

Superina Paolo

THE LAST WEEK
AND
THE RESURRECTION

Taken from
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

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**The most important facts and words of Jesus Christ's
life in the merged narratives of the four Evangelists.**

Superina Paolo

2 Last Week and Resurrection

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Chronological index of the events

Event	Place	Day	Mark	Matthew	Luke	John	
Jesus at Mary & Martha's home	Bethany	Friday	-	-	-	11:55-57 12:1	15
The Last Week							
The triumphal entry	Jerusalem	Sunday	11:1-11	21:1-11	19:28-44	12:12-19	16
Jesus predicts his death	Jerusalem	"	-	-	-	12:20-36	20
The Jews' continuous unbelief	Jerusalem	"	-	-	-	12:37-50	22
The fig tree withers	Jerusalem	Monday	11:12-14	21:18-19	-	-	25
Jesus clears the Temple	Jerusalem	"	11:15-19	21:12-17	19:45-48	-	26
The withered fig tree	Jerusalem	Tuesday	11:20-26	21:20-22	-	-	28
Jesus' authority questioned	Jerusalem	"	11:27-33	21:23-27	20:1-8	-	29
Paying taxes to Caesar	Jerusalem	"	12:13-17	22:15-22	20:20-26	-	31
Marriage and resurrection	Jerusalem	"	12:18-27	22:23-33	20:27-40	-	33
The greatest commandment	Jerusalem	"	12:28-34	22:34-40	-	-	35
Whose son is Christ?	Jerusalem	"	12:35-40	22:41-46	20:41-47	-	37
....				23:14			
Signs of the end of the age	Jerusalem	"	13:1-31	24:1-35	21:5-38	-	40
<i>The doom of Jerusalem</i>	<i>Jerusalem</i>	"	<i>13:1-2</i>	<i>24:1-2</i>	<i>21:5-6</i>	-	<i>40</i>
<i>The terror of the siege</i>	<i>Jerusalem</i>	"	<i>13:14-20</i>	<i>24:15-22</i>	<i>21:20-24</i>	-	<i>41</i>
<i>The day of the Lord</i>	<i>Jerusalem</i>	"	<i>13:7-8</i>	<i>24:6-8</i>	<i>21:9-11</i>	-	<i>42</i>
.....			<i>13:4-27</i>	<i>24:29-31</i>	<i>21:25-28</i>		
<i>The persecution to come</i>	<i>Jerusalem</i>	"	<i>13:3-4,9</i>	<i>24:3</i>	<i>21:7</i>	-	<i>44</i>
.....			<i>13:11-13</i>	<i>24:9-10</i>	<i>21:12-19</i>		
<i>Threats to the faith</i>	<i>Jerusalem</i>	"	<i>13:5-6</i>	<i>24:4-5</i>	<i>21:8</i>	-	<i>46</i>
.....			<i>13:21-23</i>	<i>24:11-13</i>			
.....				<i>24:23-26</i>			
<i>The coming of the king</i>	<i>Jerusalem</i>	"	<i>13:10</i>	<i>24:14</i>	-	-	<i>47</i>
.....				<i>24:27-28</i>			
<i>Be on the watch</i>	<i>Jerusalem</i>	"	<i>13:28-31</i>	<i>24:32-35</i>	<i>21:29-38</i>	-	<i>47</i>
Jesus anointed at Bethany	Bethany	"	14:3-9	26:6-13	-	12:2-11	48
Judas agrees to betray Jesus	Jerusalem	Wed.	14:1-2	26:1-5	22:1-6	-	52
.....			14:10-11	26:14-16			

Event	Place	Day	Mark	Matthew	Luke	John	
The Lord's Last Supper	Jerusalem	Thu.	14:12-25	26:17-29	22:7-23	13:1-30	55
Jesus predicts Peter's denial	Jerusalem	"	14:27-31	26:31-35	22:31-38	13:31-38	62
Jesus comforts his disciples	Jerusalem	"	-	-	-	14:1-4	65
Jesus the way to the Father	Jerusalem	"	-	-	-	14:5-14	66
Jesus promises Yahweh's Spirit	Jerusalem	"	-	-	-	14:15-31a	67
The vine and the branches	Jerusalem	"	-	-	-	15:1-17	71
The world hates the disciples	Jerusalem	"	-	-	-	15:18-27	74
.....						16:1-4	
The work of Yahweh's Spirit	Jerusalem	"	-	-	-	16:5-15	75
Disciples' grief turns to joy	Jerusalem	"	-	-	-	16:16-33	78
Jesus prays for himself	Jerusalem	"	-	-	-	17:1-5	80
Jesus prays for his disciples	Jerusalem	"	-	-	-	17:6-19	82
Jesus prays for all believers	Jerusalem	"	-	-	-	17:20-26	84
.....						14:31b	
Gethsemane	Mount of Olives	"	14:26	26:30	22:39-46	18:1	86
.....			14:32-42	26:36-46			
Jesus arrested	Mount of Olives	Friday	14:43-52	26:47-56	22:47-53	18:2-11	89
Jesus before the Sanhedrin	Jerusalem	"	14:53-65	26:57-68	22:54	18:12-16	92
.....					22:63-71	18:19-24	
Peter disowns Jesus	Jerusalem	"	14:66-72	26:69-75	22:55-62	18:17-18	97
.....						18:25-27	
Judas hangs himself	Jerusalem	"	-	27:3-10	-	-	99
Jesus before Pilate and Herod	Jerusalem	"	15:1-20	27:1-2	23:1-25	18:28-40	100
.....				27:11-31		19:1-16	
The Crucifixion	Golgotha	"	15:21-32	27:32-44	23:26-43	19:17-27	109
The death of Jesus	Golgotha	"	15:33-42a	27:45-56	23:44-49	19:28-37	114
The burial of Jesus	Garden Tomb	"	15:42b-47	27:57-61	23:50-56	19:38-42	118
The guard at the tomb	Jerus./Tomb	Saturday	-	27:62-66	-	-	120
The Resurrection							
The Resurrection	Jerusalem	Sunday	16:1-11	28:1-10	24:1-12	20:1-18	121
The guard's report	Jerusalem	"	-	28:11-15	-	-	126
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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.

PREFACE: 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. 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 storytellers.

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 Deuteronomic 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 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, Baruc, 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 in 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.

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.

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).

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 concerns the time between the Ascension of Jesus Christ and his return at the end of the world. It was meant to console the early Christians struggling under the Roman persecutions.

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.

-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 Jew 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 GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST

General introduction

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.

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 he 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 imprisonment 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.

Note 1: To God, His Name is given back: Yahweh.

Note 2: 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.

Note 3: 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.

THE LAST WEEK AND THE RESURRECTION**Day: FRIDAY (six days before the Jewish Passover)****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 cleanness.

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.

Day: SUNDAY (first day of the week)**The triumphal entry**

[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)(Mt-21:1-2)(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 repurified 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 Jews 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. Jesus' tears 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]

(Jn12:20) *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 is only fond of 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 liked 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 He 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 affection. 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.

Day: MONDAY (second day of the week)***The fig tree withers*** [Mark 11:12-14 Matthew 21:18-19]

(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

[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.' Gospel of Jesus Christ. 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. Al-

so, 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 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... 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.

Day: TUESDAY (third day of the week)***The withered fig tree*** [Mark 11:20-26 Matthew 21:20-22]

(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. (Mk 11:24)(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 21:21-22. *'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' (Gospel of Jesus Christ. 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 any thing 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 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.

The authority of Jesus questioned

[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 (Gospel of Jesus Christ. 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 (Gospel of Jesus Christ. 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 which was still worse. *'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.

Paying taxes to Caesar

[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. (Mk12:13-14)(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)(Mt 22:18-22)(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 leaders 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

[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 to test him again.

The greatest commandment [Mark 12:28-34 Matthew 22:34-40]

(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 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)(Mt22:39)And the second is like it: 'You'll be fond of your neighbor as of yourself.'* There is no commandment greater than these. (Mt 22:40)*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... You'll be 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 fondness for Yahweh. In its original contest 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?

[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)(Lk20:47)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 marketplaces'*: 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 the 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.

Signs of the end of the age

[Mark 13:1-31 Matthew 24:1-35 Luke 21:5-38]

[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 archeological 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':* Here 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 religion 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 quite difficult 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)(Lk 21:17-19) 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':* These 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 Christ, 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. (Gospel of Jesus Christ. 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 pro-*

phets': 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."

Mk 13:10. Mt 24:14;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 (the final Kingdom, perfect on Earth as in Heaven). *'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 (the temporary, imperfect one) 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.

Jesus anointed at Bethany

[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." (Jn12:6) 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)(Mt26:13) 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. *'Alabaster 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 made 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 (Gospel of Jesus Christ. 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.

Day: WEDNESDAY (fourth day of the week)**The plot against Jesus. Judas agrees to betray Jesus**

[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 cer-

tainly 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 God 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 informations 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 (Gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus anointed at Bethany. Jv 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 delive-

red 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.

Day: THURSDAY (fifth day of the week)**The Lord's Last Supper****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 had 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. *'They 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... in-*

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

[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?' (Gospel of Jesus 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' great affection for them and for all men. '*As I had been fond of you*': The Christian standard is Jesus' 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 (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. 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 welcome 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

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 and the truth and the life'*: In this saying Jesus took three of the 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 "saints," not even Jesus' mother.

Jn 14:7-9. *'If you... knew me, you would know...'*: Once more Jesus stresses the intimate connection between the Father and himself. *'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. 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 God. 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. *'Obey... fond of'*: Again, the concept that fondness 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 (Gospel of Jesus Christ. 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'*: Christian 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 had 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 Christ's 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 over-all 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 the religious orthodox people have too often 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]

(Jn16:5)"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 (Gospel of Jesus Christ. 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. *'He will expose...':* The New Testament speaks of the work of the Spirit of Yahweh -of the effect of the 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, without being 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 the 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, whose 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 men that Yahweh is not remote and un-approachable, 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... before the world began'*: Jesus' saving action was part of Yahweh's plans for the salvation of men. As such, in Yahweh's eyes, 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. Accep-

tance 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 "Hagiazo," 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 unity 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 emphasized 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 Christ. 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

[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. (Mt 26:44) 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," that 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.

Day: FRIDAY (sixth day of the week)**Jesus arrested**

[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)(Lk 22:50)(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 him-

self. 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 (Gospel of Jesus Christ. 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.

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) Then 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."

"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 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 clo-

thes 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 mee-

ting 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 to-wards 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 (Gospel of Jesus Christ. 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 (Gospel of Jesus Christ. 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

[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)(Mt26:69-73)(Lk22:56-59)(Jn 18:17;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 firelight. 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."** (Lk22:62) 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 had 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 (Gospel of Jesus Christ. 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.

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 washed 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)(Jn 19:2-3)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. (Mk15:20)(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 autho-

rity 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 (Gospel of Jesus Christ. 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 a criminal offense.

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 choose 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 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

[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 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. (Mk15:27)(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 Cho-

sen 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 occu-

ped 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 point of view of the soldiers, 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 his 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' (Gospel of Jesus Christ. 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 particularly fond. *'Took her into his home'*: And so John took responsibility of her.

The death of Jesus

[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. (Mk15:34)(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 voi-*

ce, *"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 Joseph, and Salome, 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

[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 Joseph, 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, came 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 (Gospel of Jesus Christ. 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.

Day: SATURDAY (the Jewish Passover)**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.

Day: SUNDAY (one day after Passover)**The Resurrection. The empty tomb. Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene**

[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)(Mt28:1-4)(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. (Mk16:5)(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, Joan-

na, 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.

(Jn20:13) 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.'"

(Mk16:9) 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)(Jn28:18) 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. (Mk16:11) 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 forechamber, 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, who did not yet believe in him, but who became disciples not long after this (Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Ascension. Mk 16:19-20; Lk 24:50-53; Ac 1:9-14).

To notice 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 senses.

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 (Gospel of Jesus Christ. 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 (Gospel of Jesus Christ. 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.

Note: 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.

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, children of Joseph

Simon } and Mary)[names of sisters are not known]

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 relation 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 } (brother and sisters, from Bethany)

Mary }

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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