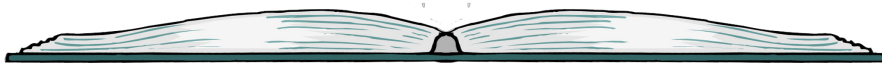


Life of Christ

By

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A GATS Textbook for Life of Christ I (Certificate Level)



An OVERSEAS MINISTRIES TRAINING COURSE Publication
in association with
Global Association of Theological Studies

**NOTE to GATS Teachers and
Bible School Administrators**

This book is designed to serve as a textbook
for Life of Christ I, Certificate Level of GATS

Sponsor's Page:
First Pentecostal Church
Belleville, Ontario

We dedicate this book to faithful saints of First Pentecostal Church of Belleville, Ontario, who sacrificially gave and still give to support world missions.

Shawn Stickler, Lead Pastor
Arnold MacLauchlan, Executive Pastor



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INTRODUCTION

Robertson's Section 1

Gospel	Written to	Showing Him to Be	Message	Key Word	Sacrifice
Mark	Romans	Man of Action	Jesus as Servant	Straightway	Bullock or Ox
Matthew	Jews	Man of Authority	Jesus as Messiah-King	Fulfilled	Turtle, Doves, or Pigeons
Luke	Greeks	Man of Wisdom	Jesus as Ideal Man	Son of Man	Goat
John	General	God in Flesh	Jesus as Son of God	Believe	Lamb

THE MESSIANIC HOPE OF ISRAEL

From the beginning, Israel's prophets had foretold the coming of Messiah who would bring in a new day. God promised Eve that her seed would bruise the serpent's head (Genesis 3:15). Genesis 9:27 states God would dwell in the tents of Shem. Genesis 22:18 indicates the Messiah would spring from the seed of Abraham. Jacob foretold the Messiah would be of the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:10). Moses said He would be a prophet like unto himself (Deuteronomy 18:18).

Later it became known that Messiah would spring from Jesse, and many Psalms described Him (e.g., Psalms 22; 110), revealing the nature of His kingdom. Isaiah described the Suffering Servant in chapters 40-46 as the One who would make propitiation —appeasement or the means by which reconciliation of God and humankind is attained—for the sins of His people. This would be the mighty God becoming priest and intercessor for His people. Other prophets stated He would be born in Bethlehem, would have a forerunner, and would appear suddenly in the Temple (Micah 5:2; Malachi 3:1; 4:5).

Israel's mistaken messianic hope was for a temporal king. They wanted someone to throw off the yoke of Roman imperialism and reestablish the throne of David. Even the apostles asked just prior to the Ascension, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6). Later these same men declared the messiahship of Jesus and interpreted His life, purpose, and death in light of the Old Testament Scriptures.

PURPOSE

The object of this study is to unveil, as far as possible, the wonderful picture of the divine Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ—both His humanity and His deity. The Gospels give four titles to Jesus: Son of David, Son of Abraham, Son of Man, and Son of God. All of these titles are essential. As Son of David, He has title to David's throne. As Son of Abraham, He has right to the land of Palestine and everything included in the Royal Grant of Abraham. As Son of Man, He has claim to the earth and the world. As Son of God, He is the heir of all things.

The goal of this book is to provide a basic text for the study of the life of Christ to be used worldwide in the OVERSEAS MINISTRIES and Global Association of Theological Studies training courses. To do so the authors have striven for simplicity and clarity, while presenting the material chronologically as based on *The Harmony of the Gospels* by A.T. Robertson. Those desiring an in-depth, exegetical study should refer to *Christ of the Gospels* by J.W. Shepard, *Jesus the Messiah* by Alfred Edersheim, and *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ* by J. Dwight Pentecost. The bibliography lists other helpful books.

THE FOUR GOSPELS

Our knowledge of Jesus comes from many sources; both pagan literature and Josephus, the Jewish historian, mention Him. Josephus was afraid to say too much about Jesus, as he could say only good things and thereby condemn his own people. He even apologized for the Crucifixion and laid the blame to the harsh judgment of the Sadducees. Likewise, Christian sources, such as the Epistles and the writings of the church fathers, teach us much about Jesus. Of course, the four Gospels are the principal sources of information.

The first three Gospels are called the "Synoptics," meaning they are much alike in content, order, and statements. For example, in comparing Matthew, Mark, and Luke, we find they agree on the general order of events, as well as content. Mark wrote his Gospel first; thus, his book served as a chronological framework for Matthew and Luke, the results of which are listed below.

1. Three-fourths of Matthew is a duplication of Mark, and eleven-twelfths of Mark is reproduced in Matthew, in the same or slightly different form.
2. Three-fourths of Mark is also found in Luke.
3. Altogether, matter particular to Mark constitutes less than one chapter: Mark 4:26-29; 14:51-52.
4. Of eighty-eight incidents, the Synoptics have seventy-one in common.
5. The general plan and order of the three Synoptics are the same.

However, even with the similarities, there are differences between the Synoptics:

1. Seventeen incidents are included in only one or two of the Gospels.
2. Slight differences occur in the narratives of the same event and the order of the temptation of Jesus.

3. There are a few verbal differences in parallel accounts.

The fourth Gospel, John, is apologetic and not primarily biographical.

Why four Gospels? During the time of Christ, there were three great national groups involved in world affairs: Romans, Greeks, and Jews. Each of these three groups had its own solution for the ills of the world. The four Gospels were written to these three groups, informing them that Jesus Christ has the only remedy. As indicated by the chart at the beginning of this introduction, Mark's audience was the Romans who liked action; Matthew wrote to the Jews who longed for Messiah to fulfill Old Testament prophecy; and Luke penned his account of the One full of wisdom for the Greeks who desired the ideal man. John's account has universal appeal, showing the deity of Jesus.

However, perhaps surprisingly, the four Gospels are not given as books of salvation. Instead, their purpose is to reveal the great price Jesus paid to purchase a church. This revelation contains several important events.

1. The birth and ministry of John the Baptist
2. The birth of Jesus
3. The life of Jesus
4. The ministry of Jesus
5. The calling of His disciples
6. His miracles
7. His sufferings
8. His death, burial, and resurrection
9. His ascension

Yet, we do not find in the Gospels any church established, anyone receiving the Holy Ghost, or anyone saved in the New Testament church. Why? Because the church was purchased on Calvary by the shed blood of Christ. (See Hebrews 9:16-17; 9:22.)

Even though the Bible consists of many parts, it is yet a complete whole. The key to its construction is the One who called Himself the "Son of Man" and who His ablest apostle called "the Lord from heaven" (I Corinthians 15:47). Any attempt to study the Bible without respect to Him must result in confusion. He is its principal unifier. He is its secret of power! Jesus is the way that man must travel to a deeper consciousness and understanding of the mystery of life. Modern Christianity has laid much stress on service and especially on method, thereby losing motive, power, and vision. Jesus Christ can lead us into a deeper experience of the sublime! He will usher us into the presence of the living God—if we will let Him.

The Gospel According to Mark

Being written before AD 65 in Rome, the Gospel of Mark is recognized as the oldest of the four. It probably most closely represents the actual course and order in the incidents of the life of Jesus and served as a chronological framework for the other Gospel writers. It is the simplest and shortest of the four, but it is rich in detail and dramatic presentation while being graphic and

animated in style. Mark vividly portrayed the powerful deeds and the looks and gestures of Jesus in the common language of the people.

Mark's purpose in writing was preeminently practical; he wrote to impress the pragmatic Romans. Consequently, he made few references to the Old Testament, frequently explained Jewish words and customs (Mark 3:17; 5:41; 7:3, 11, 34; 14:12; 15:42), and often chose Latin words, such as *legion* and *centurion*.

Mark's Gospel was admirably fitted to the Roman citizen, a man of action, as the whole tone of the book reflects Peter's energetic and impulsive nature. The volume has been commonly called "Peter's Gospel." His influence can be seen in the following points.

1. The many graphic details that indicate an eyewitness
2. The nervous energy of the narrative, characteristic of Peter's temperament
3. Two passages (Mark 9:5-6; 11:21) that directly reflect Peter's own thoughts
4. The fact that Mark wrote both from the standpoint of the Twelve, and more frequently than Matthew, from the standpoint of the three honored apostles, one of whom was Peter
5. The omission of some things creditable to Peter (Matthew 16:16-19) and the inclusion of other things not creditable (Mark 8:33; 14:30, 68-72), indicating Peter's influence

There are some indications that Mark did not write his Gospel until after Peter's death. In fact, it was possibly the loss of Peter that prompted Mark's writing, for it was written not long after the terrible persecution began under Nero when Christians were being crucified in mockery of the punishment of Jesus. Some were sewn in skins of wild beasts and mad dogs were turned loose on them in the arena. Others were burned as torches for Nero's pleasure. When we read this Gospel with this bloody background in mind, we see why Mark stressed the sufferings of Jesus and why he gave prominence to his Lord's passion.

The portrait Mark painted of Christ is that of the Servant. As the average Roman reader would care little for doctrine or teaching, but a great deal for action, he emphasized the deeds of the Lord, not His words, citing nineteen miracles but only four parables. Mark also described the activities of Jesus and the opposition He met from the beginning, which increased until the tragic end. Eleven times the Lord retired temporarily from the center of attention to escape the fury of His enemies. Likewise, Mark told of the growing enthusiasm and faith of many in spite of this opposition.

The key verse of Mark is 10:45. The plan of the book is chronological, geographical, and topical. Its message portrays Jesus as the Servant. Although it is crowded with incidents, we can identify five divisions.

1. *The Arrival and Identity of the Servant (Mark 1:1-11).*
There is no genealogy, no mention of His birth and infancy. Important as these events are, they would be out of place in a description of a servant.
2. *The Fidelity of the Servant (Mark 1:12-13).*

Only in this book is it recorded that in His temptation Jesus “was with the wild beasts.” (Note I Samuel 17:34-36.) Even in His temptation, the Servant was loyal.

3. *The Servant at Work (Mark 1:14-13:37).*
4. *The Servant Obedient to Death (Mark 14:1-15:47).*
5. *The Risen and Glorified One Still a Servant (Mark 16:1-20).*

The crucified Servant arose! His resurrection can be viewed in the light of service. Note the force and significance of “and Peter” in verse 7. Observe verse 20 where He is still the Worker, working in cooperation with His servants (Hebrews 2:1-4).

The Gospel According to Mark is “what the eye saw.” In it, we see the Jesus of public ministry answering the needs of men by His mighty deeds. Nevertheless, there is more to know of Jesus, and we can find it chiefly in the two Gospels that tell, in addition to what the eye saw, “what the ear heard.”

The Gospel According to Matthew

Matthew’s Gospel was the second of the four written. It is placed first in the New Testament because it links Jesus with Old Testament Law, Prophecy, and Wisdom. This book has been called “the most important book of Christendom,” as it was the most widely read Gospel in the early church. Had it not been for his authorship of this book, Matthew would have been one of the least known of the apostles, for after his call, the Gospels do not record a single word or act of his.

Matthew wrote his Gospel primarily for the Jews. He sought to prove to them that Jesus was the Messiah foretold in Hebrew Scriptures. “*Fulfilled*” is a characteristic word as the writer made no less than sixty references to the Old Testament writings that are fulfilled in Christ.

Matthew 1:1 and 27:37 are key verses in this book. Key words and phrases include *kingdom*, used fifty-five times; *kingdom of heaven*, mentioned thirty-two times; and *Son of David*, used seven times. The words and phrases are in keeping with Matthew’s desire to portray Jesus as the King, the royal seed for whom Israel waited. Matthew also presented Jesus as the Teacher and emphasized His prophetic and miraculous power.

Matthew’s aim was to show that the kingdom of Heaven as proclaimed by Jesus was not something new but a fulfillment of an old hope—Jesus, the Son of David, was the true Messiah. He and His kingdom were first offered to the Jews for their acceptance with warning of the consequences if they chose to reject Him. The events leading up to the Passion are narrated to show that in the face of this warning, the Jews deliberately rejected both the Messiah and His kingdom.

It has been suggested that the immediate purpose of this Gospel was to save the faith of Jewish Christians at a particular crisis, possibly the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus. That was a time of fiery trials for the Jewish Christians. All the signs of the Lord’s coming had occurred, yet He had not returned. Was it possible they had deceived themselves and He was not the Messiah?

Matthew’s Gospel is an appeal to all waverers in the faith to trust the King; He might indeed tarry, but He is nevertheless all that the Christians thought Him to be. He is Israel’s hope and the fulfillment of her prophecies: the true seed of Abraham, the One greater than Moses, the true Son

of David, and the final Judge of His people and of the world. The trials of His people were His trials extended in time. His people's controversies with the Pharisees were a continuation of His controversies. Matthew urged them to stand fast as He had stood fast!

There are nine basic sections in this book.

1. *The King's Birth (Matthew 1:1-2:23).*
The Lord Jesus Christ is the last in Jewish history whose descent from the royal line of David can be fully and clearly established.
2. *The King's Forerunner (Matthew 3:1-17).*
3. *The King's Testing (Matthew 4:1-11).*
Jesus met and vanquished the tempter, refusing to gain the kingdom in any way other than God's divine plan. The first Adam fell in Eden, surrounded by creature comfort; the Second Adam conquered in the wilderness, His body weakened by long abstinence.
4. *The King's Proclamation (Matthew 4:12-25).*
The kingdom of God consists of all who submit themselves to Him, and the entrance into that kingdom is by the new birth (John 3). The kingdom of Heaven is the visible establishment of the kingdom of God on earth.
5. *The King's Laws (Matthew 5:1-7:29).*
6. *The King's Ministry (Matthew 8:1-11:19).*
The King actively worked, healed, and taught among His people Israel.
7. *The King's Rejection (Matthew 11:20-20:34).*
Jesus prophesied concerning the establishment of the church. He gave Peter the keys to the kingdom; in no other place in the Bible did God give so much authority to man.
8. *The King's Entry (Matthew 21:1-25:46).*
The King officially entered His capital. His people gave Him a final and public rejection.
9. *The King's Death and Resurrection (Matthew 26:1-28:20).*
Jesus was slain because He declared Himself King. The rending of the veil in the Temple preceded the rending of the heart of Christ. Yet, the King arose triumphant over death and commissioned His disciples to go into all the world and proclaim His kingdom.

The Gospel According to Luke

The third Gospel has been called "the most beautiful book that has ever been written" and was penned by Luke, the beloved physician, who was probably a Greek. Perhaps the best introduction to this book would be the author's own preface.

Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word; it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed (Luke 1:1-4).

Luke is the universal Gospel, describing Jesus as the Savior of all men, the Seeker of the lost among all peoples, the One through whom all flesh shall see the salvation of God. In this Gospel we learn that Jesus declared He came “to preach the gospel to the poor” (Luke 4:18), we observe His association with publicans and sinners, and we hear His charge to the Twelve to preach repentance and remission of sins in His name “among all nations” (Luke 24:47).

In Luke’s Gospel we find several parables that strike a universal note: “The Good Samaritan,” “The Lost Coin,” “The Lost Sheep,” and “The Prodigal Son,” as well as the accounts of the “The Pharisee and the Publican” and “The Rich Man and Lazarus.” This Gospel sets forth most clearly Jesus’ way of life. It distinctly points out the characteristics of the Christian life such as self-denial and prayer. There are more references to prayer in this Gospel than any other. Luke most explicitly portrayed Jesus setting forth the terms of discipleship (Luke 14:26-27, 33).

Luke is preeminently the Gospel for the young. It tells about the infancy and boyhood of Jesus; it contains more words about young men than any other Gospel. In one sense, it is also the Gospel for women as it gives more prominence to women than the other three books. Only Luke tells in detail about the motherhood of Elisabeth and Mary, about Anna, the aged prophetess, and of the ministering women who sympathized with Jesus on His way to the cross.

Nevertheless, the most characteristic mark of this book is the message of Luke’s writings. Out of the four books, no other has made so clear that the gospel is the good news of God’s love, for in Luke we find the three parables of restoration: “The Lost Coin,” “The Lost Sheep,” and “The Prodigal Son.” They present a picture of God’s love that is found nowhere else in Scripture. Jesus taught that God anticipates the needs of His children (Luke 12:30), that He is concerned about the small details of our lives (Luke 12:7), that He responds quickly to our cry for help (Luke 11:9-13), and that He is kind even to the unthankful and merciful to the sinner (Luke 6:35).

The message of Luke is a clue that it was written primarily to the Greeks. The Roman idea of perfect manliness differed from that of the Grecian idea. The Romans felt it to be their mission to govern man; the Greeks considered it their responsibility to educate, elevate, and perfect man. The Roman ideal possessed military glory and governmental authority; the Grecian ideal embodied wisdom and beauty. Luke’s Gospel presents Jesus as the perfect man, the ideal man, the One who more than met the highest requirements of the Greeks. While he spoke of the deity of Christ, Luke emphasized Christ’s perfect manhood. The Son of Man’s character, as revealed in the Gospel, is intensely human. He is the Son of Man as well as the Son of God.

The key verse is Luke 23:47: “Now when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous man.”

Luke can be divided into five parts.

1. *The Man Made Like Unto His Brethren (Luke 1:1-3:38; Hebrews 2:17).*
Christ is one with us in His descent from Adam, the fountainhead of humanity. He is one with us in the common human relationships, with all their attendant duties and responsibilities (for instance, the first two chapters deal with cousins of Mary), and one with us in our shame and the link of baptism.
2. *The Man Tempted Like as We Are (Hebrews 4:15; Luke 4:1-13).*
Luke views the temptation from the standpoint of man. The devil challenged the first Adam; the Second Adam challenged Satan. The devil ruined the first man; Jesus Christ spoiled the devil. The story of the first Adam ended in defeat; the story of the Last Adam ended in victory.
3. *The Man Touched with the Feelings of Our Infirmities (Hebrews 4:15; Luke 4:14-19:28).*
Luke pictured Jesus as a man to which every man can relate.
 - (a) The Man with cosmopolitan interests, giving those incidents that show His interest in the whole human race, not merely the Jews
 - (b) The Man of wisdom as shown by His teaching
 - (c) The Man of ability
 - (d) The Man full of human sympathy for those fallen, despised, bereaved, despondent, and diseased
 - (e) The Man of prayer
 - (f) The Man of society
 - (g) The Man of beauty and glory
4. *The Man as Our Kinsman-Redeemer (Luke 19:28-23:56).*
When He wept over Jerusalem, Jesus showed His compassion, patriotism, and sorrow over the pending destruction of the city. This became even more evident as He fulfilled the type of the Kinsman-Redeemer. (See Leviticus 25:47-55; Ruth 2:1-23; 3:10-18; 4:1-10.)
5. *The Man Still as Man in Resurrection, Ascension, and Glory (Luke 24:1-53).*
As a man, Jesus walked to Emmaus with two men. As a man, He ate in the upper room, displaying His still perfect humanity. Why? Because salvation only comes through the man Christ Jesus.

The Gospel of Luke begins and ends with rejoicing, all in connection with Jesus!

The Gospel According to John

The Gospel of John, the fourth Gospel, gives Jesus' revelation of Himself to the world and more intimately to His disciples. Written and published at Ephesus at the request of Andrew and

the Asiatic bishops, the apologetic Gospel targeted certain prevalent errors concerning the deity of Christ.

The key word is *believe*. In this Gospel, John presented Jesus Christ as the One whom we are to believe; in John's Epistles, Jesus is the One whom we should love; and in the Revelation, the One for whom we are to wait. What are we to believe? That Jesus is the mighty God (John 8:24; 14:11).

The key verse is 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."

Note two peculiarities of this Gospel. First, the word *Jew* is used over sixty times; but it appears only once in Matthew, twice in Mark, and twice in Luke. Likewise, in contrast to the other books, John contains only eight of the Lord's miracles, all of which show the power of the Lord's Word and of His Word alone.

The portrait John drew of Christ is that of "God manifested in the flesh," "the only begotten of the Father." John showed what it is that convinces men and women of all classes and positions that Jesus is God!

John may be divided into five sections.

1. *Jesus, God Manifested in, the Flesh, Becoming the Son of God in Redemption (John 1:1-14).*

This book begins similar to Genesis.

2. *Jesus, Revealed as Son of God, the Mighty God, by His Deeds and Words (John 1:15-12:50).*

John pointed out what convinced men of Jesus' deity:

- (a) John the Baptist discovered Jesus' deity through baptism (John 1:33).
- (b) Nathaniel was convinced by His omniscience (John 1:48-49).
- (c) The disciples were convinced by His first miracle of turning water into wine (John 2:11).
- (d) Many Jews acknowledged Him as divine by His cleansing of the Temple and performance of many miracles (John 2:23).
- (e) Jesus revealed Himself as deity to Nicodemus (John 3:13-16).
- (f) John the Baptist gave four remarkable testimonies concerning Jesus (John 3:22-36).
- (g) Jesus revealed Himself as deity to the Samaritan woman (John 4:26).
- (h) The Samaritans accepted Him as divine (John 4:41-42).
- (i) The nobleman was convinced that Jesus was divine when he found His word was as effectual as His presence (John 4:53).
- (j) Opposition came because He called God "Father" (John 5:17-18).
- (k) Many were convinced of His divinity by the miracles of the loaves (John 6:14).
- (l) Note: By John 6:35; 8:12, 58; 10:9, 11; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1, Jesus declared Himself to be the complete revelation of the great I AM of the Old Testament.
- (m) Jesus revealed Himself as divine to the healed man (John 9:35-38).

- (n) Martha's confession and the raising of Lazarus (John 11:27).
 - (o) Jesus is at last acknowledged openly as divine by Jew and Gentile (John 12:12-19).
 - (p) Note who sent Him (John 12:44-45).
3. *Jesus, the Son of God, the Mighty God Revealing Himself More Fully to His Own (John 13:1-17:26).*
Jesus manifested Himself more fully to His disciples so their convictions as to His deity were deepened. (See Matthew 11:27; John 14:8-9.)
4. *Jesus, the Son of God, Slain (John 18:1-19:42).*
Note the effect of one brief flash of His divinity in John 18:6. At the time of His trial before Pilate in John 19:7, we see Jesus was slain not only because He declared Himself King, but because He claimed to be Israel's one God!
5. *Jesus, His Claim to Deity Fully Established by His Resurrection (John 20:1-21:25).*
May we all respond as did Thomas, "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28).

Christ spoke of God as "the Father" over one hundred times in this book. The relationship is quite different in the New Testament than in the Old Testament. In the Old Testament, the only time *father* is capitalized is in Isaiah 9:6. Throughout the New Testament, the term is capitalized. What a contrast between the father of Creation and the Father of Redemption! May we recognize our new relationship with God in the New Testament church.

Chapter 1

THE BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD OF CHRIST JESUS

Robertson's Sections 2-19

The birth of Jesus was an advent. The eternal God came into the world on a special mission as the living Word.

THE LOGOS

In the Bible, a “mystery” is a truth God reveals, which is beyond the power of natural reason to find or comprehend. It is a truth known only through faith or revelation; it is incomprehensible to human reasoning. In the New Testament, a “mystery” signifies a distinguishing feature that was a secret from the world until an appointed time. The great mystery revealed through Christ is “God was manifest in the flesh!” (See John 1:1, 14; I Timothy 3:16.)

In his Gospel, John took us back before the beginning of Creation to show who Jesus is. He used the terminology of the philosophers. They had settled upon the term *Logos*, as “that which comprehended the first principle and the prime cause of everything.” This was in keeping with the Greeks who argued that behind each thing there must be a thought that they called *Logos*. Although the Jews accepted this philosophy, they went a step further. They said, “It is true that behind everything there is a thought, but behind every thought there must be a thinker!” It was in this sense that John used the Greek philosophers’ *Logos*. “In the beginning was the Logos, and the Logos was with God, and the Logos was God” (John 1:1).

John then moved on to the whole point of the argument and declared that the Logos, the thought, was made flesh and dwelt among us. And we beheld His glory. To better clarify it, we could substitute the word *plan* for *Word*, *Logos*, or *thought*, and form a paraphrase: “In the beginning was the *Plan*, and the *Plan* was with God, and the *Plan* was that God would be made flesh and dwell among us and we would behold His glory.” John was simply saying that God, the mighty God, the eternal Spirit, clothed Himself in flesh and came to earth in human form, allowing people to see Him with their own eyes and talk with Him. His name is Jesus! (See I John 1:1.)

THE GENEALOGIES

The genealogies of Jesus are introduced into the brief Gospel narratives for three reasons: to show His royal descent from David; to show Him as the Messiah of Hebrew prophecy; to show

His wider human relation with the whole race, going back to the beginning. It is worthwhile to compare the genealogies listed by Matthew and Luke.

Writing for the Jews, Matthew was naturally interested in citing the fact that Jesus was of the royal seed. He therefore traced the family tree from Joseph, the husband of Mary, to David and back to Abraham, the father of the Hebrew race. Matthew used Joseph's ancestry because regal descent was always through the father's side.

The genealogy in Matthew stands at the beginning of the Gospel to validate Jesus' royal Hebrew origin before Matthew introduced any other facts about His life. Matthew listed the successive births as they came. Yet, he did not merely copy the records but selected the names with a purpose. Similarly, contrary to Jewish custom, he named four women: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba. Three of these women were guilty of gross sin and two were foreigners. The names of these women identify Christ with the female gender, with national and racial groups, and with sinful humanity as its Savior. Some of the men listed were also notorious sinners.

The heredity of Jesus is a bond of hope for the sinful human race. He lived without sin in spite of His hereditary handicaps. As a man, He had to struggle against evil tendencies like every other human. And He overcame! Matthew's narrative and selective genealogy punctured the pride of Jesus' Jewish brethren—these proud Pharisaic brethren had recently declared Jesus as unworthy and meriting death. Yet, He was superior to the best of the forefathers, even of the royal line!

Luke showed that Jesus belonged to the whole human race. Although Jesus was reputed to be the son of Joseph, He was not. Luke therefore traced the genealogy through Mary. In writing for the Gentiles, Luke pointed out that Jesus was the ideal man, a son of Adam, created by God.

The genealogy in Luke comes as an interlude after the account of the birth and infancy of Jesus and John's ministry, serving as an introduction to the saving ministry of the Christ. Luke focused our attention upon Jesus, the Person of supreme importance in the narrative and the Savior of the whole race, with which He is identified by the genealogy. Luke gave the natural bloodline of Jesus through Mary and her father, Heli, to King David—through his son Nathan—to Adam, the son of God.

Through both genealogies, the virgin birth is safeguarded. Matthew stated, "And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ" (Matthew 1:16). Luke penned, "Jesus . . . being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph" (Luke 3:23).

An interesting aside is found in Matthew 1:12 and Jeremiah 22:28-30. One of the judgments pronounced upon King Jehoiakim (Jechonias) was that "no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah." Matthew Henry commented that the phrase, "Jeconiah begat Salathiel," simply means that the former king bequeathed his claim of the government to Salathiel.¹ Note that in Luke 3:27 Salathiel is listed as the son of Neri of the house of Nathan; thus at the death of Jehoiakim, the legal right to David's throne apparently passed from Solomon's heirs to Nathan's.

Unlike Matthew and Luke, Mark did not attach great importance to the family tree of the Messiah. He was mainly concerned with the practical outcome of the life of Jesus as the Roman reader would not consider the genealogy important. The great works of Jesus would show Him to be the mighty God, the Son of God, and that was the main issue. Matthew, on the other hand, defined Jesus' place in the Hebrew race and the wider messianic hope. John dealt with the philosophical world and defined the place of Jesus in the cosmic scheme, going back into the eternities to explain who Jesus is, how He was, and that He is their Creator and Redeemer. Luke associated Him with the whole race without regard to racial, national, sexual, or social division.

THE ANNUNCIATIONS

Three announcements heralded the Messiah's coming.

The Annunciation to Zacharias of the Birth of John (Luke 1:5-25)

The annunciation to Zacharias of the impending birth of his son took place in the time of Herod the Great, who died in 4 BC. Sufficient time had elapsed since the return from Babylon for the priesthood to be well organized. By that time, there were approximately twenty thousand priests, divided into twenty-four courses. Each course had duty for eight days, all joining in on the Sabbath. About fifty priests ministered every day. Zacharias belonged to the eighth course, which Abijah led. Twice each year he went to Jerusalem to participate for one week in the sacred task of the service of the Temple. The offering of the incense was considered the highest duty and could be exercised only once in a lifetime. The lot had fallen at last on Zacharias for this honored task.

Offering the incense would be the zenith of his priestly life. At the instant of intense expectation, as the cloud of incense—the symbol of the accepted prayer—began to rise, the angel Gabriel appeared. He did not appear on the left of the throne of glory where Jewish angelology would have placed him; instead, he was at the right of the altar. Because Jewish tradition states that one who sees God will not live, Zacharias was terrified. The angel, however, declaring that the priest's prayer had been answered, quieted his fears and instructed the priest to name his son John, meaning "the Lord is gracious." The angel further proclaimed there would be gladness and joy in the quiet home of Zacharias and Elisabeth and many would rejoice at the birth of the child.

The angel also explained the character and work of the future son to the astounded father-to-be. The child would be great before the Lord, a lifetime Nazarite as Samuel had been, dedicated to the life of temperance and filled with the Holy Ghost from birth. John would bring about a great religious revival, turning many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God. He would be the forerunner of the Messiah, going forth "in the spirit and power of Elias" to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children in a revival of love and religion in the home. Rebellious sinners would be persuaded to live right, thus preparing a people for the salvation that the Messiah would bring. As a sign of confirmation because the priest doubted the angel's words, Zacharias would be speechless until the child was born.

The Annunciation to Mary of the Birth of Jesus (Luke 1:26-38)

Mary was a virgin espoused to Joseph—both were descendants of King David—when the angel Gabriel appeared unto her, saying, “Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women” (Luke 1:28). She was highly favored above all other women in being chosen as the mother of the Lord and Savior. As much as we admire her, we must not pray to her nor worship her in any way. The mother merits honor, but Jesus merits all our worship.

Gabriel then explained that Mary would conceive of the Holy Ghost and deliver a son, whom she must call Jesus. Jesus is another form of “Jehoshua” or “Joshua,” a name meaning “Jehovah-Savior.” In the Old Testament, Joshua had saved Israel from her enemies; but Jesus would save them from their sins. Gabriel’s statement takes on added significance when coupled with Isaiah 12:2, “Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation.” Who was Jesus? He was Jehovah of the Old Testament, incarnated in flesh, becoming our Savior.

As Mary listened in awe to the angel, he described the promised Christ child. He would be great in character and deed and acknowledged as the Son of God. He would fulfill the messianic hope and would ascend to the throne of David, to rule over the house of Jacob forever. There would be no national limit or temporal end to His kingdom.

As a sign, Gabriel related to Mary that her barren cousin Elisabeth was with child. Mary arose and went to visit the aged Elisabeth. Upon her arrival and salutation, Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost and, with a loud voice in spiritual ecstasy, pronounced a blessing upon her visitor and the promised Child.

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? . . . And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord (Luke 1:42-45).

This song of Elisabeth became the first of the New Testament hymns. In it, she praised Mary for her faith and assured her the angel’s promise would be fulfilled.

In response, Mary was filled with great joy, which she expressed in one of the most beautiful hymns of all centuries. Mary praised God for His great goodness to her individually in permitting her to become the mother of the Messiah.

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 (Luke 1:46-55).

Mary stayed with Elisabeth for about three months and then returned home. About this same time, Elisabeth delivered her son.

On the eighth day at the time of circumcision when the child was to be named, Zacharias declared that the child would be called John. Immediately his dumbness departed and he burst forth into a hymn. The first stanza refers to the birth of John; the other four refer with thanksgiving and praise to the approaching birth of Jesus and the salvation He would bring.

The Annunciation to Joseph

(Matthew 1:18-25)

The genealogies in both Matthew and Luke state that Jesus was not the physical son of Joseph although many supposed him to be. In the annunciation to Joseph, the character of Jesus' birth was explicitly declared in such a way as to leave no doubt of His parentage.

This announcement to Joseph was necessary. Joseph, torn between his love for his espoused wife and her apparent infidelity, was planning to put Mary away privately. The angel of the Lord, however, appeared to Joseph in a dream.

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 (Matthew 1:20-21).

Contained within the angel's message is a plain statement of the miraculous conception. Although Jesus Christ had a human mother, His father was the Holy Ghost, for only thus could Jesus Christ be both divine and human, the God-man. Consequently, the angelic explanation amplified the meaning of *Emmanuel*, "God with us." How was God with us? Incarnated in human flesh.

Matthew interpreted Jesus' birth and name as a fulfillment of Isaiah 7:14. Jesus was not a mere pledge of divine deliverance promised in the prophecy, but He was, in reality, a divine Savior. The name Emmanuel (God with us) was realized in a fuller sense in Jesus than Isaiah could possibly comprehend. The real significance of the birth is that He was God manifested or incarnated in flesh, the God-man! In one person, Jesus Christ is many things.

Both God and man
Both mortal and immortal
Both visible and invisible
Both limited and unlimited

Without a doubt, He is God manifested in the flesh!

THE BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD OF JESUS

The four Gospels omit many biographical facts about Jesus Christ. There is a reason for this. The Gospels were written to reveal God manifested in flesh. Height, weight, hair coloring, and physical features were unimportant to their goal. For example, Mark was more interested in the personality and works of Jesus than the place and manner of His birth. Luke desired to give a more complete account of His life and added the beautiful narrative of His lineage, His birth, and the announcement to the humble Judean shepherds. He also included the testimonies of divinely chosen witnesses who gave the interpretation and worldwide significance of Jesus' birth. Similarly, Matthew's primary purpose was to link the person of the Messiah with the ancient prophecy. He gave his own independent account that added universal interest, introducing the Magi, the flight into Egypt, and the return to Nazareth in fulfillment of God's plan revealed in prophecy.

The Virgin Birth

Undoubtedly, the most important fact concerning the birth of Jesus is His virgin birth. This fact is attested throughout the Scriptures. Isaiah prophesied, "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14). As mentioned earlier, the truth of the virgin birth is protected through the genealogies. Despite attacks, the fact remains that Jesus Christ was conceived of a virgin by a miracle of the Holy Ghost. Who were the parents of Jesus Christ? According to the Scriptures, His Father was the Holy Ghost and His mother was Mary (Matthew 1:20).

Time and Place of Birth

It is difficult to fix with more than approximate accuracy the exact date of Jesus' birth. It, after all, is not fundamentally important. God apparently planned that the exact day should not be known because of the tendency to worship holy days and places. It is possible, however, to approximate the time of Christ's birth. There are a number of reasons to believe Jesus was born in 5 BC.

1. Emperor Augustus ordered a census to be taken throughout the Roman Empire. This was scheduled for 8 BC, but it is known that this numbering was taken in Egypt in 6 BC and very likely was conducted the following year in Palestine.
2. Herod died in 4 BC, but he was alive at the birth of Christ.
3. John began his ministry in the fifteenth year of Tiberius's reign at the age of thirty, making his birth occur in 5 BC. Very likely John was born in the spring of 5 BC and Jesus was born six months later in the fall of the same year.

4. We do not know the day and the month of Jesus' birth. It occurred, however, while the flocks were still in open pasture. Therefore, it had to be late summer or early fall, probably no later than October.

It is extremely doubtful that the birth of Jesus occurred on December 25. (Edersheim voices a contrary opinion in *Jesus the Messiah*.²) This day was the date of the Roman pagan feast of Saturnalia, a time given to revelry and debauchery. It was also a season of goodwill when it was not pious to engage in war, when friends gave gifts to one another, and when slaves were given a holiday.

It is certain that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, a village located six miles south of Jerusalem. This was a beautiful town surrounded by vine-covered terraces and fruit trees. Near this town, Rachel died in childbirth. This was the town of Boaz, Ruth, and David. In accordance with the census ordered by Augustus, each person had to return to his ancestral home. Consequently, Mary and Joseph, both of Davidic descent, journeyed from Nazareth to Bethlehem. This was in keeping with the prophecy of Micah.

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 (Micah 5:2).

When Joseph and Mary reached Bethlehem, they found the town crowded with the many people who had come to be counted and taxed. All accommodations were taken. The only space available for the weary couple was the inn's open courtyard where the animals were housed. It was in this humble stable that Mary gave birth to the Messiah and laid Him in a manger. Yet the weary travelers may have preferred this humble setting to the din and revelry of the crowded inn.

The Shepherds

On the plains east of Bethlehem, shepherds were keeping watch over their sheep. Their solitude erupted in wonder and awe as an angel suddenly stood before them and a great light shone around them. The angel calmed their fears with the joyous news, "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" (Luke 2:10-11). This was the first divine message to Israel in over four hundred years. How like God to send it to humble shepherds! The shepherds' everyday sheep tending made them unclean, preventing them from observing the customary laws of ceremonial purification. Thus, their fellow Jews despised them.

The shepherds hurried to Bethlehem where they found Joseph and Mary with the newborn child. No one had ministered to Mary; she herself had wrapped the baby in swaddling clothes and laid Him in the manger. The shepherds then revealed the message of the angels. All were astonished at these things, but Mary treasured what she had heard in her heart.

Presentation in the Temple

The Mosaic law was strictly observed in the life of the infant Jesus. For example, He was circumcised the eighth day according to the requirements of the covenant (Genesis 17:12; Leviticus 12:3; Luke 2:21). This rite and His physical lineage made Jesus eligible to fulfill all the promises God had made to Abraham (Galatians 3:16). At that time, He was also named and became a “Son . . . under the law” (Galatians 4:4).

On the forty-first day, also in keeping with the Law, the parents brought Jesus to the Temple. This trip served two purposes. First, Mary had to be redeemed from legal and ceremonial uncleanness in order to be fully restored to her family and community. Second, Mary’s firstborn had to be redeemed from priestly service. Mary’s gift of two young doves indicated the humble circumstances of the family. The price of Jesus’ redemption was five shekels (about four dollars).

As Mary and Joseph entered the Temple, they encountered Simeon. Simeon 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” (Luke 2:25-26). Simeon took the child from His mother’s arms, blessed God, and prayed.

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 (Luke 2:29-32).

Simeon then blessed Joseph and Mary and prophesied unto her.

Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; (yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed (Luke 2:34-35).

While others saw Jesus as a temporal Messiah-King, Simeon saw Him as the suffering Redeemer.

In that instant Anna, an aged prophetess who was about eighty-four years old, entered the Temple and “gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for the redemption in Jerusalem” (Luke 2:38).

The Wise Men

Jewish prophecy (e.g., Isaiah 60:1-61:3), indicated that the coming Messiah would transcend the racial and religious confines of Judaism and would be a blessing to the Gentiles. Even Simeon referred to Jesus as “a light to lighten the Gentiles.” Consequently, many outside of Israel longed for the coming King as noted by Farrar in *Life of Christ*, vol. I:

We are informed by Tacitus, by Suetonius, and by Josephus, that there prevailed throughout the entire East at this time an intense conviction, derived from ancient prophecies, that ere long a powerful monarch would arise in Judea, and gain dominion over the world.³

Gripped with this conviction, the wise men came to worship the Christ child.

The wise men were probably priest-sages from Persia, Arabia, or Babylonia. The idea that they were kings may result from an interpretation of Isaiah 60:3. They came to Judea because they had seen His star in the east and wanted to worship the newborn King. No one knows how many men came to honor the Christ child, although the number three has been suggested because of the three gifts.

Their inquiries in Jerusalem concerning the location of the new King struck terror in Herod's heart. Insecure in his claim to the throne, Herod was heartless and cruel to all who opposed him. He even had Mariamne, his beloved wife and a princess of the Hasmonean House, and his favorite sons killed because he thought they were plotting against him. When the news of the Magi's inquiries reached Herod, he immediately called for the scribes and priests who informed him that the prophets indicated the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem.

Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, inquired 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 (Matthew 2:7-8).

The wise men found Mary and the Christ child in a house in Bethlehem. (Apparently Joseph and Mary had decided to stay in the city of David instead of returning to Nazareth following the birth of Jesus at the time of the taxation. Perhaps Joseph was trying to shield Mary from the home-town gossip concerning the conception.) The wise men entered and fell down in worship to the Infant. Then they presented gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Outwardly, the gifts represented choice commodities of their home-land. Spiritually, however, they symbolized the royalty (gold), the humanity (myrrh, a spice used in embalming), and the divinity (frankincense) of the Child. Yet, while we emphasize these gifts, we must not overlook the first gift the wise men gave—themselves in worship.

God warned the wise men in a dream that they should not return to Herod, and they departed to their homeland by another way. When Herod realized his plot to locate the Child had failed, he ordered the death of all the children in Bethlehem and the coasts thereof from two years old and under. Estimates of the number of children killed by Herod range broadly from twenty to fourteen thousand. However, since the historian Josephus did not mention this slaughter and since Bethlehem was such a small village, the actual number may have been small.

The Flight to Egypt

God warned Joseph in a dream of the impending slaughter of the children. Joseph arose and took Mary and her baby by night to Egypt. (Note how God provided for this unexpected trip through the gifts of the Magi.) There they stayed until after Herod had died and it was safe for the Child to return. Matthew said this was a fulfillment of Hosea's prophecy, "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt" (Hosea 11:1).

After Herod had died, an angel again appeared to Joseph and instructed him to return to Israel with his family. Joseph seemingly had planned to resettle in Bethlehem until he learned that Archelaus, Herod's worst son, had ascended to his father's throne. This news terrified Joseph. And "being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee: and he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene" (Matthew 2:22-23).

The Bible is silent concerning the next several years in Christ's life. Undoubtedly, He had a fairly normal Jewish childhood. Luke simply stated, "And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him" (Luke 2:40). Nevertheless, that He had to conquer hereditary tendencies toward evil was inevitable. He was a human child, subject to all its conditions, yet perfect in them.

Education was basic to every Jewish child. It began in the home as soon as the child could speak with his mother teaching him the Shema (Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 11:13-21; Numbers 15:37-41). Later it was the father's responsibility to teach the Torah, and when the child was six, he began formal education in the synagogue school. Likewise, every father was required to teach his son a craft or skill. Joseph taught Jesus carpentry, for Jesus was called "the Carpenter."

Jesus' curriculum seems to have included linguistic skills. He spoke Aramaic, the common language of Galilee. He also quoted Scripture in Hebrew, a language that was already considered dead. And apparently He was able to converse freely with the centurion whose servant was healed and with the Greeks who sought to interview Him.

The Scriptures indicate that Jesus was not raised as an only child. There would have been no need for Luke to specify that Mary brought forth her firstborn son if Jesus was her only child. Mark 6:3 indicates that Mary and Joseph had four sons and at least two daughters. After His resurrection, two of these brothers, James and Jude, became followers of Christ and penned two of the General Epistles.

In the Temple

The silence of Christ's childhood is broken only once in the Scriptures. When Christ was twelve, He accompanied His parents to Jerusalem to attend the Passover feast. Evidently, Joseph, Mary, and Jesus traveled with a much larger "company" from Nazareth and perhaps the surrounding area. This would have been an exciting time of fellowship and anticipation for the band. Jesus probably experienced the thrill and nervous energy any normal twelve-year-old boy would feel as He thought about seeing the Temple for the first time in His memory.

Only the first two days of the Feast of Passover required personal attendance at the Temple. So-called half-holidays began on the third day, and it was lawful then for the travelers to return to their homes. This may have been the time that Mary and Joseph decided to return to Nazareth.

Mary and Joseph assumed that Jesus was in the great company that journeyed back to Galilee. However, after a day of traveling and discovering that He was not with their kinfolk or acquaintances, they returned to Jerusalem. After three days, they found Him "sitting in the midst of

the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers” (Luke 2:46-47).

Mary upbraided her Son, “Why have you thus dealt with us? behold, your father and I have sought you sorrowing.”

Jesus’ answer perplexed her. “How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?” (Luke 2:49). This reply was surely not meant as a snide or snippy remark, but it does give an insight to His understanding of His divine mission. Nevertheless, Jesus returned with His earthly parents to Nazareth and “was subject unto them.”

The only other commentary given in the Scriptures concerning Jesus’ childhood is found in Luke 2:52, “And Jesus increased in wisdom [intellectually] and stature [physically] and in favour with God [spiritually] and man [socially].”

Chapter 2

THE MINISTRY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

Robertson's Sections 20-23

The prophet Isaiah foretold that a forerunner would prepare the way for the Messiah (Isaiah 40:3-5). This herald would come in the spirit of Elijah, turning the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers (Malachi 4:5; Matthew 11:14). This forerunner was John the Baptist.

HIS TIMES

Luke pinpointed the arrival of the Baptist to be in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar. The time was ripe for John's appearance.

1. Rome had reached her zenith under Augustus and was now on the decline as an empire that held sway over the world.
2. Epicureanism ("pleasure, based on self-control, moderation, and honorable behavior, is the proper end of man's effort") and Stoicism ("virtue is the highest good and men should be free from passion and unmoved by life's happenings") vied for supremacy of man's thoughts. The first led to sensuality, the second to pride, and both to despair.
3. All religions were tolerated, but none could satisfy.
4. Slavery abounded and indescribable cruelty everywhere marked their treatment.
5. Might was substituted for right and justice fled the land.
6. The people had degenerate tastes as exemplified by the butchery in the arenas.
7. Charity disappeared.
8. Honest labor was looked upon with contempt.

Although the Jews continued to cling to their monotheistic religion, Judaism had lost much of its power. The Roman procurators of Judea had changed the high priest four times even though this position was to be held for a lifetime. Annas was deposed from the high priesthood after nine years and various successors were tried until his son-in-law, Caiaphas, who was willing to be a puppet of Roman tyranny, succeeded to the office. Annas, through astuteness and political influence, however, remained the power behind the throne and continued to preside over the Sanhedrin. He had inherited the office of high priest by heredity and Israel regarded him as the rightful holder of that office.

The overall religious conditions in Palestine were low. There was little sincere religion. The externals had been multiplied and the Spirit had been quenched. The Pharisees emphasized separateness but not true holiness. The scribes professed great devotion to the Scriptures, but

emphasized traditionalism. The Sadducees praised morality, but preferred lives of comfort and self-indulgence and did not believe in a life after death.

HIS PERSON

Against the background of these conditions, John's arrival shocked the complacency of the day. As if appearing out of nowhere, he arrived near the mouth of the Jordan River in the wilderness of Judea dressed in camel's hair with a leather girdle about his loins. His diet consisted of locust and wild honey. His demeanor was straightforward and blunt.

Little is known about John prior to his startling appearance. As with the childhood and early adulthood of Christ, the Bible is silent concerning John's formative years. Being of priestly lineage, he was probably educated to follow in his father's footsteps. And as the son of a priest, he probably began his ministry at the age of thirty.

HIS MISSION

John's mission was that of the forerunner of the Messiah. This term refers to the heralds who ran before royalty, preparing their way by calling for the people to clear away rubble and obstructions and to repair the roadway so the royal procession could pass in safety and comfort. Such was the work of John. He prepared the way for the Messiah by calling for the people to remove the rubble and obstructions of sin from their lives, to tear down the high places, and to fill in the low so the King could appear.

By the very nature of his appearance and methods, John drew attention to himself. However, this was not his intention. As the forerunner, he was preparing the way for the Messiah. Over and over again he pointed to him "that cometh after me" (Matthew 3:11).

Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease (John 3:28-30).

John was well aware of his mission and sought constantly to fulfill it. He was the voice of one crying in the wilderness, "Make straight the way of the Lord."

HIS MESSAGE

John preached the message of repentance unto the remission of sin. He preached fearlessly to the Pharisees and Sadducees who came to see him at the Jordan:

O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: and think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children

unto Abraham. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire (Matthew 3:7-12).

To those who asked, “What shall we do?” he replied, “He that has two coats, let him give to him that has none; and to him that has meat, let him do likewise.” To the publicans, He said, “Exact no more than that which is appointed you.” To the soldiers, he admonished, “Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages.” (See Luke 3:10-14.)

John’s preaching struck at the core of Jewish life, revealing its hypocrisy and sham. While baptism was not a new rite—it had been practiced under the Law for the proselytes—the idea of Jews submitting to immersion to have their sins remitted was totally alien, conflicting with their self-righteousness based on their biological generation. Such a step would be a confession of their sinful state, but such action was necessary because of the coming King.

When the King did appear, John did not hesitate to announce His arrival. As John saw Jesus approaching, he cried, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).



Chapter 3

THE BEGINNING OF THE MINISTRY OF JESUS

Robertson's Sections 24-35

JESUS' BAPTISM BY JOHN

When Jesus was “about thirty years of age” (Luke 3:23), He initiated His public ministry by being baptized by John. Jesus apparently had come from Galilee specifically to be baptized (Matthew 3:13). John did not know Jesus prior to their meeting at the Jordan. Yet, the Baptizer recognized the sinlessness of the One who presented Himself for baptism and tried to deter Him. It had been made very clear that John’s baptism was a sign of confession and repentance with a view to forgiveness of sin. Through the Spirit with which he was filled from birth (Luke 1:15), John knew that as the sinless Lamb, Jesus had no need for remission of sin.

Why then was Jesus baptized? This has been a constant question through the ages. Let us consider a fourfold answer.

First, in reply to John’s reluctance, Jesus said, “Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness” (Matthew 3:15). This could refer to the demand of the Law that those entering into an office, such as the Levitical priesthood (Leviticus 16:4), be ceremonially cleansed by the washing of water.

Second, Jesus was baptized as a sign to John. The Baptizer “bare record” in John 1:33-34.

I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.

The immersion and the attending manifestations revealed unto John the identity of the Messiah.

Third, Jesus’ baptism identified Him with the believing remnant of Israel. John’s preaching had given men faith in his message and the promise of God. This group was bound together by the sign of John’s baptism. And consequently, Jesus came to John to identify Himself with this group and the coming kingdom of God and not with the Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians, or Zealots.

And fourth, Jesus was baptized to identify Himself with sinners. They came to John to confess their sins and their faith in the coming Savior who would redeem them from their sins. Similarly, the Savior identified Himself with sinners, as indicated by Dwight Pentecost in *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*.

Jesus Christ came to identify Himself with sinners so that through that identification He might become their substitute. Paul stated in II Corinthians 5:21, “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” Just as it was necessary for Israel to be identified with the scapegoat and the scapegoat to be identified with Israel through the laying on of hands, so Jesus Christ identified Himself with sinners so that they might be identified with Him when He gave Himself as a substitute for their sins.⁴

Misconceptions Concerning the Baptism of Jesus

Several misconceptions arise concerning the baptism of Jesus by John in the Jordan. It would be worthwhile to consider three of them here.

Misconception 1: “A trinity of divine persons is taught here.”

When Jesus was baptized, John “saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: and lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:16-17). Some imagine that this manifestation teaches a trinity of divine persons. However, what happened at the baptism was not arranged to teach any doctrine concerning the Godhead. No one that day heard or saw anything concerning the dove-like form or the voice except John. This was a private and infallible sign to John whereby he could identify the Messiah (John 1:33).

Misconception 2: “Jesus became the fullness of the Godhead bodily at His baptism.”

Some teach that the Spirit descending like a dove was a sign of Jesus receiving the Holy Ghost. However, the “dove” alighting was purely symbolical. There was never a time when Jesus did not have the Holy Ghost, and that without measure, for *He was the Holy Ghost embodied*. (See John 14:16-21.) (John the Baptist was “full of the Holy Ghost from his mother’s womb.” Dare we say less about Jesus?)

We must remember that Jesus was the God-man. God became flesh.

But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons (Galatians 4:4-5).

What was the Son? It was that “Holy Thing”—that physical thing, that fleshly thing—born of Mary. Jesus, in His dual nature, was both fully God and fully man. He was the flesh of God and the Spirit of God in one being.

Misconception 3: “All the persons of the Trinity are, for the first time in the New Testament, seen together at the baptism. The voice of the Father is added as a separate seal of His ministry, after the descent of the Holy Spirit.”

Those who teach the above concept claim that the voice heard “demands personality.” Yet, did the voice emanating from Balaam’s mule indicate personality? Jesus said the rocks and mountains would cry out in praise to Him if the people withheld their praise. Would this mean that the rocks would have personality? The truth is that Jesus whom John baptized is also the omnipresent, eternal God who was responsible for the voice. This is not a matter of Jesus “throwing His voice” as a ventriloquist; it was an audible expression by the One who cannot be contained—quantitatively—in one finite human body.

THE TEMPTATION

Following His baptism, the Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted. The word *tempt* means “to test or try one’s character.” During His forty days in the bleak and barren mountain of Quarantania, the traditional site of the temptation, which rises out of the Judean Plain some fifteen hundred feet above the Jordan Valley, Jesus prayed and fasted while being tempted of the devil. It was at the end of this period that the Bible states Jesus hungered and Satan appeared unto Him.

The First Temptation

The first temptation capitalized on Christ’s physical hunger pangs—which in themselves were a natural and sinless outgrowth of fasting. Satan said, “If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it become bread.” (The phrase “If thou be the Son of God” can also be translated “Since thou art the Son of God” and was not designed to instill doubt as to Christ’s relationship with the Father but to emphasize it.)

On the surface, this temptation is another version of the modern yet age-old philosophy that says, “Man’s highest good comes from gratifying his desires and happiness comes from satisfying his fleshly appetites.” By it Satan appealed to Christ to exercise His power as the Son of God and gratify His own needs. This would have been easy for Jesus to do.

On a deeper level, however, Satan appealed to Christ to put His own human desire above the will of God. To yield to His own lust of the flesh would have been to abandon the will of God and substitute His own, deeming that gratification of His appetite was more important than obedience to the will of God. Consider the following quotation from G. Campbell Morgan’s *The Crises of the Christ*.

As has been already emphasized, Jesus was led by the Spirit, driven by the Spirit, to and in the wilderness, and in that fact there was great significance. In the life of every being wholly devoted to the will of God, there is nothing accidental. Every detail of arrangement is in the Divine plan, and cannot be interfered with without changing the result, and interfering with the purpose. The circumstance of hunger was not only within the Divine knowledge, it was a part of the Divine plan. The circumstance of hunger was incidental, but not accidental. It was not an unexpected contingency. It was a part of the Divine program.⁵

Had Christ yielded to the temptation to satisfy His own fleshly desires, He would have thwarted the will of God. Any “rights” we may possess as children of God never supersede our responsibility to submit to His will—even if submission demands denying our own natural and, in themselves, sinless desires.

Christ, however, withstood the temptation. “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” (Matthew 4:4). In quoting Deuteronomy 8:3, the Son was fully aware of His Father’s ability to provide the food He needed and was content to trust in that provision. Spiritual life and growth does not come by fulfilling carnal desires, but from surrendering to the will of God. Dr. Pentecost emphasized Christ’s obedience.

Christ showed Himself to be in obedience to the will of God, and for Him that will was revealed in the Word of God. He recognized that the highest good is not to satisfy or gratify but to obey.⁶

And Christ also showed that man in his physical weakness is stronger when submitted to divine will than the forces of evil that may oppose him.

The Second Temptation

Matthew and Luke reverse the order of the second and third temptations. The “then” of Matthew 4:5 seems to indicate that his chronology is the more exacting. It was during this trial that Satan took Jesus—no one fully knows whether Jesus was taken literally or mentally—to the pinnacle of the Temple and commanded, “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” (Matthew 4:6).

In the first temptation Satan asked Jesus to exercise His rights as the Son of God and rebel against divine authority—to exercise independence. This time Satan asked Jesus to force the Father to protect Him in a great display of faith. Actually, Jesus was asked to test His Father, and the one who puts another to a test is putting himself in a higher position.

Think of the drama of Jesus leaping from such a height in view of the populace of Jerusalem and being miraculously saved by divine intervention. Would not the rescue prove to the Jews that He was the Messiah? Would not the jump demonstrate His unsurpassed faith in God? And would not the entire scene appeal to the *pride of life* as a show of one’s spirituality?

But Jesus did not choose the course offered by Satan. Instead, He turned to the Word of God and replied, “It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God” (Matthew 4:7). This quotation from Deuteronomy 6:16 illustrates that Jesus was still submitted to the complete will of the Father. The action suggested by Satan would not have shown the Son’s trust and faith in the Father, but rather His presumption. Furthermore, such an act in obedience to Satan would have removed Him from the promise of protection from God.

The Third Temptation

In the third temptation, Satan took Jesus to a very high mountain and showed Him the splendor and majesty of all the kingdoms of the world. He would give this all to Jesus, if the Son of God would only bow down and worship him.

Christ did not dispute Satan's right to the kingdoms of the world; later He even referred to him as the "prince of this world." However, He also knew that Psalm 2 had already promised the Son the uttermost part of the world for His inheritance. In reality Satan was appealing to the *lust of the eyes* and offering a shortcut to world dominion, a road that would bypass the suffering and sacrifice of Calvary. All that Jesus would have to do would be to worship Satan.

Jesus replied, "Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve" (Matthew 4:10). This answer from Deuteronomy 6:13 is vitally important when one considers the connection Jesus made between worship and service. The two acts go together. We cannot worship someone we do not serve. Satan only requested Jesus to bow down and worship. Jesus, however, went beyond the satanic enticement to the heart of the temptation: If Jesus Christ would reject the will of the Father and serve Satan, then Satan would allow Jesus to inherit the kingdoms of this world.

Following this last rebuke, Luke wrote, "When the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season" (Luke 4:13). Christ had been victorious during this time of testing. Yet throughout His life there would be echoes of these temptations. For example, His brothers suggested that He show Himself as proof of His deity. The Jews, likewise, sought to make Him an earthly king when He had come to be their eternal spiritual ruler. And Pilate questioned, "Are you then a king?" No wonder Peter cautioned the Christians to be vigilant because the devil seeks to devour whom he may.

We know that God cannot sin or be tempted to sin. Since Jesus was both God and man, however, some have asked if the temptation in the wilderness was real. Could the man Jesus Christ have yielded to the temptation and sinned as any mortal? Did He have to make moral decisions in view of temptation such as you and I do? The answer has to be a resounding, "Yes, in His humanity He could have sinned." Otherwise, the writer of Hebrews could not have stated that He was "tempted like as we are" if the possibility to sin did not exist. Without the potential to sin there could be no temptation, just exposure to sin.

Yet, Jesus was tempted. In his first epistle to the church, John identified the root of all temptation.

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world (I John 2:15-16).

The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life are the sources of all temptation. Each one had its role in the temptation of Jesus in the Judean wilderness. First, Jesus was asked to satisfy

the lust of His flesh with bread. Second, He was subjected to the pride of life. Third, He had to contend with the lust of the eyes. Therefore, He was subjected to the total realm of temptation.

He was subject to sin, but each time He overcame. The author of the Book of Hebrews recorded that Jesus was victorious over the spectrum of all temptation.

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 (Hebrews 4:15-16).

The child of God can find great comfort in knowing that even in a physically weakened condition, Christ, in His humanity, chose to live a sinless life by submitting Himself continually to the will of the Father. Regardless of the avenue of attack, Satan was tempting Jesus to rebel against the will of the Father. The secret to victory is always to resist the devil and to submit even more fully to God's will. (See James 4:7.) Temptation is never a sin unless one yields to it.

MANIFESTATION OF THE MESSIAH

The manifestation of the Messiah to Israel was through the twofold testimony of John the Baptist, the testimony of the first disciples, the first miracle, and the first cleansing of the Temple. The Greek word *Christ*, in the terminology of the Jews, was the word *Messiah*. In these opening scenes, not only is the character of the Messiah revealed, but so is the program of His future work.

John's Twofold Testimony

The first part of John the Baptist's testimony concerning Christ transpired as the result of the Sanhedrin. Because of the popular response to John's ministry and its influence, the Jewish religious leaders sent a committee of Pharisees to ascertain the veracity of what John claimed. Immediately John confessed, "I am not the Christ" (John 1:20). The messianic expectation was so high in Israel in those days that many came to offer themselves as Messiah to the nation. John did not want to be identified with these imposters.

However, since the powerful impact of John's preaching could not be ignored, the Pharisees continued their interrogation. "Who are you then? Are you Elijah?" The Old Testament had closed with a prophecy that God would send the prophet Elijah before the coming of the great and dreadful day. The Jews understood this to mean that Elijah would be resurrected or reincarnated to be the Messiah's forerunner. John answered that he was not Elijah. This denial did not conflict with Christ's affirmation that John was a fulfillment of Malachi's prophecy (Matthew 11:14; 17:12) or with the angel's words to Zacharias concerning John's ministry (Luke 1:17). Instead, John was denying that he was a fulfillment of the Jews' misinterpretation.

The Pharisees next asked if John was Moses, the prophet foretold in Deuteronomy 18:15. Again he answered negatively. "Who then are you?" queried the Jewish leaders. "We must give an answer to them that sent us. What do you say of yourself?"

John replied, “I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias” (John 1:23). This response clearly linked John with the messianic promise; nevertheless, it focused on his message rather than his office. John simply stated that he had not come to spearhead a new popular movement. Instead, he had come to herald the Savior’s coming.

The Pharisees who were standing near—and the majority of those around John—were not looking for a spiritual answer such as his. Missing the significance of John’s answer, the Pharisees said, “If you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor Moses, then why do you baptize?” The fact that John was immersing was more important to them than his message. They were incensed that John would even hint in his preaching that they in their self-righteousness and strict observance of the letter of the Law would need to publicly acknowledge defilement and submit to baptism in the Jordan.

John did not give a direct answer to their query. Instead, he stated, “I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not; He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe’s latchet I am not worthy to unloose” (John 1:26-27). This was a clear announcement to the spiritually perceptive that the Messiah was come. Tragically, the religious leaders of Israel failed to grasp its meaning.

The next day as John was standing with two of his disciples, he saw Jesus walking toward him and identified Him as the Messiah.

Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me. And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water.

And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost (John 1:29-33).

John identified Jesus as the Messiah and saw in Him the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy of the sinless Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world (Isaiah 53). The Messiah’s ministry would be universally inclusive, not just exclusive to Jews.

The Testimony of the First Disciples

On the day following John’s declaration of the Messiah, he again saw Jesus walking and said, “Behold the Lamb of God!” (John 1:36). The two disciples standing with John heard his testimony and turned to follow Jesus. Jesus noticed the pair and said, “What seek ye?” (John 1:38).

“Rabbi, where do you dwell?” they countered. This was not just a casual question concerning Jesus’ residence. The term “Rabbi” was a title of highest respect given by the Jews to those who

interpreted the Law to them. From the word *Lawgiver* in Genesis 49:10, it can be concluded the Messiah would be able to interpret the Law to the nations so they could understand what God expected of His covenant people. Their question was actually an appeal to be placed under the tutelage of Christ. This desire was immediately granted.

After spending the day with Jesus, Andrew and John, the disciples of the Baptizer, were convinced that Jesus was everything their former leader claimed. Andrew sought his brother, Simon Bar-jona, and said, “We have found the Messiah,” and took him to Jesus.

Jesus greeted Simon by stating, “Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas” (John 1:42). The Aramaic “Cephas” and the Greek “Peter” both mean “stone.” By nature, Peter was bold, brash, energetic, impulsive, and often unstable. Through His divine omniscience, Jesus foresaw Peter transformed by the Holy Ghost into a “rock”: stable, steadfast, and unmovable.

The following day Jesus left Judea to return to Galilee. The first person He met there was Philip. Philip responded immediately to the invitation, “Follow me.”

Philip went to Nathanael. “We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph,” proclaimed Philip. Nathanael, showing the disdain the small Galilean village held in Jewish thought, answered, “Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?” Philip wisely responded, “Come and see.”

Christ knew the turmoil raging within Nathanael and greeted him with warmth and perception, “Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!” Nathanael was startled by this greeting. “How do you know me?” he asked. Jesus’ insight into Nathanael’s person troubled him. How could this stranger know his character? “Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee,” (John 1:48) came the divine reply. To Nathanael, this answer conveyed a deeper meaning, revealing that this Jesus could discern the innermost thoughts and hopes of a man.

Immediately Nathanael confessed Jesus as the Messiah and cried, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel.” Jesus answered, “Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these. . . . Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man” (John 1:50-51).

The Messiah was come; His kingdom was growing.

The First Miracle

On the third day following His conversation with Nathanael, there was a marriage in Cana, a small village about four miles northwest of Nazareth. Cana was the hometown of Nathanael, and it is possible that Jesus and His disciples were guests in his home. Mary, the mother of Jesus, was already in the village.

It appears that Mary was either a close friend or a relative of the bridegroom's family. Her relationship to the family probably accounted for an invitation being extended to Jesus. However, Dr. Pentecost suggested that the invitation may not have included the disciples.

Because of Jesus' relationship to her [Mary], He had been included in the invitation, but the singular form of the Greek verb underlying "invited" in verse two seems to indicate that the invitation was given to Jesus and not directly to the disciples. It was unlikely that the bridegroom knew of the five who had so recently associated themselves with Jesus.⁷

Depending upon the resources of the bridegroom, a Jewish wedding feast could last up to a week. During the extended festivities at Cana the guests depleted the wine. This was an embarrassing disgrace to the bridal couple as custom demanded lavish hospitality. Learning of the situation, Mary said to Jesus, "They have no wine" (John 2:3). Was this a gentle rebuke because of the inclusion of unexpected guests? Was she referring to the custom of the guests bringing wine to be contributed to the feast? (Conforming to this tradition would have been difficult for the band, having traveled from Judea and just newly arrived in Cana.) Or was she trying to force a display of messianic power?

Jesus' answer seems to imply the latter. He said, "Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come" (John 2:4). He was not showing disrespect by addressing His mother as "woman." Instead, He employed the same term He would use while hanging on the cross and transferring the care of Mary to John. Yet, the answer was a firm indication that her maternal influence did not extend into His work as the Messiah. He had been a dutiful son, but now human kinship must be subordinated to the relationship in the Spirit.

Any apparent hardness disappears when we realize that Jesus did not refuse His mother's request. As Shepard points out in *Christ of the Gospels*, Jesus told Mary that the hour of His greater manifestation as the Messiah had not yet come.⁸ He was giving her a confirmation of her hope and a promise for the future. Consequently, she turned to the servants and commanded, "Whatsoever He says unto you, do it." She had great faith in her Son.

The instructions were simple. Near the gallery where the reception was held stood six large pots that were used in the Jewish rites of purification. Jesus commanded that these pots, each of which could hold twenty to thirty gallons, be filled to the brim with water. Then He ordered the servants to draw a cupful from the pots and carry the beverage to the overseer of the feast. The governor of the feast was astounded when he tasted the wine. Not knowing the source of the vintage, he said to the bridegroom, "Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now" (John 2:10).

Before moving on, let us consider Shepard's view about the nature of the miraculous vintage.

Jesus made real wine out of the water. But there was a great difference between Palestinian wine of that time and the alcoholic mixtures which today go under the name wine. Their simple vintage was taken with three parts water and would correspond more or less to

our grape juice. It would be worse than blasphemy to suppose, because Jesus made wine, that He justifies the drinking usage of modern society with its bars, strong drinks, and resulting evils.⁹

John concluded his narrative of the water becoming wine by stating in John 2:11, “This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him.” This verse plainly shows the results of Jesus’ first miracle and lays to rest all of the apocryphal stories of His childhood miracles.

This first miracle teaches several lessons.

1. The miracle is a revelation of Jesus’ interest in us—the whole of humanity. (Note that neither the bride nor the groom is named.) A wedding transcends the whole human experience and speaks of God’s concern and interest in all of our affairs.
2. The miracle is a sign of the purpose of Jesus’ coming into the world: He came to transform and transfigure. Just as He changed the water into wine, Jesus came to transform sinful lives into righteous lives.
3. The miracle shows Jesus’ method of working. The water became wine with the aid of human hands and divine authority.
4. The miracle shows that He supplies in abundance. When the servants cooperated with Him, there was wine enough to spare.
5. The miracle shows that Jesus saved the best to the last. The New Testament dispensation is the greatest of all ages God has yet given. To receive the Holy Ghost and to be baptized in Jesus’ name is the greatest experience yet offered to mankind.

CAPERNAUM

Following the wedding feast and accompanied by His mother, His half-brothers, and His disciples, Jesus went to Capernaum and “continued there not many days” (John 2:12). A city of some importance, Capernaum was located on the northwest coast of the Sea of Galilee. It was where Matthew, a high-ranking government official, made his home and collected taxes. It was also where a Roman centurion lived with a detachment of soldiers (John 4:46). This was the place that was to become Jesus’ headquarters in Galilee.

EARLY MINISTRY IN JUDEA

The First Cleansing of the Temple

Being obedient to the Mosaic law, Jesus had attended the annual Passover celebrations in Jerusalem since the year He was twelve and Mary and Joseph had found Him questioning the doctors and scribes in the Temple. It was now time again for the yearly journey to Jerusalem.

A strange sight greeted Jesus as He arrived in the Court of the Gentiles in the Temple. As a “convenience” and “service” to the worshipers, the area had been converted into a livestock market. There were lambs for the paschal sacrifices and the offerings of purification, bullocks for the

thank offerings, and doves for the offerings of the poor. Greedy priests who had devised a system to fill their coffers superintended the sale of these animals. In exchange for providing animals that met the high standard necessary for sacrifice, the priests would often charge five to six times the just price. (Of course, the Jews were not compelled to buy directly from the cattle market in the Temple. They could bring an animal from their herds or flocks or they could purchase one from the shepherds near Jerusalem. But then the animal would have to be inspected by someone qualified and duly appointed—for a high fee.)

Coupled with the graft and corruption of the animal market, the priests also ran a money market. Each Jew and proselyte—women, minors, and slaves exempted—were required to pay a yearly Temple tax of one half-shekel. A month prior to Passover, collection booths were set up in every town. Ten days later these were erected in the court of the Temple to ensure collection of the tax, by force if necessary. Many of the Jews coming to Jerusalem for Passover were from foreign countries and therefore had “unclean” money. This foreign currency had to be exchanged for “clean” coin at the Temple money market before these Jews could pay their taxes or buy the animals for sacrifice. The priests usually charged an exchange rate of twelve percent.

Incensed by the abuse of the poor and the desecration of the Temple, Jesus snatched up some of the loose cords lying on the ground. Fashioning the cords into a whip, Jesus began to cleanse the Temple. Shepard describes the scene.

Assuming the role of a prophet, and asserting symbolically His messianic authority, Jesus snatched up in His wrathful indignation some pieces of cast-away cords lying about the court, and plaiting them together with dexterous hands into a whip—symbol of authority—He flourished it and drove out the sheep and oxen forth from the Temple court. Then quick as a flash He turned upon the moneychangers, poured their money into their receptacles, and overthrew their tables. None dared oppose Him. The popular crowd looked on awe-struck and with a desire to applaud. Turning to those who sold the doves and pigeons shut up in cages, He said: “Take these things hence! Stop making my Father’s house a marketplace!” Jerome said, “A certain fury and starry light shone from His eyes and the majesty of Godhead gleamed in His face.”¹⁰

This was the first time Jesus cleansed the Temple. He would cleanse it again after the triumphal entry as recorded in the Synoptics.

Those who witnessed the wrath of Jesus interpreted His actions in view of messianic authority. His disciples recalled Psalm 69:9, “The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.” The Jews responded to the onslaught by demanding, “What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things?” (John 2:18) They did not question the action or the need for such action. They only questioned His authority to do that which they knew should have been done. Their request for a sign was an echo of an earlier demand by Satan during the temptation on the mountain in Judea.

Jesus responded with the sign of His death and resurrection. He said, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up” (John 2:19). No one understood the answer. They reminded Jesus that Herod was enlarging the Temple and it had already been under construction for forty-six years. It would be another thirty to forty years before it was complete. His

symbolism was completely lost on the stony hearts of the Jews. It took the infilling of the Holy Ghost on the Day of Pentecost to illuminate this truth even to the disciples.

Also hidden within Jesus' response is a statement revealing who He is. He said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:19). Of course, as mentioned above, Jesus was referring to the temple of His body. But who raised Jesus from the dead? According to Acts 2:24, 32; 3:15, 26; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30, 33, 34; I Corinthians 6:14; and II Corinthians 4:14, God raised Jesus from the dead. Yet, Galatians 1:1 and Ephesians 1:17-20 state it was God the Father while Romans 8:11 indicates the Holy Spirit. Was Jesus confused? Were the writers of the other Scriptures confused? No. The truth remains that Jehovah-Savior, the eternal God and Spirit, raised from the dead the frail, fleshly temple, in which He had been incarnated.

Jesus used the cleansing of the Temple to initiate His ministry in Judea. This unprecedented act instantly caught the attention of the people. This was a public presentation of Himself as the Messiah. Who other than the Messiah had the right to cleanse the Temple?

The religious leaders demanded a sign to show by what authority Jesus drove out the moneychangers and oxen. He gave them the mysterious sign of His death and resurrection. But what He would not do for the Sanhedrin, He did for the common people. He gave them a sign.

Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man (John 2:23-25).

The details of the miracles Jesus performed during the Passover week are not included in the Scriptures although knowledge of them was widespread. Because of these signs, many people believed on Jesus. Their belief, however, was shallow, lacking true spiritual depth, for Jesus "did not commit himself unto them." He knew they were still looking for a temporal Messiah.

Nicodemus and the New Birth

Rising above the spiritual mediocrity of his day, Nicodemus was a devout Jew, a member of the Sanhedrin, and possibly an interpreter and teacher of the Law. Since the miracles convinced Nicodemus that Jesus was from God, he sought an interview with Jesus.

Critics have often criticized Nicodemus for coming to Jesus at night. According to the following points, this criticism may be unjust.

1. Nicodemus was a Pharisee and would have been censured by his colleagues of the Sanhedrin had they known he was visiting Jesus. They were greatly offended by the cleansing of the Temple.
2. Nicodemus chose a time when Jesus would be more accessible for a private conversation. He came, seeking to know for himself the secrets of the miracles and asking Jesus about the coming kingdom, which constituted one of the main themes of the preaching of Jesus and John.

Nicodemus opened the conversation with a confession of Jesus' divine origin. He stated, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no man can do these miracles that you do, except God be with him." This was a great confession for a Pharisee to make concerning Jesus. The title "Rabbi" means "teacher" and signifies the reverence or honor accorded one who came to reveal God and His truths to His people.

Jesus' response shows that He knew the uppermost thoughts in Nicodemus' mind. Jesus replied, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). In doing so, Jesus sidestepped the question of when the kingdom of God would be established and centered directly on its nature. The kingdom is a spiritual order, invisible to the eye and not perceived by the senses. Those who enter do so only on the basis of a spiritual new birth. Without this regeneration, no one can see the kingdom of God.

These statements astounded Nicodemus. As a Pharisee, he had preconceived ideas about the kingdom.

1. As descendants of Abraham, the Jews had a hereditary claim to the messianic realm.
2. Participation in the kingdom meant conformity to a moral code and ritual system.
3. Obedience to a complex code of observances and restrictions would result in rewards in the coming kingdom.
4. Gentiles could enter the kingdom only through becoming Jewish proselytes.

These ideas were in direct conflict to what Jesus was teaching about the new birth. Nicodemus could accept the need of a proselyte submitting to baptism, but such a thought was untenable for a natural-born Jew. The very idea was an insult to the Pharisees. Surely the sons of Abraham would never submit to such a requirement.

Born again? "How can these things be?" Nicodemus asked. As a typical Pharisee, he had no concept of spiritual regeneration and made no connection between the disposition of the heart and the rigid outward observances. The Jews had a great zeal for God, but it was not according to knowledge of the spiritual way of salvation. To them the kingdom must come as a reward of meritorious obedience to the requirements of a moral and ceremonial code. Their religion was all external.

Christ continued His discourse.

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

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. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God (John 3:14-18).

The *believing* of John 3:16 is the counterpart to the *looking* of Numbers 21:8-9. Again Jesus was calling attention to Himself and His Word. He was asking Nicodemus to believe on Him in order to receive eternal life. The Jews equated having eternal life with entry into the kingdom. Their concept of the kingdom was that of an eternal existence in which one enjoyed the presence of God.

As Christ called attention to Himself, He presented four important facts.

1. God loves the world. This truth diametrically opposed the Pharisaic mentality that said God hates sinners and delights in their death.
2. God demonstrated His love by giving His only begotten Son. This was love translated into action. Love that is expressed only verbally is of little benefit to the one being loved; only when love is tangibly manifested can benefits accrue to the object of affection.
3. The world is under condemnation. This condemnation is the result of Adam's sin, not the coming of Christ into the world.
4. Release from this condemnation comes only through belief in the Son of God. Mankind is already lost; he does not become lost by refusing to believe in Christ. However, he can find salvation only by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Some people tend to build their entire doctrine of salvation around John 3:15-18 and interpret *believe* as mere "mental assent." In doing so, they forget that biblical believing leads to action (John 7:38; Mark 16:16). There is no way one can separate the truths of John 3:3-8 from John 3:15-18 without doing injustice to the Word of God, for they are part of the same discourse. Truly believing in the Son of God will lead to experiencing the fullness of the new birth (Acts 2).

While Jesus was ministering in the Judean countryside, John the Baptist was preaching and baptizing in Aenon near Salim "because there was much water there." John's ministry had begun to taper off after his testimony concerning Jesus and the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. Multitudes were leaving John and following Christ. The Jews saw in this an opportunity to drive a wedge between Jesus and John. As the two were preaching the same basic doctrines (repentance, baptism, prepare for the coming kingdom), the Jews were afraid that a united effort by the cousins would sweep the nation.

The controversy first arose between the Jews and John's disciples concerning the rites of purification. The Jews sought to discredit John for not following the Jewish traditions regarding cleansing and were trying to plant seeds of jealousy. Vexed by what they heard and in a display of deep loyalty to their master, John's disciples came to him and said, "Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him" (John 3:26).

Showing his true humility and understanding of his mission, the Baptist replied, "Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. . . . He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:28-30). What the Jews hoped would cause jealousy was a source of joy to John. He knew his role as the forerunner and was pleased to point men to the Messiah. The news that "all men come to him" was evidence that John had done his job well.

Incorporated into John's response was further testimony to the superiority of Jesus. Although John's birth was miraculous, he was born of earthly parents, was of the earth, and spoke of earthly things. Christ, on the other hand, was from above and spoke of heavenly things. "He that cometh from above is above all" (John 3:31).

John knew there would be two responses to the revelation concerning Jesus. Some would receive Him: "He that received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true. For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him" (John 3:33-34). Yet, not everyone would believe Christ. Those that refused would reject at least one of the five truths about Jesus given by John:

1. Christ was from Heaven.
2. He knew the Father.
3. The Father had sent Him.
4. He had the Father's words.
5. He was empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Those that denied Jesus would not receive eternal life, but would have the wrath of God abiding on them.

MINISTRY IN SAMARIA

After about six months of ministering in Judea, Jesus returned north to Galilee. In doing so, He prevented the division between Himself and the disciples of John the Baptist that the Pharisees tried to instigate. He also escaped the political sphere of Herod Antipas who had recently imprisoned John. (John had denounced Herod Antipas' marriage to Herodias, the wife of his half-brother Herod Philip and the daughter of another half-brother, Aristobulus.)

Jesus chose to journey through Samaria on His way to Cana of Galilee. This was the shortest route from the Jerusalem-Jericho area and bypassed Perea, which Herod Antipas ruled. These two facts may account for John's statement that Jesus "must needs go through Samaria" (John 4:4). However, the events that transpired in Samaria seem to be the real reason Jesus chose this course.

Origin of the Samaritans

After the kingdom of Israel, the northern ten tribes, fell to Sargon II in 721 BC, the Israelites—except for the poorest sort—were resettled into other parts of the Assyrian Empire. Peoples from other parts of the empire repopulated the area. These people intermarried with the Israelites to form the Samaritans. As a result, idolatry was mixed with true worship of Jehovah.

When Zerubbabel and Nehemiah were rebuilding Jerusalem, the Samaritans offered assistance. However, the Jews hated the idolatrous worship of Jehovah and refused their help. This refusal was a rebuff to the Samaritans, who began to do everything they could to hinder the reconstruction. The Jews never forgot the interference of the Samaritans and Jewish hatred for their northern neighbors simmered over the years.

The Jews considered the land and the people of Samaria unclean and avoided going through the land. However, Jesus chose to go through Samaria. Jesus and His small band of disciples stopped and rested at Jacob's well, about a mile from Sychar. Jesus waited there while the disciples went into the village to buy provisions.

Once again we catch a glimpse of the humanity of Jesus. He was hungry, thirsty, and weary—just as we often become. Here we can see evidence that God was manifested in the flesh! The Word was made flesh! He shared our human nature and knew by experience all the limitations and infirmities the human body is subject to, except those caused by sin.

The Samaritan Woman

While Jesus waited, a woman came to the well. This woman was a sharp contrast to Nicodemus. Nicodemus was a Jew; she was a Samaritan. He was a highly respected member of society; she was an outcast, or nearly so. He was a person of strictest morals; she had lost her virtue. He was a cultured and learned teacher of Israel; she was an ignorant, illiterate woman of the lower class. He was wealthy; she was poor. Nicodemus recognized something of the greatness of Jesus and sought Him out; she saw Him at first as a stranger and foreigner. Nicodemus was a serious, dignified inquirer; she had nothing sedate about her. In spite of the great differences between them, both had the same need of spiritual transformation. Jesus, the great lover of all souls, offered salvation to both equally.

Even though Jesus was weary, He did not allow His physical fatigue to hinder Him from grasping an opportunity to win a soul. Note carefully His approach to this woman, which would result in her salvation.

First, by courteously asking for a drink of water, Jesus captured the woman's attention and established a point of contact. It was necessary for Him to take the initiative; otherwise, the woman would not have spoken to Him. His request appealed to her sympathy, gave her a sense of importance that made her willing to listen to Him, and began to break down the barriers that normally would have separated them—barriers such as nationality, prejudice, ignorance, and the custom that prevented rabbis from talking to women.

Second, having made contact with the woman, Jesus continued to use her natural curiosity as a means of showing her need. This caused conviction. Notice in verse 9, she challenged Him. She as much as said, "You Jews ordinarily cross to the other side of the street when you see us coming, but it is a different story when you need a favor."

In verse 10, Jesus turned the conversation to spiritual things. This aroused her interest. Jesus led the woman along by awakening a longing for what He had to offer. He used a simple illustration (verses 13-14) to make it clear that the water He meant was different from the water in Jacob's well. Note her eager request in verse 15. She wanted that water! Her request gave Jesus an opening to lay down the terms on which she could receive it.

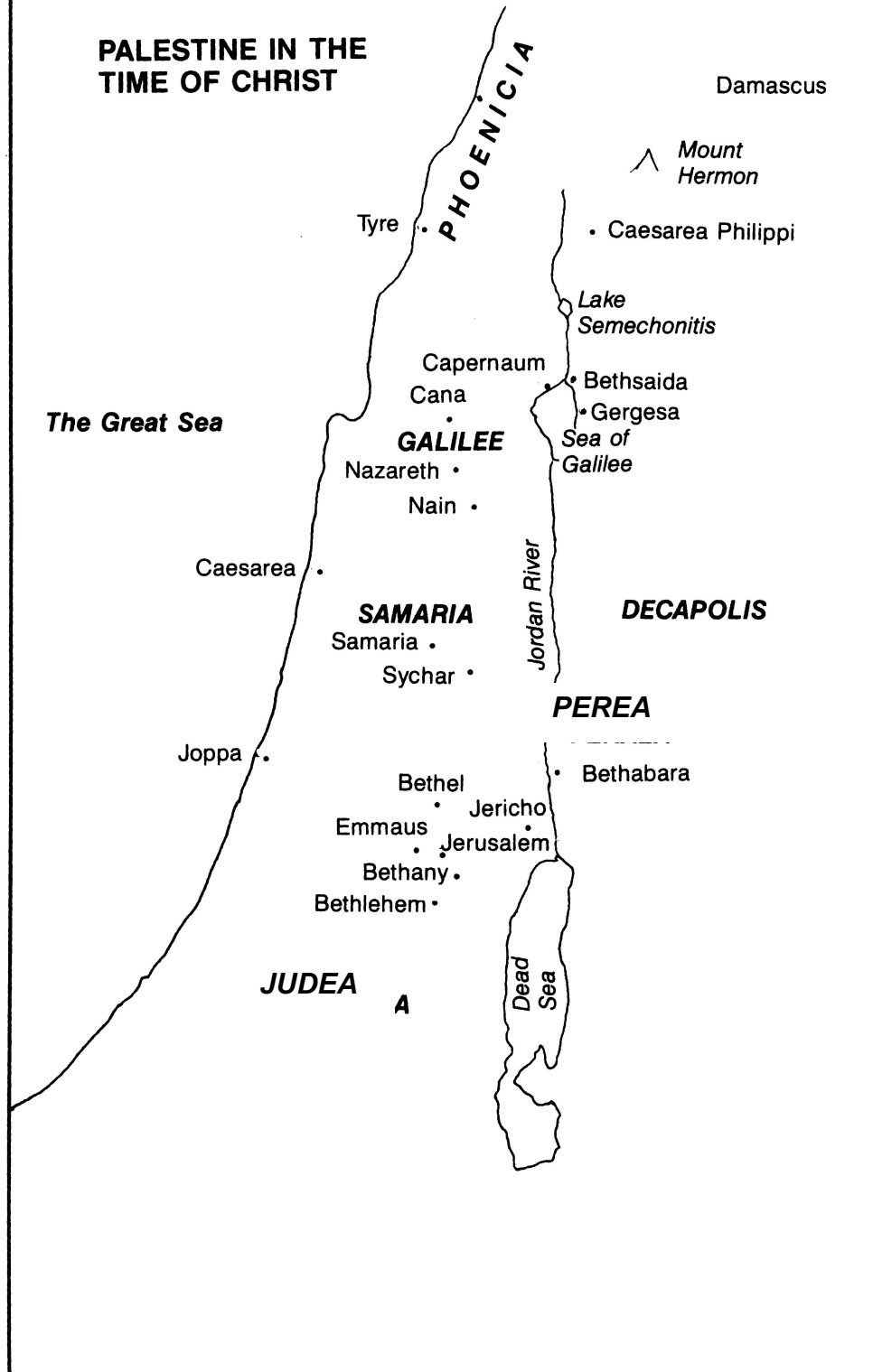
Finally, Jesus awakened her conscience by putting His finger on the cause of the woman's unhappiness. Her new life must begin on the basis of truth and honesty. She must face her sin and

her past, and the rubbish of her old life must be cleared away. (Sin cannot be forgotten or ignored. It must be dealt with and cleansed away.)

As if symbolic of the fact that she had forgotten the unsatisfying water of the old life, the Samaritan woman left her old water pot and rushed to the city in demonstration of the genuineness of her conversion. In the joy of her discovery of living water, she became an enthusiastic witness. Her life was changed; she had a new standard of values. “Come see a man who has restored my dignity as a woman,” she invited.

The woman’s testimony and invitation brought results. All who came to see were convinced. This led to the evangelization of Sychar.

**PALESTINE IN THE
TIME OF CHRIST**



Chapter 4

THE GALILEAN MINISTRY PART I

Robertson's Sections 36-48

After spending two days in Samaria, Jesus resumed His journey to Galilee. Jesus was a preacher and His theme was repentance and the kingdom of Heaven. Because of the current expectation with reference to the coming Messiah, He was very careful to explain that His kingdom was not an earthly domain. Mark stated that Jesus came into Galilee preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God to men. Whereas "Repent" was the central point of John the Baptist, the stern, wilderness preacher, "Good news" keynoted the ministry of Jesus.

RETURN TO CANA

The first place Jesus visited upon His return to Galilee was Cana. His earlier visit to this small village was on the occasion of the wedding feast shortly after His baptism and the forty days of temptation in the wilderness. It was at that marriage celebration that Jesus performed His first miracle and turned water into wine. This second visit occurred more than a year later.

Jesus initiated His work of healing in Cana. A nobleman, perhaps an officer in the service of Herod Antipas, had a little boy in Capernaum who had been wasting away with a continuous fever. He heard that Jesus had returned to Galilee from Judea. In his desperation, he came to Jesus, begging Him to go and heal his son.

Jesus did not grant the request at first. His fame as a healer had gone before Him, but few people were giving heed to His message of salvation. It is important to remember that Jesus Christ came into the world to be the supreme sacrifice in order to save men from their sins. While healing was a part of His ministry, it was not His major thrust. Jesus wanted those who were whole to respond to Him as well as those who were sick. Thus Jesus at first rebuffed the nobleman, saying, "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe" (John 4:48).

The nobleman again put forth his agonizing cry, "Sir, come down ere my child die" (John 4:49). His appeal showed that he was not merely seeking a sign; the sorrow in his heart compelled him to humble himself before his only source of hope. Such a prayer never meets with refusal when offered to Jesus! "Go your way; your son lives," Jesus said.

The words of Jesus were enough. The man turned and retraced his steps to Capernaum. As he arrived home the next day, a joyous servant met him, stating, "Your son is alive!" The father then asked when the child began to improve. "Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him,"

the servant answered. This was the same hour that Jesus had said the child would live. The nobleman and his household believed in Jesus as a result of this great miracle.

REJECTION IN NAZARETH

After preaching for some time in various places in Galilee, Jesus came to His hometown of Nazareth and entered the synagogue. In keeping with the custom of the synagogue service, Jesus stood to read. He then opened the book of the prophets and began reading from Isaiah.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord (Luke 4:18-19). (See also Isaiah 61:1-2.)

Then, with all eyes fastened upon Him, Jesus sat down to teach in the role of a rabbi. With clarity and simplicity, He stated, “This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.”

The people who witnessed this wondered at His teaching. To them He was just the son of a carpenter. “How does He dare proclaim Himself to be the Messiah? If He is who He claims, let Him prove it with signs and wonders,” they thought.

Striking at their self-righteousness and Jewish conceit, Jesus pointed out that God in His sovereignty had chosen in times past to bless Gentiles while bypassing the unbelieving Jews. He cited the examples of the widow of Zarephath during the time of Elijah and leprous Naaman during the time of Elisha. The people’s rage generated by Jesus’ statements identified them with apostate, unbelieving Israel, and they sought to kill Him. They tried to crowd Him out of the synagogue and down the street until He would be forced off the forty-foot cliff at the edge of the city. If He died of “natural means”—falling off a cliff—they would be free from the guilt of murder. Jesus, however, passed through the midst of them and went on His way.

Shepard indicates that Jesus had probably moved His mother Mary and her younger children to Capernaum previous to His rejection in Nazareth.¹¹ Now that His hometown had rejected Him, He relocated His headquarters in Capernaum. Matthew saw this move as a fulfillment of Isaiah 9:1-2. Capernaum was also the home of Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, and Matthew.

THE CALL OF THE FIRST FOUR DISCIPLES

It appears that the six disciples that had followed Jesus during His early ministry in Judea and Samaria had returned to their previous activities and daily living. They had been convinced He was the Messiah, yet there is no evidence that they were with Him during the rejection in Nazareth. It seems that Jesus ministered alone during these early days in Galilee.

Jesus’ public ministry in Capernaum received wide attention. Luke stated that “the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God” (Luke 5:1). As they crowded around Him by the Lake of Galilee, Jesus saw two ships. He entered one, requested the owner, Simon, to row out a short

distance from the shore, sat down, and began to teach. (Custom called for a rabbi to be seated when he taught.)

After Jesus concluded His lesson, He told Simon to let down the nets. Simon was a professional fisherman and knew it was the wrong time of day to go fishing. Weary and tired, he replied, “Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net” (Luke 5:5). When he obeyed the divine command, they caught such a great amount of fish that the nets began to tear. Quickly they called to James and John, the sons of Zebedee, to help them. Soon both boats were loaded with so many fish that they began to sink.

The reality of the divinity of Jesus Christ once again confronted the impetuous Simon. He fell at the feet of Jesus and cried, “Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord” (Luke 5:8). To realize that he was in the very presence of the holy God manifested in flesh caused Simon to recognize his own unworthiness and bow low in humility and repentance. May we ever follow his example.

Jesus saw Simon’s heart and said, “Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men” (Luke 5:10). Mark recorded that Jesus said, “Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men” (Mark 1:17). Immediately Simon and his brother Andrew left their nets and followed the call of Christ.

A short distance away James and John were mending their nets in anticipation of tomorrow’s catch. Jesus extended the call to them. They too left their lucrative fishing business to become students at the feet of the Master.

The immediate and total response of these four fishermen/businessmen is an example we all should follow. They did not weigh their decision on the economic scales of the future. They did not try the winds of popularity of the moment. They did not consider the possibility of personal gain or advancement. They simply recognized that they had found the Messiah and yielded all to follow Him. Just to be able to walk with Him and learn from Him meant everything to these men. They knew that He who had turned the water into wine, healed the nobleman’s son, and supplied the overabundance of fish would care for them. May the Lord help us to have their same faith and commitment.

Jesus’ invitation was more than just an appeal from a rabbi seeking to gather followers. Other teachers could espouse new doctrines and excite the emotions, but only the Creator of men could declare, “I will make you.” What a difference there was between the unlearned fishermen who plied the waters of the Sea of Galilee and the staunch apostles who boldly stood before the Sanhedrin and fearlessly proclaimed the goodness of Christ. The change was made by the infilling of the Holy Ghost on the Day of Pentecost. Jesus called flawed fishermen to follow Him while seeing what they would become as they were indwelt by His Spirit.

DELIVERING THE DEMONIAK

Entering into the synagogue of Capernaum with His disciples, Jesus again assumed the role of a rabbi and began to teach. Normally a rabbi would explain the Scriptures by citing interpretations

and ideas handed down through the years by earlier teachers. Jesus did not do this. Instead, He taught as one who held in His own power the authority and right to speak the final word to hungry hearts. The people were awed by His wisdom and sense of power. “How is this possible?” they questioned.

The answer soon manifested itself. In the midst of the synagogue was a man who was possessed by a demon. That is to say, the evil spirit controlled the man’s thinking, speaking, feeling, and actions. The demon cried aloud, “Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art; the Holy One of God” (Luke 4:34). Jesus rebuked the demon and commanded him to come out of the man. The evil spirit had no choice but to obey. This was the first record of Jesus using His authority over demonic spirits.

Shepard notes that exorcism was not a new thing to the Jews.

There were men professing to be able by the black art to expel demons. They lived apart as ascetics, “macerating themselves, and fasting to secure the fuller aid and inspiration of such evil spirits.” The Jews were not supposed to practice magic; but in this their theory did not accord with their practice. Josephus describes the wisdom, learning, and achievements of Solomon, referring especially to his skill in expelling demons, who caused various diseases (Antiquities 3:25). Under certain circumstances the repetition of magical formulas was declared lawful even on the Sabbath day . . . There was an elaborate system of superstitious demon-ology current in the popular beliefs of the Jews, and as elaborate a system of the magic art of exorcism . . . Exorcists practiced on the credulity and superstition of the people, using mesmeric and sleight-of-hand methods.¹²

Jesus had no need to use the black arts or sleight-of-hand trickery to cast out the demon. As the mighty God in flesh, all He had to do was speak the word and the demon had to flee. The demonstration of His power over the evil spirit made a lasting impression on those in the synagogue and His fame spread throughout the region.

Jesus left the synagogue and went to Simon Peter’s home where Simon’s mother-in-law lay seriously ill. Jesus touched the woman and rebuked the fever. Immediately she regained her strength and began to minister unto them.

The news of Jesus’ miracles had immediate results. As the sun was setting that evening, many who were sick with various illnesses came to Him. He laid His hands upon each of them and healed them. Demons were also cast out and Christ forbade them to speak.

THE FIRST PREACHING TOUR WITH THE DISCIPLES

The next morning, Jesus arose early and went into a desert place to pray. His disciples found Him, and Simon told Him that all men were seeking Him. The crowd wanted more miracles of healing and more signs. Jesus said, “I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also: for therefore am I sent” (Luke 4:43). Jesus always put preaching the good news of the kingdom of God first. While He performed miracles, they were always secondary and were used as a means to bring men into the kingdom. It was not Christ’s purpose to become the center of popularity by working

miracles. He came to proclaim the message of the kingdom. Thus He said, “Let us go elsewhere.” This was the beginning of the first of three preaching tours of Jesus in Galilee. On the second He took the twelve disciples and on the third, He sent the Twelve ahead by twos and followed after them.

Little is recorded about this first preaching tour. The only miracle cited during this tour was the healing of a leper. Leprosy is a loathsome, progressive disease that eventually rots the whole body. In New Testament times, whoever had the disease was considered unclean and forbidden to enter walled towns. The leper was required to wear a cloth covering his mouth and beard and to cry out, “Unclean, unclean,” whenever anyone would approach.¹³ (See Leviticus 13:47.)

The leper that came to Christ recognized his own uncleanness and unworthiness. As he knelt before Jesus and bowed his face to the ground, he cried, “Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean” (Matthew 8:2). In simplicity, humility, and reverence, the leper eloquently expressed his faith in Jesus and acknowledged His divine authority. Jewish tradition demanded that one strictly abstain from contact with anyone with leprosy. In response to the man’s plea, however, Jesus stretched forth His hand, touched him, and commanded, “Be thou clean.” Immediately the leprosy vanished.

In keeping with the Mosaic law, Jesus commanded the man to go and show himself to the priests. The Law required that anyone who had leprosy, or who was suspected of having it, should undergo an elaborate cleansing ritual in order to be accepted in society. Without being duly pronounced clean by the priest, the man’s testimony would not be validated. Nevertheless, before a priest could declare a man cleansed, he first had to investigate the means of cleansing. Such an investigation would give testimony to those in religious circles. Consequently, Jesus commanded the man to show himself to the priest to validate the leper’s testimony and to give witness of His power to the priests.

PARALYTIC HEALED IN CAPERNAUM

Jesus returned to Capernaum following His preaching tour of Galilee. When it was known that He had returned, multitudes gathered to hear Him preach. They swarmed the house He was in so that “there was no more room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door.” As Luke noted, Pharisees and doctors of the Law from every town of Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem were in the crowd. This is the first record of organized opposition of the scribes and Pharisees in Galilee.

Into this multitude, four men carried a paralytic on a pallet. The men, however, were unable to force their way to Jesus through the press. Instead, they climbed to the roof of the house and made a hole through which they lowered their friend.

In response to this great act of faith, Jesus said, “Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.” (Rabbinical theology taught that all physical infirmity was a sign of divine displeasure and came as punishment from God for specific sin.) The reaction was immediate. The doctors of the Law were ready to accuse Jesus of blasphemy, a crime and sin punishable by death. “Who can forgive sins but God only?” they reasoned.

Jesus was aware of the scribes' indignation. "Why reason ye these things in your hearts? Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk?" (Mark 2:8-9). The answer was obvious. To say, "Thy sins are forgiven" was easier, for it required no demonstration. He continued by saying first to the Pharisees, "But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins," and then to the paralytic, "I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house" (Mark 2:10-11).

The man immediately arose, picked up the pallet, and passed through the amazed crowd. His actions showed he was not only healed, but he was also infused with power. The healing was instantaneous and complete. By this miracle Christ demonstrated His authority to forgive sin. While the man went home rejoicing, the Pharisees maintained a stony silence. The miracle was a singular answer to their earlier question, yet they refused to acknowledge the truth: Jesus, as God manifested in flesh, could forgive sin.

THE CALL OF MATTHEW (LEVI)

As Jesus was again at the Sea of Galilee, He passed the customs house and saw Levi, the son of Alphaeus, "sitting at the receipt of custom." As a tax collector, Levi, also called Matthew, was a Jew hated by his fellow countrymen because of his position. The customhouse officials were direct functionaries of heathen Rome and were known for their frequent abuses and tyrannical spirit. To the Jews, Matthew and his colleagues were in the same class as harlots, gamblers, and thieves. According to rabbinical teaching, there was no hope for men such as Matthew, and they were excluded from all religious fellowship. Like a leper, they were considered unclean and unfit to associate in Jewish society.

Jesus looked beyond Matthew's social standing and saw what he could be. He called to him, "Follow me." Considering the authority of Christ greater than the Roman emperor's, Matthew left all and followed Christ. Matthew made a public declaration of his identification with Christ by hosting a banquet in His honor. Of course, the self-righteous Jews would not accept an invitation. Therefore, the guests consisted of sinners and other tax collectors.

The pious Jews were affronted that the One who claimed to be God would befriend even tainted men such as publicans and sinners. By doing so, He "made Himself of no reputation" as far as the elite society was concerned. In disgust, the Pharisees asked the disciples, "Why does he eat with the sinners?"

Before the disciples could respond, Jesus Himself answered the question: "They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Luke 5:31-32). This was an affront to the Jewish mindset that would deny the likes of Matthew a chance to repent. Jesus taught that the door to a new life of restored favor of God was open to all. Jesus offered not only pardon, but forgiveness—full restoration to the circle of divine favor and fellowship.

JESUS DEFENDS HIS DISCIPLES

Again, defeated by Jesus' rebuff, the Pharisees attacked through another means. They brought into the battle John's disciples who asked, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not?" (Matthew 9:14).

Jesus answered in the form of three parables. A parable has been defined as "an earthly story with a heavenly meaning." It is a story that is told for the definite purpose of making some truth clear. Therefore, it is an illustration to throw light upon some doctrine. Jesus told the three following parables.

1. *The Sons of the Bride Chamber.*

Jesus brought to mind a wedding feast that begins with the appearance of the bridegroom and is a time of great rejoicing. The disciples and the believers had accepted Jesus as the Messiah or Bridegroom. It was inappropriate that they who had responded to His invitation should give themselves to fasting. There would be time for this after He was taken from them.

2. *The New Patch on an Old Garment.*

An old garment could not be made presentable by just mending it with a new patch. Jesus was teaching that He came to bring something new, not just to reform Judaism.

3. *The New Wine in Old Wineskins.*

New wine could not be placed in old wineskins because the brittle skins would burst as the wine fermented. Likewise, Judaism could not contain the power and life of the gospel of Christ.

Chapter 5

THE SABBATH CONTROVERSY

Robertson's Sections 49-63

THE SABBATH CONTROVERSY IN JERUSALEM

An unnamed feast in Jerusalem, probably the Passover, marked the beginning of the second year of Jesus' ministry. For a year, His miracles and apparent disregard for Jewish traditionalism had infuriated the Pharisees. Even though their antagonism manifested itself in Galilee, it was restrained because of Jesus' great popularity in the north. Now that He was in Jerusalem, the Pharisees had opportunity to assail Him with the full brunt of their hatred.

The occasion for the conflict between Christ and the Pharisees centered on the observance of the Sabbath. Shepard explains the significance of the Sabbath.

There was no institution among the Jews regarded with more veneration and scrupulosity than that of the Sabbath. It was a divinely ordained and beneficent part of the Mosaic economy, designed for the rest of man and for his worship and service to God. Its purpose was to protect the underlings and oppressed in a nation afflicted with greed. Beginning with sunset on Friday, announced by three trumpet blasts from the Temple and synagogue, it ended at sunset on Saturday. All food must be prepared, all vessels washed, all lights kindled, and all tools laid aside. There were restrictions laid down in the Mosaic law; but the Rabbis had elaborated from these a vast array of injunctions and prohibitions, making of the Sabbath law a veritable bondage. Moses said: "Thou shalt not do any work." The Rabbis made out a system of thirty-nine works, which done rendered the offender subject to death by stoning. Derived from these "father-works" were numerous "descendant-works." One of the "father-works" was ploughing; a son of this was "digging." Wearing false teeth was a "descendant" of "carrying a burden." Among the descendants of "reaping" were the "plucking of a head of wheat" or the "pulling out of a grey hair" from one's head. Lengthy rules were formulated about what kinds of knots one might tie on the Sabbath. The camel driver's and the sailor's knots might not be tied or unloosed. Two letters of the alphabet might not be written together. To kindle or extinguish a fire was a great desecration, not being justified even in case of the emergency of sickness. The Sabbath had become a grievous burden by the thousands of such restrictions and rules too numerous to mention.¹⁴

Jesus Heals the Paralytic on the Sabbath

It was on such a Sabbath that Jesus encountered a paralytic lying near the pool of Bethesda. For thirty-eight years this man had lain among the "great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered," who waited for an angel to trouble the waters so the first one in the pool could be healed.

As he had no one to assist him, the paralytic's hopes of healing were always frustrated. Jesus saw the man and asked, "Wilt thou be made whole?" (John 5:6). The man's answer showed his utter hopelessness. But Jesus replied, "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk." Immediately the man was healed and obeyed the command of the Lord.

Those who saw him walking did not rejoice at the miraculous healing or give glory to God. Instead, they accused the man of violating the Sabbath. The former paralytic simply replied, "He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed, and walk." He could not, however, identify the miracle worker, for Jesus had withdrawn into the multitude.

Jesus later found the man in the Temple and said unto him, "Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee" (John 5:14). The man was apparently offering a sacrifice for his desecration of the Sabbath. From Jesus' statement, one may conclude that the paralysis was the result of sin. The sin could have been unthankfulness, as there is no record of the man expressing gratitude for his miraculous healing. Further evidence of the man's unthankfulness is given in his report to the Pharisees stating that Jesus had been the one who had healed him. "And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the sabbath day" (John 5:16).

The identification of Jesus as the miracle worker led to His being summoned before the Sanhedrin to give account for His disregard for the Sabbath. Jesus replied that His Father continued to work and so did He. This reply infuriated the Pharisees even more. In their opinion, it was bad enough that Jesus violated the Sabbath, but the blasphemy of making Himself equal with God was far worse.

Jesus used this opportunity to give a broader explanation of His relationship to the Father (John 5:19-23) and added insight to His subsequent relationship to mankind (John 5:24-29). Throughout this discourse, Jesus continued to claim deity by claiming the prerogatives of God.

1. The power and right to give life and judgment (verses 21-22).
2. The same right to the worship of men that they gave the Father. The one who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father. The critic who denies the deity of Jesus dishonors the Father, for we find that Father in Jesus (John 1:1, 14).
3. The power to give eternal life to anyone who hears obediently and believes.

Jesus' claim to deity so enraged His enemies that they plotted to destroy Him. Although they understood His claim to be God, they did not understand He was God manifested in flesh. Nevertheless, Jesus gave several witnesses to substantiate His claim.

1. The witness of John the Baptist (John 5:32-35)
2. The testimony of His Works (John 5:36)
3. The witness of the Father (John 5:37)
4. The witness of the Scriptures (John 5:39)
5. The testimony of Moses (John 5:45-47)

Stubborn unbelief, however, blinded the eyes of His enemies.

The real reason for the rejection was that they were unwilling to come to Jesus to accept life, or in the words of Jesus, “Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life” (John 5:40). They had no real love for God in their hearts, but were more willing to accept a false Messiah who came in his own name to receive glory of men. Jesus said, “I am come in my Father’s name.”

Jesus’ Disciples Pluck Corn of the Sabbath

It was probably on the following Sabbath that another controversy arose. The disciples were walking through a field and plucked corn to eat. This was in keeping with the Law that allowed a hungry man to pick grain along a pathway to satisfy his hunger.¹⁵ The Pharisees, however, did not view this to be legal; they said it violated their tradition about the Sabbath.

Jesus defended His disciples based on the following points.

1. The example of David eating the Tabernacle’s shewbread, which was normally reserved only for the priests.
2. The priests who labored in the Temple on the Sabbath were blameless in their service. How much more should His disciples be blameless in His service since He was greater than the Temple and hence greater than the Sabbath?
3. The words of the prophet Hosea (Hosea 6:6).
4. The superiority of man to the Sabbath since God made the Sabbath for man.
5. Jesus’ lordship of the Sabbath.

Jesus Heals the Withered Hand on the Sabbath

Following the discussion, Jesus departed and went into the synagogue. There He saw a man with a withered hand. Seeking to accuse Him further, the Jews asked whether it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath. Jesus answered with an example.

What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out? How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days (Matthew 12:11-12).

The Pharisees taught it was lawful to save life or prevent death on the Sabbath. Their silence showed they were caught in their own trap. His enemies were again defeated in argument and shamed into silence even though they had come confidently, hoping to find some basis of accusation.

Jesus then commanded the man with the withered hand to stretch it forth. Immediately the hand was restored.

RETURN TO GALILEE

Christ’s acts in Jerusalem so enraged the Pharisees and Herodians that He returned to Galilee, withdrawing with His disciples to the lake.

Jesus withdrew himself with his disciples to the sea: and a great multitude from Galilee followed him, and from Judaea, and from Jerusalem, and from Idumaea, and from beyond Jordan; and they about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they had heard what great things he did, came unto him (Mark 3:7-8).

The people were so eager to hear Christ, it was necessary for Him to enter into a boat and address the people from it. Matthew interpreted Christ's ministry to the Gentiles from the surrounding nations as a fulfillment of Isaiah 42:1-4. Even though they were not of the household of Israel, they too shared in the blessings as Christ preached, healed the sick, and delivered those possessed by demons.

The Selection of the Twelve Apostles

The Jews expected Messiah to appear, overthrow the Roman yoke of bondage, and reestablish the throne of David. When He did appear, however, He proclaimed that His kingdom was a spiritual kingdom in the hearts of men (Luke 17:20-21). (His millennial kingdom with its reign on earth is still future.) Nevertheless, the time had come for Christ to organize His kingdom more fully. Being omniscient, Jesus Christ knew His time on earth was nearing its end. For His ministry and kingdom to continue, it would have to be committed to the hands of mortal men. The importance of the choice of these men was manifested as Jesus spent the night in prayer. Afterward He chose twelve men who would be with Him at all times in all places. They would be companions in His travels, witnesses of His miracles, students of His doctrine, recipients of practical experience, ambassadors of His kingdom, and the foundation of future growth.

Mark 3, Matthew 10, Luke 6, and Acts 1 list the twelve apostles.

1. Peter (always mentioned first)
2. Andrew
3. James
4. John
5. Philip
6. Nathanael (Bartholomew)
7. Thomas
8. Matthew (Levi)
9. James the Less
10. Judas (Thaddeus)
11. Simon Zelotes
12. Judas Iscariot (always mentioned last).

Edersheim suggests that five of the twelve disciples were directly or indirectly cousins of Jesus. He states that Salome, Zebedee's wife, was the sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus, thus making James and John Jesus' cousins. Edersheim also projects the idea that James the Less, Judas (Thaddeus), and Simon Zelotes were indirectly cousins of Jesus as their father, Alpheus, also called Cleopas, was the brother of Joseph.¹⁶

The Sermon on the Mount

Shortly after choosing the Twelve, Jesus gave the greatest of all sermons recorded in human history. The Sermon on the Mount, described by some as Jesus' Inaugural Address, certainly cannot be given justice in a short study such as this. The wise student will take time to explore prayerfully the depths of this discourse, for in this sermon, recorded in Matthew 5-7 and Luke 6:17-49, Christ defined the ideals and objectives of His kingdom and set forth some of its fundamental requirements and principles.

The Sermon on the Mount may be outlined in eight sections.

1. *Introduction (Matthew 5:3-12)*
 - (a) Beatitudes and woes
 - (b) Privileges of the subjects of the kingdom
2. *The Theme of the Sermon (Matthew 5:13-20)*
Christ's standard of righteousness contrasted with that of the scribes and Pharisees
3. *Christ's Ethical Teachings (Matthew 5:21-48)*
Christ's ethical standards were superior to that of the scribes and Pharisees as illustrated by His teachings regarding the following:
 - (a) Murder
 - (b) Adultery
 - (c) Divorce
 - (d) Oaths
 - (e) Retaliations
 - (f) Love of enemies
4. *The Practice of Real Righteousness (Matthew 6:1-8)*
Christ contrasted the practice of the kingdom to that of the ostentatious hypocrisy of the Pharisees in three areas:
 - (a) Almsgiving
 - (b) Prayer
 - (c) Fasting
5. *Single-hearted devotion to God (Matthew 6:19-34)*
6. *Captious Criticism or Judging Others (Matthew 7:1-6; Luke 6:37-42)*
7. *Prayer and the Golden Rule (Matthew 7:7-12; Luke 6:31)*
8. *Conclusion (Matthew 7:13-8:1; Luke 6:43-49)*

The examples from parables drove home the lesson of personal righteousness.

The Healing of the Centurion's Servant

After concluding His sermon, Jesus entered Capernaum where a delegation of Jewish leaders met Him. A Gentile centurion had sent them to ask Jesus to heal his paralytic and tormented servant. (Perhaps previous healings by the Messiah in Capernaum had sparked this man's faith.) The leaders' testimony concerning the centurion's generosity and his concern for his slave witnessed loudly to his moral character. By sending the elders instead of coming himself to Jesus, he showed his humility.

Jesus followed the elders as they started toward the officer's home. As they neared the home, the centurion sent other friends to Jesus with another simple message.

Lord, trouble not thyself: for I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof: wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee: but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed. For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it (Luke 7:6-8).

Coupled with his humility, this Gentile, although not a proselyte to Judaism, had great faith in Jesus and understood His authority. He perceived that Jesus could speak an authoritative command and the demons would have to go forth in obedience.

In response, Jesus exclaimed, "I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel" (Luke 7:9). Here was an absolute trust that deemed all things possible with Jesus, coming from a man who made no claim to outward or inward fitness to receive divine blessing. This centurion was an example of the many Gentiles who would come from the East and the West to join with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God. Because of his faith, Jesus told the centurion, "Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee" (Matthew 8:13).

Raising of the Widow's Son in Nain

Located about twenty-five miles southwest of Capernaum, the village of Nain was the next place Jesus visited following the healing of the centurion's servant. As Jesus, accompanied by His disciples and a large crowd of people, reached the town gate, He met a funeral procession on its way to the cemetery. The procession was for the son of a well-known and respected widow. The mother's grief moved Jesus. "Weep not," He said consolingly to her. Then He came and, touching the bier, commanded, "Young man, I say unto thee, Arise" (Luke 7:13-14). Immediately the son sat up and began talking. As a result, great fear came upon those who witnessed this miracle. Here was concrete evidence that Jesus was "the resurrection, and the life." (See John 11:25.)

The Message from John the Baptist

The news that a great prophet had appeared spread throughout the land, reaching even John the Baptist, whom Herod had imprisoned at Machaerus, east of the Dead Sea. John sent two of his disciples to Jesus asking, "Are you the Messiah or should we look for another?" This question should not be considered as an indication that John had lost faith in the coming Messiah, but rather an expression of faith that the Messiah would appear. When the messengers came, Jesus was busy in the midst of His ministries of curing and preaching to the popular throng made up of all classes. He healed many "in that hour" of disease, plagues, evil spirits and all kinds of bodily ills, and gave sight to the blind. In reply to John's question, Jesus simply told the disciples to tell John what they had seen. (See Isaiah 35:5-6.)

Jesus then gave to John the most wonderful tribute ever bestowed on a mortal man. John was the greatest of the prophets, in privilege if not in character, because he was the forerunner of

the Messiah. (However, “he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he” [Luke 7:28], not morally, but positionally in the new dispensation of the Holy Ghost. John was the greatest one born in the realm of the flesh; those born of the Spirit are born into a higher realm.)

Jesus Upbraids the Unrepentant Cities

Jesus did most of His mighty works in Galilee, and principally around the Sea of Tiberias, in the populous districts of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum. He began to upbraid these three cities, which had been the scene of His greatest activities, because they did not repent. It would be more tolerable for Tyre, Sidon, and Sodom in the Day of Judgment than for these cities. To whom much is given, much is required. Although they had freely received, they did not respond. Because the people had had the light of both Christ’s words and works, they were subject to greater judgment than the Gentiles who had not had that testimony.

Why did the Jews reject Christ? Was it because He did not fulfill the messianic prophecies? Was it because He could not substantiate His claims? No. The Jews rejected the evidence of His messiahship and deity because of their spiritual blindness. (See Matthew 11:25-27.) Jesus ended His upbraiding of the cities with an invitation.

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light (Matthew 11:28-30).

The Anointing of Jesus’ Feet

A Pharisee named Simon invited Jesus to his home for dinner. This was not a sign that Simon accepted the claims of Christ; instead, it appears he was only seeking opportunity to examine Jesus more closely, as he coldly omitted the ordinary attention usually shown to an invited guest.

As the men were lying around the table in typical oriental fashion, a sinful woman entered and, in deep repentance and with utmost respect, began to bathe the feet of Jesus with her tears. Perhaps she had been listening for a word of hope when Jesus invited those who were heavy laden to come unto Him for rest. Not having a cloth, she wiped His feet with her hair; then she kissed His feet and anointed them with costly perfume.

It was considered improper for a rabbi to talk to a woman—especially a woman whose unbound hair testified to her soiled reputation and profession. Wrapped in the smug and self-righteous robes of his sect, Simon watched the scene and thought, “If this fellow were a prophet, he would have known who and what manner of woman this is that is touching him, for she is a sinner.”

Jesus knew Simon’s thoughts and presented an illustration to him. “A creditor had two debtors. One owed five hundred pence while the other owed fifty. When they had nothing to pay, the creditor forgave each one. Which of them will love the creditor the most?”

“I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most,” replied Simon. Simon’s correct response gave Jesus ample opportunity to contrast the action of Simon and the sinful woman.

Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little (Luke 7:44-47).

The woman, considered by many to be Mary Magdalene, acknowledged her many sins and found forgiveness at the feet of Christ. Her actions demonstrated her great love. Likewise, Simon’s behavior manifested his lack of love. Self-righteousness so blinded Simon that he failed to recognize his debt to Jesus.

Jesus turned to the woman and said, “Thy sins are forgiven. . . . Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace” (Luke 7:48-50). His statement brought peace and joy to the woman’s troubled soul, but consternation to the men who sat with Him at meat. “Who is this that forgiveth sins also?” they asked within themselves.

Another Tour of Galilee

Following this incident, Jesus’ work took a deeper hold in the hearts of the people. The miracle at Nain had attracted wide attention. His preaching had great appeal and reached some of the worst sinners, drawing them back from lives of depravity. To extend His ministry, Jesus began a systematic tour through the province, city by city, village by village. The Twelve were with Him, but He did the heralding and evangelizing. His theme was the good news of the kingdom of God. The tour was underwritten by the first “ladies auxiliary,” and headed by Mary Magdalene, Joanna, the wife of Herod’s steward, and Susanna, who were also witnesses of Jesus’ divine power.

Accused by the Pharisees

When Jesus returned to Capernaum after His tour of the cities of Galilee, He entered into the house of Simon. The multitude came together again in such numbers, anxious to see and hear and be healed, that Jesus and His apostles could not find time or place to rest and have their meals. So great was the tension that some of His friends got overanxious about Him. The fact that the enemies of Jesus had arrived from Jerusalem and were spreading slander about Him “that He was crazy,” reinforced their anxiety. The Master went about His activities so intensely, that some of His friends began to agree with the Pharisees’ interpretation “that He was becoming overbalanced mentally.” They went out to lay hold of Him and by gentle violence remove Him from the intensity of His movement.

At this time the Pharisees brought to Jesus a man who was blind, dumb, and demon possessed. Jesus healed him, performing three simultaneous miracles in such an easy and simple

way that the people were beside themselves when they saw the man with restored sight, fully aware, and speaking coherently.

In their amazement, the people questioned, “Is not this the Son of David?” The miracles Jesus performed testified to His deity. Yet, the Pharisees rejected His claims. How were the people to reconcile this situation? They had been taught all their lives to follow the teaching of their religious leaders. Now that teaching conflicted with what they perceived as signs of divinity.

The Pharisees heard the question of the people and rendered a swift, vindictive response: “This fellow does not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils.” They did not attempt to deny that Jesus had performed a miracle; they simply attributed it to the power of Satan.

Jesus offered three explanations to prove this accusation of the Pharisees false.

1. Division leads to destruction and unity is necessary for preservation. If Jesus had received power from Satan and used that power against him, then Satan’s kingdom would fall. Naturally, Satan would not grant power that would result in his own destruction.
2. Exorcists existed in Israel, and the Jews deemed them God’s gift to the nation. If the Pharisees recognized the ability to cast out demons as being from God, then they should not accuse Jesus of being demon possessed. If He used the Spirit of God to cast out demons, then the Pharisees must conclude that His offer of the kingdom was genuine and He was its bona fide King.
3. A robber cannot enter a guarded citadel without having subdued the guard. Therefore, if Christ could enter Satan’s stronghold, then His power was greater than Satan’s. Satan could not grant power stronger than what he possessed. Since Christ’s power was greater than Satan’s, then the conclusion had to be that Christ’s power was from God. If that were true, then the kingdom of God had come unto the people. Consequently, the answer to their earlier question had to be, “Yes, this is the Son of David, the promised Messiah.”

Jesus then cautioned the Pharisees to be careful about their attitude concerning Him. The power of God was being manifested in their midst in those wonderful cures. Their attitude toward Him determined whether they were on God’s side or Satan’s. “He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad” (Matthew 12:30).

Jesus followed this word of caution with a sharp countercharge of blasphemy against the Spirit. He warned there is a limit to God’s tolerance of mankind’s antagonism against the Spirit of God. These men were mentally convinced that Jesus was the representative of the kingdom of God, yet in the very face of the fact, they attributed His works, done through the Spirit of God, to satanic power. Such blasphemy would never be pardoned, neither in this age nor in the one to come.

The Pharisees had determined to reject Jesus, whatever proofs He might offer of His divine mission. Their prejudice and self-interest blinded them; they deliberately refused to be convinced. Their consciences had been deadened; their hearts were now incapable of repentance.

They willfully and deliberately showed enmity and antagonism toward Jesus by blaspheming the Spirit of God. Eternal sin is an adversary of the manifest work of the Spirit of God, attributing it to Satan. (See Hebrews 6:4-10.)

Scribes and Pharisees Demand a Sign

Visiting emissaries from Jerusalem probably pushed some of the local Pharisees to the front, asking Jesus to substantiate His implied claim to be the representative of the kingdom of God, the Messiah, by showing them some sign. With bland hypocrisy, they expressed their wish to see Him perform a miracle that might resolve doubts about His messiahship. The people expected that the Messiah, when he came, would repeat the great deeds and miracles of Moses and Joshua. The pressure of the request was in fact that the people thought Jesus should be willing to do this if He were the Messiah.

Instead of the miracle they requested, He gave them a spiritual sign of His sacrificial life, terminating in His atoning death and three days in the tomb. This sign of the prophet Jonah was what they needed, but not what they desired. (See Matthew 12:40.) Jesus next began to declare future judgment and condemnation on them by contrasting them with the Ninevites and the Queen of Sheba.

Christ's Mother Takes Him Home

While Jesus was speaking to the crowd, word came to Him that His mother and brothers sought to speak to Him. These children of Mary and Joseph had been friendly toward Jesus earlier in His ministry (John 2:12), but after the Jews' rejection of His claim to messiahship at Nazareth (Luke 4:16-31), they seem to have developed a disbelief of His claims. Later they ridiculed Him, calling Him the "Secret Messiah" (John 7:5).

Jesus did not stop His work, but made use of the occasion to lay down a far-reaching principle that referred not only to His own ministry but to all laborers in His kingdom. He asked, "Who is my mother? and who are my brethren?" Then stretching forth His hand toward His disciples, He said, "Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother" (Matthew 12:48-50). By doing so, He clearly indicated that all human relationships must be subordinated to higher spiritual relationships of the kingdom. He had entered the earthly family in order to found the spiritual family. They who do the will of God are His true kindred, for they have been born of the Spirit. His earthly family failed to understand Him and His mission.

Chapter 6

THE FIRST GROUP OF PARABLES

Robertson's Sections 64-68

Jesus had used parables occasionally in the earlier part of His ministry. Following the encounters with the Pharisees and the visit of His mother and her children, Jesus adopted this style of teaching and used it frequently.

A parable has been simply described as “an earthly story with a heavenly meaning.” Ralph Reynolds expounds on the nature of a parable in *Life of Christ III* of the International Alpha Bible Course.

Certainly a parable is a story—a created story of something that might have happened. It is a story that has been told for the definite purpose of making some truth clear. Therefore, it is an illustration to throw light upon some doctrine. A parable is usually a short story that is allegorical in nature. An allegory is the description of one thing under the image of another.¹⁷

Dwight Pentecost offers further insight.

A parable is a literary device and is used to teach by means of transference. In order to make it possible to discover truth in the unknown realm, something familiar is transferred from the known realm to the unknown realm. . . . While an allegory may or may not be true to life, a parable is always true to life.¹⁸

In the hands of Jesus, the parable became a vehicle of instruction and warning, of comfort and condemnation.

Why did Jesus teach in parables? When the disciples posed this question, Jesus' enigmatic reply may have added to their confusion and aroused further curiosity.

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 (Matthew 13:11-13).

A parable must be interpreted to be understood. It takes divine revelation to understand the truths brought out in parables. When Jesus taught in parables, He gave simple stories that were interesting and easily remembered. By doing so, He accomplished four things.

1. He gained and held the attention of the people and instilled vital truths in a concrete form that would be easily remembered.
2. He helped His disciples understand the failure of His ministry to reach and convert vast multitudes. For the sake of their own future ministries, the disciples had to understand that the message and messenger are not responsible for the lack of response; the fault lies with the condition of the hearer. Without this realization, they would be devastated by their disappointments.
3. He sifted the hearers. Those spiritually sensitive would understand the truths being imparted; the spiritually dull would be left in darkness.
4. He avoided the offensiveness, but not the effectiveness of direct rebuke.

How may we understand parables? Parables are not to be interpreted literally. They have a spiritual meaning that must be understood by divine revelation. There are two things about which one must be cautioned.

1. Doctrines must not be formed on the basis of parables alone. Parables illustrate doctrines and make them clear, but are not a foundation for formulating dogma.
2. Never make a parable out of a literal, historic story. An example would be the story of the beggar named Lazarus and the rich man (Luke 16:19-31). Jesus never gave the names of the characters in parables. Therefore, stories such as the one about Lazarus must be accepted as literal accounts of something that actually happened.

In the discourse recorded in Matthew 13 and Mark 4, Jesus taught by parables. How many He gave is not known. Matthew stated, “And he spake many things unto them in parables” (Matthew 13:3). Mark wrote, “And with many such parables spake he the word unto them” (Mark 4:33). Three accounts of this session, however, list eight different parables, each of which illustrates some phase of the kingdom of God. The eight may be grouped in four pairs: the parables of the sower and the seed; the parables of the tares and the net; the parables of the mustard seed and the leaven; and the parables of the buried treasure and the pearl of great price.

The kingdom parables teach many truths regarding the value of salvation that places us into the kingdom of God. Here are a few of these truths.

1. Jesus paid a great price to purchase the church.
2. The sinner must surrender all in order to be saved.
3. Jesus is the one pearl of great price.
4. In the kingdom there will be many false members who will remain there until the judgment day.
5. The church will have a small beginning but will enjoy tremendous growth.

Parable of the Sower

(Mark 4:3-25; Matthew 13:3-23; Luke 8:5-18)

Perhaps a better name for the story commonly called “The Parable of the Sower” would be “The Parable of the Soils,” for the emphasis is upon the different types of earth. Christ likened the soil to the heart of the individual and thereby explained the varied responses to His ministry of sowing the seed (the Word of God). Some refuse to hear because their hearts are hardened (rocky soil). Others receive the word with joy but do not continue as they lack spiritual depth (shallow soil). And others allow the cares of life and materialism (thorns) to choke out the seed. But some seed produces an abundant harvest (good ground). The same seed is always sown; the factor that determines the size of the harvest is the condition of the ground.

Parable of the Seed

(Mark 4:26-29)

Mark recorded the Parable of the Seed that is supplemental to the Parable of the Sower. In the Parable of the Seed (Mark 4:26-29), Christ pointed out to the disciples—and to all who follow Him—that the resulting crop would be the results of the life in the seed and not a direct result of their own efforts. Too often the sowers try to take the credit for the abundant harvest.

Parable of the Tares

(Matthew 13:24-30)

In the Parable of the Tares, Jesus likened the kingdom to a field of wheat in which an enemy sowed tares. This teaches that false seed will be sown alongside the seed of the Word of God. The tares look entirely like wheat until the real grain appears. However, at the time of harvest, the two will be separated and the tares will be cast into the fire and burned. We must ever be on guard against Satan spreading false doctrine. At the judgment, God will separate those who have followed His Word from those who have accepted the lies of Satan. Until that time, the two will live side by side.

This is one of the few parables that Jesus interpreted for His listeners. (See Matthew 13:36-43.)

1. The field is the world.
2. The good seed is the children of the kingdom.
3. The tares are the children of the devil.
4. The harvest is the end of the world.
5. The reapers are the angels.

Parable of the Mustard Seed

(Mark 4:30-32; Matthew 12:31-32)

The Parable of the Mustard Seed shows that the kingdom of God will grow from a small beginning until it fills the earth. The illustration likens the enlarged kingdom to a tree that provides

shelter for the birds of the air. The birds represent the nations who will be blessed in the tremendous growth of the kingdom.

Parable of the Leaven

(Luke 13:20-21; Matthew 13:33-35)

According to Dr. Pentecost, the Parable of the Leaven emphasizes the leavening process. When the yeast is introduced into the flour, it begins a steady, irreversible process. The yeast continues its work until the whole lump is leavened.¹⁹ The kingdom of God operates by an internal force, the Holy Ghost. Edersheim states that “the Kingdom of God, when received within, would seem like leaven hid, but would gradually pervade, assimilate, and transform the whole of our common life.”²⁰ However, an alternate interpretation, based on such verses as I Corinthians 5:6, likens leaven to false doctrine.²¹

After the Parable of the Leaven, Jesus took His disciples into the house and explained the Parable of the Tares. Then He imparted other parables to them.

Parable of the Hidden Treasure

(Matthew 13:44)

Jesus said the kingdom was like a man who found a treasure hidden in a field and then sold all he had to buy the treasure. This parable has two widely accepted interpretations. First, the hidden treasure is the Jewish church, those members of the household of Israel who accepted Jesus as the Messiah and obeyed His word. In this parable, Jesus taught that a multitude from the nation of Israel, God’s peculiar possession (Exodus 19:5; Deuteronomy 14:2; Psalm 135:4) scattered throughout the world (the field), would be redeemed by His shed blood. The second interpretation is that the hidden treasure is Christ. The sinner who comes to Christ must surrender all and place all on the altar before he can have the treasure of salvation.

The Parable of the Pearl of Great Price

(Matthew 13:45-46)

The Parable of the Pearl of Great Price is similar to the story of the hidden treasure. It also has two accepted interpretations. First, the pearl is the Gentile church. Frequently in Scripture, the sea represents the Gentile nations. This parable shows that God will get His treasure (church), not only from Israel, but also from the nations of the world. Second, the pearl is Jesus. In order for a man to have Jesus, he must lay all upon the altar and surrender it to Him.

The Parable of the Net

(Matthew 13:47-50)

The Parable of the Net teaches a message similar to that of the Parable of the Tares. While many may come into the kingdom (the net), not all are acceptable. There will be a final separation or judgment.

At the conclusion of the discourse, Jesus asked the disciples if they understood what He had taught them. He then likened them to a householder who brings both new and old things from his treasure. They could draw from the ancient prophecies as well as the newly revealed truths of the kingdom. As true Christian teachers, they must be wise conservators of the old facts and realities while receiving with open minds the new truth.

The principles of the parables can be summarized in seven points.

1. This present age with its kingdom will be characterized by the sowing of seed (the gospel), to which there will be varying responses depending upon the condition of the soil (the hearts of the hearers).
2. The harvest will result from the life that is innate in the seed, not by any special ability or feat of the sowers.
3. There is false sowing.
4. Although it had a small beginning, the kingdom will have tremendous growth.
5. The kingdom will not be external but internal (the Parable of the Leaven).
6. God will gather a peculiar treasure to Himself through this present age.
7. The age will end in judgment that will separate the righteous from the unrighteous. The righteous will enter the millennial kingdom while the sinful will be excluded.

JESUS STILLS THE TEMPEST

Evening had fallen by the time Jesus concluded His instruction. The multitude continued to press Him, so He suggested to the Twelve that they cross to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. Aboard the boat Jesus sank in weariness near the stern and fell into a deep sleep. This is the only time the Gospels speak of Jesus sleeping. The exhaustion that prevailed over His physical frame aptly demonstrated His humanity.

Suddenly a fierce storm arose upon the sea. Waves lashed violently at the boat, which began to fill rapidly with water. Panic seized the disciples. In great fear, they rushed to shake Jesus. "Master," they cried, "carest thou not that we perish?" (Mark 4:38).

The sleepy form arose and stood as almighty God. With the authority of the Creator, Jesus rebuked the wind and then commanded the sea to be still. "And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm" (Mark 4:39). He then turned to the disciples and asked, "Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?" (Mark 4:40).

Through the fright of their near disaster, the disciples marveled at Jesus. "What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" (Mark 4:41). Although the band accepted Jesus as the Messiah, they failed to grasp fully the fact that He was more than just a man. He was eternal God, the Creator of the elements, incarnated in human flesh!

THE HEALING OF THE DEMONIACS NEAR GADARA

The boat landed near the village of Gergesa that was of the district of Gadara in Perea.

And when he [Jesus] was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains: because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him. And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones (Mark 5:2-5).

The demoniac saw Jesus and ran to worship Him, but a demon spoke through him: “What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not” (Mark 5:7).

Jesus commanded the demon to depart and demanded to know his name. “My name is Legion: for we are many,” came the reply. (A Roman legion consisted of six thousand soldiers.) The demon then requested to be permitted to enter into a nearby herd of about two thousand swine. The hogs went berserk, rushed down the steep hill into the sea, and drowned.

When the news of the incident reached the city, the people came to Jesus. They found the transformed demoniac, clothed, in his right mind, and sitting at the feet of Jesus. In great fear, the people begged Jesus to depart from their midst.

As Jesus prepared to return across the lake, the former demoniac begged to be allowed to accompany Him. (Matthew mentioned two demoniacs who met Jesus; the accounts in Mark and Luke seem to center on the one man who made this request.) While the man’s desire just to be with Jesus was commendable, the Master did not grant his request. Instead, He told the man to return home and tell of the good things the Lord had done for him. What a witness Jesus left behind to the Gadarene multitude who loved their sins, demons, and pigs more than they loved Him!

MORE MIRACLES IN CAPERNAUM

A large and expectant crowd welcomed Jesus as He returned to Capernaum from across the Sea of Galilee. The crowd continued to swell as the news of Jesus’ appearing spread throughout the city. Jairus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, made his way through the crowd and approached Jesus. Jairus was agitated because his only child, a twelve-year-old girl, was at the point of death. Dismissing his pride, the distraught father prostrated himself before Jesus, beseeching Him to come and lay His hand on the child that she might live. Such a request showed faith in Jesus’ ability to heal.

A large crowd continued to press around Jesus as He made His way to Jairus’s home. In the mass of humanity was a woman who had suffered from an issue of blood for twelve years. (Some authorities believe she was a Gentile since a Jewish woman’s ceremonial uncleanness would have prevented her from being in a crowd.²²) She believed that if she could but touch the hem of Jesus’ garment, she would be made whole. With fierce determination, she forced her way through the crowd until she could reach out and touch His clothing. Immediately she was healed. Jesus felt the healing power flow from Him and asked who had touched Him. Fearfully, the woman made

herself known. Jesus kindly replied, “Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole” (Matthew 9:22).

When the crowd arrived at Jairus’s home, a messenger told him there was no need to bother the Master anymore, for his daughter was already dead. Jesus turned to Jairus and told him not to fear, just believe. Then, taking Peter, James, and John with Him—this was the first time the trio was singled out—Jesus and Jairus entered the house where the mourners were already wailing. “Why do you wail and weep? The child is not dead, but sleeping,” He told the crowd. They responded with laughs and jeers.

After putting the mourners out, Jesus led the three disciples and the parents to where the child lay. Taking the girl by her hand, He said, “Damsel, I say unto you arise.” She immediately arose and He commanded that something be given her to eat.

After leaving Jairus’s home, two blind men followed Jesus, crying, “Have mercy on us, thou son of David.” In response to their faith, Jesus touched their eyes and healed them. He then gave strict instructions that they should tell no man about it. However, they spread His fame abroad in all that land.

After the blind men, a dumb man possessed of demons approached Christ. To the utter amazement of the multitude, Jesus cast out the demons and the man spoke. The people marveled, saying, “It was never so seen in Israel,” but the Pharisees said, “He casts out devils by the prince of the devils.”

MISSIONARY SPOTLIGHT:

Reverend and Mrs. Robert McFarland



By Lois McFarland Truman, PhD

Robert McFarland and Marjorie Guinn became engaged when they were both students attending Apostolic Bible Institute in St. Paul, Minnesota. However, Reverend S. G. Norris, the school president, was not in favor of this marriage, thinking there were too many differences in their backgrounds. Robert was used to hard physical labor working on a farm near a small, country town in Indiana. Marjorie was a pampered, city girl from St. Louis. Fortunately, God saw beyond the surface and knew they both had more in common than it appeared. Immediately following their beautiful wedding in St. Louis (1944), they drove to Richmond, Indiana,

to begin pastorate of a newly formed congregation.

For the next ten years, God blessed their ministry with significant church growth, and also added three children to their family, Robert Lee, Lois Marie, and Edward Ray. In 1954, Robert had a dream of a man in a foreign country asking for help. Marjorie saw a picture in the newspaper of a man dressed in the type of clothing Robert described from his dream. The man was from Libya, North Africa.

After much prayer, they resigned from their church in 1957 and began traveling to churches to raise funds for their move to the Middle East. The city of Jerusalem was divided between Israel and Jordan, and God opened the door for the McFarlands to move to East Jerusalem (Jordan) in 1959. This move was a sheer walk of faith, as there was no foreign missions system for income. Each missionary family, though endorsed by the United Pentecostal Church organization, was responsible for finding their own means of support, and for making their own travel/living arrangements.

The children stayed with family members in the States during the three months required by Jordan for children to receive visas after the parents were in the country. Stella Guinn, Marjorie's mother, had never been out of the United States, but bravely traveled with the three children—Bob just turned 14, Lois not quite 13, and Ed 10—spending the night in Cairo, Egypt, and then on into Jerusalem. In those days, the airport runway also served as the same highway that the McFarland children traveled to and from school each day. Whenever a plane was ready to land or take off, railroad gates came down across the highway at both ends of the “runway” until the plane taxied or flew off, the gates raised, and the traffic continued.

Shortly after their arrival in Jordan, the McFarlands began working with Canadian Margaret Hogg, who lived in Bethlehem where she held services in her home. During a Sunday service, the very man who had been asking for help in Robert's dream walked into the meeting. He was the grandfather of the core family who continues the work to this day in that area. That family has lived through severe persecution, but continues steadfast in the Apostles' Doctrine. Many people have planted and watered the precious seed over the years, and God continues to give the increase.

The Lord was also opening many doors in Egypt through Boshra Sedra. He contacted the McFarlands, explaining he had several women needing to be baptized, but he, being a male, was forbidden to baptize women. Robert gave Marjorie some tips on "how to baptize" and she headed to Egypt where she did her first baptisms.

The McFarlands made trips when possible to minister in Egypt, and have many stories of miracles and healings. One evening prior to service, the McFarlands were praying in a small room, each kneeling at a small stool. When they left for service, a young man came screaming after them, holding two dead scorpions. The larger one was found and killed right under Robert's stool where he had prayed, and the smaller one under Marjorie's stool where she had prayed. Both scorpions were full of deadly poison. As the word quickly spread about these two people who had escaped death, the crowd greatly increased in attendance. It was the beginning of a wonderful congregation in that village.

Many Sunday afternoons, Robert would go to different areas for Bible studies with the young men. A particular area was known for practicing heavy witchcraft and superstitious beliefs. On one occasion, Robert and some of the young men with him witnessed a group of men in a circle, arms intertwined, dancing and chanting around a wicker basket in the center of their circle. A wooden twig was tied to the basket. As the men worked themselves into a frenzy, chanting and shouting, they would ask the basket, "What is your name?" Without anyone being within three feet of the basket, the twig raised upright and wrote "Sha-tonn" (Satan in Arabic) in the dirt. Special prayer requests were made for God to shed His true light into the darkness. God heard and answered prayer, and as of this writing, people from that very area are continuing to be baptized in the name that is above every name! Amen!

As political tension in the area increased, the McFarlands had to leave quickly Jordan on very short notice. However, God opened a door in Marion, Indiana where Robert's father, Lester, had just resigned his church due to failing health. The church voted Robert in as their pastor, and the family moved into the parsonage. Shortly thereafter, the Indiana District elected Robert as their new superintendent, so the McFarlands relocated to the state parsonage on the Indiana Campground. Robert's goal was to visit every church in the state of Indiana at least one time during each year, which he was able to do, even as the number of churches increased. He was then elected as the general secretary of the United Pentecostal Church, creating another move for the McFarlands to St. Louis, Missouri, where they had been married over thirty years prior.

After seven years as the general secretary of the United Pentecostal Church International, the Lord began calling Robert once again to serve in a slightly different mission. He resigned his position as general secretary to become the regional director for Europe and the Middle East. The McFarlands pulled out their luggage once again to begin traveling overseas. Many close to them

believe these were the happiest years of their lives, mixing and mingling with their beloved missionary family. Robert's goal was to see a legally registered work in every country.

As stated in Foreign Missions Division's 2007 *Insight*, "Although their [McFarlands'] time in the Middle East in the mid-1950s was brief, their acquaintance with King Hussein eventually led to the registration of the UPC in Jordan in 1997."⁶⁴

Following a trip to the Middle East with Robert Lee, his oldest son and missionary appointed to Israel/Palestine, Robert was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. The groundwork Robert laid resulted in a registered biblical college in Israel/Palestine. Even though Robert went to be with the Lord prior to the dedication of the college, the three McFarland children, along with their mother, attended the glorious celebration in 2005.

Each of the McFarland children and their families continue the legacy handed to them from their parents, and are involved in various aspects of working in the harvest field.

ENDNOTES

1. *Matthew Henry's Commentary*, vol. IV, 552.
2. Edersheim, *Jesus the Messiah*, 16.
3. Farrar, *Life of Christ*, vol. 1, 28.
4. Pentecost, *The Word and Works of Jesus Christ*, 94.
5. Morgan, *The Crises of the Christ*, 163.
6. Pentecost, 102.
7. Pentecost, 114.
8. Shepard, *The Christ of the Gospels*, 90.
9. Shepard, 90-91.
10. Shepard, 94.
11. Shepard, 118.
12. Shepard, 128-29.
13. Edersheim, 122.
14. Shepard, 152-53.
15. Pentecost, 164.
16. Edersheim, 612-13.
17. Reynolds, "Life of Christ III," *International Alpha Bible Course*, 8.
18. Pentecost, 211.
19. Pentecost, 218.
20. Edersheim, 175.
21. Reynolds, 15.
22. Shepard, 241.

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