

**— JESUS THE CHRIST —**



# JESUS THE CHRIST

Vincent C. Finnegan

# GOD

. . . Reconciling the world unto God . . .

JESUS THE CHRIST, Kingdom Studies, Volume II  
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NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR:

**Jesus the Christ** is the second in a series of three books written to correspond with the class *His Story: God's Purpose of the Ages*. The volumes and class teach the great theme of the Scriptures and the purpose of life—the Kingdom of God.

The primary purpose of this book is to help the reader understand the Bible and thereby to live to the glory of God. Therefore, many Scriptures are written out accompanied with an exposition. **Jesus the Christ** should be considered a study guide to be read along with the Bible. The author has no concern to impart his own or someone else's theology or opinion. The only matter of importance is to understand and obey God's will. The Bible records the will of God. The Bereans furnish the example every believer should imitate when reading or hearing things pertaining to God.

These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

Acts 17:11

If you are interested in acquiring *The Foundation* (Volume I), *Living Sacrifice* (Volume III), or the class *His Story: God's Purpose of the Ages*, then contact:

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## ***Hebrew Roots***

**T**he Bible opens in Genesis with a definite beginning and closes in Revelation with a corresponding, precise conclusion. The central theme, which Jesus called the "Kingdom of God," spans both the Old Testament (Hebrew) and the New Testament (Greek). The Hebrew Scriptures provide the foundation for the Greek. The Greek Scriptures give clarity and complete the Hebrew.

The Hebrew Scriptures are referred to as the Old Testament because of the covenant God cut with Israel in the time of Moses. Likewise, the Greek Scriptures are called the New Testament because of the covenant ushered in by Jesus Christ. (The words "covenant" and "testament" are used interchangeably.) The translators, acknowledging the difference between languages and covenants, added the title page *Old Testament* before the book of Genesis and *New Testament* before the book of Matthew. However understandable the reason, these divisions were not inspired by God. This simple human addition has caused major problems for rightly interpreting and understanding God's holy Word.

Since Jesus Christ is understood to be prominent in Christianity, the tendency is to ignore the Hebrew Scriptures and go directly to the Gospels. The reader would then be restricted to gaining understanding about Christ based entirely upon the Greek Scriptures. If we start in the middle of the Bible and ignore the beginning, accurate interpretation and understanding are virtually

impossible. No book is properly understood when read in this manner, but especially the holy Scriptures which have been authored by God, with supernatural exactness and comprehensiveness.

The words used, the concepts communicated, and the events recorded in the Gospels all have their roots in the Hebrew Scriptures. The very way in which we identify our Lord as Christ typifies this fundamental principle. What does "Christ" mean? Is "Christ" Jesus' last name, or does it have some other importance? The Greek word for Christ is *Christos* which means anointed. If we search the Greek Scriptures, we may gain some knowledge as to what Jesus was anointed to do. However, depth of understanding is gained by studying the Hebrew Scriptures. The high priest and the king of Israel are the two anointed ones that are set forth as types for Jesus the Christ. The significance of both the high priest and the king, and their relationship to Jesus, will be elaborated on in more detail further in this book.

***Jesus the Christ*** focuses on some of the many things that Jesus said and did which reveal that he (Jesus of Nazareth) is the Christ. The four Gospels reveal everything that God wants us to know about our Lord's ministry from his genealogy to his post-resurrection appearances. Moses and all the prophets speak often regarding the Messiah (Christ). They communicated many details about what he would do and say. Before Jesus was born, these Scriptures provided an intricate, complex blueprint so that there would be a standard to compare to and determine the authenticity of the Christ. The aim of ***Jesus the Christ*** is to review pertinent topics recorded in the Gospels and acknowledge the Hebrew underpinnings.

Immediately after Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden, God set in motion His plan to redeem man and restore His Kingdom upon Earth. Many details are laid out in the Hebrew text. Vital to the accomplishment

of His plan was that the Messiah would have to be completely obedient to fulfill the many specific prophecies. Everything Jesus did and said was in accordance with the will of God.

Jesus declared: "For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God..." (John 3:34). "...My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work" (John 4:34). "For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me" (John 6:38). "...I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things. And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him" (John 8:28 and 29). The things he did and the things he said were what God wanted done and said in order to accomplish His purposes. Jesus of Nazareth is indeed the Christ, and because of his accomplished works, God's Kingdom will come.

A thousand pens writing for a thousand years cannot communicate the glory of Jesus the Christ. For every topic included in this book, many, many more are excluded. This writing is designed to serve as a meager introduction to some important subjects with the intent of encouraging the readers to engage in a comprehensive study of the Scriptures for themselves.

John 20:31

But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.



## *Genealogy of Christ*

The genealogy of Jesus Christ starts in the beginning of the Bible after Adam and Eve were permanently expelled from the Garden of Eden. God cursed the serpent for tempting them and simultaneously introduced the "seed of the woman."

Genesis 3:15

And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

After we have studied more of the Scriptures, we can look back and understand that the seed of the woman was prophecy regarding Jesus Christ. This one verse serves as an introduction and theme for the remainder of the Scriptures. It foreshadows the redemption of mankind, the annihilation of the devil, and the restoration of the world. The promised seed is central to the overall theme of the Scriptures which our Lord called the Kingdom of God. At the end of the Bible in the book of Revelation, we see that the prophecy stated in Genesis 3 is finally and completely fulfilled.

The promised seed gives meaning to human history. Throughout the Old Testament, a constant struggle rages.

God guides and protects the genealogy that carries the seed, and the adversary endeavors to destroy it.

For example, in the time of Noah, all of humanity was so depraved that "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart *was only evil continually*" (Genesis 6:5). Noah was the only one left untarnished. Had there not been the flood, eventually Noah either would have been either ill-effected or would have died, and with him would have gone the promised seed. Although the flood was for the elimination of the evil ones, it was more important for the preservation of the "just one."

Another example is seen with the patriarch Abraham, who was promised that the seed would come from him. He was unable to have children with Sarah until he was 100 years old when he fathered Isaac. Isaac's wife was also barren and needed supernatural intervention to conceive. They (Isaac and Rebecca) had Jacob whose name was changed to Israel. Of Jacob's 12 sons, Judah carried the seed which again was almost lost because of his wrong dealings with Tamar. When the children of Israel were in Egypt, Pharaoh determined to have all their newborn males murdered by the midwives.

The conflict continued into the New Testament. When Jesus was born, Herod gave the command to kill all the children two years and under in order to eliminate the promised seed.

The princes of this world thought that they had finally destroyed the promised seed when they crucified Jesus. However, in retrospect we see that they fulfilled the prophecy about the serpent's bruising the heel of the seed and opened the way for the remainder of the prophecy to be accomplished. The crucifixion and subsequent resurrection certified that God's purpose of the ages would indeed come to pass.

The genealogy of Jesus is recorded in the Gospel of Matthew and shows him to be the Christ. (A genealogy is the account of the descendants of a person or family.) Our attention is immediately drawn to David and Abraham.

Matthew 1:1

The book of the generation of Jesus Christ,  
the son of David, the son of Abraham.

The phrase, "son of David," is often used in reference to Jesus and is understood to mean the Messiah. The English word "Messiah" is a translation from the Hebrew, while the word "Christ" is from the Greek. These words are used interchangeably because they both mean "the Lord's anointed." David was the Lord's anointed king over God's people and, as such, a type for the Messiah.

Nathan the prophet informed David that God would raise up his seed after him to establish his throne forever. David's descendant would also be God's Son who would rule the world on the throne of David in Jerusalem and do so forever more. When David ruled God's kingdom, it was the sweetest time Israel ever had with God. Therefore, along with David, it is held up as a type for the future Kingdom.

Abraham is the first to be given the specific promise that the Messiah would descend from him. Therefore, the genealogy of Christ begins with him. Abraham is the father of all that believe in the Messiah throughout the ages. In Abraham, the great promises about inheriting the land are given and emphatically established. God committed Himself to Abraham in an unparalleled way. He promised, cut a covenant, and swore that Abraham and his believing children from Israel and the Gentiles would inherit the restored world with Christ at his return.

The major components regarding the Messiah and God's coming Kingdom are associated with Abraham and David respectively. For Jesus of Nazareth to be the Messiah, he had to be a descendant of both David and Abraham.

A complete understanding of the genealogy of Christ would require a comprehensive study of the Old Testament. Each person in the line of Christ has his or her own distinct, noteworthy story. This chapter will highlight some of the interesting aspects and hopefully encourage a more detailed investigation into the Scriptures.

### **Five Women in the Genealogy of Christ**

Matthew 1:2 and 3

Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren;

And Judas begat Phares and Zara of Thamar; and Phares begat Esrom; and Esrom begat Aram;

Thamar is the first of five women mentioned in the genealogy. That any women are listed is significant since genealogy is always traced through the male. (The names listed in Matthew are spelled somewhat differently than they are in the Old Testament, because the Old is translated from Hebrew and the New from Greek.)

All the women connected with the family of Abraham were instructed regarding the promised seed. Therefore their desire to have a son was strongly enhanced by the potential of giving birth to the Messiah. When God told Abraham that a child of his descent would be the Messiah,

He did not say when. So each generation had the possibility of giving birth to the Messiah.

Tamar (Tamar) was the wife of Judah's firstborn son Er. Er was wicked in the sight of the Lord, "and the LORD slew him" (Genesis 38:7). Judah understood the responsibility of the kinsman redeemer which was later written in the Law (Deuteronomy 25:5-10). Since Er had no children, the next oldest son of Judah had the responsibility of marrying his deceased brother's wife and producing heirs for him. Onan, the obligated brother, married Tamar, but refused to impregnate her. Therefore, he also died. After Onan's death, the responsibility to marry Tamar fell to Judah's third son, Shelah. Since two sons had already died, Judah refused to take a chance with Shelah, and so he withheld him from marrying her.

As time went on, Judah's wife also died, and he decided to sleep with a woman he thought was a harlot. However, the "harlot" was his daughter-in-law, Tamar, in disguise. As a result of this incident, Tamar finally became pregnant. When Judah heard that she was pregnant, he determined to punish her because he still did not know that he was the one responsible. When the truth was finally revealed, Judah said, "She hath been more righteous than I; because that I gave her not to Shelah my son" (Genesis 38:26).

Tamar gave birth to twins—Pharez and Zerah. Pharez carried the promised seed and therefore is listed in the genealogy of Christ. Apparently Tamar was very determined to be a part of the line that bore the Christ. God's magnanimous grace is very obvious in this record, as it is with Rahab, the second woman in the genealogy.

Matthew 1:4 and 5

And Aram begat Aminadab; and Aminadab  
begat Naasson; and Naasson begat Salmon;

And Salmon begat Booz [Boaz] of Rachab [Rahab]; and Booz [Boaz] begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse;

After Moses died, Joshua led the children of Israel into the promised land. Before attacking the city of Jericho, he sent two spies into the land. When the authorities of the city became aware of the spies, they sought to capture them. The spies found refuge in Rahab's (the harlot's) house. She hid them and eventually helped them to escape safely. Rahab risked her own life for them because she believed that their God was the one true God. The men made an oath to protect her and her family when Israel attacked the city. To honor this oath, Joshua gave orders to destroy utterly all in the city except Rahab's household.

Joshua 6:22

But Joshua had said unto the two men that had spied out the country, Go into the harlot's house, and bring out thence the woman, and all that she hath, as ye sware unto her.

Rahab as well as her family were saved and became a part of Israel.

Verse 25

And Joshua saved Rahab the harlot alive, and her father's household, and all that she had; and she dwelleth in Israel *even* unto this day; because she hid the messengers, which Joshua sent to spy out Jericho.

She married a man of Israel and had a child named Boaz, who is in the genealogy of Jesus Christ. Since the

line came from Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, one would expect that everyone in the genealogy would have been an Israelite, but not so with Rahab. She was a Gentile. Hebrews 11 lists many of the great believers written in the Old Testament and emphasizes the faith they had in light of their hope. Rahab is included.

Hebrews 11:31

By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.

The book of James in chapter 2 explains that faith without works is dead. Two people are held up as examples of the right way to believe—Abraham and Rahab. With Rahab, we again see God's wonderful grace and mercy.

The next woman spoken of married Rahab's son Boaz.

Matthew 1:5

And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse;

The book of Ruth is named after this wonderful woman of faith. The spotlight focuses on three desperate women, Naomi, Orpah, and Ruth in the first chapter of Ruth. Their three husbands have all died, and they are living in a foreign land with no relatives to help. Naomi decides to go home and tells Orpah and Ruth to return to their mothers' houses. She has no more sons who can deliver them from the plight of widowhood. Orpah leaves, but Ruth insists on staying with Naomi.

Ruth 1:16

And Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee,  
or to return from following after thee: for  
whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou  
lodgest, I will lodge: thy people *shall be* my  
people, and thy God my God:

Ruth was a Moabitess. Years before Ruth, the Moabites seduced Israel into idolatry under the direction of Balaam. The women sexually enticed the men of Israel and eventually led them into worshipping Baalpeor which resulted in the death of 24,000 Israelites. From then on, the Moabites were cursed, and Israel was forbidden to associate with them.

Naomi and Ruth returned to the land of the Israelites in their hopeless state. Ruth's situation was indeed grim. She was a cursed Moabitess woman living in a land where she was disdained with her mother-in-law who was without sons. Through all of this, God honored this woman of faith and of commitment. She ended up marrying a relative of Naomi's husband named Boaz, who became her kinsman redeemer. Boaz and Ruth had a son named Obed. He had a son named Jesse, who was the father of David. Ruth's inclusion in the Christ line is incredibly unlikely. Yet, by the grace of God, she indeed was included.

Matthew 1:5 and 6

And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab; and  
Booz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat  
Jesse;  
And Jesse begat David the king; and David  
the king begat Solomon of her *that had been*  
*the wife* of Urias;

The fourth woman listed is not named in the genealogy, she is referred to just as "her *that had been the wife of Urias.*" Bathsheba is this woman.

David stayed at home, while Joab led his army against Ammon. One restless night, his eyes focused on Bathsheba, who was bathing. She was a beautiful woman, so David sent messengers and took her and slept with her. She conceived and informed David.

David dreamed up a plan to cover his wrongdoing. He would have her husband, Uriah, return from the war and sleep with her. Uriah would then think that the baby belonged to him. David apparently did not know Uriah very well. This great man with impeccable character refused to sleep with his wife while the ark of God and the rest of the army were in the fields of battle. The next night David got him drunk, thinking his morals would weaken, but Uriah still refused to go home. David's plan failed again, so he contrived an evil plot to have Uriah killed in battle. He had Joab send him to the front lines where he died. After the death and burial of Uriah, David took Bathsheba to be his wife. The child she bore died shortly after birth.

Later she conceived again and had a son whom they named Solomon. He was the one listed in Jesus' genealogy. God did not forget honorable Uriah, "David the king begat Solomon of her *that had been the wife of Urias.*" What are we to conclude from this record? GRACE!

The fifth woman listed in the genealogy is Mary the mother of Jesus.

Matthew 1:16

And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.

In the next chapter, we will study the birth of Jesus

Christ and see Mary's involvement. As with the women before her, God's loving grace will be evident.

### **Fourteen Generations**

Matthew 1:17

So all the generations from Abraham to David *are* fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon *are* fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ *are* fourteen generations.

When we count from Abraham to David, we see that there are fourteen generations; David to Babylon, fourteen; but from Babylon to Jesus, there seems to be only thirteen. Look at the following charts.

CHART 1

From Abraham to David (14 generations) Matthew 1:2-6		From David to the carrying away to Babylon (14 generations) Matthew 1:6-11	
1. Abraham	8. Aminadab	1. Solomon	8. Joatham
2. Isaac	9. Naasson	2. Roboam	9. Achaz
3. Jacob	10. Salmon	3. Abia	10. Ezekias
4. Judas	11. Booz	4. Asa	11. Manasses
5. Phares	12. Obed	5. Josaphat	12. Amon
6. Esrom	13. Jesse	6. Joram	13. Josias
7. Aram	14. David	7. Ozias	14. Jechonias

CHART 2

From the Carrying Away to Babylon unto Christ (14 Generations) Matthew 1:12-16	
1. Salathiel	8. Eliud
2. Zorobabel	9. Eleazar
3. Abiud	10. Matthan
4. Eliakim	11. Jacob
5. Azor	12. Joseph
6. Sadoc	13. Jesus
7. Achim	14. ?

Whenever we see what is an apparent contradiction in the Bible, it is either an error in our understanding or an error in translation. Most often the error is in our understanding. This particular section has an error in translation which can be easily identified with a

comparative study of Luke.

Luke also contains a genealogy, but instead of leading to Mary, it focuses on Joseph, the supposed father of Jesus. Luke's genealogy begins with Joseph and ends with Adam, and as such is listed in the reverse order to that of Matthew.

Luke 3:23

And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was *the son* of Heli,

Joseph's father's name was Heli. Once again, look back at chart 2, showing from the carrying away to Babylon unto Christ. It implies Jacob is the father of Joseph. Joseph's father cannot be both Heli and Jacob.

Matthew 1:16

And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.

This genealogy, unlike Luke's, leads directly to Jesus; therefore, it has to show Mary's bloodline, not Joseph's. Joseph had nothing at all to do with the birth of Jesus. Seed was provided by God when He created it in the womb of Mary. The word "husband" is from the Greek word *aner* which means a male person of full age and stature, not a child or female. The context determines the translation given — man, father, or husband. Mary's father and husband were both named Joseph. Verse 16 should have been translated "and Jacob begat Joseph the father of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ."

The following chart depicts the correct understanding.

CHART 3

From the Carrying Away to Babylon unto Christ (14 Generations) Matthew 1:12-16	
1. Salathiel	8. Eliud
2. Zorobabel	9. Eleazar
3. Abiud	10. Matthan
4. Eliakim	11. Jacob
5. Azor	12. Joseph (father of Mary)
6. Sadoc	13. Mary
7. Achim	14. Jesus

When Eve gave birth to her first son, she declared: "I have gotten a man from the Lord." She wrongly assumed that the child was the promised seed. (In actuality, it was Cain.) Beginning with Eve, everyone thought the promised seed would be born through the normal means of reproduction with the man impregnating the woman. Every prophet spoke about the coming Messiah with some including details about his birth. The Messiah was often referred to as the Son of God. However, no one understood what God kept secret—the seed of the woman would not come from a man. God created the seed in Mary which made Jesus His Son. Therefore, the genealogy of Christ leads to Mary, not a man.

The son of David, the son of Abraham, the Son of God, born of Mary, is the Christ.



## *The Birth*

**W**hen Herod "the Great" was King of Judea, there was a very special couple who believed God—Zacharias the priest and Elisabeth his wife.

The Gospels do not often speak well of the priests because many were religious hypocrites. Zacharias and Elisabeth were indeed unique because both were righteous before God and obeyed His commandments. Their behavior was irreproachable in God's presence. They were well advanced in years and beyond the point of childbearing.

While Zacharias was in the temple executing the priest's duties, the angel Gabriel appeared and told him that Elisabeth was going to bear a son who was to be named John. This child is known to the world as John the Baptist, the cousin of Jesus Christ. Shortly after this vision, Elisabeth conceived and concealed herself for the first five months of her pregnancy. During her seclusion, much time must have been given to praising and glorifying God for His loving, gracious miracle.

In her culture, not having a child was considered a disgrace, especially not having a son who would be the family heir. People believed the blessing of childbearing was withheld because of the husband's or wife's sins. Obviously in Zacharias' and Elisabeth's case, this was a wrong assumption. This pregnancy brought them a double blessing—having a son and taking away the disgrace. Elisabeth had much about which to praise God.

Luke 1:25

Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein he looked on *me*, to take away my reproach among men.

This miracle played a very important part in the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. In the sixth month of Elisabeth's pregnancy, Gabriel made another visit to a young virgin named Mary.

### **Mary and the Angel**

Luke 1:26 and 27

And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth,  
To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name *was* Mary.

The marriage procedure of that time was quite different from that of today. The first stage was the prearrangement which happened often years before the marriage ceremony. The parents of the couple would generally arrange the marriage. After the bride and groom were selected, there would be a betrothal ceremony. The time of this would be determined about one year before the wedding. This was not the wedding, but a preliminary ceremony similar to our engagement. In their culture (one based on morals and integrity), the betrothal involved a much stronger commitment than engagement does in our culture. It was an actual marriage commitment which could only be disannulled by divorce or death. The couple would be considered husband and wife from the time of the

betrothal, though they did not come together for intercourse until after the wedding ceremony. They would never consider living together before the wedding ceremony, which is again much different from our immoral society.<sup>1</sup>

When Gabriel visited Mary, she was espoused (which means betrothed) to Joseph. They had not yet gone through the wedding ceremony and as such had not begun living together. A "virgin" meant a young maiden, particularly in the sense of one who has not known a man in intercourse.

To have the angel Gabriel appear to someone is a high honor of great grace. To receive the specific message addressed to Mary made her highly favored and blessed abundantly. Of all the women who had ever lived, she was selected to conceive and give birth to the Son of God.

Verse 28

And the angel came in unto her, and said,  
Hail, *thou that art* highly favoured, the Lord *is*  
with thee: blessed *art* thou among women.

Her human response to this great visitation was fear, as is often the case with those confronted by angels.

Verses 29 and 30

And when she saw *him*, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be.

And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God.

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<sup>1</sup> Freeman, James M., *Manners and Customs of the Bible*; pg 330. Logos Int'l., Plainfield, NJ, 1972

The debate has gone on for centuries why this particular woman was selected above all others. The Old Testament tells us she had to be a descendant of Abraham and of the house of David. But many other women fulfilled these requirements. Why Mary? She was God's choice, and without His giving more specific information, we do not know. The only explanation provided is that "thou hast found favour with God." Just as the women who preceded her in the genealogy of Christ (Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba), she was chosen because of God's grace.

Much information about Jesus was provided to Mary by the angel.

#### Verses 31-33

And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS.

He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:

And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

The prophecy declared who the child would be and what he would do unto the end. Mary was to name him Jesus. "Jesus" means Jehovah is Salvation.

His Name Shall Be Jesus  
He Shall Be Great  
Called the Son of the Highest  
Given the Throne of His Father  
David  
Reign Over the House of Jacob  
His Kingdom Shall Not End

All of the Old Testament prophets spoke of the Messiah, and many referred to his reign on the throne of David. Nathan the prophet prophesied regarding David's dynasty.

II Samuel 7:12-14

And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom.

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

I will be his father, and he shall be my son....

Initially, these verses were referring to Solomon, David's son. However, the kingdom was not established under Solomon but rather divided. This is why these verses are ultimately referring to Jesus the Christ who was also a direct descendant of David. He will be the one to sit upon the throne of David forever.

Psalms 132:11

The LORD hath sworn *in* truth unto David; he will not turn from it; Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne.

After Solomon, the kingdom of Israel was split into two, never to be reconciled again. Centuries after David's death, Israel as a kingdom was completely gone. Yet the promise to David was made and therefore must be fulfilled. Indeed it will be when Jesus Christ comes back. Long before Jesus was born, the angel spoke that which he would ultimately do—"reign over the house of Jacob for ever." Isaiah also prophesied in like manner, years before Jesus' birth.

Isaiah 9:6 and 7

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

Of the increase of *his* government and peace *there shall be* no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever....

The Messiah is called these things because he is his Father's representative and is authorized to rule as God's King here upon earth. Jesus is the prophesied descendant of David. He will rule the world on the throne of David in Jerusalem. Following are some of the many verses which prophesy about these matters.

Isaiah 16:5

And in mercy shall the throne be established: and he shall sit upon it in truth in the tabernacle of David, judging, and seeking judgment, and hasting righteousness.

Jeremiah 23:5 and 6

Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.

In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this *is* his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Ezekiel 34:23 and 24

And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, *even* my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd.

And I the LORD will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the LORD have spoken *it*.

Ezekiel 37:24 and 25

And David my servant *shall be* king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them.

And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, *even* they, and their children, and

their children's children for ever: and my servant David *shall be* their prince for ever.

Amos 9:11

In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old:

Mary would have had knowledge of these Scriptures and of the many others recorded in the Old Testament which speak of the Messiah. Mary wanted to know how this was all going to happen. As a betrothed woman, she had not known a man.

Luke 1:34 and 35

Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?

And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.

Mary's question was not spawned from unbelief, rather ignorance of how these things would happen. She, like every other Israelite, had no reason to suspect that the Messiah would be born any way other than normal procreation. The Scriptures clearly communicate that the Messiah would be a descendant of Abraham and David. It was not understood that this would be from the woman's side and that God would create the seed in her which would make God his Father. Throughout Jesus' life, people thought Joseph was his father.

God caused Mary to become pregnant. Therefore, Jesus was the only man since Adam who was born without the seed of Adam. His seed was of God and therefore perfect and sinless. Although his conception was unique, he was born just like everyone else.

### **Mary and Elisabeth**

All of this information had to be a lot for Mary to receive and believe. However, Gabriel told her about Elisabeth's miraculous pregnancy. Howbeit, it was different in that Zacharias supplied the seed for Elisabeth, whereas God created seed in Mary. Nonetheless, it was supernatural and miraculous.

Luke 1:36 and 37

And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren.

For with God nothing shall be impossible.

Earlier we saw the double blessing of Elisabeth's pregnancy; now we see another great blessing. Mary must have been astonished to know that her cousin Elisabeth, who had been in seclusion, was six months pregnant. Surely this helped Mary believe. Mary's response to the angel was breathtaking.

Verse 38

And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word.  
And the angel departed from her.

The word "handmaid" is the Greek word *doule*, the feminine form of *doulos*, slave. She said in essence, "Behold the slave of the Lord. I will do whatever You want, according to Your will, O Lord." What a great, wonderful response from a great and wonderful woman!

Mary was very blessed of the Lord, but from a human point of view, she was in a serious predicament. She was not married, and she was pregnant.

In our culture, unwed mothers are all too common. In her culture, as a pregnant betrothed woman, she could be stoned to death if discovered. The best treatment a pregnant betrothed woman could hope for was to be given a written bill of divorcement and sent away in disgrace.

After the angel left and Mary contemplated her situation, she concluded that the best person to confide in was the one the angel spoke of—Elisabeth, her cousin. She went to her in haste.

Verses 39 and 40

And Mary arose in those days, and went into  
the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda;  
And entered into the house of Zacharias, and  
saluted Elisabeth.

The sequence of events which surrounded the birth of Jesus Christ is led by God with miraculous results. What Elisabeth speaks to Mary has to be the most reassuring and endearing message she could have ever heard.

Verses 41-43

And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth  
heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped  
in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the  
Holy Ghost:

And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed *art* thou among women, and blessed *is* the fruit of thy womb.  
And whence *is* this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?

Mary must have been thrilled to realize that God had revealed her secret to Elisabeth. She called her the "mother of my Lord." Even the baby in Elisabeth's womb responded, which gave validation to Mary.

Verses 44 and 45

For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy.  
And blessed *is* she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.

How very thrilling and reassuring it was to hear "there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord!" Mary was so inspired that she, too, began to prophesy. Notice how she exalted God and acknowledged the difference between pride and humility.

Verses 46-55

And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord,  
And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.  
For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.  
For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy *is* his name.  
And his mercy *is* on them that fear him from

generation to generation.

He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.

He hath put down the mighty from *their* seats, and exalted them of low degree.

He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away.

He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of *his* mercy;

As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.

The fellowship that these two women enjoyed together must have been extraordinary. Mary stayed with Elisabeth for about three months and then had to return home to Nazareth. She would soon be married and somehow had to communicate to Joseph, his parents, her parents, and their community why she was pregnant.

### **Mary and Joseph**

Matthew continues the chronological order of events.

Matthew 1:18

Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.

In Deuteronomy 22:13-22 and 24:1 and 2, instruction was given for when a betrothed wife is found to be pregnant by another. Two choices are given: the husband

can write her a bill of divorcement or take her to the elders of the city to be stoned to death publicly. Joseph loved Mary, so he was considering the bill of divorcement.

Verses 19-21

Then Joseph her husband, being a just *man*, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.

And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.

Joseph must have been greatly relieved by this message! The angel appeared to him before they came together, but now he was specifically instructed to "take unto thee Mary thy wife."

Verses 22 and 23

Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.

Isaiah was the prophet, and the prophecy was recorded in Isaiah 7:14. Centuries before it came to pass, God foretold of these things.

Matthew 1:24 and 25

Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife:

And knew her not [did not impregnate her] till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS.

Mary and Joseph later had at least six other children. Jesus was the firstborn child of Mary and the only begotten Son of God.

Matthew 13:55 and 56

Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas?

And his sisters, are they not all with us....

"Sisters" is plural, which signifies that there were at least two and maybe even more.

### **The Birth of Jesus Christ**

When the Roman Empire extended itself further than ever before, Caesar Augustus sent out a decree.

Luke 2:1

And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.

The word "taxed" is from the Greek word *apographo* meaning to register. The decree from Caesar was that

people register for taxes. The registration was first made when Cyrenius was governor in 3 B.C.

Verses 2 and 3

(*And* this taxing [enrollment] was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.)

And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.

The emperor's decree apparently was specific in that he wanted all people to register, not in the town where they lived, but the town in which they were born. Joseph, because he was of David's lineage, returned to Bethlehem (I Samuel 16:1,4). The whole world was set in motion to bring Mary to Bethlehem so that her son would be born in the city of David. Little did Caesar Augustus know that his decree was fulfilling God's will. God has always been in supreme control. Rulers (such as pharaohs, kings, and Caesars) have thought themselves to be in control, but the Word of God testifies differently.

Mary and Joseph had to be in Bethlehem because the Prophet Micah recorded it so.

Micah 5:2

But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, *though* thou be little among the thousands of Judah, *yet* out of thee shall he come forth unto me *that is* to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth *have been* from of old, from everlasting.

Mary also had to register in Bethlehem because she was a descendant of David.

Luke 2:4 and 5

And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:)

To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.

Mary was great with child since she was in the last days of her pregnancy. The word "espoused" is omitted in some Aramaic manuscripts and could be omitted in the King James Version because Joseph and Mary were now married, no longer betrothed.

Bethlehem was overflowing with people who had come to register for taxes. So crowded was this city that a full-term, pregnant woman could only find shelter in a stable. Perhaps Mary and Joseph arrived later than most because Mary was traveling in the last days of her pregnancy.

Verses 6 and 7

And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.

And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.<sup>2</sup>

When we consider the great prophecy about the Messiah as we read earlier, we may find it to be shocking

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<sup>2</sup> The traditional belief has been that Jesus was born on December 25, sometime between 4 and 7 B.C. However, research, comparing the Scriptures with historical and astronomical evidence, reveals that he was born September 11, 3 B.C. See Maranatha Church, Inc. [www.versebyverse.org/doctrine/birthofChrist.html](http://www.versebyverse.org/doctrine/birthofChrist.html)

that he was born in a stable. The inns would have stables for animals such as asses and camels. Within each stable would be a manger with straw in it to feed the animals. Jesus was laid in a manger.

Today after birth, a baby is washed and wrapped in a blanket. In Mary's day, the baby was washed in salt water and wrapped in swaddling clothes, which were strips of fine linen about two inches wide. The child was wrapped from head to foot for only a brief period of time. Some believe this Eastern custom related specifically to princes. The salt symbolized the qualities of truthfulness and honesty, and the swaddling represented the parents' commitment to raise the child to be upright before the Lord. They believed the salted and swaddled prince would grow to rule with honesty, reliability, and integrity, which certainly was true in the case with Jesus.

The greatest man who ever lived was born in a stable. How many mothers would choose to give birth in such an environment? Jesus the Christ started his life in the most humble of environments—a manger.

Joseph and Mary were prepared with the swaddling clothes, the salt, and everything needed to bring God's only begotten Son into the world. Good parents prepare long in advance for the care of their newborn. We can be well-assured that Joseph and Mary, knowing who this child was, made all the proper arrangements. They must have been devastated not to find the best location. However, God quickly comforted their hearts with the shepherds.

Shepherds were in the vicinity of Bethlehem and were keeping watch over their flock, when an angel of the Lord appeared unto them.

Luke 2:8 and 9

And there were in the same country  
shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch

over their flock by night.  
And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

The angel brought them good news of great joy. To these humble shepherds was given the grand announcement that Christ the Lord was born.

Verses 10-12

And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.  
For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.  
And this *shall be* a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

God invited the shepherds to see the newborn Messiah. The scene which followed is breathtaking. The shepherds were allowed to view the heavenly host praising God. God and the angels included these men in their glorious rejoicing regarding the birth of Christ.

Verses 13 and 14

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,  
Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men.

The corresponding records about the birth of Christ give no indication that anyone else was involved in this momentous occasion. God did not send the angel to

declare Jesus Christ's birth to King Herod, to the high priest, to the religious leaders, nor to other wealthy, powerful men in Judea. Instead, He sent His angel to humble, receptive shepherds—to those He knew would believe and obey.

Verses 15 and 16

And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.

And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.

Although Bethlehem was swelling with people, not one of them was watching and waiting for the birth of Christ. If any one of the residents of Bethlehem believed the Messiah was being born, would not he have offered his hospitality? The shepherds "came with haste" and found Mary and Joseph with the baby Jesus, still swaddled and lying in the manger as the angel had told them. The precise timing of God's dealings with them is miraculous and filled their hearts with awe. They made known everywhere what they had seen.

Verses 17 and 18

And when they had seen *it*, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.

And all they that heard *it* wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

## Simeon and Anna

Eight days after the birth, Joseph and Mary were responsible to see that their son was circumcised in accordance with the Mosaic Law.

Luke 2:21

And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

Forty-one days after Jesus' birth, his parents fulfilled the law by offering a sacrifice for their new son. Jesus was brought to the temple in Jerusalem.

Verse 22

And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present *him* to the Lord;

While in the temple, they encountered two wonderful people. The first was Simeon, an elderly man dedicated to God and waiting for the consolation of Israel. God allowed Simeon before he died to see Christ.

Verses 25-32

And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name *was* Simeon; and the same man *was* just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him.

And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ [Messiah].

And he came by the Spirit into the temple:  
and when the parents brought in the child  
Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the  
law,

Then took he him up in his arms, and  
blessed God, and said,

Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in  
peace, according to thy word:

For mine eyes have seen thy salvation,

Which thou hast prepared before the face of  
all people;

A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of  
thy people Israel.

Simeon understood the awesome privilege that was given to him. His desire to see Christ opened the door for God to bless him. As Simeon finished his prophecy, another great believer became involved.

#### Verses 36-38

And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the  
daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she  
was of a great age, and had lived with an  
husband seven years from her virginity;

And she *was* a widow of about fourscore and  
four years, which departed not from the  
temple, but served *God* with fastings and  
prayers night and day.

And she coming in that instant gave thanks  
likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to  
all them that looked for redemption in  
Jerusalem.

The temple was the great center of worship for Israel. The priests, Sanhedrin, scribes, other religious leaders, and thousands of worshippers could have been there the

day Jesus was presented to the Lord. The only ones involved were Simeon and Anna. These two apparently were watching and waiting. Both expressed great thanks for having lived to see the Christ.

## Magi

The wise men, or magi, were the next ones to acknowledge Jesus as the Christ.

Matthew 2:1

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men [magi] from the east to Jerusalem,

"Wise men" (magi) is translated from the Greek *magoi*. *Magoi*, or the English magi, was the name given by the Babylonians, Medes, and Persians to wise men. Not much is known about these men. We do not know specifically where they came from or even how many of them there were. We do know they were able to determine the birth of Jesus Christ by reading the stars.

The book of Daniel tells that the wise men of Israel were led to Babylon. Daniel rose in prominence and eventually was the overseer of the wise men and astronomers in Babylon. Perhaps Daniel taught them how to interpret the Word of God in the stars. Then one generation could have taught the next until this time.

Verse 2

Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.

These men from a faraway land recognized signs regarding the birth of the Messiah when most of God's chosen people in Israel did not. They came looking for the King of the Jews.

Verses 3 and 4

When Herod the king had heard *these things*, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.

Herod, a pagan king, understood that Christ was the King of the Jews.

Psalms 18:50

Great deliverance giveth he to his king; and sheweth mercy to his anointed, to David, and to his seed for evermore.

The word "Christ" is the same as the word "anointed." David, the king of Israel, was God's anointed. It was commonly understood that the Lord's anointed would be king of Israel. To Herod, this was a great threat.

Matthew 2:5 and 6

And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, *in* the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.

We saw earlier that Micah 5:2 has this prophecy. Herod's devices and evil plan were to find the child and eliminate him.

#### Verses 7-10

Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.

And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found *him*, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.

When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.

When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.

Here Jesus is not referred to as an infant or baby, but rather as a young child. The magi did not go to the stable as the shepherds did, but to a house. Tradition teaches they were present right after his birth, but the truth is they came over a year later.

#### Verse 11

And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.

Again, Jesus is referred to as a young child, and the location was the house. These men gave presents that would financially help this young family.

Verses 12 and 13

And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way. And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.

God continued to work by showing Joseph that which was necessary to do for his family. The gifts the magi gave must have helped when they went into Egypt.

Verses 14-16

When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt: And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son. Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men.

Herod was a wicked, fearful man. Notice that he knew the child was around two years old. Herod's action fulfilled another prophecy given in Jeremiah 31:15.

Matthew 2:17 and 18

Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by  
Jeremy the prophet, saying,  
In Rama was there a voice heard,  
lamentation, and weeping, and great  
mourning, Rachel weeping *for* her children,  
and would not be comforted, because they  
are not.

The birth of Jesus Christ involved extraordinary events  
with ordinary people. This young child grew from his  
humble beginnings to be man's redeemer. He started in a  
manger and is now ascended into heaven and seated at  
the right hand of God. This Jesus is the Christ, King of  
kings, and Lord of lords.





## *Temptation*

### CONQUERING SIN

**J**esus the Christ is the example for living a godly life. The instruction to "follow his steps" is specifically regarding the way he conquered the temptations to sin.

1 Peter 2:21 and 22

For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:

Throughout his life, he was constantly bombarded by the devil to disobey God's Word. The apex of these attacks was when he was tortured for 40 hours and crucified. As he hung dying on the cross from 9 a.m. until 3 p.m., he was continually taunted and tempted to sin. The rulers laughingly ridiculed him saying, "He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ..." (Luke 23:35). The soldiers mocked, saying, "...If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself" (Luke 23:37). For anyone else, the temptation to react spitefully against these torturers would have been overwhelming, but Christ resisted.

## Verse 23

Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed *himself* to him that judgeth righteously:

Our Lord endured what he did so that we could be dead to sin and live unto righteousness. Because of him, we can conquer sin.

## Verse 24

Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.

This study will be primarily devoted to studying the example Christ provided when contending with the devil in the beginning of his ministry. Before we delve into the record, viewing the first time sin is mentioned will be helpful to us.

Cain and Abel presented an offering to the Lord. Abel's was respected, while Cain's was not. As a result, Cain was very wroth. God lovingly intervened and gave Cain the opportunity to avoid sinning.

## Genesis 4:6 and 7

And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee *shall be* his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.

The Revised Standard Version, New American Standard Bible, and Living Bible respectively offer a much clearer translation of the latter part of verse 7.

Sin is couching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must master it.

Sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it.

Sin is waiting to attack you, longing to destroy you. But you can conquer it!

God told Cain two very important things: sin is knocking at your door, and **you can conquer it**. Cain made his choice, and now we must make ours. Every one of us, without exception, has the same conflict of the persistent temptation to sin, but we also have the encouragement that we can conquer it. At the onset of our study, it is necessary to acknowledge that God says we can conquer sin.

I Corinthians 10:13

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God *is* faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear *it*.

God always has a way for us to escape. Jesus Christ's example gives us the knowledge of how to conquer sin. Jesus was led by the spirit into the wilderness for forty days and forty nights during which time he fasted.

God's Word teaches that true fasting is an act of humility for the purpose of complete and utter focus upon God, of glorifying Him, and receiving His guidance,

instruction, or deliverance. The commencement of our Lord's ministry shows his complete devotion to his heavenly Father so that he could know and do His will.

After his days in the wilderness were completed, he was tempted by the devil. Throughout his ministry he was continually tempted, right up until he took his last breath on the cross. However, the temptations he faced when returning from the wilderness are highlighted in the Gospels and draw our attention for special consideration.

This record is important because it demonstrates our Lord's sinlessness and wisdom in standing against the devil. His response provides an example to follow when we are tempted. The temptations the devil used were presented in the craftiest of ways. They were and are fundamental to all his evil enticements. The specific details may be different from ours, but the primary intent is elementary to all.

We never have to face the devil directly as Jesus did. Only twice has this happened—with Eve and with Jesus. Eve was taken in; Jesus was not. The devil tempts us indirectly through our own thoughts, other people, situations, or circumstances. As we study how our Lord was victorious in his direct dealing with the devil, we can follow in his steps during our own less direct confrontational attacks.

## First Temptation

**If thou be the Son of God,  
command that these stones be made bread.**

Matthew 4:1-3

Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.

And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred.

And when the tempter came to him, he said,  
If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.

The one who tempted Jesus was the devil, also called "the tempter." In the Gospel of Luke, he is referred to as Satan. The tempter tempts people to sin through enticement or intimidation. He is always soliciting people to sin. However, he cannot make us sin, nor can God force us not to sin. Sin or obedience is always a freewill choice. The devil uses people, situations, and circumstances to entice us to sin, while God lovingly works within us to strengthen and guide us to live righteously. **The choice is always ours.**

The first time the devil is noted in the Bible provides us with insight about his nature and methodology.

Genesis 3:1

Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?

Notice the characteristic that God mentions first because it is the most significant. The devil is the most subtle. "Subtil" (*aruwm*) has two basic meanings: (1)mentally acute, highly skillful, ingenious and (2)crafty, cunning, and deceitful. His most powerful weapon is his subtlety. He is the master of illusion and the master of disguise.

An illusion is a false appearance designed to deceive or mislead. He convinced Eve, who lived in a perfect paradise, that she was lacking something. Through his deceitful, manipulative words, he easily swayed her to desire the fruit from the tree of good and evil. She already had good, so all he really offered was evil. He makes good to look evil and evil to look good.

His techniques are always the same but are very ingenious and deceitful. We do not see that which is really happening. For example, out of his bag of lies, he puts covetousness in front of us. Covetousness is the over-desire for money, possessions, etc. He will paint the most appealing, desirable image for our eyes to view and bait us to covet. The illusion is that you will be better off having the thing you covet. The reality is that coveting is sin, which is worse for you. Out of his bag of tricks, he places lust in our way. "If only you can do this, surely you will be happy and satisfied." If we take the bait, again we sin and end up sad and empty. Indeed, he is the master of illusion.

The tempter is also the master of disguise. He camouflages himself. He is hidden so we never think of evil or the adversary. His many disguises help us forget the all important truth, simply stated in Ephesians 6:12.

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood,  
but against principalities, against powers,  
against the rulers of the darkness of this  
world, against spiritual wickedness in high  
*places*.

When he was called the serpent in Genesis 3, it was to emphasize his subtlety, but not his appearance. Serpents are the most crafty of all animals. A snake moves in silence and under the cover of the terrain. He is often not noticed until he attacks his prey. The description of the serpent in Eden is provided in Ezekiel.

Ezekiel 28:12-14

...Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty.

Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone *was* thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created.

Thou *art* the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee *so*: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire.<sup>3</sup>

He was beautiful! He was anointed to be the guardian in Eden. His appearance to Eve was not of some disgusting snake but of a beautiful cherub. His appearance did not reveal the iniquity that was within him. As the master of disguise, he does not show the hideous ugliness that is his true reality. If his appearance ever revealed his true colors, no one would be deceived by him.

His attacks come to us from the world around us, other people, mass media, the environment, and situations. The influences are always aimed at our thought-life. Our

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<sup>3</sup> The New King James Version gives this rendering of verse 12, "...You *were* the seal of perfection, Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty."

thoughts always determine what we do. Eve's thought-life was attacked when the devil questioned God's Word. She began to consider what he said and eventually rejected God's Word.

As we recognize his mastery of illusion and disguise and the ease with which he deceived Eve who had a perfect mind, we realize he is too big for us. We must absolutely depend upon God Almighty to help us. In Him we have the victory, but not in ourselves. The first temptation illustrates the necessity of depending on God.

Matthew 4:3

And when the tempter came to him, he said,  
If thou be the Son of God, command that  
these stones be made bread.

The devil will exploit any potential weakness. Jesus was hungry, so the bait was food. He had a genuine need, and the great temptation he faced was to meet his own need without God—to be self-reliant rather than God-reliant.

The first word spoken, "if," was packed with subtlety, baiting Jesus to doubt himself as being the Son of God. Doubt can be a very destructive thought which will grow as a cancer if not eliminated. The devil tried to get him to question his own authenticity and God's. The essence of what he said was, "Prove to me you are the Son of God, turn this stone into bread." Whenever someone permits this trend of thought into his mind, he is already hooked and ready to be pulled in. We never need to prove ourselves or God to someone else, especially the devil. We do not prove that we are the sons of God; we believe we are the sons of God. We do not doubt God; we believe God. His Word is true, not our thoughts, nor someone else's opinion.

Verse 4

But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

To understand this temptation, we must understand the response Jesus gave. All the temptations were responded to with "**IT IS WRITTEN.**" Jesus never gave his own ideas or opinion, but he always quoted the Word of God. This first response was quoted from Deuteronomy; however, note that Deuteronomy refers back to Exodus 16.

The record takes place forty-five days after God led the children of Israel out of the horrendous Egyptian slavery and through the Red Sea. Only one and a half months after leaving Egypt and experiencing the miraculous deliverance of God, they began murmuring against Moses and Aaron because they were hungry.

Exodus 16:2 and 3

And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness:

And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, *and* when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger.

The food supply they took from Egypt was now gone. Hunger can be a point of great weakness and can motivate people to do some ugly things. Already we can see the similarity of this record and Matthew 4. However, these people had not been without food for forty days and nights.

Their hunger, just as Jesus', made them vulnerable for an attack. Unlike Jesus they succumbed to the temptation and spoke vile, offensive words to God.

When the necessities of life (food, shelter, daily provisions, security) are threatened, we are tempted to forsake God and go on our own. At the point of need, people try to provide for themselves instead of relying upon God. When doubt and fear arise about our well-being, we often will use any means to justify the ends. At this point of compromise, sin will begin knocking at our door and will offer the illusion of relief from the pain.

The Lord heard their murmuring.

#### Verse 4

Then said the LORD unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no.

The way in which God provided the bread from heaven and His instructions to gather it would prove whether or not they would obey His Word. God was going to help them see that obeying His Word was the best way of living.

#### Verse 5

And it shall come to pass, that on the sixth day they shall prepare *that* which they bring in; and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily.

God made special provision so they could maintain a Sabbath day unto Him. The instructions were specific and quite clear.

Verse 8

And Moses said, *This shall be*, when the LORD shall give you in the evening flesh to eat, and in the morning bread to the full; for that the LORD heareth your murmurings which ye murmur against him: and what *are* we? your murmurings *are* not against us, but against the LORD.

Their murmurings against Aaron and Moses were really murmurings against the Lord. A murmuring is a half-suppressed or muted complaint or grumbling. Usually the murmurer does not have the courage to address the one who is the object of his complaint. However, God heard them very clearly.

Verses 9-12

And Moses spake unto Aaron, Say unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, Come near before the LORD: for he hath heard your murmurings.

And it came to pass, as Aaron spake unto the whole congregation of the children of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and, behold, the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud.

And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel: speak unto them, saying, At even ye shall eat flesh, and in the morning ye shall be filled with bread; and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD your God.

They were going to experience God's provision, which would help them to "know that I am the Lord your God." We know that manna was provided every day for the forty

years they were in the wilderness.

Verses 13-15

And it came to pass, that at even the quails came up, and covered the camp: and in the morning the dew lay round about the host.

And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness *there lay* a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost on the ground.

And when the children of Israel saw *it*, they said one to another, *It is manna*: for they wist not what it *was*. And Moses said unto them, This *is* the bread which the LORD hath given you to eat.

They called the food "manna" which means "what is this" because they did not know what it was. Moses proceeded to give specific instructions from the Lord regarding the gathering of the manna.

Verses 16-19

This *is* the thing which the LORD hath commanded, Gather of it every man according to his eating, an omer for every man, *according to* the number of your persons; take ye every man for *them* which *are* in his tents.

And the children of Israel did so, and gathered, some more, some less.

And when they did mete *it* with an omer, he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack; they gathered every man according to his eating.

And Moses said, Let no man leave of it till the morning.

They did not obey but were greedy, which resulted in the food rotting.

Verses 20 and 21

Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto Moses; but some of them left of it until the morning, and it bred worms, and stank: and Moses was wroth with them.

And they gathered it every morning, every man according to his eating: and when the sun waxed hot, it melted.

On the sixth day, they did gather more as instructed, and the food did not rot because they obeyed the Word of the Lord. However, some went out on the seventh day to gather and found none. So they still did not keep God's commandments. God taught them great lessons with manna. He proved them and found out that they had unbelief, so He taught them. The manna showed them first and foremost that He was the Lord their God. It also taught them that God would provide for their every need, and He would do so daily. When they tried to provide for themselves, the food rotted. Each and every day of their lives, first thing in the morning, they experienced God's provision. Collecting the manna daily gave them opportunity to acknowledge their complete dependency upon God. Manna taught them humility—God is the Provider, not self.

Every man alive is absolutely dependent on God. Unfortunately most never realize this truth. The most adamant atheists in the world, the God rejecters, and God haters are also totally dependent upon God for He is the Provider of all life. If God decided to turn off the air valve,

within five minutes everyone on earth would be dead! If God said, "There is no more gravity," we would all float away! If God said, "No more water," we would all die of thirst! Every living soul is alive because of God; therefore we are all dependent upon Him. He Who supplies our physical needs is also willing to provide our emotional and spiritual needs. The extent to which we are humble and acknowledge our dependency on Him determines our true success in all of life. When we endeavor to provide for ourselves, things rot and stink, as manna did for Israel.

Manna was used to teach Israel in a loving, yet tangible and emphatic way, that God was the Provider. They were to be completely dependent on Him for their every need. This lesson was given daily!

This generation of Israel, which was brought up in pagan Egypt, did not know God and therefore did not trust and love Him. God helped them to learn humility which is not only the beginning of, but also essential to maintaining, a lasting relationship with God. Humility is the realization of one's total dependence and reliance upon God while he understands his own powerlessness and the unmanageableness of his life.

Manna also taught them to obey God because He meant what He said and said what He meant. Whenever they disobeyed His simple instruction, things rotted and stank. It taught them the Word of God was true, reliable, trustworthy, and the means by which God could sustain His people. If they would obey His Word, bread would never be an issue in their lives, even if they were a little hungry at times.

The generation which came out of Egypt was hard-hearted. Even with all that God did for them, they refused to obey His voice and love Him. Their rejection of God was their ruin. That whole generation died in the wilderness with the exception of two men—Joshua and Caleb. In Deuteronomy, which began the fortieth year and the

eleventh month after leaving Egypt, Moses taught the new generation the lessons God had started with their parents. Exodus is the record of Israel's first year in the wilderness, while Deuteronomy is their last year. Jesus Christ quoted from Deuteronomy.

Deuteronomy 8:1-3

All the commandments which I command thee this day shall ye observe to do, that ye may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the LORD sware unto your fathers.

And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, *and* to prove thee, to know what *was* in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no.

And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every *word* that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live.

Moses summarized the purpose for manna. When Jesus Christ quoted this verse to the devil, it was completely appropriate for the temptation he faced. The context of this verse was astoundingly relevant!

Verses 4-6

Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell, these forty years.

Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the LORD

thy God chasteneth thee.

Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to fear him.

Forty years earlier, Israel had been taught with manna to obey and reverence God. This whole generation did not learn the lesson, even though manna was there daily. The generation Moses was now addressing grew up eating manna. The only thing they ever knew was complete dependence upon God. They had watched their parents suffer because of disobeying God's commandments and were ready to obey. After they would go into the promised land, manna no longer would be provided, so Moses prepared them.

As the record progresses, God warned the people not to forget Him and the lessons of humility that they learned in the wilderness. The land they were about to enter was rich with water and crops. They would no longer need to depend on God's miracles for manna and water. When things are going well, the tendency of man is to forget that God is the reason for the good life. Moses' message was: do not forget.

When Jesus said, "It is written," he understood the full significance behind the one verse he quoted. The key issue was humility. Jesus Christ knew that if he would obey the Word of God, bread would always be provided by God. He understood that the devil was enticing him to be self-dependent. Knowing the history of Israel, Jesus understood that if he endeavored to be self-sufficient, the results would be rotten and stinky!

Matthew 4:3 and 4

And when the tempter came to him, he said,  
If thou be the Son of God, command that  
these stones be made bread.

But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

Later in his ministry, Jesus fed 5,000 people with two loaves and two fish; and another time he fed 4,000 people with seven loaves and a few fish. To turn these stones to bread seems to have been within his realm of possibility. However, the big difference that we see between feeding the multitudes and this incident was one of obeying God's command. God inspired him to feed the multitude. When Jesus said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God," he understood it to mean: "What God tells me to do is what I will do. God will provide."

The devil was tempting him to forsake God and be self-reliant, to do it on his own. The first temptation was aimed at the most fundamental principle to having a relationship with God—humility. To be self-dependent and self-reliant is also our constant temptation. We are enticed to meet our need with our own provision which ultimately rots and stinks. Humility is the beginning of our relationship with God and is absolutely necessary to maintain if we want a lasting fellowship with Him. When we think we can live life on our own, we reject God, just as Israel did in the wilderness.

Jesus Christ withstood the temptation. First and foremost, he was able to perceive that he was being tempted. Then, secondly, he went to God for His help. He did not try to wrestle the devil with his own intellect and power. He quoted God's Word and understood the full significance of the verse he used. He understood all that we have just read in Exodus and Deuteronomy. This was the method he employed which we, too, want to follow.

## Second Temptation

### **...If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down...**

The closer a counterfeit is to the original, the more difficult it becomes to distinguish it as such. The most successful forgery is the closest imitation. Children's play money (which is an imitation of the genuine) is never misunderstood for real money. Counterfeit money requires painstaking, detailed precision if it is to deceive people. Even biblically uninstructed people can perceive that murder, drunkenness, cocaine use, etc. are wrong. However, many people are tempted to tell "little white lies" or speak in a degrading manner of others.

The temptations the devil used with Jesus were very cunning because they were similar to the genuine. They were not obvious to the untrained eye.

By the way, those who are best at discerning counterfeit money are masters of the original. They know exactly what real money looks like. In the spiritual realm, we must study the genuine, the Scriptures, to be able to discern subtle enticements to sin. Remember, the devil is the master of illusion and disguise. Often the biggest challenge we face is discerning quickly that we are being tempted by the devil. A poison apple may look good on the outside, but inside it is deadly.

As we study this second temptation, we see once again that the underlying deception is common to us also. This particular temptation is so cleverly camouflaged that countless Christians have been deceived and, as a result, have given up on God.

Matthew 4:5-7

Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the

temple,  
And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of  
God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He  
shall give his angels charge concerning thee:  
and in *their* hands they shall bear thee up,  
lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a  
stone.  
Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou  
shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

Jesus gave a simple response which was pregnant with wisdom and understanding. Again he said, "**IT IS WRITTEN.**" His resistance was not in just quoting the verse, but in understanding and believing the entire concept. "If thou be the Son of God" again baited him to doubt himself and God. "Prove you are a son of God; prove God is really with you." God is never to be proved by devil-influenced circumstances. He is proved when we believe His Word.

As we view his response, we will better understand the temptation. The response is quoted from Deuteronomy where, once again, Moses is preparing Israel to enter the promised land.

Deuteronomy 6:3-5  
Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do *it*;  
that it may be well with thee, and that ye may  
increase mightily, as the LORD God of thy  
fathers hath promised thee, in the land that  
floweth with milk and honey.  
Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God *is* one  
LORD:  
And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with  
all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with  
all thy might.

The first thing to acknowledge is that the Lord our God is one Lord. The main priority of life is always to love the Lord thy God. The world provides many, many other things to busy the heart, soul, and might. The main thing is to keep the main thing, the main thing. The Lord God deserves our love, our all in all.

Verses 6 and 7

And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart:

And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

God's Word is to be at the center of our lives and conversations. When it is central, we are more able to keep God first.

Verses 8 and 9

And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes.

And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.

We are commanded to keep God's Word before our eyes so it can be in our minds. We are in a spiritual warfare with an adversary who is powerful and cunning. To resist him with our own might is suicidal. The Word of God is the great armor given to us which will help us not only to focus on God but also to rely upon Him for strength and wisdom. The devil's power and craftiness may be overwhelming for us but are minuscule to Almighty God.

Verses 10-13

And it shall be, when the LORD thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not,

And houses full of all good *things*, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not; when thou shalt have eaten and be full;

*Then* beware lest thou forget the LORD, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.

Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name.

Israel was being prepared to enter the promised land, a land flowing with milk and honey. God's exhortation was that once they had this abundance, they were not to forget the Lord. Also, they were absolutely not to follow false gods.

Verses 14-17

Ye shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the people which *are* round about you; (For the LORD thy God *is* a jealous God among you) lest the anger of the LORD thy God be kindled against thee, and destroy thee from off the face of the earth.

**Ye shall not tempt the LORD your God**, as ye tempted *him* in Massah.

Ye shall diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, and his testimonies, and his statutes, which he hath commanded thee.

The greater context of Jesus' quote was focused on keeping God first by holding His Word in mind and governing behavior accordingly.

To understand even more fully the significance of Jesus' quote, we must study Exodus to find out what "Massah" is. Deuteronomy often reflects back to Exodus and reminds the new generation what their fathers did wrong.

This incident took place shortly after God provided manna. As we saw with the first temptation, Israel murmured against the Lord because of hunger. Now they murmured again because they were thirsty.

Exodus 17:1 and 2

And all the congregation of the children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Sin, after their journeys, according to the commandment of the LORD, and pitched in Rephidim: and *there was* no water for the people to drink.

Wherefore the people did chide with Moses, and said, Give us water that we may drink. And Moses said unto them, Why chide ye with me? wherefore do ye tempt the LORD?

"Chide" means to have an adversarial attitude of complaining and quarreling. By chiding with Moses, they were tempting the Lord. They were doing two things wrong: tempting and provoking God.

Verses 3-7

And the people thirsted there for water; and the people murmured against Moses, and said, Wherefore *is* this *that* thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?

And Moses cried unto the LORD, saying, What shall I do unto this people? they be almost ready to stone me.

And the LORD said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go. Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.

And he called the name of the place **Massah**, and **Meribah**, because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the LORD, saying, Is the LORD among us, or not?

"Massah" means tempting God. "Meribah" means provoking God. They tempted the Lord by doubting His presence: "Is the Lord among us, or not?" Two months earlier they experienced the ten plagues, the parting of the Red Sea, a pillar of fire by night, and the cloud by day. As they spoke these words, their stomachs were still full with the manna from heaven, and the cloud stood above them. God had shown Himself in many glorious ways to them. They also had the promise of God that He would never leave them. Yet, they doubted God because of their problems.

Because they had a problem, they doubted whether the Almighty God really loved them and was truly with them. The circumstances influenced their confidence in God rather than their believing the Word spoken by God. God had said very emphatically and frequently, "I will be your God, you will be my people. I will not leave you. I will be

with you." Yet, with a little adversity (they were thirsty), they doubted the integrity and authenticity of God.

Christ was being tempted to prove God by some scheme dreamed up by the devil. He knew his responsibility was to believe God, not to tempt God with some fool-hardy plan.

While writing this section, within a 24 hour period, I counseled two people, independent of each other, who had been snared with this same temptation. The first gentleman came to me because he was struggling with a habitual sin. Through months of counseling, he had made significant progress. God's mercy, grace, and direction were very apparent. He was excited about the things of God and thankful. Recently he surrendered to the same sin again and, as a result, was feeling guilty, condemned, and distant from God. He expressed great doubt in his faith and even God's existence. "How come God does not help me to get out of this completely?" He was doing the same thing that Israel did at Massah and Meribah, tempting and provoking God.

The second person was in jail and was waiting for the red tape to be cleared up before he was finally released. He was convinced that God was going to get him out of jail that week. He had told everyone that he was leaving and had prepared everyone at home for his arrival. The essence of his prayer to God was, "If you release me by Friday, I will know You are really working with me." This prayer was a prescription for major pain and was tempting God. We do not tell God what He is to do—throw yourself off the pinnacle of the temple and see if God's angels will lift you up. Why should God have to prove Himself to us on our terms? Do we not breathe His air, eat His food, drink His water, warm ourselves with His sun? How come we do not believe that He exists? What is there to prove? The universe we live in is clear evidence to every soul that there is a God in heaven.

Man tells God what to do and doubts His existence when He does not respond as commanded! This is insane! God is not opposed to our proving Him; however, He tells us how to do it, for example with tithing.

Malachi 3:10

Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and **prove me** now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that *there shall not be room enough to receive it.*

We prove God by obeying His Word, not by telling Him to obey our word.

Romans 12:1 and 2

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is* your reasonable service.

And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, **that ye may prove** what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

As we renew our minds to God's Word and live accordingly, we prove His good, acceptable, and perfect will. We are to live for Him. We are not to tell Him to live for us. The temptations Jesus faced are indeed common to all mankind.

The circumstances in the wilderness caused Israel to doubt God. Good or bad circumstances have nothing to do with the promises of God. If God said it, that settles it. When He said to Israel, "I am with you," they should not have doubted regardless of hunger, thirst, or whatever.

The proper response would have been to rally together in prayer, asking for God's assistance. We should never use circumstances as the standard or measure to evaluate God or our relationship with Him. "I feel good today, so I must be in alignment with God." "I feel lousy today. I must be out of fellowship with God." Our feelings have nothing to do with the truth.

Israel's behavior at Massah and Meribah is an example of hardheartedness, one not to follow. The psalmist refers to it.

Psalms 95:7-11

For he *is* our God; and we *are* the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. To day if ye will hear his voice,

Harden not your heart, as in the **provocation** [Meribah], *and as in* the day of **temptation** [Massah] in the wilderness:

When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my work.

Forty years long was I grieved with *this* generation, and said, It *is* a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways:

Unto whom I swear in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest.

The Hebrew word translated "provocation" is the same translated as "Meribah," and the word "temptation" is the same as "Massah." Their hearts were hardened because they did not believe that the Lord God was real.

This same record is referred to in Hebrews chapter 3 with the encouragement to the Church not to be hard-hearted.

Hebrews 3:8,15

Harden not your hearts, as in the **provocation** [Meribah], in the day of **temptation** [Massah] in the wilderness:

While it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the **provocation** [Meribah].

Circumstances do not determine whether we are in or out of fellowship with God. For example, the Apostle Paul says in Philippians that he both was abased and had abounded. There were times in his life when he was financially destitute, but other times occurred when he had financial abundance. At both times, he was walking with God.

We must not allow circumstances to dictate whether God is real to us or whether we are in alignment with Him. Paul had been both in prison walking with God and a free man walking with God. In fact, when he was in prison, if he had looked at the circumstances and condemned or doubted himself, he would have never written many of the Church Epistles. They were penned while he was incarcerated.

Paul moved the Word of God throughout all Asia in two years and three months. However, II Timothy 1:15 says that all they who were in Asia turned away from him. Neither of these circumstances proved that Paul was with or without God. His state was based upon believing the Word and not on circumstances, situations, or people. Paul was whipped; he was beaten; he was shipwrecked. Yet he had many days when he was healthy and blessed. None of these situations was used as the standard, the criterion, to determine whether Paul was right with God—to do so would have been tempting God.

Right away, young believers are looking to see God at work in their lives, and that is good. However, they cannot allow that to be the standard to determine whether they believe God is real or if they are doing the right thing. The standard is the Word of God. We are to base our belief on God's Word, not on circumstances and situations. If we look to the circumstances for reassurance, we are on shaky ground. We will be led about by our noses!

Often, I have heard people say things like, "If God loves me, why am I sick?" "If God loves me, why do I have this problem?" Is this not the same temptation the devil used with Jesus? "If you are the son of God, cast yourself down from here, and see if God will lift you up." If we are sick from this day until the end of our lives, the reality that God is love does not change. God clearly states that He loves us—why doubt His integrity?

"If I am God's chosen, why is this happening to me?" That is another way of saying, "Why has God abandoned me?" "If God is real, then why did this person die?" Do not doubt God because somebody died! God is real. If you doubt God is real, then give back His air and stop breathing! All of this is the devil's temptation when we say, "Why did God allow this to happen to me?" We do the same thing that Israel did. "Why is there no water if God is real?" When we get these thoughts in our minds, we are already deceived.

Matthew 4:6

And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in *their* hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.

The devil used this quote from Psalm 91 in just the opposite way to that which it was intended. He took it out of context. He used it to tempt Jesus to prove his relationship with God and to determine whether or not God loved him. The emphasis of the psalm is for man to love and trust God, then God would take care of him. Certainly, it was not for the person to do some foolhardy act to prove God. The theme of the psalm is to love and worship God, then He would provide.

Psalms 91:3-9

Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, *and* from the noisome pestilence. He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth *shall be thy* shield and buckler.

Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; *nor* for the arrow *that* flieth by day; *Nor* for the pestilence *that* walketh in darkness; *nor* for the destruction *that* wasteth at noonday.

A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; *but* it shall not come nigh thee.

Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked.

Because thou hast made the LORD, *which is* my refuge, *even* the most High, thy habitation;

Our responsibility is to live in God. He will take care of everything else.

## Verses 10-16

There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.

For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.

They shall bear thee up in *their* hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.

Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet.

Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name.

He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I *will be* with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him.

With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation.

### Third Temptation

**...All these things will I give thee,  
if thou wilt fall down and worship me.**

As the temptations continue, they seem to intensify.

Matthew 4:8 and 9

Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them;

And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.

The third temptation is extremely enticing because the

offer seemingly accomplishes the exact purpose of Jesus' ministry. Moses and all the prophets spoke of the time of restoration, of regeneration, when the Christ will rule as King of kings. The recurrent theme of the Word of God is that the Kingdom of God will be established throughout the world. A renewed Jerusalem will be its capital, and the Messiah (Jesus) as God's agent will be the one to administer the ideal world government.

Since Jesus had a complete understanding of the Scriptures, he knew the prophecies about being the King.

Psalms 2:6-8

Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.

I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou *art* my Son; this day have I begotten thee.

Ask of me, and I shall give *thee* the heathen *for* thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth *for* thy possession.

When we read the Psalms which prophesy about these things, we understand that they are talking about the Christ. When Jesus read them, he also knew that they were talking about him!

Isaiah 2:3 and 4

And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall

beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

Jesus is the rightful heir to the throne of David according to God's Word. The devil offered him all the kingdoms of the world. Accepting this would be a seemingly easy way to inherit that which he knew would be his.

Isaiah 9:6 and 7

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

Of the increase of *his* government and peace *there shall be* no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

Daniel spoke very plainly about these matters as well. Perhaps what the devil was suggesting would be the way to bring it to pass.

Daniel 7:13 and 14

I saw in the night visions, and, behold, *one* like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him.

And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his

dominion *is* an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom *that* which shall not be destroyed.

Mary had been informed by the angel that Jesus would be the one to inherit the throne and rule the world. Surely she taught her son and helped prepare him for that day.

Luke 1:31-33

And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS.

He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:

And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

The devil offered him world dominion which would have fit with the prophecy about the King and Kingdom.

Psalms 72:8

He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth.

Daniel 2:44

And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, *but* it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.

Zechariah 9:10

And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim,

and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion *shall be* from sea *even* to sea, and from the river *even* to the ends of the earth.

Zechariah 14:9

And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one.

Jesus also had knowledge of the Scriptures that prophesied about his suffering and death. "They shall see my Servant beaten and bloodied, so disfigured one would scarcely know it was a person standing there" (Isaiah 52:14, Living Bible). The devil offered him an easy out from the horrendous torture and gruesome death which awaited him. All he seemingly had to do was worship the devil, and he could accomplish all that God wanted without all the pain. He could compromise for a moment, gain the kingdoms, then return to worshipping the true God!!! The bait was indeed very alluring, but it was coming from the father of lies. Jesus knew that the devil was the master of illusion and disguise. That which was being offered was an illusion. The real offer was sin and the complete destruction of God's plan of redemption. He would have lost the right to reign and the Kingdom forever.

Jesus knew that the most important aspect of life was to love and serve God. He would not sacrifice that for one moment (even with his fingers crossed behind his back as he tried to trick the devil). No one, not even Jesus, can play the devil's game and win. The devil will provide the illusion of supplying "the" thing that is most important to you, just so that you will sacrifice loving God.

As new Christians, our life with God is sweet. We experience major changes because we are being

transformed from death and hopelessness to life and great hope. Everything starts coming together because we are moving from darkness to light. Love, peace, and joy begin to replace hatred, sorrow, and anxiety. As we focus on God, things begin to cohere. Then "the" thing we always wanted comes along, and we think God is supplying our need. But in reality that very thing becomes a stumbling block.

For example, a single woman yearns for the right man. Finally, after she begins to walk with God, the "right man" seems to appear. The love boat pulls into the harbor. She becomes immersed in the romance of a lifetime only to forget completely about God. Shortly thereafter, the love boat becomes a shipwreck, and her new life with God is now a distant memory which occasionally causes a twinge of guilt.

Another example is that "the" job a man has longed for becomes available. Seemingly God has provided it for him, but in reality it is a deceitful gift from Satan because the job would require him to work the exact same hours as the Christian fellowship takes place. The job then replaces the time designated for God.

Perhaps the new Christian has a broken marriage, but after one gets involved with God, the spouse wants to reconcile. Good news, right? The only problem is that your spouse is not interested in God and wants your complete, attentive focus. This subtle temptation is designed to be a trade off: in exchange for the relationship that you always wanted relinquishing your devotion to God!

The more mature believer may be lured into this temptation in a more crafty way. In obedience to God's Word, we become involved in helping others to be reconciled back to God. Little by little, we become absorbed in helping people, which takes more and more of our time. Eventually the time we had devoted to be with God in meditation, prayer, or study is filled with ministering

to those in need. Once again we forsake our first love for a secondary purpose. Before long we become overwhelmed because we are doing God's work without His help. We then slip into hypocrisy. Before we know it, we are in hog country like the prodigal son.

Another trick can be when a concerned believer sees contention within the church and endeavors to be a peacemaker. His original intent is to eliminate division and strife. He becomes absorbed in helping those who have chosen to think and live carnally. Subtly, over a period of time, his thinking becomes buried in their carnal problems. Before long, he becomes burdened down, negative, and defeated. He has taken his eyes off God and placed them on man. To want to help others is a godly desire and an admirable pursuit, but never at the expense of our own relationship with God.

For Jesus, all the kingdoms of the world were not more important than keeping God first. We, too, should let everything else go like a helium balloon and focus our heart, love, and service on God. Jesus' temptation was to accomplish a godly mission by ungodly means, which would be impossible. Some think they can lie and accomplish godly results, not so. Others try to force or bait people into attending a Christian fellowship. Ministers coerce people into giving money to support their ministry, etc. We will never accomplish godly results with ungodly means.

Jesus' answer to the devil was, **"IT IS WRITTEN."**

Matthew 4:10

Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence,  
Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the  
Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

Jesus' response (like his others) started with: "It is written."

In the least common denominator, the devil desires for people to worship him. Apparently he has been very successful because, according to II Corinthians 4:4, he is the god of this age. Very few people consider themselves to be worshippers of Satan; however, many people have passion for a lot of things other than the one true God and put those things before Him.

Worship is not something we do for one hour on Sunday at church. This event may be a part of it, but only a small part. True worship is a lifestyle of humility, obedience, and reverence for God. That which is our primary focus and passion is that which we worship. For some, work is the object of worship; while for others, their family may be. Sports, television, relationships, money, drugs, etc. can all be objects of our worship. Worshipping anyone or anything in place of God is idolatry and indirect worship of the devil.

When Jesus responded, he was quoting from Deuteronomy chapter 6, which is the section we reviewed with the second temptation. Once more, the context of his quote must be acknowledged. Briefly stated below is an outline of that which was communicated in that chapter.

- Keep God's statutes and commandments. Obey Him!
- The Lord our God is one Lord.
- Love God with all your heart, soul, and might.
- Teach your children diligently.
- Focus continually on God's Word, so much so that it seems to be tattooed to your eyelids.
- Do not forget the Lord, even in the good times.

Deuteronomy 6 clearly communicates the principles that Jesus simply stated in Matthew 4.

Deuteronomy 6:13

Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name.

The word "fear" in the context means worship, as it is rendered in Matthew 4:10. When we adhere to these things, we will conquer sin. Jesus knew that if he compromised, he would not receive what the devil offered anyway. God had stated clearly His response to the worship of other gods.

Deuteronomy 6:14 and 15

Ye shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the people which *are* round about you; (For the LORD thy God *is* a jealous God among you) lest the anger of the LORD thy God be kindled against thee, and destroy thee from off the face of the earth.

### **Prayer**

When we view the Lord's mastery of life, how he always withstood temptation, it is hard not to feel inferior. However, we must learn to control our minds to think the more lofty thoughts of imitating the Lord's walk. We began this study by acknowledging two important points:

1. We are to follow in the steps of Christ when tempted to sin
2. God tells us we can conquer sin

We cannot help but admire our Lord's walk; nevertheless, let us not forget that he was able to walk as he did because he was completely dependent on God. His success was not due to his own ability, power, or thoughts,

but by complete humility. He clearly understood the Scriptures and lived by "IT IS WRITTEN."

The closest Jesus came to succumbing to temptation was not at the beginning of his ministry but rather at the end. He knew the time had come for him to suffer painful, humiliating torture, and then death by crucifixion. He was "sorrowful and very heavy;" therefore, he went into the garden and prayed.

Matthew 26:39, 42, 44

And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou *wilt*.

He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.

And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words.

Three times he prayed that if this cup (representing the suffering and death) could be passed, please let it be so. During this time of great tribulation and temptation, he went to God in prayer, and God strengthened him. Again we are given a great example that we can follow. Jesus told us to pray in like manner.

Matthew 6:9, 13

After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

Another very reassuring reality is that Jesus Christ has ascended into heaven and sits at God's right hand as our High Priest. He is able to succor them that are tempted.

Hebrews 2:18

For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.

"Succour" means to run to help upon hearing a cry, to give assistance. Our Lord will help us. We are told to come boldly to the throne of grace in our time of need.

Hebrews 4:15 and 16

For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as *we are*, yet without sin.

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

The Gospels do not show that he was confronted with the exact same situations with which others may be confronted (such as marriage, divorce, and raising children). His culture was much different than ours, so he was not faced with distractions such as television, internet, shopping malls, and other modern excesses. The specific circumstances may be different from what he experienced; however, the underlying temptations are all the same.

The first temptation shows pride as the issue. He was enticed to forsake humility and be self-reliant. The second temptation baited him to doubt himself and God by proving Him through some scheme dreamed up by the devil. His choice was to tempt God or have faith in Him. The third temptation was to accomplish godly results by using ungodly means. The devil tried to seduce Jesus into worshipping him in order to accomplish God's purpose. These are the basic temptations with which we all are confronted, although the specific details may be camouflaged in many, many ways.

I Corinthians 10:13

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God *is* faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear *it*.

God is always faithful to help us in our time of trouble. Sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, BUT YOU CAN CONQUER IT.



## *Teaching and Preaching*

**T**he teachings of Jesus Christ are built upon and in complete harmony with Moses and all the Old Testament prophets. His teachings are also consistent with and fundamental to that of the apostles in the New Testament. A harmonious, progressive theme is maintained throughout the Scriptures. The prophets, Jesus, and the apostles all remain faithful to the same theme and never contradict each other. This theme is simply stated in the Gospels as the Kingdom of God or the Kingdom of Heaven.<sup>4</sup>

The Gospels contain both the works and words of Jesus Christ. Both are vitally important and necessary to our understanding. We are not to elevate one aspect above the other. Yet, today there is a widely accepted theological system which acknowledges his works but dismisses his words. The thought is that his teachings were addressed to Israel, not the Christian Church and that the apostles' teachings are addressed to the Church and, as such, would

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<sup>4</sup> "Kingdom of God" and "Kingdom of Heaven" are synonymous. "Heaven" is figuratively used for God. Kingdom of Heaven is used only in the Gospel of Matthew. A comparison of Matthew with the identical records in the other Gospels proves that the phrases are interchangeable.

be more important.<sup>5</sup> Any dogma such as this must be shunned because I Timothy 6 clearly states that those who do not consent to the wholesome words of our Lord Jesus Christ are proud, knowing nothing, and sick about questions and strifes of words.... The words that he spoke were God's words (John 3:34). Those who hear and believe the words he spoke will have eternal life (John 5:24). Those who reject the words he spoke will be judged by those very same words in the last day (John 12:48). His words are the words of life! To not accept them is deadly.

Since there are four Gospels which record his teachings, this chapter can by no means begin to expound on all of them. Rather, a limited overview of some central topics is the aim.

## **The Kingdom of God**

Immediately following the temptations in the wilderness, Jesus began teaching and preaching the Kingdom of God.

Matthew 4:17 and 23

From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of

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<sup>5</sup> This system of theology is called dispensationalism. It is characterized by dividing the Bible into dispensations or administrations. The number of dispensations varies between four and seven, with most agreeing on seven. A dispensation is a period of time during which God deals with humans in a certain way. Each dispensation would stand on its own; hence the Bible would be segmented rather than being considered as one complete book.

sickness and all manner of disease among the people.

Wherever he went and whenever he spoke, the message was the same and that is the Gospel of the Kingdom. He spoke many truths in a variety of ways; however everything was focused on the same subject. The teaching and preaching of the Kingdom Gospel often preceded healing and miracles.

Matthew 9:35

And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.

When Jesus sent out the twelve apostles, he told them: "...go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 10:7). In like manner when he sent the seventy disciples, he said: "...say unto them, the Kingdom of God is come nigh unto you" (Luke 10:9).

The Sermon on the Mount, which is recorded in Matthew chapters 5-7, is our Lord's first major presentation. The very first topic taught was humility and its relationship to the Kingdom of Heaven.

Matthew 5:3

Blessed *are* the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

"Poor in spirit" is an idiomatic expression meaning humble. Man's relationship with God must start with an acknowledgment of his total dependency and reliance upon God. Jesus frequently taught humility in a variety of ways. The most graphic was when he placed an infant among the

disciples and said, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven; whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3 and 4). Babies are totally dependent upon their parents for everything. They cannot live on their own without help. Likewise, mankind is completely in need of God's help in everything.

Not only did Jesus teach humility, but he also required it from those he taught. When he preached to the multitudes, he most often did so in parables because they were not humble. Parables are hard to understand if the hearer does not have "eyes to see, and ears to hear." To those with the right humble attitude, he communicated the truth line by line, precept by precept, and not with parables. The sermon begins by setting the foundation of man's relationship with God and the necessary requirement for entrance into the Kingdom of God. However, as of yet no description of the Kingdom of God is presented.

With the third beatitude, "the meek shall inherit the earth," we begin to gain insight regarding the Kingdom of God.<sup>6</sup> "Meekness" is receptivity toward God and the things of God. It is acceptance of God's will without being argumentative and without stubborn resistance. This beatitude is a quote from Psalm 37. The recurring theme of the psalm is inheriting the land. Notice the many ways the psalmist communicates this promise: "Trust in the Lord...so shalt thou dwell in the land (verse 3), wait upon the Lord...shall inherit the earth (verse 9), meek shall inherit the earth (verse 11), blessed of him shall inherit the earth (verse 22), do good; and dwell for evermore (verse 27), the righteous shall inherit the land (verse 29), wait on the

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<sup>6</sup> The word "beatitude" comes from the Latin word "*beatus*" which means happy or perfect blessedness. Each of the beatitudes begin with the word "blessed" which expresses the proper attitude we are to hold.

Lord...to inherit the land (verse 34)."

This psalm is an example of that which is communicated from Genesis to Revelation, yet is commonly not understood or believed by most Christians today. The promise of inheriting the earth is one of the primary components of the Kingdom of God. When Jesus said that "the meek shall inherit the earth," he meant it literally. This teaching was not unique; quite the contrary, all the prophets and the apostles taught the same.

The first mention of the promise was in Genesis with Abraham. As Abraham's relationship with God developed, so did the promises and God's commitment to fulfill them.<sup>7</sup> God's original promise to Abraham regarding the land had no boundaries. God simply stated "this land." Later, the promise grew to include all the land that Abraham could see northward, southward, eastward, and westward. Subsequently, it grew again to include all the land between the Nile and Euphrates Rivers. After the sacrifice of Isaac, he was told that his seed would inherit the lands of their enemies. Romans 4:13 declares a great increase which includes the whole world, "For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world..." So, the final promise was that Abraham and his descendants would inherit the earth forever. (For further detail, see *The Foundation*, chapter 4, *Our Father Abraham*, by the same author.)

God also promised Abraham that he would have countless seed. God compared his seed to the dust of the earth (Genesis 13:16), the innumerable stars (Genesis 15:5; 22:17), and the sand of the seashore (Genesis 22:17). His offspring officially began with his son Isaac, followed by his grandson Jacob; both of whom God promised would inherit the earth (Genesis 26:3 and 4; 28:4; verses 13-15). However, Isaac had a brother named

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<sup>7</sup> Read Genesis 12-23 for more details.

Ishmael, and Jacob had a brother named Esau. Neither of these brothers are heirs of the promise; therefore, not all of Abraham's descendants are included. By the time of Jesus, the Abrahamic descendants had developed a prideful, arrogant assurance that they were the heirs of God's promise simply because of their biological connection. Jesus often confronted their hypocritical confidence. He said, "...If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham" (John 8:39). The genuine seed of Abraham was not clearly understood until God told Paul. Romans and Galatians make very plain that the children of Abraham are all those from among both Jew and Gentile who had faith. "Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham" (Galatians 3:7). "So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham" (verse 9). "If ye *be* Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (verse 29). The same promises which were given to Abraham are promised to those who have faith today. The true believers will inherit the earth.

For a relatively short period of time, Israel occupied part of the land promised. However, that occupation was by no means the complete fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham. It did not encompass the whole world, nor did it last forever. When Israel lost the land, the prophets spoke emphatically and frequently about the coming day when they will again inherit the Promised Land. This will happen in the regeneration when Christ returns.<sup>8</sup>

According to the prophets, when the Messiah returns, the earth will be changed in a most beautiful way. Eventually, it will return to Paradise. The regenerated earth is that which was promised to Abraham's seed. Jesus completely understood this and constantly taught the same.

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<sup>8</sup> Isaiah 32:18; 57:13; 60:21; 61:7; Jeremiah 3:18 and 19; 30:3.

The central theme of the Kingdom of God is that the believers will inherit the earth with Christ as King. The Apostle Paul who followed Jesus taught exactly the same thing (Acts 28:30 and 31).

What Jesus said as a simple statement of truth—"The meek shall inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5)—was understood by him and those he taught as a dominant part of the promised Kingdom of God. Yet, the prevailing Christian belief which is embraced by most today is that believers upon death go to heaven. The popular acceptance of this wrong doctrine clearly shows that the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ are not understood nor believed. It also demonstrates that tradition is accepted as truth above the Scriptures. Jesus never taught that when a person dies, he or she would go to heaven. He also never taught that anyone in the future would go to heaven. He taught that the true believers will inherit the earth and that they will live with him on the earth forevermore.

Throughout the Sermon on the Mount, which typifies all his teachings, the emphasis is on conducting our lives with respect to entering the Kingdom of God. Our disposition and behavior are to be governed in view of the coming Kingdom. Avoidance of evil and having loving actions are to be our way of life. Jesus provided insight to the moral part of the Mosaic Law and intensified its demands. "Ye have heard that it was said" is often followed with "but" and then more depth of understanding is given. He harvested the concepts of truth that Moses wrote and presented them with a more forceful clarity.

In Matthew 6, hypocrisy regarding compassionate deeds, praying, and fasting are confronted. The Lord's prayer, which is the most popular prayer among Christians, is set forth. Indeed this prayer is popular, but most often misunderstood. His Kingdom on earth is plainly stated. "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as *it is* in heaven...For thine is the kingdom...." This chapter also

dynamically emphasizes the importance of having our priorities straight. This current world is not to be our prevailing concern, but rather we are to seek wholeheartedly the Kingdom of God.

Matthew 6:33

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

## Faith and Obedience

Chapter 7 confronts us with the reality that the way to destruction is wide, while the way to life is narrow. Many and few will enter respectively. Not everyone who says, "Lord, Lord," will enter.

Matthew 7:21-23

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but **he that doeth the will of my Father** which is in heaven.

Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

Perhaps one of the reasons dispensational theology is so commonly accepted is that our Lord's teachings are very forceful, demanding, and confrontational. People who are not willing to change and obey the commands of the Lord can mask their unwillingness by hiding behind a dogma that

rules out his teachings. Those who conclude his teachings are not addressed to the Church can avoid compliance to their pointed "impositions." However, such reasoning may place its adherents in the position of hearing the Lord say, "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

Prophecy, casting out devils, and many wonderful works may seem impressive to man, but if they are not the result of obedience to the Father, our Lord is not impressed. We are absolutely required to know and do the will of God in order to enter the Kingdom.

John 5:24

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.

To Jesus, faith and obedience are inseparable, corresponding realities. If genuine faith exists, then of necessity the works of obedience are also present. He taught authoritatively and unyieldingly that we must obey the will of God. Hearing independent of doing is not enough to inherit life in the age to come.

John 8:51

Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep [*tereo* - retain and observe] my saying, he shall never see death.

The first commandment communicated in the Bible demonstrates that obedience to God is mandatory for everlasting life. Adam and Eve were expelled from Eden because they did not obey God's command. The last lesson communicated in the Bible is identical.

Revelation 22:14

Blessed *are* they that do his commandments,  
that they may have right to the tree of life,  
and may enter in through the gates into the  
city.

The Sermon on the Mount ends with the illustration of building houses upon two different foundations—rock and sand. Those who hear and do his Word have a solid foundation so that they shall prevail when the storms of life rage. Those who hear his sayings but fail to do them have a sandy foundation. Their destiny is destruction.

### **Saved by Grace**

Jesus completely understood that man's redemption and salvation would be provided only by the grace of God. At no time did he teach that man could be saved by his own works. The Old Testament Scriptures, of which he had total comprehension, reveal that he was to be the sacrificial lamb which would be presented as the sin offering for mankind. The whole purpose of his life was rooted in making the gift of salvation available.

John 1:17

For the law was given by Moses, *but* grace  
and truth came by Jesus Christ.

His conception was by God's grace; his birth was by God's grace; his entire life was by God's grace; his suffering, crucifixion, death, resurrection, and ascension were all by the grace of God. His soon-coming return will happen because of God's grace.

He understood grace. He taught grace, yet he also commanded obedience which indeed included works for

man. To some, grace and works are opposite, conflicting concepts. Verses in the Church Epistles seem to contradict the teaching of our Lord. For example, Ephesians 2:8 and 9 says, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."

Jesus clearly demanded works; so either he wrongly taught, things changed, or we have wrongly understood. Be well assured, Jesus understood the things that Ephesians teaches, or he would not have lived and died for us. So what is the answer?

John 3:16

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Love was God's motivation for giving His Son, and this gift was clearly by His grace alone. No one has ever deserved or could ever earn the gift of salvation. Man cannot save himself. God had to do it for him in the person of Jesus Christ. "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:7 and 8). Through Christ Jesus salvation is available as an indisputable, free gift to man.

When Christ returns, will all men be saved? The obvious answer is no, and the reason is that man has the responsibility to have faith in God and the redeeming work of Christ. Faith implies obedience. If Jesus is our Lord, then we must obey. However, faith and obedience do not make salvation available. Grace does. Faith and obedience are the necessary requirements to accept the gift that is offered by grace.

Jesus was, and is, God's way to provide eternal life for mankind. Jesus communicated in many illustrative ways that he was the source of life. He told Nicodemus, "That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:15). He declared to the multitude that he is the bread of life (John 6:35). To the disciples in the temple, he put forth that he is the light of life (John 8:12). As the good shepherd and the door to the sheepfold, he stated his destiny was to lay down his life for the sheep. He said, "...I am come that they might have life, and that they might have *it* more abundantly" (John 10:10). In order to reassure grieving Martha, he stated, "I am the resurrection, and the life..." (John 11:25).

Only through him can a man attain life in the age to come.<sup>9</sup> We must believe on him to receive this gift.

John 6:40

And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.

### **Entrance into the Kingdom**

Jesus consistently taught throughout his ministry that which was necessary to attain life in the age to come. What he taught is still true today. The apostles, who followed after him and wrote much of the New Testament, fully concurred with his teachings.

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<sup>9</sup> Both the words "eternal" and "everlasting" derive from the same Greek word, *aionios*. "Ages" is a more accurate translation of *aionios*. With the word "life," it can be translated "ages' life" or "life in the age to come" and always refers to the life which will begin with Christ's return and the resurrection of the dead.

When the young man asked Jesus, "What must I do to inherit eternal life," the response was to keep the commandments. He also told him to rid himself of the one thing that prevented him from wholeheartedly following Jesus. For this young man, it was his riches. Again, the response to this all-important question was: obey the commandments, and follow me.

A lawyer asked a similar question to which Jesus responded by saying, "Love the Lord thy God...and thy neighbor as thyself." In Matthew 25, Jesus prophesied of what will happen when everyone is judged. Those who have obeyed God's Word and lived lovingly will be rewarded with life, and those who have not obeyed will receive everlasting punishment.

Jesus taught that we are to surrender selfish worldly concerns for life in the age to come.

John 12:25

He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.

To acknowledge another vital point Jesus taught, we will review two verses already discussed.

John 5:24

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.

Hearing and believing denote the conditions determining the promise of everlasting life and deliverance from condemnation. The hearing and believing are not the act of a moment but an ongoing reality. Young's

Translation communicates well: "...He who is hearing my word, and is believing Him who sent me...." Habitual hearing and believing is required. No way should we conclude from our Lord's teachings that to be saved by grace implies that man has no responsibility to govern his behavior beyond a onetime acceptance of the resurrected Christ as Lord. Yet, many Christians believe this way.

John 8:51

Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep [tereo - observe and retain] my saying, he shall never see death.

The word "keep" has two aspects: 1) to observe or obey and 2) to retain or hold continually. Jesus clearly and simply defines discipleship.

John 8:31 and 32

...If ye continue in my word, *then* are ye my disciples indeed;  
And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

"If ye continue in my word, then...." If we do not continue, we are not his disciples. The Scriptures never teach that a person receives the gift of eternal life through a one-time act that is forever irrevocable. Quite to the contrary, our Lord taught that discipleship requires habitually hearing and obeying his word.

During the last supper, Jesus painted a clear picture of the relationship we must maintain with him in order to bear fruit now and in the age to come.

John 15:1-6

I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.

Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every *branch* that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.

Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.

I am the vine, ye *are* the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast *them* into the fire, and they are burned.

To have a belief in and relationship with the Lord at one point in time does not ensure a continuous relationship with him, nor does it guarantee eternal life. The branch, representing the believer, must continue to abide in the vine, representing Christ. If we do not abide, we will be cut off and burned. If we abide, we will produce fruit, the greatest of which is everlasting life.

The teachings of our Lord and the demands of the Kingdom are all-encompassing. Discipleship requires the Lord to be first above everyone else.

Luke 14:25 and 26

And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them, If any *man* come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children,

and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.

Discipleship also demands taking the responsibility of obeying the master.

Verse 27

And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.

"Bear his cross" was an expression of the time which meant to accept the responsibility of the commitment, to obey the master's will above one's own. We must do what he wants, not what we want. Christ insists upon these requirements, or we cannot be his disciples.

Verses 28-33

For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have *sufficient* to finish *it*?

Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish *it*, all that behold *it* begin to mock him,

Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish.

Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand?

Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace.

So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.

## **The Coming Kingdom**

Since Jesus so often spoke regarding the coming Kingdom and the disciples believed that he was the King, it was natural for them to ask when the Kingdom would come. The response that he gave provides the most comprehensive summary of the end times found in the Scriptures (Matthew 24). His teaching was in complete harmony with the prophets that came before him and the apostles who wrote after him. Although the prophets, Jesus, and the apostles all agreed, many today do not!<sup>10</sup>

The Scriptures teach that there will be two resurrections. When Christ returns, the just will be resurrected and those who are alive will be changed. Then there will be a one thousand year reign of Christ with the saints. Jerusalem will be the capital city for this new world government. At the end of this millennium, the resurrection of the unjust will occur as well as the final judgments. All evil will be completely annihilated, and, in the end, Paradise will prevail forever. The seven years before Christ's return are described as a time of great tribulation. Jesus outlined the many things which would transpire such as persecution against the Church, many turning away, many false prophets, iniquity abounding while love waxes cold, and the catastrophic destruction of Judea followed by his very obvious return.

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<sup>10</sup> A commonly accepted doctrine is that there is an "any moment" gathering of the Church before the tribulation. This doctrine, called "pre-tribulationism," began in about 1830 and has grown to be prevalent today.

**Matthew 24:29 and 30**

Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:

And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

After his resurrection and before his ascension, he continued to teach his disciples the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God (Acts 1:3). The disciples, sensing his departure, asked an important question: "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the Kingdom to Israel?" His response was the closing teaching of his earthly ministry and a fitting place to end this chapter.

**Acts 1:7 and 8**

And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.

But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

We are commissioned to carry on the ministry that he began and will finish when he returns. To be effective witnesses unto him and to understand his teaching, we must study the Gospels. Our message must be in harmony with his if we are to represent him accurately to the world.



## *Parables*

**W**hen Jesus spoke to the multitudes, he often did so with parables. His disciples asked him why? His response is somewhat surprising, if not shocking. Most often, the aim of communication is to impart understanding to the listener. Yet, this is not the reason he used parables.

Matthew 13:11-13

He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.

For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.

The disciples were considered worthy to receive straightforward teaching because they had eyes to see and ears to hear. Disciple, by definition, is one who believes in and follows the teaching of the teacher. The multitudes were curiosity seekers, that is, they were those desiring to know some new or strange thing without any intention of

accepting and following. Jesus did not court the multitudes. If they were not willing to repent and conform, he was not willing to give them the treasures of God's Word. He never handled people with kid gloves, indulging their carnal desires so as to get large numbers to follow him. Quite to the contrary, he often was confrontational which drove the multitudes away. Jesus practiced what he taught in the Sermon on the Mount: "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you" (Matthew 7:6).

Jesus understood that Isaiah's prophecy was applicable to the multitudes to whom he spoke.

Verses 14 and 15

And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive:

For this people's heart is waxed gross, and *their* ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with *their* eyes, and hear with *their* ears, and should understand with *their* heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.

Conversion and healing are the result of hearing, seeing, and understanding the Word of God.

The word "parable" literally means a placing of one thing by the side of another, a comparison. Grammatically, a parable is an extended simile. A simile is a figure of speech in which something literal is compared to something else. The words "like" or "as" usually introduce both a simile and a parable. With the parables, Jesus placed things commonly understood alongside a spiritual principle,

and, as we have already noted, the meaning was often difficult to grasp.

The parable of the seed and the sower is written in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. It is the first recorded, and, according to our Lord, it must also be the first understood.

Mark 4:13

And he said unto them, Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables?

Although the multitudes never understood, we can do so because the disciples asked him for an explanation. However, we too must hear with the right attitude of heart, or the understanding will be missed. Since this parable is essential to comprehending all parables, we will take the time to review it.

Matthew 13:5-8

Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth:

And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.

And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them:

But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.

Without the Lord's explanation, one can only guess the meaning of this parable. Guessing is never a proper method for understanding the Scriptures. If we continue to

read Matthew while comparing Mark and Luke for additional information, we can gain the full understanding.

Verses 18 and 19

Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower.  
When any one heareth the word of the kingdom....

Mark and Luke inform us that the sower's seed is the Word of God, while Matthew states it is the Word of the Kingdom. Therefore, the Word of the Kingdom is the Word of God. Everyone who hears the Word of the Kingdom falls into one of four categories. This parable shows the four responses. Once again, our attention is drawn to the theme of the Scriptures: the Kingdom of God.

Verse 19

When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth *it* not, then cometh the wicked *one*, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side.

In Matthew, he is called "the wicked one;" in Mark, "Satan;" and in Luke, "the devil." This provides three descriptive titles for man's adversary. His aim is always the same—stealing the Word of the Kingdom lest people believe and are saved. The first category would have applied to the vast majority of the multitude who first heard the parable. Luke makes a very important point to acknowledge—"taketh away the Word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved." The Word of the Kingdom must be believed in order for one to be saved.

Merely hearing the Word is not enough for one to be saved; one must also maintain obedience to it.

Verses 20 and 21

But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.

Joy is often the response when a person learns about God's coming Kingdom. The promise of a new life with the resurrection and living in a regenerated earth with our Lord and God is indeed exciting and joy inspiring. However, the requirements of the Gospel are not easy to maintain because we are told often that acceptance of them will also ensure difficulties in this evil world. Matthew states there will be tribulation or persecution because of the Word; Mark says "when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake," and Luke adds "in time of temptation." The walk is indeed difficult and requires tenacious determination and faithful endurance. Many give up and thereby forfeit sustained joy and salvation in the end.

Verse 22

He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.

As weeds choke the life from healthy plants, so will the many distractions of the world choke the Word of God from those who do not persevere. Mark adds "lusts" to the

deceitfulness of riches. Riches and lusts are both deceitful because they seemingly promise good, but they ultimately deliver evil. Luke says "are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of *this* life." Our constant temptation is to live for this life while ignoring the Kingdom to come. However, in order for us to be saved, the opposite must happen. All that this life offers is nothing in comparison with life in the age to come. If we are not watchful and diligent, the Word of the Kingdom will be choked out of us.

Verse 23

But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth *it*; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

Praise God that there is a fourth category—the good ground. The book of Luke provides the most detail regarding the good ground.

Luke 8:15

But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep *it*, and bring forth fruit with patience.

The only suitable ground that will yield fruit is an honest and good heart. Those who hear the Word and keep it have such a heart.

In the first three categories, fruit was not produced since the hearers did not endure. In the fourth, fruit was produced because the hearers did maintain the Word they heard.

Agriculture is again compared to the Kingdom of Heaven in the next parable in Matthew. It is commonly called the parable of the tares. The farmer sowed good seed in his field. While he slept, his enemy sowed tares (an injurious weed) in the same field. He decided to allow both to grow together so as not to destroy the good while eliminating the evil. At harvest time, the wheat was saved, and the tares burned (Matthew 13:24-30).

After Jesus sent the multitude away, the disciples asked him to explain the parable. His explanation makes the parable very clear and easy to understand. Without his help, we would be left to our own opinion and conjecture which undoubtedly would be wrong.

Matthew 13:37-43

He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man;  
The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked *one*;

The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels.

As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world.

The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity;

And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

Do we have ears to hear? In the end, everyone will be judged. All that offend will be burned, and the righteous will shine forth in His Kingdom. Jesus' teachings forced people to focus on the coming Kingdom and to conduct their lives accordingly. His central point of attention was the age to come, and he shunned self-centered, worldly living because its end is destruction.

The next parable to consider is brief but powerful. The Kingdom of Heaven is compared to a mustard seed.

Verses 31 and 32

Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field:

Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.

A mustard seed is very small but grows into a very large tree. The little seed is considered to be an insignificant object but grows to be very significant. The Kingdom of Heaven is now in its seed form and has little influence on people and the world. Yet, when the seed is grown to full maturity, it will completely influence every human (both dead and alive) and the entire world. Christ partially reigns in the hearts of a few believers today, but at that time he will reign over all.

A second application of this parable relates to each

believer right now. When the Word of the Kingdom is first received, it may have limited impact. However, as the believer continues to grow and believe, it will eventually have an all-encompassing, pervasive effect on every aspect of his life.

Another brief, forceful parable follows this one and has a similar point.

Verse 33

Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.

Leaven, though very small in quantity, has influences which thoroughly pervade the whole. When Christ returns, the Kingdom of Heaven will also spread through and transform all. If we heed the Word of the Kingdom today, we will experience this leavening effect.

Verse 44

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.

Jesus never compromised the demanding standard required to walk with God and to receive entrance into the Kingdom. God wants our all! Jesus often stated in a variety of ways that whosoever will save his life shall lose it, and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. Again, this simple parable shows that the Kingdom of Heaven is worth everything.

Verses 45 and 46

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls:  
Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.

If we truly believe in the Kingdom of Heaven, then we must be willing to depart with everything for its sake. Again, Jesus is unyielding in his demands. Christianity is by no means to be one of many activities of our busy lives. Our relationship with God is to be central and the priority over everything else.

Verses 47-50

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind:  
Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away.  
So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just,  
And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

"Wailing and gnashing of teeth" is an expression used to denote extreme anguish and utter despair. Jesus did not beat around the bush. He was powerfully direct with intense weightiness when he set before us the events that will happen in the end.

Superficial religion is shattered by his sobering words. He wasted no time in teaching matters of any less importance than the Kingdom of God. What he taught and

how he taught are immeasurably far from the teaching of most who now profess to speak on his behalf.

Many more parables are communicated in Matthew and the other Gospels. A comprehensive study will reveal important information about the Kingdom of God. As you study, keep in mind the lessons imparted from the first parable of the sower and the seed.



## *Jesus the Christ*

**T**he four Gospels reveal everything that God wants us to know about our Lord's ministry from his genealogy to his postresurrection appearances. In this chapter, we will focus on two major Messianic aspects. First, he fulfilled all the Messianic prophecies regarding his first coming and certified that he is the Christ. Second, much of the things that he did are a sample of what he will do when he returns and reigns as King.

To illustrate, Isaiah 35 states: "...he [Messiah] will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame *man* leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing...." Jesus healed the blind, deaf, lame, and dumb and thus showed himself to be the Christ. The prophecy in Isaiah is specifically regarding his reign in God's future Kingdom. Therefore, these healings recorded in the Gospels are a type for that which will happen in the future. The same twofold pattern will be evident throughout this chapter. However, defining the word "Christ" must come first.

## Christ—Messiah

"Christ" means anointed. Our Lord's name is Jesus, and his title is Christ. In the Aramaic-English Interlinear New Testament, the article "the" always appears before "Christ." Therefore, the accurate translation for the manner in which our Lord should be addressed, or at least thought of, is "Jesus **the Christ**."

The first mention of anointing in the Scriptures is related to the priests. The high priest was a type for Jesus the Christ. While Moses was on Mount Sinai, God explained in detail the office of the high priest and designated this responsibility to Aaron, Moses' brother, and his children. The word "priest" (Hebrew - *kohen*) means one who officiates. The priests officiated over the service of the tabernacle and, later, the temple. They represented the people to God and offered the various sacrifices presented in the Law. God graciously provided the office of the priest so that the people, cut off from Him because of their sin, could have access to Him. In a forthcoming chapter, we will review the high priest in even more detail.

The king of Israel was the second significant anointing that was a type for Jesus the Christ. David was the one whom God selected to be king.

Samuel, the prophet, was told by God to go to the house of Jesse and anoint one of his sons. Jesse presented Eliab, his oldest son, to Samuel, and the prophet thought he was the one. He said, "Surely the LORD's anointed *is* before him." The word "anointed" is translated from the Hebrew word *mashiyach* which is also translated as Messiah elsewhere. "Anointed" and "Messiah" are synonymous. In the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament), it is the word *Christos* which is transliterated into the English word "Christ." "Anointed" is also synonymous with Christ; therefore, Christ and Messiah

are the same. The Gospel of John acknowledges this fact: "...We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ" (John 1:41).

The chosen one was not Eliab, but rather Jesse's youngest son, David. Samuel anointed David to be king over Israel (I Samuel 16:12 and 13). David was the Lord's anointed, the Lord's Christ, the one destined to be the king of Israel. God considered Israel to be His people and His Kingdom. Therefore, as king, David ruled over God's Kingdom here on earth. King David, the Lord's anointed, is viewed throughout the Scriptures as the type for the Christ who also will rule over God's Kingdom which will encompass the world.

I Chronicles 28:4 and 5

Howbeit the LORD God of Israel chose me before all the house of my father to be king over Israel for ever: for he hath chosen Judah *to be* the ruler; and of the house of Judah, the house of my father; and among the sons of my father he liked me to make me king over all Israel:

And of all my sons, (for the LORD hath given me many sons,) he hath chosen Solomon my son to sit upon **the throne of the kingdom of the LORD** over Israel.

The throne which David and his descendants sat upon was called the throne of the Kingdom of the Lord or the throne of the Lord (I Chronicles 29:23) because the king was to implement God's will in ruling His people. God promised David that the throne of the Kingdom would be established forever through his seed. He also said, "I will be his father, and he shall be my son..." (I Chronicles 17:11-14). A descendant of David would be "the" Christ.

Throughout the remainder of the Hebrew Scriptures, the Hope of Israel is wrapped around the coming Messiah who would sit on the throne of David.<sup>11</sup>

The angel Gabriel informed Mary that the child she was to bear was the Christ who would sit on the throne of his father David.

Luke 1:31-33

And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS.

He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:

And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

The high priest and the king were both anointed and, as such, served as types for the Christ. However, the men who filled these responsibilities did not remain faithful to God. Sin and ungodliness were common and greatly tarnished the clarity of the type which was in representation. The ungodly evolution spun so far from godliness that, by the time of Jesus, murderous, psychopathic Caiaphas was the high priest; and pathetic, unbelieving Herod was the king. These two "anointed ones" were the primary evildoers responsible for the suffering and crucifixion of Jesus Christ. They were the last to serve in those offices before God's anointed High Priest and King, Jesus the Christ.

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<sup>11</sup> See Isaiah 9:7; 16:5; 22:22; Jeremiah 23:5; 30:9; 33:15; Ezekiel 34:23 and 24; 37:24 and 25; Hosea 3:5; Acts 2:29 and 30.

## Prophecy Fulfilled

Moses and all the prophets spoke often regarding the Messiah. They communicated many details about what he would do and say. Before the Messiah was born, these Scriptures provided an intricate, complex blueprint so that there would be a standard to compare and determine the authenticity of the Christ. Although the four Gospels do not chronicle everything Jesus did and said, they do declare that which is necessary to determine that he is the Christ. Matthew made it easy to compare Jesus to the prophecies by referring back to the prophets.

- 1:18-23 The virgin birth and his name Emmanuel were prophesied in Isaiah 7:14.
- 2:5 Jesus' birth in Bethlehem in the land of Judah was fulfilled from Micah 5:2.
- 2:15 When Joseph took Mary and the baby Jesus into Egypt, he completed the prophecy received in Hosea 11:1.
- 2:16-18 The suffering in Bethlehem when Herod murdered the children was foretold in Jeremiah 31:15.
- 2:19-23 After Herod's death Joseph brought his family back to Israel and settled in a city called Nazareth which complied with the prophecy in Isaiah 11:1.<sup>12</sup>
- 4:12-16 Jesus moved to Capernaum, which is near the borders of Zebulun and Nephtali, as was foretold in Isaiah 9:1 and 2.

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<sup>12</sup> Most biblical scholars believe Matthew is referring to Isaiah 11:1 although Nazareth is not stated. Jesse, David's father, and David lived in Nazareth. Jesus was a descendant of David.

- 8:17 While in Peter's house, he healed all that were sick and fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah 53:4 [griefs=sicknesses].
- 12:14-21 Jesus' ministry is documented and complements the prophecy in Isaiah 42:1-3.
- 13:34-35 Jesus spoke to the multitudes in parables as the psalmist said he would (recorded in Psalms 78:2).
- 21:1-5 When he rode into Jerusalem upon the ass, the revelation of Zechariah 9:9 was fulfilled.
- 26:47-54 In the garden, he surrendered to the soldiers as a lamb led to the slaughter and completed Isaiah 53.
- 27:3-10 Even the thirty pieces of silver given to Judas and later used to buy the potter's field were prerecorded in Zechariah 11:12 and 13.

These twelve records give conclusive testimony that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. But there is much more for us to consider.

### **The Word and the Messiah**

The Gospel of John was written specifically to declare that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

John 20:30 and 31

And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book:

But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

The Gospel began by showing the absolute sovereignty of God and the significance of His Word. By His words in the beginning, God spoke creation into existence. The Word was with Him in the beginning. He sent His Word into the world at various times and in many manners by the prophets, yet the world knew Him not. However, He determined to have the Word become flesh in the person of His only begotten Son.

John 1:13 and 14

Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

Jesus always did the will of God, and he always spoke the Word of God; therefore, he was the Word in the flesh. His relationship with God was one of perfect unity because he was always obedient.

Verse 18

No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared *him*.

He made known the Father more explicitly than ever before. Since everything he did and everything he said

were what God wanted done and said, he was the Word of God incarnate. God is much bigger than our limited minds can comprehend. He inhabits eternity (Isaiah 57:15). The heaven of heavens cannot contain Him (I Kings 8:27). God is eternal because He is, was, and is to come (Revelation 4:8). He created all things (Revelation 4:11).

When the Son is compared to the Father, a vast difference can be easily recognized unless we have an unyielding, predisposed belief. By no means can we conclude from the writings of John that Jesus is God. Yet, the cornerstone doctrine of modern Christianity is the trinity, which is three persons in one God.<sup>13</sup>

Jesus was born; therefore, he had a beginning. God is eternal; therefore He has no beginning. Jesus is the Son of God. God is his Father. Nowhere in John, or the entire

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<sup>13</sup> According to the *Encyclopedia Britannica 2002 Deluxe Edition*, "Neither the word 'Trinity' nor that explicit doctrine appears in the New Testament, nor did Jesus and his followers contradict the Shema (the Jewish confession of faith) in the Old Testament in Deuteronomy 6:4: 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord.'

The doctrine developed gradually over several centuries and through many controversies. Initially, both the requirements of monotheism inherited from the Old Testament and the implications of the need to interpret the biblical teaching to Greco-Roman religions seemed to demand that the divine in Christ as the Word, or Logos, be interpreted as subordinate to the Supreme Being. An alternative solution was to interpret Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as three modes of the self-disclosure of the one God but not as distinct within the being of God itself. The first tendency recognized the distinctness among the three, but at the cost of their equality and hence of their unity (subordinationism); the second came to terms with their unity, but at the cost of their distinctness as "persons" (modalism). **It was not until the 4<sup>th</sup> century that the distinctness of the three and their unity were brought together in a single orthodox doctrine of one essence and three persons.**

The Council of Nicaea in 325 stated the crucial formula for that doctrine in its confession that the Son is "of the same substance [*homoousios*] as the Father," even though very little is said about the Holy Spirit. Over the next half century, Athanasius defended and refined the Nicene formula, and, by the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, under the leadership of Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory of Nazianzus (the Cappodocian Fathers), the doctrine of the Trinity took substantially the form it has maintained ever since."

Bible, is Jesus referred to as God the Son or as Jesus the Father. Jesus was born a man with definite limitations of space and time, but God is beyond space and time. Jesus was created. God is the Creator. Jesus is the sent one, and God is the One Who sent him.

Contained within the Law of Moses is all the necessary information to govern a nation as a theocracy (a government recognizing God as the supreme civil ruler). The king was God's chosen, delegated authority over the kingdom. It was absolutely essential for the king, as God's representative, to know and obey God's Word. He was to judge the people according to God's Word and not by his own intellect or opinion. The requirements for the king are outlined in Deuteronomy 17 with specific emphasis placed on knowing the Word of God.

Deuteronomy 17:18 and 19

And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of *that which is* before the priests the Levites:

And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them:

Every king in Israel's history fell short of this noble standard. However the prophets teach that when Christ sits on the throne of David, he will rule the world righteously by the power of God's Word. He will be God's perfect representative on earth because he will always obey and speak God's Word.

The manner in which Jesus of Nazareth lived gave positive, unquestionable proof that he was the Christ. He

maintained perfect oneness with God by always doing and speaking his Father's Word.

John 3:34

For he [Jesus the Christ] whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure *unto him*.

The spirit was not given to Jesus by measure which is why every utterance he spoke was the Word of God. Every other prophet was given the spirit by measure and thereby spoke God's Word only intermittently. Every time Jesus spoke, it was God's Word. Jesus is the Christ! He is the only one qualified to be the monarch of God's Kingdom on earth.

John 4:34

Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.

Jesus considered doing the will of God essential food for his life. He understood that God sent him to do His work. His entire life was dedicated to completing the work of God. When he hung dying on the cross, the work was finally done; and therefore he said, "It is finished." God will send him again at the end of the age—this time to do the work of the King of kings.

John 5:19

Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.

John 6:38

For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.

His humble attitude and willing obedience resulted in a harmonious relationship with God. A dominant theme within the Gospel of John is that of Jesus' willing subordination to God. To suggest that Jesus is God would make subordination senseless and meaningless. God is the Supreme Ruler over all heaven and earth. In the age to come, Jesus the Christ will be King here on earth, but God will remain over all.

John 6:63

It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, *they* are spirit, and *they* are life.

Jesus' words were powerful because they were actually God's Words.

John 14:10

...the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.

Both the words and the works were the Father's.

John 17: 8, 14

For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me....

I have given them thy word....

Jesus gave his disciples God's Word. He constantly taught those who hungered to know. When he sits on the throne of David in Jerusalem, he will again teach God's Word, but this time to the world.

Isaiah 2:3

And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

Micah 4:2

And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

While Jesus was here on earth, he did not sit on David's throne but did show that he fulfilled all the requirements outlined in Deuteronomy 17. He knew God's Word, did God's Word, spoke God's Word, and did so perfectly. When God raised him from the dead, He gave him a new life equipped with even more spiritual abilities which qualify him to reign as the Christ in the age to come.

The words he spoke are those required to believe in order to be with him in the coming Kingdom.

John 12:47-50

And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.

He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.

For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak.

And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak.

## Judging

The responsibility of Israel's monarch was to govern the people with righteous, equitable judgment. David, Solomon, and a few other kings reigned in a godly fashion, howbeit not perfectly. However, for the most part, the kings judged according to their own ability, separate from God's wisdom, and thereby caused the kingdom to suffer greatly. Eventually, Israel lost the kingdom. The prophets gave Israel hope that the coming Messiah would rule rightly.

Isaiah 11:1-5

And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots:

And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding,

the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD; And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears:

But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.

And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins.

Jeremiah 23:5

Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.

Jesus showed himself to be the stem of Jesse, the righteous Branch, because his judgments were always righteous. Responding to those who persecuted him for healing the impotent man on the Sabbath day, he again made clear the work he did was that which the Father wanted done.

John 5:17

But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.

In this section of Scripture, the relationship of Jesus to God is clearly set forth. He is the Son, and God is his Father. As the Son, he always was completely faithful to doing the will of his Father.

## Verse 18

Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.

The Jews took issue with him because he declared his truthful relationship with God. Had he said that he was God, the Jews would have laughed him to scorn. A human god is nowhere to be found in the Scriptures, but rather in Greek mythology. Jesus never referred to himself as God, because he was not God. Had he said he was God, he no longer could have been man's redeemer because the first commandment would have been broken.<sup>14</sup> To be the redeemer, he had to remain sinless.

## Verse 19

Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.

Once more Jesus stated the subordinate relationship he constantly maintained with God. His humble, obedient attitude qualified him to make righteous, godly judgments because he sought the Father's will.

## Verses 20-23

For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth: and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel.

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<sup>14</sup> See Exodus 20:3 and Deuteronomy 6:4.

For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth *them*; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will.

For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son:

That all *men* should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.

God delegated to the Son great power and authority. He had the responsibility to judge conferred upon him by God; therefore his judgments were always in alignment with the will of God. He did nothing of himself. Although Jesus made righteous judgments, he did not receive the honor due him. However, the day is coming when he will sit on the throne of the Lord judging the world on God's behalf, and then he will receive proper honor.

Later in the book, he had another discourse with the Pharisees. In that occurrence, he compared their unrighteous judgments (which were according to the flesh) to his righteous judgments (which were influenced entirely by the Father).

John 8:15 and 16

Ye judge after the flesh; I judge no man.

And yet if I judge, my judgment is true: for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me.

While Jesus was here, he never judged according to the flesh. When he returns and sits upon the throne of David, he will fulfill the prophecies regarding his reign as King. All of his judgments will be righteous and equitable for everyone.

## Personal Testimony

At the beginning of Jesus' ministry, he was baptized by John. At that time God confirmed to John that his cousin Jesus was the Son of God. John saw the heavens open and the spirit descend like a dove upon Jesus. Then he heard a voice from heaven say, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17). These signs convinced John. The following day, Jesus again came to John who informed his disciples about the signs that designated Jesus as God's Son. He said, "I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God" (John 1:34). David also had been told that the Lord's anointed, the Christ who would sit on his throne forever, would be the Son of God (I Chronicles 17:11-14). God and John both testified that Jesus was the Son of God.

Two of John's disciples began to follow Jesus. After spending the day with him, one of the two (named Andrew) went to find his brother Peter. He said to him, "We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ" (John 1:41).

The next day, Jesus witnessed to Philip, who in turn told Nathanael: "We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph" (John 1:45).

All who had knowledge of the Hebrew Scriptures understood that the Messiah was its central theme. The Hope for Israel was the coming of the Messiah who would restore the Kingdom to Israel.

Jesus' first encounter with Nathanael made such an impression that he said, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel" (John 1:49).

Already within the first chapter of John, the testimony of four men gives us a comprehensive understanding that

Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ. John said that he was "the Son of God;" Andrew called him "the Christ;" Philip referred to him as the one "of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write;" and Nathanael declared "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; ...the King of Israel."

While in the city of Sychar in Samaria, Jesus witnessed to a woman at the well. He told her of the living water that he would provide. After she concluded that he was a prophet, she asked a question about worship. His response inspired her to say, "I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things" (John 4:25). Then Jesus revealed to her that he was the Christ.

The woman was so blessed by her encounter with Jesus that she returned to the city and told all what he had said. Apparently, she was quite persuasive, because many went out to meet him. Jesus spent two whole days teaching the Samaritans. They had this testimony of him.

John 4:42

And said unto the woman, Now we believe,  
not because of thy saying: for we have heard  
*him* ourselves, and know that this is indeed  
the Christ, the Saviour of the world.

He is indeed the Christ!

After Jesus miraculously fed the multitudes, they followed him and desired to make him king. Their commitment to him was self-centered since they wanted someone to provide free food. His teaching to them was very forceful and demanded commitment. As a result, many walked away, never to return. Afterward, he turned to the twelve and asked if they, too, would turn away. Peter's response again gives testimony that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

John 6:68 and 69

Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.

And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.

The blind man whom Jesus healed was brought to the Pharisees to explain his healing. The encounter turned into a harsh inquisition ending with the man who was healed being cast out. When Jesus heard that they had cast him out, he found him and asked, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" (John 9:35). Jesus had not previously revealed that he was the Son of God, but now he did.

John 9:36-38

He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?

And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee.

And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him.

Because of the things that Jesus did and the words that he spoke, there was division among the Jews. Some declared he was possessed with a devil, while others thought he was the Christ. At one point, in frustration, the Jews stated, "How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly" (John 10:24).

Anyone with a clear understanding of the Hebrew Scriptures who heard him speak and saw his miracles should have known indeed that he was the Christ, the Son of God. However, this was not always the case. Jesus responded to their inquiry by verifying his identity.

John 10:25 and 26

Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me. But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you.

When Jesus was on his way to raise Lazarus from the dead, Martha, Lazarus' sister, came to him. Jesus assured her that Lazarus would be raised. Her response clearly stated that she knew who he was.

John 11:27

She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.

When Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a young donkey, the people acknowledged that he was the King of Israel.

John 12:12 and 13

...much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, Took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed *is* the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord.

God, John the Baptist, Andrew, Philip, Nathanael, the woman at the well, the Samaritan, Peter, the blind man who was healed, the multitudes, Martha, and the people on the road to Jerusalem—all were eyewitnesses that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ, the Son of God. Indeed, the

book of John was written to declare exactly what we have clearly seen in our study.

John 20:31

But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

## Son of God

The Hebrew Scriptures communicated that the Christ would be the Son of God and also the Son of man. No one in Israel was looking for a "god-man" to rule the Kingdom. All understood that the Messiah would be a man like David, but would also be the Son of God.

Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament's Messianic prophecies and did the works that were expected of the Messiah. The Gospel of John, more than the other three Gospels, shows that Jesus is the Son of God and the Son of man. However, many trinitarian scholars use this Gospel as the primary basis for their doctrine. For this to be so is peculiar because Jesus is not called God even once; however, he is often called the Son of God.

- 1:18 The **only begotten Son**
- 1:34 I saw, and bare record that this is **the Son of God**
- 1:49 Thou art **the Son of God**; thou art the King of Israel
- 3:16 God so loved...His **only begotten Son**
- 3:17 God sent not **His Son** into the world to condemn

- 3:18 The name of the only begotten **Son of God**
- 3:35 The Father loveth **the Son**
- 3:36 He that believeth on **the Son** hath everlasting life  
He that believeth not **the Son** shall not see life
- 5:19 **The Son** can do nothing of himself
- 5:20 The Father loveth **the Son** and showeth him all things
- 5:21 As the Father raiseth up...even so **the Son** quickeneth
- 5:22 The Father judgeth no man...hath committed all...unto  
**the Son**
- 5:23 Men should honour **the Son**; even as they honour the  
Father
- 5:26 Father hath life in himself; so hath He given to **the  
Son**
- 6:40 Everyone which seeth **the Son** and believeth on him
- 6:69 Thou art **that Christ, the Son** of the living God
- 8:36 If **the Son** therefore shall make you free
- 9:35 Dost thou believe on **the Son** of God?
- 10:36 **I am the Son of God**
- 11:4 ...that **the Son of God** might be glorified
- 11:27 Thou art **the Christ, the Son of God**
- 14:13 That the Father may be glorified in **the Son**
- 17:1 Glorify **thy Son**, that **thy Son** also may glorify thee
- 19:7 Made himself **the Son of God**
- 20:31 **Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God**

Rightly understanding that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, is imperative in order to enter the coming Kingdom.



## *The Suffering*

**W**hile sharing the last supper with his beloved disciples, Jesus Christ taught many very profound yet simple truths which would dynamically impact them in the days and years to come. The evening also included a teaching by Jesus about service, demonstrated by his washing of the disciples' feet. He instituted holy communion, a memorial to the events which would occur shortly. He foretold of Judas' betrayal and Peter's denials. Lovingly, he reached out to Judas and offered him the sop which gave him the opportunity to abort his evil mission before it began. Judas rejected the offer and went into the night to betray his Lord.

The supper being ended, they walked to the Mount of Olives to a special place called the garden of Gethsemane. While walking, Jesus taught them many more things. They sang a hymn together, and he prayed to the Father a heartfelt prayer on behalf of his beloved disciples. His final hours before captivity were consistent with the whole of his life, which included having loving, compassionate concern for others without selfishness.

Once they reached the garden, he said to his disciples, "Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder." He walked on and took with him Peter, John, and James. He confided in them, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me." Then he went on a little farther and fell on his face and prayed, saying, "O my Father, if it be

possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou *wilt*." The cup represented the agonizing responsibility of the impending suffering and crucifixion. He knew the Hebrew Scriptures which described the savage torture and horrendous crucifixion.

His prayer was not motivated by stubborn resistance or rebellion, rather a sincere request, "If there is any other way to accomplish man's redemption, please let it be so." As a man, he did not want to be subject to humiliation and pain, but as God's Son, he still wanted to honor God's will and not his own.

When he finished praying, he returned to the three disciples to find them sleeping. The three men who he spent the most time training, whom he had asked to help, were sound asleep.

Matthew 26:40 and 41

And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour?

Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed *is* willing, but the flesh *is* weak.

Jesus needed more time in prayer with the Father so he went again alone into the garden.

Verse 42

He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.

Once again, he came back to his disciples and found them sleeping. He must have realized then that what he

was to do had to be done by himself without any other man to help. He left them again and went a third time to pray. He so poured his life into this prayer that his perspiration was profuse; it was like great drops of blood.

Luke 22:44

And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

Three times he prayed, not because he was afraid, doubtful, or unwilling, but because he fully knew the agonizing, excruciating torture and utter humiliation that awaited him. He knew from records like Isaiah 52:14 that his visage was going to be so marred that he would not even be recognizable as a man.

God responded to the prayers and sent an angel to minister to and strengthen him. He was ready! However, his disciples were still sleeping. Perhaps they sensed the incredible heaviness of the moment, and the burden was too much for them to bear. Sleep can sometimes be an effective temporary escape.

Matthew 26:45

Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take *your* rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.

The Mount of Olives is directly across from Jerusalem, which is also on a mount, with the Kidron Valley between. From the garden one can see the main gate of the city. Jesus apparently saw or sensed a drastic change in the situation because he woke all the disciples saying, "Rise, let us be going...."

Hundreds of armed Roman soldiers, officers of the Levitical temple guard, and incensed religious leaders were coming from Jerusalem to the garden to take one solitary man captive. The closer they got, the louder the clamoring of their armor and weapons was, the brighter the glow from the torches and lanterns, and the more intensity in the air. The disciples must have quivered with fear. Jesus Christ stood tall, fearless, confident—ready!

Judas, his beloved apostle, led the soldiers to their private prayer location. The soldiers marched with determination and boldness into the garden to be confronted by this one man who said to them: "Whom seek ye?" They responded, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus said unto them, "I am he." So powerful, so dynamic, so godly was Jesus Christ that this cohort of military men went backward and fell to the ground because of his words (John 18:4-6).

Judas had prearranged to signal the soldiers that the one whom he greeted with a kiss was their man. Judas said, "Hail, master;" and kissed him (Matthew 26:49). Jesus looking straight into his eyes said, "Friend, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?" (Luke 22:48). When they endeavored to take Jesus, Peter drew out his sword and cut off the right ear of one of the high priest's servants. If Jesus had allowed one moment of indecision, all of the disciples would have been destroyed by these armed soldiers; but he immediately shouted for them to stop and to put away their swords.

## Verses 52 and 53

Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.

Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?

Jesus could have summoned thousands of angels to help him. In the time of Moses, Pharaoh and his army were completely defeated with only one angel mentioned. They could never have taken him by force. Only because he surrendered were they able to take him, and this he did willingly in obedience to the Scriptures.

## Verses 54-56

But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?

In that same hour said Jesus to the multitudes, Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves for to take me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me.

But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled.

He surrendered, and they led him away to Annas. He was the father-in-law to Caiaphas, who was the high priest. Annas' palace was on the far side of the city, so they dragged him through the streets of Jerusalem. While at Annas' palace, he was asked about his disciples and his doctrine. Jesus answered him as follows.

John 18:21

Why askest thou me? ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said.

One of the officers struck Jesus, saying, "Answerest thou the high priest so?" Jesus responded, but the officers began to beat him with a thin, whip-like cane, the first of many beatings dealt to Jesus before his crucifixion. From Annas he was taken across the courtyard to Caiaphas, the high priest.

The entire Sanhedrin (over 70 men) were already gathered to conduct a trial. Indeed, they conducted a trial full of illegalities. Late at night was considered an unlawful hour for such a trial. The high priest and Sanhedrin illegally sought false witnesses in an attempt to convict Jesus. Finally the high priest in absolute frustration interrogated him and demanded, "I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God."

The response Jesus gave is breathtaking.

Matthew 26:64

Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.

At this most critical moment, he remained absolutely resolved to fulfill God's plan regarding this coming Kingdom. He completely embraced and boldly proclaimed his Hope. Caiaphas, the last high priest of the old covenant, judged the Lord's Christ; but the day will come when the Lord of glory will do the judging.

When Jesus answered affirmatively, Caiaphas, with extreme anger and hatred, accused him of blasphemy and sentenced him to death.

The high priest, the chief priest, the scribes, and the elders began to torture Jesus. They spit in his face, they covered his face with a bag and began to beat him repeatedly on his head and body. They used their fists and whip-like rods demanding for him to prophesy saying, "Prophesy unto us, thou Christ, Who is he that smote thee?"

Sometime during this horrendous ordeal, Peter, who had followed him from the garden, denied the Lord for the sixth time.<sup>15</sup> As he spoke the final denial, the cock crowed, and his eyes met Jesus' eyes. Peter, remembering the words of his Lord about these denials, went out of the palace area into the night and wept bitterly. Jesus remained with his torturers all night long.

The next morning, they held another illegal trial and decided to take him to Pilate, the Roman governor of Judea. He lived across town, so they dragged him through the Jerusalem streets again. Pilate questioned Jesus and found nothing for which he was guilty. He wanted to let Jesus go, but the religious leaders insisted he be punished. When

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<sup>15</sup> Peter's denials:

(1) John 18:15-18 In the first denial Peter was accused by a young female doorkeeper. Jesus was before Annas.

(2) Matthew 26:69 and 70; Luke 22:55-57; Mark 14:66-68 The accuser was a young maiden. Peter was sitting by the fire in the courtyard. Jesus was before Caiaphas.

(3) Luke 22:58 The accuser was a man. The accusation also took place at the fire in the courtyard. Mark 14:68. First cock-crowing.

(4) Matthew 26:71 and 72; Mark 14:69 The accuser was a maiden who served the high priest, a different maiden from denial number two. This happened in the porch area where there was a large door or gate.

(5) Matthew 26:73 and 74; Mark 14:70 and 71; John 18:25 This time several accusers were saying that Peter's Galilean dialect was evidence of his discipleship to Jesus. This happened in the courtyard area with Peter standing next to the fire.

(6) Luke 22:59 and 60; John 18:26 and 27 The accuser was a servant of the high priest who had been present at the arrest in the garden. The sixth denial occurred immediately after the fifth at the fire in the courtyard. While Peter spoke the final denial, the cock crowed a second time (Matthew 26:74; Mark 14:72; Luke 22:60; John 18:27).

Pilate learned that he was a Galilean, he sent him to Herod, the governor of Galilee, who was in Jerusalem.

Herod's palace was near the high priests', so Jesus again was dragged through Jerusalem. Herod was the monster responsible for beheading Jesus' cousin, John the Baptist. Along with his men of war, Herod also interrogated him, mocked him, and treated him with contempt. Herod finally sent him back to Pilate.

Pilate again interrogated Jesus. The exchange between them illustrates the understanding and commitment Jesus had regarding the coming Kingdom.

John 18:33-38

Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews?

Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?

Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done?

Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.

Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.

Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the

Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault *at all*.

Although Pilate sensed something was very wrong, he did not perceive that Jesus was the truth. Realizing that the religious leaders were trying to eliminate Jesus out of envy, but still afraid of going against their wishes, Pilate decided to take the issue of what to do with Jesus to the people. He gave the people a choice between releasing Jesus or Barabbas, a murderer. The people yelled, "Release unto us Barabbas." Pilate offered to scourge Jesus and to let him go; but the crowd insisted on having Barabbas released, not Jesus Christ.

Pilate, still looking for a way out, decided to give Jesus over to the Roman soldiers. They stripped and tied him to a post and brutally flogged him. They braided a crown of thorns and put it on his head, then put a purple robe on him and taunted him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews." After this torture and taunting, Pilate again took him to the people. They showed no compassion at all crying, "Release unto us Barabbas. Crucify *him*, crucify him."

Pilate said, "I find no fault in him."

"Crucify him, crucify him."

Pilate took water and washed his hands before the multitude and said, "I am innocent of the blood of this just person." The people's response was so cold that it is hard for us to comprehend.

Matthew 27:25

Then answered all the people, and said, His blood *be* on us, and on our children.

Pilate then gave him back to the approximately 500 soldiers gathered in the common hall who again tortured

him, spit upon him, beat him repeatedly on his head with a stick, and mocked him. Hundreds of soldiers sadistically abused and tortured him all night long.

The next morning, he was led to Golgotha where they crucified him. The chronicle of events, viewed by studying the four Gospels, reveals the details of our Lord's suffering before his death on the cross.

	<b>Matthew</b>	<b>Mark</b>	<b>Luke</b>	<b>John</b>
Arrested in garden of Gethsemane	26:47-57	14:43-52	22:47-53	18:2-12
Appeared before Annas				18:13-23
Appeared before Caiaphas and Sanhedrin	26:57-75	14:55-72	22:54-65	18:24-27
Appeared before Sanhedrin for morning trial	27:1	15:1	22:66-71	
Appeared before Pilate	27:2	15:1	23:1-7	
Appeared before Herod			23:7-12	
Appeared before Pilate second time	27:11-25	15:2-14	23:13-23	18:33-19:15
Sentenced by Pilate	27:26	15:15	23:24-25	19:16
Tortured and mocked by soldiers	27:26-31	15:15-20		
Led out to be crucified	27:32-34	15:20-23	23:26-32	19:16-17





## *It is Finished*

**G**olgotha was their destination when they dragged Jesus from Pilate's judgment hall on that dreadful Wednesday morning. After approximately forty hours of captivity and torture, Jesus did not have the strength to carry the wooden cross to be used for his crucifixion. Simon of Cyrene was forced to carry the cross.

Matthew 27:32

And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear his cross.

Three of the four Gospels clearly state that Simon carried the cross. Yet, it is commonly thought that Jesus, rather than Simon, bore the cross. This misconception is due to understanding wrongly that which is written in the Gospel of John while ignoring Matthew, Mark, and Luke. John 19:17 says, "And he bearing his cross went forth unto a place...."

"Bearing his cross" is a figurative expression often used in Jesus' day which meant accepting the responsibility of carrying out another's will.<sup>16</sup> The cross that Jesus carried was fulfilling the will of God. The cross was far weightier

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<sup>16</sup> Similar expressions are also found in Matthew 10:38; 16:24; Mark 8:34; 10:21; Luke 9:23 and 14:27.

than the wooden cross because it represented the sins, transgressions, and everything else which separated mankind from God.

While Jesus proceeded to Golgotha, a great company of people followed.<sup>17</sup>

Luke 23:27-32

And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him.

But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children.

For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed *are* the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck.

Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us.

For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?

And there were also two other, malefactors, led with him to be put to death.

The mindset our Lord maintained during this entire horrific experience is unparalleled in human history. Before Caiaphas and Pilate, in the midst of intense interrogation, he spoke regarding the coming Kingdom and his position as King. Now on his way to the crucifixion, again his thoughts are focused on the end times. As the prophets before him, Jesus prophesied about the destruction of Jerusalem. Shortly before he was taken into custody, he prophesied

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<sup>17</sup> Golgotha means the place of a skull. It is the same place as "Calvary" in Luke 23:33. According to Hebrews 13:12, it was located outside the city gate.

regarding the end times, part of which was the fall of Jerusalem. (See Matthew 24 and 25.) Rather than surrendering to self-pity or accepting the mournful concerns of the women, he redirected attention away from himself to that which would encourage repentance in others.

Two malefactors were led with Jesus from the judgment hall. Later in this chapter we will see two additional men also were crucified which made four with him in all. Another incident took place on the road to Golgotha. He was offered wine mixed with myrrh to help deaden the pain (Mark 15:22 and 23). Jesus refused, choosing to be fully alert. After they arrived at Golgotha, he was offered another drink and refused again for a second time.

Matthew 27:33 and 34

And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull, They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted *thereof*, he would not drink.

Apparently, deadening the pain was not as great a concern as maintaining mental sharpness. What other man would not eagerly medicate his pain? Both drinks were offered and refused before he was put on the cross.

Verse 35

And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots.

The coldhearted way Jesus was handled throughout his ordeal did not stop until he took his last breath. The soldiers

took his garments and ripped them into four parts for each soldier to have a piece, then gambled for his seamless tunic.

John 19:23 and 24

Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also *his* coat [tunic]: now the coat [tunic] was without seam, woven from the top throughout.

They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did.

The soldiers were obviously clueless regarding the one whose clothing they coveted. Nor did they realize that their act was fulfilling the prophecy recorded in Psalm 22. Our Lord quoted this same Psalm immediately before he died.

Luke 23:33 and 34

And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.

Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.

The malefactors were crucified with him, one on each side. They must have marveled at his utterance of forgiveness. Indeed, it is still extremely difficult to comprehend the heart and love of our Lord Jesus Christ!

His words were even more stunning when compared with the ruler's hideous, scornful words directed at him.

Verses 35-37

And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided *him*, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God.

And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar, And saying, If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself.

Little is stated about the third drink, so we do not know if he accepted it or not. The soldiers sat for a while watching him; then according to Matthew 27:37, they placed an accusation above his head.

John 19:19-22

And Pilate wrote a title, and put *it* on the cross. And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS.

This title then read many of the Jews: for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city: and it was written in Hebrew, *and* Greek, *and* Latin.

Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate, Write not, The King of the Jews; but that he said, I am King of the Jews.

Pilate answered, What I have written I have written.

There is no way to escape the recurring theme of the King and the coming Kingdom. Could this accusation, as it is called in the other Gospel, be any more ironic? As the

record continues to unfold, again we are directed to God's coming Kingdom (and of all places from the malefactor).

Luke 23:39-42

And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us.

But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?

And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss.

And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.

One malefactor reviled him, as did the bystanders; and the other stood up for Jesus. The Gospel of the Kingdom apparently was so well known that even this condemned malefactor understood. He believed Jesus was the Christ and wanted to be included in his coming Kingdom. Jesus promised that he would be with him in Paradise.

Verse 43

And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.

Paradise pertains to the beginning and the end. Adam and Eve lived in paradise until they disobeyed God. They were expelled from Eden, and the land was cursed.<sup>18</sup> Thus began a negative evolution in which mankind and the earth

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<sup>18</sup> "Eden" is translated from the Hebrew. "Paradise" is translated from the Greek. Both mean the same and are used interchangeably in the Scriptures.

were corrupted. All the prophets prophesied regarding the coming Messiah and the regeneration which will take place. In that day, the changes are going to be radical and encompass everyone and everything. Eventually, everything will return to God's original plan when man inhabited paradise. Paradise ended with the fall and will not be realized again until the end. Jesus did not tell the malefactor that they would be together in Paradise that same day. Paradise always refers to a place on earth and is never synonymous with heaven. Both died that day.

Jesus remained in the grave for three days and three nights (Matthew 12:40) after which he was resurrected. The malefactor died and remains in his grave until the resurrection of the just. The belief that the dead ascend to heaven or descend to hell upon death is not biblically founded. The dead stay in the grave until the resurrections of the just and the unjust. For more information, see ***Living Sacrifice*** (Vol. III) by this same author.

The way Luke 23:43 is punctuated, with the comma following "thee," misleads the reader. All punctuation was added by the translators because the original text had no punctuation. In this verse, they made a mistake. The verse should read: "... Verily I say unto thee today, Thou shalt be with me in paradise."

After this incident, things progress.

Matthew 27:38

Then were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left.

When Jesus was dragged to Golgotha, two malefactors went with him. The three were crucified together. Afterwards, the soldiers divided his garments and gambled for the tunic. Then they sat down and watched him.

Sometime afterward is when they placed the accusation over his head. We read in Matthew 27 that "then" two thieves were crucified with him.

Two, referred to as "malefactors" (Greek - *kakourgoi*), were crucified with him. Later two more, referred to as "thieves" or "robbers" (Greek - *lestai*), were crucified. The two malefactors and the two robbers were not identical. Thus, four men were crucified with Jesus.

Matthew 27:39-44

And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads,

And saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest *it* in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.

Likewise also the chief priests mocking *him*, with the scribes and elders, said,

He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God.

The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth.

After the robbers were crucified, people again reviled him. Both robbers reviled him. In Luke, we read only one of the malefactors reviled Jesus; the other one became a believer. Here in Matthew, both robbers reviled which provides further evidence that four were crucified with him.

The Gospel of John reveals the location of the four men in relationship to Jesus. However, there is an error in translation which causes confusion.

John 19:18

Where they crucified him, and two other with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst.

The word "one" is omitted in every critical Greek text. The proper translation should read: "Where they crucified him [Jesus], and two other with him on either side, and Jesus in the midst." He was in the "midst" of four, not "between" two. The following chart illustrates how they were located.

		Jesus		
Robber	Malefactor		Malefactor	Robber

While these five men hung on their crosses, darkness came over the land from about noon until 3 p.m.

Matthew 27:45 and 46

Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour.

And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

Since the translators left foreign words in the verse, our interest should be provoked. What is stated here seems to

contradict other Scriptures related to the same subject. The night he was taken captive, he told the disciples that everyone would leave him, but he would not be alone "because the Father is with me" (John 16:32). In the garden he prayed three times for strength to do his Father's will. The Scriptures tell us that he always did God's will and never disobeyed. While dying on the cross, he was fulfilling the will of the Father; therefore, it makes no sense that God would forsake him. Like so many other things that he did and said, his utterance was a fulfillment of prophecy; this one recorded in Psalm 22. As Jesus was coming to the end of his life, he obviously was reflecting on this Psalm and perhaps began to utter it.

A comprehensive reading of the Psalm reveals that David, the writer, was not implying that God had forsaken him. Rather, he was praying for God's help. In the latter part of the Psalm, the Lord's Kingdom and the Messiah's reign are mentioned. Jesus was praying for help and reflecting on God's promise about his future. Hebrews 12 tells us that "for the joy that was set before him [he] endured the cross." Throughout his suffering and crucifixion, he constantly referred to the future when he will reign—the joy that was set before him. Some have arrived at wrong conclusions based on the convoluted logic that God forsook Jesus because he became sin. The thought is that a holy God could not associate with a sinful man. Jesus never sinned, nor could he become sin. He was the antitype for the animal sacrifice of the old covenant. The animals were offered as a substitution for the sinner. They were the sin offering. The animal did not become sin, neither did Jesus. He was the sin offering. God did not separate Himself from His dying Son. He was there patiently enduring with him.

Those who stood by also misconstrued his words.

Matthew 27:47-49

Some of them that stood there, when they heard *that*, said, This *man* calleth for Elias. And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled *it* with vinegar, and put *it* on a reed, and gave him to drink. The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him.

This was the fourth drink offered, and again no indication is given of his accepting it. Included among the events which occurred while Jesus was hanging on the cross, at a time not exactly specified, are instructions he gave to some people he dearly loved.

John 19:25-27

Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the *wife* of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene.

When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son!

Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own *home*.

His absolute, selfless care is mind-boggling. His tender, loving concern at a time of intense pain is striking. Sometime after this, very near his death, he expressed his desire for a drink which also fulfilled a prophecy.

John 19:28-30

After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst.

Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar:  
and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put  
*it* upon hyssop, and put *it* to his mouth.  
When Jesus therefore had received the  
vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed  
his head, and gave up the ghost.

"It is finished" are words with such powerful meaning. Every Scripture that prophesied about the sacrificial Passover Lamb was now fulfilled. They placed him on the cross at approximately 9 a.m. He fought to stay alive until about 3 p.m. so as to coincide with the time the passover lamb was to die. Everything that was necessary to fulfill God's righteous redemption for mankind was accomplished. The work he began when he said as a child, "I must be about my Father's business," was now complete.

After approximately forty hours of incarceration, having prolonged periods of unimaginable physical and mental torture which included six excruciating hours of hanging on the cross, Jesus Christ finally gave up his life. The phrase "gave up the ghost" indicates he willingly gave up his life.<sup>19</sup> No one took his life from him; he laid it down.

Even the physical environment reverberated from the effects of his death. The veil in the temple was torn from top to bottom.

Matthew 27:51

And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in  
twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth  
did quake, and the rocks rent;

The veil represents man's separation from the presence

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<sup>19</sup> "Ghost" can be translated spirit which in this context is referring to the breath of life, the spirit of man.

of God. With Jesus' death, the price was paid to redeem mankind and enabled reconciliation back to God. The earth also quaked.

Matthew 27:54-56

Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.

And many women were there beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him:

Among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children.

It is remarkable that while most of the disciples had scattered, these three faithful women remained with Jesus. The Jews wanted the victims off the crosses before sunset at which time the Feast of Unleavened Bread began.

John 19:31

The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and *that* they might be taken away.

The soldiers used a club or hammer to break the legs of the victims. Such blows would cause internal blood loss which would bring about the victim's death quite rapidly. Without the support of the legs, the person's breathing

would be inhibited also. After the legs were broken, the soldiers pierced the victim's side with a spear.

John 19:32 and 33

Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him.

But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs:

The soldiers broke the legs of a robber and then the malefactor before they came to Jesus. If the traditional picture of Jesus on the center cross with only one person on each side were true, than this verse would not make sense. The soldiers would have broken the legs of the first criminal, then ignored Jesus on the center cross, and broken the legs of the other. However, when we understand that there were four others crucified with him, what is stated is very logical. His bones not being broken also fulfilled a prophecy.<sup>20</sup>

John 19:34-37

But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water.

And he that saw *it* bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe.

For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken.

And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced.

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<sup>20</sup> The prophecies about his bones not being broken are recorded in Exodus 12:46; Numbers 9:12; and Psalms 34:20.

Even the piercing in his side was the fulfillment of prophecy that is recorded in Zechariah 12:10. Nothing that happened to our Lord was by chance. Everything he endured throughout his suffering and death was necessary to accomplish the predetermined will of God.

The records regarding the suffering and crucifixion are so comprehensive that it is impossible to grasp all the truth contained therein. Each time we study this subject, we may gain more insight into his loving sacrifice. For God so to love the world that He gave His Son in such a manner should be powerfully piercing to our hearts. The reason God allowed this to happen is His love for you and me. The reason Christ did all of this was his love for you and me.

Romans 5:6-8

For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.

But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

We cannot turn our backs and walk away from the suffering and death of Christ! We must respond and give our all to Jesus.





## *He is Risen*

**A**fter all of these things, Jesus died on the cross. Then one of his faithful disciples, a very wealthy man who lived in Arimathaea, requested the body of Jesus from Pilate.

Matthew 27:58

He went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered.

Joseph laid the body in his own new tomb which he had hewn out in a rock. After Joseph departed, Nicodemus, the Pharisee who came to Jesus at night (recorded in John 3), came to the sepulcher and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes to prepare the body for a proper burial. He then wrapped Jesus in grave clothes similar to the way Lazarus was wrapped. Jesus laid in this sepulcher for three days and three nights.

According to biblical accuracy, Jesus died at approximately 3 p.m., Wednesday, the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan and was raised again some time after 3 p.m., Saturday, the 17<sup>th</sup> of Nisan.<sup>21</sup> After the weekly Sabbath day, two women came to the sepulcher. It is not uncommon for loved ones to visit the grave site of the recently buried dead.

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<sup>21</sup> See Appendix A, *Three Days and Three Nights*.

## Matthew 28:1

In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first *day* of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulcher.

Our day ends at midnight, but in Jesus' time the day's end was considered to be sunset. The word "dawn" is the Greek word *epiphosko*, translated more properly as "dusk." Saturday, around dusk, the two Marys came to the tomb. After the women departed, the miraculous resurrection of Jesus Christ took place.

## Matthew 28:2

And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it.

The day after the crucifixion, the chief priests and Pharisees compelled Pilate to post a guard at the tomb of Jesus because they remembered Jesus said that in three days he would rise. They feared his disciples would come and steal his body and tell everyone that he was risen. Pilate refused to cooperate and told them to post their own guard, which they did. Little did they understand how foolish their actions were. No guard on earth could prevent what God would do nor could stop the angel of the Lord.

## Matthew 28:3 and 4

His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow:  
And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead *men*.

The keepers, or guards, were so frightened they became as dead men! God did not have Jesus sneak out of the tomb, rather in a grand fashion He had the stone rolled away so all the world could know that Jesus was risen. These same guards would later accept money from the religious leaders to keep silent about what they saw and to support the lie that his disciples took his body.

Before sunrise Sunday morning, Mary Magdalene returned to the tomb and saw that the stone was taken away. She ran to tell Peter and the other disciples. Peter and another disciple (described as the one "whom Jesus loved") ran to the sepulcher to see for themselves.

John 20:4-8

So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulcher.

And he stooping down, *and looking in*, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in.

Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulcher, and seeth the linen clothes lie,

And the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself.

Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulcher, and he saw, and believed.

The first person to believe that Jesus was risen was this disciple whom he loved. This record and subsequent records indicate that both Mary and Peter did not yet believe.

After the man left, Mary stayed at the sepulcher and began weeping because she thought someone had stolen

his body. From when she was first delivered of seven devil spirits until this time, Mary Magdalene had remained a faithful, devoted follower. Luke 8 tells us she ministered unto him of her own substance. When Jesus hung on the cross, most of his disciples were hidden in fear, but Mary stood at the cross with him. After his death, she repeatedly returned to his tomb. This wonderful woman was the first person to see Jesus in his resurrected body.

John 20:11-14

But Mary stood without at the sepulcher weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, *and looked* into the sepulcher,

And seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.

And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.

And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus.

In her initial contact with him in his first post-resurrection appearance, she did not recognize him.

John 20:15-17

Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.

Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is

to say, Master.

Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and *to* my God, and your God.

Mary, mistaking her Lord to be the gardener, recognized his voice when Jesus lovingly spoke her name. What incredible joy must have filled her heart! With indescribable emotion, she uttered the most profound truth—"Master!"

His first resurrection appearance was not to King Herod, the high priest, dignitaries, or other powerful people. He did not hold a news conference with hundreds of reporters and television cameras. He showed himself to one solitary, humble, female disciple in the privacy of the garden tomb area. When Jesus was born, God selected the shepherds, Simeon, Anna, and the magi to share the joy of His only begotten Son. Again we see worldly celebrities and men of renown do not impress God, rather those who are humble and receptive.

After seeing Jesus, Mary Magdalene hastened to declare the good news to his disciples, but she was received with unbelief. No one believed her. Some of the women had already planned to anoint the body, so they returned with Mary Magdalene to the tomb.

Luke 24:1

Now upon the first *day* of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulcher, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain *others* with them.

Mary knew that the stone had been rolled away and that Jesus was already risen, but the other women now

discovered this for themselves.

Luke 24:2 and 3

And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulcher.

And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus.

When they entered into the tomb, they saw an angel who looked like a young man. This angel spoke the three greatest words ever spoken—HE IS RISEN!

Matthew 28:5-7

And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified.

He is not here: for he is risen, as he said.

Come, see the place where the Lord lay.

And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you.

When the women turned to leave the sepulcher, they were greeted again by other angels.

Luke 24:4-8

And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments:

And as they were afraid, and bowed down *their* faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead?

He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee,

Saying, The Son of man must be delivered  
into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified,  
and the third day rise again.  
And they remembered his words,

The angel's words reminded them of the things Jesus  
had spoken about his resurrection. When they  
remembered, they finally believed he was risen. With great  
joy and excitement, they went to tell the disciples the great  
news. Once again the report of his resurrection was not  
believed, rather it was thought to be idle tales.

Luke 24:9-11

And returned from the sepulchre, and told all  
these things unto the eleven, and to all the  
rest.

It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and  
Mary *the mother* of James, and other *women*  
*that were* with them, which told these things  
unto the apostles.

And their words seemed to them as idle tales,  
and they believed them not.

Peter had already visited the tomb once this day but  
now, hearing about the angels, decided to return. Peter had  
been with Jesus throughout his ministry. He had seen  
Lazarus raised from the dead; he had heard Jesus predict  
his own death and resurrection. As of yet, he had not seen  
the resurrected Christ, but soon would.

Luke 24:12

Then arose Peter, and ran unto the sepulchre;  
and stooping down, he beheld the linen  
clothes laid by themselves, and departed,  
wondering in himself at that which was come

to pass.

This day was filled with activities designed to help the disciples believe Jesus Christ was risen from the dead. Yet, two of the disciples apparently were not convinced enough to stay in Jerusalem. They decided to travel to a village about seven miles away called Emmaus. Their conversation must have been filled with wonderment, excitement, and, at the same time, confusion.

Luke 24:13-15

And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem *about* threescore furlongs.

And they talked together of all these things which had happened.

And it came to pass, that, while they communed *together* and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them.

Human reasoning does not open spiritual understanding. As we will see in this record, the Lord illuminates understanding. They did not have the power to grasp that the very one who was the topic of their discussion was now walking with them. The Lord did not tell them either.

Luke 24:16-18

But their eyes were holden that they should not know him.

And he said unto them, What manner of communications *are* these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?

And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not

known the things which are come to pass there in these days?

Had these men believed Jesus rose from the dead, you can be well assured they would not be walking away sad. Later in life, when Cleopas reflected on this event, he must have felt foolish about asking the Lord if he knew what had happened! The Lord let them continue on telling him their perspective of what had happened.

Luke 24:19

And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people:

They referred to Jesus as a prophet, not Christ, the Son of God. After all the evidence of the day, these disciples still did not believe he was risen.

Luke 24:20-24

And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him.

But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to day is the third day since these things were done.

Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre;

And when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive.

And certain of them which were with us went

to the sepulchre, and found *it* even so as the women had said: but him they saw not.

All their experiences and human reasoning still did not help them to acknowledge the point of the matter. Notice they made no mention of the Scriptures. They tried to figure things out with their own abilities apart from the Scriptures, which is always a prescription for failure. Human reasoning and wisdom render us foolish.

Luke 24:25-27

Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken:

Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?

And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

Moses wrote the first five books, and the other prophets wrote the remainder of the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament). When Jesus Christ in his resurrected body took the time to teach these men, he powerfully emphasized a very significant point. The Hebrew Scriptures provide the foundation for understanding who Christ is, what he accomplished, and what he will do in the future. It is impossible to have a comprehensive, accurate understanding about Jesus the Christ without first understanding Moses and the prophets. Peter also made the same points when he taught later after Jesus ascended.

Acts 3:18, 21

But those things, which God before had shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that

Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled.

Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.

This should be so obvious to all, yet most endeavor to understand Christ and Christianity by primarily studying the Gospels and then the remainder of the Greek Scriptures (New Testament). The Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) are too often considered irrelevant and are thus ignored. No book can be properly understood if the reader begins in the middle. Why should the most important book of all be handled with less regard? It is not surprising that the beliefs of so many today are rampant with inconsistencies, illogic, and error.

Since all the prophets speak regarding Christ, a considerable amount of time was invested teaching these two wavering disciples. He had the right to reprove them aggressively for their unbelief. He had the ability to show them his body with the holes in his hands, feet, and side. He could have just walked away in disgust (which is what most of us would have done). What he chose to do was share the Scriptures. His respectful attitude towards God's Word is very evident in this record.

When they arrived at their village, they constrained Jesus to come home with them, still not knowing who he was. During the meal their understanding was finally enlightened.

Luke 24:30-32

And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed *it*, and brake, and gave to them.

And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight.

And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?

What a startling, thrilling, and yet embarrassing realization was theirs. Like the women before them, once they believed Jesus was risen, they returned to the disciples to share the joyous news. By the time they returned, Peter also had had a visitation by the Lord and was sharing his revelation with the disciples.

Luke 24:33 and 34

And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, Saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.

Cleopas and the other disciple told of the things which had happened to them. Everybody must have been in total wonderment with all these different reports. However, the day was not yet over; much more was yet to astonish them.

Luke 24:35-38

And they told what things *were done* in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread.

And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood

in the midst of them, and saith unto them,  
Peace *be* unto you.  
But they were terrified and affrighted, and  
supposed that they had seen a spirit.  
And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled?  
and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?

The identical record in John 20:24 tells us that the eleven were present with Thomas missing. They were still terrified and affrighted. How much proof and reassurance did these disciples need?

Luke 24:39 and 40  
Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I  
myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath  
not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.  
And when he had thus spoken, he showed  
them *his* hands and *his* feet.

Our Lord was loving, pleasant, and patient. He ate with them and helped them to understand what they were experiencing. Again, he demonstrated the importance of the Scriptures, even when personal testimony is evidenced.

Luke 24:41-45  
And while they yet believed not for joy, and  
wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here  
any meat?  
And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish,  
and of an honeycomb.  
And he took *it*, and did eat before them.  
And he said unto them, These *are* the words  
which I spake unto you, while I was yet with  
you, that all things must be fulfilled, which  
were written in the law of Moses, and *in* the

prophets, and *in* the psalms, concerning me.  
Then opened he their understanding, that they  
might understand the scriptures,

As he did with the two on the road to Emmaus, he taught them about his fulfilling those things written about himself in the books of Moses, the prophets, and the Psalms.

Since eleven of the apostles were present and Thomas was the one missing, Judas obviously was present. After Jesus was raised from the dead, he accepted Judas back into the fellowship. Our Lord was and is loving, forgiving, and compassionate beyond description. Later, Judas would kill himself because he could not accept this loving forgiveness, but apparently this did not happen until around the time of the ascension.

When the others went back to Galilee, they found Thomas and reported that the Lord was resurrected. The response Thomas gave is the reason the term "doubting Thomas" was coined.

John 20:25

The other disciples therefore said unto him,  
We have seen the Lord. But he said unto  
them, Except I shall see in his hands the print  
of the nails, and put my finger into the print of  
the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I  
will not believe.

Thomas may have never thought the Lord would take him up on this challenge, but indeed he did.

John 20:26-29

And after eight days again his disciples were  
within, and Thomas with them: *then* came  
Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the

midst, and said, Peace *be* unto you.  
Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust *it* into my side: and be not faithless, but believing.  
And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.  
Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed *are* they that have not seen, and *yet* have believed.

Jesus was sent into the world in order to reconcile men back to God. During this post-resurrection appearance, he commissioned the disciples to carry on his ministry. This is the first time, but not the last, he prepared the disciples for his soon coming ascension. While he was on earth, he was the light of the world, God's ambassador. After the ascension, the Church is commissioned to carry on his work on earth as ambassadors of reconciliation.

Matthew 28:17-20

And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted.  
And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.  
Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:  
Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen.

The next resurrection appearance was when the disciples decided to go fishing, but had no success. Jesus told them to cast the net on the right side of the ship, and they drew in a multitude of fish. When they came to shore, Jesus served them a meal and gave more instruction in preparation for his departure. This is the third time that he showed himself to his disciples.

John 21:14-17

This is now the third time that Jesus showed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead.

So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, *son* of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.

He saith to him again the second time, Simon, *son* of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

He saith unto him the third time, Simon, *son* of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

I Corinthians 15 lists several of Jesus Christ's resurrection appearances, some of which are not recorded in the Gospels.

I Corinthians 15:4-8

And that he was buried, and that he rose

again the third day according to the scriptures:  
And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve:

After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.

After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.

And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.

All of these appearances which occurred before he ascended left no reason for doubt that indeed he was risen.

The last time he appeared before he ascended into heaven is recorded in Acts 1. He remained faithful to the central theme of his teaching ministry: the Kingdom of God. After his resurrection, many of the things previously veiled in the Hebrew Scriptures became clearly understandable. During those forty days, the disciples gained insight about the Kingdom of God that no one before could know. Since the Greek Scriptures are now available, we are privileged also to know much more.

Acts 1:3

To whom also he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:

He showed himself alive by "many infallible proofs." Over 500 people saw him during this time, some more than once. All of these accounts name primary witnesses of the resurrected Christ because they actually saw him in person. Primary witnesses in a court of law are much more credible

than the testimony of those who were not at the event in question. Jesus Christ has been resurrected from the dead, which absolutely signifies that he is the Son of God.

Acts 1:4-8

And, being assembled together with *them*, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, *saith he*, ye have heard of me.

For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.

But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

The holy spirit dwelling within qualifies us to be witnesses of the risen Christ. Had he not been raised, we would not have the holy spirit. The spirit itself makes us credible witnesses. The last thing he spoke before he was risen into heaven is that we are to be witnesses unto him.

Acts 1:9-11

And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.

And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel;  
Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

The resurrection from the dead set Jesus Christ apart from all others and declared him as the Son of God.

Romans 1:4

And declared *to be* the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:

He was not the first person to be raised from the dead, but he was the first to be raised and stay alive. According to the Scriptures, Lazarus was raised, but eventually he died again. Jesus is referred to as the firstfruits of those who are dead because he is the first one to be given a new, everlasting life.

On the day of Pentecost, Peter boldly delivered a powerful sermon with the critical and decisive point being the resurrection of Christ.

Acts 2:23 and 24

Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain:

Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.

Throughout the book of Acts, the disciples always witnessed and taught our Lord's resurrection. It is the absolute proof that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. His resurrection is also the type for all those who maintain faith; and as such, it is the foundation of our Hope. He is the first raised from the dead, but when he returns, those of faith will also be resurrected.

## Post Resurrection Appearances

Mary Magdalene	John 20:11-17
Two men on road to Emmaus	Luke 24:13-32
Peter	Luke 24:33 and 34
Eleven disciples (minus Thomas)	John 20:19-24; Mark 16:14
Disciples including Thomas	John 20:25-29
Disciples at the Sea of Tiberias	John 21:1-23
Twelve apostles	Acts 1:1-9
Cephus	I Corinthians 15:5
The twelve	I Corinthians 15:5
Above 500 brethren	I Corinthians 15:6
James	I Corinthians 15:7
All the apostles	I Corinthians 15:7
Paul	I Corinthians 15:8



## *High Priest*

**J**esus Christ is the High Priest and, as such, the mediator between God and man. He stated plainly: "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." The immensity of his position as High Priest can only be grasped by understanding the Hebrew Scriptures. The topics of paramount concern are the tabernacle and Levitical priesthood which are major elements of the old covenant and furnish a shadowy type of the heavenly tabernacle and of Jesus Christ, the High Priest. A thorough reading of the first five books of the Bible is suggested since this chapter will only touch upon some important points.

God minutely revealed to Moses every detail regarding the high priest. Everything to do with the high priest was God's doing. Man had nothing to do with this highly esteemed responsibility. Those who served were by God's selection, not man's choice. The garments which they wore were meticulously designed by God and made by wise-hearted people whom God filled with the spirit of wisdom. Everything was carried out as He wanted. Nothing was left to chance. Man's ideas, opinions, and influence were all null and void. Hence, everything about the garments was significant. The priests were to wear exactly what God determined for them to wear and to do so when He told them to wear it.

The priest could not anoint himself, nor could any man do it for him. God had Moses serve as His proxy to anoint

the high priest. The manner in which it was done left no room for doubt that it was according to God's design. The chosen man did not have the means to qualify himself to serve in the office. Nothing he could do would enable him. God had to do it for him. God commanded Moses to gather the congregation together at the door of the tabernacle to witness the anointing of the priest. (Aaron was selected to be the high priest, and his sons Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar were chosen to serve as priests.)

God told Moses exactly what to do. He washed Aaron and his sons. They did not do it for themselves. Moses put the garment on Aaron; he did not dress himself. Moses took the anointing oil and anointed the tabernacle, then Aaron and his sons. Again, they did not do it for themselves.

Moses offered animal sacrifices as a sin offering to make reconciliation for Aaron and his sons. Although they were being commissioned to carry out the office of the priesthood which included offering sacrifices, as of yet they were not qualified. Moses had to offer it for them as God's agent in the stead of God.

Aaron and his sons remained in the tabernacle for seven days until their consecration was complete. After all of this, they were finally prepared to serve as God determined. On the eighth day, Moses commanded them to make the sin offering and the burnt offering as an atonement for themselves and all the people. Moses told them that the glory of the Lord would come upon them, which indeed it did. Fire from heaven consumed the offering and signified God's acceptance of the sacrifice.

The tabernacle was the focal point of Israel's community and life. It was situated in the center of their camp. It served as a place for God to dwell among His people and a place where His people could commune with Him. The priests were the ones, among all the Israelites, designated to serve in the tabernacle. The priests, and especially the

high priest, served as mediators between God and the people. They had the weighty responsibility of offering sacrifices to God on their behalf. The high priest was the only one qualified (by God) to make atonement for sins. Only the priests were allowed into the holy place, and only the high priest was allowed into the holy of holies once a year. The single way that his service could be acceptable to God was in accordance with God's absolute will. Reconciliation to God is according to His plan and is completely independent of all human input.

The selection of the high priest, the garments he wore, the consecration, and the sacrificial services were all according to God's precise doing. Man's opinions, ideas, likes, or dislikes were not to enter in if reconciliation was to be realized.

The God of grace, mercy, and love provided a way, and man had the simple responsibility to obey. Reconciliation for sinful man was not possible in any other way than that which God provided through the priestly service.

Immediately following this historical event, an extremely shocking incident occurs. The result of this event powerfully illustrates the necessity of complete obedience by the priests.

Leviticus 10:1-3

And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not.

And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD.

Then Moses said unto Aaron, This *is it* that the LORD spake, saying, I will be sanctified in

them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified. And Aaron held his peace.

When God accepted their original sacrifice, He did so with fire from heaven. Apparently, this fire was to be maintained and used in all the tabernacle service. Nadab and Abihu decided to do things their own way and disregarded God's explicit instructions. (From this point on, Aaron and his remaining sons would realize the seriousness of God's commands regarding the priestly service.)

The tabernacle and sacrificial offering provided a limited and temporary reconciliation for Israel. They also served the greater purpose of foreshadowing the heavenly tabernacle and the eternal reconciliation that Jesus Christ, the High Priest, would facilitate.

### **Compassionate High Priest**

The book of Hebrews, more so than any other book, shows Jesus as the High Priest. He fulfilled the detailed pattern set forth in the Hebrew Scriptures.

He was a man after the seed of Abraham, just as his forefathers had been. He was not an angel and certainly was not God.

Hebrews 2:16-18

For verily he took not on *him the nature of* angels; but he took on *him* the seed of Abraham.

Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto *his* brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things

*pertaining* to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.

For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.

The first major point communicated about our High Priest is that as a man he can empathize with us. Although Jesus Christ has been elevated to the highly esteemed position of High Priest, he is not remote or aloof. Rather, he is compassionate and able to help in our time of need. The word "succour" means to run to give assistance on hearing a cry. Just like Israel, we need a high priest to make intercession for us. Unlike Israel, we have the great High Priest fully enabled to help us. We are told in a subsequent chapter of Hebrews that Jesus ever lives to make intercession for us. The high priest of old interceded for the people in a very limited, temporary tent. Jesus Christ, the High Priest, is at the right hand of God.

Romans 8:34

Who *is* he that condemneth? *It is* Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

The Church today has unparalleled access to the throne of grace because of Jesus the Christ. Although the tabernacle signified the presence of God, it also boldly declared His separation from the children of Israel. Jesus destroyed enmity and all the obstacles that separated man from God. We now have available with God a relationship for which Israel could only hope.

Hebrews 4:14-16

Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast *our* profession.<sup>22</sup>

For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as *we are*, yet without sin.

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

## Faithful

God showed with the original priests the vital importance of complete obedience to His instruction. Although Nadab and Abihu should have been sobering reminders of the strict obedience required, subsequent priests still wavered. Contrariwise, Jesus always obeyed his Father's will. His faithful obedience reached to the extreme of submission, to the death of the cross. We have acknowledged in previous chapters his resolute determination always to do God's will over his own. Indeed, he is a faithful High Priest.

Hebrews 3:1 and 2

Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus; Who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses *was faithful* in all his house.

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<sup>22</sup> The Greek word *homologia* is translated profession and confession. In the book of Hebrews, it can be understood to mean one's faith.

God selected and qualified Aaron; in like manner, He selected and qualified Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 5:4 and 5

And no man taketh this honour unto himself,  
but he that is called of God, as *was* Aaron.

So also Christ glorified not himself to be made  
an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou  
art my Son, to day have I begotten thee.

God gave meticulous detail for Aaron's garments and anointing which were a type for Jesus. God qualified and clothed him when He raised him from the dead. On the Mount of Transfiguration, a vision was given of the resurrected Christ with raiment white and glistening. The book of Revelation also describes his heavenly apparel. After Jesus was resurrected, God made the declaration: "Thou art My Son, today have I begotten thee." The word "today" refers to the time after the resurrection. The resurrected Christ is qualified and clothed to serve as the High Priest. When Jesus was dead, there was nothing he could do for himself. God had to raise him and provide the new life by which he lives today and forevermore. Jesus did not choose, clothe, or anoint himself. God had to do all of this for him.

The Lord's willingness to obey is most magnified in the garden of Gethsemene. He did not want to endure the sufferings that were before him but suppressed his own desire in order to obey God. He prayed to God for help and learned obedience.

Hebrews 5:7-9

Who in the days of his flesh, when he had  
offered up prayers and supplications with  
strong crying and tears unto him that was able

to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared;  
 Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;  
 And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;

God's masterful plan for the redemption of mankind had to be carried out exactly the way He laid it out. Jesus is man's redeemer because he was completely obedient. He is the perfect High Priest, and eternal salvation is available because of him.

### **Melchizedek**

Although the Aaronic priesthood provides the detailed type for Jesus the Christ, there was another priest after whom he is patterned. Melchizedek lived over 400 years before Aaron did.

Hebrews 5:6

As he saith also in another *place*, Thou *art* a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.<sup>23</sup>

Psalms 110, one of the great messianic psalms, prophesied that Jesus would be after the order of Melchizedek. Of all the men written about in the Scriptures, only Melchizedek held the same dual position that Christ would—that of both king and priest.

Hebrews 7:1 and 2

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<sup>23</sup> Melchisedec is a transliteration from the Greek; whereas Melchizedek is a transliteration from the Hebrew.

For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him;

To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace;

The Christ had to be anointed King after the manner of David. He was to be a descendant of David which meant that he would be from the tribe of Judah. The Christ also had to be anointed High Priest. Aaron and his children were of the tribe of Levi. Therefore, Jesus was not a priest after Aaron but rather after Melchizedek.

Psalms 76:2 indicates that Salem is the same as Jerusalem. Just like the Christ, Melchizedek was the king of Jerusalem and the priest of the most high God. Today, Jesus Christ is seated at the right hand of God and serves as the High Priest. When he returns, he will rule the world as King and Priest in his capital city, Jerusalem, and fulfill the prophecy related to Melchizedek.

The book of Hebrews progresses to show that Melchizedek's priesthood is greater than Aaron's. Abraham, the father of believing, was in subjection to Melchizedek and gave him tithes of all. The twelve tribes, including Levi, were descendants of Abraham; therefore they were of less significance than Melchizedek. The Levitical priesthood was inferior to that of Melchizedek and therefore to that of Christ as well.

Hebrews 7:14-19

For *it is* evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood.

And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest,

Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life.

For he testifieth, Thou *art* a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof.

For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope *did*; by the which we draw nigh unto God.

Connecting Jesus the Christ with Melchizedek ties him to the covenant made to Abraham, which is far superior to the covenant given to Moses. The Abrahamic covenant is everlasting, whereas the Mosaic covenant had an end. Jesus is given a better covenant.

Hebrews 7:22

By so much was Jesus made a surety [guarantee] of a better testament.

A covenant has a solemn promise. Moses was given promises pertaining to this life. The covenant given to Abraham is associated with the covenant ushered in by Christ and relates to everlasting life.

Hebrews 8:6-9

But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.

For if that first *covenant* had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second.

For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah:

Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.

The covenant Jesus ushered in was prophesied of in Ezekiel and will be fulfilled when he returns, as is recorded in the book of Revelation.

Hebrews 8:10-13

For this *is* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:

And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.

For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.

In that he saith, A new *covenant*, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old *is* ready to vanish away.

## Sacrifice

Starting with Cain and Abel, the Bible reveals that sacrifices were God-inspired and practiced by spiritually minded people. The brothers' sacrifices show clearly, right from the beginning, that those that are acceptable are offered in accordance with God's instruction. Abel's was honored; and Cain's was rejected (because Abel obeyed God, and Cain offered according to his own determination).

After the flood, Noah built an altar and offered from every clean beast and clean fowl a burnt offering unto the Lord. Throughout the time of the patriarchs, animal sacrifice was common. With Moses, God gave very specific, detailed information (subsequently written in the Law) about the sacrifices. Once the tabernacle was built, all sacrifices were to be offered there by the priests.

God supplied precise information about the sacrifices that the priests were required to do. These included the following sacrifices: the daily (morning and evening), first day of the month, Feast of Weeks, day of blowing the trumpet, day of atonement, and Feast of Tabernacles. (See Numbers 28 and 29 for more details.) In addition to these required sacrifices, God gave exact instruction for the Israelites to make voluntary ones. The book of Leviticus contains full information about these sacrifices. The five sacrifices were the burnt sacrifices, meat offering, peace offering, sin offering and trespass offering.

If the children of Israel would have literally carried out these many sacrifices, the brazen altar would have been perpetually burning. The smoke from the altar would be constantly in view. The odor of the burning meat would have continually penetrated the whole of the camp. The undesirable parts of the animals, such as their skin, heads, legs, unclean innards, and dung, were carried outside the camp to be burned. Therefore, another fire burned

perpetually with a similar smoke and smell. God appointed thousands of Levites to carry out the tabernacle service which was indeed a monumental undertaking. When we consider all of this, we see that **sacrifices** were to be of primary importance to the children of Israel. They were constantly reminded by them of their sinfulness, separation from God, and the continued need for a substitutionary sacrifice for their sin. Sacrifice was so pronounced throughout Israel's history because it was central to God's plan of redemption. Reconciliation for mankind was contingent upon the perfect sin offering: Jesus the Christ.

II Corinthians 5:21

For he hath made him *to be* sin [sin offering] for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

The sacrifices and offerings of the Law were a type for the final and perfect sin offering. God's plan for redemption was ordained before the Law; therefore, He set the pattern for Christ within the Law.

I Peter 1:18-20

Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation *received* by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you,

Some noteworthy specifications for the sacrifices should be acknowledged in that they relate to Jesus, the final and

perfect sacrifice. The person offering had to do so by his own voluntary will. Any other motive would not suffice. God required the right heart in order for the sacrifice to be acceptable. The animal selected was to be without blemish, the best of the flock. The sacrifice was brought to the door of the tabernacle courtyard. The offerer placed his hands on the animal which represented that the sins of the man passed to the sacrifice. The offerer then killed the animal. The priest took the blood of the animal and placed it on the designated location. The animal was then cut up by the priest as God had instructed. The appropriate parts were offered on the altar. The undesirable parts were taken outside of the camp to be burned.

Jesus offered himself according to his own voluntary will. Neither God nor anyone else forced him to surrender his life to the suffering and crucifixion. The animals were to be without blemish; in like manner, Jesus was perfect in every way. He was sinless and therefore without blemish. As the offerer identified with the animal, so the believer is identified with Christ. Our sins were transferred to him, and he died in our place. The people for whom the animal died were the ones who killed it; likewise Jesus was killed by the people whom he came to redeem. Jesus brought his own blood into the holiest of all, heaven itself, and presented it for the atonement of mankind.

Hebrews 9:11-14, 24-26

But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building;

Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption *for us*.

For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh:  
How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God....

For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, *which are* the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:  
Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others;  
For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

The offerer was required to do his part, but only the priest could make atonement for him. After God explained each sacrifice in the book of Leviticus, the following was repeated: "The priest shall make an atonement for them, and it [their sin] shall be forgiven them."

The Levitical priesthood and the animal sacrifices were very limited in their effectiveness; however, they did provide a graphic pattern which Jesus Christ has followed. The atonement he provides is eternal.

Hebrews 10:1-14

For the law having a shadow of good things to come, *and* not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.

For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins.

But in those *sacrifices there is* a remembrance again *made* of sins every year.

For *it is* not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.

Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me:

In burnt offerings and *sacrifices* for sin thou hast had no pleasure.

Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God. Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and *offering* for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure *therein*; which are offered by the law;

Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.

By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once *for all*.

And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins:

But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;

From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.

For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

## Mediator

The high priest of old was the mediator between God and man. The children of Israel were to have utmost respect for him. When some rose up against Aaron, they were destroyed.<sup>24</sup> God demanded that the people honor His anointed. The priest spoke to them on behalf of God. They were to obey his words. However, no direction is ever given that people worship the priest in the stead of God. Neither did any direct their prayers to the priest. Everyone understood that he was a mediator and was not God Himself.

Jesus is clearly set forth as the High Priest and, as such, the mediator between God and man.

I Timothy 2:5

For *there is* one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;

Since Jesus the Christ offered himself on our behalf and continues to serve as our High Priest, indeed we are humbly thankful. We stand in awe and hold the deepest reverence and respect for him. He is our Lord, and we are to obey his words. However, while he walked the earth, he always would insist that his followers glorify and worship God. He never allowed himself to be worshipped in the place of God. He instructed his disciples to pray to God in his name.<sup>25</sup>

Jesus is not God; rather, he is the High Priest. To worship him in the place of God denies all the things for

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<sup>24</sup> Korah, Dathan, and Abiram rebelled against Moses and Aaron. God certified that Aaron was His selected high priest, and the rebels were swallowed up by the earth. (Numbers 16 and 17).

<sup>25</sup> John 14:13 and 14; 15:16; 16:23-27.

which he suffered and died. His ministry was, and is, to bring man back to God.

Jesus indeed is in a very esteemed position in that no man comes to the Father but by him (John 14:6). Righteousness and redemption are by the faith of Jesus Christ (Romans 3:21-25; Galatians 2:16).<sup>26</sup> We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1). Through him we have received the atonement (Romans 5:11). Wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption are all graciously given to us by God through Jesus Christ (I Corinthians 1:30).

The Church Epistles (Romans through II Thessalonians) communicate that which has been accomplished for us by Jesus Christ. When he returns, those who have been faithful unto the end will realize all that has been promised to us by faith. In that day redemption, salvation, and righteousness will be manifested forth forevermore. Until then, we are to remain faithful to our God and our Lord Jesus Christ.

### **King/Priest**

We have seen in chapter 6, "Jesus the Christ," that he was anointed to be King. In this chapter, we have acknowledged that he was also anointed to be the High Priest. He has ascended into heaven and is currently seated at the right hand of God. In the holy of holies, he faithfully serves as the High Priest. He will remain there until his enemies become his footstool.

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<sup>26</sup> "The faith of Jesus Christ" implies everything he accomplished by his faith and obedience. He had faith in God which means he believed or trusted in the words God spoke to him. Obedience always corresponds with faith. Because Jesus had faith, he was always obedient.

Psalms 110:1

The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.

At the appropriate time appointed by God, he will return and reign as King and High Priest over all the earth. Then the resurrection of the just will take place. All those in the grave who have believed will be raised. Those believers who are still alive will be changed. Unbelievers will still inhabit the earth. This will continue for 1,000 years, and the devil will be locked in chains. During this time, the just ones will reign and serve as kings and priests with Christ.

Revelation 1:5 and 6

And from Jesus Christ, *who is* the faithful witness, *and* the first begotten of the dead, and the prince [ruler] of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him *be* glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Revelation 5:9 and 10

And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

At the end of the 1,000 years, Satan will be loosed for a season after which he will be destroyed forever. The

resurrection of the unjust will occur. Those who are in this resurrection will be cast into the lake of fire and be part of the second death. All evil, including the grave and death, will also be destroyed. After all of this, the Kingdom will be delivered up to God (I Corinthians 15:24-28). Then Paradise will be reestablished on earth, and God will dwell among His people.

Revelation 21:1-4

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.

And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, *and be* their God.

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

When all of this comes to pass, we will no longer need a High Priest. Forevermore, the righteous will be with God.



## ***The Coming Kingdom***

**S**ince everything about ***Jesus the Christ*** points towards God's coming Kingdom, a biblical overview of future events is a fitting way to conclude.

Shortly before Jesus was taken captive, his disciples asked of him, "...what *shall be* the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world [*aion* - age]?" His immediate response was a caution which remains vital to heed.

Matthew 24:4

And Jesus answered and said unto them,  
Take heed that no man deceive you.

Many Scriptures give detailed information about the end times. However, just as the tabernacle and other parts of the old covenant were a shadow of that which Christ would do the first time, the end times are often presented in a figurative, shadowy, enigmatic form. We must very diligently study the whole of the Scriptures while praying for God's insight in order to gain understanding. The deceptions regarding this subject are indeed rampant, so we must make a point to heed our Lord's warning.

Jesus provided a thumbnail summary of the end times in response to their question. The first thing will be the beginning of sorrows.

Matthew 24:5-14

For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.

And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all *these things* must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.

All these *are* the beginning of sorrows.

Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake.

And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.

And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.

And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.

But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

The following are some of the signs that will come before the end of the world:

- many will say, "I am Christ" and shall deceive many
- wars and rumors of wars
- nation (ethnic group) shall rise up against nation
- kingdom against kingdom
- famines, pestilences, earthquakes in many places
- people will be afflicted, killed, hated for his name's sake

- many shall offend, betray, and hate one another
- many false prophets shall deceive many
- iniquity shall abound
- love of many shall wax cold
- Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world

During the Feast of Pentecost after the ascension of our Lord, Peter explained that the outpouring of the holy spirit corresponded with prophecy recorded in the book of Joel. The prophecy declares that when the things come to pass that Peter and the others had just experienced, the beginning of the last days will have started. This Pentecost was virtually the beginning of the Christian Church and also marked the beginning of the last days.

All the events Jesus spoke of regarding the beginning of sorrows have already come to pass and still happen. We are in the last days. The Lord continued and said the following.

Matthew 24:15

When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)

Prophecy recorded in the book of Daniel declares that a king of fierce countenance will arise, preside over the city of Jerusalem, and set up the abomination of desolation. In the book of Revelation, he is called the beast (Revelation 13:1 and 2). In the book of II Thessalonians, he is called the son of perdition (II Thessalonians 2:1-4). Besides the beast, the book of Revelation also speaks of the false prophet that shall rise up (Revelation 13:11-15; 16:13).

The false prophet assists this king to become the last

great world power before Christ returns. Apparently, from Jerusalem he will orchestrate the great tribulation.

Matthew 24:16-21

Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains:

Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house:

Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.

And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!

But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day:

For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

The great tribulation is not the same as the wrath of God. Christians are not told that they are spared from the tribulation but rather to expect it (John 16:33). If we are alive during the great tribulation and stand, we will be saved from God's wrath (Romans 5:9; I Thessalonians 1:10; 5:9). Although this tribulation will be great, the promise of God is that this time will be shortened.

Matthew 24:22

And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

Many references in the Scriptures indicate that this period of time will be only three and a half years (Daniel 7:25; 12:6 and 7,11; Revelation 11:2 and 3; 12:12-14; 13:5). During this time, many false prophets will say that Christ has

come. However when Christ returns, everyone will clearly know for he is coming back in a most glorious, obvious manner.

Matthew 24:23-30

Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here *is* Christ, or there; believe *it* not.

For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if *it were* possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

Behold, I have told you before.

Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, *he is* in the secret chambers; believe *it* not.

For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.

Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:

And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

When he returns, the resurrection of the just will occur. In this resurrection, all believers who have died will be raised again. The believers who are alive at his coming will be transformed simultaneously with the resurrected ones.

Matthew 24:31

And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

I Thessalonians 4:16 and 17

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

Then we which are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

Daniel 12:1 and 2

And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation *even* to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.

And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame *and* everlasting contempt.

Many Scriptures speak regarding the glorious day when Jesus the Christ will return. In that day, the beast and the false prophet will be destroyed.

II Thessalonians 2:8

And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of

his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:

Revelation 19:11, 16, 19-21

And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him *was* called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.

And he hath on *his* vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army.

And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which *sword* proceeded out of his mouth....

The prophets and the apostles wrote about the many events that will occur during the Lord's day. The wrath of God will have a cataclysmic impact upon the earth. The stars will fall from heaven (Matthew 24:29; Revelation 6:13); the heavens being on fire will dissolve; the earth will also break up and melt with liquid heat (II Peter 3:10 and 12; Micah 1:4); one third of the vegetation on the earth will burn up (Revelation 8:7); one third of the sea and the creatures therein will burn and die (Revelation 8:8 and 9); one third of

mankind will be killed by fire and brimstone (Revelation 9:18). Those who have faith in Christ will be saved from this terrible wrath to come.

I Thessalonians 1:10

And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, *even* Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.

The wrath of God may begin to be poured out during the time of the great tribulation, it may come while the just are gathered in the air with Christ, or it may come at the time Christ comes back to earth. Whenever it occurs, the faithful in Christ will be saved from the wrath just as Israel was saved from God's wrath upon Pharaoh in Egypt.

After all these events, Jesus the Christ will begin to rule in his Kingdom on earth. All the nations of the world will be brought into subjection to him. The resurrected saints will reign with him for 1,000 years. Satan will be chained in the bottomless pit during this time.

Revelation 20:1-6

And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.

And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years,

And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.

And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and *I saw*

the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received *his* mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This *is* the first resurrection.

Blessed and holy *is* he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

The 1,000 year reign begins with the earth in disarray. However, there will be a restoration of all things.

Acts 3:21

Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution [restoration] of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.

This time is also called regeneration in Matthew 19:28 and Titus 3:5. The regeneration is the production of a new life, a re-creation. The changes are going to be radical and encompass everyone and everything. The undesirable and unproductive geographic features of the earth will be changed. Valleys will be exalted, and mountains will be brought low (Isaiah 40:4). Deserts and wildernesses will flourish with water and vegetation (Isaiah 35:7; 41:18 and 19; 43:19).

The weapons of war will be burned with fire for the first

seven years after Christ returns (Ezekiel 39:9). All war will end, and the weapons will be molded into tools of agriculture (Isaiah 2:4; Micah 4:3). Animals will be vegetarians and peacefully co-exist with each other and mankind (Isaiah 11:6-9; 65:25). All of these changes will evolve until, in the end, Paradise will be fully established on the earth.

At the end of the 1,000 years, Satan will be loosed for a short time. He will attempt to deceive the nations into revolting against Christ. However, he will be destroyed and cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:7-10).

At this time, the second resurrection, that of the unjust, will come to pass.

Revelation 20:11-13

And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.

And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book of life*: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell [the grave] delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.

Finally, at the end of the 1,000 years, all those who are not written in the book of life along with death and the grave will be cast into the lake of fire.

Revelation 20:14 and 15

And death and hell [the grave] were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

After all of this, Jesus the Christ will deliver the Kingdom to his Father (I Corinthians 15:24-28).

Then God will rule over all and dwell among His people. Mankind will live with Christ and God in a new heaven and new earth. Again the tree of life will be in the midst and give life and healing to the nations of the world (Revelation 22).

After Jesus explained the events of the end times, he clarified that no one knows the precise day or time.

Matthew 24:36-41

But of that day and hour knoweth no *man*, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. But as the days of Noe *were*, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark,

And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

Two *women shall be* grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

We can be absolutely sure that Jesus the Christ is coming back even though no one knows the exact time. We should conduct our lives in light of his coming.

Matthew 24:42-44

Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.

But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up.

Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.

Throughout our Lord's ministry, he constantly taught his disciples to live in light of the coming Kingdom. In like manner, he ended his teaching about the end times with the same exhortation. He gave three descriptive parables which emphasized the importance of governing our behavior today in light of his return. The first is about two servants who were given the stewardship over the absent master's house. The wise servant ruled well and was rewarded upon the master's return. The evil servant neglected his responsibility and partied instead. He was punished when the master returned (Matthew 24:45-51).

The next parable is about the ten virgins—five wise and five foolish. The wise were prepared when the bridegroom came. The foolish were not prepared. The wise were invited to the wedding, whereas the foolish were denied (Matthew 25:1-12). The following was the Lord's exhortation.

Matthew 25:13

Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.

The third parable was about a man who left his home and gave the responsibility to steward his goods to three servants. One was given five talents, another two, and the

last one. Upon his return, he had the servants give account of their stewardship. The first two invested wisely; therefore they were rewarded. The third did nothing with what he was given; therefore, he was punished (Matthew 25:14-30). Following these three parables, Jesus clearly explained that he is going to judge everyone when he returns.

Matthew 25:31-34

When the Son of man shall come in his glory,  
and all the holy angels with him, then shall he  
sit upon the throne of his glory:

And before him shall be gathered all nations:  
and he shall separate them one from another,  
as a shepherd divideth *his* sheep from the  
goats:

And he shall set the sheep on his right hand,  
but the goats on the left.

Then shall the King say unto them on his right  
hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit  
the kingdom prepared for you from the  
foundation of the world:

His final words of this very powerful presentation are a fitting conclusion to this book. He gives us a snapshot view of the dialogue that will transpire when he judges. We must all determine today which conversation we want to have with Jesus the Christ when he returns.

Matthew 25:35-46

For I was an hungred, and ye gave me  
meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink:  
I was a stranger, and ye took me in:  
Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and  
ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came  
unto me.

Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed *thee*? or thirsty, and gave *thee* drink?

When saw we thee a stranger, and took *thee* in? or naked, and clothed *thee*?

Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done *it* unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done *it* unto me.

Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:

For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink:

I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.

Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?

Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did *it* not to one of the least of these, ye did *it* not to me.

And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life

eternal.



# **APPENDIX**



# ***Three Days and Three Nights***

written by John Cortright

Matthew 12:40

For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

**J**esus Christ boldly declared the prophecy concerning his own death and subsequent three days and three nights in the grave. As his statement stands in God's Word, it is very clear, simple, and easy to understand. However, when this verse is compared with the teachings of our day and time, it poses a conflict in our thinking regarding the day that Jesus Christ died. Traditionally, Christians widely accept that Jesus Christ died on the afternoon of that which is called "Good Friday," and that his resurrection occurred early on Sunday morning. How could Jesus Christ have died on Friday afternoon, been buried for three days and three nights, and have risen early on Sunday? This study will provide clarity of understanding to those hungering to know the truth regarding this subject.

Jesus Christ stated: "thy [God's] word is truth" (John 17:17). The Scriptures did not come from the will of men (II Peter 1:21), but rather **all** Scripture is given by inspiration of God (II Timothy 3:16). God's work is perfect (Deuteronomy 32:4); His way is perfect (II Samuel 22:31); and His Law is perfect (Psalms 19:7). Being a perfect Word, it cannot contain any error. We must come to the Scriptures with the greatest reverence and concern.

II Timothy 2:15

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

To be approved before God, we are told to study. Here, the basic meaning of the word "study" is to put forth diligent effort. This verse further says we are to be workmen who need not be ashamed as we rightly divide the Word of truth.

Matthew 15:1-3

Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they wash not their hands when they eat bread. But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?

Traditions of men are not to supersede the commandments of God. The tradition discussed here in Matthew was to wash hands before eating bread. Though not an evil thing in itself, the tradition had been elevated to greater importance than the commandment of God. Therefore, Jesus Christ took issue.

Likewise today in Christianity, we have numerous traditions of men. These customs are not necessarily evil nor good, but are simply traditional. Many times these traditions enhance our lives and bring us into remembrance of that which God has done for us. However, in order to come to a knowledge of the truth, we must be willing to set aside tradition, if necessary.

Nowhere in the Bible does the term "Good Friday" or "Easter Sunday" ever appear.<sup>27</sup> These terms come from the traditions of men. Having said that, I also would like to point out that the purpose of this study is not to ridicule tradition; nor is its purpose to rally towards changing traditions. It is presented simply to help bring understanding of the Scriptures.

Besides conflicting with tradition, the three days and three nights of Matthew 12:40 present another difficulty in comparison with certain other Scriptures.

Mark 9:31

For he taught his disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed, he shall rise **the third day**.

Luke 18:33

And they shall scourge *him*, and put him to death: and **the third day** he shall rise again.

I Corinthians 15:4

And that he was buried, and that he rose again **the third day** according to the scriptures:

These verses clearly state that Jesus Christ would rise "the third day." Matthew 12:40 says that he would be in "the heart of the earth," or buried, for three days and three nights. How could one be buried for three full days and

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<sup>27</sup> The word "Easter" appears in the King James Version in Acts 12:4. However, the Greek texts clearly show that this is incorrect and should have been translated "Passover."

nights and still rise on the third day? This apparent contradiction lies in our understanding. When the scriptural evidence is approached logically and biblical time reckoning is considered, these verses harmonize with astounding accuracy. A brief study of the Passover will help pinpoint details and provide insight as to the exact days Jesus Christ died and rose.

## **Biblical Time Reckoning**

Whenever reading the Bible, we must keep in mind that it was written in a different time and culture than that of the Western world today. There were some significant differences in how the people of the Bible measured hours, days, weeks, months, and years.

As we study this topic of three days and three nights, comprehending the start of the Judean day is vitally important. In understanding biblical time reckoning, perhaps one of the greatest errors made concerns the beginning and ending of a day. The meaning of "day" was first presented in Genesis.

Genesis 1:5

And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.

This shows the two ways that the word "day" is used in the Bible. First of all, it represented that part of a day which had light. Secondly, a day referred to a full 24 hours containing both an evening and a morning. This full 24 hour day started with the evening and ended with the morning. In other words, the new day started at sunset. This

reckoning of a day is used throughout the Bible. At first, we may have difficulty grasping the concept of starting a day at sunset, but when honestly considering how we currently start a day, we can see their logic. We technically start our day in the middle of the night at midnight.

No names were given to the days of the week as we do today (Sunday, Monday, etc.); but rather the days of the week were numbered. The first day of the week corresponds to our Sunday; the second corresponds to Monday; the third was Tuesday, and so on. The seventh day of the week corresponds to our Saturday and was called the Sabbath.

The daylight hours were divided into 12 equal parts. The length of these hours would vary depending on the time of year. In the winter, these hours were shorter; and in the summer, they were longer. When Jesus Christ died, which was spring, the hours would have been approximately 60 minutes each. For time reference in this study, we will place: sunrise at 6 a.m., the third hour of the day at 9 a.m., the sixth hour at noon, and the ninth hour at 3 p.m. We will put sunset (the start of a new day) at approximately 6 p.m. The reader should be aware that these time references are only approximate and are given simply to aid our understanding. The Scriptures regarding the day that Jesus Christ died refer to certain hours and help pinpoint the time of his crucifixion and death.

Mark 15:25

And it was the third hour, and they crucified him.

Luke 23:44

And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour.

Matthew 27:46, 50

And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice...

Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.

Not any one Gospel gives all the details surrounding the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. However, when we compare the narratives one with another, we are presented with a very detailed yet simple picture of that which transpired. He was crucified at the third hour, approximately nine in the morning. From about the sixth hour until the ninth hour, or from about noon until three o'clock in the afternoon, darkness was over all the earth. Then at about 3 p.m., our Lord and Savior gave his life on the cross. Look how beautifully God's Word fits!

### **Jesus Christ Our Passover**

Next, we will consider the significance of Jesus Christ as our Passover.

I Corinthians 5:7

Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us:

The perfection with which God redeemed man through the work of His Son is breathtaking. The Passover is one of the great subjects to understand regarding the accomplished works of Jesus Christ. He fulfilled the legal requirements as the Passover Lamb in every detail.

John 1:29

The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

I Peter 1:18 and 19

Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold, from your vain conversation *received* by tradition from your fathers;

But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:

The Passover was instituted by God way back in the time of Moses. The children of Israel were living in captivity in Egypt. God sent Moses to tell Pharaoh to let His people go. Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he would not listen to Moses' words. Then a series of plagues came upon Egypt. In the final plague, the destroyer was sent throughout the land of Egypt at midnight to kill all the firstborn in the land. God gave instructions to Moses to have the Israelites slay a lamb, eat its flesh, and put its blood on their doorposts. The destroyer would then **pass over** these homes, and the firstborn children of Israel would be protected from the plague. Details regarding the slaying of the Passover lamb and the eating of the Passover meal are given in Exodus 12. This Passover also began the Feast of Unleavened Bread. We must comprehend the timing of these events to understand details regarding the death of Jesus Christ.

Exodus 12:1-6

And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt saying,

This month *shall* be unto you the beginning of months: it *shall be* the first month of the year to you.

Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth *day* of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of *their* fathers, a lamb for an house:

And if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next unto his house take *it* according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb.

Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take *it* out from the sheep, or from the goats:

And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening.

Thus began the first month of the Hebrew calendar. At the time of the Babylonian captivity, this month was known as Nisan (Esther 3:7). It occurred in the spring, around the time of our March and April.

Exodus 12:18

In the first *month*, on the fourteenth day of the month at even, ye shall eat unleavened bread, until the one and twentieth day of the month at even.

The Passover lamb was to be slain on the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan at "even." The term "even," or literally "between the evenings," refers to any time in the afternoon from the

sun's high point at noon until its decline below the horizon at sunset. This timing becomes significant when we carefully consider Jesus Christ's death.

Next let us consider when the lamb was eaten.

Exodus 12:8

And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; *and* with bitter *herbs* they shall eat it.

The lamb was to be eaten that night before midnight, when the destroyer would smite the land. Since the Hebrew day started at sunset, this means that although the lamb was to be slain on the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan in the afternoon, it would not be eaten until the next day, the 15<sup>th</sup> of Nisan. The 15<sup>th</sup> of Nisan started the weeklong Feast of Unleavened Bread. That year, this first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread was a special Sabbath day.

Exodus 12:14-16

And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever.

Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread; even the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses: for whosoever eateth leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel.

And in the first day *there shall be* an holy convocation, and in the seventh day there shall be an holy convocation to you; no manner of work shall be done in them, save

*that* which every man must eat, that only may be done of you.

Leviticus 23:6 and 7

And on the fifteenth day of the same month *is* the feast of unleavened bread unto the Lord: seven days ye must eat unleavened bread. In the first day ye shall have an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein.

The Passover lamb was to be slain on the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan in the afternoon. Then at sunset the 15<sup>th</sup> of Nisan began, and the lamb was eaten. The first day, starting at sunset, was a holy convocation, a special Sabbath day. Jesus Christ fulfilled every aspect of the Law as our Passover Lamb. Putting this information together with that which we have already considered, we can see that the day Jesus Christ died was the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan, and that he died at the ninth hour, around three o'clock in the afternoon. It was the exact time when the Passover lamb was slain. At sunset that night, a new day started—the 15<sup>th</sup> of Nisan which would have been a special Sabbath day. Having this understanding, we can now exactly determine the days of the week that Jesus Christ died and rose.

### **The Day Jesus Christ Died**

The 15<sup>th</sup> of Nisan began the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The first day of the feast was a special Sabbath day and was different from the weekly Sabbath. It could have occurred on any day of the week and would have taken

precedence over the weekly Sabbath. This is not unlike that which we have in Christianity today with our celebration of Christmas. Sunday is considered by most people to be the day set aside as the Christian's "Sabbath day," so to speak. But Christmas, December 25<sup>th</sup>, is given more of a celebration than the weekly Sunday service. Christmas can take place on any day of the week. Understanding the precedence given a special day becomes very important when we consider an event in the Gospel of John which took place right after Jesus died.

John 19:31

The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken and *that* they might be taken away.

Not recognizing which "Sabbath day" is being discussed in this verse has caused much misunderstanding regarding the day Jesus Christ died. Perhaps the term "Good Friday" came from thinking this was talking about the weekly Sabbath. However, the verse very clearly points out that the Sabbath day was not just any Sabbath day, but that it was "an high day." This Sabbath day could have taken place on any day of the week.

So, Jesus Christ died on the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan at around 3 p.m. The Judeans did not want the bodies to remain on the crosses during the special Sabbath day, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which started at sunset. So they besought Pilate to have the legs broken and bodies removed from the crosses. Next, Joseph of Arimathaea, having been granted permission from Pilate, took the body of Jesus Christ. He buried him in a sepulcher before sunset

that night which started the special Sabbath day.

Luke 23:52-54

The *man* went unto Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus.

And he took it down, and wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a sepulchre that was hewn in stone, wherein never man before was laid.

And that day was the preparation, and the sabbath drew on.

Jesus Christ was buried on the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan sometime between three o'clock in the afternoon and sunset. We know from Matthew 12:40 that he was to have been buried in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights, a full 72 hours. That means he would have risen from the dead a full three days later also between 3 p.m. and sunset. If we can figure out the day he rose from the dead, then we can count backwards 72 hours and determine the day of the week that he died. None of the Gospels tell us exactly when he rose from the dead. However, all the records show that early on the first day of the week, our Sunday morning, when his disciples arrived at the tomb, he was already risen from the dead.

Luke 24:1, 4-6

Now upon the first *day* of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain *others* with them.

And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments:

And as they were afraid, and bowed down

*their* faces to the earth, they said unto them,  
Why seek ye the living among the dead?  
He is not here, but is risen: remember how he  
spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee,

Since he was already risen from the dead early on Sunday morning, then he must have been raised from the dead on Saturday, sometime between 3 p.m. and sunset. Counting back three days and three nights, we can determine he would have had to have died on Wednesday afternoon at approximately 3 p.m. and to have been buried before sunset that night. With this understanding, we can see how he could have risen from the dead "the third day." From the time he died on Wednesday, the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan, we can count and see how perfectly the Scriptures fit together. The first day would have been Thursday, the 15<sup>th</sup> of Nisan; the second, Friday, the 16<sup>th</sup> of Nisan; and the third, Saturday, the 17<sup>th</sup> of Nisan. And on that day, sometime between the hours of 3 p.m. and sunset, God raised him from the dead!!

## THE RESURRECTION

	Judean day began	┌ 24 Hrs ┐	┌ 24 Hrs ┐	┌ 24 Hrs ┐	Christ Resurrected
With	14 Nisan	15 Nisan	16 Nisan	17 Nisan	18 Nisan
SUNSET	Died 3 p.m. Was buried before sunset	Passover meal		Weekly Sabbath	Women see empty tomb
		Special Sabbath			SUNSET
	Passover sacrifice	High Day			Jesus Christ is seen alive
		First day of Feast of Unleavened Bread			
		1	2	3	
	Wednesda y	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday

God's Word is truly magnificent! The Word of God, as originally given, is truth and contains no error. When Jesus Christ said that he would be buried in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights, he spoke the truth. And when he said that he would be raised from the dead the third day, he said that which he meant and meant that which he said. The Scriptures are accurate in every detail. Jesus died on Wednesday, the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan, and was raised on Saturday, the 17<sup>th</sup> of Nisan.