **(13)** "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. **(14)** Now that I, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. **(15)** I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. **(16)** I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. **(17)** Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.



**(18)I am not referring to all of you; I know those I have chosen. But this is to fulfill the scripture: 'He who shares my bread has lifted up his heel against me.'**

**(19)I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am he. (20)I tell you the truth, whoever accepts anyone I send accepts me; and whoever accepts me accepts the One who sent me."**

**(Mk14:18)(Mt26:21)(Jn13:21)After he had said this, Jesus was troubled in spirit and, while they were reclining at the table eating, he testified, "I tell you the truth, one of you is going to betray me -one who is eating with me."**

**(Mk14:19)(Mt26:22)(Lk22:23)(Jn13:22)His disciples were saddened, stared at one another, at a loss to know which of them he meant. They began to question among themselves which of them it might be who would do this, and one by one they began to say to him, "Surely not I, Lord?"**

**(Jn13:23)One of them, the disciple whom Jesus cherished, was reclining next to him. (24)Simon Peter motioned to this disciple and said, "Ask him which one he means."**

**(25)Leaning back against Jesus, he asked him, "Lord, who is it?"**

**(Mk14:20-21)(Mt26:23-24)(Lk22:21-22)(Jn13:26)"The hand of him who is going to betray me is with mine on the table. It is one of the Twelve." Jesus replied, "One who has dipped bread with his hand into the bowl with me will betray me. It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish. The Son of Man will go as it has been decreed, just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born." Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, son of Simon.**

**(Mt26:25)(Jn13:27)As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him.**

**Then Judas, the one who would betray him, said, "Surely not I, Rabbi?"**

**Jesus answered him, "Yes, it is you. What you are about to do, do quickly." (Jn13:28)But no one at the meal understood why Jesus said this to him. (29)Since Judas had charge of the money, some thought Jesus was telling him to buy what was needed for the Feast, or to give something to the poor. (30)As soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out. And it was night.**

**(Lk22:15)And Jesus said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. (16)For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the Kingdom of Yahweh."**

**(Mk14:22)(Mt26:26)(Lk22:19)And while they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat it; this is my body given for you; do it in remembrance of me."**

**(Mk14:23-25)(Mt26:27-29)(Lk22:17-18;20)Then in the same way, after the supper he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for many of you for the forgiveness of sins. Take this and divide it among you. For I tell you the truth, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine from now on until that day when the Kingdom of Yahweh comes and I drink it anew with you in my Father's Kingdom." And they all drank from it.**

**Mk 14:12-14. Mt 26:17-18. Lk 22:7-11.** 'Then came the first day... when it was customary to sacrifice the Passover lamb': The Passover lambs were killed on the 14th of Nisan (Exodus 12:6). The entire eight-day celebration was sometimes referred to as the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and the 14th of Nisan was referred to as the "first day of Unleavened Bread," even if it was actually the Passover Day. 'Where do you want...': As

we read the narrative of the last week of Jesus' life, we see that he did not leave things to the last moment. Before arriving in Jerusalem, he had arranged that the colt should be ready for his ride into the town, and here again we see that Jesus had made all the arrangements in advance. His disciples wished to know where they would eat the Passover, and Jesus sent them into Jerusalem with instructions to look for a man carrying a jar of water. That was clearly a pre-arranged signal. To carry a water-pot was a woman's duty, and a man with a water-pot on his shoulder would stand out in any crowd. Jesus had also arranged a password, "My appointed time is near." *'Where is my guest room...?'*: It was a Jewish custom that anyone in Jerusalem who had a room available would give it to the pilgrims to celebrate the Passover.

**Mk 14:15. Lk 22:12.** *'A large upper room'*: The larger Jewish houses had an upper room which looked like a small box placed on a bigger one. This upper room was approached by an external stair and had many uses. It was a storeroom, a place for peace and meditation, and a guest-room for visitors. *'Make preparations'*: The Passover Feast dinner had to be prepared following the tradition.

**Mk 14:16. Mt 26:19. Lk 22:13.** *'As Jesus... directed them'*: Jesus had made previous arrangements with the owner of the house in order to make sure that this Passover meal would not be interrupted. And, since Jesus did not identify ahead of time the house where he would observe Passover, Judas was unable to inform the Jewish authorities, who might have interrupted this important occasion. *'Prepared the Passover'*: The Jews had to prepare it in a precise way. First, on Thursday morning, the ceremonial search for leaven and the preparation of the unleavened bread. Before the Passover every particle of leaven had to be found and taken from the house. This was in remembrance of the unleavened bread eaten at the first Passover in Egypt. And that Passover, the Passover of escape from Egypt, had been eaten in haste, with everybody ready for the road. Next, on Thursday afternoon, came the sacrifice of the Passover Lamb. All the people came to the temple where each worshipper had to slain his own lamb, so making his sacrifice. Then the lamb was carried home to be roasted. The things necessary for the Passover dinner were the lamb, the unleavened bread, a bowl of salty water, some bitter herbs, and the cups of wine, to be drunk at different stages of the meal.

**Jn 13:1.** *'Jesus knew...'*: Jesus knew that his hour of humiliation was near, but he knew that his hour of glory was also near. And, in spite of the knowledge of the power and the glory that were to be his, at the moment when he might have had supreme pride, he had supreme humility; he washed his disciples' feet (Jn 13:4-17).

**Mk 14:17. Mt 26:20. Lk 22:14.** *'When evening came'*: Thursday evening. *'Reclined at the table'*: There was only one change in the old ritual which had been observed so many centuries before in Egypt. There the Passover had been eaten standing. But that was a sign of haste, a sign that they were slaves escaping from slavery. In the time of Jesus the regulation was that the meal should be eaten reclining, for that was the sign of a free man, with a home and a country of his own.

**Jn 13:2.** *'The devil had already...'*: A confirmation of Satan's control over Judas.

**Jn 13:3.** *'Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power'*: As he knew of his imminent suffering, so Jesus knew that Yahweh had already decided to give him full authority on the human race and that he was going to be in Heaven, second only to his Father. Here, John again emphasizes the fulfillment of Yahweh's plans and Jesus' control of the situation.

**Jn 13:4.** *'Got up from the meal'*: Jesus' action was during the meal, not upon arrival, done and timed deliberately to emphasize a particular point. It was a lesson in humility, to

set forth the principle of selfless service that was so soon to be exemplified in the Cross. **Jn 13:5.** *'Began to wash his disciples' feet'*: To wash the feet of the guests at a feast was a menial task, normally performed by a servant or a slave. Jesus' little company of friends had no servants and they had to share the duties which servants would carry out in wealthier circles. It may well be that on the night of this last meal together the disciples had got themselves into such a state of competitive pride (they were still looking for the most important positions in Jesus' Kingdom) that not one of them would accept this duty. And Jesus mended their omission in the most effective way; he himself did what none of them was prepared to do.

**Jn 13:6-8.** *'He came to Simon Peter. No, you shall never...'*: Characteristically, Peter objected, though apparently no one else did. *'You do not realize...'*: Jesus' reply looks beyond the incident to what it symbolizes; Peter needed a spiritual cleansing, he needed to understand the necessity of humble service.

**Jn 13:9.** *'My hands and my head as well'*: All of Peter's responses were immediate and wholehearted. At first he refused to allow Jesus to wash his feet. But, after Jesus' explanation, he affirmed that he was fully and totally available to whatever Jesus wanted from him.

**Jn 13:10-11.** *'Only to wash his feet'*: A man would bathe himself before going to a feast. When he arrived, he only needed to wash his feet to be entirely clean again. *'You are clean'*: Jesus knew perfectly well Peter and all the other disciples. He knew that they were quite ready for their future mission, that they only needed a final refinement to be perfect. *'Not everyone of you'*: Referred to Judas Iscariot.

**Jn 13:12-17.** *'Do you understand...'*: Here, in this picture of the Son of Yahweh kneeling at his disciples' feet, there is the lesson that in Christianity there is only one greatness, the greatness of service. *'Wash one another's feet'*: Christians should be willing to perform in humility the most menial services for one another.

**Jn 13:18-20.** *'Not referring to all of you'*: Jesus was leading up to his prediction of Judas' betrayal. *'He who shares my bread...'*: A quotation from Psalm 41:9. In the East to eat bread with anyone was a sign of friendship. For one who had eaten bread at someone's table to turn against the person, to whom by the very act he had pledged his loyalty, was a wicked action. *'Telling you... so that... you will believe'*: Jesus' concern was for the disciples, not for himself. *'Anyone I send... the One who sent me'*: The mission of Jesus' followers was and is linked to his. Some day these same disciples would take the message of Jesus out to the world. And when they did, they were the representatives of Yahweh Himself.

**Mk 14:18. Mt 26:21. Jn 13:21.** *'Troubled'*: Though Jesus knew of it long before it happened, he was grieved by the betrayal of a friend. The curious fact is that the other disciples seem to have had no suspicions. *'Going to betray me -one who is eating with me'*: In that culture, to eat with a person was tantamount of saying, "I am your friend and will not hurt you." This fact made Judas' deed all the more despicable.

**Mk 14:19. Mt 26:22. Lk 22:23. Jn 13:22.** *'At a loss to know'*: The disciples' astonishment shows that Judas had concealed his contacts with the High Priest. *'Surely not I'*: No one suspected Judas, and all seem to have thought that the betrayal would be something involuntary.

**Jn 13:23-25.** *'The disciple whom Jesus cherished'*: Traditionally thought to be John, the author of this Gospel. The expression does not, of course, mean that Jesus did not like the others, but that there was a special bond with this man. *'Reclining'*: To better understand what follows, it is necessary to know how the Jews reclined at the table, which

was a low solid block with couches around it, shaped like a U and with the place of the host in the center. They reclined on their left side, resting on the left elbow, thus leaving the right hand free to deal with the food. Reclining in such a way, a man's head was literally in the breast of the person reclining on his left. Jesus would be sitting in the place of the host, at the center of the single side of the low table. The disciple whom Jesus cherished must have been sitting on his right, for as he lent on his elbow at the table, his head was in Jesus' breast. The place of Judas is of special interest. It is quite clear that Jesus could speak to him privately without the others overhearing. To be so, there is only one place Judas could have been occupying. He must have been on Jesus' left, so that Jesus' head was in Judas' breast.

**Mk 14:20-21. Mt 26:23-24. Lk 22:22. Jn 13:26.** *'The hand of him...'*: That night Jesus offered to Judas a last chance, telling him the consequences of what he was doing. And, as in Jesus there was no compulsion, it was Judas' full responsibility that he went ahead with what he did. *'Dipped bread... into the bowl with me'*: It was the custom to take a piece of bread and dip it into a bowl of sauce (made of stewed fruit) on the table. *'The one to whom I will give...'*: For the host to offer the guest this special morsel from the dish, was a sign of special friendship, a mark of special affection. Again, we have to note that even when Jesus did this, the disciples did not understand the meaning of his words. *'As it is written about him'*: Surely Jesus had the "Suffering servant" passage of Isaiah 53 in mind. *'Woe to that man'*: The actual meaning is not so much of accusation, but of affliction, of bitter grief. *'It would be better for him...'*: Because Judas' name will be despised for ever all around the world, and because of the very sad action -hanging himself- that he will commit.

**Mt 26:25. Jn 13:27.** *'As soon as Judas took the bread'*: Evidently the critical moment, the moment when the affection of Jesus had to admit defeat. If the giving of the bread to Judas was a mark of honor, it had also been a final appeal -which Judas did not accept. *'Do quickly'*: Jesus' words once more indicate his control. He would die as he directed, not as his opponents determined. So he told Judas to act quickly. There was no point in further delay. If it was to be done, better quickly.

**Jn 13:28-30.** *'No one... understood'*: Judas must have acted with complete secrecy, for, if the rest of the disciples had known of it, he would never have escaped with his life. The disciples did not understand, probably they thought that Judas was being dispatched to make some arrangement, as to give the usual presents to the poor, that they too might be able to celebrate the Passover.

**Lk 22:15-16.** *'I have... desired'*: Jesus knew that he was going out to Gethsemane, to the trial before the Sanhedrin, to the Cross; and yet he spoke in terms of Kingdom. To Jesus the Cross was never a defeat; it was the way to glory. *'I will not eat again until...'*: Jesus was on his way to Calvary, but he was also on his way to a throne in the Kingdom of Yahweh.

**Mk 14:22. Mt 26:26. Lk 22:19.** *'Jesus took bread...'*: Part of the traditional Jewish ceremony was the breaking of the bread. Here Jesus linked his own action to the ancient feast of the Jewish people so that it would be better imprinted on the minds of his men. He said, "Look! Just as this bread is broken for you to eat, so my body is broken for you, for your spiritual salvation!" *'Gave thanks'*: The word "Eucharist" is derived from the Greek term used here. *'This is my body'*: The bread represented his body, given for them; for all men. *'In remembrance of me'*: Just as the Passover was a constant reminder and proclamation of Yahweh's redemption of Israel from bondage in Egypt, so the Christians will break and eat the bread remembering and proclaiming the deliverance of believers from the bondage of sin.

**Mk 14:23-25. Mt 26:27-29. Lk 22:17-18;20.** *'Took the cup. New covenant in my blood':* The wine of the cup represents the blood of Jesus, which, in turn, represents his poured-out life. The New Covenant was promised through the prophet Jeremiah (31:31-34). *'New covenant':* The foundation of the Jewish religion was that Yahweh had entered into a covenant with Israel. This old covenant was a relationship entirely dependent on the Law and on the obedience to the Law. And Jesus introduced a new covenant, a new kind of relationship between Yahweh and man, which depends, once for ever and for all, on the blood that Jesus shed. That is to say, it depends solely on affection. Yahweh's commitments to His people, to all men, in the new covenant are possible only through Jesus Christ' anointing death. *'I tell you the truth...':* Again, we have to note that, as Jesus was sure of the incoming Cross, so he was sure of his going to the Kingdom of Yahweh.

***Jesus predicts Peter's denial***

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[Mark 14:27-31 Matthew 26:31-35 Luke 22:31-38 John 13:31-38]

**(Jn13:31)**When he [Judas Iscariot] was gone, Jesus said, **"Now is the Son of Man glorified and Yahweh is glorified in him. (32)If Yahweh is glorified in him, Yahweh will glorify the Son in Himself, and will glorify him at once.**

**(33)My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come.**

**(34)A new command I give you: Be fond of one another. As I had been fond of you, so you must be fond of one another. (35)By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you are fond of one another."**

**(36)Simon Peter asked him, "Lord, where are you going?"**

Jesus replied, **"Where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later."**

**(37)Peter asked, "Lord, why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you."**

**(38a)Then Jesus answered, "Will you really lay down your life for me? (Lk22:31) Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. (32)But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers."**

**(Mk14:27)(Mt26:31)Then Jesus told them, "This very night you will all fall away on account of me, for it is written:**

**'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.'**

**(Mk14:28)(Mt26:32)But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee."**

**(Mk14:29)(Mt26:33)(Lk22:33)But Peter replied and declared, "Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will. Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death."**

**(Mk14:30)(Mt26:34)(Lk22:34)(Jn13:38b)"I tell you the truth, Peter," Jesus answered, " today -yes, this very night- before the rooster crows twice you yourself will deny three times that you know me!"**

**(Mk14:31)(Mt26:35)But Peter insisted emphatically and declared, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you." And all the other disciples said the same.**

**(Lk22:35)Then Jesus asked them, "When I sent you without purse, bag or sandals, did you lack anything?"**

"Nothing," they answered.

**(36)He said to them, "But now if you have a purse, take it, and also a bag; and if you don't have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one. (37)It is written: 'And he was numbered with the transgressors;' and I tell you that this must be fulfilled in me. Yes, what is written about me is reaching its fulfillment."**

(38) *The disciples said, "See, Lord, here are two swords."*  
*"That is enough," he replied.*

**Jn 13:31-32.** *'Glorified'*: Here the idea of glory refers to Jesus' sacrificial death on the Cross and to the salvation of all men that would result with his resurrection. *'Yahweh is glorified in him'*: In the Christian concept, the glory of the Father is closely bound to that of the Son; the glory of Jesus was the consequence of his sacrifice on the Cross, and it was Jesus' obedience which brought glory to Yahweh. It follows that the law of sacrifice is not a law of Earth only; it is a law of Heaven and Earth. *'Yahweh will glorify the Son'*: At the moment the Cross was the glory of Jesus, but more glory would come from what Yahweh would do for His Son, first with the Resurrection and the Ascension and, at the end of time, with the full and final triumph of Jesus Christ at his second coming.

**Jn 13:33.** *'A little longer'*: The few hours left from now to his death on the cross, and the "40 days" from Resurrection to Ascension. *'Just as I told to the Jews'*: Told in 'Is Jesus the Christ?' (Jn 7:14,25-44).

**Jn 13:34-35.** *'A new command'*: In a sense it was an old one (Leviticus 19:18), but for Jesus' disciples it was new, because it was the mark of their brotherhood, characterized by Jesus Christ's great affection for them and for all men. *'As I had been fond of you'*: The Christian standard is Jesus Christ's affection for his disciples.

**Jn 13:36.** *'Where are you going?'*: Peter seems to have ignored Jesus' words about fondness and was only concerned about his Master's departure. *'Jesus replied'*: In Jesus' reply "you" is singular and thus personal to Peter, whereas in Jn 13:33 the word is plural and refers to all disciples.

**Jn 13:37-38.** *'I will lay down my life'*: Peter was characteristically sure of himself, when in fact he would not at this time lay down his life for Jesus. Exactly the opposite would be true. *'Will you really...?'*: Jesus knew, not only what Peter was, but also what he would become. He knew that at the moment Peter could not follow him; but he also knew that the day would come when Peter himself would take the same road to martyrdom.

**Lk 22:31.** *'Sift you'*: Satan wanted to test the disciples, hoping to bring them to spiritual ruin. Satan is subtle. He attacks in the moment when a man is too sure of himself, for exactly then he will be quite unprepared.

**Lk 22:32.** *'When you have turned, strengthen your brothers'*: It is as if Jesus said to Peter, "You will deny me; and you will weep bitter tears; but the result will be that you will be better able to help your brothers when they will go through the same experience." Even in spite of his denial in that critical moment, Peter was fundamentally loyal. No matter what he did, no matter how terrible his failure, he was nonetheless passionately devoted to Jesus.

**Mk 14:27. Mt 26:31.** *'Jesus told them...'*: Here we can see that Jesus was really prepared for everything. Opposition, misunderstanding, enmity of the religious people, betrayal by one of his own inner circle, pain and agony on the cross, even the failure of his friends, who will leave him alone. *'I will strike...'*: A quotation from Zechariah 13:7. *'Fall away'*: In Greek "skandalizein," meaning "to entrap by some deceit."

**Mk 14:28-29. Mt 26:32-33. Lk 22:33.** *'After I have risen'*: In this passage we see the realism and the confidence of Jesus. He knew what lay ahead. He foresaw what would inevitably happen and yet he went on. We see also his confidence. When he said that he would go and meet them in Galilee, Jesus saw beyond the Cross. He was absolutely certain of the glory as he was of the suffering. He knew that his men were going to flee for

their lives and abandon him in the moment of his deepest need; but he did not condemn them, not even reproached them, he only told them that when that terrible time is past, he will meet them again. *'Peter declared...'*: When Jesus foretold his tragic failure of loyalty, Peter could not believe that it would happen.

**Mk 14:30. Mt 26:34. Lk 22:34. Jn 13:38.** *'I tell you... Peter'*: Peter's fault is clear; overconfidence in himself. He knew that he was fond of Jesus and thought that all by himself he could face any situation which could arise. *'Before the rooster crows'*: Before dawn.

**Mk 14:31. Mt 26:35.** *'Peter insisted'*: Peter was too sure. He had forgotten the traps that life can prepare for the best men. Forgotten the human weakness and the strength of the devil's temptation. But there is one thing to be remembered in Peter; his heart was right. Peter was fond of Jesus, and even if sometimes he failed, he always rose again. And not only Peter will fall away, but all the eleven.

**Lk 22:35-37.** *'When I sent you...'*: Actually, Jesus was saying, "All the time so far you have had me with you, and you did not need 'a purse, bag or sandals.' But now, in a very short time you are going to be left to your own resources and the real danger will not be that you do not possess anything, but that you have to fight for your very existence." *'A sword... by one'*: These verses talking of swords constitute a strange passage. But what they mean is clear. This was not an incitement to armed forces. It was simply a vivid eastern way of telling the disciples that their very lives were at risk. *'Numbered with the transgressors'*: A quotation from Isaiah 53:12. Jesus was soon to be arrested as a criminal, in fulfillment of prophetic Scripture, and his disciples would also be in danger for being his followers.

**Lk 22:38.** *'Here are two swords. That is enough'*: Sensing that the disciples had taken him too literally, Jesus ironically closed the discussion with a short "That's plenty!" And, not long after this, Peter was rebuked for using one of those swords (Jesus arrested. Mk 14:43-52; Mt 26:47-56; Lk 22:47-53; Jn 18:2-11).

***Jesus comforts his disciples*** [John 14:1-4]

***(Jn14:1)"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in Yahweh; trust also in me. (2) In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. (3)And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. (4)You know the way to the place where I am going."***

**Jn 14:1.** *'Do not... be troubled'*: The Apostles had just received disturbing news, that in a very short time their life was going to fall on pieces. *'Trust in Yahweh'*: At such a time there was only one thing to do; to stubbornly trust in Yahweh. *'Trust also in me'*: For Jesus himself is the proof of what Yahweh is willing to do for us.

**Jn 14:2.** *'Many rooms'*: By "My Father's house" he meant "Heaven." The Greek word used here for "room" is "monai," which has a number of meanings. Here, it means that in Heaven there are different grades of blessedness which would be given to men according to their goodness and their fidelity on Earth; that there are many stages along the way, as even in Heaven there is progress, development and advance; that in Heaven there is room for all, so Heaven will never become over-crowded. *'If it were not so...'*: In this case Jesus would not have told that he was going to prepare a place for them.

**Jn 14:3.** *'I go and prepare...'*: Jesus opens up the way so that all men may follow in his steps and go to Heaven and to Yahweh. *'I will come back'*: This tells of the ultimate triumph of Jesus. When he will come again, at the end of time, he will receive and wel-

come all his friends. *'That you also may be where I am'*: For the Christians, Heaven is where Jesus is. Furthermore, there is no need to speculate on what Heaven will be like. It is enough to know that, there, all men will be for ever with Jesus.

**Jn 14:4.** *'You know the way'*: Again and again Jesus had told his disciples where he was going, but they never understood. Even less they understood the way by which Jesus was going; for that way was the Cross, a way they understood only after Jesus' resurrection.

***Jesus the way to the Father*** [John 14:5-14]

**(Jn14:5)** *Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?"*

**(6)** *Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. (7)If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know Him and have seen Him."*

**(8)** *Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us."*

**(9)** *Jesus answered, "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? (10)Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing His work. (11)Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves. (12)I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. (13)And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. (14)You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it."*

**Jn 14:5.** *Thomas'*: At this moment the disciples were bewildered men. There was one among them who could never say that he had understood what he did not understand, and that was Thomas. He could not be satisfied with any vague and pious expressions. He had to be sure. So he expressed his doubts and his failure to understand.

**Jn 14:6.** *'I am the way... the truth... the life'*: In this saying Jesus took three basic concepts of the Jewish religion, and claimed that in him all three had found their full realization. He is "The way to Yahweh," the way in which men must walk, with Jesus leading them, to reach Yahweh. He is "The truth of Yahweh," the example of the realization of moral perfection. He is "The life," the eternal life in communion with Yahweh that he had made available to all men. *'No one comes to the Father...'*: Jesus alone is the way to Yahweh. Between men and Yahweh there is no other intermediary or intercessor -no priest or pastor, no angel, no recognized "saint", not even Jesus' mother.

**Jn 14:7-9.** *'If you... knew me, you would know...'*: Again Jesus stresses the intimate connection between him and the Father. *'You do know Him'*: Jesus brought a full revelation of the Father, so that the Apostles had a real knowledge of Yahweh. *'Seen me... seen the Father'*: To see Jesus (how he acts, what he thinks) is to see what Yahweh is like.

**Jn 14:10.** *'I am in the Father, and...'*: This means that there is a deep spiritual communion between and uniting the Son and the Father. *'Not just my own'*: Jesus' teaching was not of human origin, and there was an inseparable connection between his words and his work. *'It is the Father, living in me, who is doing His work'*: The things he said and did came straight from Yahweh; not from Jesus, but throughout him. Jesus is the channel by which Yahweh comes to men.



**Jn 14:11.** *'Believe... or at least believe on the evidence'*: Jesus said to Philip, "Even if you cannot believe in me because of what I say, surely you will be convinced by what I have done." The way to Christian belief is not to argue about Jesus but to listen to him and look to him.

**Jn 14:12.** *'Anyone who has faith...'*: First, Jesus said that one day his disciples would do what he did, and even more. And, in effect, at the beginning of the Church, all of them possessed healing gifts. *'Greater things'*: The disciples' capability of doing miracles depended on Jesus' going to the Father, because they were and are works done in the strength of the communion with the Spirit of Yahweh, whom Jesus' action would make available to all.

**Jn 14:13-14.** *'Ask in my name'*: Not a prayer that simply mentions Jesus' name but a prayer in accordance with his teaching, a prayer aimed at carrying forward the work Jesus did, a prayer that he himself will answer.

***Jesus promises the Spirit of Yahweh [John 14:15-31a]***

***(Jn14:15)"If you are fond of me, you will obey what I command. (16)And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another help to stay with you forever -(17)the help of the Spirit of Truth. The world cannot accept Him, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. But you know Him, for He lives with you and will be in you. (18)I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. (19)Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. (20)On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. (21)Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who is fond of me. He who is fond of me will be cherished by my Father, and I too will cherish him and show myself to him."***

***(22)Then Judas (not Judas Iscariot) said, "But, Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?"***

***(23)Jesus replied, "If anyone is fond of me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will cherish him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. (24)He who is not fond of me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.***

***(25)All this I have spoken while still with you. (26)But the help of the Spirit of Yahweh, which the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. (27)Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.***

***(28)You heard me say, 'I am going away and I am coming back to you.' If you were fond of me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. (29)I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe. (30)I will not speak with you much longer, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold on me, (31a)but the world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what my Father has commanded me."***

**Jn 14:15.** *'If you are fond of me, you will obey...'*: To John fondness, like faith, cannot be separated from obedience. To him there is only one test to fondness, and that is obedience. It was by his obedience that Jesus showed his fondness for Yahweh; and it is by their obedience that men must show their fondness for Jesus. Real affection for Jesus is not a matter of mere words, it is not an easy thing; it is realized and shown only in true obedience.

**Jn 14:16-17.** *'I will ask the Father':* Jesus does not leave his followers to struggle with their Christian life alone. He is giving his help, which is the help of Yahweh. *'He will give you':* This is the first of a series of important passages about the possibility of men's spiritual communion with Yahweh. *'Another help':* Besides Jesus. The Greek term for "Help" is "Parakletos," a legal term, which here has a broader meaning than "Counselor for the defense." In effect, it has the meaning of someone called in to help in time of trouble or need, someone who will make a dispirited creature a brave one, who will take away the human inadequacies and will enable us to cope with life. *'Spirit of Truth':* This help comes from nobody else but the Spirit of Yahweh. In effect, both in the Old and the New Testament, the Spirit of Yahweh is also referred to as "the Spirit of Truth" and "the Word of Yahweh" because in His essence (Spirit) and in His action (Word) Yahweh is characterized by Truth. *'The world':* Here, the "world" is that section of humanity which lives as if there was no Yahweh. And so they cannot see what they are not fitted to see. They, the world, cannot recognize the existence of this kind of communion. *'Lives with you and will be in you':* The Spirit of Yahweh, by being in communion with Jesus' disciples, would be "with" them and "in" them. In other terms, Jesus said, "I am setting you a hard task, and I am sending you out on a very difficult assignment. But, with the help of the Spirit of Yahweh -of being in spiritual communion with Yahweh- you will be able to do what you are requested to.

**Jn 14:18.** *'I will not leave you as orphans':* The Greek word used here is "orphanos," which not only means sons without father, but also students or disciples left without a highly liked master. *'I will come to you':* Jesus said that this was not their case, and that he will come back to them after his Resurrection.

**Jn 14:19.** *'The world will not see me... but you...':* The Cross will separate the world (who will not see Jesus thereafter) from the disciples (who will). In effect, it was to those who were fond of him that Jesus appeared when he rose from the dead, not to the scribes, not the Pharisees, not the hostile Jews. *'Because I live, you also will live':* The life of the Christians always depends on the life of Jesus Christ. They will see him because he is alive and, because he is alive, they are alive, that is, spiritually alive.

**Jn 14:20.** *'On that day you will realize...':* The day will come when their eyes will be opened, their minds will understand, and they will really see him. The Resurrection would radically change his disciples' thinking. Then they will understand the spiritual communion uniting Yahweh, Jesus, and all men.

**Jn 14:21.** *'Obeys... fond of':* Again, the concept that affection for Jesus and keeping of his commands cannot be separated. *'Cherished by my Father... I too will cherish him':* The fondness of the Father cannot be separated from that of the Son. Again, Jesus stresses the necessity of obedience, which is the only proof of affection. This obedient, trusting affection leads to two things. First, to ultimate safety; those who believe in Jesus Christ will enjoy eternal life with him. Second, to a much fuller revelation; by living properly we can be in communion with Jesus and with Yahweh and, the longer the communion, the deeper the knowledge of Yahweh we acquire.

**Jn 14:22.** *'Then Judas...':* Judas son of James, usually called Thaddeus. He (and, for that matter, all the others) still looked for Jesus to fulfill the popular Jewish Messianic expectations of power and conquest. It was not easy, therefore, to understand the real meaning of Jesus showing himself to them but not to the world.

**Jn 14:23-24.** *'Jesus replied':* A repetition and a summary of previous concepts. For a man, to be fond of Jesus is to obey him. As a result, Yahweh will be fond of this man and will be in spiritual communion with him. On the contrary, the demonstration of no

fondness is no obedience. *'Words... not my own'*: These declarations of Jesus are true because he only refers the words Yahweh gives him.

**Jn 14:25-26.** *'Spoken while still with you. But the help of...'*: The communion with the Spirit of Yahweh will give to the believers much more than Jesus was able to during his physical, terrestrial life. *'Remind you of everything I have said'*: To remember Jesus' teachings was and is crucial for the life of the Christian Church on Earth.

**Jn 14:27.** *'Peace... my peace'*: A common Hebrew greeting, which Jesus uses here in an unusual way, saying that peace is a gift. To remember that the Hebrew word for "peace," which is "shalom," never means only the absence of trouble. It means everything which makes for men's highest good. The term speaks, in effect, of the salvation that Jesus Christ's redemptive work will achieve for his disciples; their physical well-being and inner rest of spirit, in fellowship and in communion with Yahweh. All true peace is Jesus' gift, which the repetition emphasizes. *'I do not give... as the world gives'*: In its greetings of peace the world can only express a longing or a wish for the future. But Jesus' spiritual peace is real and present.

**Jn 14:28.** *'I am going to the Father'*: If the disciples were really fond of him, they would be glad that it was so as he was being released from the limitations of this world; going to receive his full glory. *'The Father is greater than I'*: Again confirming the subordinate role Jesus always accepted.

**Jn 14:29.** *'Told you now before it happens'*: What was to happen (to receive the highest glory by the lowest death) was so unthinkable of that Jesus had to anticipate it to the disciples, to allow them to understand it when it would happen.

**Jn 14:30.** *'Has no hold on me'*: Jesus had already shown, at the time of his temptations (The temptations of Jesus. Mk 1:12-13; Mt 4:1-11; Lk 4:1-13), to have the capability of resisting Satan.

**Jn 14:31a.** *'I do exactly what my Father has commanded me'*: With these words Jesus was going to fulfill his mission. Jesus had stressed the importance of his followers being obedient, and he set the example. At the moment men saw in the Cross only his humiliation and his shame; but the time will come when they would understand and see in it his obedience to Yahweh and his affection to men.

### *The vine and the branches* [John 15:1-17]

*(Jn15:1)"I am the true vine and my Father is the gardener. (2)He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit He prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. (3)You are already clean because of the Word I have spoken to you. (4)Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. (5)I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. (6)If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. (7)If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. (8)This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.*

*(9)As the Father has been fond of me, so I have been fond of you. Now remain in my affection. (10)If you obey my commands, you will remain in my affection, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in His love. (11)I have told you this so my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. (12)My command is this: Be fond of each other as I have been fond of you. (13)No one can have greater*

*affection than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. (14) You are my friends if you do what I command. (15) I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. (16) You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit -fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. (17) This is my command: Be fond of each other."*

**Jn 15:1.** *'The true vine'*: In the Old Testament, Israel is often pictured as the vine and the vineyard of Yahweh. In the New Testament, Jesus is "the true vine" and men are the branches of this vine. Here Jesus, as so often, has used pictures and ideas which were part of the religious heritage of the Jewish nation.

**Jn 15:2.** *'Cuts off'*: A reference to judgment. *'Prunes'*: In the New Testament the figure of good fruit represents the product of a godly life. The vine, which was grown all over Palestine, is a plant that needs a great deal of attentions if the best fruit is to be got out of it. Careful preparation of the soil is essential. Then it grows luxuriant and drastic pruning is necessary each year to develop and conserve its life and energy and to improve its yield. When grapes mature, the branches which do not bear fruit are cut off, so that they will not drain away part of the plant's strength. And the branches which bear fruit are pruned because the vine cannot produce the crop of which it is capable without drastic pruning.

**Jn 15:3.** *'Already clean'*: Jesus' disciples are already fruitful for all the work (teaching, that is, pruning) Jesus has done on them. *'The Word'*: The message of Jesus.

**Jn 15:4-5.** *'Remain in me and I will remain in you'*: As a branch in itself, not joined to the vine, is fruitless, so the believers have no fruitfulness apart from their union and fellowship with Jesus. *'Remains in me and I in him'*: A living, spiritual union with Christ is absolutely necessary; without it there is nothing. Here Jesus said, "You think that because you belong to the nation of Israel you are the branches of the vine of Yahweh. But the nation is a degenerate vine, as the prophets (Isaiah and Jeremiah) said. The fact that you are Jew will not save you. The only thing that can save you is to have an intimate fellowship (spiritual communion) with me, for I am the true vine of Yahweh and you must be the good branches." Not Jewish blood but faith in Jesus is the way to Yahweh's salvation. No external qualification can set a man right with Yahweh; only the friendship of Jesus Christ can do that.

**Jn 15:6.** *'Thrown away... into the fire and burned'*: That is, judged and condemned. These branches represent the unbelievers. The cut off branches are good for nothing and the only way to get rid of them is by burning them in a bonfire.

**Jn 15:7.** *'If... my words remain in you, ask...'*: Another recommendation to pray correctly, asking for what is right and in the right way, that is, subject to the final will of Yahweh. It is impossible to pray correctly apart from knowing and believing the teaching of Jesus Christ.

**Jn 15:8.** *'To my Father's glory'*: The Father is glorified in the work of the Son, and He is also glorified in the fruit-bearing of the disciples. By being in communion with Jesus, a good Christian not only enriches his life, being a fruitful branch, but he also brings glory to Yahweh.

**Jn 15:9.** *'Affection'*: Jesus had explained what his affection is, and he wishes that all men will share of it.

**Jn 15:10.** *'Obey... as I have obeyed'*: Again the importance of obedience, and again the example of Jesus Christ. *'My affection... His love'*: Obedience and affection go together.

**Jn 15:11.** *'Joy'*: Christians' joy is one of the characteristic notes of the Upper Room discourse. The Christians are called for joy, and the Christian way is never sad, for Jesus desires his disciples' joy to be complete. It is true that the Christians are sinners, but redeemed sinners, and of this consists their joy.

**Jn 15:12.** *'Be fond of... as I have been fond of you'*: The highest possible target to achieve is to feel, act and be fond like Jesus.

**Jn 15:13.** *'Greater affection...'*: Jesus' affection was not only in words but also in his sacrificial death. And the greater demonstration of affection is exactly what he did: to lay down his own life for the salvation of his friends -of all Christians, that is, at the end, of all men.

**Jn 15:14-15.** *'You are my friends... no longer... servants'*: In the Old Testament, to be slaves of Yahweh was not a title of shame; on the contrary, it was a title of the highest honor. And now Jesus says that he has something even greater for his followers; they are no longer slaves, they are his friends, friends who have the closest and the most intimate connection with him. A servant is simply an agent, doing what his master commands and often not understanding his master's purposes. But Jesus takes his friends into his total confidence. *'Everything... I have made known to you'*: Jesus had let his disciples know as much as they were able to absorb of the Father's plan. Of course, at the time of Jesus' preaching, the revelation was not yet complete; only their communion with the Spirit of Yahweh (fully possible only after Pentecost) would allow them to understand more and deeper.

**Jn 15:16.** *'I chose you... bear fruit... whatever you ask'*: Disciples normally chose the rabbi to whom they wanted to be attached, but it was not so with Jesus' disciples. He chose them, and for a specific purpose -their capacity of bearing plenty of fruit. *'Then the Father'*: For how to pray, see comment to Jn 15:7.

**Jn 15:17.** *'Be fond of each other'*: This is the shortest form of Jesus' moral teaching; it summarizes what should always be the overall behavior of any man.

***The world hates the disciples*** [John 15:18-27;16:1-4]

**(Jn15:18)** *"If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. (19)If you belonged to the world, it would like you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. (20) Remember the words I spoke to you: 'No servant is greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. (21)They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the One who sent me. (22)If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin. Now, however, they have no excuse for their sin. (23)He who hates me hates my Father as well. (24)If I had not done among them what no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin. But now they have seen these miracles, and yet they have hated both me and my Father. (25)But this is to fulfill what is written in their Law: 'They hated me without reason.'*

**(26)When the help of the Spirit of Truth comes, which I will send to you from the Father, and which goes out from the Father, He will testify about me. (27)And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.**

**(16:1)All this I have told you so that you will not go astray. (2)They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to Yahweh. (3)They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me. (4)I have told you this, so that when the time comes you will remember that I warned you. I did not tell you this at first because I was with you."**

**Jn 15:18.** *'The world hates you... it hated me first'*: At the time when John wrote his Gospel, the Church was living under the constant threat of Roman persecution. Christianity was illegal, and Christians were heavily persecuted. On the matter of persecution Jesus had been quite explicit. He had told his people beforehand what they might expect. *'The world'*: Here it refers to the human system that opposes Yahweh's purposes.

**Jn 15:19.** *'If you belonged. You do not belong'*: The believer's essence, his Christian life, comes from Yahweh (from the spiritual communion with Yahweh), and therefore it is not the same as for those who oppose Yahweh. The basic demand on the Christians is the demand that they should have the courage to be different. And to be different will be dangerous, but nobody can be a Christian unless he accepts that risk, for there must be a difference between the man of the world and the man of Jesus Christ.

**Jn 15:20.** *'Remember...'*: Jesus always pointed to the difficulties a Christian will have to face to live a proper, Christian life.

**Jn 15:21.** *'They will treat you this way'*: Because Christians do not belong to the world, persecution from the world is inevitable. The basic reason is the world's ignorance and rejection of Yahweh.

**Jn 15:22-24.** *'If... they would not be guilty. Now... they have no excuse'*: Here Jesus returns to the concept that knowledge and privilege bring with them responsibility. The more knowledge a man has and the more privileges he enjoys, the greater the responsibility laid upon him. Until Jesus came men never really had the opportunity to know Yahweh; to know which kind of life He wished them to live, so they could scarcely be blamed for being such as they were. By his coming, Jesus exposed sin and provided the remedy for it. He opened the way to forgiveness for past sins, and provided the power to overcome sin and do the right. So now, if a man disregards Jesus' work and refuses to use the remedy, he is fully responsible for his decision.

**Jn 15:25.** *'To fulfill what is written'*: A quotation from Psalms 35:19 and 69:4. In the end Yahweh's purposes are always accomplished, despite the belief of sinful men that they have successfully opposed them.

**Jn 15:26-27.** *'The help of the Spirit of Truth'*: When there is spiritual communion between Yahweh -the Spirit of Yahweh- and a man, this communion has many effects, one of which is to make him "testify" about Jesus, that is, to move him to respond to Jesus' requests. *'You also...'*: The disciples were Jesus' witnesses because they had been in communion with him from the beginning. For all other Christians their testimony, fortified and justified by their spiritual communion, is a matter of conviction. A convinced Christian will give a testimony by himself, by the way he speaks, acts and lives.

**Jn 16:1.** *'All this I told you'*: Jesus foresaw that there will be a number of people whose faith will not be strong enough to resist persecution. He did not want anyone to be able to say that he had not known what to expect when he became a Christian.

**Jn 16:2.** *'They will put you out of the synagogue. Who kills you will think he is offering a service to Yahweh'*: Jesus spoke of two ways in which his followers would be persecuted; that is, excommunicated and killed. Excommunicated; it would be hard for them to live ostracized, cut from social life. Killed; it is a matter of fact that too often the religious orthodox people have persecuted others -Christians and not- in the strong conviction that this was right, that they were working for Yahweh, and not against Him.

**Jn 16:3.** *'Not known the Father or me'*: What above happens because the world does not recognize Yahweh. Here, again the Father and the Son are strictly linked. Not to know Jesus Christ is to be ignorant of the Father.

**Jn 16:4.** *'I have told you this,...'*: Jesus offered, and still offers, not the way of ease, but the way of glory. He wants men who are prepared with open eyes to venture for his

name. *'I did not tell you...'*: The three years Jesus was physically with them were of preparation and he was personally protecting them against the world -against Satan. But now, close to be left on their own, they needed to know which kind of difficulties they had to expect.

**The work of the Spirit of Yahweh** [John 16:5-15]

*(Jn 16:5)"Now I am going to Him who sent me, yet none of you asks me, 'Where are you going?'* (6)*Because I have said these things, you are filled with grief. (7)But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the help of the Spirit of Yahweh will not come to you; but if I go, I will send It to you. (8) When It comes, It will expose the guilt of the world in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: (9)In regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; (10)in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; (11)and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.*

*(12)I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. (13)But when His Spirit of Truth comes, It will guide you into all truth. It will not speak on Its own; It will speak only what It hears, and It will tell you what is yet to come. (14)It will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. (15)All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit of Yahweh will take from what is mine and make it known to you."*

**Jn 16:5.** *'None of you asks me...'*: Peter had asked such a question (Jesus predicts Peter's denial. Mk 14:27-31; Mt 26:31-35; Lk 22:31-38; Jn 13:31-38), but quickly turned his attention to another subject. His concern had been for what would happen to himself and to the other disciples and not for where Jesus was going.

**Jn 16:6.** *'You are filled with grief'*: Because of his announced departure.

**Jn 16:7.** *'Unless I go away...'*: Jesus said to his disciples that the Spirit of Yahweh could not come -the spiritual communion with Yahweh would not be possible- until he went away, clearly saying that his saving work on the Cross was necessary before the arrival of the Spirit of Yahweh -before all men could be in spiritual communion with Yahweh.

**Jn 16:8.** *'It will expose...'*: The New Testament speaks of the work of the Spirit of Yahweh -of the effect of spiritual communion- in the believers, of their new moral strength, and of the fact that their spiritual communion with Yahweh allows them to understand the true reality of the world.

**Jn 16:9.** *'In regard to sin'*: Only when in communion with Yahweh, people can see themselves as sinners. When the Jews crucified Jesus, they did not believe they were sinning; they believed they were serving Yahweh. But only later some of them understood, when the work of Yahweh, of His Spirit, convinced and allowed them to.

**Jn 16:10.** *'In regard to righteousness'*: It is from Jesus Christ's righteousness that men will be convinced to believe in him. Jesus was tried, found guilty and crucified as a criminal. It is the work of the Spirit of Yahweh that men should put their trust for all eternity in a Jewish criminal who died crucified. Furthermore, only the Spirit of Yahweh can reveal to a man that his righteous status before Yahweh does not depend on his good works but on Jesus Christ's death on the Cross. *'Because I am going to the Father'*: The Ascension which, as part of Jesus Christ's exaltation, placed Yahweh's seal of approval on Jesus Christ's redemptive act.

**Jn 16:11.** *'In regard to judgment'*: Jesus was speaking of the defeat of Satan, which was

a form of judgment, not simply a victory. It is the work of the Spirit of Yahweh which convinces men that there will be a judgment, that evil stands condemned and defeated. Most important of all, it is the work of the Spirit of Yahweh which convinces men that, in spite of their sins and of the judgment to come, they will certainly be saved and forgiven as a result of Jesus Christ's Cross.

**Jn 16:12.** *'More than you can now bear'*: More than they can understand at the moment, not being yet in spiritual communion with Yahweh.

**Jn 16:13.** *'Spirit of Truth'*: To Jesus the Spirit of Yahweh is the Spirit of Truth, whose work is to make Yahweh's truth known to men. *'Only what It hears... what is yet to come'*: What Yahweh hears from -that is, in accordance with the requests of- His Son Jesus Christ. The spiritual communion with Yahweh will let men understand other parts of Yahweh's truth. And the task of revealing such truth was given to Jesus. Revelation is a progressive process. Jesus knew that there were many things he could not at the moment tell his disciples, because they were not yet able to understand them.

From a more general point of view, this fact has certain consequences. It explains certain parts of the Old Testament which normally we do not understand and justify. For example the killing of whole populations when the people of Yahweh entered the Promised Land. At the back of these passages there is the great truth that Israel could not risk the corrupting influence of any pagan religion. To avoid that risk, those who did not worship the true God had to be taken out of Israel. In other words, the Jews, at that stage, had grasped the fact that the purity of their religion had to be safeguarded; and they tried doing it by destroying the Pagans -method which, obviously, did not work. When Jesus came, men understood that the way to preserve the purity of religion is to convert the Pagans, not to destroy them. Here, we see two steps of revelation. And Yahweh's revelation to men is still going on, working in the single individuals as well as in the groups, collectivities, and populations.

**Jn 16:14.** *'He will bring glory to me'*: One of the effects of spiritual communion is to draw attention to and promote the glory of Jesus Christ.

**Jn 16:15.** *'This is why'*: Here we have a clear explanation of the effects of the spiritual communion between men and Jesus and Yahweh. Jesus is in complete spiritual communion with the Father, so what belongs to the Father belongs to the Son as well. In the same way, the spiritual communion with the believers allows them to receive and understand what belongs to Jesus, and so to Yahweh.

**The disciples' grief will turn to joy** [John 16:16-33]

**(Jn16:16)** *"In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me."*

**(17)** *Some of his disciples said to one another, "What does he mean by saying, 'In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me,' and 'Because I am going to the Father'?"* **(18)** *They kept asking, "What does he mean by 'a little while'? We don't understand what he is saying."*

**(19)** *Jesus saw that they wanted to ask him about this, so he said to them, "Are you asking one another what I meant when I said, 'In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me'?"* **(20)** *I tell you the truth, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy.* **(21)** *A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when her baby is born she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world.* **(22)** *So with you: Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again*



*and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy. (23)In that day you will no longer ask me anything. I tell you the truth, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. (24)Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.*

*(25)Though I have been speaking figuratively, a time is coming when I will no longer use this kind of language but will tell you plainly about my Father. (26)In that day you will ask in my name. I am not saying that I will ask the Father in your behalf. (27)No, the Father Himself is fond of you because you had been fond of me and have believed that I came from Yahweh. (28)I came from the Father and entered the world; now I am leaving the world and going back to the Father."*

*(29)Then Jesus' disciples said, "Now you are speaking clearly and without figures of speech. (30)Now we can see that you know all things and that you do not even need to have anyone ask you questions. This make us believe that you came from Yahweh."*

*(31)"You believe at last!" Jesus answered. (32)"But a time is coming, and has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home. You will leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me.*

*(33)I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."*

**Jn 16:16-19.** *'A little while... After a little while'*: The first phrase refers to the time left before his crucifixion. The second refers to Jesus' apparitions after his resurrection. *'They kept asking'*: Clearly, at the moment, the disciples did not have yet understood what Jesus told them.

**Jn 16:20.** *'Weep'*: The Greek verb used here is for loud wailing, which carries the idea of deep sorrow and its outward expression. *'Your grief will turn to joy'*: They will grieve for Jesus' death, but will later rejoice for his Resurrection.

**Jn 16:21.** *'A woman giving birth'*: Giving birth usually causes first pain and then joy.

**Jn 16:22.** *'I will see you again'*: Another reference to Jesus' appearances after his Resurrection. *'No one will take away your joy'*: The Resurrection will change things permanently, bringing a joy that cannot be removed by the world's assaults.

**Jn 16:23.** *'You will no longer ask me anything'*: Their joy will be so great that they will not ask Jesus for any further information. *'My Father will give you...'*: Jesus then moved on to the subject of prayer. After his death and resurrection, by praying in Jesus' name they will be able to reach directly Yahweh. This is another recommendation to pray correctly, asking for what is right and in the right way, that is, subject to the final will of Yahweh. It is impossible to pray correctly apart from knowing and believing the teaching of Jesus Christ.

**Jn 16:24.** *'Until now'*: Previously they have asked the Father or Jesus, but they had never asked the Father in Jesus' name. Now they (and, consequently, all believers) would have a new relationship with Yahweh, and would become so intimate with Yahweh that they may take everything to Him. Anyway, every request must always end by saying: "Your will be done." This new relationship is made possible by Jesus; it exists in his name. *'Your joy will be complete'*: There are two aspects of Christian joy; it will never be taken away, and it will be independent of the chances and changes of the world. The joy the world gives is at the mercy of the world. The joy which Jesus gives is independent of anything the world can do.

**Jn 16:25.** *'Speaking figuratively'*: The Greek word used here is "paroimia," the word used for Jesus' parables, which basically means a saying that is hard to understand, who-

se meaning is not clear to the casual listener, which demands effort before it becomes clear. Jesus is saying, "So far I have been giving you hints and indications; I have been giving you the truth with a veil on it; I have been saying things which you had to think your way through; but now I am going to speak the truth in all its clarity." *'A time is coming'*: After the Resurrection.

**Jn 16:26.** *'I am not saying that I will ask'*: After his death and resurrection, Jesus will not need to make any further petition in our behalf.

**Jn 16:27.** *'The Father Himself is fond of you'*: Jesus is explaining why the disciples can come directly to the Father in prayer. It is because the disciples had been fond of and trusted in Jesus, and Yahweh will hear with affection their requests in Jesus' name.

**Jn 16:28.** *'I came... now I am... going back'*: His Father is Yahweh, and now he has to go to Him.

**Jn 16:29-31.** *'Now... Believe that you came from Yahweh'*: Two recurring themes of this Gospel: believing in Jesus and in Jesus' coming from Yahweh. To note that, beginning in Jn 16:19 Jesus answers to his disciples' questions without asking them which they were. In other words he could read in their hearts like an open book. This is why they believed in him.

**Jn 16:32.** *'You will be scattered'*: The disciples had faith, but not enough to stand firm in face of disaster. Jesus knew they would fall; however, his Church is not built on people's strength but on Yahweh's ability to use people even after they have failed.

**Jn 16:33.** *'I have told you...'*: If Jesus had not foretold them their weakness, when later they realized how they had failed him, they might have been driven to despair. *'In me... peace'*: Notice the contrast: between "in me" and "in this world" and between "peace" and "trouble." *'I have overcome'*: Again, just before his death Jesus affirms his final victory.

### ***Jesus prays for himself*** [John 17:1-5]

*(Jn17:1)After Jesus said this, he looked toward Heaven and prayed:*

***"Father, the time has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son may glorify You. (2) For You granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those You have given him. (3)Now this is eternal life: that they may know You, the Only True God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent. (4)I have brought You glory on Earth by completing the work You gave me to do. (5)And now, Father, glorify me in Your presence with the glory I had with You before the world began."***

**Jn 17:1.** *'He looked toward Heaven'*: A customary attitude in prayer. *'Glorify... may glorify'*: The glory of the Father and that of the Son are closely connected, and the death by which Jesus would glorify Yahweh would lead to eternal life for all believers. For Jesus, terrestrial life had a climax, the Cross, which was his glory because it was the completion of his work. In effect, for him to have stopped short of the Cross would have been to leave his task uncompleted. Furthermore, the Cross glorified Yahweh too, because the only way to glorify Yahweh is to obey Him. And Jesus brought glory and honor to Yahweh by his perfect obedience.

**Jn 17:2.** *'You granted'*: This point stresses the concept that all tasks and all responsibilities come from Yahweh. *'Those You have given him'*: Again Yahweh's initiative is stressed, in this case referred to men's salvation.

**Jn 17:3.** *'Eternal life'*: The Greek word used here for "eternal" is "aionis," which has a meaning, not only of duration, but also of quality. The eternal life Jesus makes available

to men is a life having the same characteristic of duration and quality as the life of Yahweh. *'Know You'*: Men could never have known Yahweh unless Jesus had come to tell of Him. Most important, to know Yahweh means to have an intimate personal relationship, to be in spiritual communion with Him. And without Jesus, such intimacy with Yahweh would have been unthinkable and impossible. It is Jesus who taught that Yahweh is not remote and unapproachable, but the Father whose real nature is benevolence.

**Jn 17:4.** *'I have brought You glory'*: Jesus' mission was not self-centered. *'The work You gave me'*: Here again Jesus emphasized the supreme place of the Father.

**Jn 17:5.** *'Glorify me...'*: The Cross was not the end; there was the Resurrection to follow, which was the vindication of Jesus, the proof that men can do their worst, and that Jesus could still triumph. The glory of the Resurrection obliterated the shame of the Cross. For Jesus the Cross was also the way to his Father, to the divine part of his double nature (he was fully human because of his mother Mary and fully divine because of his Father Yahweh). *'Glory I had with You before the world began'*: Jesus' saving action was part of Yahweh's plans for the salvation of men. As such, the glory of Jesus' action had been always existing.

***Jesus prays for his disciples [John 17:6-19]***

***(Jn17:6)"I have revealed You to those whom You gave me out of the world. They were Yours; You gave them to me and they have obeyed Your Word. (7)Now they know that everything You have given me comes from You. (8)For I gave them the words You gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from You, and they believed that You sent me. (9)I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those You have given me, for they are Yours. (10)All I have is Yours, and all You have is mine. And glory has come to me through them. (11)I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to You. Holy Father, protect them by the power of Your Name -the Name You gave me- so that they may be ones as we are one. (12)While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that Name You gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled.***

***(13)I am coming to You now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy with them. (14)I have given them Your Word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. (15)My prayer is not that You take them out of the world but that You protect them from the evil one. (16)They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. (17)Sanctify them by the Truth; Your Word is Truth. (18)As You sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. (19)For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified."***

**Jn 17:6.** *'I have revealed You'*: What Jesus says here refers, at the moment of his prayer, to his disciples and, later, to all believers. Jesus had enabled men to know what the real nature of Yahweh is like. In fact, this is another way of saying: "He who has seen me has seen the Father." In Jesus men can see the mind, the character, the heart of Yahweh. In the time of Jesus Yahweh was remote and inaccessible. And Jesus brought this remote, inaccessible God so close to men that even the simplest people can speak directly to Him. *'They were Yours'*: All men belong to Yahweh who "gives" them to Jesus by the work of His grace; by awakening their faith.

**Jn 17:7.** *'Now they know...'*: Only when people see the Father at work in Jesus they can

have a proper concept of Yahweh. And the disciples had at last reached this level of understanding.

**Jn 17:8.** *'I gave them the words...'*: The disciples accepted Jesus' teaching, unlike the Pharisees and the others Jews who heard it but refused it. Acceptance of the revelation led them further into the truth. They believed in Jesus; they realized that Jesus came from Yahweh, and that in his words there were Yahweh's words, in his actions Yahweh's actions.

**Jn 17:9.** *'I pray for them. Not... for the world'*: Here, even if he says that he does not pray for the world (the human society organized without Yahweh), Jesus sent his disciples into the world in order to make it aware of Yahweh and to bring it back to Yahweh. *'Those You have given me'*: The disciples were given to Jesus by Yahweh, who had moved the heart of those people to the appeal of Jesus.

**Jn 17:10.** *'All I have is Yours, and...'*: The first part of the sentence is natural and easy to understand, for all things belong to Yahweh. The second part is understandable only considering the deep spiritual communion between Son and Father. *'Glory has come to me through them'*: The men whom Jesus has redeemed bring honor to him by their conversion.

**Jn 17:11.** *'Holy Father'*: A form of address to Yahweh found only here in the whole New Testament (that doesn't have to be used by anybody else -Pope of the Roman Catholic Church included). *'That they may be one'*: This part of the prayer strongly emphasizes the necessity of spiritual unity among his disciples. Their unity is to be like that between the Father and the Son. Where there are divisions and competition among the Churches and the men of Church, the cause of Christianity is harmed and the prayer of Jesus frustrated.

**Jn 17:12.** *'I protected them'*: Until Jesus was physically together with his disciples, he protected them personally against Satan's temptations. But now, in a short while, they would need Yahweh's protection -the protection coming from being in spiritual communion with Him. *'None... lost except...'*: The loss of one of the disciples -the betrayal of Judas Iscariot- had been foretold in the Scripture (Zechariah 11:12-13).

**Jn 17:13.** *'I say these things... so that...'*: Speaking this way, Jesus offered his disciples joy and warning. He told them that their values and standards were different from the world's, so they could not expect anything but hatred from it. But he also said that it is only by facing the hostility of the world in the name of Jesus Christ that they could give him joy -and share of it with him.

**Jn 17:14.** *'The world has hated them'*: The world is hostile to Yahweh and Yahweh's people. *'Are not of the world'*: They do not have the mind-set of the world, that is, hostility to Yahweh, for they have been "born of the Spirit" and are "Children of Yahweh."

**Jn 17:15-16.** *'Not that You take them out of the world'*: Jesus did not want that his disciples should be taken out of the dangers of this world. He never prayed that they could find escape; he prayed that they might find victory. Christianity is not meant to withdraw men from life, but to equip them better for it. It is true that the Christians are not of the world, but it remains true that it is within the world that their Christianity must be lived out. They must never desire to abandon the world, but always desire to win it. *'Protect them from the evil one'*: Who is especially active in the world, making Yahweh's protection indispensable.

**Jn 17:17.** *'Sanctify them by the Truth; Your Word is Truth'*: Sanctification and revelation go together. By praying that his disciples might be consecrated by the Truth, Jesus was asking that they would be equipped with the qualities of mind, heart, and character necessary for their task.

**Jn 17:18.** *'As You sent me... I have sent them'*: Jesus' mission is one of the dominant themes of John's Gospel and it is given as the pattern for his followers' mission. *'Into the world'*: Christians may long for Heaven, but it is on Earth that their work is done.

**Jn 17:19.** *'I sanctify myself'*: "Sanctify," from the Greek "Hagiazō," means "set apart for sacred duty," or "holy." In the Old Testament this verb was used for the consecration of priests and sacrifices. Jesus solemnly "set himself apart to do Yahweh's will," which at this point meant his death. *'They too... sanctified'*: Jesus died on the Cross not only to save, but also to consecrate his followers, and all men, to Yahweh's service.

***Jesus prays for all believers*** [John 17:20-26;14:31b]

*(Jn17:20)"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, (21)that all of them may be one, Father, just as You are in me and I am in You. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that You have sent me. (22)I have given them the glory that You gave me, that they may be one as we are one: (23)I in them and You in me. May them be brought to complete unity to let the world know that You sent me and had been fond of them even as You have loved me.*

*(24)Father, I want those You have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory You have given me because You loved me before the creation of the world.*

*(25)Righteous Father, though the world does not know You, I know You, and they know that You have sent me. (26)I have made You known to them, and will continue to make You known in order that the love You have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.*

*(14:31b)Come now; let us leave."*

**Jn 17:20** *'Those who will believe in me'*: Jesus had just spoken of the mission and the sanctification of his disciples. He was confident that they would spread the Gospel, and so now he prays for those who would believe as a result. All future believers are included in this prayer, all men of every land and future age. Here we see Jesus' complete faith and certainty. At that moment his followers were few but, even with the Cross facing him, his confidence was unshaken, and he prayed for those who would come to believe in him. Jesus knew that his men did not fully understand him; that in a very short time they were going to abandon him. Yet he looked to these very men with complete confidence to spread his name and his word throughout the world.

**Jn 17:21.** *'All of them may be one'*: His prayer was that there would be full spiritual communion between all the Christians, as there was between Yahweh and him; a unity of love and obedience. *'So that the world may believe...'*: The example of the unity of believers should have an effect on outsiders, bringing them to Christianity. This prayer of Jesus is a rebuke of the always groundless and often bitter divisions existing among believers. It is sad but clear that the Christians will never organize their Churches all in the same way; that they will never worship Yahweh all in the same way; that they will never even all believe precisely the same things. But Christian unit transcends all these differences and joins all men together in the affection of Jesus and of Yahweh.

**Jn 17:22.** *'The glory'*: The Cross, his obedience to the will of Yahweh, was Jesus' glory. Therefore, a Christian's glory is the cross that he must bear. The harder the task given, the greater will be the glory. The Christians find their glory, not in doing what they like, but in doing Yahweh's will. *'That they may be one as we are one'*: Again Jesus emphasi-

zed the importance of unity among his followers, which has to be of the same quality and depth as the unity of the Father and the Son.

**Jn 17:23.** *'I in them and You in me'*: Spiritual communion is seen in terms of that of the Son in the believers, and that of the Father in the Son. It is because the latter is a reality that the former can take place. *'Complete unity'*: Again the emphasis on unity has an evangelistic aim. This time it refers not only to Jesus' mission but also to Yahweh's fondness for men and for Jesus.

**Jn 17:24.** *'I want'*: Jesus' last will, his last request, his testament, was for his followers. To notice the way Jesus did express himself in this case, with a "I want," where, when he himself was concerned, he prayed saying, "Not what I will, but what You will." *'To be with me'*: The Christian's greatest blessing, to be in spiritual communion with Jesus. *'My glory'*: Jesus' eternal glory in Heaven. It is Jesus' promise that if his men will share his mission and his suffering on Earth, they will also share his glory and his triumph in Heaven. *'Before the creation'*: Here John expresses the idea that Yahweh, being all-powerful, always knew of Jesus' work, even before the creation of the world.

**Jn 17:25-26.** *'Righteous Father'*: A form of address found only here. *'They know'*: Jesus' followers did not know Yahweh directly, but they knew that Yahweh had sent Jesus. And to recognize Yahweh in Jesus' mission is a great advance over anything the world can know.

**Jn 14:31b.** *'Let us leave'*: After this prayer in the room of the Last Supper, Jesus was to go straight to face the betrayal and the Cross.

### Jesus prays in the Gethsemane, on the Mount of Olives

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[Mark 14:26;32-42 Matthew 26:30;36-46 Luke 22:39-46 John 18:1]

**(Mk14:26,32)(Mt26:30,36)(Lk22:39-40)(Jn18:1)**When he had finished praying and they had sung a hymn, Jesus left with his disciples and crossed the Kidron Valley. On the other side there was an olive grove and Jesus, going as usual to the Mount of Olives, into it, went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and his disciples followed him. And then, on reaching the place, he said to his disciples, **"Sit here while I go over there and pray. Pray that you will not fall into temptation."** **(Mk14:33)(Mt26:37)**He took Peter and James and John, the two sons of Zebedee, along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled. **(Mk14:34)(Mt26:38)**Then he said to them, **"My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me."**

**(Mk14:35-36)(Mt26:39)(Lk22:41-42)**Going a little farther, he withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down, fell with his face to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him. **"Abba, my Father,"** he said, **"everything is possible for You. If it is possible, if You are willing, take this cup from me. Yet not as and what I will, but as and what You will be done."** **(Lk22:43)**An angel from Heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. **(44)**And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.

**(Mk14:37-38)(Mt26:40-41)(Lk22:45-46)**Then, when he rose from prayer and went back to his disciples, he found them sleeping, exhausted from sorrow. **"Simon,"** he asked Peter, **"are you asleep? Why are you sleeping? Could you men not keep watch with me for one hour? Get up, watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak."**

**(Mk14:39)(Mt26:42)**He went away a second time and prayed the same thing, **"My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may Your will be done."**

**(Mk14:40)(Mt26:43)**When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. They did not know what to say to him. **(Mt26:44)**So he left them and went away once more and prayed the third time, saying the same thing.

**(Mk14:41)(Mt26:45-46)**Then, returning to the disciples the third time, he said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! The hour is near, has come. And look, the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. **(Mk14:42)**Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!"

**Mk 14:26,32. Mt 26:30,36. Lk 22:39-40. Jn 18:1.** '*Sung an hymn*': An essential part of the Passover ritual was the singing of the "Hallel," which means "Praise Yahweh!" and consisted of Psalms 113-118, which are praising Psalms. At different points of the Passover Feast the Jews sang sections of these Psalms; and at the very end they sang the "Great Hallel," which is Psalm 136. That was the hymn Jesus and his disciples sang before they went out to the Mount of Olives. '*Kidron Valley*': East of Jerusalem and dry except during the rainy season. '*Gethsemane*': A garden or orchard on the lower slopes of the Mount of Olives, one of Jesus' favorite places. The name in Hebrew means "oil press." '*Pray*': Jesus went to Gethsemane with his disciples for his last prayers to the Father before the beginning of his trial. '*Temptation*': Here it refers to a severe trial, so severe that it could lead to a faltering of their faith.

**Mk 14:33. Mt 26:37.** '*He took...*': The three who had been with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration.

**Mk 14:34. Mt 26:38.** '*My soul is...*': Certain things appear clearly from this passage. Jesus did not want to die. He was only thirty-three. He knew what crucifixion was like. He had had the time to do so little and there was a world waiting to be saved. Anyway, even if Jesus did not know all the details of what was going to follow, he knew beyond any doubt that this was the will of Yahweh and that he must go on. Jesus, too, had to make the great venture of faith; he, too, had to accept what he could not fully understand. '*Sorrow to the point of death*': Here, in the Gethsemane, Jesus had his supreme struggle to submit to the will of Yahweh.

**Mk 14:35-36. Mt 26:39. Lk 22:41-42.** '*Prayed that if possible...*': Clearly, Jesus submitted himself to the will of his Father. '*Abba*': It is the Aramaic word for "My father," and it is this word that makes all the difference. Jesus was not submitting to a terrible God, he was submitting to his Father. '*This cup*': A symbol of deep sorrow and suffering.

**Lk 22:43** '*An angel*': As the angels ministered to Jesus at the close of his fasting and temptation, so even here an angel came to comfort him.

**Lk 22:44.** '*Drops of blood*': Probably perspiration in large drops mixed with blood, or hematidrosis, the actual mingling of blood and sweat in cases of extreme anguish, strain or sensitivity.

**Mk 14:37-38. Mt 26:40-41. Lk 22:45-46.** '*Found them sleeping*': The disciples were so exhausted with the events of these last days and hours that they could not stay awake. And Jesus had to fight his battle alone. '*Simon*': Peter was singled out because of his bold assertion that he would not fail Jesus. '*Pray so that you will not fall into temptation*': Here the trial was to be faithful to him even in face of the threatening circumstances confronting them. '*The spirit is willing*': Even when the spirit of a man is under Yahweh's control, it has to strive against the weakness of the human body. The expression is taken from Psalm 51:12.

**Mk 14:39. Mt 26:42.** See comment to Mk 14:35-36. Mt 26:39. Lk 22:41-42.

**Mk 14:40. Mt 26:43.** See comment to Mk 14:37-38. Mt 26:40-41. Lk 22:45-46.

**Mt 26:44.** See comment to Mk 14:35-36. Mt 26:39. Lk 22:41-42.

**Mk 14:41-42. Mt 26:45-46.** *'The hour is near... Rise!':* To note how the passage ends. The traitor and his gang had arrived. And Jesus' reaction was not to run away in the darkness of the night, his reaction was to face them.

### **Jesus arrested**

See page 453

[Mark 14:43-52 Matthew 26:47-56 Luke 22:47-53 John 18:2-11]

**(Jn18:2)** Now Judas, who betrayed him, knew the place, because Jesus had often met there with his disciples.

**(Mk14:43-45)(Mt26:47-49)(Lk22:47)(Jn18:3)** So, just as Jesus was still speaking, the man who was called Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived. With him was a large crowd which came up armed with swords and clubs. Judas came to the grove leading and guiding a detachment of soldiers and some officials sent from the chief priests, the Pharisees, the teachers of the law, and the elders of the people. They were carrying torches, lanterns and weapons.

Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: "The one I kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard." Going at once to Jesus, to kiss him, Judas said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" and kissed him.

**(Mt26:50a)(Lk22:48)** But Jesus replied, "Friend, do what you came for." And asked him, "Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?"

**(Jn18:4)** Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, "Who is it you want?"

**(5)** "Jesus of Nazareth," they replied.

"I am he," Jesus said. (And Judas the traitor was standing there with them.) **(6)** When Jesus said, "I am he," they drew back and fell to the ground.

**(7)** Again he asked them, "Who is it you want?"

And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth."

**(8)** "I told you that I am he," Jesus answered. "If you are looking for me, then let these men go." **(9)** This happened so that the words he had spoken would be fulfilled: "I have not lost one of those You gave me." **(Mk14:46)(Mt26:50b)** Then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus and arrested him.

**(Lk22:49)** When Jesus' followers saw what was going to happen, they said, "Lord, should we strike with our swords?" **(Mk14:47)(Mt26:51)(Lk22:50)(Jn18:10)** Then, with that, one of Jesus' companions standing near, Simon Peter, who had a sword, reached for his sword, drew it out and struck the servant of the High Priest, cutting off his right ear. (The servant's name was Malchus.)

**(Lk22:51)** But Jesus answered, "No more of this!" And he touched the man's ear and healed him.

**(Mt26:52-54)(Jn18:11)** "Put your sword away, back in its place," Jesus commanded Peter, "for all who draw the sword will die by the sword. Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and He will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way? Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?"

**(Mk24:48-50)(Mt26:55-56)(Lk22:52-53)** Then, at that time, Jesus said to the crowd, to the chief priests, the officers of the temple guard, and the elders, who had come for him, "Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? Every day I was with you, I sat in the Temple courts teaching, and you did not arrest me, you did not lay a hand on me. But this has all taken place that the



**Scripture, the writings of the prophets, might be fulfilled. This is your hour -when darkness reigns." Then everyone, all the disciples, deserted him and fled.**

**(Mk14:51)** *A young man, wearing nothing but a linen garment, was following Jesus. When they seized him, (52)he fled naked, leaving his garment behind.*

**Jn 18:2.** *'Knew the place':* The Gethsemane.

**Mk 14:43-45. Mt 26:47-49. Lk 22:47. Jn 18:3.** *'A large crowd armed with swords and clubs':* They were auxiliary guards and servants of the Temple assigned to the task of maintaining public order during the great feast. The fact that some carried clubs suggests that they were conscripted at the last moment. *'Soldiers and some officials':* The real force which came to arrest Jesus was composed by a company of Roman soldiers together with some officials from the Temple Guard. *'Sent from the chief priests...':* In other terms, by the Sanhedrin. *'Lanterns':* Terracotta holders into which household oil lamps could be inserted. *'The betrayer had arranged a signal':* Judas was aware that everybody knew Jesus by sight. But he felt that in the dim light of the garden they needed a sure indication of who was the man to arrest. And so he chose a sign, a kiss. *'Kissed him':* A token of respect with which the disciples customarily greeted their rabbi.

**Mt 26:50. Lk 22:48.** *'Friend':* Not even in that moment Jesus condemned Judas for his betrayal.

**Jn 18:4-8.** *'Knowing all that was going to happen to him':* Jesus was not taken by surprise. *'Who is it you want? I am he':* At the Passover time it was full moon and the night was full of light. The people who came for Jesus were carrying lamps and torches because they thought that they would have to search in the darkness of the trees and of the hides of the hill to find him. So far from hiding, when they arrived, Jesus stepped out and showed himself. This shows, not only the courage and the authority with which he faced the soldiers, but that he chose the way to the Cross. They thought they had come to arrest a man who would have run away at their sight and instead they were met in the dim light by a man facing them with calm, without demonstrating any fear. *'Let these men go':* Jesus cared for the disciples even as he was going to his death. Twice he made the soldiers say plainly that he was the only one they wanted.

**Jn 18:9.** *'The words... would be fulfilled':* This kind of phrase is normally used in quoting Scripture, but here it refers to Jesus' words, which are on the same level than Scripture (Jesus the bread of life. Jn 6:25-59).

**Mk 14:46. Mt 26:50.** *'Then the men...':* It seems they were reluctant, but at the end they had to do what they came for.

**Mk 14:47. Mt 26:51. Lk 22:49-50. Jn 18:10.** *'Peter, who had a sword... struck...':* Peter was ready to defend Jesus fighting alone against all of them.

**Lk 22:51.** *'No more of this. Healed him':* Jesus rectified the wrong done by his followers healing the injured man. In this case, the healing did not involve any faith on the part of Malchus, but it was a corrective action of Jesus because to allow such kind of actions would have been contrary to his teaching.

**Mt 26:52-54. Jn 18:11.** *'For all who draw...':* Violence can generate nothing more than violence; one drawn sword can only produce another drawn sword to meet it. Jesus knew that war settles nothing, but produces only plenty of evil. *'Do you think...':* Jesus knew that Yahweh's purpose could be worked out only by his sacrifice. *'Scriptures be fulfilled':* A reference to Isaiah 53, and more particularly to Zechariah 13:7. *'Shall I not drink...':* This was Yahweh's will, and that was more than enough. Jesus was faithful till

death. Jesus' death was by his own choice. He came to Jerusalem for the Passover Feast. He went deliberately to teach in the Temple courts, in defiance of the Jewish authorities. He went to the garden, his usual place of rest and meditation, where it was easy to find him. Every step of those last days makes it clear that Jesus laid down his life and that his life was not taken from him against his will. And he chose to do so because he knew that his death was necessary to work out the purpose of Yahweh. *'Drink the cup'*: It points to suffering and trial sent by Yahweh. *'The Father has given me'*: Everything came from the Father; Yahweh was in control, not the Jews, not Judas, not Satan.

**Mk 24:48-50. Mt 26:55-56. Lk 22:52-53.** *'This is your hour'*: It was the time appointed for Jesus' enemies to apprehend him, the time when the forces of darkness (the powers of evil) would do their worst trying to defeat Yahweh's plans. *'Everyone... deserted him'*: The nerve of the disciples cracked. They could not face the situation any more, and so they fled. Jesus was the only one who in all this disordered scene was calm and serene. It looks as if he, and not the Sanhedrin police, was directing the affair. For him the struggle in the garden was over, and now there was the peace of the man who knows that he is following the will of Yahweh.

**Mk 14:51-52.** *'A young man'*: At first these verses seem completely irrelevant. They seem to add nothing to the narrative; yet there must be some reason for them being there. The most probable answer is that this man was Mark, the Gospel writer, and that this is his way to say that he was there, without mentioning his name at all. Most probably Mark, still very young, was present at the Last Supper (it seems that the house where the Last Supper was eaten was the house of Mary, the mother of Mark, the same house which later became the meeting place of the first Christians of Jerusalem). Probably, when Jesus and his disciples went out in the dark, he slipped out after them when he ought to be in bed, with only the linen tunic over his body. So he was there, all the time in the shadow, listening and watching. And, when all the disciples were asleep, he witnessed the struggle of soul that Jesus had in the Gethsemane. *'A linen garment'*: The fine linen tunic left behind in the hands of the guards indicates that the youth was from a wealthy family. *'Fled naked'*: The absence of an outer garment suggests that he had dressed hastily to follow Jesus.

### **Before the Sanhedrin. Jesus taken to Annas**

See page 455

#### **The High Priest questions Jesus**

[Mark 14:53-65 Matthew 26:57-68 Luke 22:54;63-71 John 18:12-16;19-24]

**(Jn18:12)** Then the detachment of soldiers with his commander and the Jewish officials arrested Jesus. They bound him **(13)** and brought him first to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the High Priest that year. **(14)** Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it would be good if one man died for the people.

**(19)** Then, the High Priest [Annas] questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching.

**(20)** "I have spoken openly to the world," Jesus replied. "I always taught in synagogues or at the Temple, where all the Jews come together. I said nothing in secret. **(21)** Why question me? Ask those who heard me. Surely they know what I said."

**(22)** When Jesus said this, one of the officials nearby struck him in the face. "Is this the way you answer the High Priest?" he demanded.

**(23)** "If I said something wrong," Jesus replied, "testify as to what is wrong. But if I spoke the truth, why did you strike me?"

**(Mk14:53-54)(Mt26:57-58)(Lk22:54)(Jn18:15-16;24)** And Annas sent him, still

bound, to Caiaphas. Seizing him, those who had arrested Jesus led him away and took him to Caiaphas, the High Priest, into his house, where all the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders came and had assembled together. But Simon Peter and another disciple were following Jesus at a distance. Because this disciple was known to the High Priest, he went with Jesus into the High Priest's courtyard, but Peter had to wait outside at the door. The other disciple, who was known to the High Priest, came back, spoke to the girl on duty there and brought Peter in, right up into the courtyard of the High Priest. He entered there, sat down with the guards to see the outcome and warmed himself at the fire.

**(Lk22:66)** At daybreak the council of the elders of the people, both the chief priests and teachers of the law, met together, and Jesus was led before them.

**(Mk14:55-58)(Mt26:59-61)** The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for false evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death. But they did not find any, though many false witnesses came forward and testified falsely against him, but their statements did not agree.

Then finally some, two, came forward, stood up, gave this false testimony against him and declared: "We heard this fellow say, 'I am able to and I will destroy this man-made Temple of Yahweh and in three days will build another, not made by man.'" **(Mk14:59)** Yet even then their testimony did not agree.

**(Mk14:60)(Mt26:62)** Then the High Priest stood up before them and asked Jesus, "Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?" **(Mk14:61-62)(Mt26:63-64)(Lk22:67-69)** But Jesus remained silent and gave no answer.

Again the High Priest said to him, "I charge you under oath by [Yahweh] the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of [Yahweh] the Blessed One God."

"Yes, I am, it is as you say," Jesus replied. "If I tell you, you will not believe me, and if I asked you, you would not answer. But I say to all of you: In the future, from now on, you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of [Yahweh] the Mighty One God and coming on the clouds of Heaven."

**(Lk22:70)** They all asked, "Are you then the Son of Yahweh?"

He replied, "You are right in saying I am."

**(Mk14:63-64)(Mt26:65-66)(Lk22:71)** Then the High Priest tore his clothes and said, "He has spoken blasphemy! Why do we need any more witnesses, any more testimony? Look, now you have heard the blasphemy from his own lips. What do you think?"

They all condemned him and answered, "He is worthy of death." **(Mk14:65)(Mt26:67-68)(Lk22:63-65)** Then some of the men who were guarding Jesus began to spit at him in his face; they blindfolded him and struck him with their fists. Others began mocking and beating him, slapped him and said, "Prophecy to us, Christ. Who hit you?" And they said many other insulting things to him. And the guards took him and beat him.

**Jn 18:12.** 'Arrested Jesus. Bound him': It was standard procedure to bound the arrested man, much like the modern use of handcuffs.

**Jn 18:13-14.** 'Annas': He had been deposed from the High Priesthood by the Romans in AD 15 but was still regarded by many as the true High Priest. He himself had been High Priest from AD 6 to 15. Four of his sons also held the High Priesthood and Caiaphas, his son-in-law, was the High Priest at the time. Before the Roman domination, the High Priest held office for life; but when the Roman Governor came, the office became a

matter for contention and corruption, going to the man who was most willing to pay and collaborate with the Romans. The family of Annas was immensely rich and, as one by one they had intrigued and bribed their way into office, Annas remained the real power behind them all. They were making their fortune with the sale of animals for sacrifice (all pilgrims were practically obliged to buy those animals in the Temple court). And this is the reason why Jesus was brought first to Annas, because he had attacked Annas' interests by clearing the Temple of the animals sellers.

**Jn 18:19.** *'The High Priest [Annas] questioned Jesus'*: The examination in front of Annas was a mockery of justice. It was an essential regulation of the Jewish law that a prisoner must be asked no question which would incriminate him. Annas violated this principle when he questioned Jesus. It was precisely of this that Jesus reminded him.

**Jn 18:20-21.** *'I have spoken openly. Why question me?'*: Practically, Jesus told Annas to take evidence against him in the proper and legal way, examining the witnesses; to stop examining him against the law.

**Jn 18:22-23.** *'If I said something wrong...'*: Jesus complained that he had only stated the law; so the man had no right to hit him.

**Mk 14:53-54. Mt 26:57-58. Lk 22:54. Jn 18:15-16;24.** *'Annas sent him... to Caiaphas'*: Annas had no official status with the Romans, so he had to send Jesus to Caiaphas to give some form of legitimacy to what was done. *'Where all... had assembled together'*: Actually, this was an informal meeting of the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin was the Supreme Court of the Jews and was composed by seventy-one members. Its members were the Sadducees -all the high priests were Sadducees-, the Pharisees and the Scribes -the expert in the law called the Elders. The High Priest presided over the Court sessions. The decisions of the Sanhedrin were valid only when the meeting was held within the Temple precincts, in the Hall of Hewn Stone. The Court could not meet at night, nor at any of the great feasts. The witnesses were examined separately and their evidence, to be valid, had to agree in every detail. Each individual member must give his verdict separately, beginning from the youngest and going on to the eldest. If the verdict was of death, a night must elapse before it was carried out, so that the Court might have a chance to change its mind and its decision towards mercy. But, at this time, under the Roman domination, the Sanhedrin had only limited powers. Its function was not to condemn, but to prepare a charge on which the criminal could be tried before the Roman Governor. *'Simon Peter and another disciple'*: In all fairness it has to be noted that Peter was one of the only two disciples who had the courage to follow Jesus after his arrest, till into the courtyard of the High Priest. It is often forgotten that during that night Peter did show a great courage. First, by drawing his sword in the garden against the Roman soldiers and the Temple guards. Second, by going into the courtyard of the High Priest's house. Only later he broke under the weight of all this stress. *'Disciple... known to the High Priest'*: Nobody knows for sure who the other disciple was and why he was known, even if the traditional view is that it was John himself. *'High Priest's courtyard'*: In Palestine the houses of the well-off were built in a hollow square around an open courtyard, off which the various rooms opened. *'Sat down...'*: It was a cold night; Peter would have been conspicuous if he had stayed away from the fire.

**Lk 22:66.** *'At daybreak'*: A legal trial could take place only after daylight. Until now, the meeting had been held in the night -and not in the Temple. Furthermore, there were no individually given verdicts, and a night was not allowed to pass before the penalty of death was inflicted. There is no doubt that in the trial of Jesus the Sanhedrin broke all its own laws.

**Mk 14:55-58. Mt 26:59-61.** *'The whole Sanhedrin'*: Even under Roman domination the Sanhedrin had a great deal of authority, but they could not impose capital punishment. So now they had to build a case, to find a charge worthy of the death penalty, and after that to transfer it to the Roman governor. *'Many... testified falsely against him'*: In Jewish judicial procedure, witnesses functioned as the prosecution. According to Deuteronomy 19:15 a person could not be convicted unless two or more witnesses gave testimony, which assumes that their testimonies had to agree. *'Their statements did not agree'*: For long the Court could not get even two false witnesses to agree, so they were unable to come up with a charge. *'Then finally'*: And then a charge was found, that Jesus had said that he would destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days. *'I am able to and I will destroy this Temple of Yahweh'*: Evidently an intentional distortion of Jesus' words (Jesus clears the Temple. Jn 2:12-25).

**Mk 14:59.** *'Yet even then...'*: But even in this case the witnesses' statements did not agree enough to be used to build a charge against Jesus.

**Mk 14:60-62. Mt 26:62-64. Lk 22:67-69.** *'Then the High Priest'*: At last the High Priest took the matter in his own hands. *'Not going to answer?'*: To that charge Jesus utterly refused to reply. And here the law was on his side, for no person on trial could either be asked, or compelled to answer, any question which would incriminate him. *'I charge you under oath'*: After the High Priest had used this form, Jesus was legally obliged to reply to the next question. *'You are the Christ, the Son of... Yahweh? Yes, I am'*: Clearly Jesus felt it was time that all this farce was ended, and without hesitation he answered that he was. *'If I asked you, you would not answer'*: With reference to Jesus' question about John's baptism (The authority of Jesus questioned. Mk 11:27-33; Mt 21:23-27; Lk 20:1-8). *'The Son of Man sitting...'*: Jesus quoted Daniel 7:13, with its account of the ultimate triumph and kingship of Yahweh's Messiah.

**Lk 22-70.** *'Are you...? I am'*: The fundamental question was repeated, to be sure that everybody had heard Jesus' answer. And now, finally, they had a charge of blasphemy, a very serious insult against Yahweh. A charge which carried the death penalty.

**Mk 14:63-64. Mt 26:65-66. Lk 22:71.** *'Tore his clothes'*: Usually this was a sign of great grief or shock. In the case of the High Priest it was a form of judicial act expressing the fact that he regarded Jesus' answer as blasphemous to Yahweh. *'You have heard the blasphemy'*: It was blasphemy to claim to be the Messiah and the Son of Yahweh -unless, of course, the claim was true. The sin of blasphemy not only involved reviling the Name of Yahweh, but also included any affront to His majesty and to His authority. The penalty prescribed by the Mosaic law was death by stoning. *'What do you think?'*: The question was asked to all Sanhedrin members, and all did agree with Caiaphas.

**Mk 14:65. Mt 26:67-68. Lk 22:63-65.** *'Then... some began...'*: Then followed the spitting on him, the buffeting, the slapping on his face, the mockery. Even the external of justice were forgotten. Jesus was handed over to the Temple Police for safe-keeping, and they played their cruel jokes on him. *'To spit at him. Blindfolded him. Struck him with their fists'*: Conventional gestures of rejection and condemnation. *'Prophecy... Who hit you?'*: An old -and wrong- interpretation of Isaiah 11:2-4 held that the Messiah could see without the aid of sight.

***Peter disowns Jesus. Peter's first, second and third denials***

*See page 457*

*[Mark 14:66-72 Matthew 26:69-75 Luke 22:55-62 John 18:17-18;25-27]*

*(Lk22:55)(Jn18:18)It was cold, and the servants and officials were staying around a*

fire they had kindled in the middle of the courtyard to keep warm. And, when they had sat down together, Peter also sat down with them, warming himself. **(Mk14:66-70)(Mt 26:69-73)(Lk22:56-59)(Jn18:17;25)** Now, while Peter was below sitting out in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the High Priest saw him seated there in the fire-light. When she saw Simon Peter warming himself, she came by to him, looked closely at him and said, "This man was with him. You also were with that Nazarene, Jesus of Galilee. You are not one of his disciples, are you?"

But he denied it before them all, "I am not. Woman, I don't know him. I don't know or understand what you are talking about," he said, and then he went out into the entryway and the rooster crowed.

A little later, someone else, another servant girl, the girl at the door, saw him there and said again to those people standing around there, "This fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth, is one of them. You also are one of them." And she asked Peter, "You are not one of his disciples, are you?" Again Peter denied it, with an oath: "I am not! I don't know the man!"

After a little while, about an hour later, another of those standing there near went up to Peter and said, "Certainly this fellow was with him. Surely you are one of them, for your accent gives you away, you are a Galilean." **(Jn18:26)** One of the high priest's servants, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked him, "Didn't I see you with him in the olive grove?"

**(Mk14:71-72)(Mt26:74-75)(Lk22:60-61)(Jn18:27)** Then again Peter denied it, began to call down curses on himself, and he swore to them, "Man, I don't know what you're talking about. I don't know this man you're talking about." And immediately at that moment, just as he was speaking, the rooster began to crow the second time. The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word the Lord Jesus had spoken to him: "**Before the rooster crows twice today, you will disown me three times.**" **(Lk 22:62)** And he went outside, broke down and wept bitterly.

**Lk 22:55. Jn 18:18.** '*Peter also sat down with them*': Peter was sitting by the fire, as anybody else, for on a cold night he would have attracted too much attention to himself if he had stayed away from the fire.

**Mk 14:66-70. Mt 26:69-73. Lk 22:56-59. Jn 18:17;25.** '*Below*': While Jesus was tried and beaten in an upstairs room of Caiaphas' house, Peter was below in the courtyard. '*This man was with him. You are not... are you?*': Initially, she did believe that he was one of Jesus' followers, then she asked him a question which, in Greek language, did expect a negative answer. '*I don't know or understand what you're talking about*': A common phrase, in Jewish law, for a formal denial. Immediately after denying any connection with Jesus, Peter moved from the light of the fire to the relative darkness of the entryway. Here, a fundamental point is always forgotten; any weak or prudent man would then have left the courtyard as fast as possible. But Peter did not leave. '*You are not... are you?*': Even the question of the servant girl at the door expected a negative answer. And, again, Peter denied to be one of Jesus' followers. But again, he did not leave the courtyard. '*Another of those standing there*': With a group of servants who spent their time talking around the fire, it is clear that some would doubtless take up and repeat such a question. Probably, even when asking, the servants did not really expect to find a follower of Jesus in the High Priest's courtyard. '*Your accent gives you away*': Peter had a decidedly Galilean accent that was conspicuous in Jerusalem.

**Jn 18:26.** '*Didn't I see you...?*': In this case, in Greek, the question expected a positive answer.

**Mk 14:71-72. Mt 26:74-75. Lk 22:60-62. Jn 18:27.** *'Again Peter denied it'*: For the third time, as Jesus had told him. Even if Peter swore that he did not know Jesus -and called curses on himself if he was not telling the truth, still he did not go away. *'The rooster began to crow'*: The fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy (Jesus predicts Peter's denial. Mk 14:27-31; Mt 26:31-35; Lk 22:31-38; Jn 13:31-38). At this point, when the rooster did crow again, Peter remembered Jesus' words and his heart broke. *'The Lord... looked straight at Peter'*: Peter was in the courtyard, near the entrance, and probably Jesus was taken to Pilate. So, passing by, he caught Peter's eyes. Jesus did not speak to Peter in anger but looked silently at him in sorrow. The penalty for his failure was not to face the anger of Jesus, but the heartbreak in his eyes. Anyway, it is important to understand that Peter fell to a temptation which could come only to a man of high courage. Surely, it was necessary to have plenty of courage to enter the courtyard of the High Priest, were all of their enemies were. Every man has his breaking point, and Peter reached it there. Furthermore, there is only one source from which this story could have come, and that is Peter himself. So far from suppressing this story, Peter made it a strong point of his preaching, as an example of how and what Jesus can forgive.

***Judas hangs himself*** [Matthew 27:3-10]

**(Mt27:3)** *When Judas, who had betrayed him, saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse and returned the thirty silver coins to the chief priests and the elders. (4)"I have sinned," he said, "for I have betrayed innocent blood."*

*"What is that to us?" they replied. "That's your responsibility."*

**(5)** *So Judas threw the money into the Temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself.*

**(6)** *The chief priests picked up the coins and said, "It is against the law to put this into the Treasury, since it is blood money." (7)So they decided to use the money to buy the potter's field as a burial place for foreigners. (8)That is why it has been called the Field of Blood to this day. (9)Then what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled, "As the Lord commanded me: 'They took the thirty silver coins, the price set on him by the people of Israel, (10)and used them to buy the potter's field'".*

**Mt 27:3.** *'When Judas... saw that Jesus was condemned'*: Here there is the last act of Judas' tragedy. However we consider him, one thing is clear; at this point Judas saw the horror of what he had done. *'Returned the thirty silver coins'*: Even if he liked money, he could not keep that money for himself.

**Mt 27:4.** *'I have sinned'*: He went to confess his sin to the priests. *'What is that to us?'*: But they were absolutely not interested in him and his moral problems.

**Mt 27:5.** *'Threw the money into the Temple'*: On the floor, an understandable act, caused by his desperation. *'Hanged himself'*: Judas' suicide is surely the final indication that his plan had gone wrong. He had meant to push Jesus become a conqueror; instead he had driven him to the Cross. Anyway, it is absolutely imperative to understand that the Cross was part of Yahweh's plan. So, with or without Judas' betrayal, the Cross had to come.

**Mt 27:6-8.** *'Picked up the coins...'*: For the kind of men those priests were, money is money. For them, even if some ways of using it was forbidden, it had to be used profitably. And by using it to buy a burial place for foreigners they were saving on the cost of future burials.

**Mt 27:9-10.** 'Spoken by Jeremiah the prophet': Here there is, in fact, a mistake. Evidently, Matthew was quoting from memory; and this quotation -actually, quite loose- was not from Jeremiah but from Zechariah 11:12-13.

**Jesus before Pilate and Herod**

See page. 458

**The soldiers mock Jesus, sentenced to be crucified**

[Mark 15:1-20 Matthew 27:1-2;11-31 Luke 23:1-25 John 18:28-40;19:1-16]

**(Mk15:1)(Mt27:1-2)(Lk23:1)(Jn18:28)**Very early in the morning, all the chief priests, with the elders of the people, the teachers of the law and the whole Sanhedrin, reached the decision to put Jesus to death. Then they bound Jesus, and the whole assembly of the Jews rose and led Jesus away from Caiaphas to the palace of the Roman governor, and handed him over to Pilate, the governor. By now it was early morning, and to avoid ceremonial uncleanness the Jews did not enter the palace; they wanted to be able to eat the Passover. **(Jn18:29)**So Pilate came out to them and asked, "What charges are you bringing against this man?"

**(30)**"If it were not a criminal," they replied, "we would not have handed him over to you." **(Lk23:2)**And they began to accuse him, saying, "We have found this man subverting our nation. He opposes payment of taxes to Caesar and claims to be Christ, a king."

**(Jn18:31)**Pilate said, "Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law."

"But we have no right to execute anyone," the Jews objected. **(32)**This happened so that the words Jesus had spoken indicating the kind of death he was going to die would be fulfilled.

**(Mk15:2)(Mt27:11)(Lk23:3)(Jn18:33-37)**Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus, and while Jesus stood before the governor, the governor asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?"

"Is that your own idea," Jesus asked, "or did others talk to you about me?"

"Am I a Jew?" Pilate replied. "It was your people and your chief priests who handed you over to me. What is it you have done?"

Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place."

"You are a king, then!" said Pilate.

"Yes, it is as you say," Jesus replied. "You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."

**(Lk23:4)(Jn18:38)**"What is truth?" Pilate asked. Then with this Pilate went out again to the Jews and announced to the chief priests and the crowd, "I find no basis for a charge against this man."

**(Mk15:3)(Mt27:12)**Then, when Jesus was accused of many things by the chief priests and the elders, he gave no answer. **(Mk15:4)(Mt27:13)**So again Pilate asked him, "Don't you hear the testimony they are bringing against you? Aren't you going to answer? See how many things they are accusing you of."

**(Mk15:5)(Mt27:14)**But Jesus still made no reply, not even to a single charge -to the great amazement of Pilate, the governor.

**(Lk23:5)**But they insisted, "He stirs up the people all over Judea by his teaching. He started in Galilee and has come all the way here."

**(6)**On hearing this, Pilate asked if the man was a Galilean. **(7)**When he learned that Jesus was under Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who was also in Jerusalem at that time.



(8)When Herod saw Jesus, he was greatly pleased, because for a long time he had been wanting to see him. From what he had heard about him, he hoped to see him perform some miracle. (9)He plied him with many questions, but Jesus gave him no answer. (10)The chief priests and the teachers of the law were standing there, vehemently accusing him. (11)Then Herod and his soldiers ridiculed and mocked him. Dressing him in an elegant robe, they sent him back to Pilate. (12)That day Herod and Pilate became friends -before this they had been enemies.

(13)Pilate called together the chief priests, the rulers and the people, (14)and said to them, "You brought me this man as one who was inciting the people to rebellion. I have examined him in your presence and have found no basis for your charges against him. (15)Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us; as you can see, he has done nothing to deserve death. (16)Therefore, I will punish him and then release him, (Mk15:6-9) (Mt27:15-17)(Lk23:17)(Jn18:39)for it is your custom for me to release to you a prisoner at the time of Passover." Now he was obliged, it was the governor's custom at the Feast, to release one man to them, a prisoner chosen and requested by the people. At the time they had a notorious prisoner, a man called Barabbas, who was in prison with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the uprising. The crowd came up and asked Pilate to do for them what he usually did. So when the crowd had gathered, Pilate asked them, "Which one do you want me to release to you: Barabbas, or Jesus, the king of the Jews who is called Christ? Do you want me to release to you 'The King of the Jews?'" (Mk15:10)(Mt27:18)For he knew it was out of envy that the chief priests had handed Jesus over to him.

(Jn18:40)They shouted back, "No, not him! Give us Barabbas!" Now Barabbas had taken part in a rebellion.

(Mt27:19)While Pilate was sitting on the judge's seat, his wife sent him this message: "Don't have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him."

(Mk15:11)(Mt27:20)But the chief priests and the elders stirred up and persuaded the crowd to ask Pilate to release Barabbas instead and to have Jesus executed.

(Mt27:21)"Which of the two do you want me to release to you?" asked the governor.

"Barabbas," they answered.

(Mk15:12-13)(Mt27:22)"What shall I do, then, with Jesus, the one you call Christ, the king of the Jews?" Pilate asked them.

They all answered and shouted, "Crucify him!"

(Mk15:14)(Mt27:23)"Why? What crime has he committed?" asked Pilate.

But they shouted all the louder, "Crucify him!"

(Lk23:18)With one voice they cried out, "Away with this man! Release Barabbas to us!" (19)(Barabbas had been thrown into prison for an insurrection in the city, and for murder.)

(20)Wanting to release Jesus, Pilate appealed to them again. (21)But they kept shouting, "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

(22)For the third time he spoke to them: "Why? What crime has this man committed? I have found in him no grounds for the death penalty. Therefore I will have him punished and then release him."

(23)But with loud shouts they insistently demanded that he be crucified and their shouts prevailed.

(Mt27:24)(Lk23:24)So, when Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, he decided to grant their demand. He took water and wa-

shed his hands in front of the crowd." I am innocent of this man's blood," he said. "It is your responsibility!"

**(Mt27:25)**All the people answered, "Let his blood be on us and on our children!"

**(Mk15:15)(Mt27:26)(Lk23:25)(Jn19:1)**Then, wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released to them Barabbas, the man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, the one they asked for, and surrendered Jesus to their will. But then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.

**(Mk15:16)(Mt27:27)**Then the governor's soldiers led Jesus away and took him into the palace (that is, the Praetorium) and called together the whole company of soldiers around him. **(Mk15:17-18)(Mt27:28-29)(Jn19:2-3)**They stripped him and clothed him in a purple robe, and then twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand, went up to him, knelt in front of him and mocked him. And they began to call out to him, saying, "Hail, king of the Jews!" And they struck him in the face.

**(Jn19:4)**Once more Pilate came out and said to the Jews, "Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no basis for a charge against him." **(5)**When Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, Pilate said to them, "Here is the man!"

**(6)**As soon as the chief priests and their officials saw him, they shouted, "Crucify! Crucify!"

But Pilate answered, "You take him and crucify him. As for me, I find no basis for a charge against him."

**(7)**The Jews insisted, "We have a law, and according to that law he must die, because he claimed to be the Son of Yahweh."

**(8)**When Pilate heard this, he was even more afraid, **(9)**and he went back inside the palace. "Where do you come from?" he asked Jesus, but Jesus gave him no answer. **(10)**"Do you refuse to speak to me?" Pilate said, "Don't you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?"

**(11)**Jesus answered, "**You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above. Therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin.**"

**(12)**From then on, Pilate tried to set Jesus free, but the Jews kept shouting, "If you let this man go, you are not friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be king opposes Caesar."

**(13)**When Pilate heard this, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judge's seat at a place known as the Stone Pavement (which in Aramaic is Gabbatha). **(14)**It was the day of Preparation of Passover Week, about the sixth hour.

"Here is your king," Pilate said to the Jews.

**(15)**But they shouted, "Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!"

"Shall I crucify your king?" Pilate asked.

"We have no king but Caesar," the chief priests answered.

**(16)**Finally Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified. So the soldiers took charge of Jesus. **(Mk15:19)(Mt27:30)**They took the staff and again and again they struck him on the head and spit on him. Falling on their knees, they paid homage to him. **(Mk 15:20)(Mt27:31)**And after they had mocked him, they took off the purple robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.

**Mk 15:1. Mt 27:1-2. Lk 27:1. Jn 18:28.** 'Very early in the morning': Friday morning of Passion Week. The Sanhedrin could not have a legal session at night, so at daybreak a

special meeting was held to make the death sentence official, and to confirm the conclusions they had arrived at during the night. *'Reached the decision'*: To accuse Jesus before the Roman authority for treason rather than for blasphemy. *'Handed him over to Pilate'*: The Sanhedrin had been deprived by the Roman government of the right to carry out capital punishment -which had to be imposed by the Roman governor and carried out by the Roman authorities- except in the case of a foreigner who invaded the sacred precinct of the Temple. So Jesus had to be handed over to Pilate for trial, condemnation and execution. *'Pilate'*: The Roman governor (actually, a procurator under the governor of Syria) of Judea (which was part of the Roman province of Syria) from AD 26 to 36. His official residence was in Caesarea, on the Mediterranean coast. When he came to Jerusalem, his residence was the palace built by Herod the Great, located south-west of the Temple area. The term Praetorium was sometimes used to indicate this palace, and it was there that the Roman trial of Jesus took place. The Roman governor came to Jerusalem during Passover time to prevent trouble from the large number of pilgrims assembled for the occasion. *'To avoid ceremonial uncleanness'*: If they had gone into Pilate's headquarters, a pagan residence, they would have incurred ceremonial uncleanness, an unacceptable condition during a great feast. *'To eat the Passover'*: This refers to the whole festival of Passover and Unleavened Bread, which lasted seven days and included a number of ritual meals.

**Lk 23:2. Jn 18:29-32.** *'What charges ...?'*: A normal question at the beginning of a trial. *'They replied...'*: It was difficult to answer Pilate's question because the Jews had no actual charge that would stand up in a Roman court of law. The real charge at which they had arrived was one of blasphemy, of insulting Yahweh. But that was not the charge on which they brought Jesus before Pilate, who would have had nothing to do with what he would have considered a Jewish religious argument. So they charged Jesus with perverting the people, inciting them not to pay the tribute to Caesar and calling himself King of the Jews. They knew that their charge was a lie, and so clearly did Pilate. *'Take him yourselves...'*: In other words, without a charge valid for Rome, no Roman trial. *'We have no right to execute anyone'*: It is evident that this restriction was very important, for otherwise the Jews supporting Rome could have been quietly removed by local Jewish courts with fully legal executions. *'The kind of death he was going to die'*: Jewish execution was by stoning, but Jesus' death was to be by crucifixion (Jesus predicts his death. Jn 12:20-36). The Romans, not the Jews, had to put Jesus to death.

**Mk 15:2. Mt 27:11. Lk 23:3. Jn 18:33-37.** *'Are you the king of the Jews?'*: Pilate's first words to Jesus. One glance was enough to show him that a dangerous rebel existed only in the imagination of Jesus' enemies. To Pilate's question, Jesus did not answer, but asked something of his own. *'Is that your own idea... or did others...?'*: If so, Pilate's question would have meant, "Are you a rebel?" If the question had originated with the Jews, it would have meant, "Are you the Messianic King?" *'My Kingdom is not...'*: What Jesus did really say was: "I may have claimed to be the King of the Jews, but you know very well that the meaning I give to it is not the interpretation my accusers are giving. I am not a political revolutionary. My Kingdom is a Kingdom of truth and benevolence; it is not the kind of kingdom that has soldiers to fight for. It is not built, nor it is maintained by military power." And Pilate understood him perfectly well.

**Lk 23:4. Jn 18:38.** *'What is truth?'*: Pilate meant, "What does truth matter?" It was clear to him that Jesus was no rebel. He knew the truth very well, and he knew that, when truth conflicted with politics, truth had to go. *'I find no basis for a charge'*: Clearly, teaching the truth and preaching mutual affection were not criminal offenses.

**Mk 15:3-5. Mt 27:12-14. Lk 23:4. Jn 18:38.** *'Accused of many things'*: Seeing that Pilate was not prone to accept their initial accusations, the Jewish authorities came out with many more; something which was then common in criminal cases. *'Again Pilate asked him...'*: Pilate went to question Jesus more, but Jesus remained completely silent. *'Aren't you going to answer?'*: If Jesus made no defense, according to Roman law Pilate would have to pronounce against him. *'To the great amazement of Pilate'*: Pilate knew men and had administered Roman justice for many years. He was accustomed to all kind of people, from the defiant criminals who even violently defended themselves, to the panic-stricken creatures who plead for mercy. So he was astonished that Jesus made no defense at all but stood there, perfectly calm and serene, looking a regal figure who seemed to be the judge and not the defendant.

**Lk 23:5-12.** *'He stirs up the people'*: In order to obtain the death of Jesus the Jews denied every principle they had, going so far as to say: "We have no king but Caesar" (Jn 19:15). *'All over Judea'*: They were referring to the whole of the land of the Jews, not only to the region of Judea. *'He started in Galilee'*: Pilate had no desire to gratify their wishes, but neither did he wish to offend them. So, when they said that Jesus was a Galilean, Pilate saw a way out. Galilee was under the jurisdiction of Herod Antipas, who at that very time was in Jerusalem for the Passover. And Pilate referred the case to Herod and sent Jesus to him. *'Was also in Jerusalem'*: Herod's headquarters was in Tiberias; but, like Pilate, he had come to Jerusalem to keep under control the crowds at Passover. *'Herod... was greatly pleased'*: For what he considered an act of respect from the Roman governor. *'Wanting to see him'*: Herod had never met Jesus and was curious about him. *'To see him performing some miracle'*: Obviously, Jesus refused to perform a miracle on request. *'Ridiculed and mocked'*: As a consequence of Jesus' attitude, Herod regarded him as a joke and, refusing to take Jesus' accusers seriously, he had him clothed in a king's robe as an imitation king. Anyway, this actually means that even Herod was unable to find any ground for and confirm the charges brought out by the Jewish authorities against Jesus. So, at the end, he sent him back to Pilate. *'Herod and Pilate became friends'*: Clearly, here "friends" means only "not political enemies," as they were before. **Lk 23:13-16.** *'Pilate called... and said...'*: An official declaration that Jesus was absolutely not guilty. *'I will punish him'*: Although Pilate found Jesus not guilty of the charges, he was willing to have him beaten in order to satisfy the chief priests.

**Mk 15:6-10. Mt 27:15-18. Lk 23:17. Jn 18:39-40.** *'For he knew...'*: Pilate tried every possible way of saving Jesus from his accusers, not so much for the sake of Jesus himself but for he stood for the proper Roman justice. *'It is your custom'*: Prisoners are known to have been released even in other places on the occasion of some important national festival. *'Barabbas'*: Palestine was an occupied land and it was filled with insurrectionists. Barabbas, according to this, was a patriot, a brave man, and it is understandable that he was quite popular. Probably he was a member of the Zealots, a revolutionary Jewish group which was continuously fighting against the Romans. *'In the uprising'*: Nothing from other sources is known about this insurrection, though the Gospels speak of it as it was well known. *'The crowd came up and asked Pilate'*: It looks strange that, less than one week after the crowds were shouting a welcome when Jesus rode into Jerusalem, they would now ask for his crucifixion. The reason is quite simple; Jesus' arrest was kept deliberately secret, and the Sanhedrin meeting was held in secret. Consequently, there can have been very few supporters of Jesus in the crowd asking for his crucifixion. Quite surely they were a big group of Barabbas' supporters, and it is clear that their choice went to Barabbas. *'Which one do you want'*: Pilate offered a choice

between Jesus and Barabbas, for him a dangerous criminal. *'The King of the Jews'*: Pilate hoped that the use of that title would have influenced the people in Jesus' favor. *'For he knew...'*: It is clear that Pilate did not wish to condemn Jesus. He did not take the King of the Jews claim seriously. He knew a revolutionary when he saw one, and Jesus was not revolutionary. But the crowd did not leave him any choice as they chose the violent criminal (for them, a patriot) and rejected the gentle Jesus (for them, an enemy of the Sanhedrin).

**Mt 27:19.** *'His wife sent him this message'*: The Romans, as all the people of the ancient times, strongly believed to the dreams. It looks really strange that Matthew has bothered to refer of the dream of Pilate's wife. The explanation for his report can only be found in the legendary tradition about Pilate, which says that both Pilate and his wife became Christians. This means that, when he wrote his Gospel, Matthew knew or was convinced that Pilate, after repenting for having condemned Jesus, had become a Christian. In effect, Tertullian wrote (Apology 21) that Pilate became a Christian; and, astonishing as it may seem, in the Coptic Church and in the Church of Abyssinia Pilate has been canonized.

**Mk 15:11-14. Mt 27:20-25. Lk 23:18-24.** *'But the chief priest and...'*: After receiving his wife's message, Pilate tried again and again to convince the crowd to chose and have Jesus released. But the only answer he always got was the shout, "Crucify Jesus!" *'For the third time...'*: So many more times Pilate tried to convince the crowd to allow him to set free Jesus, but always all of them, pushed by the Jewish authorities, asked for Barabbas set free and for Jesus crucified. *'An uproar was starting'*: The reason of Pilate's presence in Jerusalem was exactly to avoid or sedate trouble. So, when he realized that a big trouble was on the way, he had to grant their request. *'He took water and...'*: Pilate sought to unshoulder the responsibility for condemning Jesus. The public washing of hands was a Jewish custom taken from Deuteronomy 21:6-7. *'It is your responsibility. Let his blood be on us and...'*: They agreed to take full responsibility of Jesus' crucifixion. And they stated their responsibility by using a legal phrase which was strictly connected to the Old Testament idea of generational responsibility.

**Mk 15:15. Mt 27:26. Lk 23:25. Jn 19:1.** *'Wanting to satisfy the crowd...'*: To calm the crowd and avoid the incoming trouble, Pilate had to immediately release Barabbas. At this point, surely the crowd dispersed, but the Jewish authorities remained, to make sure that Pilate was actually going on with Jesus' crucifixion. *'Had him flogged'*: The Roman flogging was a terrible torture. The victim was stripped, and he was tied to a post with his back bent and conveniently exposed to the lash. The lash itself was a long leather thong, studded at intervals with sharpened pieces of bones and pellets of lead. Such scourging always preceded crucifixion and it reduced the body to a mass of bleeding flesh. That is what they inflicted on Jesus.

**Mk 15:16. Mt 27:27.** *'Then... the soldiers...'*: After the flogging, the dreadful routine of the crucifixion began. Jesus was handed over to the soldiers, while the last details of his crucifixion were arranged, and the cross itself was prepared. *'Praetorium'*: The Praetorium was the residence of the governor, his headquarters in Jerusalem, and the soldiers involved were his guard.

**Mk 15:17-18. Mt 27:28-29. Jn 19:2-3.** *'They... clothed him...'*: Jesus had already undergone the agony of flogging before this horse-play of the soldiers began. To them Jesus was only another man for a cross, and they carried out their barrack-room pantomime of royalty and worship, not with malice, but as a rough play. *'Purple robe'*: They used the outer cloak of a Roman soldier as a mock royal cloak. *'Crown of thorns'*: A mock regal

crown. We may shudder at what the soldiers did; but of all the parties involved in the crucifixion they were the least to be blamed. They were not stationed in Jerusalem; surely they had no idea of who Jesus was; they were not Jews, for the Jews were exempted from military service; probably they came from some very far away country. They took their amusement in a way quite common at the time; by tormenting a man condemned to the death penalty.

**Jn 19:4-6.** *'Once more Pilate...'*: Still Pilate did not want to condemn to death Jesus. He was well aware that to do so would be to betray that justice which was the glory of Rome. He had already made no fewer than four attempts to avoid passing a sentence of condemnation. And now he showed again Jesus to the Jewish authorities, a man beaten, flogged, mocked; hoping they would be moved to pity by seeing him in such conditions. But, again, they refused.

**Jn 19:7-11.** *'We have a law...'*: The Law (Leviticus 24:16) laid it down, "Anyone who blasphemes the Name of the Lord must be put to death. The entire assembly must stone him." In such a case the witnesses whose words proved the crime had to be the first to throw the stones, "The hands of the witnesses must be the first in putting him to death, and then the hands of all the people" (Deuteronomy 17:7). *'He claimed to be the Son of Yahweh'*: There was a kind of superstitious curiosity in Pilate. He wished to know from where Jesus came -and it was more than Jesus' native place he was thinking of. When he heard that Jesus had declared to be the Son of Yahweh, he was still more disturbed. Pilate was superstitious rather than religious, fearing that there might be something in it. He was afraid to come to a decision in Jesus' favor because of the Jews; and he was equally afraid to come to a decision against him, because he had an inner suspicion that the Jewish God might be in this. *'Don't you realize...'*: Pilate warned Jesus that he had the power to release him or to crucify him. *'You would have no power...'*: Jesus answered that in reality Pilate had no power at all, except what he had been given by Yahweh.

**Jn 19:12-15.** *'If you let this man go, you are not friend of Caesar'*: This is what at the end coerced Pilate into sentencing Jesus to death. From Josephus and from Philo we know of three previous incidents in Pilate's career as a governor of Judea. Early in his office he marched his troops into Jerusalem with the images of the reigning emperor Tiberius -who was considered a god- still on the tops of their standards. And to enter the Holy City with the graven images of a foreign god was an outrage to the Jews. At the end, to avoid a blood-bath, Pilate had to comply and remove those images. The second incident was when he hung in his palace a series of shields with the images of the Roman gods. This time the Jews complained to the emperor Tiberius himself. And Tiberius took their part. The third incident occurred when Pilate decided to improve Jerusalem water supply taking the money from the Temple Treasury. There were immediate riots which were suppressed with undue savagery. So now the Jewish leaders were threatening to report him to the emperor, and Pilate could not afford another such report. Under the Roman justice, any province had the right to report a governor to Rome for misgovernment, and such a governor would be severely dealt with. *'Day of Preparation'*: Normally, Friday was the day people prepared for the Sabbath. Here, the meaning is Friday of the Passover week. *'The sixth hour'*: Here, surely, John was using Roman time, so the appearance before Pilate would have been at about six AM. *'We have no king but Caesar'*: An unbelievable declaration. This phrase showed to Pilate how much far the Jewish leaders were ready to go to have Jesus killed.

**Jn 19:16.** *'Finally Pilate...'*: After his last attempt, he had no choice but to proceed with the execution.

**Mk 15:19-20. Mt 27:30-31.** *'They took the staff again...': They went on again with their torments until it was time to go to the crucifixion place.*

**The Crucifixion**

See page 462

[Mark 15:21-32 Matthew 27:32-44 Luke 23:26-43 John 19:17-27]

**(Mk15:21-22)(Mt27:32-33)(Lk23:26)(Jn19:17)** *When they led him away carrying the beam of his own cross, as they were going out, they met a certain man from Cyrene, named Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus, who was passing by on his way in from the country. And they seized him, put the beam of the cross on him, and forced him to carry the beam of the cross behind Jesus. They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which in Aramaic means The Place of the Skull).*

**(Mk15:23)(Mt27:34)** *Then there they offered Jesus wine to drink, mixed with gall and myrrh, but after tasting it, he refused to drink and did not take it.*

**(Lk23:27)** *A large number of people followed him, including women who mourned and wailed for him. (28)Jesus turned and said to them, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children. (29)For the time will come when you will say, 'Blessed are the barren women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!' (30)Then 'they will say to the mountains, "Fall on us!" and to the hills, "Cover us!"' (31)For if men do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?"*

**(32)** *Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. (Mk 15:27)(Mt27:38)(Lk23:33)(Jn19:18)* *When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him, and along with him they crucified the other two criminals, two robbers -one on each side; one on his right, the other on his left and Jesus in the middle. (Mk15:28)* *And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "He was counted with the lawless ones."*

**(Mk15:25)** *It was the third hour when they crucified him.*

**(Mk15:26)(Mt27:37)(Lk23:38)(Jn19:19)** *Pilate had a written notice with the charge against him prepared and fastened to the cross. They placed it above his head and it read: THIS IS JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. (Jn19:20)* *Many of the Jews read this sign, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and the sign was written in Aramaic, Latin and Greek. (21)The chief priests of the Jews protested to Pilate, "Do not write 'The King of the Jews,' but that this man claimed to be king of the Jews."*

**(22)** *Pilate answered, "What I have written, I have written."*

**(Mk15:24)(Mt27:35)(Lk23:34)(Jn19:23-24)** *And when they had crucified him, Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."*

*And the soldiers took his clothes, dividing them up into four shares, one for each of them, with the undergarment remaining. This garment was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom.*

*"Let's not tear it," they said to one another. "Let's decide by lot who will get it." And they cast lots to see what each would get.*

*This happened that the Scripture, the word spoken by the prophet, might be fulfilled which said,*

*"They divided my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing."*

*So this is what the soldiers did. (Mt27:36)* *And sitting down, they kept watch over him there.*

**(Mk15:29-30)(Mt27:39-40)** *Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their*

heads and saying, "So! You who are going to destroy the Temple and build it in three days, come down from the cross and save yourself, if you are the Son of Yahweh!"

**(Mk15:31-32)(Mt27:41-44)(Lk23:35)**The people stood watching and, in the same way, even the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him among themselves. "He saved others," they said, "but he can't save himself! He's the King of Israel! If he is the Son of Yahweh, the Chosen One, let this Christ, this King of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe in him. He trusts in Yahweh. Let Yahweh rescue him now if He wants, for he said, '**I am the Son of Yahweh.**'" In the same way those robbers who were crucified with him also heaped insults on him.

**(Lk23:36)**The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar **(37)**and said, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself."

**(39)**One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!"

**(40)**But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear Yahweh," he said, "since you are under the same sentence? **(41)**We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man had done nothing wrong."

**(42)**Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom."

**(43)**Jesus answered him, "**I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in Paradise.**"

**(Jn19:25)**Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. **(26)**When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he cherished standing nearby, he said to his mother, "**Dear woman, here is your son,**" **(27)**and to the disciple, "**Here is your mother.**" From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

**Mk 15:21-22. Mt 27:32-33. Lk 23:26. Jn 19:17.** 'Carrying the beam of his own cross': When the cross was prepared, the criminal condemned to death was usually forced to carry the beam of his cross, often weighing 30 or 40 pounds (15 to 20 kg), to the place of crucifixion. He was placed in the middle of four soldiers and in front of them marched another soldier carrying a board stating the crime of which the condemned was guilty. They took the longest way to the execution place, so that as many people as possible should see the punished criminal and take warning. When they reached the place of crucifixion, the cross was assembled on the ground. The prisoner was stretched on it and his hands and feet nailed to the wood. The cross was then lifted upright and set in its socket -and the criminal was left there to die. Jesus started out by carrying the beam of his cross, but he had been so weakened by the flogging and the soldiers' beating that under its weight his strength gave out and he could carry it no further. 'A certain man... they... forced him': Simon, a bystander, was pressed into service by the soldiers and obliged to carry the beam of Jesus' cross. Palestine was an occupied country and any man might be compelled into the Roman service for any task. 'Cyrene': An important city of Libya that had a large Jewish population. 'Simon': Most probably a Libyan Jew who was in Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover, and whose accommodation was outside Jerusalem. 'Alexander and Rufus': Only mentioned by Mark, but referred to in such a way as to suggest that they were well known by those to whom Mark wrote, that is, the Christians of the Church of Rome. 'Golgotha': In Jerusalem the place of execution was called "The Place of the Skull," Golgotha in Hebrew, Calvarius in Latin. It was outside the city walls, for it was not lawful to crucify a man within the boundaries of the city.

**Mk 15:23. Mt 27:34.** 'They offered Jesus wine to drink, mixed with...': Tradition says



that a company of pious and merciful women of Jerusalem came to every crucifixion, first accompanying the criminals by their weeping and wailing and, then furnishing this pain-killing narcotic, to ease their terrible pain. *'Mixed with gall and myrrh'*: The Talmud gives evidence that both substances were mixed with wine to deaden pain. *'He refused to drink'*: Jesus refused to drink it because he wanted to be fully conscious until his death.

**Lk 23:27-31.** *'Daughters of Jerusalem...'*: Jesus warned the people following him, especially the group of women, of the days of terror that were coming. Once again Jesus was seeing ahead the destruction of Jerusalem, the town which had once more refused the invitation of Yahweh. In effect, a terrible suffering would fall on Jerusalem some 40 years later when the Romans would besiege the city and completely destroy the Temple. *'Blessed are the barren'*: It would be better not to have children than to have them experience such a suffering. *'Fall on us!'*: People will seek escape in death rather than to endure the continuing suffering. *'If men do these things...'*: A proverbial phrase which could be used in many ways. Here it means, "If they do this to one who is innocent, what will they do to those who are guilty?"

**Mk 15:27. Mt 27:38. Lk 23:32-33. Jn 19:18.** *'They crucified him'*: The terror of the cross was that the pain of the process of putting the nails and lifting the cross was terrible but not enough to kill, and the victim was left to die of hunger and thirst under the scorching sun of the day and in the frost of the night. Many men did hang for days before to finally die. *'Two robbers'*: According to Roman law, robbery was not a capital offense. However, the Greek term used here for "robbers" actually signifies "men guilty of insurrection," so crucified for treason.

**Mk 15:28.** *'He was counted with the lawless ones'*: A quotation from Isaiah 53:12.

**Mk 15:25.** *'The third hour'*: Nine o'clock in the morning.

**Mk 15:26. Mt 27:37. Lk 23:38. Jn 19:19.** *'A written notice'*: The inscription placed on the cross was the same placard that had been carried by the soldier heading the group to the crucifixion place. *'THE KING OF THE JEWS'*: So, officially, Jesus was crucified for claiming to be the king of the Jews. No doubt that Pilate put this inscription on Jesus' cross to irritate the Jewish authorities.

**Jn 19:20-22.** *'Written in Aramaic, Latin and Greek'*: The inscription on Jesus' cross was written in the main languages spoken in the area and all around the Roman Empire. Aramaic was the main language of the Jewish people at that time. Latin was the official language of Rome. Greek was the common language of communication throughout the empire. *'The chief priests... protested'*: They had just said that they had no king but Caesar; they had just absolutely refused to have Jesus as their king. *'What I have written...'*: The Jewish authorities had just obtained what they were looking for, so now they could not object to some minor detail which, by the way, was Pilate's way of mocking them.

**Mk 15:24. Mt 27:35. Lk 23:34. Jn 19:23-24.** *'Father, forgive them...'*: The idea that this terrible action was done in ignorance runs all through the New Testament. *'The soldiers took his clothes'*: The soldiers who marched the prisoner to the place of crucifixion had as their perquisite the clothes of the criminal. Every Jew wore five articles -the inner tunic, the outer robe, the belt, the sandals and the turban. Four were divided among the four soldiers. But it would have been a waste to cut the inner tunic, which was woven in one piece without a seam, therefore too valuable to be cut up. So the soldiers gambled for it. *'They divided my garments...'*: This was the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy on Psalm 22:18.

**Mt 27:36.** *'Sitting down'*: From the soldiers' point of view, all the action was over; now the only thing left was a long, boring guard, waiting for the three condemned to die.

**Mk 15:29-32. Mt 27:39-44. Lk 23:35-37.** *'Come down... save yourself'*: Jesus was continuously tested by Satan, for all the length of this ordeal, in his body as well as in his mind. In his body, by the scourging and the crucifixion. In his mind, more than by the mockery of the soldiers, it was by the insults of the own people, and of the chief priests and teachers of the law. But Jesus did not come down from the Cross; his death was absolutely necessary to fulfill Yahweh's salvation plan. *'Those robbers who were crucified with him'*: Initially, both of them insulted Jesus. But, later, one of them repented and asked to be forgiven.

**Lk 23:36-37.** *'Wine vinegar'*: A sour drink carried by the soldiers for the day.

**Lk 23:39-43.** *'One of the criminals... But the other...'*: Initially, we were told (by Matthew) that both of them were insulting Jesus. But then Luke reports the change happened to one of them who, in his suffering and with his own death approaching, understood the wrong of his life and repented. *'Jesus, remember... I tell you the truth...'*: And, immediately after he had asked for forgiveness, Jesus granted it to him. Surely this story tells above all that, from Jesus' point of view, it is never too late to turn to him. *'Paradise'*: This is a Persian word meaning "a walled garden."

**Jn 19:25-27.** *'Near the Cross...'*: At Jesus' Cross there were the four women who were fond of him. *'Dear woman ...'*: As in 'Jesus changes water to wine' (Jn 2:1-11) this form, which to us appears to be rude, is actually a form of respect. When Jesus saw his mother, he could not but think of the days ahead. Even in the agony of the Cross, Jesus did not forget his duties of oldest son and thought of the loneliness of his mother in the days to come. He could not commit her to the care of his brothers, for they were not in Jerusalem and did not yet believe in him. And, after all, John was qualified for the service Jesus entrusted to him for he was Jesus' cousin, being the son of Salome, his mother's sister, and he was the disciple of whom Jesus was particularly fond. *'Took her into his home'*: And so John took responsibility of her.

### **The death of Jesus**

See page 463

[Mark 15:33-42a Matthew 27:45-56 Luke 23:44-49 John 19:28-37]

**(Mk15:33)(Mt27:45)(Lk23:44-45a)** *It was now about the sixth hour and from it darkness came all over the whole land until the ninth hour, for the sun stopped shining. (Mk 15:34)(Mt27:46)And at about the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" -which means, "[Yahweh] my God, my God, why have You forsaken me?"*

**(Jn19:28)** *Later, knowing that all was now completed, and so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I am thirsty." (Mk15:35)(Mt27:47)When some of those standing near heard this, they said, "Listen, he's calling Elijah."*

**(Mk15:36)(Mt27:48-49)(Jn19:29)** *A jar of wine vinegar was there, so immediately one man, one of them, ran and got a sponge. He soaked the sponge in it, filled it with wine vinegar, and put the sponge on a stick, a stalk of the hyssop plant, lifted it to Jesus' lips, and offered it to him to drink. The rest said, "Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to take him down and to save him."*

**(Mk15:37)(Mt27:50)(Lk23:46)(Jn19:30)** *And when he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished," and he called out again with a loud voice, "Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit." When he had said this, Jesus bowed his head, breathed his last and gave up his spirit.*

**(Mk15:38)(Mt27:51)(Lk23:45b)** *And at the moment the curtain of the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split. (Mt27:52)The*

tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. (53) They came out of the tombs, and after Jesus' resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many people.

(Mk15:39)(Mt27:54)(Lk23:47) And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, and those with him who were guarding Jesus, heard his cry and saw how he died, saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, praised Yahweh and exclaimed, "Surely this was a righteous man, a Son of Yahweh!" (Lk23:48) When all the people who had gathered to witness this sight saw what took place, they beat their breasts and went away.

(Mk15:40-41)(Mt27:55-56)(Lk23:49) But those who knew him, including the many women who had followed Jesus from Galilee and cared for his needs, stood there at a distance, watching these things. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salomè, the mother of Zebedee's sons. Many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem were also there.

(Mk15:42a)(Jn19:31) Now it was Preparation day (that is, the day before the Sabbath), and the next day was to be a special Sabbath. Because the Jews did not want the bodies left on the crosses during the Sabbath, they asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies taken down. (Jn19:32) The soldiers therefore came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with Jesus, and then those of the other. (33) But when they came to Jesus and found that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. (34) Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water. (35) The man who saw it has given testimony, and his testimony is true. He knows that he tells the truth, and he testifies so that you also may believe. (36) These things happened so that the Scripture would be fulfilled: "Not one of his bones will be broken," (37) and, as another Scripture says, "They will look on the one they have pierced."

**Mk 15:33. Mt 27:45. Lk 23:44-45.** 'Sixth hour': 12.00 Noon. 'Darkness came all over...': During Jesus' agony and death, the sky was darkened for three hours, from 12.00 Noon till 3:00 PM. Jesus had been put on the cross at the third hour (9:00 AM), and died at the ninth hour (3.00 PM), hanging on the cross for six hours.

**Mk 15:34. Mt 27:46.** 'Ninth hour': 3.00 PM. '[Yahweh] my God, my God...': The words of Psalm 22:1 were spoken in Aramaic, the most common language spoken in Palestine in Jesus' days.

It was necessary for Jesus to die; a rescue even a fraction of a moment before his death would have left open the doubt about the possibility of Jesus losing his battle against Satan just in that one moment. Furthermore, his special communion with Yahweh was an obstacle to the doubtless demonstration of his faith; so Yahweh had to leave him alone to stand the last test, "[Yahweh]... why have You forsaken me?" And Jesus was able to withstand Satan alone, till the very last moment of his life.

**Jn 19:28.** 'I am thirsty': When Jesus was on the cross, he knew the agony of thirst. By this John wished to show that Jesus was really human and really underwent the agony of the cross. John traced back Jesus' cry, "I am thirsty," to the fulfillment of Psalm 69:21, "They... gave me vinegar for my thirst."

**Mk 15:35. Mt 27:47.** 'He's calling Elijah': The bystanders mistook the first words of Jesus' cry to be a cry to Elijah. It was commonly believed that Elijah would come in times of critical need to protect the innocent and rescue the righteous.

**Mk 15:36. Mt 27:48-49. Jn 19:29.** 'Wine vinegar': A cheap wine, the drink of ordinary

people. *'A sponge'*: A useful way of giving a drink to one on the cross, indicative of forethought and compassion. *'Hyssop'*: A general name, given to a number of plants. *'Leave him alone. Let's see if...'*: One man was compassionate, not so all the others.

**Mk 15:37. Mt 27:50. Lk 23:46. Jn 19:30.** *'It is finished'*: In Greek "Tetelestai," which is the victor's shout; the cry of a man who had completed his task; who has won through the struggle. So, then, Jesus died as a victor with a shout of triumph on his lips and, his task accomplished, he went to Yahweh as a triumphant victor. *'With a loud voice'*: The strength of the cry indicates that Jesus did not die the ordinary death of those crucified, who normally suffered long periods of complete exhaustion and unconsciousness before dying. *'Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit'*: That is Psalm 31:5 with one word added -Father.

After having being scourged, beaten and crucified, Jesus died and then was buried. It was absolutely necessary for Jesus to die, as all human beings have to go through death. If Jesus was truly and completely man, then he had to experience it. By dying on the cross, Jesus "sacrificed" himself by a fully voluntary "sacrifice." With his "sacrifice," Jesus gave Yahweh the final and complete possibility -demonstrating to Satan that there was a man fully and totally faithful to Him- to open forever His Reign to all people. By suffering and dying, Jesus paid for the cost of releasing the whole human race from Satan's domination; he paid the price of everybody's ransom.

**Mk 15:38. Mt 27:51. Lk 23:45.** *'The curtain of the Temple was torn...'*: This was the curtain that separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place, the Holy of the Holies. The tearing of the curtain had a symbolical meaning; into the Holy of the Holies only the High Priest could go, and only once a year on the day of Atonement. But now, the curtain was torn and the way to Yahweh was wide open to every man. Men could look at Jesus and say, "That is what Yahweh is like." The tearing of the curtain signified that Jesus made it possible for believers to go directly into Yahweh's presence.

**Mt 27:52-53.** *'The tombs broke open and the bodies of many... were raised to life'*: The symbolism of this is that Jesus conquered death. In dying and in rising again he destroyed the power of the grave. So we can be certain that because he lives we will also live.

**Mk 15:39. Mt 27:54. Lk 23:47.** *'The centurion'*: A commander of 100 men, a century, in the Roman army. He was surely accustomed to see men die. But, even for him, the way Jesus died, and the signs that accompanied his death, were something absolutely out of the ordinary; and he was sure that Jesus came from Yahweh. *'A Son of Yahweh'*: Obviously the centurion, a pagan, did only acknowledge that, since the Jewish God had so obviously acted to vindicate this judicial victim, Jesus had to be one specially favored by Him.

**Lk 23:48.** *'Beat their breast'*: A sign of anguish and grief.

**Mk 15:40-41. Mt 27:55-56. Lk 23:49.** *'The many women'*: They were bewildered, heart-broken, full of sorrow -but they were there. They were so much fond of Jesus that they could not leave him alone in such a terrible moment.

**Mk 15:42a. Jn 19:31-32.** *'Preparation day'*: Friday. Since it was now late in the afternoon, it was urgent to get the bodies of the three crucified men down from the crosses before sundown, when the Sabbath began. *'Special Sabbath'*: The Sabbath that fell at Passover time. *'To have the legs broken'*: To hasten death, because the victims then could not put any weight on their legs and breathing would become almost impossible.

**Jn 19:32-37.** *'The soldiers... broke the legs'*: That was done to the two criminals who were crucified with Jesus. But Jesus was spared that, because he was already dead. *'Instead...'*: One of the soldiers, to make sure that Jesus was dead, thrust a spear into his

side. And there flowed out water and blood. The only physical explanation is that Jesus died literally of a broken heart. When that happened the blood of the heart mixed with the fluid of the pericardium which surrounds the heart. The spear of the soldier pierced the pericardium and the mingled fluid and blood came forth. *'The man who saw it...'*: John stresses so much this point for two reasons. 1) To give proof that Jesus was a real man with a real body -in answer to the emerging heresy of the Gnostic with their ideas of phantoms and spirits and of unreal manhood. 2) These were Jesus' blood and flesh which, as he told his disciples at the Last Supper, he shed for the salvation of all men. *'Not one of his bones...'*: A quotation from Psalm 34:20. *'The one... pierced'*: A quotation from Zechariah 12:10.

### **The burial of Jesus**

See page 465

[Mark 15:42b-47 Matthew 27:57-61 Luke 23:50-56 John 19:38-42]

**(Mk15:42b-46)(Mt27:57-60)(Lk23:50-54)(Jn18:38-42)** Now there was a rich man named Joseph, a prominent member of the Council, a good and upright man, who had not consented to their decision and action. Joseph had himself become a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jews. He came from the Judean town of Arimathea and he was himself waiting for the Kingdom of Yahweh. So later, as evening approached, there came Joseph of Arimathea who went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. Pilate was surprised to hear that he was already dead. Summoning the centurion, he asked him if Jesus had already died. When he learned from the centurion that it was so, Pilate ordered that the body be given to Joseph. So Joseph bought some linen cloth and then, with Pilate's permission, he came, took down the body, and took it away. He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred litrai. Taking Jesus' body, the two of them wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of clean linen cloth. This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs. At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had ever been laid. Because it was the Jewish day of Preparation, and the Sabbath was about to begin, and since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there, in Joseph's own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock. Then he rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away.

**(Mk15:47)(Mt27:61)(Lk23:55)** Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, the mother of Joses, the women who had come with Jesus from Galilee, followed Joseph and, sitting opposite to the tomb, saw the tomb and where and how his body was laid in. **(Lk23:56)** Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes. But they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment.

**Mk 15:42b-46. Mt 27:57-60. Lk 23:50-54. Jn 18:38-42.** *'Joseph...'*: He was a member of the Sanhedrin, most probably the member from whom came all the information we have about Jesus' trial before the Sanhedrin. *'Had not consented'*: Clearly, he had not agreed to the decision of getting rid of Jesus. *'Disciple of Jesus, but secretly'*: It would have been hard for a member of the Sanhedrin to support Jesus' cause openly before the Council. *'Arimatea'*: A village in the hill country of Ephraim, about 20 miles (32 km) northwest of Jerusalem. *'Later, as evening approached...'*: Jesus died at three o'clock on Friday afternoon and the next day, the Sabbath, started at 6 PM, therefore there was no time to waste because after 6 PM no work could be done. *'Went boldly to Pilate'*: It is certainly true that Joseph displayed great courage. He, a member of the Sanhedrin, ca-

me out on the side of a crucified criminal; he risked the possible resentment of Pilate and the certain hatred of the other Sanhedrin members. *'Asked for Jesus' body'*: According to the Roman law, the relatives of a criminal might claim his body for burial. None of Jesus' relatives were in a position to claim his body, for they were all Galileans and none of them possessed a tomb in Jerusalem. *'Pilate was surprised'*: Crucified men often lived few days before dying, and the early death of Jesus surprised him. *'Accompanied by Nicodemus'*: Nicodemus was another Jewish leader (Jesus teaches Nicodemus. Jn 3:1-21). *'Nicodemus brought...'*: It was the Jewish custom to wrap the bodies of the dead in linen clothes and to put sweet spices between the folds of the linen. *'A hundred litrai'*: In Greek, about 75 pounds (34 kg). Nicodemus brought enough spices for the burial of a king. So, when Jesus' closest followers all run away, Joseph and Nicodemus decided to provide for his burial. *'The Sabbath was about to begin...'*: It was now late Friday afternoon, and there was only time to put Jesus' body into the tomb before sundown, when the Sabbath began. *'New tomb... cut out of the rock'*: The tomb belonged to Joseph, had not been used before, and was in a garden very near to the site of the crucifixion. *'Big stone in front of...'*: A disc-shaped stone that rolled in a sloped channel. **Mk 15:47. Mt 27:61. Lk 23:55-56.** *'The women'*: These women, who had followed Jesus when he was alive, and were present at his crucifixion, wished now to see where his body was laid, to be able to come back there two days later -at the third day, as the Jews said- to take proper care of the body. *'Saw the tomb and where...'*: The time left was short, that is why the women had only time to see where the body was laid and go home to prepare their spices and ointments for it before to have to stop, for after 6 PM all work became illegal.

#### ***The guard at the tomb*** [Matthew 27:62-66]

**(Mt27:62)***The next day, the one after Preparation Day, the chief priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate. (63)"Sir," they said, "we remember that while he was still alive that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise again.' (64)So give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, his disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that he has been raised from the dead. This last deception will be worse than the first."*

**(65)"Take a guard," Pilate answered. "Go, make the tomb as secure as you know how." (66)So they went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting the guard.**

**Mt 27:62.** *'The next day'*: This means only one thing, that the chief priests and the Pharisees actually approached Pilate on the Sabbath with their request. By them doing so, it is clear how radically they broke the Sabbath Law, which was one of their own most sacred laws.

**Mt 27:63-64.** *'We remember that...'*: There is a kind of irony here. They came to Pilate saying that Jesus had said that he would rise after three days. They did not want to admit that they envisaged the possibility that this might be true, but only that they thought Jesus' disciples might seek to steal away the body and say that a resurrection had happened. *'This last deception will be worse than the first'*: The first, that Jesus was the Messiah; the second, that he had risen. They, therefore, wished to take special steps to guard the tomb for three days.

**Mt 27:65-66.** *'Take a guard'*: Pilate granted them a guard of Roman soldiers. *'Make the tomb as secure...'*: And they took their steps to secure it, sealing the great round stone which closed the tomb and setting the Roman guard.

***The Resurrection and after***

***The Resurrection. The empty tomb. Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene*** See page 466  
[Mark 16:1-11 Matthew 28:1-10 Luke 24:1-12 John 20:1-18]

***(Mk16:1)***When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they must go to anoint Jesus' body. ***(Mk16:2-4)(Mt 28:1-4)(Lk24:1-2)(Jn20:1)***After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary took the spices they had prepared and went to look at the tomb. Just after sunrise they were on their way to the tomb and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?"

There had been a violent earthquake, for an angel of Yahweh came down from Heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.

The women went to the tomb and, when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been removed and rolled away from the entrance of the tomb. ***(Mk 16:5)(Lk24:3)***When they entered the tomb, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus, but they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed.

***(Mk16:6)(Mt28:5-6)***"Don't be alarmed and afraid," the angel said to the women, "for I know you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is not here. He has risen, just as he said! Come and see the place where they laid him. ***(Mk16:7)(Mt28:7)*** Then go quickly and tell his disciples and Peter, 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.' Now I have told you."

***(Mk16:8)(Mt28:8)***So, trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples.

***(Mt28:9)***Suddenly Jesus met them. ***"Greetings,"*** he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshipped him. ***(10)***Then Jesus said to them, ***"Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."***

***(Lk24:9)(Jn20:2)***So, when they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. [Mary Magdalene] came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one who Jesus cherished, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!" ***(Lk24:10)***It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. ***(11)***But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense.

***(Lk24:12)(Jn20:3-5)***Peter and the other disciple, however, got up and ran to the tomb. Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent over, looked in and saw the strips of linen lying there by themselves. But he did not go in and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened. ***(Jn20:6)*** Then Simon Peter, who was behind him, arrived and went into the tomb. He saw the stripes of linen lying there, ***(7)***as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus' head. The cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen. ***(8)***Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. ***(9)***(They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) ***(10)***Then the disciples went back to their homes.

(11) But Mary [Magdalene] stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb (12) and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot. (Lk 24:4) While they [Mary Magdalene and the other women,] were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. (5) In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? (6) He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: (7) **'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.'**" (8) Then they remembered his words.

(Jn 20:13) They asked her [Mary Magdalene], "Woman, why are you crying?"

"They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." (14) At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize it was Jesus.

(15) "Woman," he said, "why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?"

Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him." (16) Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher).

(17) Jesus said, "**Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to [Yahweh] my God and your God.'**"

(Mk 16:9) When Jesus rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had driven seven demons. (Mk 16:10) (Jn 28:18) Mary Magdalene went to the disciples and told the news to those who had been with him and who were mourning and weeping: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her. (Mk 16:11) When they heard that Jesus was alive and that she had seen him, they did not believe it.

**Mk 16:1.** *'The Sabbath was over':* Saturday ended at about 6.00 PM on Saturday evening. No purchases were possible till that moment. *'Spices':* Not for embalming, which was not practiced by the Jews, but to cover the bad odor given off by the bodies. *'To anoint Jesus' body':* There had been no time to render the last services to the body of Jesus, because the Sabbath had come, when all activities were forbidden. It is clear that the women had absolutely no expectation of Jesus' resurrection.

**Mk 16:2-4. Mt 28:1-4. Lk 24:1-2. Jn 20:1.** *'First day of the week':* Sunday, which for the Jews began at sundown on Saturday. Then, all activities could be resumed, and the women got ready to set out early next day. When they started out, it was dark, still early dawn. *'Who will roll the stone away...?':* Setting the large stone in place was a relatively easy task, but once it had slipped into the groove cut in the bedrock in front of the entrance it was very difficult to remove. Furthermore, this stone had been sealed by the Roman authority. *'There had been a violent earthquake':* It is clear that this event occurred before the women would actually arrive at the tomb. *'An angel of Yahweh ...':* Jesus' resurrection was an act of the will of Yahweh, who sent His angels to take the necessary actions. *'The guards...':* The Roman soldiers, surely superstitious people, were shocked by what was happening. Anyway, it is clear that the report about the earthquake, the angel opening the tomb and his appearance, comes from them.

**Mk 16:5. Lk 24:3.** *'When they entered the tomb':* The tomb was composed by a fore-chamber, at the back of which a low rectangular opening led to the burial chamber. *'They did not find the body...':* Jesus had risen when there had been the earthquake and



the angel had opened the tomb. *'A young man dressed in white robe'*: A messenger angel, probably other than the one seated on the entrance stone.

**Mk 16:6. Mt 28:5-6.** *'The angel said... He has risen'*: The climax of the Gospels is the Resurrection, without which Jesus' death, though noble, would only be tragic. But the Resurrection, due to the will of Yahweh, declared him to be the Son of Yahweh.

**Mk 16:7. Mt 28:7.** *'Go... tell... Peter'*: Through the angel, Jesus showed a special concern for Peter, who must have been tortured with the memory of his disloyalty, so making him understand that he was not condemned. *'He has risen... As he told you'*: The angel reminded them of Jesus' promise, to point that Jesus, when still alive, was aware of his incoming death and resurrection.

**Mk 16:8. Mt 28:8.** *'They said nothing to anyone'*: To none of those they encountered going back home from the tomb. *'Ran to tell...'*: They wasted no time following the angel's order.

**Mt 28:9.** *'Jesus met them'*: Mary Magdalene and the other women were the first to receive the news of the Risen Lord (Mk 16:6; Mt 28:5-6) and, now, to encounter him. They had been there at the Cross, they had been there when he was laid in the tomb; and now they were receiving their affection's reward; they were the first to know the joy of the Resurrection.

**Mt 28:10.** *'My brothers'*: The members of his family did not yet believe in him, but who became disciples not long after this (The Ascension. Mk 16:19-20; Lk 24:50-53; Ac 1:9-14).

To note that the news of the Resurrection and the encounter with Jesus did first convince and fill the women of joy but then, going back home, they lost their confidence as, even if they referred everything to the disciples, they concluded by saying that they did not know where Jesus' body could be (Lk 24:9; Jn 20:2,13).

**Lk 24:9-11. Jn 20:2.** *'When they came back...'*: The women returned with their story to the disciples but they refused to believe them. *'To the Eleven and to all the others'*: "Eleven" is sometimes used to refer to the group of apostles after the betrayal of Judas. The "others" included all the other disciples who, for the most part, came from Galilee. *'Taken the Lord out of the tomb, and...'*: Mary Magdalene's words were not stating Jesus' resurrection. It is clear that she, too, was not convinced -perhaps it was something too big and too difficult to believe.

**Lk 24:12. Jn 20:3-5.** *'Peter and... ran'*: Only Peter and another disciple, John, went out to see if what they had heard might possibly be true. They went running and John, who was younger than Peter, outdistanced him. But, when he came to the tomb, John did not have the courage to enter.

**Jn 20:6-10.** *'Then Simon Peter... arrived... and went into the tomb'*: Peter, with his typical impulsiveness, not only looked in, but went in. *'He saw the stripes...'*: If someone had removed Jesus' body, tomb-robbers or others, why should they leave the grave-clothes? Furthermore, the grave-clothes were there folded and separated from the linen. They did not look as if they had been taken off to be stolen. *'The other disciple also went inside. He saw and believed'*: The sight suddenly penetrated into John's mind; he realized what had happened, and believed to Jesus' resurrection. *'Did not understand from Scripture'*: First the disciples came to know of the Resurrection through what they saw in the tomb; only later they saw it in Scripture. *'Had to rise'*: In effect, Jesus' Resurrection was in Scripture and, thus, was due to the will of Yahweh. *'Went back to...'*: At this point Peter and John left the tomb and returned to the others.

**Jn 20:11-12.** *'Mary [Magdalene] stood outside'*: Mary Magdalene had come back to the

tomb. After she had taken the angel's message to Peter, she was left behind in the race to the tomb so that by the time she got there, Peter and John were already gone. And she stood there weeping. *'She saw two angels'*: This time she had the strength to give a look inside the tomb and, surely with her surprise, she saw two angels.

**Lk 24:4-8.** *'While they... were wondering'*: The other women had later followed Mary Magdalene till Jesus' tomb. *'Suddenly two men'*: They looked like men, but their clothes were remarkable; they were angels. *'Remember... while... in Galilee'*: Jesus had predicted his death and resurrection on a number of occasions, but the disciples and the women had failed to understand or to accept what he was saying. But now the women remembered Jesus' words.

**Jn 20:13-14.** *'They have taken... I don't know where...'*: In spite of what the two angels had said, Mary Magdalene did not understand the reality of Jesus' resurrection. *'She... saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus'*: A number of times the risen Jesus was not recognized. He may have looked different, or he may intentionally have prevented recognition. But, on this occasion, probably Mary did not recognize Jesus for the very simple reason that she could not see him through her tears.

**Jn 20:15-16.** *'Tell me where you have put him'*: See comment to Jn 20:13. *'Mary'*: Finally, only Jesus' direct words had the power to let her understand. *'Rabboni'*: Another Aramaic form for Rabbi.

**Jn 20:17.** *'Do not hold on to me'*: Once she had recognized Jesus, she went to him with all her affection, touching him, to make sure he was real, and not a ghost. The actual meaning of Jesus' phrase is, "Stop touching me. In a short time I am going to my Father, and I want to meet my disciples as often as possible before then. Go and tell them that none of the time we should have together may be wasted." *'My brothers'*: See comment to Mt 28:10. *'My Father and your Father'*: Yahweh is Father both of Christ and of believers, but in different ways.

**Mk 16:9-10. Jn 28:18.** *'When Jesus rose...'*: One thing is certain, if Jesus had not risen from the dead, we would never have heard of him. Clearly, the women had come to pay the last tribute to a dead body. Clearly, the attitude of the disciples was that everything had finished in tragedy. By far the best proof of the Resurrection is the existence of Christianity. Nothing else could have changed a group of sad and despairing men and women into the people radiant with joy and flaming with courage we find later. In effect, the Resurrection is the central fact of the whole Christian faith.

**Mk 16:11.** *'They did not believe'*: Anyway, in spite of what the women said to them -and of what Peter and John could have told- all the other disciples did not believe that Jesus' resurrection was possible.

### ***The guards' report*** [Matthew 28:11-15]

*(Mt28:11) While the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened. (12) When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money, (13) telling them, "You are to say, 'His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.' (14) If this reports gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble." (15) So the soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story has been widely circulated among the Jews to this very day.*

**Mt 28:11.** *'While the women where on their way':* Sunday early in the morning, after the earthquake and after the angel opened the entrance of Jesus' tomb (The Resurrection. Mk 16:1-11; Mt 28:1-10; Lk 24:1-12; Jn 20:1-18). *'Some of the guards...':* The Roman soldiers who had been dispatched to guard the tomb to make sure the disciples could not come and steal Jesus' body (The guard at the tomb. Mt 27:62-66).

**Mt 28:12-13.** *'The chief priests... devised a plan':* When the guards came to the chief priests and told them what had happened at the tomb, the Jewish authorities were desperately worried. Was it possible that all their planning had come to nothing? So they devised another fraud; they bribed the members of the guard to say that Jesus' disciples had come while they slept and had stolen his body.

**Mt 28:14-15.** *'If this report gets to the governor...':* There is no doubt that the soldiers were very worried about Pilate's reaction to such a kind of report; their punishment for sleeping during their duty would have been extremely severe. The Jewish authorities had to reassure them offering their protection. And then, the soldiers agreed. *'This story':* Consequently, this was the official version of the facts, a version that the Jews were widely using at the time the Gospels were written.

It is interesting to note the means used by the Jewish authorities in their attempt to eliminate the problem Jesus. They used treachery to lay hold on him, illegality to try him, slander to charge him to Pilate, and, finally, bribery to silence the truth about him. And they failed.

**On the road to Emmaus** [Mark 16:12-13 Luke 24:13-33a]

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**(Mk16:12)(Lk24:13-15)** *Now that same day two of them were walking in the country, going to a village called Emmaus, about sixty stadia from Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. Afterwards, as they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up, appeared in a different form and walked along with them; (Lk24:16)but they were kept from recognizing him.*

**(17)** *He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?"*

*They stood still, their faces downcast. (18)One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened there in these days?"*

**(19)** *"What things?" he asked.*

*"About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before Yahweh and all the people. (20)The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; (21)but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. (22)In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning (23)but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. (24)Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see."*

**(25)** *He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! (26)Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" (27)And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.*

**(28)** *As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus acted as if he were going farther. (29)But they urged him strongly, "Stay with us, for it is near evening; the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them.*

(30) *When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. (31) Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him. And he disappeared from their sight.*

(Lk24:32) *They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"*

(Mk16:13)(Lk24:33a) *They got up, returned at once to Jerusalem and reported it to the rest; but they did not believe them either.*

**Mk 16:12. Lk 24:13-16.** *'Two of them':* Two of Jesus' disciples. *'Emmaus':* A village 7 miles (11 km) west of Jerusalem. *'Talking with each other':* The whole situation seemed to these two men to have no explanation. Their hopes and their dreams were shattered. *'Jesus himself... in a different form':* Jesus' resurrected body had different characteristics and capabilities than the physical one, and Jesus often did make use of them when still on Earth, between Resurrection and Ascension. The risen Christ came and went at will, independent of time and space, not subject any more to the limitations of the earthly body.

**Lk 24:17-18.** *'Their faces downcast':* It is clear that they did not actually believe to the possibility of Jesus' resurrection.

**Lk 24:19-21.** *'A prophet':* After his death they could not call him Messiah anymore. *'We had hoped...':* Those were the words of men whose hopes were dead and buried. *'To redeem Israel':* To set the Jewish nation free from bondage to Rome. *'It is the third day':* A reference both to the Jewish belief that after the third day the soul left the body and to Jesus' remark that he would be resurrected on the third day -in this case intending that he was not.

**Lk 24:22-24.** *'In addition...':* And, further to all that, his body had disappeared from the tomb and nobody knew where to find him.

**Lk 24:25-27.** *'He said to them...':* They still did not know it was Jesus speaking. *'Moses and all the Prophets':* A way of designating the whole of the Old Testament Scriptures. *'He explained':* In spite of all his explanations, they still did not understand.

**Lk 24:28-29.** *'As if he were going farther':* If they had not invited him in, he would have continued on by himself. He would not have forced himself on them; he awaited their invitation to come in. Yahweh gave to men the greatest and most perilous gift, the gift of been able to choose. Men can use it to invite Jesus Christ to enter their lives or to allow him to pass on.

**Lk 24:30-31.** *'When he was at the table...':* Finally they recognized him at the moment of the breaking of the bread, when "Their eyes were opened," a phrase which shows more than a matter of simple recognition; it means that they recognized Jesus and understood his position and his function with Yahweh.

**Lk 24:31.** *'And he disappeared':* Making use of the capabilities of his resurrected body.

**Lk 24:32.** *'They asked each other':* Only after having been allowed to recognize Jesus, they understood that, in the inner of their heart, they had already known it was him.

**Mk 16:13. Lk 24:33a.** *'They got up, returned at once to Jerusalem':* It was a 7 miles (11 km) walking trip back to Jerusalem, but they could not keep the good news to themselves. *'But they did not believe':* This fact, that none of the disciples believed to the various reports about Jesus' Resurrection, keeps repeating. There is only one possible explanation; before to be in spiritual communion with Yahweh (that is, before Pentecost), a direct intervention of Jesus was necessary to make people believe something so extraordinary.

***Jesus appears to his disciples***

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*[Mark 16:14 Luke 24:33b-43 John 20:19-20;24-25]*

**(Mk16:14)(Lk24:36)(Jn20:19)** Later, on the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, and while they were still talking about this, Jesus himself appeared to the Eleven as they were eating; he came and stood among them and said to them, "**Peace be with you.**" He rebuked them for their lack of faith and their stubborn refusal to believe those who had seen him after he had risen.

**(Lk24:37)** They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. **(38)** He said to them, "**Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? (39) Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.**"

**(Lk24:40)(Jn20:20)** After he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. **(Lk24:41)** And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, "**Do you have anything here to eat?**" **(42)** They gave him a piece of broiled fish, **(43)** and he took it and ate it in their presence.

**(33b)** There they [the two who met Jesus on the road to Emmaus] found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together **(34)** and saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon." **(35)** Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.

**(Jn20:24)** Now Thomas (called Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. **(25)** So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!"

But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it."

**Mk 16:14. Lk 24:36. Jn 20:19.** '*On the evening...*': Sunday evening. '*The disciples were together*': Most likely the disciples continued to meet in the room of the Last Supper and they were afraid that the Jews who had killed Jesus will now turn against them, and would arrest them too. '*Jesus... appeared*': As they were there, Jesus was suddenly among them, into a room, behind locked doors, indicating that his resurrected body had now new capabilities. '*The Eleven*': The Twelve minus Judas Iscariot. '*Peace be with you!*': The usual eastern greeting. '*Rebuked them*': Probably, the disciples did expect to be rebuked for running away when Jesus was arrested but, instead, he reprovved them sharply for not wanting to believe to the evidence of the facts and to all the witnesses of his Resurrection.

**Lk 24:37-39.** '*Thinking they saw a ghost*': The fact that Jesus had come into a locked room made this thought almost natural. '*Look at my hands and my feet*': Jesus' hands and feet bore the mark of the nails used to crucify him. '*Touch me and see...*': The risen Lord was no ghost or hallucination; he was real. The risen Jesus was truly the Jesus who died. Christianity is founded on the reality of Resurrection; not on the dreams or on the visions of few men, but on One who in actual historical facts faced, fought and conquered death and rose again.

**Lk 24:40. Jn 20:20.** '*His hands and feet and side*': Where the most serious wounds were. Knowing that his disciples thought to have seen a ghost, Jesus was clearly identifying himself as a real, physical human being.

**Lk 24:41-43.** '*Anything here to eat?... A piece of broiled fish... he... ate it in their presence*': Demonstrating in front of so many witnesses that he had a physical body that could take food.

**Lk 24:33b-35.** *'There they... found...'*: It is clear that, when the two who had met Jesus on the road to Emmaus reached all the others in Jerusalem, Jesus had already left the room. So, when they came, they did not find a group of unbelieving people, but a group of friends who had already shared their experience of meeting with the resurrected Jesus. *'Appeared to Simon'*: This is the only remark that Jesus appeared to Peter before to appear to the disciples gathered in the room of the Last Supper.

**Jn 20:24-25.** *'Now Thomas... was not with the disciples...'*: When Jesus came, Thomas was not there; and, as the news that he had come back seemed to him far too good to be true, he refused to believe it. *'Unless I see... I will not believe'*: To Thomas the Cross was exactly what he had expected when Jesus had proposed going to Bethany, during Lazarus' illness. His reaction had been, "Let us also go, that we can die with him" (The death of Lazarus. Jn 11:1-16). Thomas never lacked courage, but he was a natural pessimist. Even if what he had expected had happened, he was broken-hearted and could not allow himself to believe his friends' good news without verifying them personally.

***Jesus appears to Thomas [John 20:26-31]***

**(Jn20:26)** *A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" (27)Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here: see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe."*

**(28)** *Thomas said to him, "My Lord! My Master!"*

**(29)** *Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."*

**(30)** *Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. (31)But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of Yahweh, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*

**Jn 20:26.** *'A week later'*: A week later Jesus appeared again in the same room; and this time Thomas was there. *'Though the doors were locked. Peace be with you'*: See comment to 'Jesus appears to his disciples (Mk 16:14; Lk 24:33b-43; Jn 20:19-20,24-25).

**Jn 20:27.** *'He said to Thomas...'*: Jesus knew Thomas' heart, and so he repeated Thomas' own words, inviting him to make the test he had demanded.

**Jn 20:28.** *'My Lord! My Master!'*: Before, Thomas had honestly refused to believe but then, when he was sure, with his heart full of happiness and devotion, all he could say was: "My Lord! My Master!" -in this way declaring his faith.

**Jn 20:29.** *'Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed'*: These words, of course, apply to future believers, not to those who, at the time, did see Jesus personally.

**Jn 20:30.** *'Many other miraculous signs'*: The Gospels writers had selected few signs from among many. *'In the presence of his disciples'*: So they could testify to what he had done.

**Jn 20:31.** *'That you may believe...'*: It is clear that the Gospels do not give a full account of Jesus' life. They do not follow him from day to day but give a selection of what Jesus said and did, showing what he was like and the kind of things he was doing. The Gospels are not meant to be biographies of Jesus, but appeals to take him as Savior, Master and Lord. The Gospels were written to show the truth of Jesus' Messiahship and to present him as the Son of Yahweh, so that the readers may believe in him and, by believing, they may have access to eternal life.

***Jesus appears again to his disciples*** [John 21:1-14]

**(Jn21:1)** *Afterward Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Tiberias. It happened this way: (2) Simon Peter, Thomas (called Didymus), Nathanael, from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. (3) "I'm going out to fish," Simon Peter told them, and they said, "We'll go with you." So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.*

**(4)** *Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus.*

**(5)** *He called out to them, "Friends, haven't you any fish?"*

*"No," they answered.*

**(6)** *He said, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some." When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish.*

**(7)** *Then the disciple whom Jesus cherished said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, "It is the Lord," he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water. (8) The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about two hundred cubits. (9) When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread.*

**(10)** *Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish you have just caught."*

**(11)** *Simon Peter climbed aboard and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn. (12) Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. (13) Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. (14) This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.*

**Jn 21:1.** *'Jesus appeared again':* Surely, the Gospels report only few of the occasions Jesus had to stay with his disciples during the "forty days" between Resurrection and Ascension. *'Sea of Tiberias':* The Sea of Galilee.

**Jn 21:2-3.** *'Out to fish. That night':* Normally, night-time was the best for fishing. But, this particular night, the group of fishermen did not get anything.

**Jn 21:4-5.** *'The disciples did not realize...':* It was very early in the morning, they were tired for being out in the boat all the night, so it is understandable that they did not recognize Jesus from the boat.

**Jn 21:6.** *'Throw your net...':* This is the description of something which frequently happens on that lake. Jesus, from the shore, could see in the clear water a shoal of fish invisible to the men on the boat. Jesus was acting as guide to his fishermen friends. Clearly, the catch here is not described as a miracle, then it is not meant to be taken as one.

**Jn 21:7.** *'It is the Lord!':* Finally, one of them did recognize Jesus. *'As soon as Simon Peter...':* When Peter realized who it was he jumped into the water to reach immediately Jesus. *'Wrapped his outer garment':* Before to rush to meet Jesus, Peter covered himself. When fishing, he was not naked, but he was using a loin cloth as all the fishermen did when fishing.

**Jn 21:8.** *'Not far from shore':* They were about 200 cubits, that is, 100 yards (90 meters), far from shore.

**Jn 21:9-10.** *'They saw a fire of burning coal...':* The risen Christ was a real person. To demonstrate this fundamental point, Jesus prepared a charcoal fire on the beach, cooked some fish on it and then ate and drank with his disciples.

**Jn 21:11.** *'Peter... dragged the net ashore'*: Peter headed up the effort, pulling the net to the beach, for the whole group had not been able previously to haul the net into the boat. *'Full of large fish, 153'*: There is a reason for writing exactly this numerical quantity. At the time, Jerome said that in the sea there were 153 different kinds of fish. In other words, John wrote that in that catch there were all the kinds of fish existing in the world. Therefore the number 153 symbolizes the fact that some day all men of all nations will be gathered together to Jesus Christ. Furthermore, the net stands for the Church because, as the net held all the fishes and was not broken, so there is room in the Church for all men of all times and of all nations.

**Jn 21:12-13.** See comment to Jn 21:9-10.

**Jn 21:14.** *'The third time'*: The third appearance to a group of disciples, though there had been other appearances to individuals.

***Jesus reinstates Peter*** [John 21:15-25]

**(Jn21:15)** *When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, are you truly fond of me more than of these?"*

*"Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I am fond of you."*

*Jesus said, "Feed my lambs."*

**(16)** *Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, are you truly fond of me?"*

*He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I am fond of you."*

*Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep."*

**(17)** *The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, are you fond of me?"*

*Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Are you fond of me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things, you know that I am fond of you."*

*Jesus said, "Feed my sheep. (18)I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." (19)Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify Yahweh. Then he said to him, "Follow me!"*

**(20)** *Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus cherished was following them. (This was the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the supper and said, "Lord, who is going to betray you?") (21)When Peter saw him, he asked, "Lord, what about him?"*

**(22)** *Jesus answered, "If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me." (23)Because of this, the rumor spread among the brothers that this disciple would not die. But Jesus did not say that he would not die; he only said, "If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you?"*

**(24)** *This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true. (25)Jesus did many other things as well. If everyone of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.*

**Jn 21:15-17.** *'Are you truly fond of me? I am fond of you'*: The Greek verb used in Jesus' first two questions -translated "truly be fond"- is different from that in the third question and in all of Peter's answers -translated "be fond." "Truly be fond" refers to an affection in which the entire personality, beginning by the will, is involved. "Be fond" refers to an affection in which emotion plays a more prominent role than will. In these verses we have a scene which must have been printed for ever on the mind of Peter. *'Simon... are you truly fond of me more than of these?'*: "These" has the meaning of "these men and



these things;" that is, all people dear to him -relatives and friends- and all terrestrial goods -house, boat, etc.- he owned and used. The important point is that in so serious a matter as the reinstatement of Peter, the true question was whether he really, was deeply fond of Jesus at the best of his capabilities. And Peter simply said, "You know that I am fond of you and how I am fond of you." Jesus asked his question three times; and for a good reason. It was three times that Peter had denied his Lord, and so it was three times that the Lord gave him the chance to affirm his affection. *'You know all things'*: Peter's reply stresses that Jesus perfectly knew the true sentiment of his heart. But it was necessary to ask the question and have the answer in front of all disciples, to reinstate Peter publicly and officially. *'Feed my lambs'*: It means the same as "Take care of my sheep" and of "Feed my sheep." By these phrases, Jesus was assigning to Peter the task of guiding that group of believers who constitute the first, little, Christian Church on Earth.

**Jn 21:18.** *'I tell you...'*: His affection for Jesus brought Peter a task and a cross. By being fond of Jesus he had to dedicate his life to the task of looking after Jesus' flock. And the day came when, in Rome, Peter had to die for his Lord. He, too, went to a cross. *'Will stretch out your hands'*: From the beginning, the Church understood these words as a prophecy of Peter's crucifixion.

**Jn 21:19.** *'The kind of death'*: Peter would be a martyr. The tradition indicates that he was crucified and asked to be nailed to the cross head downwards, for he said that he was not worthy to die as his Lord had died.

**Jn 21:20.** *'Disciple whom Jesus cherished'*: John. *'Was following'*: Surely, John was following Jesus to stay as much as possible with him.

**Jn 21:21.** *'What about him?'*: John was "The disciple whom Jesus cherished" So, it looks natural that Peter, after Jesus' words, asked about John's role in Jesus' plan.

**Jn 21:22.** *'If I want him to... You must follow me'*: The meaning of this phrase is: "Peter, even in the case I would have decided to keep John alive till my second coming (till the end of the world), this doesn't have to interest you. Each of you has his own assigned task. So you don't have to worry about anybody else. You have fully accepted me; now you have only to follow your Lord." *'Until I return'*: A clear declaration that Jesus will actually come back on Earth at the end of the world.

**Jn 21:23.** *'The rumor spread... But Jesus... only said...'*: The other disciples misunderstood the meaning of Jesus' phrase of the previous verses, and thought that he had decided to keep John alive till the end of the world. But Jesus only said that he had decided what to do with each of his disciples. So, whatever his decision was for one of them, the others had only to look after their own tasks.

**Jn 21:24.** *'Disciple who testifies'*: The concept of testimony is important all throughout the Gospels. Here John, the cherished disciple, was the witness behind the account. *'These things'*: It refers to his whole Gospel. *'Who wrote them down'*: John was not only the witness but also the actual author. *'We know that...'*: It is evident that this verse was written by John's contemporaries who were in a position to know the truth.

This passage makes it quite clear that John must have lived to a very old age. Tradition says that he lived in Ephesus until he was more than 100 years old. He had been the witness of Jesus Christ and, until the early Church was strong enough, he was there, the man who was able to say: "I saw these things personally, and I know they are true."

**Jn 21:25.** *'Many other things'*: It is clear that, of the whole life of Jesus Christ, we know only few fragments. The Gospels' authors had been selective and had written down only a selection of the facts. *'Even the whole world would not have room'*: Our historical knowledge of Jesus is minimal, but we have been given all we need to know to strengthen our faith.

**The great commission**

See page 469

*[Mark 16:15-18 Matthew 28:16-20 Luke 24:44-48]**(Mt28:16)Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. (17)When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted.**(Lk24:44)He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms."**(45)Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. (46)He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, (47)and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. (48)You are witnesses of these things."**(Mk16:15)(Mt28:18-20)Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in Heaven and on Earth has been given to me. Therefore go into all the world, preach the Good News to all Creation, and make disciples of all nations baptizing them, in the name of the Father and of the Son, by the Spirit of Yahweh, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. (Mk16:16)Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. (17)And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; (18)they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well."*

**Mt 28:16-17.** *'Went to Galilee, to the mountain where...':* Some days later, Jesus and his disciples met in the place chosen by Jesus, one of the mountains around the Sea of Galilee. *'Some doubted':* That he was the Messiah foretold by the Scriptures, because all the Jews were expecting a completely different kind of Messiah.

**Lk 24:44.** *'He said...':* And Jesus began to explain the proper interpretation of the Scriptures, stressing the necessity of the Cross for Yahweh's Messiah, showing that it was to the Cross that all the Scriptures looked forward, and that the Cross was part of the plan of Yahweh. *'Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms':* The three parts of the Hebrew Scripture, indicating that Christ (the Messiah) was foretold in the whole Old Testament.

**Lk 24:45.** *'Opened their minds':* By clearly and properly explaining the Old Testament Scriptures.

**Lk 24:46.** *'Will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day':* The Old Testament depicts the Messiah as actually having these characteristics.

**Lk 24:47.** *'Repentance and forgiveness of sins':* Jesus stresses that in the Old Testament the prediction of the Messiah's death and resurrection is always joined with the request of all men's repentance and with divine forgiveness.

**Lk 24:48.** *'You are the witnesses':* They had seen with their eyes the realization of everything those Scriptures foretold.

**Mk 16:15. Mt 28:18-20.** *'All authority... been given to me':* Jesus assured his disciples of the legitimacy of his power. Now they were the servants of a Master whose authority on Earth and in Heaven was beyond question. *'Therefore go...':* Jesus gave them the great commission, sending them out in the world to make all men his disciples. He had come on Earth with a message for all men and now he was going to his Father. So, from that moment onwards, his message had to be taken to all men by his disciples -by the Church. And every Christian who is sent out with a message needs power and authority to back the message; needs someone to whom he may turn when he is in doubt and in

difficulty. This means that the Church -every one Christian- is always dependent on Jesus. The sending of the Church by Jesus is parallel to the sending of Jesus by Yahweh. Furthermore, as the relationship between Jesus and Yahweh was characterized by Jesus' continuous perfect obedience to Yahweh, so the Church has always to fully obey to Jesus. *'Baptizing them, in the name...'*: After repenting of all the past sins and having accepted Jesus Christ as his Lord, baptism officially marks a man as a Christian; it is a sign of his union with and commitment to Jesus Christ. *'Surely I am with you...'*: Jesus promised them to be always present with his help, every time they will need it.

**Mk 16:16.** *'Whoever believes...'*: After believing in Jesus, repenting and entering in spiritual communion with Yahweh, a man is spiritually saved. On the contrary, a person who doesn't want to believe and repent is cutting himself out ("condemned") of the possibility of being in spiritual communion with Yahweh and, consequently, of spiritual salvation.

**Mk 16:17-18.** *'These signs will accompany...'*: It is clear that these phrases don't have to be taken literally. The Christians don't have such a kind of physical powers, but they are filled with a power that allows them to cope with life in a totally different way than other people.

The great interest of this passage is the picture of the preaching and healing duty of the Church. It is the duty of the Church, and so of every Christian, to tell the story of Jesus and of his Good News to those who have never heard them. Furthermore, it is important to remember that Christianity has to be concerned with men's bodies as well as men's spirits, as Jesus did during his earthly mission.

***The commission confirmed*** [Luke 24:49 John 20:21-23 Acts 1:4-8] See page 470

**(Lk24:49)(Jn20:21-23)(Ac1:4)** *Again on one occasion, while he was eating with them, Jesus said: "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Spirit of Yahweh. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven." And he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father has promised, which you have heard me speak about and I am going to send you. Stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on High. (Ac-1:5) For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Spirit of Yahweh."*

**(6)** *So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"*

**(7)** *He said to them, "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by His own authority. (8) But you will receive power when the Spirit of Yahweh comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the Earth."*

**Lk 24:49. Jn 20:21-23. Ac 1:4.** *'On one occasion...'*: Clearly, this episode took place in Jerusalem, as Jesus tells his disciples non to leave the city. *'As the Father sent me, I am sending you'*: By these words Jesus confirms the mission assigned to his men (The great commission. Mk 16:15-18; Mt 28:16-20; Lk 24:44-48). *'He breathed on them'*: Jesus breathed on the Eleven putting them in spiritual communion with Yahweh. As in the story of the creation of man Yahweh breathed in Adam's nostrils the breath of life, so here Jesus gave the Apostles the live power of the spiritual communion with Yahweh. *'If you forgive...'*: This is a saying whose true meaning has to be carefully understood.

One thing is certain; the Apostles had to bring Jesus' message to men. So, if they knew that a man was really penitent, they could with absolute certainty proclaim to him the forgiveness of Jesus. But equally, if they knew that there was no penitence in his heart, they had to tell him that until his heart changed there was no Jesus' forgiveness for him. So, this sentence doesn't mean that the power to forgive sins was ever entrusted to any man; it means that the power to proclaim the forgiveness was so entrusted; along with the power-duty to warn that forgiveness is not open to the impenitent. *'Do not leave Jerusalem'*: Only the Eleven did "receive the Spirit of Yahweh" -were put in spiritual communion with Yahweh- by the direct intervention of Jesus. All the other disciples and followers will be put in this condition later, after Jesus' Ascension to Heaven. *'The gift my Father has promised. Clothed with power from on High'*: The reference is to the spiritual power all Christians receive when they are in communion with the Spirit of Yahweh.

**Ac 1:5.** *'In a few days'*: On the day of Pentecost, few days later, when all disciples will be put in communion with the Spirit of Yahweh (The Spirit of Yahweh at Pentecost. Ac 2:1-13).

**Ac 1:6.** *'Going to restore the Kingdom of Israel?'*: Like their fellow countrymen, they were always looking for the deliverance of the people of Israel from foreign domination and for the establishment of an earthly kingdom. The reference to the coming of the Spirit of Yahweh had caused them to wonder if the New Age was about to begin.

**Ac 1:7-8.** *'It is not for you... but you will receive power...'*: They had been given a task, to evangelize the world and they will receive what they need to carry out their task; the spiritual strength coming from being in communion with Yahweh. Everything else, to them, didn't have to matter, as not related to their mission. *'My witnesses'*: First, a witness is a man who confirms what he knows to be true. Second, the true witness is not of words but of deeds. *'In Jerusalem, and... to the ends of the Earth'*: They will testify about Jesus; that is, they will spread the Good News of the Kingdom of Yahweh now open to all men.

### **The Ascension. Jesus taken up into Heaven**

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[Mark 16:19-20 Luke 24:50-53 Acts 1:9-14]

**(Mk16:19)(Lk24:50-51)(Ac1:9)** *After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them and said this, and when he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into Heaven before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight, and he sat at the right hand of Yahweh.*

**(Ac1:10)** *They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. (11)"Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into Heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into Heaven."*

**(Lk24:52)(Ac1:12)** *Then they worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day's walk from the city.*

**(Ac1:13)** *When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. Those present were Peter, John, James and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James.*

**(Lk24:53)** *And they stayed continually at the Temple, praising Yahweh. (Ac1:14) They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.*

*(Mk16:20) Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his Word by the signs that accompanied it.*

**Mk 16:19. Lk 24:50-51. Ac 1:9.** *'Bethany'*: The village of Jesus' friends -Martha, Mary an Lazarus- near Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives. *'Taken up into Heaven'*: It was essential that something of that kind should happen. In effect, it was unthinkable that the appearances of Jesus would continue for ever or would at a certain point simply stop. There had to come a day when the Jesus of Earth finally became the Christ of Heaven. To the disciples Jesus' Ascension had a number of meanings. It was an ending; the end of the days when their faith was in a flesh and blood person physically present among them. From that moment they were linked to someone who was forever independent of space and time. It was a beginning; the disciples did not leave the scene of the Ascension heart-broken; they left it with great joy, because now they knew that they had a Master from whom nothing could separate them any more. They were certain that they had a friend, not only on Earth, but also in Heaven. *'He sat at the right hand of Yahweh'*: A position of authority second only to Yahweh.

**Ac 1:10.** *'Two men dressed in white'*: A common description of angels.

**Ac 1:11.** *'Men of Galilee'*: The Eleven apostles were from Galilee. *'Taken... into Heaven'*: Today we do not regard Heaven as some place beyond the sky; we regard it as a state of blessedness when we will for ever be with Yahweh. But in those days men thought of Earth as flat and of Heaven as a place above the sky. Therefore, if Jesus was to give his followers a definite proof that he had gone to his Father, the Ascension was absolutely necessary. *'Will come back'*: It will be Jesus' second coming, at the end of the world. *'In the same way'*: In the same resurrected body, reappearing in the middle of the clouds.

**Lk 24:52. Ac 1:12.** *'Mount of Olives'*: The Ascension occurred on the eastern slope of that mount, between Jerusalem and Bethany. *'Sabbath day's walk'*: The distance a faithful Jew was to travel no further on the Sabbath, of about 0.6 miles (1 km).

**Ac 1:13.** *'Bartholomew'*: John calls him Nathanael. *'James son of Alphaeus'*: Called also James the younger. *'Judas son of James'*: Called also Thaddaeus.

**Lk 24:53.** *'At the Temple'*: During the period of time immediately following Jesus' Ascension the believers met continually at the Temple, where many rooms were available for meetings. To note that they did not meet any more fearfully in the room of the Last Supper behind locked doors, but openly, in the center of the Jewish worship -in Yahweh's Temple.

**Ac 1:14.** *'With the women'*: The wives of the apostles and those who were ministering to Jesus and to the apostles. *'Mary the mother of Jesus'*: Last mentioned here in Scripture. *'Brothers'*: It is interesting to note that Jesus' brothers now are with the company of the disciples while, during Jesus' lifetime, they had not been among his followers.

**Mk 16:20.** *'Then the disciples went out and...'*: As they had been commissioned by Jesus, to spread the Good News of the Kingdom of Yahweh open to everybody.

### ***The Spirit of Yahweh at Pentecost [Acts 2:1-13]***

*(Ac2:1) When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. (2) Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from Heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. (3) They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. (4) All of them were filled with the Spirit of Yahweh and began to speak in other tongues as Yahweh enabled them.*

(5)Now there were staying in Jerusalem Yahweh-fearing Jews from every nation under Heaven. (6)When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. (7)Utterly amazed, they asked: "Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? (8)Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language? (9)Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, (10)Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (11)(both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs -we hear them declaring the wonders of Yahweh in our own tongues!" (12)Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?"

(13)Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine."

**Ac 2:1.** '*Pentecost*': It was one of the three great Jewish festivals (Passover, Feast of Tabernacles, and Pentecost). The name means "The Fiftieth," and another name for Pentecost was "The Feast of Weeks." It was so called because it fell on the fiftieth day (after a week of weeks) after the Passover, at the beginning of June. By that time traveling conditions were at their best, and plenty of people from every country came to Jerusalem. The feast had two significances. An historical one as it commemorated the giving of the Law to Moses on Mount Sinai. And an agricultural one as a thanksgiving for the ingathered harvest (it was also called, "The Feast of Harvest"). '*They were all together*': The eleven apostles and all the other disciples.

**Ac 2:2.** '*Violent wind*': Breath or wind is a symbol of the Spirit of Yahweh. The coming of His Spirit is marked by audible (wind) and visible (fire) signs.

**Ac 2:3.** '*Tongues of fire*': A description appropriate to the context. '*Fire*': A symbol of divine presence, also associated with divine judgment.

**Ac 2:4.** '*All of them were filled with the Spirit of Yahweh*': This was the fulfillment of Jesus' promise. Their spirits were in complete communion with the Spirit of Yahweh; their words were His words. '*In other tongues*': Their spiritual communion with Yahweh enabled them to speak in languages they did not previously know.

**Ac 2:5.** '*Yahweh-fearing Jews*': Devout Jews coming from every part of the world assembled in Jerusalem for the great feasts.

**Ac 2:6-8.** '*Speaking in his own language*': The Jews coming from the rest of the world would very probably understand both the Aramaic spoken in Israel and the Greek language which was common all around the world. But more than this was occurring; they heard the apostles speak in languages of the different places represented.

**Ac 2:9-10.** '*Parthians*': Inhabitants of the territory from the Tigris to India. '*Medes*': Media lay east of Mesopotamia, north-west of Persia and south-southwest of the Caspian Sea. '*Elamites*': Elam was north of the Persian Gulf, bounded on the west by the Tigris. '*Mesopotamia*': Between the Euphrates and Tigris rivers. '*Judea*': The homeland of the Jews, used here in the Old Testament sense, including the whole Israel. '*Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia*': Districts in Asia Minor. '*Phrygia and Pamphylia*': Other districts in Asia Minor. '*Egypt*': From the most ancient times, a great number of Jews lived there. '*Libya*': A region west of Egypt. '*Cyrene*': The capital of a district of Libya called Cyrenaica. '*Rome*': Thousands of Jews lived in Rome.

**Ac 2:11.** '*Converts to Judaism*': Pagans who had accepted the full observance of the Mosaic Law and were received into full fellowship with the Jews. '*Cretans*': From an island lying south-southeast of Greece. '*Arabs*': From a region to the east. '*We hear them declaring*': Not a miracle of hearing but of speaking. The apostles were declaring Yahweh's wonders in the native languages of the various visiting Jews.

**Ac 2:12.** *'What does this mean?'*: At Pentecost the disciples had an experience of the power of the Spirit of Yahweh flooding their beings as they never had before. And, for the first time in their lives, the people gathered there were hearing the Word of Yahweh in a way that cut straight to their hearts and that they could clearly understand. The power of the Spirit of Yahweh was such that it had given these simple disciples a message that could reach straight to the heart.

**Ac 2:13.** *'They have had too much wine'*: But not all the presents were touched by the apostles' message. And, hearing of a "Messiah crucified, dead, resurrected and taken into Heaven," they considered the whole matter with scorn, so much to actually insult those who were speaking.

**Peter addresses the crowd** [Acts 2:14-15;22-24;29-33;36-41]

**(Ac2:14)** *Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. (15)These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only the third hour of the day!*

**(22)** *Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by Yahweh to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which Yahweh did among you through him, as you yourselves know. (23)This man was handed over to you by Yahweh's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of those not having the Law, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. (24)But Yahweh raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.*

**(29)** *Brothers, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. (30)But he was a prophet and knew that Yahweh had promised him on oath that He would place one of his descendants on His throne. (31) Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay. (32)Yahweh has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. (33)Exalted to the right hand of Yahweh, he has received from the Father His promised Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear.*

**(36)** *Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: Yahweh has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."*

**(37)** *When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"*

**(38)** *Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gifts of the Spirit of Yahweh. (39)The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off -for all whom Yahweh our God will call."*

**(40)** *With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." (41)Those who accepted this message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.*

**Ac 2:14.** *'With the Eleven'*: The apostles had just been baptized with the Spirit of Yahweh and had spoken in their languages to the various groups of pilgrims. Now they stood with Peter, who served as their spokesman.

**Ac 2:15.** *'Only the third hour'*: Nine in the morning. On a festival day such as Pentecost, the Jews would not break their fast until at least 10 AM. So it was extremely unlikely that a group of men would be drunk at such an hour.

**Ac 2:22.** *'Accredited... by miracles, wonders and signs'*: The works done by Jesus, which were well known to everybody around there, were signs showing that the Messiah had come.

**Ac 2:23.** *'Yahweh's set purpose'*: Everything was due to Yahweh's initiative, to His plan. *'Those not having the Law'*: The Romans.

**Ac 2:24.** *'Yahweh raised him... it was impossible for death...'*: Again, everything was due to Yahweh's initiative.

**Ac 2:29-33.** *'David... his tomb is here'*: In Jesus' time in Jerusalem there was still the tomb of king David, and it contained his remains. David was a patriarch and a prophet, his prophecies were part of Scripture and known to everybody. David wrote of the resurrected Messiah, and Jesus was such a Messiah. This passage is full of the essence of the thought of the early preachers. It insists that the Cross was no accident, that it belonged to the eternal plan of Yahweh. The Cross was not a kind of emergency measure flung out by Yahweh when everything else had failed; it had always been part of His plan. So, the suffering and death of Jesus were the fulfillment of prophecy. It is important to remember that to the Jews of that time the idea of a crucified Messiah was so incredible that it was the Cross which made it completely impossible that Jesus could be the Messiah. To them, the early preachers answered, "If you would only read your Scriptures rightly you would see that all was foretold." So, the Resurrection was and is the final proof that Jesus was indeed Yahweh's Chosen One.

**Ac 2:36.** *'Yahweh has made this Jesus... both Lord and Christ'*: Not only Jesus was the expected Messiah of Yahweh, he was also appointed by Yahweh Master -Lord- of the human race.

**Ac 2:37.** *'Cut to the heart'*: This phrase reflects both their new belief in Jesus and their regret over their former rejection.

**Ac 2:38.** *'Repent and be baptized'*: Repentance was important in the message of the forerunner, John the Baptist, in the preaching of Jesus, and in the directions Jesus left just before his Ascension. Baptism as well was important to John the Baptist, in the instructions of Jesus, and in the preaching of the apostles recorded in Acts, where it was associated with belief in Jesus Christ, acceptance of the Word of Yahweh and repentance. This passage shows with crystal clarity the effect of the Cross. As Jesus had said, "When I am lifted up from the earth I will draw all men to myself" (Jesus predicts his death. Jn 12:20-36). *'Be baptized... in the name of Jesus Christ'*: This abbreviated form -the Father is omitted- emphasizes the distinctive quality of Jesus' baptism, for Jesus was now Lord. *'For the forgiveness of your sins'*: This doesn't mean that baptism can effect forgiveness. Rather, that forgiveness comes through that which is symbolized by baptism. *'The gifts of the Spirit of Yahweh'*: Two gifts are given: The forgiveness of sin and the spiritual communion with Yahweh.

The word "repentance" originally meant "afterthought." Often a second thought, after the necessary reflection, shows that the first idea was wrong; and so the word came to mean a change of mind. But a change of mind demands a change of action. So repentance must involve both change of mind and change of action. After repentance, there is Yahweh's forgiveness, which does not abolish the consequences of what we have done but puts us right with Yahweh. At this point, after repenting, we can receive the gift of the communion with the Spirit of Yahweh.

**Ac 2:39.** *'The promise is for...'*: The promise of the gift of the spiritual communion with Yahweh was given to all Christians.



**Ac 2:40.** *'With many other words...'*: Peter was doing as Jesus told his people to, trying to convince as many people as possible to believe in him.

**Ac 2:41.** *'Their number'*: The number of believers.

**APPENDIX: Individual texts****Matthew 1:18-25. The birth of Jesus Christ**

(Mt1:18) This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Spirit of God. (19) Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

(20) But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Spirit of God. (21) She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

(22) All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: (23) "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" -which means, "God with us."

(24) When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. (25) But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

**Luke 2:1-7. The birth of Jesus**

(Lk2:1) In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (2) (This was the first census that took place while Quirinus was governor of Syria.) (3) And everyone went to his own town to register.

(4) So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David. (5) He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. (6) While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, (7) and she gave birth to her first-born, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

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**Mark 1:2-8. John the Baptist prepares the way**

(Mk1:2) It is written in Isaiah the prophet: "I will send My Messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way." (3) A voice of one calling in the desert, "Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him."

(4) And so John came, baptizing in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. (5) The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. (6) John wore clothing made of camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. (7) And this was his message: "After me will come one more powerful than I, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. (8) I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Spirit of God."

**Matthew 3:1-12. John the Baptist prepares the way**

(Mt3:1) In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea (2) and saying, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near." (3) This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah:

"A voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'"

(4)John clothes were made of camel's hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. (5)People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. (6)Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.

(7)But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? (8)Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. (9)And do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. (10)The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. (11)I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Spirit of God and with fire. (12)His winnowing fork is in his hands, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

### **Luke 3:1-20. John the Baptist prepares the way**

(Lk3:1)In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar -when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and Traconitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene- (2)during the High Priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the Word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the desert. (3)He went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

(4)As is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet: "A voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him. (5)Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill made low. The crooked roads shall become straight, the rough ways smooth. (6)And all mankind will see God's salvation.'"

(7)John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? (8)Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. (9)The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire."

(10)"What should we do then?" the crowd asked.

(11)John answered, "The man with two tunics should share with him who has none, and the one who has food should do the same."

(12)Tax collectors also came to be baptized. "Teacher," they asked, "what should we do?"

(13)"Don't collect any more than you are required to," he told them.

(14)Then some soldiers asked him, "And what should we do?" He replied, "Don't extort money and don't accuse people falsely -be content with your pay."

(15)The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Christ. (16)John answered them all, "I baptize you with water. But one more powerful than I will come, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Spirit of God and with fire. (17)His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." (18)And with many other words John exhorted the people and preached the Good News to them.

(19)But when John rebuked Herod the tetrarch because of Herodias, his brother's wife, and all the other evil things he had done, (20)Herod added this to them all: he locked John up in prison.

### **John 1:6-9;15;19-28. John the Baptist denies being the Christ**

(Jn1:6)There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. (7)He came as a witness to testify concerning that Light, so that through him all men might believe. (8)He himself was not the Light; he came only as a witness to the Light. (9)The true Light that gives light to every man who comes into the world.

(15)John testifies concerning him. He cries out, saying, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me surpasses me because he has been before me.'"

(19)Now this was John's testimony when the Jews of Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. (20)He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, "I am not the Christ."

(21)They asked him, "Then who are you? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" He answered, "No."

(22)Finally they said, "Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?"

(23)John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, "I am the voice of one calling in the desert, 'Make straight the way for the Lord.'"

(24)Now some Pharisees who had been sent (25)questioned him, "Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ, not Elijah, nor the Prophet?"

(26)I baptize with water," John replied, "but among you stands one who you do not know. (27)He is the one who comes after me, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie."

(28)This all happened at Bethany on the other side of the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

### **Mark 1:9-11. The baptism of Jesus**

(Mk1:9)At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. (10)As Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw Heaven being torn open and the Spirit of God descending on him like a dove. (11)And a voice came from Heaven: "**You are My Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.**"

### **Matthew 3:13-17. The baptism of Jesus**

(Mt3:13)Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. (14)But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?"

(15)Jesus replied, "**Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.**" Then John consented.

(16)As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment Heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. (17)And a voice from Heaven said, "**This is My Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.**"

### **Luke 3:21-22. The baptism of Jesus**

(Lk3:21)When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, Heaven was opened (22)and the Spirit of God descended on him in bodily

form like a dove. And a voice came from Heaven: **"You are My Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."**

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#### **Mark 1:12-13. The temptations of Jesus**

**(Mk1:12)**At once the Spirit of God sent him out into the desert, **(13)**and he was in the desert forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.

#### **Matthew 4:1-11. The temptations of Jesus**

**(Mt4:1)**Then Jesus was led by the Spirit of God into the desert to be tempted by the devil. **(2)**After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. **(3)**The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."

**(4)**Jesus answered, **"It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"**

**(5)**Then the devil took him to the Holy City and had him stand on the highest point of the Temple. **(6)**"If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: 'He will command His angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'"

**(7)**Jesus answered him, **"It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"** **(8)**Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. **(9)**"All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me."

**(10)**Jesus said to him, **"Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.'"**

**(11)**Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

#### **Luke 4:1-13. The temptations of Jesus**

**(Lk4:1)**Jesus, full of the Spirit of God, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit of God in the desert, **(2)**were for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry.

**(3)**The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread."

**(4)**Jesus answered, **"It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone.'"**

**(5)**The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. **(6)**And he said to him, "I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. **(7)**So if you worship me, it will all be yours."

**(8)**Jesus answered, **"It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve Him only.'"**

**(9)**The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the Temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down from here. **(10)**For it is written: 'He will command His angels concerning you to guard you carefully; **(11)**they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'"

**(12)**Jesus answered, **"It says: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"**

**(13)**When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.

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**Mark 1:14-15.**

(Mk1:14)After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the Good News of God. (15)"**The time has come,**" he said. "**The Kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the Good News!**"

**Matthew 4:12-17. Jesus begins to preach**

(Mt4:12)When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, he returned to Galilee. (13)Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum, which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali (14)to fulfill what was said through the prophet Isaiah:

(15)"Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the way to the sea, along the Jordan, Galilee of the Pagans- (16)the People living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned."

(17)From that time on Jesus began to preach, "**Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near.**"

**Luke 4:14.**

(Lk4:14)Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit of God, and the news about him spread through the whole countryside.

**John 4:43.**

(Jn4:43)After two days he left for Galilee.

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**Mark 1:16-20. The calling of the first disciples**

(Mk1:16)As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. (17)"**Come, follow me,**" Jesus said, "**and I will make you fishers of men.**" (18)At once they left their nets and followed him. (19)When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. (20)Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.

**Matthew 4:18-22. The calling of the first disciples**

(Mt4:18)As Jesus was walking besides the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. (19)Jesus said, "**Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.**" (20)At once they left their nets and followed him.

(21)Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, (22)and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

**Luke 5:1-11. The calling of the first disciples**

(Lk5:1)One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennezareth, with the people crowding around him and listening to the Word of God, (2)he saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. (3)He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat.

(4)When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "**Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch.**"

(5) Simon answered, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets."

(6) When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. (7) So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink.

(8) When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" (9) For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, (10) and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners.

Then Jesus said to Simon, "**Don't be afraid; from now on you will catch men.**" (11) So they pulled their boats up to shore, left everything and followed him.

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### **Mark 1:21-28. Jesus drives out an evil spirit**

(Mk1:21) They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the Synagogue and began to teach. (22) The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who has authority, not as the teachers of the law. (23) Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an evil spirit cried out, (24) "What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are -the Holy One of God!"

(25) "**Be quiet!**" said Jesus sternly. "**Come out of him!**" (26) The evil spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek.

(27) The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, "What is this? A new teaching -and with authority! He even gives orders to evil spirits and they obey him."

(28) News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee.

### **Luke 4:31-37. Jesus drives out an evil spirit**

(Lk4:31) Then he went down to Capernaum, a town in Galilee, and on the Sabbath began to teach the people. (32) They were amazed at his teaching, because his message had authority.

(33) In the Synagogue there was a man possessed by a demon, an evil spirit. He cried out at the top of his voice, (34) "Ha! What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are -the Holy One of God!"

(35) "**Be quiet!**" Jesus said sternly. "**Come out of him!**" Then the demon threw the man down before them all and came out without injuring him.

(36) All the people were amazed and said to each other, "What is this teaching? With authority and power he gives orders to evil spirits and they come out!" (37) And the news about him spread throughout the surrounding area.

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### **Mark 1:29-34. Jesus heals many**

(Mk1:29) As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew. (30) Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told Jesus about her. (31) So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them.

(32) That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and the demon-possessed. (33) The whole town gathered at the door, (34) and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was.

**Matthew 8:14-17. Jesus heals many**

(Mt8:14)When Jesus came into Peter's house, he saw Peter's mother-in-law lying in bed with a fever. (15)He touched her hand and the fever left her, and she got up and began to wait on him.

(16)When evening came, many who were demon-possessed were brought to him, and he drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick. (17)This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah:

"He took our infirmities and carried our diseases."

**Luke 4:38-41. Jesus heals many**

(Lk4:38)Jesus left the synagogue and went to the home of Simon. Now Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked Jesus to help her. (39)So he bent over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. She got up at once and began to wait on them. (40)When the sun was setting, the people brought to Jesus all who had various kinds of sickness, and laying his hands on each one, he healed them. (41)Moreover, demons came out of many people, shouting, "You are the Son of God!" But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew he was the Christ.

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**Mark 1:35-39. Jesus prays in a solitary place**

(Mk1:35)Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. (36)Simon and his companions went to look for him, (37)and when they found him, they exclaimed: "Everyone is looking for you!"

(38)Jesus replied, "**Let us go somewhere else -to the nearby village- so I can preach there also. That is why I have come.**" (39)So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.

**Matthew 4:23-25. Jesus heals the sick**

(Mt4:23)Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the Good News of the Kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. (24)News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed, and he healed them. (25)Large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan followed him.

**Luke 4:42-44.**

(Lk4:42)At day break Jesus went out to a solitary place. The people were looking for him and when they came to where he was, they tried to keep him from leaving them. (43)But he said, "**I must preach the Good News of the Kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent.**" (44)And he kept on preaching in the synagogues of the Land of the Jews.

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**Mark 1:40-45. A man with leprosy**

(Mk1:40)A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, "If you are willing, you can make me clean."



(41) Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. **"I am willing,"** he said. **"Be clean!"** (42) Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cured.

(43) Jesus sent him away at once with a strong warning: (44) **"See that you don't tell this to anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them."** (45) Instead he went out and began to talk freely, spreading the news. As a result, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places. Yet the people still came to him from everywhere.

#### **Matthew 8:1-4. The man with leprosy**

(Mt8:1) When he came down from the mountainside, large crowds followed him. (2) A man with leprosy came and knelt before him and said, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean."

(3) Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. **"I am willing,"** he said. **"Be clean!"** Immediately he was cured of his leprosy. (4) Then Jesus said to him, **"See that you don't tell anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the gift Moses commanded, as a testimony to them."**

#### **Luke 5:12-16. The man with leprosy**

(Lk5:12) While Jesus was in one of the towns, a man came along who was covered with leprosy. When he saw Jesus, he fell with his face to the ground and begged him, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean."

(13) Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. **"I am willing,"** he said. **"Be clean!"** And immediately the leprosy left him.

(14) Then Jesus ordered him, **"Don't tell anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them."**

(15) Yet the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses. (16) But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.

#### **Matthew 8:5-13. The faith of the centurion**

(Mt8:5) When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help. (6) "Lord," he said, "my servant lies at home paralyzed and in terrible suffering."

(7) Jesus said to him, **"I will go and heal him."**

(8) The centurion replied, "Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. (9) For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."

(10) When Jesus heard this, he was astonished and said to those following him, **"I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith. (11) I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven. (12) But the subjects of the Kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."**

(13) Then Jesus said to the centurion, **"Go! It will be done just as you believed it would."** And his servant was healed at that very hour.

**Luke 7:1-10. The faith of the centurion**

(Lk7:1)When Jesus had finished saying all this in the hearing of the people, he entered Capernaum. (2)There a centurion's servant, whom his master valued highly, was sick and about to die. (3)The centurion heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and to heal his servant. (4)When they came to Jesus, they pleaded earnestly with him, "This man deserves to have you do this, (5)because he likes our nation and has built our synagogue." (6)So Jesus went with them. He was not far from the house when the centurion sent friends to say to him: "Lord, don't trouble yourself, for I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. (7)That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. (8)For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."

(9)When Jesus heard this, he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd following him, he said, "**I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel.**" (10)Then the men who had been sent returned to the house and found the servant well.

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**Mark 2:1-12. Jesus heals a paralytic**

(Mk2:1)A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. (2)So many gathered that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the Word to them. (3)Some men came, bringing to him a paralytic, carried by four of them. (4)Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus and, after digging through it, lowered the mat the paralyzed man was lying on. (5)When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "**Son, your sins are forgiven.**"

(6)Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, (7)"Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

(8)Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, "**Why are you thinking these thing? (9)Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk'?** (10)**But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on Earth to forgive sins...**" He said to the paralytic, (11)"**I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.**" (12)He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"

**Matthew 9:1-8. Jesus heals a paralytic**

(Mt9:1)Jesus stepped into a boat, crossed over and came to his own town. (2)Some men brought to him a paralytic, lying on a mat. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "**Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven.**" (3)At this, some teachers of the law said to themselves, "This fellow is blaspheming!"

(4)Knowing their thoughts, Jesus said, "**Why do you entertain evil thoughts in your hearts? (5)Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'?** (6)**But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on Earth to forgive sins...**" Then he said to the paralytic, "**Get up, take your mat and go home.**" (7)And the man got up and went home. (8)When the crowd saw this, they were filled with awe; and they praised God, who had given such authority to men.

**Luke 5:17-26. Jesus heals a paralytic**

(Lk5:17)One day as he was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law, who had come from every village of Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem, were sitting there. And the power of the Lord was present for him to heal the sick. (18)Some men came carrying a paralytic on a mat and tried to take him into the house to lay him before Jesus. (19)When they could not find a way to do this because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the beams into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus.

(20)When Jesus saw their faith, he said, "**Friend, your sins are forgiven.**"

(21)The Pharisees and the teachers of the law began thinking to themselves, "Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

(22)Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, "**Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? (23)Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'?** (24)**But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on Earth to forgive sins...**" He said to the paralyzed man, "**I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.**" (25)Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God. (26)Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God. They were filled with awe and said, "We have seen remarkable things today."

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**Mark 2:13-17. The calling of Levi**

(Mk2:13)Once again Jesus went out beside the lake. A large crowd came to him, and he began to teach them. (14)As he walked along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax collector's booth. "**Follow me,**" Jesus told him, and Levi got up and followed him.

(15)While Jesus was having dinner at Levi's house, many tax collectors and "sinners" were eating with him and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. (16)When the teachers of the law who were Pharisees saw him eating with the "sinners" and tax collectors, they asked his disciples: "Why does he eat with tax collectors and 'sinners'?"

(17)On hearing this, Jesus said to them, "**It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but the sinners.**"

**Matthew 9:9-13. The calling of Matthew**

(Mt9:9)As Jesus went out from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "**Follow me,**" he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him.

(10)While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and "sinners" came and ate with him and his disciples. (11)When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and 'sinners'?"

(12)On hearing this, Jesus said, "**It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. (13)But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.**"

**Luke 5:27-32. The calling of Levi**

(Lk5:27)After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector by the name of Levi sitting at his tax booth. "**Follow me,**" Jesus said to him, (28)and Levi got up, left everything and followed him. (29)Then Levi held a great banquet for Jesus at his house, and a large

crowd of tax collectors and of others were eating with them. **(30)**But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law who belonged to their sect complained to his disciples, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and 'sinners'?"

**(31)**Jesus answered them, **"It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. (32)I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."**

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### **Mark 2:18-22. Jesus questioned about fasting**

**(Mk2:18)**Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. Some people came and asked Jesus, "How is it that John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees are fasting, but yours are not?" **(19)**Jesus answered, **"How can the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? They cannot, so long as they have him with them. (20) But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them, and on that day they will fast. (21)No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. If he does, the new piece will pull away from the old, making the tear worse. (22)And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined. No, he pours new wine into new wineskins."**

### **Matthew 9:14-17. Jesus questioned about fasting**

**(Mt9:14)**Then John's disciples came and asked him, "How is it that we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?" **(15)**Jesus answered, **"How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them? The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast.**

**(16)No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch will pull away from the garment, making the tear worse. (17)Neither do men pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst, the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved."**

### **Luke 5:33-39. Jesus questioned about fasting**

**(Lk5:33)**They said to him, "John's disciples often fast and pray, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees, but yours go on eating and drinking."

**(34)**Jesus answered, **"Can you make the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? (35)But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; in those days they will fast."**

**(36)**He told them a parable: **"No one tears a patch from a new garment and sews it on an old one. If he does, he will have torn the new garment, and the patch from the new will not match the old. (37)And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the new wine will burst the skins, the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. (38)No, new wine must be poured into new wineskins. (39)And no one after drinking old wine wants the new, for he says, 'The old is better.'"**

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### **Mark 2:23-28. Lord of the Sabbath**

**(Mk2:23)**One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grain-fields, and as his disciples walked along, they began to pick some heads of grain. **(24)**The Pharisees said to him, "Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?"

(25)He answered, **"Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need? (26)In the days of Abiathar the High Priest, he entered the House of God and ate the consecrated bread, which is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions."**

(27)Then he said to them, **"The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. (28)So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."**

#### **Matthew 12:1-8. Lord of the Sabbath**

(Mt12:1)At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry and began to pick some heads of grain and eat them. (2)When the Pharisees saw this, they said to him, "Look! Your disciples are doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath."

(3)He answered, **"Haven't you read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? (4)He entered the House of God, and he and his companions ate the consecrated bread -which was not lawful for them to do, but only for the priests. (5)Or haven't you read in the Law that on the Sabbath the priests in the Temple desecrate the day and yet are innocent? (6)I tell you that One greater than the Temple is here. (7)If you had known what these words mean, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the innocent. (8)For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."**

#### **Luke 6:1-5. Lord of the Sabbath**

(Lk6:1)One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grain-fields, and his disciples began to pick some heads of grain, rub them in their hands and eat the kernels. (2)Some of the Pharisees asked, "Why are you doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?"

(3)Jesus answered them, **"Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? (4)He entered the House of God, and taking the consecrated bread, he ate what is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions." (5)Then Jesus said to them, "The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."**

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#### **Mark 3:1-6. A man with a shriveled hand**

(Mk3:1)Another time he went into the synagogue, and a man with a shriveled hand was there. (2)Some of them were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath. (3)Jesus said to the man with the shriveled hand, **"Stand up in front of everyone."**

(4)Then Jesus asked them, **"Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?"** But they remained silent.

(5)He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, **"Stretch out your hand."** He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored. (6)Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus.

#### **Matthew 12:9-14. A man with a shriveled hand**

(Mt12:9)Going on from that place, he went into their synagogue, (10)and a man with a shriveled hand was there. Looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, they asked him, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?"

(11)He said to them, "If any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will you not take hold of it and lift it out? (12)How much more valuable is a man than a sheep! Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath."

(13)Then he said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." So he stretched it out and it was completely restored, just as sound as the other. (14)But the Pharisees went out and plotted how they might kill Jesus.

#### **Luke 6:6-11. A man with a shriveled hand**

(Lk6:6)On another Sabbath he went into the synagogue and was teaching, and a man was there whose right hand was shriveled. (7)The Pharisees and the teachers of the law were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal on the Sabbath. (8)But Jesus knew what they were thinking and said to the man with the shriveled hand, "Get up and stand in front of everyone." So he got up and stood there.

(9)Then Jesus said to them, "I ask you, which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?"

(10)He looked around at them all, and then said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He did so, and his hand was completely restored. (11)But they were furious and began to discuss with one another what they might do to Jesus.

#### **Mark 3:7-12. Crowds follow Jesus**

(Mk3:7)Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the lake, and a large crowd from Galilee followed. (8)When they heard all he was doing, many people came to him from Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, and the regions across the Jordan and around Tyre and Sidon. (9)Because of the crowd he told his disciples to have a small boat ready for him, to keep the people from crowding him. (10)For he had healed many, so that those with diseases were pushing forward to touch him. (11)Whenever the evil spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, "You are the Son of God." (12)But he gave them strict orders not to tell who he was.

#### **Matthew 12:15-21. God's Chosen Servant**

(Mt12:15)Aware of this, Jesus withdrew from that place. Many followed him, and he healed all their sick, (16)warning them not to tell who he was. (17)This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah:

(18)"Here is My servant whom I have chosen, the One I am fond of, in whom I delight; I will put My Spirit on him, and he will proclaim justice to the nations.

(19)He will not quarrel, or cry out; no one will hear his voice in the streets.

(20)A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out, till he leads justice to victory. (21)In his name the nations will put their hope."

#### **Luke 6:17-19.**

(Lk6:17)He went down with them and stood on a level place. A large crowd of his disciples was there and a great number of people from all over Judea, from Jerusalem, and from the coast of Tyre and Sidon, (18)who had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. Those troubled by evil spirits were cured, (19)and the people all tried to touch him, because power was coming from him and healing them all.

**Mark 3:13-19. The appointing of the Twelve Apostles**

(Mk3:13) Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. (14) He appointed Twelve -designating them Apostles- that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach (15) and to have authority to drive out demons. (16) These are the Twelve he appointed: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter); (17) James son of Zebedee and his brother John (to them he gave the name Boanerges, which means Sons of Thunder); (18) Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot, (19) and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

**Matthew 10:2-4.**

(Mt10:2) These are the names of the Twelve Apostles: first, Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; (3) Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; (4) Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

**Luke 6:12-16. The Twelve Apostles**

(Lk6:12) One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. (13) When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose Twelve of them, whom he also designated Apostles: (14) Simon (whom he named Peter), his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, (15) Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Simon who was called the Zealot, (16) Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

**Mark 3:20-30. Jesus and Beelzebub**

(Mk3:20) Then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat. (21) When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, "He is out of his mind."

(22) And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, "He is possessed by Beelzebub! By the prince of the demons he is driving out demons."

(23) So Jesus called them and spoke to them in parables: "**How can Satan drive out Satan? (24) If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. (25) If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. (26) And if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand; his end has come. (27) In fact, no one can enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man. Then he can rob his house. (28) I tell you the truth, all the sins and blasphemies of men will be forgiven them. (29) But whoever blasphemes against the Spirit of God will never be forgiven; he is guilty of eternal sin.**"

(30) He said this because they were saying, "He has an evil spirit."

**Matthew 12:22-32. Jesus and Beelzebub**

(Mt12:22) Then they brought him a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute, and Jesus healed him, so that he could both talk and see. (23) All the people were astonished and said, "Could this be the Son of David?"

(24) But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, "It is only by Beelzebub, the prince of demons, that this fellow drives out demons."

(25) Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them, "**Every kingdom divided against**

itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand. (26)If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then can his kingdom stand? (27)And if I drive out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your people drive them out? So then, they will be your judges. (28)But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the Kingdom of God has come upon you.

(29)Or again, how can anyone enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man? Then he can rob his house.

(30)He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters. (31)And so I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit of God will not be forgiven. (32)Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Spirit of God will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come."

**Luke 11:14-23;12:10. Jesus and Beelzebub**

(Lk11:14)Jesus was driving out a demon that was mute. When the demon left, the man who had been mute spoke, and the crowd was amazed. (15)But some of them said, "By Beelzebub, the prince of demons, he is driving out demons." (16)Others tested him by asking for a sign from Heaven.

(17)Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them: "Any kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and a house divided against itself will fall. (18)If Satan is divided against himself, how can his kingdom stand? I say this because you claim that I drive out demons by Beelzebub. (19)Now if I drive out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your followers drive them out? So then, they will be your judges. (20)But if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the Kingdom of God has come to you.

(21)When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are safe. (22)But when someone stronger attacks and overpowers him, he takes away the armor in which the man trusted and divides up the spoils.

(23)He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me, scatters.

(12:10)And everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who blasphemes against the Spirit of God will not be forgiven."

**Matthew 7:15-23;12:33-37. A tree and its fruit**

(Mt7:15)"Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. (16)By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? (17)Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. (18)A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. (19)Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. (20)Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

(21)Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in Heaven. (22)Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' (23)Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'

(12:33)Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit



will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit. (34)You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. (35)The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. (36)But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. (37)For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned."

**Luke 6:43-45. A tree and its fruit**

(Lk6:43)"No good tree will bear bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. (44)Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thornbushes, or grapes from briars. (45)The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks."

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**Matthew 12:38-42. The sign of Jonah**

(Mt12:38)Then some of the Pharisees and teachers of the law said to him, "Teacher, we want to see a miraculous sign from you."

(39)He answered, "A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. (40)For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the Earth. (41)The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now one greater than Jonah is here. (42)The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for she came from the ends of the Earth to listen to Solomon's wisdom, and now one greater than Solomon is here."

**Luke 11:29-32. The sign of Jonah**

(Lk11:29)As the crowd increased, Jesus said, "This is a wicked generation. It asks for a miraculous sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah. (30)For as Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, so also will the Son of Man be to this generation. (31)The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them; for she came from the ends of the Earth to listen to Solomon's wisdom, and now one greater than Solomon is here. (32)The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now one greater than Jonah is here."

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**Matthew 12:43-45. An evil spirit leaving and coming back**

(Mt12:43)"When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. (44)Then it says, 'I will return to the house I left.' When it arrives, it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order. (45) Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go and live there. And the final condition of that man is worse than the first. That is how it will be with this wicked generation."

**Luke 11:24-28. An evil spirit leaving and coming back**

(Lk11:24)"When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, 'I will return to the house I left.' (25) When it arrives, it finds the house swept clean and put in order. (26)Then it goes and takes seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that man is worse than the first."

(27)As Jesus was saying these things, a woman in the crowd called out, "Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you." (28)He replied, "**Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it.**"

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**Mark 3:31-35. Jesus' mother and brothers**

(Mk3:31)Then Jesus' mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent someone in to call him. (32)A crowd was sitting around him, and they told him, "Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you."

(33)"**Who are my mother and my brothers?**" he asked. (34)Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, "**Here are my mother and my brothers! (35) Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother.**"

**Matthew 12:46-50. Jesus' mother and brothers**

(Mt12:46)While Jesus was still talking to the crowd, his mother and brothers stood outside, wanting to speak to him. (47)Someone told him, "Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you." (48)He replied to him, "**Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?**" (49)Pointing to his disciples, he said, "**Here are my mother and my brothers. (50)For whoever does the will of my Father in Heaven is my brother and sister and mother.**"

**Luke 8:19-21. Jesus' mother and brothers**

(Lk8:19)Now Jesus' mother and brothers came to see him, but they were not able to get near him because of the crowd. (20)Someone told him, "Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to see you." (21)He replied, "**My mother and brothers are those who hear God's word and put it into practice.**"

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**Matthew 5:1-12. The beatitudes**

(Mt5:1)Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, (2)and he began to teach them, saying:

- (3)"**Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.**
- (4)**Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.**
- (5)**Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the Earth.**
- (6)**Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.**
- (7)**Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.**
- (8)**Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.**
- (9)**Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.**
- (10)**Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.**

(11) Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. (12) Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in Heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

**Luke 6:20-26. Blessings and woes**

(Lk6:20) Looking at his disciples, he said:

"Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the Kingdom of God.

(21) Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied.

Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.

(22) Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man.

(23) Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in Heaven. For that is how their fathers treated the prophets.

(24) But woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort.

(25) Woe to you who are well fed now, for you will go hungry.

Woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep.

(26) Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for that is how their fathers treated the false prophets."

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**Mark 9:49-50.**

(Mk9:49) "Everyone will be salted with fire. (50) Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with each other."

**Matthew 5:13. The salt of the Earth**

(Mt5:13) "You are the salt of the Earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men."

**Luke 14:34-35.**

(Lk14:34) "Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? (35) It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure pile; it is thrown out."

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**Mark 4:21. A lamp on a stand**

(Mk4:21) He said to them, "Do you bring in a lamp to put it under a bowl or a bed? Instead, don't you put it on its stand?"

**Matthew 5:14-16. The light of the world**

(Mt5:14) "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. (15) Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. (16) In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in Heaven."

**Luke 8:16. A lamp on a stand**

**(Lk8:16)"No one lights his lamp and hides it in a jar or puts it under a bed. Instead, he puts it on a stand, so that those who come in can see the light."**

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**Matthew 5:17-20. The fulfillment of the Law**

**(Mt5:17)"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. (18)I tell you the truth, until Heaven and Earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. (19)Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the Kingdom of Heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven. (20)For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the Kingdom of Heaven."**

**Luke 16:16-17.**

**(Lk16:16)"The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John. Since that time, the Good News of the Kingdom of God is being preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it.**

**(17)It is easier for Heaven and Earth to disappear than for the least stroke of a pen to drop out of the Law."**

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**Mark 9:42-48. Causing to sin**

**(Mk9:42)"And if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a large millstone tied around his neck.**

**(43)If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter eternal life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out, (44)where**

**'their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.'**

**(45)And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter eternal life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell, (46)where**

**'their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.'**

**(47)And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the Kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, (48)where**

**'their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.'"**

**Matthew 5:27-30;18:6-10. Adultery**

**(Mt5:27)"You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' (28)But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. (29)If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. (30)And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.**

**(18:6)But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.**

**(7)Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to sin! Such things must come, but woe to the man through whom they come! (8)If your hand or your foot causes you to sin cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter eternal life maimed or crippled than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into eternal fire. (9)And if your eye causes you to sin, gauge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter eternal life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell.**

**(10)See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in Heaven always see the face of my Father in Heaven."**

#### **Luke 17:1-10. Sin, faith, duty**

**(Lk17:1)Jesus said to his disciples: "Things that cause people to sin are bound to come, but woe to that person through whom they come. (2)It would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around his neck than for him to cause one of these little ones to sin. (3)So watch yourselves.**

**If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him. (4)If he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times comes back to you and says, 'I repent,' forgive him."**

**(5)The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!"**

**(6)He replied, "If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it will obey you.**

**(7)Suppose one of you had a servant plowing or looking after the sheep. Would he say to the servant when he comes in from the field, 'Come along now and seat down to eat'? (8)Would he not rather say, 'Prepare my supper, get yourself ready and wait on me while I eat and drink; after that you may eat and drink'? (9)Would he thank the servant because he did what he was told to do? (10)So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.'"**

#### **Matthew 18:11-14. The parable of the lost sheep**

**(Mt18:11)"The Son of Man came to save what was lost. (12)What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? (13)And if he finds it, I tell you the truth, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wandered off. (14)In the same way your Father in Heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost."**

#### **Luke 15:1-7. The parable of the lost sheep**

**(Lk15:1)Now the tax collectors and "sinners" were all gathering around to hear him. (2)But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."**

**(3)Then Jesus told them this parable: (4)"Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go**

after the lost sheep until he finds it? (5)And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders (6)and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' (7) I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in Heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent."

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### **Mark 10:1-12. Divorce**

(Mk10:1)Jesus then left that place and went into the region of Judea and across the Jordan. Again crowds of people came to him, and as was his custom, he taught them.

(2)Some Pharisees came and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?"

(3)"What did Moses command you?" he replied.

(4)They said, "Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away."

(5)"It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law," Jesus replied. (6)"But at the beginning of creation God 'made them male and female.' (7) For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, (8)and the two will become one flesh. So they are no longer two, but one. (9)Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."

(10)When they were in the house again, the disciples asked Jesus about this. (11)He answered, "Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. (12)And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery."

### **Matthew 19:1-12;5:31-32. Divorce**

(Mt19:1)When Jesus had finished saying these things, he left Galilee and went into the region of Judea to the other side of the Jordan. (2)Large crowds followed him, and he healed them there.

(3)Some Pharisees came to him to test him. They asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?"

(4)"Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator made them male and female, (5)and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh?' (6)So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."

(7)"Why then," they asked, "did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?"

(8)Jesus replied, "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. (9)I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery."

(10)The disciples said to him, "If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry."

(11)Jesus replied, "Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given. (12)For some are eunuchs because they were born that way; others were made that way by men, and others have renounced marriage because of the Kingdom of Heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it.

(5:31)It has been said, 'Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate

of divorce.' (32)But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to become an adulteress, and anyone who marries the divorced woman commits adultery."

**Luke 16:18.**

(Lk16:18)"Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery, and the man who marries a divorced woman commits adultery."

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**Matthew 5:38-48;7:12. An eye for an eye. Kindness for enemies**

(Mt5:38)"You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' (39) But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. (40)And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. (41)If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. (42)Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

(43)You have heard that it was said, 'You'll be fond of your neighbor and you'll hate your enemy.' (44)But I tell you: Be kind to your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who persecute you, (45)that you may be sons of your Father in Heaven. He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. (46)If you are fond of those who are fond of you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? (47)And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? (48)Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

(7:12)So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets".

**Luke 6:27-36. Kindness for enemies**

(Lk6:27)"But I tell you who hear me: Be kind to your enemies, do good to those who hate you, (28)bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. (29) If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic. (30)Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. (31)Do to others as you would have them do to you.

(32)If you are fond of those who are fond of you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' are fond of those who are fond of them. (33)And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' do that. (34)And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' lend to 'sinners,' expecting to be repaid in full. (35)But be kind to your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because He is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. (36)Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful."

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**Matthew 6:5-15. Prayer (Our Father)**

(Mt6:5)"And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they like to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you

the truth, they have received their reward in full. (6)But when you pray, go in your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. (7)And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. (8)Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.

(9)This, then, is how you should pray:

'Our Father in Heaven, hallowed be Your Name,

(10)Your Kingdom come, Your will be done, on Earth as it is in Heaven.

(11)Give us today our daily bread.

(12)Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

(13)And let us not fall into temptation, but deliver us from evil.'

(14)For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. (15)But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins."

#### Luke 11:1-4. Jesus' teaching on prayer

(Lk11:1)One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John has taught his disciples."

(2)He said to them, "When you pray, say:

'Father, hallowed be Your Name, Your Kingdom come.

May Your will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven.

(3)Give us each day our daily bread.

(4)Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us.

And let us not fall into temptation, but deliver us from evil.'"

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#### Matthew 6:19-21. Treasures in Heaven

(Mt6:19)"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on Earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. (20)But store up for yourselves treasures in Heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. (21)For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

#### Luke 12:32-34.

(Lk12:32)"Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the Kingdom. (33)Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in Heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. (34)For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

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#### Matthew 6:22-23.

(Mt6:22)"The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. (23)But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!"

#### Luke 11:33-36. The lamp of the body

(Lk11:33)"No one lights a lamp and puts it in a place where it will be hidden, or



under a bowl. Instead he puts it on its stand, so that those who come may see the light. (34)Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eyes are good, your whole body also is full of light. But when they are bad, your body also is full of darkness. (35)See to it, then, that the light within you is not darkness. (36)Therefore, if your whole body is full of light, and no part of it dark, it will be completely lighted, as when the light of a lamp shines on you."

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**Matthew 6:24. No one can serve two masters**

(Mt6:24)"No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and be fond of the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money."

**Luke 16:13-15. No servant can serve two masters**

(Lk16:13)"No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and be fond of the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money."

(14)The Pharisees, who liked money, heard all this and were sneering at Jesus. (15)He said to them, "You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of men, but God knows your hearts. What is highly valued among men is detestable in God's sight."

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**Matthew 6:25-34. Do not worry**

(Mt6:25)"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? (26)Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? (27)Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life or a single cubit to his height?

(28)And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. (29)Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. (30)If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? (31)So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' (32)For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. (33)But seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. (34)Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of his own."

**Luke 12:22-31. Do not worry**

(Lk12:22)Then Jesus said to his disciples: "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. (23)Life is more than food, and the body more than clothes. (24)Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds! (25)Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life or a single cubit to his height? (26)Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest?"

(27)Consider how the lilies grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. (28)If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will He clothe you, O you of little faith! (29)And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. (30)For the pagan world runs after such things, and your Father knows that you need them. (31)But seek His Kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well."

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#### Mark 4:24-25.

(Mk4:24)"Consider carefully what you hear," he continued. "With the measure you use, it will be measured to you -and even more. (25)Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him."

#### Matthew 7:1-6. Judging others

(Mt7:1)"Do not judge, or you too will be judged. (2)For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

(3)Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? (4)How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? (5)You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

(6)Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and then turn and tear you to pieces."

#### Luke 6:37-42. Judging others

(Lk6:37)"Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. (38)Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." (39)He also told them this parable: "Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? (40)A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher.

(41)Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? (42)How can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye,' when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."

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#### Matthew 7:7-11. Ask, seek, knock

(Mt7:7)"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. (8)For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. (9)Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? (10)Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? (11)If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in Heaven give good gifts to those who ask Him!"

**Luke 11:5-13.**

(Lk11:5)Then he said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and he goes to him at midnight and says, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, (6)because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him.'

(7)Then the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children are with me in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.' (8)I tell you, though he will not get up and give him the bread because he is his friend, yet because of the man's persistence he will get up and give him as much as he needs.

(9)So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. (10)For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.

(11)Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? (12)Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? (13)If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in Heaven give His Spirit to those who ask him!"

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**Matthew 7:13-14. The narrow and wide gates**

(Mt7:13)"Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. (14)But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it."

**Luke 13:22-30. The narrow door**

(Lk13:22)Then Jesus went through the towns and villages, teaching as he made his way to Jerusalem. (23)Someone asked him, "Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?"

He said to them, (24)"Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able. (25)Once the Owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, 'Sir, open the door for us.'

But he will answer, 'I don't know you or where you come from.'

(26)Then you will say, 'We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.' (27)But he will replay, 'I don't know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers!'

(28)There will be weeping there, and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the Kingdom of God, but you yourselves thrown out. (29)People will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the Kingdom of God. (30)Indeed there are those who are last who will be first, and first who will be last."

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**Matthew 7:24-29. The wise and foolish builders**

(Mt7:24)"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. (25)The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundations on the rock. (26)But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. (27)The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."

(28)When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, (29)because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.

**Luke 6:46-49. The wise and foolish builders**

(Lk6:46)"Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say? (47)I will show you what he is like who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice. (48)He is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built. (49)But the one who ears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete."

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**Mark 4:1-20;22-23. The parable of the sower**

(Mk4:1)Again Jesus began to teach by the lake. The crowd that gathered around him was so large that he got into a boat and sat in it out on the lake, while all the people were along the shore at the water's hedge. (2)He taught them many things by parables, and in his teaching said: (3)"Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. (4)As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. (5) Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. (6)But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. (7)Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain. (8)Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, multiplying thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times."

(9)Then Jesus said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

(10)When he was alone, the Twelve and the others around him asked him about the parables. (11)He told them, "The secret of the Kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables (12)so that, 'they may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding; otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!'"

(13)Then Jesus said to them, "Don't you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable? (14)The farmer sows the Word. (15)Some people are like seed along the path, where the Word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the Word that was sown in them. (16)Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the Word and at once receive it with joy. (17)But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the Word, they quickly fall away. (18)Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the Word; (19)but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the Word, making it unfruitful. (20) Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the Word, accept it, and produce a crop -thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times what was sown.

(22)For whatever is hidden is meant to be disclosed, and whatever is concealed is meant to be brought out into the open. (23)If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear."

**Matthew 13:1-23. The parable of the sower**

(Mt13:1)That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. (2)Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore. (3)Then he told them many things in parables, saying: "A farmer went out to sow his seed. (4)As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. (5)Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. (6)But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. (7)Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. (8)Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop -a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. (9)He who has ears, let him hear."

(10)The disciples came to him and asked, "Why do you speak to the people in parables?"

(11)He replied, "The knowledge of the secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven has been given to you, but not to them. (12)Whoever has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. (13)This is why I speak to them in parables:

'Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand.'

(14)In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah:

'You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. (15)For this people's heart has become callused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Instead, if they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, I would heal them.'

(16)But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear. (17)For I tell you the truth, many prophets and righteous men longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.

(18)Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: (19)When anyone hears the message about the Kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the seed sown along the path. (20)The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the Word and at once receives it with joy. (21)But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the Word, he quickly falls away. (22)The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the Word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful. (23)But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the Word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown."

**Luke 8:4-15;17-18. The parable of the sower**

(Lk8:4)While a large crowd was gathering and people were coming to Jesus from town after town, he told this parable: (5)"A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path; it was trampled on, and the birds of the air ate it up. (6)Some fell on rock, and when it came up, the plants withered because they had no moisture. (7)Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up with it and choked the plants. (8)Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up and yielded a crop, a hundred times than was sown."

When he said this, he called out, **"He who has ears to hear, let him hear."**

(9)His disciples asked him what this parable meant. (10)He said, **"The knowledge of the secrets of the Kingdom of God has been given to you, but to others I speak in parables, so that,**

**'Though seeing, they may not see; though hearing, they may not understand.'**

(11)**This is the meaning of the parable: The seed is the Word of God. (12)Those along the path are the ones who hear, and then the devil comes and takes away the Word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. (13)Those on the rock are the ones who receive the Word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away. (14)The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature. (15)But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the Word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop.**

(17)For there is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed, and nothing concealed that will not be known or brought out into the open. (18)Therefore consider carefully how you listen. Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has will be taken from him."

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#### **Mark 4:30-34. The parable of the mustard seed**

(Mk4:30)Again he said, **"What shall we say the Kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? (31)It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest seed you plant in the ground. (32)Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds of the air can perch in its shade."**

(33)With many similar parables Jesus spoke the word to them, as much as they could understand. (34)He did not say anything to them without using a parable. But when he was alone with his own disciples, he explained everything.

#### **Matthew 13:31-35. The parable of the mustard seed and the yeast**

(Mt13:31)He told them another parable: **"The Kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. (32)Though it is the smallest of all your seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and perch in its branches."**

(33)He told them still another parable: **"The Kingdom of Heaven is like the yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough."**

(34)Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; he did not say anything to them without using a parable. (35)So was fulfilled what was spoken through the prophet:

**'I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things hidden since the creation of the world.'**

#### **Luke 13:18-21. The parable of the mustard seed and the yeast**

(Lk13:18)Then Jesus asked, **"What is the Kingdom of God like? What shall I compare it to? (19)It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his garden. It grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air perched in its branches."**

(20) Again he asked, **"What shall I compare the Kingdom of God to? (21) It is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough."**

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**Matthew 8:18-22. The cost of following Jesus**

(Mt8:18) When Jesus saw the crowd around him, he gave orders to cross to the other side of the lake. (19) Then a teacher of the law came to him and said, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go."

(20) Jesus replied, **"Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."**

(21) Another disciple said to him, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father."

(22) But Jesus told him, **"Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead."**

**Luke 9:57-62. The cost of following Jesus**

(Lk9:57) As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go."

(58) Jesus replied, **"Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."**

(59) He said to another man, **"Follow me."** But the man replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father."

(60) Jesus said to him, **"Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the Kingdom of God."**

(61) Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say good-bye to my family."

(62) Jesus replied, **"No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the Kingdom of God."**

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**Mark 4:35-41. Jesus calms the storm**

(Mk4:35) That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, **"Let us go over to the other side."** (36) Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. (37) A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. (38) Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"

(39) He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, **"Quiet! Be still!"** Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.

(40) He said to his disciples, **"Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"**

(41) They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"

**Matthew 8:23-27. Jesus calms the storm**

(Mt8:23) Then he got into the boat and his disciples followed him. (24) Without warning, a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. (25) The disciples went and woke him, saying, "Lord, save us! We're going to drown!"

(26) He replied, **"You of little faith, why are you so afraid?"** Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm.

(27)The men were amazed and asked, "What kind of man is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"

### **Luke 8:22-25. Jesus calms the storm**

(Lk8:22)One day Jesus said to his disciples, "**Let's go over to the other side of the lake.**" So they got into a boat and set out. (23)As they sailed, he fell asleep. A squall came down on the lake, so that the boat was being swamped, and they were in great danger.

(24)The disciples went and woke him, saying, "Master, we're going to drown!" He got up and rebuked the wind and the raging waters; the storm subsided, and all was calm. (25)"**Where is your faith?**" He asked his disciples.

In fear and amazement they asked one another, "Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him."

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### **Mark 5:1-20. The healing of a demon-possessed man**

(Mk5:1)They went across the lake to the region of the Gadarenes. (2)When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an evil spirit came from the tombs to meet him. (3)This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him any more, not even with a chain. (4)For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue him. (5)Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones.

(6)When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell on his knees in front of him. (7)He shouted at the top of his voice, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? Swear to God that you won't torture me!" (8)For Jesus had said to him, "**Come out of this man, you evil spirit!**"

(9)Then Jesus asked him, "**What is your name?**"

"My name is Legion," he replied, "for we are many." (10)And he begged Jesus again and again not to send them out of the area.

(11)A large herd of pigs was feeding on the nearby hillside. (12)The demons begged Jesus, "Send us among the pigs; allow us to go into them." (13)He gave them permission, and the evil spirits came out and went into the pigs. The herd, about two thousand in number, rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned.

(14)Those tending the pigs ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, and the people went out to see what had happened. (15)When they came to Jesus, they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons, sitting there, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. (16)Those who had seen it told the people what had happened to the demon-possessed man -and told about the pigs as well. (17)Then the people began to plead with Jesus to leave the region.

(18)As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him. (19)Jesus did not let him, but said, "**Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how He has had mercy on you.**" (20)So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed.

### **Matthew 8:28-34. The healing of two demon-possessed men**

(Mt8:28)When he arrived at the other side in the region of the Gadarenes, two demon-possessed men coming from the tombs met him. They were so violent that no one



could pass that way. (29)"What do you want with us, Son of God?" they shouted. "Have you come here to torture us before the appointed time?"

(30)Some distance from them a large herd of pigs was feeding. (31)The demons begged Jesus, "If you drive us out, send us into the herd of pigs."

(32)He said to them, "Go!" So they came out and went into the pigs, and the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and died in the water. (33)Those tending the pigs ran off, went into the town and reported all this, including what had happened to the demon-possessed men. (34)Then the whole town went out to meet Jesus. And when they saw him, they pleaded him to leave their region.

### **Luke 8:26-39. The healing of a demon-possessed man**

(Lk8:26)They sailed to the region of the Gadarenes, which is across the lake from Galilee. (27)When Jesus stepped ashore, he was met by a demon-possessed man from the town. For a long time this man had not worn clothes or lived in a house, but had lived in the tombs. (28)When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell at his feet, shouting at the top of his voice, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, don't torture me!" (29)For Jesus has commanded the evil spirit to come out of the man. Many times it had seized him, and though he was chained hand and foot and kept under guard, he had broken his chains and had been driven by the demon into solitary places.

(30)Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" "Legion," he replied, because many demons had gone into him. (31)And they begged him repeatedly not to order them to go into the Abyss.

(32)A large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside. The demons begged Jesus to let them go into them, and he gave them permission. (33)When the demons came out of the man, they went into the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned.

(34)When those tending the pigs saw what had happened, they ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, (35)and the people went out to see what had happened. When they came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting at Jesus' feet, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. (36)Those who had seen it told the people how the demon-possessed man had been cured. (37)Then all the people of the region of the Gadarenes asked Jesus to leave them, because they were overcome with fear. So he got into the boat and left.

(38)The man from whom the demons had gone out begged to go with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, (39)"Return home and tell how much God has done for you." So the man went away and told all over town how much Jesus had done for him.

### **Mark 5:21-43. A dead girl and a sick woman**

(Mk5:21)When Jesus had again crossed over by boat to the other side of the lake, a large crowd gathered around him while he was by the lake. (22)Then one of the synagogue rulers, named Jairus, came there. Seeing Jesus, he fell at his feet (23)and pleaded earnestly with him, "My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live." (24)So Jesus went with him.

A large crowd followed and pressed around him. (25)And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. (26)She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse. (27)When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and

touched his cloak, (28)because she thought, "If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed." (29)Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was free from her suffering.

(30)At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, "**Who touched my clothes?**"

(31)"You see the people crowding against you," his disciples answered, "and yet you can ask, '**Who touched me?**'"

(32)But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it. (33)Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came, fell at his feet trembling with fear, and told him the whole truth. (34)He said to her, "**Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.**"

(35)While Jesus was still speaking, some men came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue ruler. "Your daughter is dead," they said. "Why bother the teacher any more?"

(36)Ignoring what they said, Jesus told the synagogue ruler, "**Don't be afraid; just believe.**"

(37)He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James and John the brother of James. (38)When they came to the home of the synagogue ruler, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. (39)He went in and said to them, "**Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep.**" (40)But they laughed at him.

After he put them all out, he took the child's father and mother and the disciples who were with him, and went in where the child was. (41)He took her by the hand and said to her, "**Talitha koum!**" (which means, "**Little girl, I say to you, get up!**"). (42)Immediately the girl stood up and walked around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished. (43)He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this, and told them to give her something to eat.

#### **Matthew 9:18-26. A dead girl and a sick woman**

(Mt9:18)While he was saying this, a ruler came and knelt before him and said, "My daughter has just died. But come and put your hand on her, and she will live." (19)Jesus got up and went with him, and so did his disciples.

(20)Just then a woman who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak. (21)She said to herself, "If I only touch his cloak, I will be healed."

(22)Jesus turned and saw her, "**Take heart, daughter,**" he said, "**your faith has healed you.**" And the woman was healed from that moment.

(23)When Jesus entered the ruler's house and saw the flute players and the noisy crowd, (24)he said, "**Go away. The girl is not dead but asleep.**" But they laughed at him. (25)After the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took the girl by the hand, and she got up. (26)News of this spread through all the region.

#### **Luke 8:40-56. A dead girl and a sick woman**

(Lk8:40)Now when Jesus returned, a crowd welcomed him, for they were all expecting him. (41)Then a man named Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue, came and fell at Jesus' feet, pleading with him to come to his house (42)because his only daughter, a girl of about twelve, was dying.

As Jesus was on his way, the crowds almost crushed him. (43)And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years, but no one could heal her. (44)She

came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak, and immediately her bleeding stopped.

**(45) "Who touched me?"** Jesus asked.

When they all denied it, Peter said, "Master, the people are crowding and pressing against you."

**(46)** But Jesus said, "**Someone touched me; I know that power has gone out from me.**"

**(47)** Then the woman, seeing that she could not go unnoticed, came trembling and fell at his feet. In the presence of all people, she told why she had touched him and how she had been instantly healed. **(48)** Then he said to her, "**Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace.**"

**(49)** While Jesus was still speaking, someone came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue ruler. "Your daughter is dead," he said. "Don't bother the teacher any more."

**(50)** Hearing this, Jesus said to Jairus, "**Don't be afraid; just believe, and she will be healed.**"

**(51)** When he arrived at the house of Jairus, he did not let anyone go in with him except Peter, John and James, and the child's father and mother. **(52)** Meanwhile, all the people were wailing and mourning for her. "**Stop wailing,**" Jesus said. "**She is not dead but asleep.**"

**(53)** They laughed at him, knowing that she was dead. **(54)** But he took her by hand and said, "**My child, get up!**" **(55)** Her spirit returned, and at once she stood up. Then Jesus told them to give her something to eat. **(56)** Her parents were astonished, but he ordered them not to tell anyone what had happened.

#### **Mark 6:1-6a. A prophet without honor**

**(Mk6:1)** Jesus left there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples. **(2)** When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed.

"Where did this man get these things?" they asked. "What's this wisdom that has been given him, that he even does miracles! **(3)** Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren't these his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him.

**(4)** Jesus said to them, "**Only in his hometown, among his relatives and his own house is a prophet without honor.**" **(5)** He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. **(6a)** And he was amazed at their lack of faith.

#### **Matthew 13:53-58. A prophet without honor**

**(Mt13:53)** When Jesus had finished these parables, he moved on from there. **(54)** Coming to his hometown, he began teaching the people in their synagogue, and they were amazed. "Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?" they asked. **(55)** "Isn't this the carpenter's son? Isn't his mother's name Mary, and aren't his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas? **(56)** Aren't all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?" **(57)** And they took offense at him.

But Jesus said to them, "**Only in his hometown and in his own house is a prophet without honor.**"

**(58)** And he did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith.

**Mark 6:6b-13. Jesus sends out the Twelve**

**(Mk6:6b)**Then Jesus went around teaching from village to village. **(7)**Calling the Twelve to him, he sent them out by two and gave them authority over evil spirits.

**(8)**These were his instructions: **"Take nothing for the journey except a staff -no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. (9)Wear sandals but not an extra tunic. (10)Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you live that town. (11)And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave, as a testimony against them."**

**(12)**They went out and preached that people should repent. **(13)**They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.

**Matthew 10:1;5-42. Jesus sends out the Twelve**

**(Mt10:1)**He called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.

**(5)**Jesus sent the Twelve out with the following instructions: **"Do not go among the Pagans or enter any town of the Samaritans. (6)Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. (7)As you go, preach this message: 'The Kingdom of Heaven is near.' (8)Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give. (9)Do not take along any gold or silver or copper in your belts; (10)take no bag for the journey, or extra tunic, or sandals or a staff; for the worker is worth his keep.**

**(11)**Whatever town or village you enter, search for some worthy person there and stay at his house until you leave. **(12)**As you enter the home, give it your greeting. **(13)**If the home is deserving, let your peace rest on it; if it is not, let your peace return to you. **(14)**If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that home or town. **(15)**I tell you the truth, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town. **(16)**I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves.

**(17)**Be on your guard against men; they will hand you over to the local councils and flog you in their synagogues. **(18)**On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Pagans. **(19)**But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, **(20)**for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

**(21)**Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. **(22)**All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. **(23)**When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another. I tell you the truth, you will not finish going through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes.

**(24)**A student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. **(25)**It is enough for the student to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If the head of the house has been called Beelzebub, how much more the members of his household!

**(26)**So do not be afraid of them. There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. **(27)**What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs. **(28)**Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the

One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. (29)Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. (30)And even the very hairs of your head are numbered. (31)So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

(32)Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in Heaven. (33)But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in Heaven.

(34)Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to Earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. (35)For I have come to turn 'a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law (36)-a man's enemies will be the members of his own household.'

(37)Anyone who is fond of his father or mother more than of me is not worthy of me; anyone who is fond of his son or daughter more than of me is not worthy of me; (38)and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. (39)Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

(40)He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives the One who sent me. (41)Anyone who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and anyone who receives a righteous man because he is a righteous man will receive a righteous man's reward. (42)And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward."

#### **Luke 9:1-6. 12:1-9;11-12. Jesus sends out the Twelve.**

##### **Warnings and encouragements**

(Lk9:1)When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, (2)and he sent them out to preach the Kingdom of God and to heal the sick. (3)He told them: "Take nothing for the journey -no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, no extra tunic. (4)Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that town. (5)If people do not welcome you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave their town, as a testimony against them." (6)So they set out and went from village to village, preaching the Gospel and healing people everywhere.

(12:1)Meanwhile, when a crowd of many thousands had gathered, so that they were trampling on one another, Jesus began to speak first to his disciples, saying: "Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. (2)There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. (3)What you have said in the dark will be heard in the daylight, and what you have whispered in the ear in the inner rooms will be proclaimed from the roof.

(4)I tell you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. (5)But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after the killing of the body, has power to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear Him. (6)Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. (7)Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

(8)I tell you, whoever acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man will also acknowledge him before the angels of God. (9)But he who disowns me before men will be disowned before the angels of God.

**(11)When you are brought before synagogues, rulers and authorities, do not worry about how you will defend yourselves or what you will say, (12)for the Spirit of God will teach you at that time what you should say."**

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### **Matthew 11:1-19. Jesus and John the Baptist**

**(Mt11:1)**After Jesus had finished instructing his Twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach and preach in the towns of Galilee. **(2)**When John heard in prison what Christ was doing, he sent his disciples **(3)**to ask him, "Are you the One who was to come, or should we expect someone else?"

**(4)**Jesus replied, "Go back and report to John what you hear and see: **(5)**The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the Good News is preached to the poor. **(6)**Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me."

**(7)**As John's disciples were leaving, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John: "What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed swayed by the wind? **(8)**If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear fine clothes are in kings' palaces. **(9)**Then what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. **(10)**This is the one about whom it is written:

'I will send My messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.'  
**(11)**I tell you the truth: Among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet he who is least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he. **(12)**From the days of John the Baptist until now, the Kingdom of Heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it. **(13)**For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John. **(14)**And if you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who was to come. **(15)**He who has ears, let him hear.

**(16)**To what can I compare this generation? They are like children sitting in the market-places and calling out to others: **(17)**'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.'  
**(18)**For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.'  
**(19)**The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and "sinners.'" But wisdom is proved right by her actions."

### **Luke 7:18-35. Jesus and John the Baptist**

**(Lk7:18)**John's disciples told him about all these things. Calling two of them, **(19)**he sent them to the Lord to ask, "Are you the One who was to come, or should we expect someone else?"

**(20)**When the men came to Jesus, they said, "John the Baptist sent us to you to ask, 'Are you the One who was to come, or should we expect someone else?'"

**(21)**At that very time Jesus cured many who had diseases, sicknesses and evil spirits, and gave sight to many who were blind. **(22)**So he replied to the messengers, "Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the Good News is preached to the poor. **(23)**Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me."

**(24)**After John's messengers left, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John: "What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed swayed by the wind? **(25)**If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear ex-

pensive clothes and indulge in luxury are in palaces. (26)But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. (27)This is the one about whom is written:

'I will send My messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.' (28)I tell you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John; yet the one who is least in the Kingdom of God is greater than he."

(29)(All the people, even the tax collectors, when they heard Jesus' words, acknowledged that God's way was right, because they had been baptized by John. (30)But the Pharisees and experts in the law rejected God's purpose for themselves, because they had not been baptized by John.)

(31)"To what, then, can I compare the people of this generation? What are they like? (32)They are like children sitting in the market-place and calling out to each other: 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not cry.' (33)For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and you say, 'He has a demon.' (34)The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and you say, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and "sinners.'" (35)But wisdom is proved right by all her children."

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#### Matthew 11:20-24. Woe on unrepentant cities

(Mt11:20)Then Jesus began to denounce the cities in which most of his miracles had been performed, because they did not repent. (21)"Woe to you, Korazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. (22)But I tell you, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you. (23)And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths. If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day. (24)But I tell you that it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment than for you."

#### Luke 10:12-15.

(Lk10:12)"I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town.

(13)Woe to you, Korazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. (14)But it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you. (15)And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the sky? No, you will go down to the depths."

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#### Matthew 11:25-30. Rest for the weary

(Mt11:25)At that time Jesus said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth, because You have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. (26)Yes, Father, for this was Your good pleasure.

(27)All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him.

(28)Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, 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."**

**Luke 10:21-22.**

**(Lk10:21)** At that time Jesus, full of joy through the Spirit of God, said, "I praise You, Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was Your good pleasure.

**(22)** All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows who the Son is except the Father, and no one knows who the Father is except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him."

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**Mark 6:14-29. John the Baptist beheaded**

**(Mk6:14)** King Herod heard about this, for Jesus' name had become well known. Some were saying, "John the Baptist has been raised from the dead, and that is why miraculous powers are at work in him."

**(15)** Others said, "He is Elijah."

And still others claimed, "He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of long ago."

**(16)** But when Herod heard this, he said, "John, the man I beheaded, has been raised from the dead!"

**(17)** For Herod himself had given orders to have John arrested, and he had him bound and put in prison. He did this because of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, whom he had married. **(18)** For John had been saying to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." **(19)** So Herodias nursed a grudge against John and wanted to kill him. But she was not able to, **(20)** because Herod feared John and protected him, knowing him to be a righteous and holy man. When Herod heard John, he was greatly puzzled; yet he liked to listen to him.

**(21)** Finally the opportune time came. On his birthday Herod gave a banquet for his high officials and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee. **(22)** When the daughter of Herodias came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his dinner guests.

The king said to the girl, "Ask me for anything you want, and I'll give it to you." **(23)** And he promised her with an oath, "Whatever you ask, I will give you, up to half my kingdom."

**(24)** She went out and said to her mother, "What shall I ask for?"

"The head of John the Baptist," she answered.

**(25)** At once the girl hurried in to the king with the request: "I want you to give me right now the head of John the Baptist on a platter."

**(26)** The king was greatly distressed, but because of his oaths and his dinner guests, he did not want to refuse her. **(27)** So he immediately sent an executioner with orders to bring John's head. The man went, beheaded John in the prison, **(28)** and brought back his head on a platter. He presented it to the girl, and she gave it to her mother. **(29)** On hearing of this, John's disciples came and took his body and laid it in a tomb.

**Matthew 14:1-12. John the Baptist beheaded**

**(Mt14:1)** At that time Herod the tetrarch heard the reports about Jesus, **(2)** and he said to his attendants, "This is John the Baptist; he has risen from the dead! That is why miraculous powers are at work in him."



(3) Now Herod had arrested John and bound him and put him in prison because of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, (4) for John had been saying to him: "It is not lawful for you to have her." (5) Herod wanted to kill John, but he was afraid of the people, because they considered him a prophet.

(6) On Herod's birthday the daughter of Herodias danced for them and pleased Herod so much (7) that he promised with an oath to give her whatever she asked. (8) Prompted by her mother, she said, "Give me here on a platter the head of John the Baptist." (9) The king was distressed, but because of his oaths and his dinner guests, he ordered that her request be granted (10) and had John beheaded in the prison. (11) His head was brought in on a platter and given to the girl, who carried it to her mother. (12) John's disciples came and took his body and buried it. Then they went and told Jesus.

### **Luke 9:7-9.**

(Lk9:7) Now Herod the tetrarch heard about all that was going on. And he was perplexed, because some were saying that John had been raised from the dead, (8) others that Elijah had appeared, and still others that one of the prophets of long ago had come back to life. (9) But Herod said, "I beheaded John. Who, then, is this I hear such things about?" And he tried to see him.

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### **Mark 6:30-44. Jesus feeds the five thousands**

(Mk6:30) The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. (31) Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, "**Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.**"

(32) So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place. (33) But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. (34) When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things.

(35) By this time it was late in the day, so his disciples came to him. "This is a remote place," they said, "and it's already very late. (36) Send the people away so they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat."

(37) But he answered, "**You give them something to eat.**" They said to him, "That would take two hundred denarii! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?"

(38) "**How many loaves do you have?**" he asked. "**Go and see.**"

When they found out, they said, "Five, and two fish."

(39) Then Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. (40) So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties. (41) Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to Heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to his disciples to set before the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. (42) They all ate and were satisfied, (43) and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish. (44) The number of the men who had eaten was five thousand.

### **Matthew 14:13-21. Jesus feeds the five thousand**

(Mt14:13) When Jesus heard what had happened, he withdrew by boat privately to a

solitary place. Hearing of this, the crowds followed him on foot from the towns. **(14)** When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick.

**(15)**As evening approached, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a remote place, and it's already getting late. Send the crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food."

**(16)**Jesus replied, "**They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.**"

**(17)**"We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish," they answered.

**(18)**"**Bring them here to me,**" he said. **(19)**And he directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to Heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. **(20)**They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. **(21)**The number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children.

### **Luke 9:10-17. Jesus feeds the five thousand**

**(Lk9:10)**When the apostles returned, they reported to Jesus what they had done. Then he took them with him and they withdrew by themselves to a town called Bethsaida, **(11)**but the crowds learned about it and followed him. He welcomed them and spoke to them about the Kingdom of God, and healed those who needed healing.

**(12)**Late in the afternoon the Twelve came to him and said, "Send the crowd away so they can go to the surrounding villages and countryside and find food and lodging, because we are in a remote place here."

**(13)**He replied, "**You give them something to eat.**"

They answered, "We have only five loaves of bread and two fish -unless we go and buy food for all this crowd." **(14)**(About five thousand men were there.)

But he said to his disciples, "**Have them sit down in groups of about fifty each.**" **(15)**The disciples did so, and everybody sat down. **(16)**Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to Heaven, he gave thanks and broke them. Then he gave them to the disciples to set before the people. **(17)**They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over.

### **John 6:1-15. Jesus feeds the five thousand**

**(Jn6:1)**Some time after this, Jesus crossed to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee (that is, the Sea of Tiberias), **(2)**and a great crowd of people followed him because they saw the miraculous signs he had performed on the sick. **(3)**Then Jesus went up on a mountainside and sat down with his disciples. **(4)**The Jewish Passover Feast was near.

**(5)**When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, "**Were shall we buy bread for those people to eat?**" **(6)**He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do.

**(7)**Philip answered him, "Two hundred denarii would not buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!"

**(8)**Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up, **(9)**"Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?"

**(10)**Jesus said, "**Have the people sit down.**" There was plenty of grass in that place, and the men sat down, about five thousand of them. **(11)**Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish.

(12)When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, "**Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted.**" (13)So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten.

(14)After the people saw the miraculous sign that Jesus did, they began to say, "Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world." (15)Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself.

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#### **Mark 6:45-56. Jesus walks on the water**

(Mk6:45)Immediately Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go ahead of him to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. (46)After leaving them, he went up on a mountainside to pray.

(47)When evening came, the boat was in the middle of the lake, and he was alone on land. (48)He saw the disciples straining at the oars, because the wind was against them. About the fourth watch of the night he went out to them, walking on the lake. He was about to pass by them, (49)but when they saw him walking on the lake, they thought he was a ghost. They cried out, (50)because they all saw him and were terrified.

Immediately he spoke to them and said, "**Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid.**" (51)Then he climbed into the boat with them, and the wind died down. They were completely amazed, (52)for they had not understood about the loaves; their hearts were hardened.

(53)When they had crossed over, they landed at Gennezaret and anchored there. (54)As soon as they got out of the boat, people recognized Jesus. (55)They ran throughout that whole region and carried the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was. (56)And wherever he went -into villages, towns or countryside- they placed the sick in the marketplaces. They begged him to let them touch even the edge of his cloak, and all who touched him were healed.

#### **Matthew 14:22-36. Jesus walks on the water**

(Mt14:22)Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. (23)After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, (24)but the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it.

(25)During the fourth watch of the night Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. (26)When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear.

(27)But Jesus immediately said to them: "**Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid.**"

(28)"Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water."

(29)"**Come,**" he said.

Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. (30)But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!"

(31)Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "**You of little faith,**" he said, "**why did you doubt?**"

(32)And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. (33)Then those who were in the boat worshipped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

(34)When they had crossed over, they landed at Gennezaret. (35)And when the men

of that place recognized Jesus, they sent word to all the surrounding country. People brought all their sick to him (36) and begged him to let the sick just touch the edge of his cloak, and all who touched him were healed.

### **John 6:16-24. Jesus walks on the water**

(Jn6:16) When evening came, his disciples went down to the lake, (17) where they got into a boat and set off across the lake for Capernaum. By now it was dark, and Jesus had not yet joined them. (18) A strong wind was blowing and the waters grew rough. (19) When they had rowed twenty-five or thirty stadia, they saw Jesus approaching the boat, walking on the water; and they were terrified. (20) But he said to them, "**It is I; don't be afraid.**" (21) Then they were willing to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the shore where they were heading.

(22) The next day the crowd that had stayed on the opposite shore of the lake realized that only one boat had been there, and that Jesus had not entered it with his disciples, but that they had gone away alone. (23) Then some boats from Tiberias landed near the place where the people had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks. (24) Once the crowd realized that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum in search of Jesus.

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### **Mark 7:1-23. Clean and Unclean**

(Mk7:1) The Pharisees and some of the teachers of the law who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus and (2) saw some of his disciples eating food with hands that were "unclean," that is, unwashed. (3) (The Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they give their hands a ceremonial washing, holding to the tradition of the elders. (4) When they come from the marketplace they do not eat unless they wash. And they observe many other traditions, such as the washing of cups, pitchers and kettles).

(5) So the Pharisees and the teachers of the law asked Jesus, "Why don't your disciples live according to the tradition of the elders instead of eating their food with 'unclean' hands?"

(6) He replied, "**Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written:**

**'These people honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me.**

**(7) They worship Me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.'**

**(8) You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the tradition of men."**

(9) And he said to them: "**You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions! (10) For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.'** (11) **But you say that if a man says to his father or mother: 'Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is Corban' (that is, a gift devoted to God), (12) then you no longer let him do anything for his father or mother. (13) Thus you nullify the Word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that."**

(14) Again Jesus called the crowd to him and said, "**Listen to me, everyone, and understand this. (15) Nothing outside a man can make him 'unclean' by going into him. Rather, it is what comes out of a man that makes him 'unclean.'** (16) **If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear."**

(17)After he had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples asked him about this parable. (18)"Are you so dull?" he asked. **"Don't you see that nothing that enters a man from the outside can make him 'unclean'? (19)For it doesn't go into his heart but into his stomach, and then out of his body."** (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods "clean.")

(20)He went on: **"What comes out of a man is what makes him 'unclean.'** (21)**For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, (22)greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. (23)All these evils come from inside and make a man 'unclean.'"**

### **Matthew 15:1-20. Clean and unclean**

(Mt15:1)Then some Pharisees and teachers of the law came to Jesus from Jerusalem and asked, (2)"Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? They don't wash their hands before they eat!"

(3)Jesus replied, **"And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition? (4)For God said, 'Honor your father and mother' and 'Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.' (5)But you say that if a man says to his father or mother, 'Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is a gift devoted to God,' (6)he is not to 'honor his father or his mother' with it. Thus you nullify the Word of God for the sake of your tradition. (7)You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you:**

(8)'These people honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me.

(9)They worship Me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.'

(10)Jesus called the crowd to him and said, **"Listen and understand. (11)What goes into a man's mouth does not make him 'unclean,' but what comes out of his mouth, that is what makes him 'unclean.'"** (12)Then the disciples came to him and asked, "Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this?"

(13)He replied, **"Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be pulled up by the roots. (14)Leave them; they are blind guides. If a blind man leads a blind man, both will fall into a pit."** (15)Peter said, "Explain the parable to us."

(16)"Are you still so dull?" Jesus asked them. (17)"**Don't you see that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and then out of the body? (18)But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these make a man 'unclean.'** (19)**For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. (20)These are what make a man 'unclean;'** but eating with unwashed hands does not make him 'unclean.'"

### **Mark 7:24-30. The faith of a Syrophenician woman**

(Mk7:24)Jesus left that place and went to the vicinity of Tyre and Sidon. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know it; yet he could not keep his presence secret. (25)In fact, as soon as she heard about him, a woman whose little daughter was possessed by an evil spirit came and fell at his feet. (26)The woman was a Greek, born in Syrian Phoenicia. She begged Jesus to drive the demon out of her daughter.

(27)"**First let the children eat all they want,"** he told her, **"for it is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs."**

(28)"Yes, Lord," she replied, "but even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs."

(29)Then he told her, **"For such a reply, you may go; the demon has left your daughter."**

(30)She went home and found her child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.

#### **Matthew 15:21-28. The faith of the Canaanite woman**

(Mt15:21)Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. (22)A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is suffering terribly from demon-possession."

(23)Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, "Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us."

(24)He answered, **"I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel."**

(25)The woman came and knelt before him. "Lord, help me!" she said.

(26)He replied, **"It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs."**

(27)"Yes, Lord," she said, "but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table."

(28)Then Jesus answered, **"Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted."** And her daughter was healed from that very hour.

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#### **Mark 8:1-10. Jesus feeds the four thousand**

(Mk8:1)During those days another large crowd gathered. Since they had nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples to him and said, (2)**"I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. (3)If I send them home hungry, they will collapse on the way, because some of them have come a long distance."**

(4)His disciples answered, "But where in this remote place can anyone get enough bread to feed them?"

(5)**"How many loaves do you have?"** Jesus asked. "Seven," they replied.

(6)He told the crowd to sit down on the ground. When he had taken the seven loaves and given thanks, he broke them and gave them to his disciples to set before the people, and they did so. (7)They had a few small fish as well; he gave thanks for them also and told the disciples to distribute them. (8)The people ate and were satisfied. Afterward the disciples picked up seven basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. (9)About four thousand men were present. And having sent them away, (10)he got into the boat with his disciples and went to the region of Dalmanutha.

#### **Matthew 15:29-39. Jesus feeds the four thousand**

(Mt15:29)Jesus left there and went along the Sea of Galilee. Then he went up on a mountainside and sat down. (30)Great crowds came to him, bringing the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute and many others, and laid them at his feet; and he healed them. (31)The people were amazed when they saw the mute speaking, the crippled made well, the lame walking and the blind seeing. And they praised the God of Israel.

(32)Jesus called his disciples to him and said, **"I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. I do not want to send them away hungry, or they may collapse on the way."**

(33)His disciples answered, "Where could we get enough bread in this remote place to feed such a crowd?"

**(34)"How many loaves do you have?"** Jesus asked. "Seven," they replied, "and a few small fish."

**(35)**He told the crowd to sit down on the ground. **(36)**Then he took the seven loaves and the fish, and when he had given thanks, he broke them and gave them to the disciples, and they in turn to the people. **(37)**They all ate and were satisfied. Afterward the disciples picked up seven basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. **(38)**The number of those who ate was four thousand, besides women and children. **(39)**After Jesus had sent the crowd away, he got into the boat and went to the vicinity of Magadan.

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### **Mark 8:11-13.**

**(Mk8:11)**The Pharisees came and began to question Jesus. To test him, they asked him for a sign from Heaven. **(12)**He sighed deeply and said, **"Why does this generation ask for a miraculous sign? I tell you the truth, no sign will be given to it."** **(13)** Then he left them, got back into the boat and crossed to the other side.

### **Matthew 16:1-4. The demand for a sign**

**(Mt16:1)**The Pharisees and Sadducees came to Jesus and tested him by asking him to show them a sign from Heaven.

**(2)**He replied, **"When evening comes, you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red,' (3)and in the morning, 'Today it will be stormy, for the sky is red and overcast.' You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times. (4)A wicked and adulterous generation looks for a miraculous sign, but none will be given except the sign of Jonah."** Jesus then left them and went away.

### **Luke 12:54-59. Interpreting the times**

**(Lk12:54)**He said to the crowd: **"When you see a cloud rising in the west, immediately you say, 'It's going to rain,' and it does. (55)And when the south wind blows, you say, 'It's going to be hot,' and it is. (56)Hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of the earth and the sky. How is it that you don't know how to interpret this present time?**

**(57)Why don't you judge for yourselves what is right? (58)As you are going with your adversary to the magistrate, try hard to be reconciled to him on the way, or they may drag you off to the judge, and the judge turn you over to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison. (59)I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last lepton."**

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### **Mark 8:14-21. The yeast of the Pharisees and Herod.**

**(Mk8:14)**The disciples had forgotten to bring bread, except for one loaf they had with them in the boat.

**(15)"Be careful,"** Jesus warned them. **"Watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees and that of Herod."**

**(16)**They discussed this with one another and said, "It is because we have no bread."

**(17)**Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked them: **"Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you not still see or understand? Are your hearts hardened? (18) Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears and fail to hear? And don't you remem-**

ber? (19) When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?"

"Twelve," they replied.

(20)"And when I broke the seven loaves for the four thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?" They answered, "Seven."

(21)He said to them, "Do you still not understand?"

#### **Matthew 16:5-12. The yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees**

(Mt16:5)When they went across the lake, the disciples forgot to take bread. (6)"Be careful," Jesus said to them. "Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees."

(7)They discussed this among themselves and said, "It is because we didn't bring any bread."

(8)Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked, "You of little faith, why are you talking among yourselves about having no bread? (9)Do you still not understand? Don't you remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered? (10)Or the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered? (11)How is it you don't understand that I was not talking to you about bread? But be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees."

(12)Then they understood that he was not telling them to guard against the yeast used in bread, but against the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

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#### **Mark 8:27-30. Peter's confession of Christ**

(Mk8:27)Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, "Who do people say I am?"

(28)They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets."

(29)"But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

Peter answered, "You are the Christ."

(30)Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him.

#### **Matthew 16:13-20. Peter's confession of Christ**

(Mt16:13)When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" (14)They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets." (15)But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" (16) Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

(17)Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in Heaven. (18)And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. (19)I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven; whatever you bind on Earth will be bound in Heaven, and whatever you loose on Earth will be loosed in heaven." (20)Then he warned his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Christ.

#### **Luke 9:18-21. Peter's confession of Christ**

(Lk9:18)Once when Jesus was praying in private and his disciples were with him, he



asked them, **"Who do the crowds say I am?" (19)**They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, that one of the prophets of long ago has come back to life."

**(20)"But what about you?"** he asked. **"Who do you say I am?"** Peter answered, "The Christ of God." **(21)**Jesus strictly warned them not to tell this to anyone.

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#### **Mark 8:31-38;9:1. Jesus predicts his death**

**(Mk8:31)**He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. **(32)**He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

**(33)**But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. **"Get behind me, Satan!"** he said. **"You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."**

**(34)**Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: **"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. (35)For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the Gospel will save it. (36)What good is for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? (37)Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? (38)If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."**

**(9:1)**And he said to them, **"I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Kingdom of God come with power."**

#### **Matthew 16:21-28. Jesus predicts his death**

**(Mt16:21)**From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. **(22)**Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "Never, Lord!" He said. "This shall never happen to you!"

**(23)**Jesus turned and said to Peter. **"Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."**

**(24)**Then Jesus said to his disciples, **"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. (25)For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it. (26)What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? (27)For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done. (28)I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his Kingdom."**

#### **Luke 9:22-27.**

**(Lk9:22)**And he said, **"The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life."**

**(23)**Then he said to them all: **"If anyone would come after me, he must deny him-**

self and take up his cross daily and follow me. (24)For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it. (25)What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self? (26)If anyone is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. (27)I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Kingdom of God."

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### **Mark 9:2-13. The Transfiguration**

(Mk9:2)After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them. (3)His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. (4)And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus.

(5)Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters -one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." (6)(He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.)

(7)Then a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and a voice came from the cloud: **"This is My Son, whom I love. Listen to him!"**

(8)Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus.

(9)As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. (10)They kept the matter to themselves, discussing what "rising from the dead" meant.

(11)And they asked him, "Why do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?"

(12)Jesus replied, **"To be sure, Elijah does come first, and restore all things. And it is also written that the Son of Man must suffer much and be rejected. (13)But I tell you, Elijah has come, and they have done to him everything they wished, just as it is written about him."**

### **Matthew 17:1-13. The Transfiguration**

(Mt17:1)After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. (2)There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. (3)Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus.

(4)Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters -one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah."

(5)While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, **"This is My Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!"**

(6)When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown to the ground, terrified. (7)But Jesus came and touched them. **"Get up,"** he said. **"Don't be afraid."** (8)When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus.

(9)As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus instructed them, **"Don't tell anyone what you have seen, until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead."**

(10)The disciples asked him, "Why then do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?"

(11) Jesus replied, **"To be sure, Elijah comes and will restore all things. (12) But I tell you, Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but have done to him everything they wished. In the same way the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands."** (13) Then the disciples understood that he was talking to them about John the Baptist.

#### **Luke 9:28-36. The Transfiguration**

(Lk9:28) About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray. (29) As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. (30) Two men, Moses and Elijah, (31) appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus. They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem. (32) Peter and his companions were very sleepy, but when they became fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him. (33) As the men were leaving Jesus, Peter said to him, "Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters -one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." (He did not know what he was saying.)

(34) While he was speaking, a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. (35) A voice came from the cloud, saying, **"This is My Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him!"** (36) When the voice had spoken, they found that Jesus was alone. The disciples kept this to themselves, and told no one at that time what they had seen.

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#### **Mark 9:14-32. The healing of a boy with an evil spirit**

(Mk9:14) When they came to the other disciples, they saw a large crowd around them and the teachers of the law arguing with them. (15) As soon as all the people saw Jesus, they were overwhelmed with wonder and ran to greet him. (16) **"What are you arguing with them about?"** he asked.

(17) A man in the crowd answered, "Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech. (18) Whenever it seizes him, it throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth and becomes rigid. I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not."

(19) **"O unbelieving generation,"** Jesus replied, **"how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy to me."**

(20) So they brought him. When the spirit saw Jesus, it immediately threw the boy into a convulsion. He fell to the ground and rolled around, foaming at the mouth.

(21) Jesus asked the boy's father, **"How long has he been like this?"**

"From childhood," he answered. (22) "It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us."

(23) **"If you can'?"** said Jesus. **"Everything is possible for him who believes."**

(24) Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!"

(25) When Jesus saw that a crowd was running to the scene, he rebuked the evil spirit. **"You deaf and mute spirit,"** he said, **"I command you, come out of him and never enter him again."**

(26) The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and came out. The boy looked so much like a corpse that many said, "He's dead." (27) But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him to his feet, and he stood up.

(28)After Jesus had gone indoors, his disciples asked him privately, "Why couldn't we drive it out?"

(29)He replied, "**This kind can come out only by prayer.**"

(30)They left that place and passed through Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone to know where they were, (31)because he was teaching his disciples. He said to them, "**The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise.**" (32)But they did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it.

#### **Matthew 17:14-23. The healing of a boy with a demon**

(Mt17:14)When they came to the crowd, a man approached Jesus and knelt before him. (15)"Lord, have mercy on my son," he said. "He has seizures and is suffering greatly. He often falls into the fire or into the water. (16)I brought him to your disciples, but they could not heal him."

(17)"**O unbelieving and perverse generation,**" Jesus replied, "**how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy here to me.**" (18)Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of the boy, and he was healed from that moment.

(19)Then the disciples came to Jesus in private and asked, "Why couldn't we drive it out?"

(20)He replied, "**Because you have so little faith. I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you. (21)But this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.**"

(22)When they came together in Galilee, he said to them, "**The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. (23)They will kill him, and on the third day he will be raised to life.**" And the disciples were filled with grief.

#### **Luke 9:37-45. The healing of a boy with an evil spirit**

(Lk9:37)The next day, when they came down from the mountain, a large crowd met him. (38)A man in the crowd called out, "Teacher, I beg you to look at my son, for he is my only child. (39)A spirit seizes him and he suddenly screams; it throws him into convulsions so that he foams at the mouth. It scarcely ever leaves him and is destroying him. (40)I begged your disciples to drive it out, but they could not."

(41)"**O unbelieving and perverse generation,**" Jesus replied, "**how long shall I stay with you and put up with you? Bring your son here.**"

(42)Even when the boy was coming, the demon threw him to the ground in a convulsion. But Jesus rebuked the evil spirit, healed the boy and gave him back to his father. (43)And they were amazed at the greatness of God.

While everyone was marveling at all that Jesus did, he said to his disciples, (44)"**Listen carefully to what I am to tell you: The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men.**" (45)But they did not understand what this meant. It was hidden from them, so that they did not grasp it, and they were afraid to ask him about it.

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#### **Mark 9:33-37. Who is the greatest?**

(Mk9:33)They came to Capernaum. When he was in the house, he asked them, "**What were you arguing about on the road?**" (34)But they kept quiet because on the

way they had argued about who was the greatest. (35)Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, **"If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all."**

(36)He took a little child and had him stand among them. Taking him in his arms, he said to them, (37)**"Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the One who sent me."**

**Matthew 18:1-5. The greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven**

(Mt18:1)At a certain time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?"

(2)He called a little child and had him stand among them. (3)And he said: **"I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven. (4)Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven.**

(5)And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me."

**Luke 9:46-48. Who will be the greatest?**

(Lk9:46)An argument started among the disciples as to which of them would be the greatest. (47)Jesus, knowing their thoughts, took a little child and had him stand beside him. (48)Then he said to them, **"Whoever welcomes this little child in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me welcomes the One who sent me. For he who is the least among you all -he is the greatest."**

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**Mark 9:38-41. Whoever is not against us is for us**

(Mk9:38)"Teacher," said John, "we saw a man driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us."

(39)"Do not stop him," Jesus said. **"No one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me, (40)for whoever is not against us is for us. (41)I tell you the truth, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to Christ will certainly not lose his reward."**

**Luke 9:49-50.**

(Lk9:49)"Master," said John, "we saw a man driving out demons in your name and we tried to stop him, because he is not one of us."

(50)"Do not stop him," Jesus said, **"for whoever is not against you is for you."**

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**Mark 10:13-16. The little children and Jesus**

(Mk10:13)People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. (14)When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, **"Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these. (15)I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the Kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." (16)And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them.**

**Matthew 19:13-15. The little children and Jesus**

(Mt19:13)Then little children were brought to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked those who brought them.

(14)Jesus said, "**Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to such as these.**" (15)When he had placed his hands on them, he went on from there.

**Luke 18:15-17. The little children and Jesus**

(Lk18:15)People were also bringing babies to Jesus to have him touch them. When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them. (16)But Jesus called the children to him and said, "**Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these. (17)I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the Kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.**"

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**Mark 10:17-31. The rich young man**

(Mk10:17)As Jesus started on his way, a man run up to him and fell on his knees before him, "Good teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

(18)"**Why do you call me good?"** Jesus answered, "**No one is good -except God alone. (19)You know the commandments: 'Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not defraud, honor your father and mother.'**"

(20)"Teacher," he declared, "all these I have kept since I was a boy."

(21)Jesus looked at him and liked him, "**One thing you lack,**" he said, "**go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have a treasure in Heaven. Then come, follow me.**"

(22)At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.

(23)Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "**How hard it is for the rich to enter the Kingdom of God!**"

(24)The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, "**Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the Kingdom of God! (25)It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God.**"

(26)The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, "Who then can be saved?"

(27)Jesus looked at them and said, "**With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God.**"

(28)Peter said to him, "We have left everything to follow you!"

(29)"**I tell you the truth,**" Jesus replied, "**no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the Gospel (30)will fail to receive in this present age a hundred times the value of homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields (and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life. (31)But many who are first will be last, and the last first.**"

**Matthew 19:16-30. The rich young man**

(Mt19:16)Now a man came up to Jesus and asked, "Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?"

(17) **"Why do you ask me about what is good?"** Jesus replied, **"There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, obey the commandments."**

(18) **"Which ones?"** the man inquired.

Jesus replied, **"Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, (19)honor your father and mother, and be fond of your neighbor as of yourself."**

(20) **"All these I have kept,"** the young man said. **"What do I still lack?"**

(21) Jesus answered, **"If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have a treasure in Heaven. Then come, follow me."**

(22) When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth.

(23) Then Jesus said to his disciples, **"I tell you the truth, it is hard for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. (24)Again, I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God."**

(25) When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and asked, **"Who then can be saved?"**

(26) Jesus looked at them and said, **"With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."**

(27) Peter answered him, **"We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?"**

(28) Jesus said to them, **"I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. (29)And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life. (30)But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first."**

#### **Luke 18:18-30. The rich ruler**

(Lk18:18) A certain ruler asked him, **"Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"**

(19) **"Why do you call me good?"** Jesus answered, **"No one is good -except God alone. (20)You know the commandments: 'Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, honor your father and mother.'"**

(21) **"All these I have kept since I was a boy,"** he said.

(22) When Jesus heard this, he said to him, **"You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have a treasure in Heaven. Then come, follow me."**

(23) When he heard this, he became very sad, because he was a man of great wealth.

(24) Jesus looked at him and said, **"How hard it is for the rich to enter the Kingdom of God! (25)Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God."**

(26) Those who heard this asked, **"Who then can be saved?"**

(27) Jesus replied, **"What is impossible with men is possible with God."**

(28) Peter said to him, **"We have left all we had to follow you!"**

(29) **"I tell you the truth,"** Jesus said to them, **"no one who has left home or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the Kingdom of God (30)will fail to receive many times as much in this age and, in the age to come, eternal life."**

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**Mark 10:32-34. Jesus again predicts his death**

(Mk10:32)They were on their way up to Jerusalem, with Jesus leading the way, and the disciples were astonished, while those who followed were afraid. Again he took the Twelve aside and told them what was going to happen to him. (33)"We are going up to Jerusalem," he said, "and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Pagans, (34)who will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him. Three days later he will rise."

**Matthew 20:17-19. Jesus again predicts his death**

(Mt20:17)Now as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the Twelve disciples aside and said to them, (18)"We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death (19)and will turn him over to the Pagans, to be mocked and flogged and crucified. On the third day he will be raised to life!"

**Luke 18:31-34. Jesus again predicts his death**

(Lk18:31)Jesus took the Twelve aside and told them, "We are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled. (32)He will be handed over to the Pagans. They will mock him, insult him, spit on him, flog him and kill him. (33)On the third day he will rise again."

(34)The disciples did not understand any of this. Its meaning was hidden from them, and they did not know what he was talking about.

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**Mark 10:35-45. The request of James and John**

(Mk10:35)Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. "Teacher," they said, "we want you to do for us whatever we ask."

(36)"What do you want me to do for you?" he asked.

(37)They replied, "Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory."

(38)"You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said. "Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?"

(39)"We can," they answered.

Jesus said to them, "You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with, (40)but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared."

(41)When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John. (42)Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Pagans lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. (43)Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, (44)and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. (45)For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

**Matthew 20:20-28. A mother's request**

(Mt20:20)Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Jesus with her sons and, kneeling down, asked a favor of him.



(21) "What is it you want?" he asked.

She said, "Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom."

(22) "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said to them. "Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?"

"We can," they answered.

(23) Jesus said to them, "You will indeed drink from my cup, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father."

(24) When the ten heard about this, they were indignant with the two brothers. (25) Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Pagans lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. (26) Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, (27) and whoever wants to be first must be your slave -(28) just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

#### Luke 22:24-30.

(Lk22:24) Also a dispute arose among them as to which of them was considered to be the greatest. (25) Jesus said to them, "The kings of the Pagans lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. (26) But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. (27) For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? It is not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves. (28) You are those who have stood by me in my trials. (29) And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, (30) so that you may eat and drink at my table in my Kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

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#### Mark 10:46-52. The blind Bartimaeus receives his sight

(Mk10:46) Then they came to Jericho. As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd, were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus (that is, the Son of Timaeus), was sitting by the roadside begging. (47) When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

(48) Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

(49) Jesus stopped and said, "Call him."

So they called the blind man, "Cheer up! On your feet! He's calling you." (50) Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus.

(51) "What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus asked him.

The blind man said, "Rabbi, I want to see."

(52) "Go," said Jesus, "Your faith has healed you."

Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.

#### Matthew 20:29-34. Two blind men receive sight

(Mt20:29) As Jesus and his disciples were leaving Jericho, a large crowd followed him. (30) Two blind men were sitting by the roadside, and when they heard that Jesus was going by, they shouted, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!"

(31)The crowd rebuked them and told them to be quiet, but they shouted all the louder, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!"

(32)Jesus stopped and called them. **"What do you want me to do for you?"** he asked.

(33)"Lord," they answered, "we want our sight."

(34)Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and followed him.

**Luke 18:35-43. A blind beggar receives his sight**

(Lk18:35)As Jesus approached Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging. (36)When he heard the crowd going by, he asked what was happening. (37)They told him, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by."

(38)He called out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

(39)Those who led the way rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

(40)Jesus stopped and ordered the man to be brought to him. When he came near, Jesus asked him, (41)**"What do you want me to do for you?"**

"Lord, I want to see," he replied.

(42)Jesus said to him, **"Receive your sight; your faith has healed you."** (43)Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus, praising God. When all the people saw it, they also praised God.

**Matthew 24:37-41.**

(Mt24:37)"As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. (38)For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; (39)and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. (40)Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. (41)Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left."

**Luke 17:20-37. The coming of the Kingdom of God**

(Lk17:20)Once, having been asked by the Pharisees when the Kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, **"The Kingdom of God does not come with signs you can observe, (21)nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the Kingdom of God is among you."**

(22)Then he said to his disciples, **"The time is coming when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, but you will not see it. (23)Men will tell you, 'There he is!' or 'Here he is!' Do not go running off after them. (24)For the Son of Man in his day will be like the lightning, which flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other. (25)But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.**

(26)Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man. (27)People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all.

(28)It was the same in the days of Lot. People were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building. (29)But the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from Heaven and destroyed them all.

**(30)It will be just like this on the day the Son of Man is revealed. (31)On that day no one who is on the roof of his house, with his goods inside, should go down to get them. Likewise, no one in the field should go back for anything. (32)Remember Lot's wife! (33)Whoever tries to keep his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life [for me] will preserve it. (34)I tell you, on that night two people will be in one bed; one will be taken and the other left. (35)Two women will be grinding grain together; one will be taken and the other left. (36)Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left."**

**(37)"Where, Lord?" they asked.**

**He replied, "Where there is a dead body, there the vultures will gather."**

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### **Matthew 23:1-13;15-39. Seven woes**

**(Mt23:1)Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: (2)"The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. (3)So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach. (4)They tie up heavy loads and put them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them.**

**(5)Everything they do is done for men to see: They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long; (6)they like the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; (7)they like to be greeted in the marketplaces and to have men call them 'Rabbi.'**

**(8)But you are not to be called 'Rabbi,' for you have only one Master and you are all brothers. (9)And do not call anyone on Earth 'father,' for you have one Father, and He is in Heaven. (10)Nor are you to be called 'teacher,' for you have one Teacher, the Christ. (11)The greatest among you will be your servant. (12)For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.**

**(13)Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the Kingdom of Heaven in men's faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to.**

**(15)Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are.**

**(16)Woe to you, blind guides! You say, 'If anyone swears by the Temple, it means nothing; but if anyone swears by the gold of the Temple, he is bound by his oath.' (17)You blind fools! Which is greater; the gold, or the Temple that makes the gold sacred? (18)You also say, 'If anyone swears by the altar, it means nothing; but if anyone swears by the gift on it, he is bound by his oath.' (19)You blind men! Which is greater: the gift, or the altar that makes the gift sacred? (20)Therefore, he who swears by the altar swears by it and by everything on it. (21)And he who swears by the Temple swears by it and by the One who dwells in it. (22)And he who swears by Heaven swears by God's throne and by the One who sits on it.**

**(23)Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices -mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law -justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. (24)You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel.**

**(25)Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. (26)Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean.**

**(27)Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean. (28)In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.**

**(29)Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You build tombs for the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous. (30)And you say, 'If we had lived in the days of our forefathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.' (31)So you testify against yourselves that you are the descendants of those who murdered the prophets. (32)You fill up, then, the measure of the sin of your forefathers!**

**(33)You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell? (34)'Therefore I am sending you prophets and wise men and teachers. Some of them you will kill and crucify; others you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town.' (35)And so upon you will come all the righteous blood that has been shed on Earth, from the blood of the righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Berekiah, whom you murdered between the Temple and the altar. (36)I tell you the truth, all this will come upon this generation.**

**(37)O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. (38)Look, your house is left to you desolate. (39)For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the Name of the Lord.'"**

#### **Luke 11:37-54. Six woes. 13:31-35. Jesus' sorrow for Jerusalem**

**(Lk11:37)When Jesus had finished speaking, a Pharisee invited him to eat with him; so he went in and reclined at the table. (38)But the Pharisee, noticing that Jesus did not first wash before the meal, was surprised.**

**(39)Then the Lord said to him, "Now then, you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness. (40)You foolish people! Did not the one who made the outside make the inside also? (41)But give what is inside the dish -what you have- to the poor, and everything will be clean for you.**

**(42)Woe to you Pharisees, because you give God a tenth of your mint, rue and all other kinds of garden herbs, but you neglect justice and the affection of God. You should have practiced the latter without leaving the former undone.**

**(43)Woe to you Pharisees, because you like the most important seats in the synagogues and greetings in the market-places.**

**(44)Woe to you, because you are like unmarked graves, which men walk over without knowing it."**

**(45)One of the experts in the law answered him, "Teacher, when you say these things, you insult us also."**

**(46)Jesus replied, "And you experts in the law, woe to you, because you load people down with burdens they can hardly carry and you yourselves will not lift one finger to help them.**

**(47)Woe to you, because you build tombs for the prophets, and it was your forefathers who killed them. (48)So you testify that you approve of what your forefathers did; they killed the prophets and you build their tomb. (49)Because of this, God in His wisdom said, 'I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and others they will persecute.' (50)Therefore this generation will be held responsible for the blood of all the prophets that has been shed since the beginning of the world, (51) from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, this generation will be held responsible for it all.**

**(52)Woe to you expert in the law, because you have taken away the key to knowledge. You yourselves have not entered, and you have hindered those who are entering."**

**(53)When Jesus left there, the Pharisees and the teachers of the law begun to oppose him fiercely and to besiege him with questions, (54)waiting to catch him in something he might say.**

**(13:31)At that time some Pharisees came to Jesus and said to him, "Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you."**

**(32)He replied, "Go tell that fox, 'I will drive out demons and heal people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal.' (33)In any case, I must keep going today and tomorrow and the next day -for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!**

**(34)O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! (35)Look, your house is left to you desolate. I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the Name of the Lord.'"**

### **Mark 11:1-11. The triumphal entry**

**(Mk11:1)As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage from Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples, (2)saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. (3)If anyone asks you, 'Why are you doing this?' tell him, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back shortly.'"**

**(4)They went and found a colt outside in the street, tied at a doorway. As they untied it, (5)some people standing there asked, "What are you doing, untying that colt?" (6) They answered as Jesus had told them to, and the people let them go. (7)When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it. (8)Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields. (9)Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted,**

**"Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!**

**(10)Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Glory in the Highest!"**

**(11)Jesus entered Jerusalem and went to the Temple. He looked around at everything, but since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve.**

### **Matthew 21:1-11. The triumphal entry**

**(Mt21:1)As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, (2)saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and**

**at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. (3)If anyone says anything to you, tell him that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away."**

(4)This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet:

(5)"Say to the Daughter of Zion, 'See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'"

(6)The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. (7)They brought the donkey and the colt, placed their cloaks on them, and Jesus sat on them. (8)A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. (9)The crowd that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted,

"Hosanna, Son of David!

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!

Glory in the Highest!"

(10)When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, "Who is this?"

(11)The crowd answered, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee."

#### **Luke 19:28-44. The triumphal entry**

(Lk19:28)After Jesus had spoken, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. (29)As he approached Bethphage from Bethany, at the hill called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, (30)"**Go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. (31)If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' tell him, 'The Lord needs it.'**"

(32)Those who were sent ahead went and found it as he had told them. (33)As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, "Why are you untying the colt?"

(34)They replied, "The Lord needs it."

(35)They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it. (36)As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road.

(37)When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen:

(38)"Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!

Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"

(39)Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples!"

(40)"I tell you," he replied, "if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out."

(41)As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it (42)and said, "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace -but now it is hidden from your eyes. (43)The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. (44)They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you."

#### **John 12:12-19. The triumphal entry**

(Jn12:12)The next day the great crowd that had come for the Feast heard that Jesus

was on his way to Jerusalem. (13)They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting,

"Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!  
Blessed is the King of Israel!"

(14)Jesus found a young donkey and sat upon it, as it is written,

(15)"Do not be afraid, O Daughter of Zion; see,  
your king is coming, seated on a donkey's colt."

(16)At first his disciples did not understand all this. Only after Jesus was glorified did they realize that these things had been written about him and that they had done these things to him.

(17)Now the crowd that was with him when he called Lazarus from the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to spread the word. (18)Many people, because they had heard that he had given this miraculous sign, went out to meet him. (19)So the Pharisees said to one another, "See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him!"

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#### **Mark 11:12-14.**

(Mk11:12)The next day as they were leaving Bethany, Jesus was hungry. (13)Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to find out if it had any fruit. When he reached it, he found nothing but leaves, because it was not the season for figs. (14)Then he said to the tree, "**May no one ever eat fruit from you again.**" And his disciples heard him say it.

#### **Matthew 21:18-19. The fig tree withers**

(Mt21:18)Early in the morning, as he was on his way back to the city, he was hungry. (19)Seeing a fig tree by the road, he went up to it but found nothing on it except leaves. Then he said to it, "**May you never bear fruit again!**" Immediately the tree withered.

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#### **Mark 11:15-19. Jesus clears the Temple**

(Mk11:15)On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the Temple area and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves, (16)and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the Temple courts. (17)And as he taught them, he said, "**It is not written:**

**'My House will be called a House of Prayer for all nations'?  
But you have made it 'a den of robbers.'**"

(18)The chief priests and the teachers of the law heard this and began looking for a way to kill him, for they feared him, because the whole crowd was amazed at his teaching.

(19)When evening came, he went out of the city.

#### **Matthew 21:12-17. Jesus at the Temple**

(Mt21:12)Jesus entered the Temple area and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. (13)"**It is written,**" he said to them, "**'My House will be called a House of Prayer,' but you are making it 'a den of robbers.'**"

(14)The blind and the lame came to him at the Temple, and he healed them. (15)But when the chief priests and the teachers of the law saw the wonderful things he did and the children shouting in the Temple area, "Hosanna, Son of David," they were indignant.

(16)"Do you hear what these children are saying?" they asked him.

"Yes," replied Jesus, **"have you never read,**

**'From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise'?"**

(17)And he left them and went out of the city to Bethany, where he spent the night.

### **Luke 19:45-48. Jesus at the Temple**

(Lk19:45)Then he entered the Temple area and began driving out those who were selling. (46)"It is written," he said to them, **"My House will be a House of Prayer,' but you have made it 'a den of robbers.'"**

(47)Every day he was teaching at the Temple. But the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the leaders among the people were trying to kill him. (48)Yet they could not find any way to do it, because all the people hung on his words.

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### **Mark 11:20-26. The withered fig tree**

(Mk11:20)In the morning, as they went along, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots. (21)Peter remembered and said to Jesus, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree you cursed has withered!"

(22)"Have faith in God," Jesus answered, (23)"I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. (24)Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. (25)And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in Heaven may forgive you your sins. (26) But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in Heaven forgive your sins."

### **Matthew 21:20-22.**

(Mt21:20)When the disciples saw this, they were amazed. "How did the fig tree wither so quickly?" they asked.

(21)Jesus replied, **"I tell you the truth, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and it will be done. (22)If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer."**

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### **Mark 11:27-33. The authority of Jesus questioned**

(Mk11:27)They arrived again in Jerusalem, and while Jesus was walking in the Temple courts, the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders came to him. (28)"By what authority are you doing these things?" they asked. "And who gave you authority to do this?"

(29)Jesus replied, **"I will ask you one question. Answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. (30)John's baptism -was it from Heaven, or from men? Tell me!"**



(31)They discussed it among themselves and said, "If we say, 'From Heaven,' he will ask, 'Then why didn't you believe him?' (32)But if we say, 'From men'..." (They feared the people, for everyone held that John really was a prophet.)

(33)So they answered Jesus, "We don't know."

Jesus said, "**Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.**"

#### **Matthew 21:23-27. The authority of Jesus questioned**

(Mt21:23)Jesus entered the Temple courts, and, while he was teaching, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him. "By what authority are you doing these things?" they asked. "And who gave you this authority?"

(24)Jesus replied, "**I will also ask you one question. If you answer me, I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. (25)John's baptism -where did it come from? Was it from Heaven, or from men?"**

They discussed it among themselves and said, "If we say, 'From Heaven,' he will ask, 'Then why didn't you believe him?' (26)But if we say, 'From men' -we are afraid of the people, for they all hold that John was a prophet."

(27)So they answered Jesus, "We don't know."

Then he said, "**Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.**"

#### **Luke 20:1-8. The authority of Jesus questioned**

(Lk20:1)One day as he was teaching the people in the Temple courts and preaching the Gospel, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, together with the elders, came up to him. (2)"Tell us by what authority are you doing these things," they said. "Who gave you this authority?"

(3)He replied, "**I will also ask you a question. Tell me, (4)John's baptism -was it from Heaven, or from men?"**

(5)They discussed it among themselves and said, "If we say, 'From Heaven,' he will ask, 'Why didn't you believe him?' (6)But if we say, 'From men,' all the people will stone us, because they are persuaded that John was a prophet."

(7)So they answered, "We don't know where it was from."

(8)Jesus said, "**Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.**"

#### **Mark 12:1-12. The parable of the tenants**

(Mk12:1)He then began to speak to them in parables: "**A man planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a pit for the winepress and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and went away on a journey. (2)At harvest time he sent a servant to the tenants to collect from them some of the fruit of the vineyard. (3)But they seized him, beat him and sent him away empty-handed. (4)Then he sent another servant to them; they struck this man on the head and treated him shamefully. (5)He sent still another, and that one they killed. He sent many others; some of them they beat, others they killed.**

(6)He had one left to send, a son, whom he loved. He sent him last of all, saying, 'They will respect my son.'

(7)But the tenants said to one another, 'This is the heir. Come, let's kill him and the inheritance will be ours.' (8)So they took him and killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard.

(9)What then will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and kill those te-

nants and give the vineyard to others. (10)Haven't you read this Scripture: 'The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; (11)the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes'?"

(12)Then they looked for a way to arrest him, because they knew he had spoken the parable against them. But they were afraid of the crowd; so they left him and went away.

#### **Matthew 21:33-46. The parable of the tenants**

(Mt21:33)"Listen to another parable: There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a winepress in it and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and went away on a journey. (34) When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his fruit.

(35)The tenants seized his servants; they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third. (36)Then he sent other servants to them, more than the first time, and the tenants treated them the same way. (37)Last of all, he sent his son to them. 'They will respect my son,' he said. (38)But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other, 'This is the heir. Come, let's kill him and take his inheritance.' (39)So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.

(40)Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?"

(41)"He will bring those wretches to a wretched end," they replied, "and he will rent the vineyard to other tenants, who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time."

(42)Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: 'The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes'?"

(43)Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away and given to a people who will produce its fruit. (44)He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed."

(45)When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard Jesus' parables, they knew he was talking about them. (46)They looked for a way to arrest him, but they were afraid of the crowd because the people held that he was a prophet.

#### **Luke 20:9-19. The parable of the tenants**

(Lk20:9)He went on to tell the people this parable: "A man planted a vineyard, rented it to some farmers and went away for a long time. (10)At harvest time he sent a servant to the tenants so they would give him some of the fruit of the vineyard. But the tenants beat him and sent him away empty-handed. (11)He sent another servant, but that one also they beat and treated shamefully and sent away empty-handed. (12)He sent still a third, and they wounded him and threw him out.

(13)Then the owner of the vineyard said, 'What shall I do? I will send my son, whom I love; perhaps they will respect him.'

(14)But when the tenants saw him, they talked the matter over. 'This is the heir,' they said. 'Let's kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.' (15)So they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.

What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them? (16)He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others."

When they heard this, they said, "May this never be!"

(17) Jesus looked directly at them and asked, **"Then what is the meaning of that which is written: 'The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone'?"** (18) **Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed."**

(19) The teachers of the law and the chief priests looked for a way to arrest him immediately, because they knew he had spoken this parable against them. But they were afraid of the people.

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#### **Mark 12:13-17. Paying taxes to Caesar**

(Mk12:13) Later they sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians to Jesus to catch him in his words. (14) They came to him and said, "Teacher, we know you are a man of integrity. You aren't swayed by men, because you pay no attention to who they are; but you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not? (15) Should we pay or shouldn't we?"

But Jesus knew their hypocrisy. **"Why are you trying to trap me?"** he asked. **"Bring me a denarius and let me look at it."** (16) They brought the coin, and he asked them, **"Whose portrait is this? And whose inscription?"** "Caesar's," they replied.

(17) Then Jesus said to them, **"Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's."**

And they were amazed at him.

#### **Matthew 22:15-22. Paying taxes to Caesar**

(Mt22:15) Then the Pharisees went out and laid plans to trap him in his words. (16) They sent their disciples to him along with the Herodians. "Teacher," they said, "we know you are a man of integrity and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You aren't swayed by men, because you pay no attention to who they are. (17) Tell us then, what is your opinion? Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not?"

(18) But Jesus, knowing their evil intent, said, **"You hypocrites, why are you trying to trap me? (19) Show me the coin used for paying the tax."** They brought him a denarius, (20) and he asked them, **"Whose portrait is this? And whose inscription?"** (21) "Caesar's," they replied.

Then he said to them, **"Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's."**

(22) When they heard this, they were amazed. So they left him and went away.

#### **Luke 20:20-26. Paying taxes to Caesar**

(Lk20:20) Keeping a close watch on him, they sent spies, who pretended to be honest. They hoped to catch Jesus in something he said so that they might hand him over to the power and authority of the governor. (21) So the spies questioned him: "Teacher, we know that you speak and teach what is right, and that you do not show partiality but teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. (22) Is it right for us to pay taxes to Caesar or not?"

(23) He saw through their duplicity and said to them, (24) **"Show me a denarius. Whose portrait and inscription are on it?"** (25) "Caesar's," they replied.

He said to them, **"Then give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's."**

(26)They were unable to trap him in what he had said there in public. And astonished by his answer, they became silent.

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### **Mark 12:18-27. Marriage at the resurrection**

(Mk12:18)Then the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to him with a question. (19)"Teacher," they said, "Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies and leaves a wife but no children, the man must marry the widow and have children for his brother. (20)Now there were seven brothers. The first one married and died without leaving any children. (21)The second one married the widow, but he also died, leaving no child. It was the same with the third. (22)In fact, none of the seven left any children. Last of all, the woman died too. (23)At the resurrection, when men rise from the dead, whose wife will she be, since the seven were married to her?"

(24)Jesus replied, "**Are you not in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God? (25)When the dead rise, they will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in Heaven. (26)Now about the dead rising -have you not read in the book of Moses, in the account of the bush, how God said to him, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? (27)He is not the God of the dead, but of the living. You are badly mistaken!**"

### **Matthew 22:23-33. Marriage at the resurrection**

(Mt22:23)The same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to him with a question. (24)"Teacher," they said, "Moses told us that if a man dies without having children, his brother must marry the widow and have children for him. (25)Now there were seven brothers among us. The first one married and died, and since he had no children, he left his wife to his brother. (26)The same thing happened to the second and third brother, right on down to the seventh. (27)Finally, the woman died. (28)Now then, at the resurrection, whose wife will she be of the seven, since all of them were married to her?"

(29)Jesus replied, "**You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God. (30)At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in Heaven. (31)But about the resurrection of the dead -have you not read what God said to you, (32)'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not the God of the dead but of the living.**"

(33)When the crowds heard this, they were astonished at his teaching.

### **Luke 20:27-40. The resurrection and marriage**

(Lk20:27)Some of the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Jesus with a question. (28)"Teacher," they said, "Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies and leaves a wife but no children, the man must marry the widow and have children for his brother. (29)Now there were seven brothers. The first one married a woman and died childless. (30)The second (31)and then the third married her, and in the same way the seven died, leaving no children. (32)Finally, the woman died too. (33)Now then, at the resurrection whose wife will she be, since the seven were married to her?"

(34)Jesus replied, "**The people of this age marry and are given in marriage. (35)But when they are considered worthy of taking part in that age and in the resurrection from the dead, they will neither marry nor be given in marriage, (36)and**

they can no longer die; for they are like the angels. They are God's children, since they are children of the resurrection. (37)But in the account of the bush, even Moses showed that the dead rise, for he calls the Lord 'the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' (38)He is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for to Him all are alive."

(39)Some of the teachers of the law responded, "Well said, teacher!" (40)And no one dared to ask him any more questions.

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#### **Mark 12:28-34. The greatest commandment**

(Mk12:28)One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?"

(29)"The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God, the Lord is One. (30)Be fond of the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. (31)The second is this: 'Be fond of your neighbor as of yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."

(32)"Well said, teacher," the man replied. "You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but Him. (33)To be fond of Him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to be fond of your neighbor as of yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices."

(34)When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the Kingdom of God." And from then on no one dared ask him any more questions.

#### **Matthew 22:34-40. The greatest commandment**

(Mt22:34)Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. (35)One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: (36)"Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"

(37)Jesus replied: "Be fond of the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. (38)This is the first and greatest commandment. (39) And the second is like it: 'Be fond of your neighbor as of yourself.' (40)All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

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#### **Mark 12:35-40. Whose son is the Christ?**

(Mk12:35)While Jesus was teaching in the Temple courts, he asked, "How is it that the teachers of the law say that the Christ is the son of David? (36)David himself, speaking by the Spirit of God, declared:

'The Lord said to my Lord:

"Sit at My right hand until I put your enemies under your feet.'"

(37)David himself calls him 'Lord.' How then can he be his son?"

The large crowd listened to him with delight.

(38)As he taught, Jesus said, "Watch out for the teachers of the law. They like to walk around in flowing robes and be greeted in the marketplaces, (39)and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets. (40) They devour widows' houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. Such men will be punished most severely."

**Matthew 22:41-46;23:14. Whose son is the Christ?**

(Mt22:41)While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, **(42)"What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?"**

"The son of David," they replied.

**(43)He said to them, "How is it then that David, speaking by the Spirit of God, calls him 'Lord'? For he says,**

**(44)'The Lord said to my Lord:**

**"Sit at My right hand until I put your enemies under your feet."**

**(45)If then David calls him 'Lord,' how can he be his son?"**

**(46)No one could say a word in reply, and from that day no one dared to ask him any more questions.**

**(23:14)"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You devour widows' houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. Therefore you will be punished more severely."**

**Luke 20:41-47. Whose son is the Christ?**

(Lk20:41)Then Jesus said to them, **"How is it that they say the Christ is the son of David? (42)David himself declares in the Book of Psalms:**

**'The Lord said to my Lord:**

**"Sit at My right hand (43)until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet."**

**(44)David calls him 'Lord.' How then can he be his son?"**

**(45)While all the people were listening, Jesus said to his disciples, (46)"Beware of the teachers of the law. They like to walk around in flowing robes and like to be greeted in the marketplaces and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets. (47)They devour widows' houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. Such men will be punished most severely."**

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**Mark 12:41-44. The widow's offering**

(Mk12:41)Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the Temple Treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. **(42)But a poor widow came and put in two lepton, worthy only a kodrantes.**

**(43)Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the Treasury than all the others. (44)They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything -all she had to live on."**

**Luke 21:1-4. The widow's offering**

(Lk21:1)As he looked up, Jesus saw the rich putting their gifts into the Temple Treasury. **(2)He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. (3)"I tell you the truth," he said, "this poor widow has put in more than all the others. (4)All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on."**

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**Mark 13:1-31. Signs of the end of the age**

(Mk13:1)As he was leaving the Temple, one of his disciples said to him, "Look, Teacher! What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!"

**(2)"Do you see all these great buildings?" replied Jesus. "Not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down."**

**(3)As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the Temple, Peter, James, John and Andrew asked him privately, (4)"Tell us, when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are all about to be fulfilled?"**

**(5)Jesus said to them: "Watch out that no one deceives you. (6)Many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am he,' and will deceive many. (7)When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. (8)Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places, and famines. These are the beginning of birth pains.**

**(9)You must be on your guard. You will be handed over to the local councils and flogged in the synagogues. On account of me you will stand before governors and kings as witnesses to them. (10)And the Gospel must first be preached to all nations. (11)Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Spirit of God.**

**(12)Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child. Children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. (13)All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.**

**(14)When you see 'the abomination that causes desolation' standing where it does not belong -let the reader understand- then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. (15)Let no one on the roof of his house go down or enter the house to take anything out. (16)Let no one in the field go back to get his cloak. (17)How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! (18)Pray that this will not take place in winter, (19)because those will be days of distress unequalled from the beginning, when God created the world, until now -and never to be equaled again. (20)If the Lord had not cut short those days, no one would survive. But for the sake of the elect, whom He has chosen, He has shortened them. (21)At that time if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or, 'Look, there he is!' do not believe it. (22)For false christs and false prophets will appear and perform signs and miracles to deceive the elect -if that were possible. (23)So be on your guard; I have told you everything ahead of time.**

**(24)But in those days, following that distress,**

**'The sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; (25)the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.'**

**(26)At that time men will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. (27)And he will send his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the Earth to the ends of the Heavens.**

**(28)Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. (29)Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that it is near, right at the door. (30)I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. (31)Heaven and Earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away."**

#### **Matthew 24:1-35. Signs of the end of the age**

**(Mt24:1)Jesus left the Temple and was walking away when his disciples came up to him to call his attention to its buildings. (2)"Do you see all these things?" he asked. "I**

**tell you the truth, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down."**

**(3)As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, "Tell us," they said, "when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?"**

**(4)Jesus answered: "Watch out that no one deceives you. (5)For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. (6)You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. (7)Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. (8)All these are the beginning of birth pains.**

**(9)Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. (10)At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, (11)and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. (12)Because of the increase of wickedness, the faith of most will grow cold, (13)but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. (14)And this Gospel of the Kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.**

**(15)So when you see standing in the Holy Place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel -let the reader understand- (16) then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. (17)Let no one on the roof of his house go down to take anything out of the house. (18)Let no one in the field go back to get his cloak. (19)How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! (20)Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath. (21)For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now -and never to be equaled again. (22)If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened. (23)At that time if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or, 'There he is!' do not believe it. (24)For false christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive the elect -if that were possible. (25)See, I have told you ahead of time.**

**(26)So if anyone tells you, 'There he is, out in the desert,' do not go out; or, 'Here he is, in the inner rooms,' do not believe it. (27)For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. (28)Whenever there is a carcass, there the vultures gather.**

**(29)Immediately after the distress of those days**

**'The sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light;  
the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.'**

**(30)At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the Earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. (31)And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the Heavens to the other.**

**(32)Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. (33)Even so, when you see these things, you know that it is near, right at the door. (34)I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. (35)Heaven and Earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away."**



**Luke 21:5-38. Signs of the end of the age**

(Lk21:5)Some of his disciples were remarking about how the Temple was adorned with beautiful stones and with gifts dedicated to God. But Jesus said, (6)"As for what you see here, the time will come when not one stone will be left on another; every one of them will be thrown down."

(7)"Teacher," they asked, "when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are about to take place?"

(8)He replied: "Watch out that you are not deceived. For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am he,' and 'The time is near.' Do not follow them. (9)When you hear of wars and revolutions, do not be frightened. These things must happen first, but the end will not come right away."

(10)Then he said to them: "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. (11)There will be great earthquakes, famines and pestilences in various places, and fearful events and great signs from Heaven.

(12)But before all this, they will lay hands on you and persecute you. They will deliver you to synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors, and all on account of my name. (13)This will result in your being witnesses to them. (14)But make up your mind not to worry beforehand how you will defend yourselves. (15)For I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict. (16)You will be betrayed even by parents, brothers, relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death. (17)All men will hate you because of me. (18)But not a hair of your head will perish. (19)By standing firm you will gain life.

(20)When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near. (21)Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those in the city get out, and let those in the country not enter the city. (22)For this is the time of punishment in fulfillment of all that has been written. (23)How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! There will be great distress in the land and wrath against this people. (24)They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the pagans until the times of the pagans are fulfilled.

(25)There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the Earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. (26)Men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken. (27)At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. (28)When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

(29)He told them this parable: "Look at the fig tree and all the trees. (30)When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near. (31)Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the Kingdom of God is near.

(32)I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. (33)Heaven and Earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

(34)Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap. (35)For it will come upon all those who live on the face of the whole Earth. (36)Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man."

(37)Each day Jesus was teaching at the Temple, and each evening he went out to spend the evening on the hill called the Mount of Olives, (38)and all the people came early in the morning to hear him at the Temple.

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**Mark 13:32-37. The day and hour unknown**

(Mk13:32)"No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in Heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. (33)Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come. (34)It's like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with his assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch.

(35)Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back -whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. (36)If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. (37)What I say to you, I say to everyone: 'Watch!'"

**Matthew 24:36;42-51. The day and hour unknown**

(Mt24:36)"No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in Heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

(42)Therefore keep watch because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. (43)But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. (44)So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.

(45)Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? (46)It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns. (47) I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. (48)But suppose that servant is wicked and says to himself, 'My master is staying away a long time,' (49)and he then begins to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with drunkards. (50)The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. (51)He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

**Luke 12:39-48.**

(Lk12:39)"But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. (40)You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him."

(41)Peter asked, "Lord, are you telling this parable to us, or to everyone?" (42)The Lord answered, "Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom the master puts in charge of his servants to give them their food allowance at the proper time? (43)It will be good for that servant whom the master finds doing so when he returns. (44)I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. (45) But suppose the servant says to himself, 'My master is taking a long time in coming,' and he then begins to beat the menservants and maidservants and to eat and drink and get drunk. (46)The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the unbelievers.

**(47)That servant who knows his master's will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows. (48)But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked."**

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**Mark 14:3-9. Jesus anointed at Bethany**

**(Mk14:3)**While he was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of a man known as Simon the Leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head. **(4)**Some of the present were saying indignantly to one another, "Why this waste of perfume? **(5)**It could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor." And they rebuked her harshly.

**(6)"Leave her alone,"** said Jesus. **"Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. (7)The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me. (8)She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial. (9)I tell you the truth, wherever the Gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her."**

**Matthew 26:6-13. Jesus anointed at Bethany**

**(Mt26:6)**While Jesus was in Bethany, in the home of a man known as Simon the Leper, **(7)**a woman came to him with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, which she poured on his head as he was reclining at the table.

**(8)**When the disciples saw this, they were indignant. "Why this waste?" they asked. **(9)"This perfume could have been sold at a high price and the money given to the poor."**

**(10)**Aware of this, Jesus said to them, **"Why are you bothering this woman? She has done a beautiful thing to me. (11)The poor you will always have with you, but you will not always have me. (12)When she poured this perfume on my body, she did it to prepare me for burial. (13)I tell you the truth, wherever this Gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her."**

**John 12:2-11. Jesus anointed at Bethany**

**(Jn12:2)**Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. **(3)**Then Mary took about a pound of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

**(4)**But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, **(5)**"Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth three hundred denarii." **(6)**He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.

**(7)"Leave her alone,"** Jesus replied. **"It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. (8)You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me."**

**(9)**Meanwhile a large crowd of Jews found out that Jesus was there and came, not only because of him, but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. **(10)**So

the chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus as well, (11)for on account of him many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and putting their faith in him.

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#### **Mark 14:1-2;10-11. The plot against Jesus. Judas agrees to betray Jesus**

(Mk14:1)Now the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread were only two days away, and the chief priests and the teachers of the law were looking for some sly way to arrest Jesus and kill him. (2)"But not during the Feast," they said, "or the people may riot."

(Mk14:10)Then Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve, went to the chief priests to betray Jesus to them. (11)They were delighted to hear this and promised to give him money. So he watched for an opportunity to hand him over.

#### **Matthew 26:1-5;14-16. The plot against Jesus. Judas agrees to betray Jesus**

(Mt26:1)When Jesus had finished saying all these things, he said to his disciples, (2) "As you know, the Passover is two days away -and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified."

(3)Then the chief priests and the elders of the people assembled in the palace of the High Priest, whose name was Caiaphas, (4)and they plotted to arrest Jesus in some sly way and kill him. (5)"But not during the Feast," they said, "or there may be a riot among the people."

(Mt26:14)Then one of the Twelve -the one called Judas Iscariot- went to the chief priests (15)and asked, "What are you willing to give me if I hand him over to you?" So they counted out for him thirty silver coins. (16)From then on Judas watched for an opportunity to hand him over.

#### **Luke 22:1-6. Judas agrees to betray Jesus**

(Lk22:1)Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread, called the Passover, was approaching, (2)and the chief priests and the teachers of the law were looking for some way to get rid of Jesus, for they were afraid of the people. (3)Then Satan entered Judas, called Iscariot, one of the Twelve. (4)And Judas went to the chief priests and the officers of the Temple guard and discussed with them how he might betray Jesus. (5)They were delighted and agreed to give him money. (6)He consented, and watched for an opportunity to hand Jesus over to them when no crowd was present.

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#### **Mark 14:12-25. The Lord's Supper**

(Mk14:12)On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, when it was customary to sacrifice the Passover lamb, Jesus' disciples asked him, "Where do you want us to go and make preparations for you to eat the Passover?"

(13)So he sent two of his disciples, telling them, "Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him. (14)Say to the owner of the house he enters, 'The Teacher asks: Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' (15)He will show you a large upper room, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there."

(16)The disciples left, went into the city and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover.

(17)When evening came, Jesus arrived with the Twelve. (18)While they were reclining

ning at the table eating, he said, **"I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me -one who is eating with me."**

(19)They were saddened, and one by one they said to him, "Surely, not I?"

(20)"**It is one of the Twelve,**" he replied, **"one who dips bread into the bowl with me. (21)The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born."**

(22)While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, **"Take it; this is my body."**

(23)Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, and they all drank from it.

(24)"**This is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for many,**" he said to them. (25)"**I tell you the truth, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it anew in the Kingdom of God."**

### Matthew 26:17-29. The Lord's Supper

(Mt26:17)On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Where do you want us to make preparations for you to eat the Passover?"

(18)He replied, **"Go into the city to a certain man and tell him, 'The Teacher says: My appointed time is near. I am going to celebrate the Passover with my disciples at your house.'"** (19)So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them and prepared the Passover.

(20)When evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the Twelve. (21)And while they were eating, he said, **"I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me."**

(22)They were very sad and began to say to him one after the other, "Surely not I, Lord?"

(23)Jesus replied, **"The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me. (24)The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born."**

(25)Then Judas, the one who would betray him, said, "Surely not I, Rabbi?"

Jesus answered, **"Yes, it is you."**

(26)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 new 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."**

### Luke 22:7-23. The Last Supper

(Lk22:7)Then came the day of the Unleavened Bread on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. (8)Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, **"Go and make preparations for us to eat the Passover."**

(9)"Where do you want us to prepare for it?" they asked.

(10)He replied, **"As you enter the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him to the house that he enters, (11)and say to the owner of the house, 'The Teacher asks: Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my**

disciples?' (12)**He will show you a large upper room, all furnished. Make preparations there.**"

(13)They left and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover.

(14)When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. (15)And he said to them, **"I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. (16) For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the Kingdom of God."**

(17)After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, **"Take this and divide it among you. (18)For I tell you I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the Kingdom of God comes."**

(19)And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, **"This is my body given for you; do it in remembrance of me."**

(20)In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, **"This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you. (21)But the hand of him who is going to betray me is with mine on the table. (22)The Son of Man will go as it has been decreed, but woe to that man who betrays him."** (23)They began to question among themselves which of them it might be who would do this.

### **John 13:1-30. Jesus washes his disciples' feet and predicts his betrayal**

(Jn13:1)It was just before the Passover Feast, Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having been fond of his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his affection.

(2)The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus. (3)Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; (4)so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. (5)After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

(6)He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

(7)Jesus replied, **"You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."**

(8)"No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet."

Jesus answered, **"Unless I wash you, you have no part with me."**

(9)"Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!"

(10)Jesus answered, **"A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you."** (11)For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean.

(12)When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. **"Do you understand what I have done for you?"** he asked them. (13)**"You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. (14)Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. (15)I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. (16)I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. (17)Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.**

**(18)I am not referring to all of you; I know those I have chosen. But this is to fulfill the Scripture: 'He who shares my bread has lifted up his heel against me.'**

**(19)I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am he. (20)I tell you the truth, whoever accepts anyone I send accepts me; and whoever accepts me accepts the One who sent me."**

**(21)After he had said this, Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, "I tell you the truth, one of you is going to betray me."**

**(22)His disciples stared at one another, at a loss to know which of them he meant.**

**(23)One of them, the disciple whom Jesus cherished, was reclining next to him. (24)Simon Peter motioned to this disciple and said, "Ask him which one he means."**

**(25)Leaning back against Jesus, he asked him, "Lord, who is it?"**

**(26)Jesus answered, "It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish." Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, son of Simon. (27)As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him.**

**"What you are about to do, do quickly,"** Jesus told him, **(28)but no one at the meal understood why Jesus said this to him. (29)Since Judas had charge of the money, some thought Jesus was telling him to buy what was needed for the Feast, or to give something to the poor. (30)As soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out. And it was night.**

#### **Mark 14:27-31. Jesus predicts Peter's denial**

**(Mk14:27)"You will all fall away,"** Jesus told them, **"for it is written:**

**'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.'**

**(28)But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee."**

**(29)Peter declared, "Even if all fall away, I will not."**

**(30)"I tell you the truth,"** Jesus answered, **"today -yes, tonight- before the rooster crows twice you yourself will disown me three times."**

**(31)But Peter insisted emphatically, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you." And all the others said the same.**

#### **Matthew 26:31-35. Jesus predicts Peter's denial**

**(Mt26:31)Then Jesus told them, "This very night you will all fall away on account of me, for it is written:**

**'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.'**

**(32)But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee."**

**(33)Peter replied, "Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will."**

**(34)"I tell you the truth,"** Jesus answered, **"this very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times."**

**(35)But Peter declared, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you." And all the other disciples said the same.**

#### **Luke 22:31-38.**

**(Lk22:31)"Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. (32)But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers."**

**(33)But he replied, "Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death."**

(34)Jesus answered, **"I tell you, Peter, before the rooster crows today, you will deny three times that you know me."**

(35)Then Jesus asked them, **"When I sent you without purse, bag or sandals, did you lack anything?"**

"Nothing," they answered.

(36)He said to them, **"But now if you have a purse, take it, and also a bag; and if you don't have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one. (37)It is written: 'And he was numbered with the transgressors'; and I tell you that this must be fulfilled in me. Yes, what is written about me is reaching its fulfillment."**

(38)The disciples said, "See, Lord, here are two swords."

"That is enough," he replied.

### **John 13:31-38. Jesus predicts Peter's denial**

(Jn13:31)When he [Judas Iscariot] was gone, Jesus said, **"Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in him. (32)If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in Himself, and will glorify him at once.**

(33)My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come.

(34)A new command I give you: Be fond of one another. As I had been fond of you, so you must be fond of one another. (35)By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you are fond of one another."

(36)Simon Peter asked him, "Lord, where are you going?"

Jesus replied, **"Where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later."**

(37)Peter asked, "Lord, why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you."

(38)Then Jesus answered, **"Will you really lay down your life for me? I tell you the truth, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times!"**

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### **Mark 14:26;32-42. Gethsemane**

(Mk14:26)When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

(32)They went to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples, **"Sit here while I pray." (33)He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled. (34)"My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death,"** he said to them. **"Stay here and keep watch."**

(35)Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him. (36)"Abba, Father," he said, **"everything is possible for You. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what You will."**

(37)Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. **"Simon,"** he said to Peter, **"are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour? (38)Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak."**

(39)Once more he went away and prayed the same thing. (40)When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. They did not know what to say to him.

(41)Returning the third time, he said to them, **"Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! The hour has come. Look, the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. (42)Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!"**



**Matthew 26:30;36-46. Gethsemane**

(Mt26:30)When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

(36)Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, "**Sit here while I go over there and pray.**" (37)He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. (38)Then he said to them, "**My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.**"

(39)Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "**My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as You will.**"

(40)Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "**Could you men not keep watch with me for one hour?**" he asked Peter. (41)"**Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak.**"

(42)He went away a second time and prayed, "**My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may Your will be done.**"

(43)When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. (44)So he left them and went away once more and prayed the third time, saying the same thing.

(45)Then he returned to the disciples and said to them, "**Are you still sleeping and resting? Look, the hour is near, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. (46)Rise, let us go! Here comes my betrayer!**"

**Luke 22:39-46. Jesus prays on the Mount of Olives**

(Lk22:39)Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives, and his disciples followed him. (40)On reaching the place, he said to them, "**Pray that you will not fall into temptation.**" (41)He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, (42)"**Father, if You are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but Yours be done.**" (43)An angel from Heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. (44)And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.

(45)When he rose from prayer and went back to the disciples, he found them asleep, exhausted from sorrow. (46)"**Why are you sleeping?**" he asked them. "**Get up and pray so that you will not fall into temptation.**"

**John 18:1.**

(Jn18:1)When he had finished praying, Jesus left with his disciples and crossed the Kidron Valley. On the other side there was an olive grove, and he and his disciples went into it.

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**Mark 14:43-52. Jesus arrested**

(Mk14:43)Just as he was speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, appeared. With him was a crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders.

(44)Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: "The one I kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard." (45)Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, "Rabbi!" and kissed him. (46)The men seized Jesus and arrested him. (47)Then one of those standing near drew his sword and struck the servant of the High Priest, cutting off his ear.

**(48)"Am I leading a rebellion,"** said Jesus, **"that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? (49)Every day I was with you, teaching in the Temple courts, and you did not arrest me. But the Scripture must be fulfilled." (50)**Then everyone deserted him and fled.

**(51)**A young man, wearing nothing but a linen garment, was following Jesus. When they seized him, **(52)**he fled naked, leaving his garment behind.

#### **Matthew 26:47-56. Jesus arrested**

**(Mt26:47)**While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived. With him was a large crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests and the elders of the people. **(48)**Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: "The one I kiss is the man; arrest him." **(49)**Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" and kissed him.

**(50)**Jesus replied, **"Friend, do what you came for."**

Then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus and arrested him. **(51)**With that, one of Jesus' companions reached for his sword, drew it out and struck the servant of the High Priest, cutting off his ear.

**(52)"Put your sword back in its place,"** Jesus said to him, **"for all who draw the sword will die by the sword. (53)Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and He will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? (54)But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?"**

**(55)**At that time Jesus said to the crowd, **"Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? Every day I sat in the Temple courts teaching, and you did not arrest me. (56)But this has all taken place that the writings of the prophets might be fulfilled."** Then all the disciples deserted him and fled.

#### **Luke 22:47-53. Jesus arrested**

**(Lk22:47)**While he was still speaking a crowd came up, and the man who was called Judas, one of the Twelve, was leading them. He approached Jesus to kiss him, **(48)**but Jesus asked him, **"Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?"**

**(49)**When Jesus' followers saw what was going to happen, they said, "Lord, should we strike with our swords?" **(50)**And one of them struck the servant of the High Priest, cutting off his right ear.

**(51)**But Jesus answered, **"No more of this!"** And he touched the man's ear and healed him.

**(52)**Then Jesus said to the chief priests, the officers of the Temple Guard, and the elders, who had come for him, **"Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come out with swords and clubs? (53)Every day I was with you in the Temple courts, and you did not lay a hand on me. But this is your hour -when darkness reigns."**

#### **John 18:2-11. Jesus arrested**

**(Jn18:2)**Now Judas, who betrayed him, knew the place, because Jesus had often met there with his disciples. **(3)**So Judas came to the grove, guiding a detachment of soldiers and some officials from the chief priests and the Pharisees. They were carrying torches, lanterns and weapons.

**(4)**Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, **"Who is it you want?"**

(5) "Jesus of Nazareth," they replied.

"**I am he,**" Jesus said. (And Judas the traitor was standing there with them.) (6) When Jesus said, "**I am he,**" they drew back and fell to the ground.

(7) Again he asked them, "**Who is it you want?**"

And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth."

(8) "**I told you that I am he,**" Jesus answered. "**If you are looking for me, then let these men go.**" (9) This happened so that the words he had spoken would be fulfilled: "**I have not lost one of those You gave me.**"

(10) Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it and struck the High Priest's servant, cutting off his right ear. (The servant's name was Malchus.)

(11) Jesus commanded Peter, "**Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?**"

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### **Mark 14:53-65. Before the Sanhedrin**

(Mk14:53) They took Jesus to the High Priest, and all the chief priests, elders and teachers of the law came together. (54) Peter followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the High Priest. There he sat with the guards and warmed himself at the fire.

(55) The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death, but they did not find any. (56) Many testified falsely against him, but their statements did not agree.

(57) Then some stood up and gave this false testimony against him: (58) "We heard him say, 'I will destroy this man-made Temple and in three days will build another, not made by man.'" (59) Yet even then their testimony did not agree.

(60) Then the High Priest stood up before them and asked Jesus, "Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?" (61) But Jesus remained silent and gave no answer.

Again the High Priest asked him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?"

(62) "**I am,**" said Jesus. "**And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of Heaven.**"

(63) The High Priest tore his clothes. "Why do we need any more witnesses?" he asked. (64) "You have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?"

They all condemned him as worthy of death. (65) Then some began to spit at him; they blindfolded him, struck him with their fists, and said, "Prophecy!" And the guards took him and beat him.

### **Matthew 26:57-68. Before the Sanhedrin**

(Mt26:57) Those who had arrested Jesus took him to Caiaphas, the High Priest, where the teachers of the law and the elders had assembled. (58) But Peter followed him at a distance, right up to the courtyard of the High Priest. He entered and sat down with the guards to see the outcome.

(59) The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for false evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death. (60) But they did not find any, though many false witnesses came forward.

Finally two came forward (61) and declared, "This fellow said, 'I am able to destroy the Temple of God and rebuild it in three days.'"

(62)Then the High Priest stood up and said to Jesus, "Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?" (63)But Jesus remained silent.

The High Priest said to him, "I charge you under oath by the Living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God."

(64)"Yes, it is as you say," Jesus replied. **"But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven."**

(65)Then the High Priest tore his clothes and said, "He has spoken blasphemy! Why do we need any more witnesses? Look, now you have heard the blasphemy. (66)What do you think?"

"He is worthy of death," they answered.

(67)Then they spit in his face and struck him with their fists. Others slapped him (68)and said, "Prophecy to us, Christ. Who hit you?"

### **Luke 22:54:63-71.**

(Lk22:54)Then seizing him, they led him away and took him into the house of the High Priest. Peter followed at a distance.

(63)The men who were guarding Jesus began mocking and beating him. (64)They blindfolded him and demanded, "Prophecy! Who hit you?" (65)And they said many other insulting things to him.

(66)At daybreak the council of the elders of the people, both the chief priests and teachers of the law, met together, and Jesus was led before them. (67)"If you are the Christ," they said, "tell us."

Jesus answered, **"If I tell you, you will not believe me, (68)and if I asked you, you would not answer. (69)But from now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the Mighty God."**

(70)They all asked, "Are you then the Son of God?" He replied, **"You are right in saying I am."**

(71)Then they said, "Why do we need any more testimony? We have heard it from his own lips."

### **John 18:12-16. Jesus taken to Annas. 18:19-24. The High Priest questions Jesus**

(Jn18:12)Then the detachment of soldiers with his commander and the Jewish officials arrested Jesus. They bound him (13)and brought him first to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the High Priest that year. (14)Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it would be good if one man died for the people.

(15)Simon Peter and another disciple were following Jesus. Because this disciple was known to the High Priest, he went with Jesus into the High Priest's courtyard, (16)but Peter had to wait outside at the door. The other disciple, who was known to the High Priest, came back, spoke to the girl on duty there and brought Peter in.

(19)Then, the High Priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching.

(20)"I have spoken openly to the world," Jesus replied. **"I always taught in synagogues or at the Temple, where all the Jews come together. I said nothing in secret. (21)Why question me? Ask those who heard me. Surely they know what I said."**

(22)When Jesus said this, one of the officials nearby struck him in the face. "Is this the way you answer the High Priest?" he demanded.

(23) "If I said something wrong," Jesus replied, "testify as to what is wrong. But if I spoke the truth, why did you strike me?" (24) Then Annas sent him, still bound, to Caiaphas the High Priest.

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**Mark 14:66-72. Peter disown Jesus**

(Mk14:66) While Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the High Priest came by. (67) When she saw Peter warming himself, she looked closely at him.

"You also were with that Nazarene, Jesus," she said.

(68) But he denied it. "I don't know or understand what you are talking about," he said, and went out into the entryway and the rooster crowed.

(69) When the servant girl saw him there, she said again to those standing around, "This fellow is one of them." (70) Again he denied it.

After a little while, those standing near said to Peter, "Surely you are one of them, for you are a Galilean."

(71) He began to call down curses on himself, and he swore to them, "I don't know this man you're talking about."

(72) Immediately the rooster crowed the second time. Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken to him: "**Before the rooster crows twice you will disown me three times.**" And he broke down and wept.

**Matthew 26:69-75. Peter disown Jesus**

(Mt26:69) Now Peter was sitting out in the courtyard, and a servant girl came to him. "You also were with Jesus of Galilee," she said.

(70) But he denied it before them all. "I don't know what you are talking about," he said.

(71) Then he went out to the gateway, where another girl saw him and said to the people there, "This fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth."

(72) He denied it again, with an oath: "I don't know the man!"

(73) After a little while, those standing there went up to Peter and said, "Surely you are one of them, for your accent gives you away."

(74) Then he began to call down curses on himself and he swore to them, "I don't know the man!"

Immediately a rooster crowed. (75) Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken: "**Before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times.**" And he went outside and wept bitterly.

**Luke 22:55-62. Peter disown Jesus**

(Lk22:55) When they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and had sat down together, Peter sat down with them. (56) A servant girl saw him seated there in the firelight. She looked closely at him and said, "This man was with him."

(57) But he denied it. "Woman, I don't know him," he said.

(58) A little later someone else saw him and said, "You also are one of them."

"Man, I am not!" Peter replied.

(59) About an hour later another asserted, "Certainly this fellow was with him, for he is a Galilean."

(60) Peter replied, "Man, I don't know what you're talking about!" Just as he was speaking, the rooster crowed. (61) The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: **"Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times."** (62) And he went outside and wept bitterly.

**John 18:17-18. Peter's first denial. 18:25-27. Peter's second and third denials**

(Jn18:17) "You are not one of his disciples, are you?" the girl at the door asked Peter. He replied, "I am not."

(18) It was cold, and the servants and officials were staying around a fire they had made to keep warm. Peter also was standing with them, warming himself.

(25) As Simon Peter stood warming himself, he was asked, "You are not one of his disciples, are you?"

He denied it, saying, "I am not."

(26) One of the High Priest's servants, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked him, "Didn't I see you with him in the olive grove?" (27) Again Peter denied it, and at that moment a rooster began to crow.

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**Mark 15:1-15. Jesus before Pilate. 15:16-20. The soldiers mock Jesus**

(Mk15:1) Very early in the morning, the chief priests, with the elders, the teachers of the law and the whole Sanhedrin, reached a decision. They bound Jesus, led him away and handed him over to Pilate.

(2) "Are you the king of the Jews?" asked Pilate.

"Yes, it is as you say," Jesus replied.

(3) The chief priests accused him of many things. (4) So again Pilate asked him, "Aren't you going to answer? See how many things they are accusing you of."

(5) But Jesus still made no reply, and Pilate was amazed.

(6) Now it was the custom at the Feast to release a prisoner whom the people requested. (7) A man called Barabbas was in prison with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the uprising. (8) The crowd came up and asked Pilate to do for them what he usually did.

(9) "Do you want me to release to you the king of the Jews?" asked Pilate, (10) knowing it was out of envy that the chief priests had handed Jesus over to him. (11) But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have Pilate release Barabbas instead.

(12) "What shall I do, then, with the one you call the king of the Jews?" Pilate asked them.

(13) "Crucify him!" they shouted.

(14) "Why? What crime has he committed?" asked Pilate.

But they shouted all the louder, "Crucify him!"

(15) Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them. He had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.

(16) The soldiers led Jesus away into the palace (that is, the Praetorium) and called together the whole company of soldiers. (17) They put a purple robe on him, then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on him. (18) And they began to call out to him, "Hail, king of the Jews!" (19) Again and again they struck him on the head with a staff and spit on him. Falling on their knees, they paid homage to him. (20) And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.

**Matthew 27:1-2;11-26. Jesus before Pilate. 27:27-31. The soldiers mock Jesus**

(Mt27:1)Early in the morning, all the chief priests and the elders of the people came to the decision to put Jesus to death. (2)They bound him, led him away and handed him over to Pilate, the governor.

(11)Meanwhile Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?"

"Yes, it is as you say," Jesus replied.

(12)When he was accused by the chief priests and the elders, he gave no answer.(13) Then Pilate asked him, "Don't you hear the testimony they are bringing against you?"

(14)But Jesus made no reply, not even to a single charge -to the great amazement of the governor.

(15)Now it was the governor's custom at the Feast to release a prisoner chosen by the crowd. (16)At the time they had a notorious prisoner, called Barabbas. (17)So when the crowd had gathered, Pilate asked them, "Which one do you want me to release to you: Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?" (18)For he knew it was out of envy that they had handed Jesus over to him.

(19)While Pilate was sitting on the judge's seat, his wife sent him this message: "Don't have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him."

(20)But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus executed.

(21)"Which of the two do you want me to release to you?" asked the governor.

"Barabbas," they answered.

(22)"What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called Christ?" Pilate asked.

They all answered, "Crucify him!"

(23)"Why? What crime has he committed?" asked Pilate.

But they shouted all the louder, "Crucify him!"

(24)When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. "I am innocent of this man's blood," he said. "It is your responsibility!"

(25)All the people answered, "Let his blood be on us and on our children!"

(26)Then he released Barabbas to them. But he had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.

(27)Then the governor's soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole company of soldiers around him. (28)They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, (29)and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand, knelt in front of him and mocked him. "Hail, king of the Jews!" they said. (30)They spit on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again. (31)After they had mocked him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.

**Luke 23:1-25. Jesus before Pilate and Herod**

(Lk23:1)Then the whole assembly rose and led him off to Pilate. (2)And they began to accuse him, saying, "We have found this man subverting our nation. He opposes payment of taxes to Caesar and claims to be Christ, a king."

(3)So Pilate asked Jesus, "Are you the king of the Jews?"

"Yes, it is as you say," Jesus replied.

(4)Then Pilate announced to the chief priests and the crowd, "I find no basis for a charge against this man."

(5)But they insisted, "He stirs up the people all over Judea by his teaching. He started in Galilee and has come all the way here."

(6)On hearing this, Pilate asked if the man was a Galilean. (7)When he learned that Jesus was under Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who was also in Jerusalem at that time.

(8)When Herod saw Jesus, he was greatly pleased, because for a long time he had been wanting to see him. From what he had heard about him, he hoped to see him perform some miracle. (9)He plied him with many questions, but Jesus gave him no answer. (10)The chief priests and the teachers of the law were standing there, vehemently accusing him. (11)Then Herod and his soldiers ridiculed and mocked him. Dressing him in an elegant robe, they sent him back to Pilate. (12)That day Herod and Pilate became friends -before this they had been enemies.

(13)Pilate called together the chief priests, the rulers and the people, (14)and said to them, "You brought me this man as one who was inciting the people to rebellion. I have examined him in your presence and have found no basis for your charges against him. (15)Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us; as you can see, he has done nothing to deserve death. (16)Therefore, I will punish him and then release him. (17)Now he was obliged to release one man to them at the Feast.

(18)With one voice they cried out, "Away with this man! Release Barabbas to us!" (19)(Barabbas had been thrown into prison for an insurrection in the city, and for murder.)

(20)Wanting to release Jesus, Pilate appealed to them again. (21)But they kept shouting, "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

(22)For the third time he spoke to them: "Why? What crime has this man committed? I have found in him no grounds for the death penalty. Therefore I will have him punished and then release him."

(23)But with loud shouts they insistently demanded that he be crucified, and their shouts prevailed. (24)So Pilate decided to grant their demand. (25)He released the man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, the one they asked for, and surrendered Jesus to their will.

### **John 18:28-40. Jesus before Pilate. 19:1-16. Jesus sentenced to be crucified**

(Jn18:28)Then the Jews led Jesus from Caiaphas to the palace of the Roman governor. By now it was early morning, and to avoid ceremonial uncleanness the Jews did not enter the palace; they wanted to be able to eat the Passover. (29)So Pilate came out to them and asked, "What charges are you bringing against this man?"

(30)"If it were not a criminal," they replied, "we would not have handed him over to you."

(31)Pilate said, "Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law."

"But we have no right to execute anyone," the Jews objected. (32)This happened so that the words Jesus had spoken indicating the kind of death he was going to die would be fulfilled.

(33)Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?"

(34)"Is that your own idea," Jesus asked, "or did others talk to you about me?"



(35)"Am I a Jew?" Pilate replied. "It was your people and your chief priests who handed you over to me. What is it you have done?"

(36)Jesus said, "**My Kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my Kingdom is from another place.**"

(37)"You are a king, then!" said Pilate.

Jesus answered, "**You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.**"

(38)"What is truth?" Pilate asked. With this he went out again to the Jews and said, "I find no basis for a charge against him. (39)But it is your custom for me to release to you one prisoner at the time of Passover. Do you want me to release 'The king of the Jews?'"

(40)They shouted back, "No, not him! Give us Barabbas!" Now Barabbas had taken part in a rebellion.

(19:1)Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. (2)The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They clothed him in a purple robe (3)and went up to him, saying, "Hail, king of the Jews!" And they struck him in the face.

(4)Once more Pilate came out and said to the Jews, "Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no basis for a charge against him." (5)When Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, Pilate said to them, "Here is the man!"

(6)As soon as the chief priests and their officials saw him, they shouted, "Crucify! Crucify!"

But Pilate answered, "You take him and crucify him. As for me, I find no basis for a charge against him."

(7)The Jews insisted, "We have a law, and according to that law he must die, because he claimed to be the Son of God."

(8)When Pilate heard this, he was even more afraid, (9)and he went back inside the palace. "Where do you come from?" he asked Jesus, but Jesus gave him no answer. (10) "Do you refuse to speak to me?" Pilate said, "Don't you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?"

(11)Jesus answered, "**You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above. Therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin.**"

(12)From then on, Pilate tried to set Jesus free, but the Jews kept shouting, "If you let this man go, you are not friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be king opposes Caesar."

(13)When Pilate heard this, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judge's seat at a place known as the Stone Pavement (which in Aramaic is Gabbatha). (14)It was the day of Preparation of Passover Week, about the sixth hour.

"Here is your king," Pilate said to the Jews.

(15)But they shouted, "Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!"

"Shall I crucify your king?" Pilate asked.

"We have no king but Caesar," the chief priests answered.

(16)Finally Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified. So the soldiers took charge of Jesus.

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**Mark 15:21-32. The Crucifixion**

(Mk15:21)A certain man from Cyrene, Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus, was passing by on his way in from the country, and they forced him to carry the beam of the cross. (22)They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means The Place of the Skull). (23)Then they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it. (24)And they crucified him. Dividing up his clothes, they cast lots to see what each would get.

(25)It was the third hour when they crucified him. (26)The written notice of the charge against him read: THE KING OF THE JEWS. (27)They crucified two robbers with him, one on his right and one on his left, (28)and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "He was counted with the lawless ones." (29)Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, "So! You who are going to destroy the Temple and build it in three days, (30)come down from the cross and save yourself!"

(31)In the same way the chief priests and the teachers of the law mocked him among themselves. "He saved others," they said, "but he can't save himself! (32)Let this Christ, this King of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe." Those crucified with him also heaped insults on him.

**Matthew 27:32-44. The Crucifixion**

(Mt27:32)As they were going out, they met a man from Cyrene, named Simon, and they forced him to carry the beam of the cross. (33)They came to a place called Golgotha (which means The Place of the Skull). (34)There they offered Jesus wine to drink, mixed with gall; but after tasting it, he refused to drink it. (35)When they had crucified him, they divided up his clothes by casting lots that the word spoken by the prophet might be fulfilled: "They divided my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing." (36)And sitting down, they kept watch over him there. (37)Above his head they placed the written charge against him: THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS. (38)Two robbers were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left. (39)Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads (40)and saying, "You who are going to destroy the Temple and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!"

(41)In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him. (42)"He saved others," they said, "but he can't save himself! He's the King of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. (43)He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if He wants, for he said, '**I am the Son of God.**'" (44)In the same way the robbers who were crucified with him also heaped insults on him.

**Luke 23:26-43. The Crucifixion**

(Lk23:26)When they led him away, they seized Simon from Cyrene, who was on his way in from the country, and put the beam of the cross on him and made him carry it behind Jesus. (27)A large number of people followed him, including women who mourned and wailed for him. (28)Jesus turned and said to them, "**Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children. (29)For the time will come when you will say, 'Blessed are the barren women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!'** (30)Then 'they will say to the mountains, "Fall on us!" and to the hills, "Cover us!'" (31)For if men do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?"

(32) Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. (33) When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him, along with the criminals -one on his right, the other on his left. (34) Jesus said, "**Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.**" And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.

(35) The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Christ of God, the Chosen One."

(36) The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar (37) and said, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself."

(38) There was a written notice above him, which read: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

(39) One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!"

(40) But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence? (41) We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man had done nothing wrong."

(42) Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom."

(43) Jesus answered him, "**I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in Paradise.**"

#### **John 19:17-27. The Crucifixion**

(Jn19:17) Carrying the beam of his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha). (18) Here they crucified him, and with him two others -one on each side and Jesus in the middle.

(19) Pilate had a notice prepared and fastened to the cross. It read: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. (20) Many of the Jews read this sign, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and the sign was written in Aramaic, Latin and Greek. (21) The chief priests of the Jews protested to Pilate, "Do not write 'The King of the Jews,' but that this man claimed to be king of the Jews."

(22) Pilate answered, "What I have written, I have written."

(23) When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes, dividing them into four shares, one for each of them, with the undergarment remaining. This garment was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom.

(24) "Let's not tear it," they said to one another. "Let's decide by lot who will get it."

This happened that the Scripture might be fulfilled which said,

"They divided my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing."

So this is what the soldiers did.

(25) Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. (26) When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he cherished standing nearby, he said to his mother, "**Dear woman, here is your son,**" (27) and to the disciple, "**Here is your mother.**" From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

#### **Mark 15:33-42. The death of Jesus**

(Mk15:33) At the sixth hour darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour.

(34) And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "**Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?**" -which means, "**My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?**"

(35)When some of those standing near heard this, they said, "Listen, he's calling Elijah."

(36)One man ran, filled a sponge with wine vinegar, put it on a stick, and offered it to Jesus to drink. "Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to take him down," he said.

(37)With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last.

(38)The curtain of the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom. (39)And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, heard his cry and saw how he died, he said, "Surely this man was a Son of God!"

(40)Some women were watching from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. (41)In Galilee these women had followed him and cared for his needs. Many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem were also there.

(42a)It was Preparation day (that is, the day before the Sabbath).

### **Matthew 27:45-56. The death of Jesus**

(Mt27:45)From the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over all the land.

(46) About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "**Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?**" -which means, "**My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?**"

(47)When some of those standing there heard this, they said, "He's calling Elijah."

(48)Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a stick, and offered it to Jesus to drink. (49)The rest said, "Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to save him."

(50)And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit.

(51)At the moment the curtain of the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split. (52)The tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. (53)They came out of the tombs, and after Jesus' resurrection they went into the Holy City and appeared to many people.

(54)When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, "Surely he was a Son of God!"

(55)Many women were there, watching from a distance. They had followed Jesus from Galilee to care for his needs. (56)Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's sons.

### **Luke 23:44-49. Jesus' death**

(Lk23:44)It was now about the sixth hour, and darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour, (45)for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the Temple was torn in two. (46)Jesus called out with a loud voice, "**Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.**" When he had said this, he breathed his last.

(47)The centurion, seeing what had happened, praised God and said, "Surely this was a righteous man." (48)When all the people who had gathered to witness this sight saw what took place, they beat their breasts and went away. (49)But those who knew him, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.

### **John 19:28-37. The death of Jesus**

(Jn19:28)Later, knowing that all was now completed, and so that the Scripture would

be fulfilled, Jesus said, **"I am thirsty."** (29) A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus' lips. (30) When he had received the drink, Jesus said, **"It is finished."** With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

(31) Now it was the Day of Preparation, and the next day was to be a special Sabbath. Because the Jews did not want the bodies left on the crosses during the Sabbath, they asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies taken down. (32) The soldiers therefore came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with Jesus, and then those of the other. (33) But when they came to Jesus and found that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. (34) Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water. (35) The man who saw it has given testimony, and his testimony is true. He knows that he tells the truth, and he testifies so that you also may believe. (36) These things happened so that the Scripture would be fulfilled: "Not one of his bones will be broken," (37) and, as another Scripture says, "They will look on the one they have pierced."

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#### **Mark 15:42-47. The burial of Jesus**

(Mk15:42) So as evening approached, (43) Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Council, who was himself waiting for the Kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. (44) Pilate was surprised to hear that he was already dead. Summoning the centurion, he asked him if Jesus had already died. (45) When he learned from the centurion that it was so, he gave the body to Joseph. (46) So Joseph bought some linen cloth, took down the body, wrapped it in the linen, and placed it in a tomb cut out of the rock. Then he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. (47) Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Jesus saw where he was laid.

#### **Matthew 27:57-61. The burial of Jesus**

(Mt27:57) As evening approached, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who had himself become a disciple of Jesus. (58) Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body, and Pilate ordered that it be given to him. (59) Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, (60) and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock. He rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away. (61) Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting there opposite the tomb.

#### **Luke 23:50-56. Jesus' burial**

(Lk23:50) Now there was a man named Joseph, a member of the Council, a good and upright man, (51) who had not consented to their decision and action. He came from the Judean town of Arimathea and he was waiting for the Kingdom of God. (52) Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body. (53) Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen cloth and placed it in a tomb cut in the rock, one in which no one had yet been laid. (54) It was Preparation Day, and the Sabbath was about to begin.

(55) The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how his body was laid in. (56) Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes. But they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment.

#### **John 19:38-42. The burial of Jesus**

(Jn19:38) Later, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. Now Joseph

was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jews. With Pilate's permission, he came and took the body away. (39)He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred litrai. (40)Taking Jesus' body, the two of them wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen. This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs. (41)At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had ever been laid. (42)Because it was the Jewish day of Preparation and since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

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### **Mark 16:1-11. The Resurrection**

(Mk16:1)When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they must go to anoint Jesus' body. (2)Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb (3)and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?"

(4)But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. (5)As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed.

(6)"Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. (7)But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.'"

(8)Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.

(9)When Jesus rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had driven seven demons. (10)She went and told those who had been with him and who were mourning and weeping. (11)When they heard that Jesus was alive and that she had seen him, they did not believe it.

### **Matthew 28:1-10. The Resurrection**

(Mt28:1)After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.

(2)There had been a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from Heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. (3)His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. (4)The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.

(5)The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. (6)He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. (7)Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I have told you."

(8)So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples.

(9)Suddenly Jesus met them. "Greetings," he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshipped him. (10)Then Jesus said to them, "**Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.**"

**Luke 24:1-12. The Resurrection**

(Lk24:1) On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. (2) They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, (3) but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. (4) While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. (5) In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? (6) He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: (7) **'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.'**" (8) Then they remembered his words.

(9) When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. (10) It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. (11) But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense. (12) Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened.

**John 20:1-10. The empty tomb. 20:11-18. Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene**

(Jn20:1) Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. (2) So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one who Jesus cherished, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"

(3) So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. (4) Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. (5) He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. (6) Then Simon Peter, who was behind him, arrived and went into the tomb. He saw the stripes of linen lying there, (7) as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus' head. The cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen. (8) Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. (9) (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.)

(10) Then the disciples went back to their homes.

(11) But Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb (12) and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

(13) They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?"

"They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." (14) At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize it was Jesus.

(15) **"Woman,"** he said, **"why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?"**

Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him."

(16) Jesus said to her, **"Mary."**

She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher).

(17) Jesus said, **"Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"**

(18) Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her.

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**Mark 16:12-13.**

(Mk16:12) Afterwards Jesus appeared in a different form to two of them while they were walking in the country. (13) These returned and reported it to the rest; but they did not believe them either.

**Luke 24:13-33a. On the road to Emmaus**

(Lk24:13) Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about sixty stadia from Jerusalem. (14) They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. (15) As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; (16) but they were kept from recognizing him.

(17) He asked them, "**What are you discussing together as you walk along?**"

They stood still, their faces downcast. (18) One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened there in these days?"

(19) "**What things?**" he asked.

"About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. (20) The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; (21) but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. (22) In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning (23) but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. (24) Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see."

(25) He said to them, "**How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! (26) Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?**" (27) And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

(28) As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus acted as if he were going farther. (29) But they urged him strongly, "Stay with us, for it is near evening; the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them. (30) When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. (31) Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. (32) They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"

(33a) They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem.

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**Mark 16:14.**

(Mk16:14) Later Jesus appeared to the Eleven as they were eating; he rebuked them for their lack of faith and their stubborn refusal to believe those who had seen him after he had risen.



**Luke 24:33b-43. Jesus appears to the disciples**

(Lk24:36)While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "**Peace be with you.**"

(37)They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. (38)He said to them, "**Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? (39)Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.**"

(40)When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. (41)And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, "**Do you have anything here to eat?**" (42)They gave him a piece of broiled fish, (43)and he took it and ate it in their presence.

(33b)There they [the two who met Jesus on the road to Emmaus] found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together (34)and saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon." (35)Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.

**John 20:19-20;24-25. Jesus appears to his disciples**

(Jn20:19)On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "**Peace be with you!**" (20)After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

(24)Now Thomas (called Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. (25)So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!"

But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it."

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**Mark 16:15-18.**

(Mk16:15)He said to them, "**Go into all the world and preach the Good News to all Creation. (16)Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. (17)And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; (18)they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well.**"

**Matthew 28:16-20. The great commission**

(Mt28:16)Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. (17)When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. (18)Then Jesus came to them and said, "**All authority in Heaven and on Earth has been given to me. (19)Therefore go and make disciples of all nations baptizing them, in the name of the Father and of the Son, by the Spirit of God, (20)and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.**"

**Luke 24:44-48.**

(Lk24:44)He said to them, "**This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.**"

(45)Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. (46)He told them, "**This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, (47)and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. (48)You are witnesses of these thing.**"

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**Luke 24:49.**

(Lk24:49)"I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on High."

**John 20:21-23. The commission confirmed**

(Jn20:21)Again Jesus said, "**Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.**" (22)And with that he breathed on them and said, "**Receive the Spirit of God. (23)If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.**"

**Acts 1:4-8.**

(Ac1:4)On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "**Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. (5)For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Spirit of God.**"

(6)So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"

(7)He said to them, "**It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by His own authority. (8)But you will receive power when the Spirit of God comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the Earth.**"

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**Mark 16:19-20.**

(Mk16:19)After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, he was taken up into Heaven and he sat at the right hand of God. (20)Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his Word by the signs that accompanied it.

**Luke 24:50-53. The Ascension**

(Lk24:50)When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. (51)While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into Heaven. (52)Then they worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. (53) And they stayed continually at the Temple, praising God.

**Acts 1:9-14. Jesus taken up into Heaven**

(Ac1:9)After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

(10)They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. (11)"Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into Heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into Heaven."

(12)Then they returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day's walk from the city. (13)When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. Those present were Peter, John, James and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. (14)They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.

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## **JESUS CHRIST'S RELATIVES, DISCIPLES, FRIENDS**

### **Relatives:**

**Yahweh** (Jesus' Father)

**Mary** (Jesus' mother)

**Joseph** (Mary's husband, from Bethlehem)

**James** }

**Joseph** } (Jesus' younger half-brothers and sisters [names of

**Simon** } sisters: not known], children of Joseph and Mary)

**Judas** } [see Mk 6:3; Mt 13:55-56; Ac 1:14; 1Co 9:5; Ga 1:19]

**Sisters** }

**John the Baptist** (son of Zechariah and Elizabeth)

**Zechariah** (John the Baptist's father)

**Elizabeth** (John the Baptist's mother; cousin, aunt or other of Mary, Jesus' mother)

**James (the Older.** Apostle. Jesus' cousin, son of Zebedee and Salome)

**John** (Apostle. Evangelist. Jesus' cousin, son of Zebedee and Salome)

**Salome or Mary** (Jesus' aunt, mother of the apostles James and John)

**Zebedee** (Salome's husband, father of the apostles James and John)

### **The Twelve Apostles:**

**Peter (Simon,** son of John, called **Cephas** or **Peter** by Jesus, from Bethsaida)

**Andrew** (son of John, Peter's brother, from Bethsaida)

**James (the Older.** Jesus' cousin, son of Zebedee called Boanerge -Son of Thunder- Simon's partner)

**John** (Jesus' cousin, son of Zebedee, called Boanerge -Son of Thunder- Simon's partner, evangelist)

**Philip** (from Bethsaida)

**Bartholomew** (called **Nathanael**, from Cana)

**Matthew (Levi,** son of Alphaeus, tax collector, evangelist)

**Thomas** (called **Didymus**)

**James** (son of Alphaeus, called **James the Younger**)

**Thaddaeus** (or **Judas son of James**)

**Simon (the Zealot)**

**Judas Iscariot** (from Keriot)

### **Disciples:**

**Nicodemus** (member of the Sanhedrin, has buried Jesus)

**Joseph** (member of the Sanhedrin, from Arimathea, has buried Jesus)

**Matthias** (chosen to replace Judas Iscariot as 12th apostle)

**Joseph** (called **Barsabbas** or **Justus**, proposed to replace Judas Iscariot as 12th apostle)

### **Friends:**

**Lazarus, Martha, Mary** (brother and sisters, from Bethany)

**Mary** (wife of Clopas)

**Mary Magdalene** (from Magdala)

**Mary** (mother of the apostle James the younger and of Joses)

**Joanna** (wife of Cuza, the manager of Herod's household)



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| Jesus anointed at Bethany       | Bethany        | "          | 14:3-9   | 26:6-13  | -        | 12:2-11          | 304  |
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| Jesus the way to the Father       | Jerusalem       | "          | -           | -              | -           | 14:5-14             | 316         |     |
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| Disciples' grief turns to joy     | Jerusalem       | "          | -           | -              | -           | 16:16-33            | 324         |     |
| Jesus prays for himself           | Jerusalem       | "          | -           | -              | -           | 17:1-5              | 326         |     |
| Jesus prays for his disciples     | Jerusalem       | "          | -           | -              | -           | 17:6-19             | 327         |     |
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